An investigation into student academic help seeking

behaviours in a tertiary institution's learning support centre


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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to

May Daisy Clara,

Pamela Irene Mary,

Diana Carolyn,

Andrea Jeanette,

David Edward

and

Leslie Henry James.

# Abstract

The majority of academic help seeking studies worldwide have predominantly used the quantitative paradigm and have been undertaken in the secondary and primary sector. This project addresses a perceived gap in the research as it was conducted in a tertiary institution's learning centre in Aotearoa, New Zealand using Constructivist Grounded Theory in order to gain a deeper understanding of tertiary students' academic help seeking. Help seeking theory was reconceptualised in order to provide a more descriptive model of the process, than had previously occurred because of the quantitative nature of the majority of the previous help seeking studies.

Eight participants from a tertiary institute's learning centre were interviewed about their motivation to seek academic help; were videoed during a learning support session; and then interviewed regarding this session. Grounded theory was used to analyse the data from both interviews and the videoed learning support session.

Four aspects were indentified that motivated participants to seek academic help: the recognition of the need for help; views of help seeking; participants' views of themselves as help seekers; and confidence. Two previously theorised types of help seeking, executive and instrumental help seeking, were confirmed in the videoed learning support sessions. Two new types were also identified, executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking, which were combinations of previously identified help seeking types. Help seeking approach was also discerned as different from help seeking type. Help seeking approach was theorised as a state that seemed to be a background against which the four help seeking types occurred. Behavioural precipitators of academic help seeking were identified as either tutor or student initiated and were further categorised as prompts, pressures, permissions and provocations. A tentative overall model of tertiary help seeking was developed.

The findings of this study indicate that external pressures or permissions precipitated executive or instrumental help seeking, whereas external prompts precipitated executive/instrumental or instrumental/executive help seeking and provocation precipitators led to executive/instrumental, instrumental/executive or instrumental help seeking.

Recommendations for practitioners include being aware of the four different help seeking types used by tertiary students, and that tutor actions can precipitate any of the four help seeking types dependent on the help seeking approach displayed by students. Recommendations also highlight that tutors need to be aware that student confidence is an important element in seeking help, and that students may not always see help seeking as positive.

Suggestions for further research were outlined.

# Acknowledgements

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# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

Academic help seeking at tertiary level in New Zealand has not been well researched. Additionally, the majority of work worldwide that has been undertaken has occurred in secondary or primary schools, with fewer studies being conducted at tertiary level. These studies have tended to involve quantitative approaches through the use of questionnaires such as the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), which measures help seeking in terms of participants' self reports. These measures are quantified and statistically compared to other learning strategies such as retrieval or rehearsal, in an attempt to build models of how help seeking occurs in a tertiary context.

Studies using the quantitative paradigm, although useful, leave gaps in any theory of help seeking particularly at tertiary level. Although such statistical comparisons are interesting and often useful they do not provide fuller explanations of tertiary help seeking. This study has attempted to address this by providing a richer vein of data through the use of a qualitative approach. Grounded Theory has been used for this study, as I initially believed that this provided a social scientific method that had paralleled the scientific approach espoused by many quantitative theorists.

This research study took place in a New Zealand tertiary institution's learning support centre and was designed to build a tentative model of how tertiary students seek help, what precipitates their help seeking, and whether the seminal work of Nelson Le Gall (1987) could be applied to a tertiary context. The research questions for this study were formed to fill what I saw as gaps in academic help seeking theory, and a qualitative research paradigm was employed in order to answer them. The next section briefly introduces me as a researcher.

## Personal Introduction

I am Mervyn Protheroe and I work as a Learning Support Tutor in a Tertiary Institute's Learning Support Centre in New Zealand. I provide contextualised and generic learning support to students in class, group and one to one sessions. Not only does my work involve providing generic support, but also helping students complete their course assignments. This involves helping students to interpret assignment questions, or helping them produce and adhere to a timetable to ensure that they are able to hand their assignments in on time. For some students, once they have an idea of the structure of the kind of writing that they have to do or have specific examples of how they can research a topic and then reference their source material, they do not need further support. However, there are others who, no matter how much support they have, will still want more. The last problem has been of concern to me, since I started work in tertiary education. Consequently, I decided to do research, in order to try to begin to address this problem. As a starting point to solving this problem I decided to do research to produce a tentative model of help seeking with tertiary students who access support. I think such a model would be a useful starting point in addressing this problem.

## My Background

I began teaching in the United Kingdom working in infant and primary schools. Subsequently I taught mathematics and computer science in secondary schools, latterly working for an adult community college teaching mathematics. Because of my initial teacher education and experiences in schools I tended to espouse a positivist approach to my teaching and what I saw as my students' learning. I would attribute this to my approach to the subject matter that I dealt with. It was not until later in my career when I discovered the work of Kurt Gödel (Smullyan, 1992), ethno-mathematics and postmodernism (Sarup, 1988) that I began to realise the transient nature of knowledge. Postmodernism particularly had applications to supposedly complete systems like mathematics. However, the idea of a rational method that moved a learner from initial axioms to conclusions still had its appeal, and consequently I still espoused the idea of the scientific method. This was one of the reasons that I was drawn to Grounded Theory, since in its original form

it promises a social scientific method that I think parallels the approaches taken in mathematics and the hard sciences. However, because of the work I now do and through the course of completing this thesis, my position has moved towards the use of a more constructivist approach to grounded theory. This is because I think that qualitative data gathering inevitably involves the researcher and participant co-constructing meanings. They do this, for example through interviews or in the case of this study by considering videoed learning support sessions. My reasons for undertaking this study are explained more fully in the next section.

## Rationale

As stated above I work in a tertiary institution's learning support centre, and consequently my day to day job consists of providing help to students who have academic difficulties or who want support in their studies. I had many reasons for conducting this study. Firstly, I wanted an overview of tertiary help seeking, so that I would be better able to explain and in some cases defend the work of the learning centre at the institution where I work. Secondly, by conducting this study, I felt that I would be better informed as a practitioner. Thirdly, I wanted the opportunity to make an original contribution to an area of interest, and be able to provide recommendations to tutors to improve teaching and learning in a learning support context. The next section introduces some of the technical terms that are used in this thesis.

## Explanation of Terms

Throughout this thesis technical vocabulary that is used in the help seeking and psychological literature has been employed. This section will briefly explain these key vocabulary items.

**Help Seeking Terms**

*Adaptive Help Seeking*

Adaptive help seeking is another name for instrumental help seeking as proposed by Newman (2008). There is little conceptual difference between adaptive and instrumental help seeking.

*Autonomous Help Seeking*

Autonomous help seeking as proposed by Nadler (1998) is akin to instrumental and adaptive help seeking, but in this case the help seeker is concerned about retaining their autonomy in relation the solution of the presented problem.

*Dependent Help Seeking*

Dependent help seeking is another term in the literature for Nelson Le-Gall's (1985) executive help seeking. A different conceptualisation of dependent help seeking and executive help seeking is proposed in this thesis.

*Direct Help Seeking*

Direct help seeking is where a help seeker is explicit in the request for help.

*Executive Help Seeking*

Executive help seeking: The help seeker is intent on someone solving their problem, or attaining their goal without necessarily developing the required skills to perform the task or solve the problem for themselves. This has been postulated by Nelson Le-Gall (1985).

*Indirect Help Seeking*

Indirect help seeking: The help seeker does not explicitly ask for help, but drops hints that help is needed or acts in such a way as to elicit help without specifically asking for assistance.

*Instrumental Help Seeking*

Instrumental help seeking: The student obtains enough assistance to solve a problem in question, rather than asking for the complete solution directly. This has similarly been postulated by Nelson Le-Gall (1985).

**Psychological Terms**

*Attribution Theory*

Attribution Theory is a psychological theory that models the way that individuals process information by assigning causes about what they and other people do. Typically this is theorised using three dimensions: locus (internal versus external); stability (consistent versus inconsistent); and control (controllable versus uncontrollable) (Weiner, 1985).

*Dependency*

Dependency is a psychological construct proposed by Bornstein (1993) that postulates that some people motivationally, cognitively affectively and behaviourally rely on others.

*Mastery Goals*

Mastery goals are goals that cause students to focus on learning and mastering the content of a subject, rather than seeing their performance of a subject in relation to others.

*Reactance Theory*

Reactance theory is a psychological theory that models peoples' behaviour in terms of their need not to lose their freedom. The theory indicates that people become motivated when an event threatens not to let them do what they want to do (Brehm & Brehm, 1981).

*Performance Goals*

Performance goals are goals where a student engages in an activity to demonstrate competence or avoid showing a lack of competence. Performance goals tend to make students more concerned about their ability and performance in relation to others, rather than being concerned with understanding a subject fully.

## Research questions

At the beginning of this research study the following questions were posed regarding academic help seeking in a tertiary environment.

> ➤ What motivates tertiary students to seek academic help?

> ➤ What help seeking behaviours do tertiary students use?

> ➤ To what extent is the instrumental-executive model of help seeking applicable to tertiary students?

> ➤ What behaviours precipitate instrumental and executive help seeking in tertiary students?

> ➤ What model could describe tertiary students' help seeking behaviours at one tertiary institution?

## Thesis Outline

This thesis is made up of six chapters. Chapter one introduces me as the researcher and the rationale for conducting this study, outlines the research questions, gives a rationale for the study, and then provides an outline of the rest of the thesis.

Chapter two reviews current and past help seeking literature. This chapter defines help seeking, focuses on help seeking models, and considers Nelson Le Gall's (1987) theory of instrumental and executive help seeking. It then covers how help seeking has been explained in terms of psychological theories such as attribution theory, reactance theory, path modelling, self esteem models, dependency, and goal theory.

Chapter three is split into a methodological section and a methods section. The former covers the approach taken by me in the collection and analysis of the data for this study. Specifically, the methodological section looks at research paradigms, quantitative and qualitative approaches culminating in the choice of grounded theory as the methodological approach for this study.

Subsequently, types of interviewing approaches are considered, and the rationale for a semi structured approach outlined. Next, how I treated the data using the chosen grounded theory approach is outlined.

The second section is the methods section which gives an overview of the participants, how they were selected for this study, the recruitment process employed, and how the data was collected. The chapter then explains how the data was analysed.

Chapter four is an account of the findings of this study. Specifically, it considers factors that combine to motivate students to seek help, help seeking categories, types of help seeking that students used, and the types of behaviour that precipitated help seeking.

Chapter five discusses the findings from chapter four. It outlines participants' motivation to seek academic help, their help seeking approaches, their help seeking types, how motivation, help seeking approach and help seeking type are linked, help seeking precipitators, and outlines a tertiary help seeking model.

Recommendations and conclusions are considered in chapter six. This chapter outlines some recommendations for learning support tutors regarding the help seeking types and approaches of tertiary students. This chapter also concludes the thesis by providing answers to the initial research questions, providing some of my reflections concerning the research study and recommending some avenues for further academic tertiary help seeking research based on help seeking approach and type.

## Conclusion
This chapter has given a rationale for this research, and introduced academic help seeking. It has also introduced me as a researcher and some of the key terms that are used in this thesis. It has outlined the research questions that will be considered, and provided an outline of this thesis. The next chapter looks at the literature that has to date been written about academic help seeking.

# CHAPTER TWO
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Help seeking research has been conducted in three major areas of social science. These are medicine, psychology, and education. Health practitioners, social psychologists and educational researchers have been involved in studying the variables that affect people's willingness to seek help (Nadler, 1998; Martini & Page, 1996). Researchers from each area have used methodologies that are diverse and characteristic of their own particular research traditions. However, despite the diversity of contexts, many studies focus on discovering variables that prompt individuals to ask for help, and in some cases, the structural components of the help seeking process. For this reason, this review will consider the characteristics that help seekers exhibit, the ways that help seeking has been studied, the psychological and educational explanations of help seeking and the continua and dichotomies that exist.

A comprehensive definition of help seeking has not been evident in the literature. Lee (2007) postulates that although help seeking initially seems to be simple to define, it is in fact quite complex as it involves processes that are influenced by many individual and environmental factors (p.468).

Prior to the 1970s much of the literature, from each of the three areas mentioned above, focussed on the help giver rather than the help seeker (Nadler, Fisher & De Paulo, 1983).  Gross and McMullen (1983) consequently claimed that it was essential that more research be conducted regarding the nature of help seeking (p.45). To a certain extent this lack has been addressed (De Paulo, Nadler & Fisher, 1983; Fisher, Nadler & dePaulo, 1983; Karabenick & Newman, 2006; Karabenick, 2004; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Karabenick & Knapp, 1988; Nadler, Fisher, & DePaulo, 1983; Nelson Le-Gall, 1981, 1985), however there is no one definition of help seeking that is all encompassing. Consequently this chapter begins by focussing on the

characteristics of help seekers and the different models and theoretical frameworks used to explain the concept of help seeking. It will consider help seeking from differing psychological theories, including attribution, reactance, behavioural precipitator theory and examine how goal structure, dependency, independency and help seeking relate. It will also locate my own research in relation to other studies. In the next section, I will consider the characteristics that help seekers seem to display.

## Characteristics of Help Seekers

The characteristics that will be considered in this section include dependence, independence, interdependence, and confidence.

### Dependency, Independence and Interdependence

Dependency, independence and interdependence are important characteristics of help seekers, with several researchers linking dependency with help seeking (Bornstein, 1993; Cotler, Quilty & Palmer, 1970; Nadler, 1997, 1998). This section will consider dependency, independence and interdependence.

*Dependency*

The literature on dependency and help seeking falls into two groups. The first group exemplified by Bornstein (1993, 2005) sees dependency as a component of personality, of which help seeking is one facet of the type of behaviours exhibited by dependent people. The second group has been studied by Nadler (1997, 1998) and Cotler et al. (1970). Their work, whilst recognising the concept of dependent personality types, also conceptualises dependency as a type of help seeking behaviour. This latter group equates dependent help seeking with Nelson Le-Gall's (1981) construct of executive help seeking. This section will consider both approaches to dependency.

<u>Defining Dependency</u>

Bornstein (1993, 2005) defines dependency as a style of personality that is characterized by four aspects, motivational, cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Motivational aspects of dependency involve the need for guidance, support and approval from others, whereas cognitive aspects

include a self perception of powerlessness and ineffectuality, with the belief that others can control the outcome of situations. Affective aspects entail the tendency of the help seeker to become anxious when asked to function independently, and behavioural aspects involve a need to seek help, support or approval from others, or to give way to other peoples' views in interpersonal interactions (Bornstein, 1993, p.18; Cotler, Quilty & Palmer, 1970, p.324; Johnson, 1995, p.18; Nagurney, Reich & Newsom, 2004). Each of Bornstein's (1993) aspects of dependency can be seen to have an effect on students' help seeking, either in their decision to seek help or in their approach during a help seeking session. These aspects gel with Clark and Wegener's (2008) assertion that a dependent person is one who expects their achievements to rely in some way on another person (p. 586), and that high levels of dependency cause a dependent person to pay careful attention to the person who is being depended upon (p.578).

Dependency and Help Seeking

Dependency has been studied in relation to help seeking in two ways. Some researchers see dependency as an overarching behavioural type from which help seeking emanates (Bornstein, 1993, 2005; Shilkret & Masling, 1981). Others see dependency in terms of a form of help seeking, which is akin to Nelson Le-Gall's (1981) conception of executive help seeking (Nadler, 1997, 1998; Nelson Le-Gall, 1981, 1985). This latter conclusion could have been reached because of earlier studies linking dependent behaviour with help seeking (Bernardin & Jessor, 1957; Diener, 1967). The linking of dependency with help seeking in these earlier studies could have led to the development of the construct of dependent help seeking that has been prominent in the help seeking literature since Nelson Le-Gall (1981) first distinguished it from the instrumental variety. For example, Nadler (1997, 1998) and Newman (1998) both used the term dependence as a synonym for executive help seeking. Equating dependence with a form of help seeking sets help seeking back to a time before it was considered to be a non adaptive activity. This stigmatises the activity and discounts the possibility that people who display independent tendencies also seek help. This will be considered in the next section.

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*Independence*

Independence has been conceptualized in the literature as a person being autonomous and standing alone when dealing with problems (Bornstein, 1993, p.9; Nagurney, Reich & Newsom, 2004, p.215). Additionally, it has been seen as a person's construal of being separate from others and organizing their behaviour in relation to their own internal state that is, according to their own thoughts, feelings and wants as opposed to being affected by other people's concerns and wishes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). Examples of independent behaviour on the part of a person include: seeing oneself as separate from the social context; seeing others as a way of achieving personal goals; using others for social comparison; promoting one's own goals; and being able to express oneself clearly and directly (ibid., p.230). In a help seeking context, a help seeker displaying independent behaviour is clearly not attempting to deal with their presenting issue alone. They would be attempting however to control the help seeking session to ensure that their goals were met rather than acceding to the goals of the help giver. Independent help seeking relates to pro-active behavior where the help seeker actively participates in and tries to manage the direction of the help seeking session. Independent help seeking based on this definition is referred to in this study.

*Interdependence*

Early views of interdependence saw it as the extent to which two people depended on each other in the completion of a task (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978, p.5). So, in dyadic interdependent relationships a person is very interested in explaining the responses of the other person in order to be able to predict them in the future (ibid., p.209). This reciprocity of dependence has been attributed to the differing cultural values of collectivist and individualist cultures (Hofstede, 1980; Peck, 1967; Chia et al., 1994 as cited in Sandoval & Lee, 2006). The linking of interdependence and independence to specific cultural contexts, rather than them being viewed as standalone psychological constructs indicates for some researchers that interdependence and independence are opposing aspects of the same continuum (Raeff, 2006, p.11). However, some researchers see each construct as disjoint (Markus &

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Kitayama, 1991, p. 226, Kitayama, Park, Sevincer, Karasawa & Uskul, 2009, p.238). Independence and interdependence are however both linked to cultural practices with interdependence being associated with Eastern views of the self as interpersonally connected and socially embedded (Kitayama & Imada, 2010, p.176). A consideration of these constructs by helping professionals is important in a help seeking context since students from other cultural backgrounds tend not to utilize helping services in tertiary institutions (Mori, 2000; Narikiyo & Kameoka, 1992).

An interdependent construal of the self seems to facilitate help seeking, as asking for help in a collectivist culture may be more acceptable than in one where individualist norms were to the fore (Sandoval & Lee, 2006, p.161).

Interdependent help seeking based on the above definition will be considered in this study.

**Confidence**

Confidence is an important aspect of help seeking and although several researchers have outlined a framework (Moore & Healey, 2008; Stajkovic, 2006) and related it to aspects such as metacognition (Koriat, 2008); none have linked it to help seeking. This section will consider confidence and its components.

*Definition of Confidence*

Confidence can be defined with a common sense meaning as the certainty of being able to do a task. This would be at counterpoint to 'diffidence' where uncertainty would be to the fore (Stajkovic, 2006). Confidence according to Stajkovic (2006) is a core construct that comprises a blend of hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism which can be used across many domains, since each aspect has been adequately framed in the psychological literature. A complete analysis of each aspect is beyond the scope of this thesis; however a description of the components of confidence is outlined in the next section.

*Components of Confidence*

Hope has been defined in two ways. The first is passive hope, where a person would 'hope for the best' (Stajkovic, 2006, p. 1210), and the second as a psychological construct which is based on a sense of success, where a person has particular goals that lead to events and then plans to be successful in order to reach their objective. This has been termed active hope (ibid.). Snyder (2002) similarly defines this form of hope as 'the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways' (p.249). In a tertiary environment this could include a student deciding on which educational target to aim for and then acquiring a skill set to reach this predetermined objective. The second component of confidence, self-efficacy, is defined as the belief on the part of a person that they will be able to complete a specific task if required. If a person has high self-efficacy, then there is more chance that they will achieve their desired outcome (Stajkovic, 2006, p.1210). Self efficacy would be a useful quality for students to bring to their studies and Snyder (2002) sees it as an important element of hope and subsequently confidence, with goals that are cross situational rather than specific, underpinning self efficacy thinking (p.257). He claims a different conception of self efficacy than Bandura's (1977) construct, as according to 'Hope Theory' individuals not only need to want to achieve a goal, but must also know how to achieve it, rather than just think certain goals are achievable (ibid.). However, Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) critique this definition, preferring to define hope in terms of an individual's control beliefs (p.277). Hope, however, is seen as distinct from resilience, another component of confidence, which has been defined as a person's ability to cope with change, risk and difficulty (Stewart, Reid & Mangham, 1997) or as 'a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes despite serious threats to adaptation or development' (Masten, 2001, p. 228). Stajkovic (2006) states that people who are resilient are able to recover or preserve their psychological equilibrium in the face of adversity (p. 1211), and because of this have the capacity to accept reality, find meaning in some aspect of their lives and then improvise in order to solve problems (Coutu, 2002). Resilience in an educational setting would be advantageous to

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students. Optimism has been defined as a static disposition and also as a psychological aspect that can be changed dependent on the circumstances (Stajkovic, 2006, p.1211). Although different researchers define optimism differently (Peterson, 2000; Tiger, 1979), it has been shown to be beneficial in a number of domains: academic performance; athletic success; and physical and psychological health (ibid.). Currently, there appears to be little to no literature on optimism and its relationship to help seeking in a New Zealand setting.

*Confidence and Help Seeking*

Although there is little current research linking confidence and help seeking, this thesis is not limited to a particular theoretical framework for understanding help seeking. Consequently, it is able to draw on confidence and help seeking among other theoretical approaches to understand help seeking behavior. The next section considers ways of studying help seeking.

## Ways of Studying Help Seeking

Help seeking studies have mainly been located within a quantitative paradigm in primary, secondary and tertiary contexts, with a lesser number using qualitative techniques. In a minority of cases researchers have used secondary sources to build help seeking models. The prevalence of studies being located with a quantitative methodology means that many studies have used statistical techniques to build models of help seeking. The next section will consider models that have been built using either qualitative or quantitative techniques in primary, secondary and tertiary educational contexts.

**Help Seeking Models from Different Educational Contexts**

Research into help seeking to date has taken various forms, and has been conducted in primary, secondary and tertiary educational settings, as well as in counselling and health related contexts. Researchers who have studied help seeking within the context of academic situations have tried to provide insights into why, from whom and in what circumstance students seek academic help when others do not (Karabenick, 1998). Others have been

more interested in the individual components that make up academic help seeking and have attempted to provide an efficient model of the process, postulating its nature and structure (Karabenick, 1991; Knapp & Karabenick, 1988; Nadler, Ellis & Bar, 1993; Newman, 1994). This section will consider how help seeking has been studied in various educational contexts, and briefly mention the range of help seeking models that have emanated from this research.

*Models and Methods from Primary and Secondary Educational Contexts*
Barriers, Avoidance, Context and Type from Quantitative Studies

Models that have emanated from studies of help seeking in primary or secondary schools seem to have been concerned with the type of help that students sought, as well as the barriers that students experienced and the strategies for help seeking avoidance that they used (Wilson & Deane, 2001). These studies have mostly been framed within both quantitative and qualitative paradigms, but occasionally have relied on the results of previous research rather than researchers collecting primary data to build models. An example of researchers working within a quantitative paradigm to study help seeking is Cheong, Pajares and Oberman (2004), who conducted a study with secondary college students to develop scales to measure instrumental and executive help seeking. These researchers also developed a survey instrument to measure how students felt about the help they received. This study resulted in a statistical model that also measured help avoidance in school based students through the use of factor analysis. Cheong et al.'s study is fairly typical of the quantitative approach taken by many researchers within help seeking research.

Often statistical techniques are used to identify variables that make up a help seeking model (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988), providing useful correlations between tertiary college grade and reported frequency of help seeking or frequency or avoidance of help seeking (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). Other studies working within a quantitative paradigm have considered self esteem and help seeking type (Nelson Le-Gall, 1985; 1987), motivation and help seeking (Nelson Le-Gall & Jones, 1990) and goal structure and help seeking

(Peng & Cherng, 2005). Help seeking within a subject specific context has also been studied within a quantitative paradigm (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), concluding that student mastery goal orientations were more predictive of help seeking than ability within a specific context. This indicates that the context may not be a salient factor in help seeking. This result is counter to similar contextual work where qualitative approaches were used.

Barriers, Avoidance, Context and Type from Qualitative Studies

A different approach to building a help seeking model was taken by Helms (2003). He used a qualitative approach with focus groups of school aged students and found that barriers to help seeking do not significantly change as a student progresses through school. He concluded certain characteristics of help givers also affect whether students seek help or not. For example, students do not seek help if help givers had dual roles, were psychologically inaccessible, gave unhelpful responses, were judgmental, displayed favouritism for some students, breached confidentiality, were out of touch with teens, acted negatively, or were too busy to spend time helping (p.27). The data from this kind of qualitative study offers a different perspective from some of the quantitative approaches used above, although qualitative studies often do not have such a large number of participants as quantitative studies.

For example, Marchand and Skinner (2007) carried out research in the same area as Helms (2003), but with a larger sample. However, their conclusions were counter to Helms' (2003) results. They concluded that help seekers' approach to help seeking did change as they progressed through school, with successful help seekers seeking even more help, whilst poorer students concealed the fact that they needed it (p.65). Marchand and Skinner (2007) developed a motivational model of help seeking using questionnaires for both students and teachers to develop a different help seeking model. The number of participants (1600 students, and 53 teachers) in this study give the results greater weight than if a smaller qualitative approach were used. However, in this case the richness of data is lacking. Help seeking has also been studied in a subject specific context using a qualitative approach (Nye, 2008; Oberman, 2002; Van der Riet & Knoetze, 2004). In these studies contextual

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factors were found to be significant mediators of help seeking behaviour, whereas similar work within the quantitative paradigm produced results that do not confirm this result.

<u>Barriers, Avoidance, Context and Type from Secondary Data or Anecdotal Research</u>

Some studies have only used secondary data in an attempt to theorise help seeking. For example, Ryan, Pintrich and Midgley, (2001) explored help avoidance in relation to school students' motivational goal structures, concluding that such students risk undermining their learning and achievement if they do not seek help. They collected no data in this study, preferring to postulate a model based on previous research. However, in a later study, Ryan, Patrick and Shim (2005) working within the quantitative paradigm studied the differential help seeking profiles of school students, partitioning them into avoidant, appropriate or dependent help seekers (p.275). They concluded that dependent help seekers generally had an adaptive profile for social relations. That is, they were skilled at eliciting help when they felt they needed it.

It seems that the majority of help seeking studies conducted in the primary and secondary sector have been conducted within the quantitative paradigm. Fewer studies have worked within a qualitative framework, but the type of model of help seeking that has been constructed involves barriers to help seeking, help seeking avoidance and the type of help seeking undertaken. The next section considers help seeking studies in the tertiary sector.

*Models and Methods from Tertiary Educational Contexts*
Fewer studies have been conducted with adults and in the tertiary sector. Similar to studies in the primary and secondary sectors, some have been conducted within a quantitative paradigm, others within a qualitative paradigm, and some using secondary data or anecdotal evidence.

<u>Barriers, Avoidance, Context and Type from Quantitative Studies</u>

Help seeking avoidance and self esteem has been investigated by Hartman, Hall and Haaga (2002) working within a quantitative paradigm. They

conducted a study with students who had been identified as having learning disabilities, and concluded that students who perceived their disability as stigmatising were less likely to seek help, particularly if they had had a recent negative experience regarding their study. Similarly, Karabenick and Knapp's (1988) study conducted with 612 university students found that many who identified that they needed academic help did not seek it. They concluded that students who did not seek help were either doing well and did not need it or were doing poorly, and consequently had in accordance with Weiner et al.'s (1979) attributional approach, low attributions of their ability and hence expected to fail. This was compounded with negative emotions such as resignation regarding their perception of success on their tertiary course.

Sheu and Sedlacek (2002) similarly used a quantitative approach with 2678 first year tertiary students, demonstrating differences regarding help seeking attitudes and academic coping strategies by gender and race. They found that African Americans were more positive about seeking help for issues that were not personal, whereas Asian Americans avoided seeking help. They also found that females were more amenable to having help than males. This finding has also been corroborated by Ang, Lim, Tan and Yau (2004) in a study of 163 student teachers, confirming Johnson's (1988) result with 218 college students.

In a mathematics learning context, Morris, Lee and Barnes (2008) developed an instrument to measure student willingness to seek help with a sample of 519 first year undergraduate students. They used factor analysis to validate the construct 'willingness to seek help' but did not relate this construct to factors such as gender or final course grade. A similar study by Alexitch (2002), with 361 first year undergraduates also only hypothesized a model regarding 'willingness to seek help' and other factors such as gender or achievement. In contrast, Karabenick (2004) conducted two studies in chemistry and psychology classes with 883, and 852 college students respectively forming a useful help seeking model based on classroom goal structure. He concluded from both studies that student help seeking is related to either an intention to seek autonomous help from the tutor, or an intention

to avoid help or seek expedient help, reliant on whether the class they attended operated using a performance or a mastery goal structure. This study confirmed similar results in the primary and secondary sectors.

A significant quantitative technique that has been used to model help seeking is Path Modelling. It has been used to describe help seeking in a counselling context, which may have implications for academic help seeking.  Path Modelling is a technique that describes graphically the causal relationships within a situation (Bozionelos, 2003). Using this method, complex relationships among variables can be shown within a single model. Cramer (1999) used a path modelling approach to quantify help seeking in a counselling context in a tertiary institution. He claimed that personal distress, attitudes towards counselling, social support, and self-concealment are predictive of undergraduates not seeking psychological help. He concluded that when distress is high, and attitudes to counselling are positive then students tend to seek help. Additionally, distress is likely to be high when social support networks are impaired and individuals conceal personally distressing information from others. Individuals who conceal information are also more likely to have negative attitudes towards counselling and impaired social networks. These results may have some transfer to academic help seeking, since some students who do not seek academic help, even when they need it, may eventually experience distress and not complete couses. Path modelling could be useful technique with which to describe the help seeking process, but it may not be provide sufficiently detailed information to answer the research questions in this study.

Quantitative approaches to researching help seeking do provide valuable data for helping professionals, but a fuller picture of the help seeking process could be developed if qualitative techniques were also employed. The studies that are central to this thesis are those by Nelson Le-Gall, Nadler, Newman, Bornstein, Karabenick, and Pintrich. However, the inclusion of other quantitative work in this literature review shows the frequency of this type of study in help seeking research. In my view qualitative studies will add depth to findings from quantitative research.

## Barriers, Avoidance, Context and Type from Qualitative Studies

Adams, Ford and Dailey (2004) conducted telephone interviews to gather data whilst investigating formal and informal help seeking, Clegg, Bradley and Smith (2006) used semi-structured, in-depth interviewing to investigate help seeking and self esteem. They concluded that students are often reluctant to seek help even if they are experiencing difficulties with their tertiary study. Developing a different model, Hertzhog (2000), using both interviews and questionnaires, identified a three stage process of help seeking with beginning student teachers. He constructed a help seeking model, the components of which are: knowing when to ask for help; identifying who to ask; and relating the given help to a specific problem to effect a solution. In this study more contextual information was reported because part of the data collection involved working in a qualitative research paradigm.

## Barriers, Avoidance, Context and Type from Secondary Data or Anecdotal Research

Karabenick (1987) developed a three stage help seeking model using secondary data in a computer conferencing context. He concluded that help seeking involves the help seeker admitting their inadequacy, making the decision to seek help and consequently seeking it. However, help seeking models are now more developed and involve the tutor. For example, Lee (2007), who used anecdotal evidence to describe help seeking situations, states that help seeking facilitation relies as much on tutors encouraging students to seek help, communicating effectively with them and demonstrating a commitment to meeting their needs as students seeing the need for help and consequently seeking it.

## Summary of other Help Seeking Studies

Many studies of help seeking have been conducted within the quantitative paradigm, where help seeking researchers employ statistical techniques in order to correlate demographic or psychological factors that relate to help seeking (Arbreton, 1998; Butler & Neuman, 1995; Ciarrochi, Deane, Wilson & Rickwood, 2002; James, 2003; Karabenick & Knapp, 1988; Lee, 2002; Lopez,

Melendez, Sauner, Berger & Wyssmann, 1998; Magnusson & Perry, 1992; Martini & Page, 1996; Nelson Le-Gall & DeCooke, 1987; Nelson Le-Gall & Glor- Scheib, 1986; Newman, 1998; Newman & Schwager, 1995; Pintrich, 2000; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1995). Fewer studies have worked within a qualitative methodology to investigate help seeking (Grayson, Miller, Clarke, 1998; Oberman, 2000; Wilson & Deane, 2001), and some have presented secondary data or anecdotal data (Newman, 1994; Lee, 2007).

Some studies have tried to explain the varying responses from students who seek help and the factors that prevent others from accessing it (Karabenick, 1998; 2001). The majority of this type of work is quantitative, relying on participant responses to questionnaires such as the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and statistical techniques to link participants' self reported behaviours with their demographics (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991) or in other cases their grade level (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988). Data gathering using this type of instrument in some cases may only have face validity rather than content validity, and consequently comparisons between participants' individual views of their own aptitudes regarding aspects of their self regulation or help seeking should be treated with caution (Carmines & Zeller, 1991; Fink, 1995). This view needs to be considered despite the wealth of "construct validity" that these measures can claim by virtue of links with other constructs and findings that support predictions made, based on those constructs. An example of such a link is that between help seeking and students' use of other learning strategies (Zusho, Karabenick, Rhee Bonney & Sims, 2007).

The comparisons that are made from the data generated from the use of these tools necessitate the use of large samples to statistically validate the results and produce useful models. Possibly, more complete models of help seeking may emanate from studies that are positioned within a qualitative paradigm, and in order to ascertain the underlying variables that cause help seeking it may be more useful to examine some of the psychological and

educational theories that researchers have used in order to explain it. This will be done in the next section.

## Psychological and Educational Explanatory Approaches

This section covers the literature from psychology and education theory that is related to help seeking. These are: Attribution theory; Self Esteem studies; Reactance Theory; Motivational Goal Theory; and Behavioural Precipitator Theory.

### Attributions

Heider (1958) was the pioneer of attribution theory, where he highlighted the distinction between dispositional (internal) and environmental (external) perceptions of an individual's actions. Later Kelly (1967) refined the theory by developing a three-part causal attribution model involving consensus (how most people behave), consistency (how an individual typically behaves towards a specific stimuli) and distinctiveness (whether an individual behaves in the same way to other stimuli). When behaviour is high in consistency and low on consensus and distinctiveness, internal attributions are made; when behaviour is high on all three factors, external attributions are made. Kelsey, Kearney, Plax, Allen and Ritter (2004) have postulated that people develop a framework when a particular social phenomena occurs, which helps them interpret and identify causes in their own and others' behaviour. Attribution Theory models the way that individuals process information by making judgements and assigning causes regarding what other people do (ibid), and is based on an individual's desire to understand the causes of events and behaviour in the social world, including their own behaviour, which will help to predict future events and behaviours.

Three assumptions form the basis of this theoretical perspective. Firstly individuals tend to interpret other people's behaviour in terms of its causes. Secondly, causes for behavioural responses are assigned to behaviours systematically and not at random and thirdly, these causes play an important role in individual affective and behavioural responses (Martini & Page, 1996). Martini et al. claim that help seeking behaviour is readily explainable through the use of Attribution Theory, perhaps because of the development of the

Attribution theory by researchers such as Rotter (1975) and Wiener, Nierenberg and Goldstein (1976). Their work into explanations of success and failure, based on locus of control (internal / external attributions), stability (whether causes are stable or changeable) and controllability (whether a person has control of the situation) are of particular importance in driving students' affective and behavioural responses to events.

Ames (1982) claims that this is only one aspect, since she sees help seeking as not only depending on the pattern of attributions made when a student is attempting a task, but also on the underlying goals that students are pursuing. As will be seen later, students' goal orientations may have major impacts on the type of help that they seek in an academic context.

Attribution Theory has been applied to help seeking scenarios, and Martini and Page (1996) highlight that much of the literature focuses on the locus dimension involving internal and external attributions. Internal attributions for help seeking can lead to negative evaluations of the self because the need for help is linked to a deficit in ability or skill, as opposed to an external cause beyond the individual's control (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988). However, external factors may generate more help acceptance, since external attributions such as task difficulty may be more acceptable to help seekers (ibid.).

Attribution Theory is useful, as it attempts to explain why some students do not seek academic help when they need it. However, when a researcher is faced with events and their associated outcomes, the cognitive effort in accounting for all the factors involved in attributional models may be too high for practical use. For example, Attribution Theory does not explain the processes that may be in play, when students seek help and are receiving it. Neither does it explain how students who do not seek help can be encouraged into seeking and receiving it. The lack of these aspects in this theory appears to be a major deficit, and therefore it may not provide a theoretical base to answer the research questions in this thesis. However, these facets may be explained in terms of students' self esteem, as this appears to be an important factor in whether or not they seek help.

**Self Esteem**

Studies concerning the relationship of self esteem and help seeking revolve around the threat that seeking help poses to a student's self esteem (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007; Ryan, Pintrich & Midgley, 2001). The results seem inconclusive initially, since some studies indicate that students with high self esteem who perform poorly are more likely to seek help to redress the imbalance in their self esteem, whereas others claim that students with high self esteem are less likely to seek help. This position has been termed the vulnerability versus consistency hypothesis (Tesslar & Schwartz, 1972, p.318; Nadler, 1983, p. 308). A connection with Attribution theory occurs here, as a potential threat to self-esteem can result if help seeking is attributed to personal failure to meet the task demands. This type of attribution is likely to occur in the absence of an external attribution. Alternatively, the perceived difficulty of the task could influence the degree of external attributions, and reduce the internal responsibility attributed to failure. Equally, the perceived failure of others on the same task can also reduce internal responsibility for failure on a task (Tesslar & Schwartz, 1972). Additionally, Crocker & Nuer (2003) found that students who were normally academically successful, experienced more negative effects to their self esteem if they performed poorly. This was because they tended to measure their success and base their self worth in terms of academic success. According to the consistency hypothesis, they would therefore not seek help. Crocker & Nuer's study supports Tesslar and Schwartz's (1972) and Nadler's (1983) findings, where it was concluded that high self esteem students were less likely to seek needed help than students with poor self esteem. However, this only occurred in areas where the higher self esteem students felt that they should have performed better. Nadler (1983) terms this phenomenon ego centrality (p.313).

One issue with self esteem studies seems to be the breadth attached to the later developments of the construct (ibid., p.314), in counterpoint to Rosenberg's (1960) definition of self esteem being a person's stable sense of personal worth or worthiness. Nadler (1983) claims that the construct of self

esteem cannot be purely defined and consequently it needs to be partitioned conceptually into other variables, such as ego-defensiveness.

It seems that measuring a student's self esteem may be problematic, and ascertaining whether or not high or low self esteem in students causes them to seek help or not is difficult. Possibly students' self esteem may not be the only factor in whether or not they seek help, rather their perception of the potential debt to the help giver may play a significant role in their help seeking decisions. This phenomenon has been theorised by Reactance Theory.

**Reactance**

The underlying assumption of Reactance Theory is that people are able to react freely, and that they perceive they can act in any way they choose in response to specific events (Brehm and Brehm, 1981, p.12).

Researchers who have studied reactance theory, in relation to help seeking posit that people react in direct response to the possibility of their freedom being impaired because they feel they need to seek help (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Fisher, Nadler & Whitcher-Alagna, 1983; Miller, Lane, Deatrick, Young, & Potts, 2007). Wacker (2007) claims that the nature of this reaction is an adverse or negative psychological state, which causes a person to attempt to restore their previous state of freedom. The strength of the reaction is dependent on the value to the recipient of the freedom that has been limited or removed. Fisher Nadler and Whitcher-Alagna (1983) claim that reactance theory could explain why some people refuse help, even if they need it. The possibility that they may need to reciprocate or be indebted to the help giver may prevent them from asking for help or accepting it if it is offered.

Reactance Theory may be a useful approach to describing help seeking in a tertiary context, since students may feel the help giver expects a return or they may not wish to feel indebted to the help giver, so they don't seek help. However, Reactance Theory falls short as a complete description as to why people may not seek help. Firstly, help seekers may only feel unable to ask for help if it was clear that accepting the help would be restrictive in some way. Secondly, the theory makes no predictions about 'non-restrictive help' when it is offered (Fisher, Nadler & Whitcher-Alagna, 1983, p.59). In an earlier study Broll, Gross and Piliavin (1974) attempted to address this problem and

found that students who were offered help rather than having to request it tended to be more receptive of help and liked the help giver more. This may have applications in a Learning Support context, as it may be more useful for learning support tutors offer help to students who need it rather than waiting for them to request it.

However, Brehm and Brehm (1981) claim that offers of help can create reactance, but that to predict the magnitude of reactance in a help seeking situation it is necessary to measure the importance of the freedom that is being impaired for the help seeker (p.194).This aspect is crucial if the theory is to be predictive in help seeking situations. Additionally, students' perceptions of loss of freedom in an academic context may not impact their help seeking, if they see that having help results in them achieving their academic goals. Reactance theory was considered as one approach in answering the research questions posed in this thesis.

**Motivational Goals**

Goal development has been seen as an important aspect of self-regulation and has been linked to help seeking (Butler & Neuman, 1995; Karabenick, 2004; Newman & Schwager, 1995; Newman, 1998; 1994). Shah and Kruglanski (2000) claim that goals are reference points for an individual's actions, helping to provide a concrete focus in the fulfilment of needs (p.85). They would necessarily apply to adaptive help seeking, since this is seen in the literature as a self regulative strategy.

Different individuals have different goals, but they may also have different ways of achieving the same or similar goals. Shah and Kruglanski (2000) define a goal as a knowledge structure. In this sense a goal is a cognitive construct that an individual can relate to other constructs in their mental architecture. Shah and Kruglanski (2000) also take a connectionist view of this. They claim that a goal can be represented in terms of a set of neural connections.  So, it is possible to represent goal structures as cognitive components, constituting perceptions on the part of the person attempting to attain a specified goal.

The goal orientation models that have been proposed (Karabenick, 2004; Ryan, Hicks & Migdeley, 1997; Ryan, Gheen & Midgeley, 1998) are neatly summarised by Pintrich (2000), as being of two general purpose orientations. These are learning goals and performance goals. Pintrich also states that both these type of goals have an 'approach' or 'avoidance' focus. Learning or achievement goals relate to an individual's need to increase their competence at a particular task. These are often called mastery goals in the psychological literature (Pintrich, 2000, p.415). Performance goals entail attempts to elicit positive judgements of competence on the part of an individual, or the avoidance of negative judgements (Ryan, Pintrich & Midgley, 2001; Midgley, Kaplan & Middleton, 2001). The approach and avoidance focus indicates how the goal is achieved. For example, a student with a mastery-orientated goal, who had an approach focus, would concentrate on learning or understanding a particular item. If the goal had an avoidance focus, then the student would be concentrating on avoiding not mastering the task or item.

Ryan, Pintrich and Midgley (2001) state that goals can be classified as achievement orientated and social orientated (pp. 97-98). Both would have an effect on student help seeking. Latterly, Peng and Cherng (2005) and Cherng (2003) have found with samples of high school students (932 and 610, respectively), that personal goals as opposed to contextual goals have a four dimensional structure. Within this structure they supported Pintrich's (2000) classification of goals as having both an approach and an avoidance focus. Combining this structure with a mastery and performance goal formation results in a four dimensional model of goal attribution where goals can be - approach/mastery; avoidance/mastery; approach/performance; and avoidance/performance.

Pintrich (2000) claims that all the varying goal orientation models include mastery goals with an approach focus (p.479). Therefore these types of goals have an important place in the development of any model of self regulated learning of which help seeking is a part. There is a limited amount of research linking the use of mastery goals and the acquisition of content knowledge or metacognitive behaviour (Pintrich, 2000, p.480). These studies may be crucial

if tertiary educators are to develop methods that help students develop self regulative processes and encourage help seeking and hence deeper rather than surface learning (Ibid., p. 486). Such methods may also help to overcome many students' resistance to help seeking, as students who approach tasks with a mastery orientation tend not to see help seeking as a negative reflection on their ability (Newman, 1998).

*Goal Structure and Help Seeking*

The majority of work assessing achievement goal structure and help seeking has revolved around students' personal goal orientations (Butler & Neuman, 1995; Chang, 2008; Karabenick, 2004; Newman, 1994; 1998), and class or contextual goal structures (Deemer, 2004; Pintrich, 2000; 2004; Peng & Cherng, 2005). There seem to be significant relationships between the types of goals that students have and their approach to academic help seeking, as well as the congruence or incongruence of personal and class-based goals. The following sections will consider students' goal orientations in relation to types of help seeking.

## Instrumental Help Seeking and Goal Structure

Karabenick (2004) claims that students who adopt mastery goals are more likely to engage in instrumental/autonomous help seeking (p.569), but that the incidence of help seeking seems to rely on the response of the teacher or tutor in question. However, it is unclear whether or not instrumental help seekers would prefer formal sources of help rather than informal sources. Some evidence seems to point to the latter (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988). Newman (1998) claims that students with mastery or learning goals tend to seek help concerning task related information, as well as confirming previously completed work. This supposedly helps students find errors, sort out any difficulties they may have with the material and subsequently improve their task mastery.

The academic benefits of class based goals that stress learning rather than performance has been well researched (Karabenick, 2004; Peng & Cherng, 2005; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), and indicates that students benefit from being asked to master aspects of a subject rather than just produce assignments

that meet with course criteria. Students whose classes operate along these lines seem to ask for instrumental help when they have academic difficulties (Butler & Neuman, 1995). Pintrich (2004) confirms these findings with tertiary students, where those who had a mastery orientated goal focus tended to ask for more help, whereas help seeking avoidance patterns were inversely related to this type of focus (p.578).

Consequently, students with strong mastery goals when placed in a situation where these types of goals are espoused would seek process (instrumental) related help for tasks rather than task related help. Strong personal mastery goals also tend to boost help seeking if the context of the class or course is mastery orientated (Newman, 1998, p.646). Conversely, students with strong mastery goals tend to seek less help if the goal orientation of the course or class is performance based (ibid.).

## Executive Help Seeking and Goal Structure

Students who adopt performance goals either avoid seeking help or seek expedient/executive help (Karabenick, 1998, 2003). Newman (1998) claims that students with strong performance goals or who are working within an environment that is performance based tend to seek more help if the course or class espouses mastery based goals. This tendency arises when both the student in question and the class are congruently attempting to do less work in the fulfillment of their goals. The type of help sought may be unnecessary help, or help that seeks immediate answers to questions. In some circumstances students may not seek help at all (ibid.). There seems to be little research available in a tertiary context to address such research questions. The research questions posed in this thesis may form a basis to further explore students' goal orientations and their relationship to help seeking.

The reasons tertiary students do seek particular types of help is an important question to address, and the next sub section which considers types of behavioural precipitators is useful in producing a theory that may explain the precipitators that lead to help seeking.

**Behavioural Precipitators**

Behavioural precipitators have not been researched in a help seeking context to date, however aspects of Wortley's (2008) analysis in criminology provides a useful starting point from which to theorise help seeking precipitators in this thesis. Precipitators are events and influences that occur prior to behaviour, and which cause it. They are described by Wortley (2001, 2008) and Cornish and Clarke (2003) as prompts, pressures, permissions and provocations (Wortley, 2001, p.63; 2008, p. 51). Wortley claims that these behavioural precipitators are located in learning theory, social psychology, social cognitive theory, and environmental psychology respectively. Aspects of his approach have implications for the precipitating of help seeking behaviour.

*Prompts*

Prompts are part of the immediate environment that causes thoughts and feelings to come to the surface (Wortley, 2001, p.65; Cornish & Clarke, 2003, p.43). Four types of prompts are evident in eliciting behaviour. These are triggers, signals, imitation, and expectancies. Triggers are defined as prompts that elicit physiological responses in people, such as, salivation or sweating. Their original conception may not have an application to help seeking; however, other aspects of Wortley's approach could be amalgamated with this definition so it could be used to theorise a help seeking setting. Signals are environmental cues that indicate what the appropriate behaviour should be in a given context. For example, in a help seeking context, it might be inappropriate to seek executive help with a tutor, and this may be signalled to the help seeker by the tutor not responding to executive help seeking. In some instances imitation may precipitate behaviour. This is the result of a person modelling appropriate behaviour in a given context, and where the observation of that behaviour causes someone to replicate it. In a help seeking context the help giver may be the main modeller of behaviour, and this may cause particular help seeking types of behaviour to occur. In a help seeking session, the help seeker may have expectations about how the session should proceed. These are a person's preconceived ideas of what will happen in a particular situation (Wortley, 2008, p.53).

*Pressures*

Wortley (2008) defines pressures as social influences on people which precipitate behaviour (p.53). He states that there are four types of pressure that people are subject to. These are conformity, obedience, compliance/defiance, and anonymity. Conformity is the tendency for individuals to take on group norms or behaviours even if they do not subscribe to such behaviours personally (ibid, p.53). In a one to one help seeking situation, conformity could occur if the help seeker took on behaviours to which the help giver subscribed. Conformity is distinct from obedience, which occurs when a person follows a direct order from someone who is seen as in legitimate authority (Cornish & Clarke, 2003, p.44). For example, a help seeker may follow a direct instruction from the help giver from whom they are seeking help, since they may see the help giver as someone with the authority to influence them. Both conformity and obedience are separate from compliance, which is when someone acquiesces to a person's request. Compliance mostly occurs if requests are seen to be reasonable (Bottoms et al, 1995; Sparks et al., 1996, as cited in Wortley, 2008, p.53). However, if requests are too direct or are seen as manipulative then they tend not to be complied with. In a help seeking context a student may comply with a tutor's request if they see that what is being requested helps resolve their presented issue. A student who does not comply with a request that is seen as too direct is in line with reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Anonymity occurs when an individual feels that they cannot be identified within a group. This may cause their behaviour to be subsumed into group norms, and cause them to act in ways that are counter to their usual behaviour (ibid.). Students' anonymity could have ramifications in a help seeking context, if a group of students sought help. In such a case a student may listen to the help that is provided for other students, without necessarily having to identify their own need.

*Permissions*

Permissions are also precipitators of people's behaviour. Wortley (2008) sees permissions as a way for individuals to make excuses for their behaviour and convince themselves that their actions are justified (p.55). This approach to

criminal behaviour could be applied to help seeking. A student could excuse their help seeking behaviour through what Bandura (1977) calls a process of neutralisation. This occurs when individuals minimise the negative consequences of what they are doing in order to make it seem acceptable (Wortley, 2008, p.55). Aspects of neutralisation include: minimising a rule in order to avoid self blame; minimising responsibility in order to avoid the negative consequences of behaviour; and minimising the consequences of their actions (Cornish & Clarke, 2003, p.44). Each of these aspects could be applied to help seeking. For example, a student seeking help from a learning support tutor might indicate that they had done poorly on a course assignment because the course tutor set certain rules about how it should be approached. Additionally, they might excuse their help seeking behaviour by claiming that other students in the group also needed help, or by claiming they were seeking help in order to maximise their investment in their education, rather than admitting they needed it.

*Provocations*

In some instances behaviour could be provoked in individuals by environmental conditions. This has been addressed by environmental psychology, which is concerned with the effects that the natural and constructed environment has on behaviour (ibid.). A constructed environment could include an environment with another person or people in it. In this way, a provocation could be caused by a help giver in a help seeking situation. Wortley (2008) theorises that there are four provocations for behaviour. These are frustration, crowding, territoriality, and environmental irritants. Frustration is defined as the emotional state that is produced when someone is stopped from reaching a goal. In a help seeking context, the help seeker may experience frustration if there is a lack of options available to them (Cornish & Clarke, 2003, p.45), or if they do not receive the help they expect in a help seeking session. Frustration could also be the result of crowding, which is a psychological experience that occurs when someone is exposed to a lot of people, and can sometimes cause anti social behaviour. This may be relevant in a help seeking context if the help seeker is not having their goals met in a group session. This precipitator could change a student's help

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seeking behaviour. Territoriality and environmental irritants may be also applicable to help seeking. For example, help seeking behaviour may change if help seekers do not feel that their session is private (Shapiro, 1983), and environmental irritants such as excessive noise (Cornish & Clarke, 2003, p.45) may effect a help seeker's ability to communicate their needs to the help giver.

Cornish and Clarke (2003) claim that Wortley's theory has limitations in developing practices to eliminate crime (p.45). This may be the case; however, his approach does provide a way to theorise the behavioural precipitators in student help seeking that occur in this thesis. The above approach may also help to provide an answer as to why students seem to seek different types of help in help seeking sessions. These different types will be considered in the next section.

## Help Seeking Continua and Dichotomies

Help seeking has been theorised by several researchers either as dichotomous entities or along continua (Marchand & Skinner, 2007; Nadler, 1998; Nelson, Le-Gall, 1981; Newman, 1994; Olsson, 2002). This section will consider the following approaches, instrumental-executive, adaptive-coping, autonomous-dependent and indirect-direct.

### Instrumental-Executive Help Seeking

This section will outline Nelson Le-Gall's model of help seeking which splits the help seeking construct into two parts, instrumental and executive. Her seminal 1981 paper outlined the differences between instrumental and executive approaches to help seeking, and postulates the adaptive nature of instrumental help seeking. Secondly, this section will review the work of Nadler (1998), Newman (1994), Ryan and Pintrich (1998) and Karabenick (1998; 2001).  Finally, two discrete approaches to researching help seeking will be examined.

*Instrumental Help Seeking*

Instrumental help seeking is a term associated with the process where a student obtains enough assistance to solve a problem in question, rather than

asking for the complete solution. This type of help seeking has also been termed Autonomous Help Seeking (Nadler, 1998), or Adaptive Help Seeking (Newman, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003) and is often seen in the literature as a discrete from executive help seeking, where the help seeker is more concerned with finding answers. Results from this type of work seem to produce frequencies of help seeking requests, or correlations of self reported help seeking proficiency to other aspects on a self-regulative framework. The instrumental construct was first proposed by Nelson Le-Gall (1981; 1983; 1985), who saw the nature of learning as a social process with learners being directly affected by the cultural, social and physical systems that surrounded them. Such a situation indicated that learners are rarely completely in charge of their learning situation, and consequently help seeking could be a useful self-regulative tool. She postulates that the approach that students may take when using instrumental help seeking would involve becoming aware of the need for help; deciding to seek help; finding someone who might be able to provide help; approaching the identified help giver and reacting to the help given (Nelson Le-Gall, 1983, p.270).

Later, Nelson Le-Gall's (1985) analysis of help seeking highlights the disjuncture that exists between a western cultural espousal of individualism, as typified by such values as competitiveness, self-reliance and independence and other much sought after qualities in students such as socialisation and personality development. An example of such national differences is exemplified by Graf, Freer & Plaizier (1979) who compared the differences in attitude to help seeking in Dutch and North American contexts. The North American sample derogated help seekers more than participants from the Dutch sample, which Graf et al. claim is due to a stronger North American cultural adherence to self-reliance.  Typically, education in the USA tends to reflect and promote ideas of the desirability of students completing activities and solving problems autonomously (Nelson Le-Gall et al., 1998), even though the context of such practices may be essentially social. This type of practice differs from Asian countries such as Japan and China, where more emphasis is placed on social competence as a component of intelligence and achievement.  Similar intra-cultural differences were found in a study by

Nadler (1983), which was conducted in Israel. This study considered help seeking in a New Zealand context, and consequently provide a new dimension to the cultural components of help seeking theory.

Additionally, early theorists often bracketed help seeking as a dependent activity from which students move to the more desired state of self-sufficiency. The inference from such frameworks is that help seeking is seen as an indicator of immaturity, passivity and incompetence (Nelson Le-Gall, 1985). Consequently, although seeking help may be a necessary strategy in solving a problem, the very construction of such frameworks has characterised it as an activity that should be avoided. Nelson Le-Gall (1985) cites several examples of studies where help seeking has been linked to personal inadequacy, loss of self-esteem, and an individual participant's concern that they will be seen when seeking help. Such work is often seen as stigmatising the help seeking process, and consequently removes it as an effective alternative for dealing with problem situations for students.

Nelson Le-Gall's (1981) influential work reformulated the field, so that help seeking could subsequently be classified as an adaptive strategy. Consequently, instrumental help seeking is seen as an activity that is 'mastery orientated' in that students who use this method are more concerned with acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to solve problems, rather than merely be given solutions. Instrumental help seeking may therefore help students develop necessary skills, and consequently serve as a mechanism to help them move from 'other-regulation' to 'self-regulation'.

*Executive Help Seeking*

Executive help seeking refers to those instances when the help seeker is intent on someone solving their problem, or attaining their goal without necessarily developing the required skills to perform the task or solve the problem for themselves (Nelson Le-Gall, 1985). Here, ready-made solutions would be of interest to the help seeker. Students, who seek this type of help, do so because they are passive in their learning and also lack self efficacy (Nadler, 1998). Consequently, this type of help seeking is seen by the student as an end in itself, and help seekers of this type relinquish control of their

situation to more knowledgeable others (ibid.). Some problems initially may require executive help seeking from students, but a continued reliance on such an approach would be detrimental to the development of independent or mastery orientated help seeking. This type of help seeking includes those situations in which the help sought is not needed for the student to solve the problem and this type of help seeking may have negative long-term effects (Nelson Le-Gall, 1981). Students with effective help-seeking skills are able to refuse help insofar as they can manage a task themselves, but can elicit help when it is needed (ibid).

Executive help seeking contrasts with instrumental help seeking that has been previously described, and highlights the varying nature that help seeking can take. This form of help seeking has similarly been termed dependent help seeking (Nadler, 1998) with little conceptual difference from Nelson Le-Gall's (1981) analysis. Nadler postulates that help may be sought for varying reasons. That is, the student may want to avoid criticism or academic penalty from a course tutor for incomplete work, or may want to lessen their workload in order to keep up with their course assignments.

Additionally, there is some evidence to link positive peer relations within academic institutions with the type of help seeking sought by students. For example, Nelson Le-Gall & Glor-Scheib's (1986) study with younger students concludes that there is support for the hypothesis that the relationship between help-seeking behaviours and acceptance by a student's peers may vary depending on the helper and the type of help requested (p.191). So, students who request executive help are still able to develop successful peer relationships. This is at counterpoint to results from previous studies with younger populations (Hartup, 1970) where negative correlations existed between peer relations and help seeking from adult sources. Consequently, seeking appropriate help from a tutor may be seen as an acceptable method for an adult tertiary level student, whereas this may not be the case in a secondary context. This may be subject dependent however (Nelson Le-Gall, 1986), as well as dependent on other students' perceptions of the help seeker in question (ibid). If peer help seeking is excessive and presumably executive, then students may associate this negatively with perceived academic

competence because the help-seeker is seen as not trying to sort out their own academic problems. The perception may be that the help seeker is asking for a large amount of help, which may indicate to students that the help seeker not only lacks knowledge but also an ability to learn the specified subject matter (ibid). Similarly, the pursuance of such help seeking may indicate to peers that the student is attempting to achieve their goals illegitimately, without gaining the necessary skills to support their academic results. The consequence of this is that students who seek excessive executive help from their peers may be perceived as being unable to reciprocate with help in the future, since the help seeker's skill set may not be honed enough to facilitate help giving (ibid).

However, Nelson Le-Gall and Glor-Scheib (1986) postulate that if the help seeking in question is instrumental, then a different set of social reactions from peers comes into play.  This is ostensibly because requests for instrumental help do not place all of the responsibility for problem solving on the helper (p. 192). Rather, it may at some stage, because of the perception that the help seeker is interested in acquiring competence rather than solutions, mitigate against thoughts that the help seeking is uni-directional. That is, the help seeker may be able to reciprocate at some time in the future using a skill set from another area.

The consideration of peer help is relevant in a tertiary help seeking context since these studies indicate that it is more likely that such help seeking may be successful if it is instrumental.

Nelson Le-Gall characterises help seeking as either 'instrumental' or 'executive', where each category is discrete from the other (Nelson Le-Gall, 1981, 1985; Newman, 1998; Nadler; 1998). This approach to theorising help seeking has been replicated by other researchers. The next subsection will consider Newman's (1990) approach, that is, adaptive-coping help seeking.

**Adaptive-Coping**
Marchand and Skinner (2007) claim that help seeking theory can be seen as coming from two distinct perspectives. These are as an adaptive strategy and

as a coping strategy. From an adaptive perspective, students of all ages would use help seeking when they encounter problems that they cannot solve for themselves. However, in an academic context adaptive help seekers attempt to learn processes rather than just the answers to specific questions that have been posed. This approach to help seeking and the subsequent research is exemplified by such writers as Karabenick (1998), Newman (1990) and Ryan and Pintrich (1998). In contrast to this perspective is help seeking as a coping strategy, where both adults and children use help seeking to cope with stressful aspects of their lives. In some instances this could include academic work. This approach has been researched by such writers as Compas (1987). Despite this bifurcation there are many similarities between these perspectives, and both claim that help seeking is a legitimate strategy, and that it forms one approach among many for dealing with stressful situations (Marchand & Skinner, 2007, p.65). This resonates with the self regulation literature (Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990), which claims that help seeking is one aspect in the panoply of approaches that students can use in their academic pursuits.

Earlier, Newman (1994) expanded on Nelson Le-Gall's work, by claiming that instrumental help seeking is an adaptive strategy rather than a coping one that involves students in a four-part process. Firstly, students need to understand the difficulty of the task that has to be performed. Newman sees this as unproblematic, however understanding the difficulty of a task requires students to exhibit some form of metacognition, since they would be considering their own state of knowledge as they attempt to perform a task or solve a problem. Secondly, all the available information has to be considered in deciding whether the request for help is necessary or not. Adaptive help seeking indicates that such requests occur only when the student recognises that their knowledge state is insufficient to reach a desired outcome with a particular problem (ibid., p.285). Thirdly, the request for help has to be expressed in a way that is suitable for the situation so that help seekers have the opportunity to avoid short term failure, but ultimately enhance their skills so that long term mastery is acquired (ibid., p.285). Lastly, Newman (1994) states that, the help that is given has to be processed by the help seeker so

that there is a chance of solving the problem or completing the task. This is important because the help seeker has to decide if further help is needed to solve the problem (p.285). If the help seeking session is to be successful then this last part of the process is clearly a priority. In some cases the tutor would have to revisit the subject material or attempt another approach to ensure that the help seeker is able to interpret the relevant subject matter and hence solve the problem.

Although Newman's (1994) analysis has some merits, it is difficult to specify exactly how adaptive help seeking presents itself during a help seeking session. He claims that these factors are not explicitly understood in a school setting. However, tertiary students may be able to provide more adequate explanations of their instrumental help seeking processes during help seeking sessions. There appears to be little difference between Newman's analysis of help seeking and Nelson Le Gall's (1981) model. A further approach to theorising help seeking will be considered in the next section, that is, autonomous-dependent help seeking.

**Autonomous-Dependent**

Autonomous help seeking is where an individual seeks help in order to improve their skill set, and consequently be able to solve problems on their own (Nadler, 1998, p.64). Autonomous help seeking is akin to Nelson Le-Gall's (1985) instrumental, and Newman's (1994) adaptive help seeking. One possible difference between autonomous help seeking and its instrumental or adaptive counterpart is that individuals who seek autonomous help are concerned about retaining their autonomy when it comes to dealing with their problems (ibid.). This would have higher priority than developing the skills required to solve a problem.

In contrast to autonomous help seeking, Nadler (1998) defines dependent help seeking as help that is sought out of passivity, and where the help seeker seeks help whether they need it or not. Here, the help seeker is attempting to resolve a problem situation with minimal effort, by relying on more knowledgeable or powerful 'others' to solve their problem (ibid.).

As with instrumental-executive and adaptive-coping help seeking, autonomous-dependent help seeking is seen as two facets of help seeking behaviour that are opposite to each other. Help seekers are either using autonomous or dependent help seeking. The next section considers the styles of help seeking that help seekers employ.

**Direct-Indirect**

Help seeking style has been the subject of two major studies (Bornstein, 1998; Olsson, 2002). Olsson (2002) identified two styles of help seeking - direct and indirect. Direct help seeking occurs when the help seeker is explicit in the request for help. Indirect help seeking occurs when the help seeker does not explicitly ask for help, rather drops hints that help is needed or acts in such a way as to elicit help without specifically asking for assistance (Bornstein, 1998, p. 782). In the latter case the help seeker would not mention that help was needed, nor refer to help in any way. Olsson (2002) concluded from participant self reports that it was not clear whether the majority of help seeking in professional relationships is direct or indirect in nature, but that most participants in studies reported using a direct rather than an indirect style to seek the help they needed (p.15). Indirect help seeking may well be a useful tool for help seekers especially taking into account the costs of help seeking in relation to the help seekers' self esteem (ibid.).

The costs and benefits of seeking help using both a direct and an indirect style, have been the subject of several studies (De Paulo & Fisher, 1980; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990, 1992). Direct help seeking may assist the relationship between help seeker and help giver to strengthen (ibid.), whereas indirect help seeking allows the help seeker to save face if either the help is denied or there is a negative reaction on the part of the help giver. Olsson (2002) concluded that direct help is more often used by males, especially in circumstances where they are asking for help from a more powerful person, whereas indirect help seeking is more often used by females (Olsson, 2002, p.13), but that people in a close relationship tend to seek help directly irrespective of gender.

This result is counter to Bornstein's (1998) conclusions, where he studied direct and indirect help seeking in a college sample. In this case, over a four week period Bornstein found that there was less difference between direct and indirect help seeking in relation to gender than expected. He claims that the non significant gender differences for direct help seeking, and marginally significant gender differences for indirect help seeking were due to a departure from traditional gender roles among the college sample he studied. If this were the case then help givers in a tertiary setting, could expect little difference between the help seeking styles of male and female students. Each of the continua or dichotomies outlined in this section postulate that help seekers seek help either to improve their ability to solve their presented problem or to have the problem solved by the help giver. This seems to be at the core of the instrumental-executive, adaptive-coping and autonomous-dependent dichotomies. Help seeking style is distinct from these three dichotomies as it looks at the way help seekers seek help rather than the type of help they seek. For the purposes of this thesis I will use Nelson Le Gall's (1981) instrumental-executive model, as it appears to be the basis for Newman's (1994) and Nadler's (1998) later approach to modelling help seeking. The adaptive-coping and autonomous-dependent models seem to be similar in type to Nelson Le Gall's influential work.

## Conclusion

This chapter began by focussing on the different models and theoretical frameworks used to explain the concept of help seeking. Several researchers' conceptual frameworks were considered particularly the seminal work of Nelson Le Gall. This chapter also looked at help seeking from the perspective of differing psychological theories, including attribution and reactance theory and examined how goal structure, dependency, independency, interdependency and help seeking relate. It has also explored how help seeking and confidence relate. Behavioural precipitators that may be useful in theorising precipitators to help seeking behaviour were also considered. The approaches that have been used to research help seeking were considered and it seems that there have been fewer help seeking studies in the tertiary sector using qualitative rather than quantitative approaches in order to

produce models. What little work that has occurred in this sector has been situated within the quantitative paradigm.

The majority of the literature considered for this study has focussed on barriers to help seeking, help seeking avoidance and the type of help seeking used. There appears to be little research that attempts to build a complete model of the help seeking process particularly in the tertiary education sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This thesis is an attempt to address this gap in the literature, as it relates motivation to seek help, help seeking approaches and type and help seeking precipitators in one model of tertiary help seeking. This study is important, not just because it has used a qualitative approach to collect a richer vein of data, but also because it has produced a tentative model of help seeking that may help to illuminate the reasons some tertiary students do seek academic help when they need it.

The next chapter will review various research paradigms and outline the research methodology that has been used in this study, in order to build a model of tertiary help seeking.

# CHAPTER THREE
# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

This chapter will review various research paradigms, and I will justify my approach to constructivist grounded theory based on my axiological, ontological, and epistemological beliefs. The chapter will show how this chosen methodology has been configured to the data collection, data analysis and theory generation stages of the research, in an attempt to build a theory of tertiary help seeking.

## Methodology

Researchers into academic help seeking have mainly located their studies within a quantitative paradigm in their attempts to produce theories that may be helpful to educational practitioners. Studies into academic help seeking with tertiary students have relied almost exclusively on surveys with large samples (Alexitch, 1997, 2002; Karabenick, 2001; 2004; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007) in order to generate theory, whereas few have been located within a qualitative paradigm (Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, Blumberg & Jackson, 2003). Another collected no data before generating theory (Lee, 2007). Theory generated from survey based research into academic help seeking tends use statistical techniques to correlate psychological constructs such as intentions to seek help, motivational goals, and motivational or affective support. These models attempt to predict the nature of the help sought from these constructs. The data generated is useful, but the application of qualitative techniques to help seeking would provide a different perspective to the theories generated. Fewer researchers have used a qualitative paradigm in order to explore students' views of their own academic help seeking process, and to gather a richer form of data from which applicable theory can be generated. A qualitative approach would add a depth of understanding about help seeking to what is known from the quantitative studies. This study used a qualitative paradigm in an attempt to collect this richness of data and generate a theory of academic help seeking that is reflective of what participants reported in

both of their interviews and displayed in the videoed learning support sessions.

**Research Paradigms**

Axiology, ontology, epistemology and subsequently methodology are all aspects of a paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as a set of basic beliefs that represent a person's worldview and their place in it (p.107). This definition does not change in their later work (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), however they claim that no study which is based within one paradigm remains uncontested by proponents of another (p.191). Yang, Zhang and Holzer (2008) state that a paradigm is synonymous with a 'view of reality and an intellectual framework that specifies a discipline's proper domain, basic assumptions, appropriate research questions and rules for inference' (p.25). More simplistically, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) equate a 'paradigm' with a 'model'. They state that education research is bifurcated into either the 'normative' paradigm or the 'interpretive' paradigm. The normative paradigm presupposes that human behaviour is rule governed and amenable to investigation by the methods used in natural science, whilst the interpretive paradigm attempts to understand peoples' subjective experiences (p.21). In this study my worldview is important as it will affect the reporting of the participants' data which will provide the basis for the eventual theory that was generated or negotiated. A researcher's worldview has been termed by Cresswell (2005), as the researcher's lens (p.125). The elucidation of the components of a paradigm, i.e. axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology together with my views will be considered in the following subsections.

*Axiology*

Axiology is the study of value. Guba and Lincoln (2005) see axiology as being grouped with basic beliefs, that is, as a fundamental element in the inquiry process (p.197). Axiology comes into play before one has chosen the problem to research, the theoretical framework in which the problem may be researched and the choice of data gathering approach.

The axiological lens that I brought to this study entails a belief that help seeking is a valuable process for students to engage in when they feel that they need to. Although there is a power relationship between tutors and students, this can in some cases be ameliorated because of the concept of customer focus in education (Yam, 1996), that is, treating students as if they were customers in the process of accessing educational services. If students are not using available help, then they are missing out on a valuable aspect of their tertiary education.

This reasoning was partly responsible for this study. Knowing the boundaries of an issue or problem, particularly an educational one, helps practitioners with their varied solutions and may help students realise the value of the help seeking process. Help seeking is a transactional process between help seeker and help giver and consequently lends itself to a research process that is also transactional, which is either part of critical theory or constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 2000, p.198). The next section outlines the nature of ontology and the ontological stance I took in this thesis.

*Ontology*
Ontological questions are concerned with the nature of reality. For example, does the world exist as something that is independent of the person observing it, or is the concept of a 'real' world undermined by the fact that most people view and experience the world differently?

The help seeking research that has occurred, particularly with tertiary students, appears to subscribe to the former view since the surveys used in this research tend to assume that there is a social construct, in this case help seeking that is measurable. This would categorise this kind of research as positivist, i.e. a view that purports that there is an apprehendable reality being driven by absolute laws (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.109), or post positivist which posits the view that although the real world exists and is separate from individual sense perception it is only imperfectly apprehendable. These studies attempt to use statistical techniques in order to correlate variously constructed help seeking elements. There seems to be little research that

uses a constructivist or participatory approach (ibid., p.193) to model tertiary help seeking.

The ontological lens that I have brought to this study assumes that the world is discernable in different ways by different people. In this sense people construct their world through these differing discernments. Although one can only see the world through one's own lens, one can attempt to adjust this to assimilate another person's point of view. This is my preferred approach in this study.

*Epistemology*

The epistemological question concerns the nature of knowledge and the relationship of that knowledge to the person knowing it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.183; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 193; 1994, p.108). The epistemology adopted in a research study relies on the ontology and axiology undertaken. So, for example, a researcher who takes a positivist stance regarding reality would probably see themselves as a detached observer of that reality in order to work out the underlying laws that make that reality function (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, pp.193-195; Von Glaserfeld, 1996, p.3). However, a researcher taking a constructivist approach to reality would not see that reality as independent of the observer, and consequently any results that emanate from research are relative, local and a co-construction between researcher and participant (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.195). Denzin (2009) sees epistemology as historically and politically situated, with governments in various countries attempting to promote medical research based within the quantitative paradigm as a blueprint for educational research (p.143).

The epistemological stance I have taken in this study is the latter. That is, knowledge is constructed and in a research situation it is a construction between me as a researcher and the participants.

The next section looks at the differences between qualitative and quantitative paradigms and justifies the use of a qualitative paradigm for this study.

*Qualitative and Quantitative Research Paradigms*

The quantitative and qualitative paradigms are distinct in that quantitative research in the social sciences entails the use of numbers to measure what is seen as objective reality (Silverman, 2001, p.25). Essentially this may indicate that researchers using a quantitative research paradigm could ascribe to positivist ontology. Bryman (2006) found from a meta analysis of 232 mixed methods social science studies that despite the mixed method approach either qualitative or quantitative methods predominated (p. 97). However, he claims that the potential for new insights is magnified if the two approaches are used together (ibid., p. 111).

Notwithstanding, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state, that there are five main differences between quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. Firstly, whether or not the researcher accepts postmodern ideas. Secondly, whether or not researchers attempt to capture individuals' points of view during their research. Thirdly, whether or not they deal with the constraints that participants experience on a day to day basis. Fourthly, whether they wish to collect richer data and lastly their view of positivist and postpositivist paradigms (p.10). Essentially, researchers using a qualitative paradigm often claim that they are better able to explain participant views, life stories, social worlds through the use of interviews and observation, rather than through the use of the more remote inferential methods that fall into the quantitative paradigm (ibid.).

At the start of the 1960s the dominance of the quantitative paradigm in the social sciences was challenged. This dovetailed with the growth of qualitative methodologies, and consequently produced a schism in the field between the older quantitative (Guba & Lincoln, 2008) and newer qualitative approaches (Punch, 2005, p.2). This resulted in what has been aptly termed the 'paradigm wars' (Alexander, 2006, p.207) where proponents of the qualitative paradigm pronounced the end of the grand or master narrative as a tool to frame research in social science. A truce between proponents of the different camps ensued, broken in 2001 when the Education Department of the United States government indicated that the preferred approach to educational research was positivistic, quantitative methodologies (ibid.).  This situation has not been

ameliorated as Denzin (2009) states that qualitative researchers are presently involved in a conversation worldwide concerning the evidential basis of research, and emerging standards and guidelines for conducting qualitative studies (p.139). These conversations seem to have led to the publishing of quality frameworks such as those by the United Kingdom government (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003). Whether such frameworks would be able to fully evaluate the multifarious types of qualitative research needs to be considered. Consider Spencer et al's (2003) comments regarding the scope of their framework.

> It was not felt possible to design a single set of quality markers that would be appropriate for all the different qualitative and evaluative traditions that exist. The assumptions on which they are based are too diverse – in some cases contradictory – and the conception of what matters in terms of 'quality' can vary with these assumptions (p.5).

Researchers working within a qualitative paradigm state that knowledge of the social world can only exist in a multi-faceted way. In order to describe social situations in a richer way, qualitative social researchers seem to attempt a description using local theories that are limited to the time and place of that particular theory's construction (Flick, 2006, p.12). Instead of starting from theories and testing them by collecting data, new knowledge is generated from collected data to model the social world. This way of working is termed induction.

There are several issues that emanate from relying totally on quantitative data in studying education. These include: the fact that some results do not apply to a situation because they could be based on incomplete variables; the problems of relating what actually happens to initial theoretical positions; and the perception amongst researchers that quantitative methods no longer produce 'absolute truths' which can be uncritically adopted (Flick, 2006). In order to produce research results in education, which are applicable, which generate sound theoretical positions and which recognise the transient and local nature of knowledge, then researchers should use qualitative methodologies as part of their research process (Denzin, 2009, p. 146; Maxwell, 2004a, p. 243; Maxwell, 2004b, p.3).

This study was located within a qualitative research paradigm, since the collection of a richer form of data may add to findings of existing quantitative studies about academic help seeking. The next section looks more closely at qualitative approaches to educational research.

*Qualitative Research Methods*

Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach and Richardson (2005) define qualitative research as a systematic approach to understanding the qualities or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context. This general definition is intended to account for the multifarious approaches that are considered under the qualitative research banner. Notwithstanding the positivist slant to Brantliner et al.'s (2005) definition, the concept of data collection using a systematic approach seems sensible. One difficulty with this definition of qualitative research is that it seems to ignore any reactivity that could occur between researcher and participant, as the 'essential nature of a phenomenon' is open to various interpretations depending on one's viewpoint.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) claim that qualitative research is a complex nexus of interrelated terms, concepts and approaches that enshrine research traditions from positivism to poststructuralism (p. 1). This implies that qualitative researchers can engender a positivist approach to their work. In this sense qualitative research is a multiplex of approaches and methods. It has no one method that is entirely its own (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.3). This is reiterated by Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006), who state that qualitative research comprises an exciting interdisciplinary landscape with many perspectives of knowledge construction that is made possible by a range of epistemological, theoretical and methodological possibilities (p. 5).

Marshall and Rossman (2006) outline the many typologies of qualitative research that have been developed. These include human ethology, ecological psychology, holistic ethnography, cognitive anthropology, the ethnography of communication and symbolic interactionism (Jacob, 1987); symbolic interactionism, anthropology, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, democratic evaluation, neo Marxist ethnography and feminism (Atkinson,

Delamont & Hammersley, 1988); case studies, ethnography, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, grounded theory, life history, historical method, action and applied research and clinical research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.4).

Flick (2006) has also characterized qualitative research by the following distinct approaches:  grounded theory; ethnomethodology, conversation, discourse and genre analysis; narrative theory and biographical research; ethnography; cultural studies and gender studies. Qualitative researchers from each area have developed methodologies that gel with the particular domain in which they are working, but despite the differences in emphasis, Brantlinger et al. (2005) claim that qualitative research involves empirical work, knowledge production, systematic methods, evidence, and a coherent articulation of results.

Similarly, Cresswell (2007) states that qualitative researchers have a large number of choices of approach (p.6), and that each differing approach seems to have been used with different subject disciplines. He cites several authors' typologies which include, psychologists using ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, as well as educational theorists using ecological psychology, holistic ethnography, cognitive anthropology and symbolic interactionism.  However, Cresswell's aim was to condense the number of qualitative approaches to five, based on the frequency of use in the qualitative studies that he encountered (Cresswell, 1998, p. 4; Cresswell, 2007, p.9). He subsequently claims that qualitative research is engendered in the following major approaches: biographical research; phenomenology; grounded theory; ethnography; and case studies.

Biographical research attempts to describe the life of one person, whereas a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several people of a particular phenomenon or event (Cresswell, 1998, p.47). In his later work Cresswell (2007) replaces biographical with narrative research (p.57). He maintains his position between his earlier and later work regarding grounded theory and claims that a grounded theory approach is a research methodology that attempts to move beyond the description of an event and tries to generate

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or discover a theory, which is grounded in the data that has been collected, yet is abstract, analytical and also descriptive (Cresswell, 2007, p.63). This may or may not occur with participants that are located in separate sites and who only share the phenomenon of study. An ethnographical approach however, attempts to provide descriptions of participants that are located closely, to the extent that they interact and consequently share cultural norms. An ethnographer would be interested in a larger number of participants, where he or she could interpret the shared and learned patterns of behavior of a group of participants (ibid., p.68; Alexander, 2005). This is in contrast to a researcher using a case study, where a participant would be an interesting exemplar of an aspect of a culture.

Researchers of academic help seeking have predominantly used quantitative approaches in their work, possibly because this approach was more prevalent when these studies were conducted. Consequently there is little research that attempts to gather richer data from participants. For this reason, a qualitative research approach was used in this study. A biographical approach to help seeking would be useful if this study were focused around one or two participants. However, this study was intended to centre around a larger number of participants, and consequently I decided that a biographical approach would not be appropriate.

A phenomenological approach might also have been appropriate, but I wanted to go beyond description and posit a theory based on the collected data. An ethnographic approach would similarly have been inappropriate, as help seekers are not always located in one place with shared goals, culture, or the same tutor. Additionally, a case study approach could result in data construction from participants over a longer period of time, and I wanted to impact on the learning centre where I collected the data as little as possible, whilst providing sufficient data to build a model that reflected help seeking in a tertiary institutions learning support centre. Grounded theory was the preferred approach in this study partly because of the above reasons, but mainly because I was concerned to build a theory of tertiary help seeking from the collected data. Also, I thought grounded theory would be an appropriate

method for collecting and analyzing the data, because it was the best fit with my research questions.

*Grounded Theory*

Grounded theory is an inductive methodology where theory emerges from the data that is collected. It moves from the organised collection of data in a particular area to the construction of an abstract theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p.1; Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006a, p.8; Nathaniel, 2004, p.1).

This research utilised a grounded theory methodology to develop a tentative model of tertiary students' help seeking in the context of a tertiary institution's learning support centre. Grounded theory utilises a tight framework that allows a theory to be developed from a data set (Tuettemann, 2003).

Grounded theory research normally follows the following pattern.

| Researcher Questions | Data Collection 1 | Data Analysis 1 | Data Collection 2 | Data Analysis 2 | Data Collection 3 | Data Analysis 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Figure 3.1** Grounded Theory Process

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed this research approach in order that theory could be inductively generated from collected data. Consequently, theories stem from the data, rather than the data being interpreted by a particular perspective to which a researcher may ascribe. This approach was chosen to form the basis of this research into tertiary students' help seeking processes, because I initially wanted to develop a theory that was generated from the data that I collected. However, as the project proceeded, Nelson Le Gall's (1985) model of help seeking in a primary and secondary school context seemed to be represented in the data that was analysed. Consequently, this model was reinterpreted and applied to the data collected in the learning support tertiary context of this study.

Initially grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1965) had positivist roots, as the main emphasis in theory development was the discovery of core categories and a basic social process. Glaser (1978) saw the researcher as removed from the research process, acting as an

independent, objective observer of reality. Later, this view was contested by Strauss and Corbin (1990), where they emphasize 'forcing' categories rather than allowing them to 'emerge'. This positions the researcher more as a constructor rather than a discoverer of theory. Many grounded theorists have continued this move, particularly Charmaz (1994a; 1994b; 2000; 2003; 2006) who has developed a constructivist approach to this research methodology.

Research projects that use grounded theory begin with some form of data collection and analysis, which may be guided by initial research questions (Punch, 2005, p. 158). In some cases researchers have no specific research questions to address, nor have they conducted a literature review (Dey, 1999, p.3). In this research project, the data collection was based on initial research questions concerning factors that cause participants to seek academic help; the factors that precipitate instrumental and executive help seeking behaviours in tertiary students; the help seeking behaviours that tertiary students use; the motivations which cause them to seek academic help; and the usefulness of the instrumental-executive model of help seeking in describing tertiary students help seeking. The codes and categories developed from these questions were used to produce a tentative model of help seeking used by tertiary students at one tertiary institution. Aspects that go beyond the instrumental/executive model were elucidated using this approach.

The next section looks at the type of data gathering techniques I used in this research. The section begins with an overview of interviewing techniques, and concludes with an analysis of video observation techniques.

*Interviewing*
Gerson and Horowitz (2002) claim that even though in-depth interviewing permits a researcher to formulate research questions in a number of ways, qualitative research should always start with a set of theoretical questions that attempt an interrogation of some aspect of the social world. This approach has been contested by grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, this study began with a number of research questions, which were reflected in the questions that are asked in

the pre-interview. These elucidated the nature of student perceptions regarding their own help seeking, and provide a framework to interrogate their perceptions of their own videoed observational data. Using semi-structured interviews for the qualitative data collection in this project is in keeping with their wide use in social science research (Flick, 2002, p.74), and gave participants the opportunity to express their views in a relatively openly designed interview situation.

Flick (2002) outlines five types of semi-structured interview. These are: the focused interview; the semi-standardised interview; the problem-centred interview; the expert interview and the ethnographic interview. The first two forms of interviewing have been used in this project.

Focused Interview
Focused interviews are normally used after participants have viewed video footage or a film, and are asked questions regarding their view of the footage. The original aim of this type of interview was to provide a starting point for interpreting statistically significant findings (ibid, p.75). The objective was to assess the differences between participants' subjective views of a situation and the 'objective' facts displayed in the film or video. Since assessing the 'objective' facts of a videoed learning support session is problematic at best, this project was only attempting to canvass participants' views of their session as they viewed them with me. This provided a recontextualisation of the original filmed session, and gave the participants the opportunity to give their views about what was happening during their videoed learning support session.

This type of interview played a central part in this research project, since each participant attended a post-interview about their learning support session where key aspects that occurred in the session were considered.

Semi-Standardised Interview
Semi-standardised interviews are often used with participants who have a considerable amount of knowledge about the topic in question. Normally, a participant's implicit assumptions are uncovered during the interview through the use of a graphical representation technique called 'structure laying' (Flick,

2002, p.80) and through the use of different types of interview questions, that is, open questions, hypothesis directed questions and confrontational questions. These techniques structure participants' responses as well as validating them.

This type of interview seems a reasonable approach for this project, since participants were in a position to elucidate their help seeking activities with prompting from the researcher. However, I did not want the participants to feel uncomfortable, so rarely used confrontational questioning.

The next section briefly elucidates the reasons I did not use problem centred, expert or ethnographic interviewing.

Problem-Centred, Expert and Ethnographic Interviews
Problem-centred Interviews are useful in collecting biographical data regarding a certain problem. However, the main problem with this approach is that the interviewer at certain times during the interview may have to interrupt participants in an attempt to develop a focus (Flick, 2002, p. 86). This approach was not used in the interviews in this study, as I did not want to stop participants while they were talking. Expert interviews are a specific form of semi-structured interview where the participant is of less interest as a 'whole' person, than in their capacity as an expert in a particular field. Consequently, in this case I would have to direct the interview in order to eliminate unproductive topics (ibid, 89). Ethnographic interviews are an attempt to shape conversations that have arisen in a social setting or in the field (ibid, p.90). Consequently, they often occur spontaneously. Since all the interviews in this project were prearranged, then this type of interview did not form part of the data gathering processes in this project.

Each interview in this project was planned to last no more than one hour, and was tape recorded and transcribed. Throughout the interview process I was empathetic with participants, rather than treating the interview situation as a scientific data gathering exercise (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.696).

*Video Observational Techniques*

Burawoy (1991) claims that participant-observational techniques are used to help explore gaps in theory within a specific social site. Consequently, this approach would be useful in investigating help seeking processes in the Learning Support Centre. In order to use this approach, individual help seekers were videotaped as they received learning support. Videotaping participants as they received learning support was the best way to record the help seeking behaviours that participants used, and to have a visual record for my later analysis with and without the participant in question.

Denzin (1989) specifies four steps in analysing film, which were applied to the video footage taken during this project prior to the second semi-structured interview. Firstly, the video was considered as a whole and impressions, questions and patterns elicited. Secondly, questions were formulated regarding the subject matter, and key aspects of the video were noted. Thirdly, a structured microanalysis was conducted of individual aspects of the videoed learning support session, which helped to prompt participants to elucidate their help seeking activities. Fourthly, rather than the patterns generated from the last process being applied to the whole learning support session, at a later date the participants and I viewed the video together, and a second semi structured interview (post-interview) occurred to elicit participants' views regarding the nature of their help seeking during the viewed session. The direction of this second interview was grounded in the data collected during the videoed learning support session. This stimulated recall approach has been successfully used in previous qualitative studies (Do & Schallert, 2004; Jensen & Winitsky, 2002; Stough & Palmer, 2003). After the second semi-structured interview (post-interview), I completed another analysis of the video footage in order to construct a theoretical basis for tertiary help seeking.

*Grounded Theory Coding Process*

A grounded theory approach allows for the systematic development of theory using the following coding methods - initial or open coding, axial coding, theoretical coding and selective coding. La Rossa (2005) claims that this approach has been the most widely accepted method of dealing with data

once it is collected (p.840), and that grounded theoretical methods are at their most effective when all coding phases are employed. Charmaz (2006) posits that there are two phases to grounded theory coding. These are an initial coding phase, and a focussed/selective coding phase (p.46). This second phase will be termed the selective phase (Holton, 2007, p.265) in this thesis to avoid confusion with focussed coding. The coding methods used in this study were initial coding, focussed coding and theoretical coding. These are explained in the next section, together with my reasons for using them.

<u>Initial Coding Phase</u>
Charmaz (2006) refers to the first stage of coding as initial coding, where the researcher remains open to exploring the theoretical possibilities that can be constructed using the data (p.47). Initial coding involves the researcher reading the data closely and at the same time staying open so as to be able to follow as many theoretical directions as possible (Charmaz, 2006, p.46). This approach is based on Glaser et al.'s (1967) concept of open coding, where initial codes that are generated are provisional, comparative and grounded in the data (ibid, p.48). Borgatti (2005) sees this stage of coding as a method of analysis that deals with the identification of issues or phenomena found in text.

In this study the texts have been transcripts from the initial interviews, videoed learning support sessions and subsequently the post interview transcripts. The object of this stage of analysis was to open up the coding to theoretical possibilities (Punch, 2005, p.205), and to identify first order concepts and substantive codes (Sarantakos, 2005, p.349). This form of coding fractures the data. Student responses from the pre interviews, videoed learning support sessions and their responses in the post interviews were subjected to initial coding, where several instances of the same theoretical concept were identified through the data. La Rossa (2005) calls this a concept indicator model which is based on the constant comparison of indicators, that is, on regularly identifying similarities and differences in texts (p.841). An 'indicator' can be a word, phrase or sentence in the text in question, whereas a 'concept' is a label associated with an indicator (ibid).

Once a concept cannot be expanded through the addition of new indicators, that is the indicator does not generate any significant new insights regarding the concept, then the concept is said to be 'theoretically saturated'. Theoretically saturated concepts are classed as 'grounded' in grounded theory (ibid). La Rossa's approach could be seen to have positivist roots as he posits that a 'concept' is a label in the text, rather than a construction relying on the researcher's analysis.

Charmaz's (2006) view of saturation has a different emphasis, but the underlying idea is still the same. She claims that categories are saturated when collecting new data no longer 'sparks' new theoretical insights, nor adds to core categories (p.113). Data from the interview sessions in this phase of the research were coded to generate the first layer of categories.

Outlining a similar approach to analysis and categorisation, Punch (2005) claims that using the following questions might be a useful starting point. What is this piece of data an example of? What does this piece of data represent? What category does this piece of data indicate (Punch, 2005, p.207)? This approach gels with Charmaz (2006), who states that initial coding should start with such questions as: What is this data a study of?;  What does the data suggest or pronounce?; From whose point of view?; What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate (p.47)? This latter approach was used in order to generate codes in this study.

Initial coding is useful if the conceptual framework that is generated from the data is neither too small nor too large. If there is not enough scope in a conceptual framework, (that is, it is not abstract enough), then only a few observations will fit in the category. In this case, the conceptual label is just a restatement of the original data. If the conceptual framework is too abstract then too much information will fall into the category, which will weaken its descriptive power. Open or initial coding can be completed using 'word by word coding', 'incident to incident coding' or 'line by line coding' (Charmaz, 2006, p.50).

Line by line coding involves breaking up the data into lines and then attaching a code to each line. Charmaz (2006) claims that this approach is useful, as

the researcher will be able to see aspects that would not necessarily be apparent if the data were looked at by themes (p.50). This approach reduces the amount of reactivity that may occur if the data were considered in larger chunks.

Word by word coding tends to be used when grounded theorists are working with documents. This approach was too unwieldy for this study, taking too much time and would not produce reasonable analytical codes at the end of the process. Incident by incident coding involves applying codes to incidents that occur in the data. This approach is useful if grounded theorists are coding field notes, of observed events, since incidents are easier to code than the more mundane forms of behaviour that participants exhibit (Charmaz, 2006, p.53).

The open coding in this research study was completed using line by line coding as this approach provides an appropriate amount of data to produce initial codes. The objective of this stage of the coding process was to generate codes from the collected data into possible initial categories which formed the basis of the next stage of analysis, that is, selective coding.

Selective Coding Phase

The selective coding phase is the second phase of the coding process where the researcher uses the most frequent or significant initial codes in order to integrate and partially theorise the collected data. Holton (2007) claims that this phase of coding can only start once a potential core category has been identified (p.280). This may not always be the case, as initial coding may not suggest a core category for the researcher to focus on to create a theory at this stage. Charmaz (2006) categorises focused coding, axial coding and theoretical coding as three types of selective coding. This is opposed to Strauss and Corbin (1990) who posit that axial coding is at a coding level below theoretical coding.

Focused coding is where the researcher categorises the earlier codes to reorganise the data so that it begins to make theoretical sense. This type of coding involves careful consideration of the data generated from the previous

coding cycle, and comparing data with data, and data with codes in order to generate aspects of the grounded theory that is being constructed. This approach was used in this study.

Axial coding is the process where the open or initial coded results are analysed, and generic categories generated in order to describe tertiary help seeking approaches. In this stage of the analysis the codes generated in the open coding stage are reconfigured and put together to form more general theoretical codes. Axial coding, unlike open coding, puts data back together, but does so in conceptually different ways (ibid, p.210). In this form of coding it would have been necessary to reconfigure the data so that an axis is put through it, in order to connect concepts that describe tertiary help seeking (Sarantakos, 2005, p.350; Strauss, 1987, p.64). This form of coding was not used in this study as I believe, despite its theoretical appeal that it moves the codes generated in the first coding phase too far away from participants' initial responses.

Additionally, Charmaz (2006) claims not to have used Strauss and Corbin's (1998) formal process of axial coding in her work. However, she has derived a system where she relates categories to sub categories to make sense of data (p.61). In this sense Charmaz has not used axial coding in its true sense in her work, as no axis is put through her data. The coding approach used in this study mirrors Charmaz's approach. Axial coding was not used as I did not want to arbitrarily reconfigure the data away from participants' earlier responses. This is in line with Charmaz's approach to grounded theory coding. My chosen method of selective coding was focused coding.

Theoretical coding is the process where one or more categories are chosen as the core categories, and to which all other categories are related. Using this form of analysis it may be possible to identify underlying factors that contribute to tertiary students seeking academic help.

*Constructivist Grounded Theory*
Constructivist grounded theory arose because many qualitative theorists saw the need to adapt traditional methodology to take into account the more

constructivist approaches that arose in social science and particularly educational research. Mills et al. (2006a) saw this change in grounded theory approach in terms of the creation of a sense of reciprocity between researcher and participant, where there was a co-construction of meaning that leads to a theory grounded in both the participant's and researcher's experiences. Such an approach is typified by the recognition that data collection, particularly using interviewing techniques is not a neutral process; rather it is the location for mutual exchanges between two people, which lead to jointly negotiated and contextual meanings (ibid).

In this study I was anxious to ensure that participants felt comfortable expressing themselves completely during the interviews in response to my initial interview questions. For the majority of the time in the interviews, participants talked and I only prompted. I did this to show that I was listening. In some cases co-constructions occurred as I asked further questions for clarification, or sought a further opinion from participants after having suggested an alternative scenario.

Charmaz (2000) saw constructivist grounded theory as a middle ground between positivism and post modernism (p.510). Essentially, a constructivist approach to grounded theory recognises the world as real by addressing human realities which are multi dimensional. Each participant in a study therefore sees the world in a different way. This is representable using constructivist grounded theory since this approach does not attempt to define a theoretical stance based on truth. A constructivist grounded theoretical approach posits that what is considered as objective knowledge and real in the world relies on the participant's and researcher's individual perspectives (ibid, p.523). This approach resonated with me regarding some of the responses I received from participants. They often had a different perspective of help seeking from me as I fulfilled the role of researcher or learning support tutor.

Using constructivist grounded theory as a research approach clarifies and ultimately reduces any power imbalances that may initially exist between researcher and participant. To effect a more equal position, the researcher

needs to take on a more reflective stance with regard to the interview process. If this approach is to be successfully undertaken then there is a need for the researcher to provide a forum that is non-judgmental, where participants feel that their responses are being considered in a value free light. During the data collection for this study I attempted to implement this approach, although participants were still participating and I was still researching. Assessing whether or not participants felt judged is problematic. However, most participants engaged with the process and were willing to provide answers and comments when requested.

The constructivist approach similarly has an impact on the position that the researcher takes when writing up research results. Advocates of this methodology necessarily clarify their individual stances as they produce writing around the collected data. There is more of an emphasis on participants' individual stories, rather than the traditional grounded theory coding approach. This is a move away from the traditional grounded theory approach, where the researcher remains a 'silent author' (ibid), in the fracturing of data via the coding method. I attempted to elucidate my position from the outset as I wrote the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis. However, this thesis is the product of my interpretation of the collected data, and consequently could be seen as my construction of the interactions I had with participants during the study.

Ultimately, constructivist grounded theory repositions the researcher as the participants' equal during the research process, rather than framing him or her as an objective analyst of a subject's experiences (ibid.). This emphasis requires that I listen carefully and openly to participants' stories, and reflect critically on my own assumptions and worldview in order to report on those stories as fairly as possible. I have done this to some extent in this chapter and more fully in chapter six. I am hoping that this has allowed readers to understand the lens through which both participants and I view the world, and that this thesis consequently presents an account of the research that can be critically interrogated.

*Critique of Grounded Theory*

Grounded theory is not without its critics. Since its 'discovery' by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, it has been the subject of many revisions in an attempt to remedy its positivist leanings (Bryant, 2003; Charmaz, 1994b, 2000, 2006; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006b; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Additionally, there have been concerns regarding reflexivity - the extent to which qualitative researchers present themselves as embedded in a particular situation (Clarke, 2005; Clarke & Friese, 2007; Olesen, 2007). Other issues include the nature of theory that is produced using a grounded theory analysis (Thomas, 2007), the ethics of conducting a grounded theory study (Olesen, 2007) and the transparency of the method that generates codes (Wasserman, Clair & Wilson, 2009, p. 355).

Positivism

Olesen (2007) claims that grounded theory initially was based on positivism, and with the exception of one or two grounded theory writers such as Charmaz (2006) and Clarke (2005), this initial approach still prevails (p.422). Consequently, the researcher being embedded within the research context is often not recognised. This criticism is paradigmatically based. It relies on the constituent parts of a different paradigm to undermine the axiomatic stance of another (Spencer et al., 2003, p.4; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 212). So, in Olesen's (2007) case a constructivist, feminist framework is being used to critique a positivist one. This does not totally undermine the critique, but reduces its power because it may not have the effect of changing the positivist framework. However, it does provide an alternative view of this positivist approach. Despite this, different worldviews seem to rely on different underlying beliefs, and consequently are not amenable to being critiqued from another worldview without a rejection of the underpinning aspects that caused that worldview to develop. Consequently, criticisms of positivism would only be useful if researchers' belief systems changed or were adjusted.

Reflexivity

Grounded theory has been criticized because of a change in the approach to reflexivity by early theorists. These have led to some different approaches to grounded theory to incorporate a reflexive approach. Neill (2006) claims that

there are many definitions of reflexivity and often these definitions do not discriminate between reflexivity and reflection. She posits that reflexivity is a contemporary term used to refer to reflective activity in qualitative research. Finlay (2002) sees these terms at the opposite ends of a continuum. Reflection is at one end and is concerned with thinking about a research practice, and reflexivity is at the other end and is concerned with more immediate thoughtful conscious self awareness regarding one's effect as a researcher in the research site (p.215).

Neill (2006) states that reflexivity is a crucial idea in grounded theory, since it has its roots in symbolic interactionism. Since the main driving force of defining theory is the basic social process that occurs between participants in a study, then reflection on the part of the researcher would play a crucial part. Glaser (1978) saw reflexivity as important, but later recanted this view, claiming that reflexivity is unnecessary as it is adequately dealt with if a grounded theory approach is correctly applied (Glaser, 2001, p.41). This is a consequence of Glaser's idea that 'all is data', and any interaction with the data on the part of the researcher will be dealt with by a correct application of a grounded theory method. Neill (2006) claims that if there are interactions by the researcher on the data, then these need to be recorded and reflexivity is one way of doing this.

Reflexivity as an issue has led to different emphases with grounded theory approaches. For example, Charmaz (2006) has developed a constructivist approach, and other theorists have used grounded theory to deal with their own paradigmatic approaches which also incorporate reflexive approaches (Clarke & Friese, 2007; Gibson, 2007; Olesen, 2007). The underlying theme of these differing types of grounded theory approaches is that researchers scrutinize their research processes, report them and hence allow the reader to see how these have influenced the results of a particular piece of research (Charmaz, 2005, p.188).

My position regarding grounded theory has changed throughout the course of this research. Despite realising the transient nature of knowledge and theory because of my poststructuralist readings (Dowling, 1998; Dowling & Noss,

1990; Sarup, 1988), I still tended to see aspects of social interaction as amenable to theory because of my mathematical background. Consequently, I thought that grounded theory could provide not only a rigorous method to investigate social phenomena, but also make available theories that would be more descriptive of social events whatever the context.

Clearly, any attempt at describing 'reality' is dependent on the person constructing that description. Consequently, theories that are descriptive of the world can only be useful in a local context. That is, they are micro theories, and there are many of them. Reflecting on the research processes used in this study, I am aware that my interactions with participants have coloured the nature of the data that has been collected. Throughout the data collection phase, I was conscious not to influence what participants reported in the interviews, and attempted to use the videoed learning support sessions to reflect what the participant felt had occurred as much as possible.

However, as a researcher, I still analysed the videoed sessions and developed a theory based on what I thought was happening and what was reported to me by participants. In this sense, this analysis is a reconstruction of what occurred in both the interviews and the video sessions. Throughout the analysis, I tried to find patterns of behavior in the videos and confirmations in the interview transcripts in order to develop a theory of tertiary help seeking. The approach used has been outlined in figures 3.1 to 3.3, which appear in the 'methods' section of this chapter.

Constructivist grounded theory has been used in this study to the following extent: I was concerned to position myself on a equal footing with participants during the data collection (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 12) and felt  I achieved this to a certain extent; I tried to ensure that participants felt comfortable so that they would be able to tell their own help seeking stories; I tried to ensure that the analysis that occurred was located in the data, albeit constructed by me from interview transcripts and video viewing; and I tried to report the results of this study by making clear my preconceptions  about the nature of knowledge, research and theory.

<u>Theory Development</u>

Thomas (2007) states theory generated by grounded theory is distinct from theory generated in the natural sciences (p.123). He claims that inductive theory is not theory in the sense that it is predictive, rather it is explanatory. He claims that many grounded theorists, that is, Glaser and Strauss and Charmaz, see the theory of grounded theory as part of the approach which allows them to make inferences and give explanations based on inductive processes (p.121). There seems to be confusion here as the term 'theory' in grounded theory could be mistakenly used to describe two essentially different things - a scientific theory or an inductive theory. The former would encompass scientific theories from the natural sciences which are predictive. The latter would encompass social scientific theories which are explanatory. Thomas (2007) claims, that one of the problems with grounded theory, is that, the term 'theory' conflates findings using this research methodology to that of the natural sciences, assigning a rigour to its results that is unwarranted.

Charmaz (2006) focuses her definition of theory in grounded theory around positivist and interpretive approaches. She claims that positivist grounded theorists would want their theories to be predictive and explanatory (p.126), and that they would tend to seek explanations regarding phenomena that are deterministic.  Alternatively, interpretive grounded theorists attempt to understand phenomena rather than explain it. Charmaz sees theory from interpretive grounded theory studies as enshrining the concept of multiple realities, indeterminacy, with facts and values being linked together (p.126).

The criticisms based on the nature of theory generated from grounded theory studies seem to be based on the confusion of what theory means in a social scientific sense. Perhaps positivist grounded theorists attempt to produce theory that is more in line with the natural sciences, whereas interpretive grounded theorists have what Thomas (2007, p.123) calls 'weak' theory. This study has employed an interpretive approach to theory in grounded theory, so I can adequately understand help seeking, and be able to explain it. The theory generated in this study has necessarily been a micro theory, which models the help seeking of the small number of participants from whom data was collected. A micro theory is one which has some explanatory power in

qualitative research, but is more limited because it is not based on data from a large number of participants and therefore may not lead to general insights (Richardson & Kramer, 2006, p.510).

*Critique of Constructivist Grounded Theory*

Glaser and Holton (2004) claim that the theoretical nature of classic grounded theory means that the theory 'discovered' does not rely on the participants being studied, the place the data was collected or when it was collected (p.2). Additionally, theory that emanates from classic grounded theory does not have the problems of accuracy that plague most qualitative data analysis, since grounded theory data collection encompasses everything that goes on during the study when the data is collected. This would entail the researcher being aware of what is happening beyond what is merely being reported by participants (Glaser, 2002, p.1).

This is a positivist approach to data and theory, since the researcher is being seen as an observer of objective reality. Glaser (2002) claims that grounded theory is not constructivist because everything that happens under the auspices of a grounded theory study is data (p.1). This mitigates against having a conception of grounded theory focused on the constructions of both researcher and participant. If a researcher applies classic grounded theory methods, then because every aspect of the study is considered data, any biases or perspectives will be dealt with through grounded theory method. Glaser and Holton (2004) claim that this approach places grounded theory not merely as a qualitative data analysis method, but as the qualitative data analysis methodology that transcends others (p.4).

Furthermore, there is a major confusion between grounded theory and qualitative data analysis in that researchers seldom see the distinction between generating theory as researchers collect data, and generating theory once data has been completely collected (p.4). The former would position a study as a ground theory study, the latter as a qualitative data analysis study (ibid.).

For Glaser, any form of grounded theory that deviates from his original approach is not a grounded theory method, rather a qualitative data analysis method. Consequently, constructivist grounded theory; feminist grounded theory, ethnographic grounded theory and post modern grounded theory are all forms of qualitative data analysis. These are distinct from Glaser's original conceptualization which produced a method to provide a more rigorous qualitative data collection, analysis and theory generation approach.

**Chosen Methodology and Rationale**

Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed that individual participant perspectives vary and that a grounded theorist researcher would take these multiple perspectives into account and raise these perspectives to a theoretical level, whereby other underlying perspectives would become apparent. This approach does have constructivist leanings, and it seems that Glaser only developed a more positivist position after Strauss began working with Corbin, and latterly when other researchers used grounded theory in forms that Glaser would claim was not classic or pure. Subsequently, he formed the Grounded Theory Institute and began his own publishing house (Sociology Press) and journal (The Grounded Theory Review) in order to ensure that classic grounded theory was maintained.

The concept of a general method to undertake social science research appealed to me, as I initially thought that it could be used in any study. I adopted a grounded theory approach for this study, because I thought that it was the most appropriate fit for the research questions I was attempting to answer, particularly as I wanted to build a theory of tertiary help seeking.

The positivist ontology that underpins classic grounded theory has not been employed because my underlying beliefs tend to line up with constructivist approaches; consequently classic grounded theory has not been used in this study. Glaser would probably claim that therefore grounded theory is not being used. However, three forms of coding have been employed in each area of the data collecting. These are open coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. The data and generated codes have been constantly compared to produce categories. Theoretical sampling has been used, but

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only in the form of post interviews. Participants were not asked to attend a third interview after they have completed the pre-interview, videoed learning support session and post-interview. Issues that arose from the videoed learning support session have been considered in the post-interview, and consequently part of this interview provided theoretically sampled data.

Consequently, this research study has used a constructivist grounded theory approach using the aspects from Charmaz's (2006) approach.

## Method

### Institutional Access

In order to be able to collect data at the chosen tertiary institute, I met with a middle manager there in order to gain written permission to contact students who accessed learning support. The rationale and methodology of the research project were outlined at this meeting. Students were to be contacted initially by an administrative staff member who used to work in the learning centre, and who knew how to access contact details from a database of students that the learning support staff maintained. Subsequently, I met with the research officer of the institute, who suggested that the research be conducted at another institution. Neither the middle manager nor the research officer were able to give written permission for data to be collected or students to be contacted at that time. After this second meeting, I attempted to gain permission from a second institute, and met with their ethics committee after having completed the relevant application forms. The time frame to make amendments to this ethics application was short but I was able to amend the application in line with the second institution ethics committee's recommendations, but was unsuccessful in gaining written permission from this institute despite the learning support staff being very keen to be part of the study. I was not contacted by the second institution regarding my ethic's application. Additionally, I did not contact them, as I did not want to pressure them into allowing me to conduct aspects of my research with their students. Eventually, after a year, I managed to gain written permission from the first institute and subsequently students were contacted using the details in the database.

**Selection of Sample**

At the time this research study was undertaken, the Learning Support Centre maintained a Microsoft Access database of students who attended learning support sessions. An employee at the tertiary institute (who had at one time been an administrator for the Learning Support Centre) assigned a unique identifier to each student and used a table of random numbers in order to generate a sample to invite to be part of the study. I was not informed of the names of the students who were contacted, and I was only aware that they had been asked to be part of the study when they contacted me.

In total 85 students were written to: introducing me; explaining the nature of the study; giving my contact details; and providing a consent form to fill in if they wanted to be part of the study (Appendix 1; Appendix 2).

**Recruitment Procedures**

Once a student had contacted me, I either emailed or rang them in order to outline to them the nature of the study, the amount of time they were being asked to contribute to the study and to arrange a time when they could come to the main campus and take part in an interview. Of the 85 students who were initially contacted, 29 replied. Of those 29, 26 completed the pre-interview. The three students who did not attend the pre interview were not contacted again.

Of the 26 students who completed the pre-interview, only 13 attended for the videoed learning support session. The thirteen students who did not attend for the videoed learning support session either had no need of extra help or had finished their course.

One student who attended for a videoed learning support session forgot her appointment for the post interview. She was unable to attend at a later time as by this time she had left New Zealand. This reduced the number of participants to 12. However, four students of those students were prepared to attend for a videoed learning support session only if the session was taken by me in my role as a learning support tutor. This removed them from the sample

as part of the selection criteria was that participants be tutored by someone other than me so there was no conflict of interest.

Therefore, eight students completed all three aspects of the data collection in this study.

**Participants**

The participants in this study were students at a tertiary institute who used that tertiary institute's Learning Support Centre to have extra help with their tertiary studies. Eight participants from the first tertiary institute were involved in this study.

*Participant One*

Participant one was a male returning student. He had a European ancestry and was over 40 years of age. Participant one's presenting issue was his spelling, and he was very keen to improve this during the course of his session. At school he was considered a 'bright student', but at the same time a 'stupid lad'. His problems emanated from an eyesight problem that was not diagnosed until he was well into his 20s. Over the years since school he 'learnt how to ask' for advice. Prior to this he was not sure how to 'go about asking' for help, mainly because of his self doubt. This seems to have arisen because he was put into the top classes when he was at school, but because of his unrecognised disability was unable to do the required work. He was unable to focus on the board or his desk top because of the stigmatism in his eyesight. Despite this he proved to be an excellent 'hands on' learner.

*Participant Two*

Participant two was a male returning student. He was Maori, and was over 30 years of age. Participant two's presenting issue was having help with his literacy and numeracy in the context of revising for a class test that was occurring within a few days of the videoed learning support session. He had had help from his previous boss prior to attending polytechnic, but even though 'he was a bit negative' there were a lot of positives when he had this help. He was actually working as an allied staff member of a university, and consequently qualified to have literacy help from the learning centre there. He

found that help 'amazing', and felt that if he could have continued with it that he would 'actually to get to start reading properly'. He was learning how to pronounce words, and had started to spell difficult words.

*Participant Three*

Participant three was a female returning student. She was of Maori origin, and was over 35 years of age. Participant three's presenting issue was an assignment she was completing on a spreadsheet that was due to be handed in, within the next few days after the videoed learning support session. She did not tend to ask for help at work before she started studying, mainly because she was not as confident as she is now. Her first attempt at asking for help in a tertiary context produced an unsatisfactory result, as she felt that the help giver went off on a tangent and consequently did not help her. However, she has regularly attended the learning centre and had one to one help since that time.

*Participant Four*

Participant four was a female mainstream student who has English as a second language. She was from Sri Lanka, and was under 25 years of age. Participant four's presenting issue was to get an outline of the important elements of a course she was about to undertake. Also, she wanted to review aspects of her study skills to ensure she did as well as possible on the papers she had enrolled in. She was used to receiving extra help for her courses, as she always had extra tuition or coaching for her schoolwork in Sri Lanka either from tutors or friends. When she was studying English as a second language, she attended a number of learning support sessions in order to improve her mathematics. She saw learning support sessions as a supplementary way of achieving her academic goals.

*Participant Five*

Participant five was a female second language student. She was from Indonesia, and was under 25 years of age. Participant five's presenting issue was improving her knowledge of some aspects of English grammar, and her ability to speak more fluently in English. During her session she covered adjectives, particularly 'ed' and 'ing' endings. She was used to receiving help,

as "many people help me because I always took help with some teacher when I in class." She stated that she had always had extra tuition after class in Indonesia, but that this was unlike the support she received at her tertiary institute. She described the help she received in Indonesia as "personal tuition" for her mathematics, or accounting.

*Participant Six*

Participant six was a male, returning student. He was of European origin and over 50 years of age. Participant six's presenting issue was having help for an assignment that he was working on for a course that he was enrolled on. He did not seem to be used to having help prior to his tertiary study, and only seemed comfortable seeking help if he knew the help giver well. Often he preferred to 'work things out' for himself, and denied that he had help from friends when he 'used them as sounding boards' for his problems. When he started his tertiary studies he initially felt very nervous and apprehensive about asking for help, but later stated that 'it's all part and parcel of the learning process'.  Participant six attended the learning centre on a regular basis for assignment help.

*Participant Seven*

Participant seven was a female mainstream student with English as a second language. She was from the Philippines, and was over 25 years of age. Participant seven's presenting issue in her videoed learning support session was having help for an assignment that she was undertaking for a course she was enrolled on. She was not comfortable having help prior to attending her chosen tertiary institute and the first time she had help for her tertiary study she felt awkward. She stated that 'maybe there's something wrong with me', as even though people seem willing to help, she would prefer to do things for herself in order to prove to herself that she could do the work herself. She also stated that to be able to learn the material for her course, she needed to complete the work without assistance.

*Participant Eight*

Participant eight was a female mainstream student. She was of European origin, and was over 30 years of age. Participant eight's presenting issue was

having help with an assignment that she was writing for a course she was enrolled on. She was used to having help prior to attending tertiary study. She stated that she did not do very well academically at school, and that this caused her to lose her confidence. She claims that she 'just needed a little bit of extra help'. When she started work she had help on the job. She thinks she is the type of person that 'if I ever got stuck on something, or whether I'm unsure, I'd ask for help'. Also, she stated that if she was ever stuck on a problem, she has 'got to let someone know I don't know something'. She attended learning support on a regular basis for assignment help.

**Ethics**

Ethical considerations in relation to qualitative research are important and arose after the Nuremberg trials revealed the Nazi's medical research on concentration camp inmates during World War II (Punch, 1994, p.88). Later studies with doubtful ethical consideration have been documented by Kelly and Ali (2004). They include social psychological studies of obedience (Milgram, 1974), homosexuality (Humphrey, 1970), the National Front (Fielding, 1981), and the Tuskegee experiment conducted by the United States Public Health Service between 1932 and 1972 (Brunner, 2009). Each of these studies may or may not have provided valuable results, but clearly the unethical approach taken in each study undermines anything of value that may have emanated.

Kelly and Ali (2004) state that, any definition of ethical practices in research depends on the ontology of the researcher conducting the research (p.116). For example, researchers who espouse positivist ontology would see ethical practice as a form of professional practice, where the objective truths that are discovered are considered in the light of the effect that they have on the participants. Central to this approach to research is the principle of informed consent, where participants are fully informed about the nature of the research and its objectives. This reduces the nature of ethics within the research study to that of the completion of procedures, that is, ensuring that participants sign a consent form, that their identities are not disclosed or that the research results are not misused. Latterly, post modern views of social research have

postulated that conducting ethical research does not necessarily mean that harm is not done to participants (ibid.). Despite this, Piper and Simons (2005) view ethical research as comprising research where there is: informed consent; and confidentiality and anonymity. This is substantiated by Punch (2000) who also claims that the ethical issues that affect a social research study involve: ownership of the data and conclusions; and the use or misuse of the results of the study. It is unclear whether these researchers ascribe to positivist ontology, but it is clear that what constitutes ethical research behavior changes over time, and is probably influenced by the researcher's theoretical, moral and political view of the research process (Kelly & Ali, 2004, p.116).

This research study like all other social research involved ethical issues (Punch, 2005, p.276). I approached the ethical considerations in this research study using Punch's (2005) and Piper and Simons' (2005) approach. In that regard I was concerned that participants' privacy was protected, that their confidentiality was protected, and that they were fully informed about the research and its objectives.

*Privacy*

Privacy involves the protection of participants' identities (Christians, 2005, p. 145).Throughout this study the privacy of participants has been maintained. This has occurred in the following ways. Firstly, individual participants had no knowledge of other participants in the study, as data was collected from them at different times, and often in different locales. Secondly, participants only met with the researcher and the learning support tutor during the data collection stage. Learning support tutors all agreed to maintain participants' privacy and all those involved signed a confidentiality form. Thirdly, interviews took place in a private space away from the leaning support centre workroom, so that no one could observe participants being involved with the research. Fourthly, videoed learning support sessions occurred in a low key manner, with the camera being small and unobtrusive. In five cases the videoed sessions took place in a separate area, away from the learning support centre student workroom. The other three videoed sessions took place in the

learning support centre student workroom when it was empty. Additionally, I did not observe the learning support sessions being videoed.

*Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is where participants' identities are protected during the research process. Confidentiality allows participants to talk in confidence, and also allows them to veto the publication of any material that they think may harm them in any way (Piper & Simons, 2005, p.57). The confidentiality of participants has been maintained throughout this study, as the video and audio tapes used to collect data in this study have been kept in a locked box at my home. Great care has been taken to ensure that both audio and video tapes have not been mislaid. If a video tape needed to be used during the post interviews, I made sure that I had it with me at all times. I took the audio tapes that needed to be transcribed to a transcription service, whose employees signed a confidentiality agreement regarding participant data. This company specialized in legal transcriptions, so its employees are aware of confidentiality issues and have their own code of ethics in this regard. Once transcripts were completed I copied them to a portable hard drive, which either is at my home or which is kept with me at all other times. Participants were identified during the interviews for this study, but all references that could compromise their confidentiality have been removed during the reporting stage. Participants have been referred to by number throughout this research. This use of anonymisation (ibid.), has been implemented to try to ensure that no harm was done to participants.

*Informed Consent*

Informed consent means that participants in a research study should give their consent to be interviewed or observed in the full knowledge of the objectives of the research study, and the consequences that the study may have for them (Piper & Simons, 2005, p.56). This has been viewed as the focal point in any discussion of research ethics in the natural and social sciences, and is used to support the principle of the participants' individual autonomy in coming to a decision as to whether they want to participate in a research project or not (Kelly & Ali, 2004, p.120). Informed consent was achieved in this research

project as all the participants were sent a consent form (Appendix 2), which they signed. I made sure that participants knew what the project was about, and what the objectives for the project were. Participants were aware that there were three data collection phases in this project, and of the amount of time that they would have to commit to it. Participants who decided not to continue were not contacted. The reasons why some participants did not continue were not clear. They could have decided that they could not afford the time or that they did not want to participate. This would indicate that for some participants their informed consent improved as a result of the pre interview and that they felt able to withdraw from the study even though they had initially agreed to participate (Kelly & Ali, 2004, p.121).

**Data Collection**

*Pre Interviews*

The pre interviews took place in a small classroom away from the learning support centre. The pre interviews were semi structured using a list of questions as a starting point (Appendix 3). These were based on Charmaz's (2006) model and were intended to explore participants' views rather than interrogate them (p.29).

The itemized pre-interview questions were a starting point for a conversation with participants about their academic help seeking practices. Interviews were scheduled for an hour, but in some cases because of the amount of data that participants provided, took longer. The pre interviews were recorded on audio tape and transcribed by an independent agency. Transcripts of interviews were available for participants on request, but no participants in this study wanted to see their interview transcript.

*Videoed Learning Support Session*

Videoed learning support sessions occurred after the pre interviews, when the participant next required academic help. The learning support sessions were instances of the normal work that occurred in the learning support centre, and three of the eight sessions took place in the learning support centre student workroom. One session took place at another block, where ESOL learning support took place, and four took place in an area separate from the Learning

Support Centre workroom. Participants booked time with a tutor of their choice, after which I obtained written consent from the tutor that videoing the session would be acceptable. All tutors signed the confidentiality agreement (Appendix 8). No tutor refused to be videoed. The video camera used was a tape based Sony Handycam, which was small and portable. This allowed sessions to be videoed discretely, and for the participant or tutor to turn off the camera if they wanted to. I attended the beginning of seven of the eight sessions to set up the camera. Once this was completed I left the tutor and participant to continue the learning support session. The session that took place at the ESOL block was set up by the tutor and participant together.

*Post Interviews*

The questions in the post interviews differed depending what had occurred in the videoed learning support session. However, I asked a set of general questions at the start of the earlier post interviews (Appendix 4). These were expanded in the light of the analysis from the pre interviews and from viewing the videoed learning support sessions. This is in line with a grounded theory approach where data analysis informs later data collection. Subsequently, questioning in the post interviews involved viewing segments of the videoed learning support sessions and questioning the participant about their thoughts, goals or wishes. I maintained a time log of each videoed learning support session against which I wrote questions or issues to be explored with the participant.

Video Specific Post Interview Questions

The following are some examples of the video specific questions that I asked during the post interviews while viewing the videoed learning support sessions, together with some of the notes that accompanied the specific question. The position of the incident on the video that prompted the question is shown on the left hand side, and the number of specific questions formulated is shown in brackets next to each participant. The first few and the last questions used in the post interviews are shown. I had handwritten copies that varied for each participant dependent on what occurred in each videoed learning support session. The questions, as in the pre interview, formed the basis of a discussion about what occurred in the videoed learning support

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session. The post interviews were recorded onto audio tape, and transcribed by an independent agency. These transcripts were available to participants, but no participants wanted to see their transcript. The following are extracts of notes for Participant 6 taken by the researcher of the first viewing of the video, together with some of the questions asked. Examples of questions for other participants appear in Appendix 5.

Participant Six (69 specific questions)
0.00.18.05   Did you want to see what was going on, on the screen?
0.00.55.24   [Support tutor] seems to carry on after you said you'd done that one another way. Did you want [support tutor] to do it your way?
0.01.28.21   You interrupted [support tutor] here. Did you have specific views about what you wanted to cover in the session?
0.01.50.08   Were you aware of the camera?

.
.
.

0.47.53.24   Did you expect a complete solution at the end of the session?
0.52.15.00   P6: "Can I borrow your photocopier?" How important is a positive response?

In most cases I was able to collect relevant data from participants in the post interview during the allotted hour. However in some instances a longer time was required than the hour set aside. Participants were generous with their time in this regard, with one participant giving three hours of his time for his post interview, and two others one and a half hours.

**Data Analysis**

*Grounded Theory Coding Process Used*

Figures 3.2 to 3.4 highlight the coding processes used in grounded theory. I devised these figures in order to explain the coding processes used in this study and rationale for that choice. These diagrams are a new perspective on grounded theory coding.
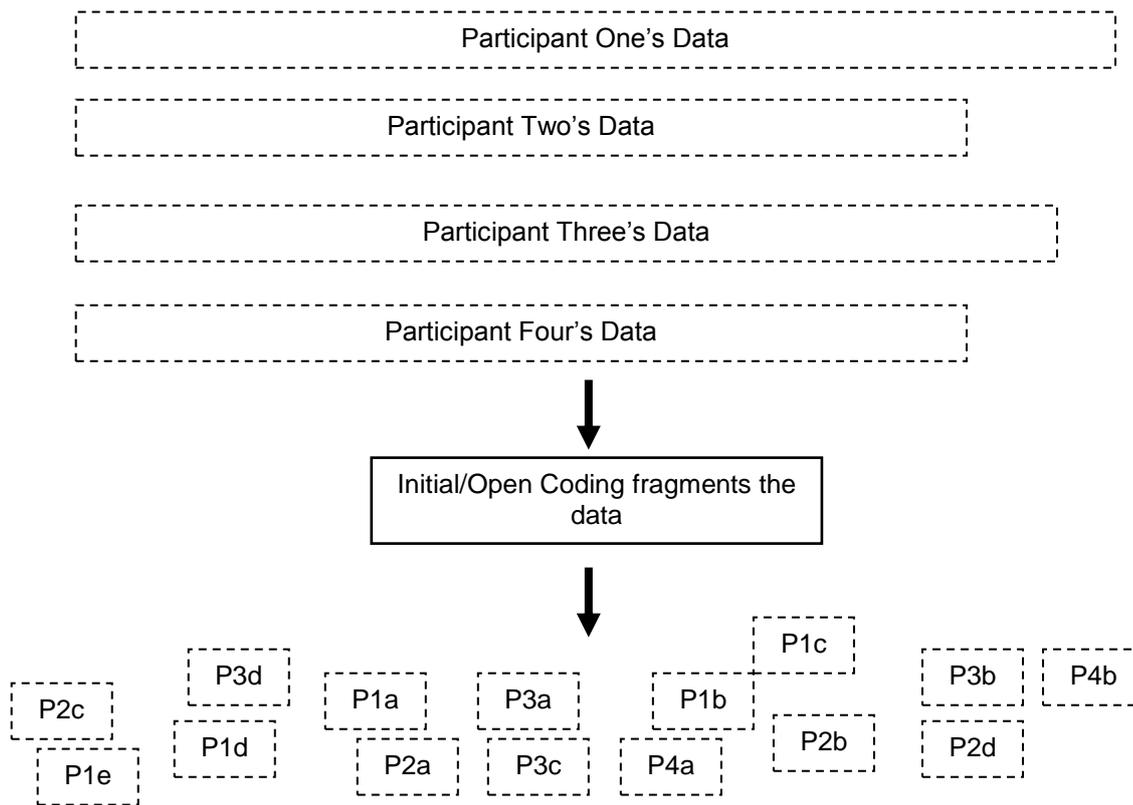
**Figure 3.2** Open coding fragmenting participant data responses.

Figure 3.3, which I devised, shows how focused coding reorganises the data from participants and generates codes, which are then compared with each other and the original gathered data. This form of selective coding was used during this study.
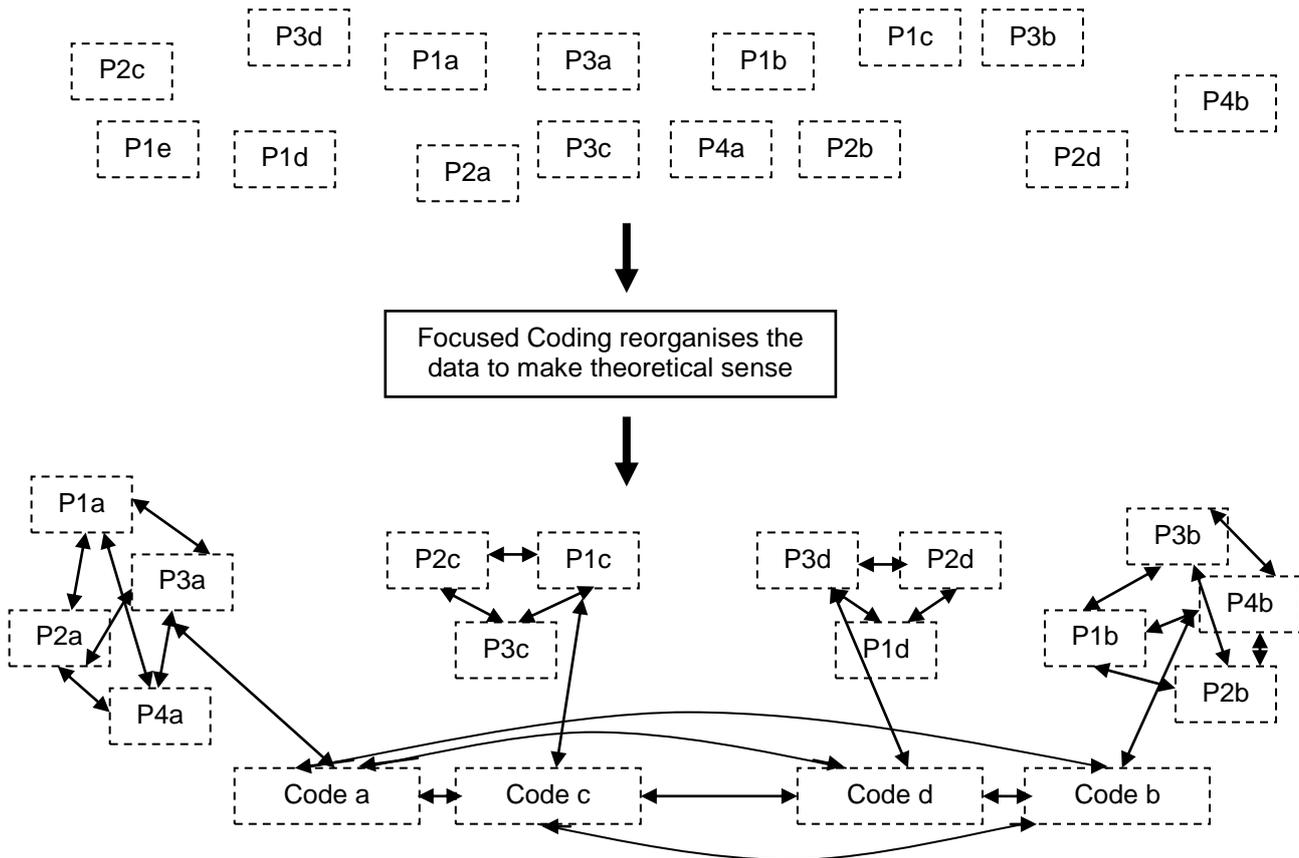


**Figure 3.3** Focused coding reorganising participant responses and identifying codes with constant comparison occurring.

Figure 3.4 shows how the coding from the focused coding stage has been put together into categories using theoretical coding. I developed this figure to show how theoretical coding was used in this study.
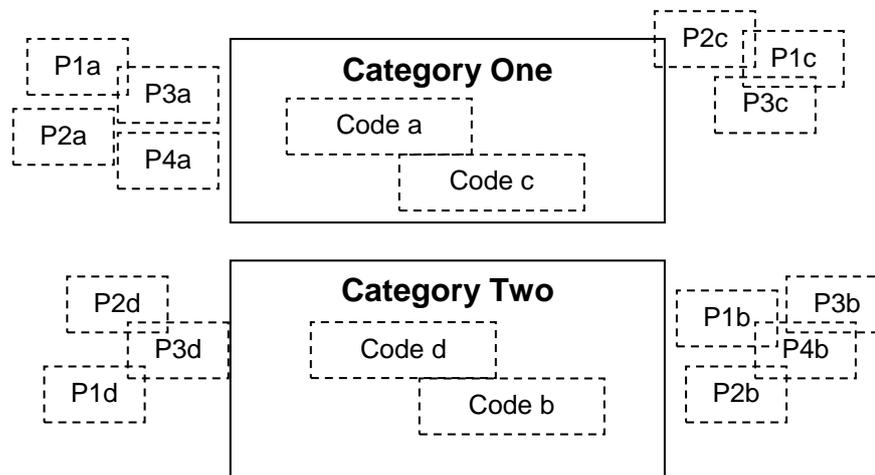


**Figure 3.4** Theoretical coding puts the codes generated with focussed coding into core categories where the data and subsequently collected data are located.

During this phase of the coding one or more core categories were identified, which formed the centrepiece of the tertiary help-seeking model. From then on other categories were redefined in terms of these core categories, so that a central focus to the help-seeking model was established. These categories were at a higher level of abstraction than the data produced during the focussed coding phase, and emerged through the comparisons that were undertaken at previous data analysis phases. Once the core categories were identified and systematically related back to focussed and open coded data it was then validated in terms of its relationship to this data and consequently redefined when aspects of it did not fit.

The above process allowed me to theorise using a systematic method of data analysis which is grounded in the data that is collected. Constant comparison is the central technique that allows a grounded theory to emerge (if a researcher takes a positivist view), or be constructed (if he or she takes a constructivist view).

*Pre Interview Coding*

As outlined earlier the pre interview data was coded using open, focused and theoretical coding. The open coding in this research study was completed using line by line coding as this approach provides an appropriate amount of data to produce initial codes. The objective of this stage of the coding process was to generate codes from the collected data into possible initial categories which formed the basis of the next stage of analysis, which was selective coding.

Pre Interview Open Coding

The open coding of the pre interviews in this study involved fracturing the data and assigning codes using a line by line approach. The pre interviews were transcribed by an outside agency and emailed to me. A table was inserted into the text in order to partition it into boxes for each question and participant response. In this first stage of coding, another box was inserted on the left hand side to accommodate the line by line codes. Gerunds were used in this stage of coding in accordance with Charmaz's (2006) approach.

An example of initial coding is outlined below. A section of the pre interview is separately displayed from the table insertion and coding.

Example of Initial Transcript

Figure 3.5 is an extract of a pre interview with a participant, which had been transcribed and emailed to the researcher.

Q       So have you just got a lot of things?

A       Well I did one paper last year just to see if I could actually do it.  And I came to Learning Support for my assignment and yeah I did alright in that course.  So I thought well I'll carry on full time this year and keep going back to them knowing I would.

Q       What kind of help did you get the first time?

A       It just – probably more like reassuring and encouragement.  And you know I had actually done most of the work myself so it just needed more punctuation things and things like – I don't know just the little hiccups that needed – yeah little things like that – referencing needed to be in alphabetical order.  Things like that were the things I had no idea about.

**Figure 3.5** Extract form Participant Eight's transcribed pre interview

## Example of Open Coding
Figure 3.6 shows how the extract in figure 3.5 was tabularized, and line by line coded.

| Line By Line | Data |
|---|---|
| | Q       So have you just got a lot of things? |
| *Testing self with study* <br> *Getting help* <br><br> *Identifying confidence* <br> *Returning to LS* | A       Well I did one paper last year just to see if I could actually do it.  And I came to Learning Support for my assignment and yeah I did alright in that course.  So I thought well I'll carry on full time this year and keep going back to them knowing I would. |
| | Q       What kind of help did you get the first time? |
| *Needing reassurance* <br><br> *Claiming work done by S* <br> *Identifying need* <br><br><br> *Seeing not knowing what don't know* | A       It just – probably more like reassuring and encouragement.  And you know I had actually done most of the work myself so it just needed more punctuation things and things like – I don't know just the little hiccups that needed – yeah little things like that – referencing needed to be in alphabetical order.  Things like that were the things I had no idea about. |

**Figure 3.6** Tabulation and line by line coding of pre interview extract.

## Pre Interview Focused Coding
As stated earlier focused coding was the second stage of coding in this study. The line by line codes were considered and the most frequent or significant were used in order to represent larger amounts of data. This is in line with Charmaz's (2006) position.

Example of Focused Coding
Figure 3.7 shows how the line by line coded extract in figure 3.6 was focused coded.

| Line By Line | Focussed | Data |
|---|---|---|
| | | Q       So have you just got a lot of things? |
| Testing self with study Getting help<br><br>Identifying confidence Returning to LS | Identifying confidence | A       Well I did one paper last year just to see if I could actually do it.  And I came to Learning Support for my assignment and yeah I did alright in that course.  So I thought well I'll carry on full time this year and keep going back to them knowing I would. |
| | | Q       What kind of help did you get the first time? |
| Needing reassurance<br><br>Claiming work done by S Identifying need<br><br><br>Seeing not knowing what don't know | Identifying need | A       It just – probably more like reassuring and encouragement. And you know I had actually done most of the work myself so it just needed more punctuation things and things like – I don't know just the little hiccups that needed – yeah little things like that – referencing needed to be in alphabetical order. Things like that were the things I had no idea about. |

**Figure 3.7** Example of pre interview focused coding based on the extract in figure 3.5

Pre Interview Theoretical Coding
After the focused codes had been constructed, they were copied into another document and analysed to generate a set of theoretical codes. Once these had been established, they were compared with new focused codes which appeared as participant data was analysed. This approach ensured constant comparison of the pre interview data.

Figure 3.8 shows how theoretical codes were created from focused codes.

The participant focused codes in the left hand box are labeled with the

number for the theoretical code in the right hand box. The right hand box

contains a count of the number of times a focused code fits into that particular

theoretical code.

<table>
<tr><td>

**Participant Focussed Codes**

*9 Believing in reciprocity: 10 Seeing self ability: 1
Realising problem: 3 Rationalising help sought: 3
Justifying help seeking:    3 Justifying asking: 6
Reflecting on process: 6 Metacognising learning: 3
Justifying asking: 3 Justifying using reception:
12 Admitting nervousness: 3 Excusing not knowing: 3
Explaining help giving: 10 Improving knowledge of how
to ask for help:        7 Questioning abilities:  7 Unsure
of help asking:  7,4 Being young and diffident: 10
Depicting static ability: 5 Emphasizing help givers
qualities: 10 Emphasizing qualities of help seeker:
9 Categorising help seeking by help giving: 7
Categorising help seeking with confidence: 8
Categorising help seeking with asking: 9 Paying back
help?: 10 Stigmatising self because of help seeking: 3
Justifying help seeking: 10 Identifying problem solution
as in self: 10  Itemising self enhancing prognosis:
3 Rationalising ability lack?: 3 Enhancing self despite
help seeking: 12 Changing subject from help seeking
issue:            5 Identifying caring as an important
quality in help giver: 8 Deciding to insist on help: 5
Identifying qualities of help giver:            11
Identifying how to help seek: 11 Identifying constant
help seeking approaches:12  Identifying not wanting to
have attention:        10 Identifying personality to seek
help: Emphasizing positive aspects: 11 How help is
sought: 8 Expecting academic help as a right:  8
Seeing no problem seeking academic help:5 Identifying
having the same person is important: 9 Reciprocating
help seeking return*
</td><td>

**Theoretical Codes**
1. Recognising need 1
3. Justifying help seeking 12
4. Help seeking as age related 1
5. Qualities of help giver 5
6. Help seekers attitude to help 4
7. Confidence 7
8. Viewing help as a right 3
9. Reciprocity for help 3
10. Views of self  4
11. Help seeking methods 4
12. Embarrassment 1
</td></tr>
</table>

**Figure 3.8** Focused codes becoming theoretical codes

More theoretical codes were developed as the pre interview data was

analysed. Counts were then taken and calculated as percentages, in order to

produce the most common theoretical codes. The theoretical codes were then

ranked by counts to check their authenticity against the number of participants

who reported this aspect as important.

Table 3.1 shows the number of participants that reported "recognising the need for help", "confidence", "views of self" and "views of help seeking" as motivators of help seeking. Categories were only included in the analysis if they were reported across at least four participants. For example, 'recognising the need for help' was reported across all eight participants, whereas 'views of self' was only reported by four participants, yet ranked third because of the high total number of reports for this motivator.

| Category | P1 | P6 | P2 | P4 | P3 | P7 | P5 | P8 | Total | No. Part | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recognising | 1 | 5 | 24 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 19 | 14 | **90** | **8** | **1** |
| Confidence | 16 | 8 | 5 | | 12 | 9 | 9 | 12 | **71** | **7** | **2** |
| Views of Self | 9 | | 7 | | 16 | | | 7 | **39** | **4** | **3** |
| Views of HS | | 18 | 5 | 9 | 1 | | 1 | 3 | **37** | **6** | **4** |

**Table 3.1** Pre Interview Category Rankings of Help Seeking Motivator Reports. The second column from the right indicates the number of participants reporting the motivator.

*Video Session Question Generation*

I viewed the video sessions prior to the post interviews and a set of general questions and questions specific to the videoed learning support session prepared. I considered the video session as a whole, and then performed a micro analysis in order to generate specific questions. Extracts of the specific questions asked are given in Appendix 6.

*Video Session Coding*

Video Initial Coding
After the first viewing of the videoed learning support sessions to generate post interview questions, the videos were analysed together in more depth in order to ascertain the micro processes that had occurred with participants' help seeking.

Interactions during the videoed learning support sessions were analysed and hand coded by the researcher using the pro forma in Figure 3.9. This sheet was used for all the participants in this study, with the 'session maintenance' and 'engagement' columns that were initially constructed being used to transcribe pertinent aspects of dialogue and participant actions. The 'other'

column was used to record help seeking behaviours that were not executive or instrumental. Help seeking precipitators were identified at this stage, and then recoded at a later stage.

Each minute of video was analysed for all eight participants in this study, which produced codes of the type of help seeking behavior present in the video sessions. This approach was the open coding phase of the video analysis as several different types of help seeking were identified. The data was fractured. The differing types of help seeking were recoded and the number of codes reduced to produce larger categories that encompassed the smaller categories initially constructed. This approach mirrored focused coding. Theoretical coding occurred with the video data, when the codes for the help seeking approaches and types were revisited and the codes again reduced. This produced a more abstract set of categories of tertiary help seeking which together with the codes from the pre interviews and post interviews were coalesced into a theory of tertiary help seeking.

*Post Interview Coding*

The post interviews were initially held to discuss and confirm aspects of the video analysis. As the discussion chapter was written, aspects of the post interviews were used for this purpose. I had pinpointed which part of the video was being considered during the post interview, and consequently I was able to align video transcripts with post interview transcripts in order to confirm or contradict aspects that occurred during the analysis. The post interview data was recorded in the 'participant's explanation of behaviour' column.

Figure 3.9 is an extract of a participant's video record sheet, together with participant post interview comments. The initial hand written comments have been transcribed.

**Participant:**

| Time | Executive help seeking behaviour | Instrumental help seeking behaviour | Engagement in help seeking | Session maintenance behaviour | Other | Researcher comments re precipitators for behaviour | Participant's Explanation of behaviour |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0.04.00-0.05.00** | 0.04.48.00 S "You agree with that?" T "Yes that's a good start" | | | | 0.04.00-0.04.42 T working on problem. S observing

0.04.53.13 'Guess where I got that from?" Indicates book. 0.04.58.24 T "Oh good" T had recommen ded text | T looking at problem S had previously attempted

S not wanting T to think that S had come up with programming solution | S confirmed his expectation of the session revolved around T's skillset

S not concerned whether T agreed with him |

**Figure 3.9** Example of participant record sheet

The post interviews also provided me with an opportunity to conduct a form of theoretical sampling, as codes and categories that were developed from the pre interviews and video footage could be revisited in this section of the data gathering. This helped to move the research methodology from qualitative data analysis to grounded theory.

In summary the pre-interviews, post-interviews and videotaped learning support sessions were analysed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. Three forms of coding were used for each set of data generated by participants. The next section considers the limitations of this study.

**Limitations**

This is a small scale qualitative study, and consequently the tentative model of help seeking that has been constructed from the data needs to be considered with care. This section will look at the limitations of this study in terms of its validity (credibility and transferability), dependability, confirmability, authenticity, participants and sample size.

*Validity*

The issue of validity in qualitative studies has been a concern since the 1950s, with several qualitative researchers presenting differing approaches to the concept (Cho & Trent, 2006, p.319; Searle, 2004; Silverman, 2001; 2005; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003, p.61). Cho & Trent (2006) identify transactional and transformational validity. Transactional validity incorporates various techniques within a study such as member checking, triangulation, auditing or bracketing. Alternatively, transformational validity requires that a study adheres to specific ideals such as the exposition of the values that underpin social and cultural interactions between the researcher and participants (p.320). Despite this typology, Cho and Trent (2006) concur with Cresswell and Miller (2000) and by default Guba and Lincoln (2005) that the conception of validity in a qualitative study depends on the paradigm that is initially used (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 320; Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p.39; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.206; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003, p.18). Both Searle (2004, p. 77) and Spencer et al (2003, p. 40) highlight Lincoln and

Guba's (1985) conceptualisation of validity in qualitative research, which comprises credibility (internal validity) and transferability (external validity). Credibility entails whether or not the participants in a study find the account of their experiences true, whereas transferability indicates results may be transferrable to other settings (Spencer et al, 2003, p. 40). The participants in this study were interviewed concerning their videoed learning support session, and their comments regarding the video were recorded and transcribed. This goes some way towards making the results of this study credible.

The results from this study may in some instances be transferable to other Learning Support Centres in tertiary institutions in New Zealand, however further research would need to be done to check this. I think that the findings and discussion in this thesis would appear 'thick' (Searle, 2004, p.79) to other learning support tutors as they are working in the same context and may therefore be useful to them.

*Dependability*

Spencer et al. (2003) note that reliability in a qualitative research context is problematic, since there are no standard methods that can be applied as the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and interpretation (p.64). They state that the attempt at replication of the findings of a study is often rejected by qualitative researchers. This resonates with me as whether the results of this study could be replicated with different participants and with a different researcher remains to be seen. A more useful re-conception of reliability is the dependability of results, which can be achieved through auditing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Auditing involves people external to the study scrutinizing the documentation of data, methods and decisions made during the project as well as its end products. This has occurred during this study. The key to auditability is whether a researcher has given a clear account of how the research was conducted (Spencer et al., 2003, p.65).

This study employed grounded theory, which specifies a systematic approach to data analysis. Additionally, each aspect of the data collection occurred in a similar systematic way which has been documented either in this chapter or

the appendices of this thesis. I feel that there is a clear audit trail from data to final results for readers to follow.

*Confirmability*

Confirmability is the qualitative replacement of neutrality or objectivity in qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Spencer et al (2003) state that objectivity in a qualitative study is problematic because the researcher is intimately involved in the research process, and that this leads to an inevitable selectivity in terms of data collection, analysis and interpretation (p.66). Although as previously stated, I devised the interview questions, collected, analysed and interpreted the data, this was done under the umbrella of Grounded Theory which ensured a systematic approach. Additionally, although my supervisors played no role in any of the above processes, they were aware of the categories that emanated from the interview transcripts and coding processes and this provided a useful monitoring system. On one occasion a category was called into question (Qualities of the Help Giver), and after reflecting on its relevance to the study I removed it, as firstly it did not answer any of the research questions I was considering, and secondly there was the possibility that I had predetermined its relevance in the study. Generally, this is an aspect of social science research that causes Silverman (2000) concern, as he would see this as an ideological use of data to back up a predetermined position. Subsequently, I was more careful ensuring that the categories that were formed were located in the data.

*Authenticity*

Authenticity in qualitative research was first introduced by Guba and Lincoln in 1989 and was later expanded and developed as a criterion of quality in qualitative studies (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.207). They saw the need to be able to judge the process and outcomes of constructivist research, rather just apply a series of methods to a particular study. Authenticity involves the extent to which different views are fairly represented in a study. Authenticity implies that a researcher has a greater understanding of the phenomenon being studied, and whether or not this has led to a better appreciation of participants' views. Also, whether the evaluation or researcher process in a

study had encouraged and empowered participants to act (Spencer et al, 2003, p. 41).

Guba and Lincoln (2005) see the researcher as a trainer of participants in ways to undertake social or political action as part of a study, so that participants are empowered to take this kind of action if they wish (p.207).

During this study I was conscientious regarding the representation of participants' voices, which resulted in a reasonably long findings chapter. Additionally, I attempted to represent participants' views of help seeking throughout this thesis. My understanding concerning the motivations that caused these participants to seek help has improved, as well as the types and approaches to help seeking that they used. During the course of the interviews I was concerned that the research process would not discourage participants from seeking further help if they needed it. This has not been the case as several participants still use Learning Support services. Additionally, if it became apparent that participants were reticent to ask for help from other tutors, I validated their need for help, and hopefully encouraged them to continue to seek help as the research sessions unfolded.

*Participants*

The sample in this study was self selective in that each participant decided whether or not to participate. Each of them felt able to have their help seeking session videoed, and be interviewed not only about their help seeking generally but also specifically about their intent during their help seeking session. This limits the results of this study, since no data has been collected regarding students who may want to seek help but may also want to be discrete about their help seeking. Additionally, there is no data from students who have not sought academic help for their work. The data gathering methods for this study required that participants feel confident. Consequently, they do not 'represent' the student body and the findings cannot be generalised.

*Sample Size*

This study was based on a small sample of participants. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the research design was complex and required that participants volunteer more time than if, for example, the results were based on one semi structured interview, which may have resulted in fewer students volunteering. Secondly, there were more opportunities for participant attrition since the research relied on three separate data collecting stages. Participants who did not complete all three stages were not included in the sample. This limits the results from this study, as these students are not a representative sample of the tertiary institution where the data was collected. Consequently, the results, model and theory developed need to be considered in this context and treated with caution.

## Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods used in this study. A constructivist grounded theory has been used in this study, using a constant comparison of codes to produce a help seeking theory. Essentially, a semi-structured interview technique was used to collect both pre and post interview data. The pre interviews were used to ascertain the motivations that tertiary help seekers had for seeking help, and the post interviews were used to confirm or contradict aspects of the videoed learning support sessions.

The pre interviews and video sessions were analysed using open, focused and theoretical coding. The post interviews were used in conjunction with the video footage and also as a form of theoretical sampling, as codes that were developed during the analysis of the pre interviews and video footage could be revisited. This approach places the methodology in this study as a Grounded Theory. The limitations of this study were discussed.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# FINDINGS

## Introduction

The findings for this thesis are based on the analysis of three sets of data: pre video interview data; videoed learning support session data and post video interview session data. The pre interview data was used to find out what motivates the participants in this study to seek academic help. The video data and post interview data was used to ascertain the approaches that these help seekers demonstrated in their help seeking and the precipitators that preceded particular forms of help seeking. Finally, the post interview data was used to confirm some of the findings from the video session. Data from each source will be used in the discussion chapter to produce a theory of academic help seeking in the context of a tertiary institution learning support centre. The following data has been taken from interview and video transcripts.

## Factors that combine to motivate students to seek help

The following major factors have been identified that combined to motivate these participants to seek academic help. These are: the recognition in the student of the need for help, the confidence that the student has in themselves, the student's view of themselves as a help seeker and the student's view of help seeking.

### Recognising the need for help

Several participants outlined their recognition of the need for help during the interview sessions. This category ranked highest in participant responses from the pre interviews. All eight participants indicated that this category was important in their responses in the pre interview. In total there were 90 instances where this category was mentioned. Participants' needs varied, but most felt there had to be a reason why they were seeking help. Additionally, they often saw a lack in themselves, where they felt that they needed to improve an aspect of their approach to their study.

*Needing to improve a perceived aspect of basic skills*

Some participants perceived a need to improve their basic skills, and reported that they needed to try to address this either to be accepted on a tertiary course or to complete it. Participant five (P5), an international student from Korea, reported that she sought help because she wanted to improve her English language skills as well as take the International English Language Test (IELTS) in order to be able to qualify to study for a degree in hospitality management. This was a motivator for her help seeking.

> P5: "Because I want to learn my grammar and then I want more writing practice because I want to take the English – International English Language Test System on – I think on next year or this year on 31 November 2007."
> R: "So you wanted the help because of that?"
> P5: "I wanted to take my Bachelor of Hospitality but my English still didn't – still not enough and I need the help because my grammar was all not so good (Pre5, p. 1)..Yeah, because I want to practice my listening, speaking, writing and reading" (Pre5, p.4).

Participant two (P2), a male Maori student, wanted help so that he could improve his reading and writing skills. He perceived a lack in his own abilities, and knew that he needed to improve his basic skills in order to progress his building career.

> P2: "And the only best place for me to do that was come to polytech, how to build a deck? I didn't know nothing about nothing…I wanted to read. I wanted to read and write" (Pre2, p.1). When I came here I knew I was going to ask for help, because I knew how I was... I knew I wasn't very good at writing and reading…I knew I'm terrible at maths. And so I knew I was going to go and get help" (Pre2, p.9).

Participant three (P3), a female Maori student, reported that she needed help improving her writing skills, having previously identified her inability as a lack. She wanted to be able to explain her work more fully than she had previously done.

> P3: "…I just couldn't write anything, I couldn't write and I couldn't make any sense out of it, I couldn't make a sentence, I just couldn't do a paragraph of written work, 600 words and I'd freak out and think what am I gonna say, I mean normally I can say whatever it is about that and maybe just ten words or something like that. I didn't know how to draw out. You might have this, tell me a story or write something about this, I didn't know how to do that. How do you write that, how do you write about something" (Pre3, p.5).

So, the need to improve an aspect of basic skills was a motivator for their seeking academic help.

*Needing help to deal with an academic problem*

In this situation participants had a specific study based problem that they had to solve and were unsure how to go about dealing with the issue. In some instances participants needed specific explanations about work that was covered on their course to ensure they knew how to do course based work.

Participant six (P6), an older male Pakeha student, wanted specific course related help with the concepts and structuring of programming problems that he was dealing with. He outlined several specialist aspects of his course that he reported needing help with and which he thought learning support should be able to provide.

> P6: "There are a number of programming languages that students could need some help with and consequently with those you're actually looking for things like syntax, programming help, how to string a programme together, how to go from one thing to another, how to put a function together, you know, and that sort of thing" (Pre6, p.12).

He reiterated this view at a later time.

> P6: "One of the main reasons that I was actually asking for help was because I was struggling with say a part of the subject that I was actually asking help for, i.e. maths" (Post6, p.1).

Participant three (P3) reported having the help that she asked for in dealing with some aspects of her writing, but that she still needed help in producing her written work. She outlined that she needed specific help to complete her assignment. This was a motivator for her seeking help, as she wanted someone to help her improve her first attempts at written work.

> R: "Tell me a little bit about what happened when you first asked for some help at [polytechnic]?"
> P3:"…I got the help I asked for…I really needed somebody to say no this is how you do it not what you've done, but this is the way it should be done (Pre3, p.1)…I also want someone to sit there and say this is how I would do it, I'd write it this way (Pre3, p.10).

Later she identified that she was aware of what type of help she wanted, and consequently asked for it. She also reported not having enough time to complete the work without help.

> P3: "Well I knew what I wanted to know and I knew – I didn't have the time – you know how you've got to book ahead.  Well I knew [support tutor] didn't have the time.  I didn't have the time to book [support tutor] for help.  So any

time I couldn't figure something out...Yeah, get going and not just sit there and sit on it" (Post3, p.11).

Participant seven (P7), a female international student, wanted specific help in dealing with her marketing report. She reported that being shown how to structure the report was not enough help for her, and that she needed help dealing with the content as well.

> P7:"Because I have this marketing report – I need to know how to structure the report …Okay, and then after doing that I don't know how to continue.  So what else should I need to put here? I need something that can help me how to continue doing it, I know that [support tutor] are there and I can just set up an appointment" (Pre7, pp.5-7).

Needing help with a specific academic problem also appears to be a motivator for these participants when seeking help.

## Confidence

The participants' confidence levels seemed to be a major factor in determining whether or not they sought help. Seven out of the eight participants indicated that this category was important in their responses in the pre interview. This category was ranked second in participants' responses in the pre interviews, with 71 instances where this category was mentioned. Some participants reported having to feel confident in order to seek help, whereas others reported that they sought help because they did not feel confident. Others perceived that having help built confidence and this motivated many participants to ask for help.

*Perceiving self confidence as a prerequisite to asking for help*
Some participants felt that they needed a measure of confidence in order to be motivated to ask for help. Participant one (P1), an older male Pakeha student, reported that he felt he could ask for help now that he was older because he had developed more confidence in himself. He contrasts this situation with one when he was younger.

> P1: "Well I learnt how to ask for it…And it's just that inner confidence that comes um after you've had a few wins you know.  It's just that it comes you know...When we're young and stupid we you know we tend to be um you know we tend to doubt ourselves" (Pre1, pp.4-5).

Alternatively, participant seven (P7) reported that if she did not feel confident then she would not seek help as it would not be of use to her.

> P7: "But if I would not be in the good mood I would not be confident any more as to being what I think is right.  And just because if that would happen, that tutor would not – the tutor would not be able to resolve what are the things that...that are really big" (Post7, p.8).

*Perceiving that having help builds self confidence*

One participant felt that having academic help built up his confidence as well as increased his ability to ask for help when it was needed. Participant six (P6) reported that having help had made him less inhibited and helped to increase his confidence levels, which in turn enabled him to seek more academic help.

> P6: "I think it's lessened my inhibitions, coming to get help.  Yeah, I think basically just lowering my inhibitions…It's part of the whole study process…And as you do study you do learn – I think you become more confident…Before I came here, I don't class myself as a terribly confident person…But having help, since being here, my confidence levels have shot up…And I think that has – as my confidence has increased, my inhibitions have decreased and consequently if I want help, I will go out and find it, get it" (Pre6, pp.12-13).

*Perceiving a lack of confidence in ability to cope with academic work*

Some participants expressed that they lacked confidence in their ability to cope with academic work, and consequently sought help because of this motivator. Participant eight (P8), a female Pakeha student, reported that she needed reassurance for her academic work and consequently would come to learning support even though she questioned whether she should be coming for help. She outlined the cause of her behaviour as a lack of confidence.

> P8:"Yeah.  I did need reassuring.  I mean sometimes I do look at people who come to learning support and I think, should I actually be here?  But I think oh no I've just got to keep coming until they tell me I'm not allowed to come anymore.  So um yeah.  I know it's still getting confidence, getting that confidence again.  And I'm hoping it will come, but whether or not I don't know" (Pre8, p.3). "I did – had just lost my confidence.  I didn't do too well at school.  So academically I – yeah I just needed a little bit of extra help" (Pre8, p.2).

Participant three (P3) emphasized that she was not very confident in her writing style.

P3:"…I wasn't all that confident in my own writing styles. Yeah, yeah.  It was hard for me.  I didn't like people reading my work for starters…"(Pre3, p.5).

Participant seven (P7) reported that she was not always confident that she had completed her work to a satisfactory standard. Consequently she sought help in order that she could make sure her work was acceptable and improve it if it were not. She felt her confidence improved because of the kind of approach that her learning support tutors took to her and her work.

P7:"Yeah, and sometimes I'm not really confident if I've done it correct – I've done it correctly, and by going to Learning Support I seem more confident about my work because [support tutor] has this approach to students that would make them feel that you're doing right.  As if you're really doing right and if there's something needs to be improved, they're also there to give support and help to improve" (Pre7, pp.1-2).

Additionally, participant eight (P8) reported that she wanted help because she was not confident. She explained this to me as I was attempting to clarify aspects of her confidence levels in the post interview. She claimed that if she had had more help at home for her academic work then she would not necessarily attend learning support sessions. She claimed that having help was a result of her poor confidence levels.

R: "You've identified that you're not confident you see and yet being confident is one of the things that makes people want to have help."
P8: "Does it?"
R: "Yeah because if you're confident in yourself to ask, whereas you've not ever had any problems doing that, so that's interesting.  So I just wondered would you know why that is the case?"
P8: "I thought it would be a lack of confidence.  I thought people that didn't come to learning support were confident within themselves that they could do the work and they didn't need help.  I thought coming here was the lack of confidence."
R: "What it is, is the confidence themselves to know it doesn't affect their self esteem.  So you get a lot of people that see having help as a weakness…so I'm just wondering if you've ever felt that?"
P8: "No.  Maybe it's not …I don't know.  You maybe look at it a bit differently but, and I think that if there was someone at home with me that was reading my work and helping me, I wouldn't be coming here because … at my last course there was a couple of girls…one's very academic and they always do well so some people maybe don't come here but then they've got other support systems, whereas I don't feel that I've got any options.  I've got one friend that sometimes reads over some work" (Post8, p.6)

In this latter case P8 was very clear that it was her lack of confidence that caused her to seek academic help.

Confidence seems to play a major role in motivating participants to seek academic help. In some cases it was participants' lack of confidence that was the motivator, in others it was their reported higher confidence levels.

**Students' views of self as help seekers**

The students' view of themselves as help seekers seemed to be a factor in whether participants sought help or not. Seven out of the eight participants reported this as an element in the motivational mix, with a total of 39 instances reported. Some participants saw themselves as the sort of people who would be able to receive help. Others felt that they did not see themselves as help seekers initially, but that their view of themselves changed to accommodate having help.

*Seeing selves as help seekers*

In the following case participant one (P1) reported that there were no barriers for him as far as help seeking was concerned.

> P1: "You discussed it and I think you were probably looking at me as though I was going to be a problem child in the fact that I think the words - your words to me was it's not the spelling, you might be putting barriers in your way. So that was when I explained to you there are no barriers, and there are no other problems" (Pre1, p.8).

In this case the participant had represented his problem to me, prior to the videoed learning support session with another tutor, and had (as the above extract indicates) felt that I had misconstrued his issues. His view of himself as a help seeker had motivated him to receive help.

The same participant felt that he was able to seek help as he was self-confident and would talk to anybody in order to solve his problems.

> P1: "And really what it came down to was...because I'm quite garish and talk to people and listen (Pre1, p.12).

This view of himself as someone who listens and would talk to anyone to receive help is one motivator in the help seeking mix.

In the following case participant four (P4) explained that even if she did not receive help after asking for it, she would still persist with her help seeking.

> R: "Is it that you still ask people and get help? If you didn't get help when you asked would it stop you asking for help?"

> P4: "I would ask can you explain about this.  If they didn't explain, I will ask them again.  I hope they will tell me and will explain" (Pre4, p.14).

In this case this participant would not be put off if the requested help was not forthcoming. Her view of herself as a help seeker would ensure that she continued to ask until she received the help she wanted.

In the following example participant eight (P8) reported seeing herself as the sort of person who would seek help for her problems.

> R: "I suppose all those years working as a flight attendant – did you get help? Do loads of training for that?"
> P8:"We had a six months course to start off with training and yeah I suppose I am the type of person that if I ever got stuck on something, or whether I'm unsure, I'd ask for help" (Pre8, p.2).

The same participant later confirmed that seeking help was particular to the individual.

> P8: "But maybe it's just the individual whether or not they feel that they can come to someone for help must be purely an individual thing" (Pre8, p.13).

This is exemplified in the following example where participant seven (P7) reported that asking for help was easy. She was uncertain however whether she was comfortable having help. She doubted that she had a normal response to receiving help.

> P7:"Asking for help is easy but at the same time – at the same time not really comfortable.  I don't think that's the right term...Not comfortable in the way that – I don't know. Maybe there's something wrong with me" (Pre7, p.2)

This participant saw no problems in terms of asking for help, but queried whether she ought to be receiving it. This contrasts with participant two (P2), who was very happy to receive help.

> P2: "Well if I kept at it, kept at it and kept at it every time every day I think I'd actually to get to start reading properly."
> R: "How did it make you feel having that help?"
> P2: "Excellent" (Pre1, p.3).

He saw himself as someone who would ask for help, even if he had to be absent from work to have academic support.

> P2: "Yes she was always helping me out.  And I was doing really well. Absolutely.  So the problem was the boss found out and he didn't appreciate it because I was doing it on my own but I was doing it on their time."

These participants saw themselves as being able to ask for help and subsequently sought it. This provided motivation for their help seeking. In contrast the following participant felt that she was not in that category initially.

*Seeing self initially as someone who would not receive help*

In the following example participant three (P3) saw herself as not being the sort of student who should receive help because of her maturity and work experience.

> R: "So when you asked for that help, did you expect it?"
> P3: "I didn't expect it being a mature student, being in the workforce having experience and all that stuff, I should have known.  That's my idea, I should have known how to do these things, but I wasn't that comfortable in asking because for that very reason" (Pre3, p.3).

This shows the importance of the recipients views of self as help seekers as a motivator, or in this case a demotivator, in the help seeking process. This participant later reported that she changed her view regarding her approach to help seeking as she began to feel that she was making her study more difficult by not having help.

> P3: "But back then I wasn't comfortable asking people for a hand.  I have a lot more experience about things.  Little did I know that it doesn't matter how at all or whatever it is you've got, you just go and ask for help, it just makes it hard on yourself really" (Pre3, p.4).

In the above example it can be seen that her later view of herself as someone who should seek help motivated her to seek assistance for her academic work. At this time she saw herself as someone who needed help. She later reiterated her previous reluctance to seek help as culturally motivated.

> R: "So before you came to WelTec, would you say that you were the sort of person that asked for help at all?"
> P3: "No.  Nope."
> R: "And that was because of?"
> P3: "I think it's just me and my culture, being Maori.  I think that has a heck of a lot to do with it... No, it was very much even at work I didn't even ask for help in my working.  If I think about it now I didn't ask for a lot of help, I could have done with a lot of help and I would have understood a lot of things" (Pre3, p.9).

In this case participant three (P3) saw her Maori culture as preventing her from seeking help. There are two interpretations of this situation. One would be that Maori culture may not encourage help seeking. This interpretation seems unlikely, since it would seem anecdotally that members of Whanau

spend time helping each other, and that achievements of individuals in the group are celebrated and shared by that group. Another interpretation would be that as a new Maori worker in a predominantly Pakeha workforce she may have felt the need to show her independence and competence in order to prove that she was able to do the job well. Whatever the reason, this participant felt that she was unable to ask for help even though she felt that she needed it, wanted it and would have benefitted from it. She saw herself as being constrained by her culture in terms of her ability to seek help. This view of herself stopped her seeking help.

Student views of themselves as help seekers seem to be a motivator in the help seeking mix. In this study participants reported that they felt able to seek help if they wanted it, or if they had been reluctant in the past then this had changed during the time they had been studying in the tertiary sector.

## Students' views of help seeking

Some students saw their view of help seeking as a factor in whether they sought help or not. Four out of the eight participants reported this as an element in the motivational mix, with a total of 32 instances reported. Some participants saw help seeking as positive, but one participant had ambivalent feelings about it even though she sought help.

### *Seeing help seeking as positive*

Some participants saw help seeking as positive and something that would help them in their studies in tertiary education.

Participant two (P2), for example, thought that having help was a good thing. He described how happy he was to have it. This positive view of help seeking would motivate him to seek help.

> P2: "Oh brilliant. I needed the help. I needed [*support tutor*] to help me. So I was absolutely wrapt" (Pre2, p.12).

Similarly participant seven (P7) was also happy to have support for his work.

> R: "How did you feel about that when you knew that you could get help? How did that make you feel?
> P7: "That's so wonderful. That every time you would be needing help, you know that there's Learning Support" (Pre 7, p.2).

Participant four was also happy to have extra help for her course.

> R: "How do you feel when you ask for help, how do you feel about it?"
> P4: "Very peaceful ... it's a good environment to study, it's really important.
> R: "So you're not nervous about asking for help?"
> P4: "No, I never do" (Pre4, p.4).

These participants saw having help as a positive experience.

*Seeing help seeking as having costs*

Even though some participants were positive about help seeking, they often displayed ambivalent views of it in the interviews, and saw that there were costs involved. For example, even though participant two (P2) was positive about the process, he saw that there were negative aspects attached to it.

> R: "So obviously there's negative things about asking for help. What are the negatives?"
> P2: "Well I can't actually see any benefits just walking up here after my work out. I'd like to be at home right now. But then when I'm at home I'm not going to leave. So there is a negative about it (Pre2, p.17).

For this participant, going home instead of having a help seeking session was preferable.

Participant seven (P7) also displayed ambivalent views regarding whether or not she should be receiving help for his assignment work.

> P7: "Maybe I just have this attitude that as much as possible I would like to prove to myself that I can do it. And by forcing that, that thinking to myself, you can do it, you can do it, it makes the task harder for me" (Pre7, p.3).

Views of the help seeking process varied among some of these participants. Some saw help seeking as a positive process. Others reported having mixed feelings. Even though they were positive about having help, they saw that it had some negative aspects as well.

The participants in this study identified four major motivating components to their help seeking: the recognition of the need for help, confidence, their view of themselves, and their view of help seeking. The following section identifies the range of help seeking approaches drawn on by participants.

## Types of help seeking that these students used

The participants in this study used different types of help seeking during the videoed learning support sessions. They moved from Nelson Le Gall's (1981)

executive help seeking to instrumental help seeking and often displayed combinations of these as they sought academic help. These forms of help seeking behaviours have been identified from the videoed learning support sessions that took place as part of this study. Participants displayed the following types of help seeking: executive help seeking; instrumental help seeking; executive/instrumental help seeking; instrumental/executive help seeking; dependent help seeking and independent help seeking. This expands Nelson Le Gall's (1981) conceptualization of help seeking into a tertiary education context. Executive and instrumental help seeking can be seen as polarized categories, with combinations of these states occurring between these extremes.
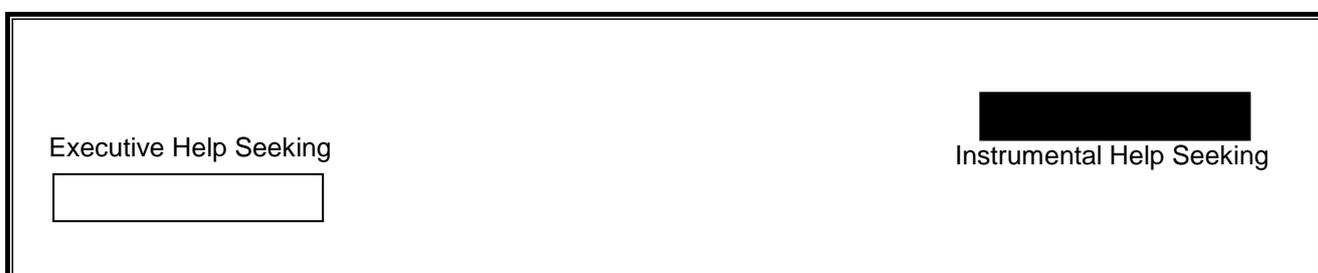


**Figure 4.1** Executive and instrumental help seeking categories

**Instrumental help seeking**

The participants in this study displayed instances of Nelson Le Gall's (1981) instrumental help seeking. This is where a student seeks enough assistance to solve a problem in question, then solves it rather than asking for the complete solution directly.  Examples of this type of help seeking varied between participants. In some cases students asked instrumental type questions. In other cases, participants realised that they needed to deal with some of the questions that they had themselves, and consequently mentioned this to the tutor. Often the intent of these comments was unclear. Were students attempting to draw more information from the tutor, or were they verbalising their realisations? In some cases the tutor provided more specific help, in others he or she left the work for the student to attempt. For example, participant one (P1) indicated that he needed to be able to help himself.

> P1: "I realised after the first discussion that I actually had to help myself". The student then shows his spelling book to the tutor (Vid 1, 0.09.10).

In this case the student is highlighting his problem with spelling and showing the tutor what he has done to address the problem. The tutor validates his choice but does not initially provide him with any strategies. Then the tutor made the following comments:

> T: "Oh that one. Do you know how long that book has been in existence? It's very, very useful" (Vid 1, 0.09.40).
> P1 continues to elaborate his personal history culminating in the following statement.
> P1: "I never learnt how to basically retain…I think a lot of spelling…is the fact you've got to be repetitious" (Vid 1, 0.11.42). The tutor agrees with this participant and then begins to outline what he would need to do to address his problems.

In this case P1 is looking for strategies to help resolve his spelling problems. He realises that he has to apply these strategies himself.

In some instances a participant asked for general help, so that they could complete their assignment without any further assistance. An example of this is where participant eight (P8) realised that the tutor was not going to proof read her essay, so consequently asked for some general advice about how to do this herself.

> P8: "What advice would you give me to take away" (Vid8, 0.25.00).

In this case the tutor referred the student to the spell and grammar checker in Microsoft Word, and reiterated that learning support tutors could not proof read student essays.

Instrumental help seeking occurred in seven out of the eight participant sessions. This confirms Nelson Le Gall's (1981) categorisation, and moves it into this particular tertiary context.

**Executive help seeking**

The participants also displayed instances of Nelson Le Gall's (1981) executive help seeking. Executive help seeking is where the help seeker is trying to find someone else to solve their problem, and hence attain their academic goals without necessarily developing the required skills to perform the task or solve the problem for themselves. Similar to instrumental help seeking, the participants' exhibition of executive help seeking varied. In some cases the participant asked direct pertinent questions regarding the assignment or

presenting issue. In other cases the participant facilitated executive help giving by allowing the tutor to explain material extensively if it was relevant to what was required for the work in question. In these cases the student often just prompted the tutor to continue with the provided help.

For example participant six (P6) asked the tutor specifically for help with his programming assignment.

> P6: "What are you going to divide by to get the average?" (Vid6, 0.08.15). The tutor thought about this question, then answered the student.

Whereas, participant three (P3) sat quietly listening while the tutor provided specific help for the work being covered.

> P3: Was silent as the tutor gave detailed help regarding her assignment (Vid 3, 0.02.30). Consequently, the tutor continued with the explanation for another three minutes, culminating in
> T: "…and the position that you are going to come to is..."
> P3: "Ok" (Vid 3, 0.06.32).

In this case the student confirmed that she was interested in that aspect of the session as the tutor was focusing specifically on the assignment question.

> P3: "That was part of my assignment so I was definitely interested in it.  And I get the picture what he's trying to – that was a question that was in my assignment so I would have been listening.  Probably I don't look like I'm listening" (Post3, p.3).

There were examples of executive help seeking in all eight videoed participant learning support sessions. This confirms Nelson Le Gall's (1981) classification, as far as this tertiary setting is concerned.

In the following section, two new categories of help seeking are identified from the videoed learning support sessions. These are executive/instrumental help seeking and instrumental/executive help seeking.

**Executive/Instrumental help seeking**

Executive/instrumental help seeking is a new help seeking classification which I have developed as a result of this study. It is a combination of executive and instrumental help seeking. This type of help seeking is where the student is concerned with having his or her assignment or presented issue looked at in the learning support session, but where some upskilling is also taking place.

Upskilling would occur when the participant seeks a deeper understanding of the material or problem that is being presented together with the acquisition of relevant techniques to affect a solution, rather than just requiring the solution to be provided. In the case of executive/instrumental help seeking, however, the upskilling is a byproduct, and the main emphasis of the interaction is on looking at the assignment or piece of work that the student presents. In this case the help seeker may be focusing on their assignment but they are prepared to acquire skills in order that they can deal with their immediate problem or issue. Executive/instrumental help seeking is subtly different from executive help seeking, and is located closer to executive help seeking than to instrumental help seeking.

Executive Help Seeking

**Executive/Instrumental Help Seeking**

Instrumental Help Seeking
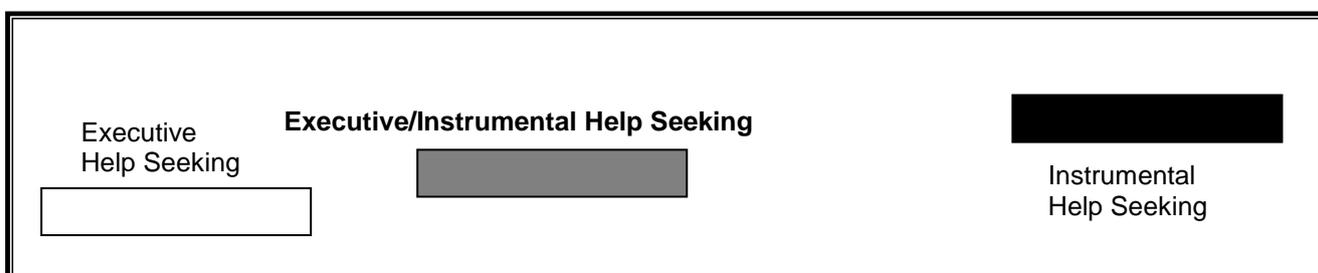
**Figure 4.2** Executive/Instrumental help seeking category

For example, Participant four (P4), a younger female student who had English as a second language, asked a specific question about the topics in her study programme. The nature of the help seeking could be classified as executive, but because more general content is the focus of the help seeking, this instance can be labeled as executive/instrumental help seeking.

> P4 asked a series of specific questions about the nature of her study programme.
> P4: "So for excel what topics do they normally cover?"
> T: "The big difference between this and other courses is they do multiple worksheets in a work book" (Vid4, 0.20.06).

This help seeking is executive/instrumental because while the question she asks is executive in nature, the context of the question refers to more general issues around the course she is about to study.

The student later confirmed that she listened more to the tutor when it involved her classwork and the approach to the course that she was about to undertake. In this example P4 is being told about the use of case studies.

> P4: "Because he is teaching about case study. I'm just concentrating because he said it's really important and when it will come to the exam and we must listen carefully" (Post4, p.11).

This help seeking behaviour is very close to executive behaviour in that the student seems to want to find out immediately from the tutor what she will be doing on the course. However, the content of the question categorises it as executive/instrumental. This is because the student appeared to be trying to ascertain the sort of topics she would be covering in order to gain an overview of the course. In this case this aspect moves the help seeking away from an instance of full executive help seeking, since she is trying to sort out more generally what she would be studying.

One aspect of this executive/instrumental help seeking behaviour is upskilling, but the driver for this behaviour appears to be the assignment or course work being looked at in the learning support session. However, upskilling involves a student gaining a deeper understanding of the material being covered, so that at a later time they could solve the same type of problem without assistance. In participant four (P4)'s case a more instrumental form of help seeking behaviour might involve questions such as "What topics would you recommend that I study in order to be able to cope with the requirements of this course?" or "What ways would you recommend I study the use of excel so that I can gain the skills I need to use it?". I classify this help seeking is executive/instrumental, and this shows how my model is more finely nuanced than predecessors. Executive help seeking is where the help seeker is trying to find someone else to solve their problem, and hence attain their academic goals without necessarily developing the required skills to perform the task or solve the problem for themselves. In this case P4 is asking an executive type question but the help seeking is executive/instrumental because the context of the question refers to more general issues around the course she is about to study.

In the following example participant eight (P8), a psychology student demonstrated executive/instrumental help seeking. Although she seems initially to be seeking more specific help, she is attempting to reorder her writing. The work that she would do on the assignment would take place after the session.

> P8: "No, but what I did was I did an overview of narrative therapy before I started comparing the two"
> T: "Okay"
> P8: 'Which I'm thinking well maybe there are some bits that I could put into the other" (Vid8,0.04.00).

In this case the student was attempting to refocus her writing, but wanted some specific help in doing this. She was not explicit in asking for the help she required, but confirmed later that she was keen to make sure that she had the right points in her assignment and wanted feedback in sorting out what those points might be. This moves the help seeking from purely executive to executive/instrumental.

> P8: "Maybe I was concerned that I didn't have the points that I needed because of things I mentioned about the discussion" (Post8, p.4)
>
> P8: "I wanted [support tutor]'s feedback on my assignment, so that was why I was there and then I asked [support tutor] or tried to ask [support tutor] the questions" (Post8, p.10).

In executive/instrumental help seeking the help seeker appears to be asking for more executive help, but the content of the help asked for moves the help seeking into this category. Executive/instrumental help seeking occurred in all eight videoed learning support sessions.

**Instrumental/Executive help seeking**

Similarly, instrumental/executive help seeking is a combination of instrumental and executive help seeking but is unlike executive/instrumental help seeking. Instrumental/executive help seeking is where the focus of the help seeking is on upskilling, whilst having the assignment question looked at by the help giver. In most cases in the videoed learning support sessions, the assignment provided the context for the session, but in some instances it was not the main focus of the help seeking. This is where instrumental/executive help seeking occurred. The upskilling in instrumental/executive help seeking is the

main focus in the interaction with the support tutor. In this case the help seekers wanted new information in relation to the assignment, so that they could solve the specific problem themselves.
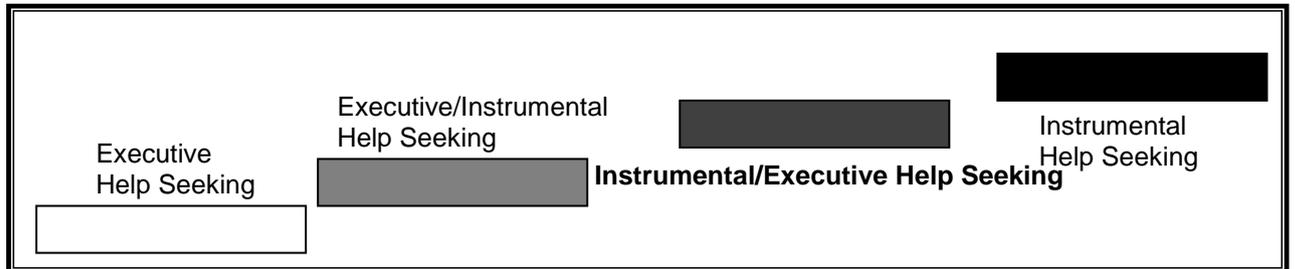


**Figure 4.3** Instrumental/Executive help seeking category

Examples of instrumental/executive help seeking occurred throughout the videoed learning support sessions, and were demonstrated by students asking general questions using the assignment as a basis or allowing the tutor to continue with an explanation which was providing general information.

For example, Participant six (P6), a computing student exhibited instrumental/executive help seeking in the following exchanges.

> T: "That doesn't pass the array size…just the name"
> P6: "Nah hang on…If you put in there, isn't const taken as a … or do you actually have to put in there const equals?"
> T: "I'm wondering if it's a reserved word" (Vid6, 0.05.28).

This behaviour is instrumental/executive because the student is asking a more general question around the assignment problem. In this case 'Does 'const' always have to be followed by an equals sign?' In this case the upskilling seems to be more to the forefront of the help seeking, with P6 trying to learn the principle that can be applied to other assignments rather than just this one.

Whereas in the case of Participant five (P5), a second language student, instrumental/executive help seeking behaviour manifested  in her  grappling with the language she was learning. She produced correct spoken English sentences with the tutor as the lesson proceeded. When she became stuck, she queried her use of the language with quizzical looks to receive feedback to ensure that her sentences were correct.

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P5: "I'm always tired when I er…when I running"
T: "When I'm running"
P5: "Yeah"
T: "When I have run, when you're finished"
P5: "Yeah, I have run"
P5: "I'm not satisfied with myself"
T: "Oh really?"
P5 laughs.
T: "Well as a grammar example, that's a good example"
P5: "I'm not satisfied with my English?"
P5 looks queryingly at the tutor.
T: "Alright then, yes, you're English is getting better" (Vid5, 0.08.34).

In this case the language items involved dealing with the correct use of 'ing' and 'ed' endings, which the student was unclear about and wanted to use appropriately in her speaking. The help seeking behaviour was instrumental/executive as the student was concerned about her language learning generally, rather than merely completion of an assignment. Throughout this section of the video, she worked orally with the tutor. In this case the tutor responded to P5's question on another level rather than treating it as a grammar exercise. She gave an affirming answer, in order to ensure that P5 knew that she was improving.

Instrumental/executive help seeking occurred less than other forms of help seeking during this study but occurred in five out of the eight videoed learning support sessions.

**Dependent approaches to help seeking**

In some sessions the students allowed the tutor to control the session. This allowed the tutor to effect some changes in student help seeking behaviour by fostering a more instrumental/executive or instrumental help seeking type in the students they were supporting. This is at counterpoint to an independent approach to help seeking, where the student attempted to set the agenda for the learning support session. Students exhibiting this dependent approach seemed to be happy to allow the tutor to drive the session, acceding to the tutor in terms of the content covered and approach taken. Dependent help seeking is where the help seeker allows the help giver to control and focus the session on aspects that the help giver feels is appropriate. This is a new conceptualization of dependent help seeking and it is dissimilar to Karabenick's (1991) definition, which equates dependent help seeking with

executive help seeking. It is possible for a student to display other types of help seeking, whilst being dependent in the session. For example students could be dependent in the session, and still seek help instrumentally. Participant two (P2) displayed dependent tendencies in his learning support session, with the tutor controlling the approach to the content and the pace of the session, with some consultation with the student.

> T: "And I thought today what we probably need to do from my point of view and then you tell me what you were wanting…A general, a recap. Know what I mean by that?"
> P2: "a recap? Whatever I want to study on…comeback to it"
> T: "Right, it means a review, a revision of what we've done up to now when you first came and what you will need to do in the next few weeks" (Vid2, 0.01.39).

In this session the tutor attempts to foster independence in the student which in this case was unsuccessful, as the student ends up seeking executive/instrumental help. The tutor attempts to deflect this by answering with her own question.

> T: "It's got here that the stud is 90 by 45"
> P2: "45"
> T: "Now we've worked that out haven't we?"
> P2: "Yep"
> T: "That gives you the measurements of your…"
> P2: "My studs…of…of my measurements of my timber wall"
> T: "Good, those are the measurements of your timber wall, one horizontal {T indicates horizontal} one vertical {T indicates vertical}. Alright now can you tell me.."
> P2: "What is 90 by 45 stud?"
> T: "Uhm. What is your stud?" (Vid2, 0.10.00).

Here the tutor is attempting to draw the student out, so that he engages with the material being covered. In this case the tutor ends up fostering executive/instrumental behaviour since the student asks an executive type question in order to try and clarify his understanding. He was however concerned about his upcoming test and this provided the motivation for the help seeking.

P2 confirmed that the support tutor was in control of the session, but commented on the problem of having to reconcile the support tutor's approach with that of the course tutor.

> P2: "[Support tutor] she was cool, I like the way she explained things. She's a bit hard in that the academic way of doing things properly. She wanted work done this way, this is the way we're supposed to do it, which is nothing wrong with it but myself I found it quite frustrating going back to my tutor, telling them something's wrong and he's saying who cares." (Post2, p.1).

Here, P2's dependence is clear. He is attempting to satisfy both the course tutor and the support tutor, who seems to be working with him differently. There is no evidence to suggest that P2's dependence has been affected, or his help seeking approach changed during his learning support session.

Participant eight (P8) displayed a tendency toward dependent help seeking in her session, allowing the tutor to set the agenda in various interactions throughout the session. In the session the tutor attempts to foster a more independent approach to P8's help seeking behaviour.

> T: "By, so you would put in here Ground et. al. ed. I think"
> P8: "In there?"
> T: "Need to check to see if it says something" .
> Tutor leaves to find a general handout on referencing.
> P8: "I think I did another assignment with that in just like that and that's why I copied…,but I haven't actually got that one back yet."
> T: "Okay". Looking at pamphlet. "How to reference a book… so an edited book"
> P8: "…that and then, that and then the date" (Vid8, 0.21.10).

Here the tutor is focusing on the assignment with the student in order to solve a specific referencing problem. This approach ends up promoting executive/instrumental help seeking behaviour because, while the student wants an answer, she actively applies the information read out by the tutor to the assignment (Vid8, 0.23.00).

Later in the session the tutor attempts to foster independent help seeking.

> T: "Now as far as the content goes, this is another way to look at it. Have you understood and answered the question? Have you got a correct style of presentation? Is there a logical flow?..there's definitely a logical flow of ideas…divided the work up into parts and the spelling's fine. Okay…By the time you've been through this one and this one" (Vid8, 0.32.00).
> Here the tutor was going through a general learning support handout regarding proof reading.
> P8: "You're gonna have an A+"
> T: "Yeah…and then you can compare…so these are the most common faults in essay writing" (Vid8, 0.32.55).
> P8 nods.

Here the tutor was attempting to foster more independent as well as instrumental help seeking by refocusing the session away from the presented assignment to a more general handout that detailed techniques to deal with essay writing. This led to more executive/instrumental help seeking (Vid8, 0.35.47) because, initially, the student focuses on the exact phasing needed for the assignment. Subsequently, instrumental/executive help seeking occurs (Vid8, 0.41.00) because the student appears to be attempting to find out material that would be useful in her work generally. Towards the end of the session (Vid8, 0.44.00) more independent type help seeking occurred.

> P8: "Yeah. Okay, alright.. Well I'll just go home and check my quotes and just put those quotation marks around them"
> T: "Yeah"
> P8: "Cos I haven't done, I haven't put any on any of them".
> T: "If it's more than forty words you indent it…" (Vid8, 0.44.00)

Throughout this session the tutor seemed to be setting the agenda, as confirmed by P8 in the post interview.

> R: "So did you feel in control of this session?"
> P8: "I never feel in control that's not a word for me.  I felt that [support tutor] was in control" (Post8, p.3).

In this case, P8 displayed dependent help seeking tendencies during her learning support session, which seemed to provide the background for executive, executive/instrumental, instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking approaches to overlap.

During a session where dependent help seeking is occurring, it is possible for the help seeker to seek instrumental, executive, executive/instrumental or instrumental executive help. Additionally, help givers should be able to move students to different forms of help seeking behavior because they would be amenable to the effect that the tutor was having during the session. Tutors attempted to do this during the videoed learning support sessions, and there was some evidence that this occurred.

**Independent approaches to help seeking**
In some sessions or parts of sessions the student tried to set the agenda. In some cases the student was successful, and consequently the tutor spent

time focusing on what the student presented. In other cases the student followed what the tutor felt was important and needed covering, but later in the session the student coerced the tutor into doing what he or she wanted. Independent help seeking is a new categorisation of academic help seeking, which has been identified from the analysis of the videoed learning support sessions in this study.

Participant one (P1) exhibited independent help seeking, in that he attempted to set the agenda in his learning support session. However, for large parts of the session the tutor gave detailed help regarding his learning. Throughout the session, the tutor attempted to set the agenda and ensure that the student was following her advice.

> T: "At this stage I'm not going to give you any more…call these strategies". T does a brief review of the session. "You need to go away and put this into practice"
> P1: "I hear what you're saying"
> T: And this is another thing, that is in your hands, the responsibility for progress is on your shoulders" (Vid1, 0.31.05).

This attempt on the part of the tutor to change the help seeking approach of the student did not seem to be successful, because the student did not seem to register that the provided information was useful nor change his help seeking behaviour. This could be because of the independent nature of the student's help seeking approach.

Participant seven (P7) demonstrated more independent help seeking strategies from the start of her session. She set the agenda at the outset.

> T: "When's it due?"
> P7: "Ah June…I want to…"
> T:"…get it out of the way"
> P7: "Yeah, so I can focus on my marketing and communication project" (Vid7, 0.00.03).

Throughout the rest of the session P7 asked questions of the tutor, to ensure that she had a clear understanding of the accountancy questions she had to answer. In two instances the tutor attempted to foster instrumental/executive help seeking behaviour.

> P7: "I just can't understand how the 22c to 100,000 shares"

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T: "…we pay them out a dividend…"
P7: "So for example we are a business, company so both of us give 100,000 to the company…each of us or it's a company"
T: "It's a company. It's a combination".
P7: "Of ourselves"
T then focuses on the assignment question (Vid7, 0.07.15).

In the above case the student moves from executive/instrumental help seeking to instrumental/executive help seeking. However, because of P7's independent approach to the session and her desire to complete the assignment as well as the tutor refocusing on the assignment, the help seeking approach reverted to executive/instrumental. This is an example of the tutor initiating more executive type help seeking from the student, since the student then refocused on the assignment. However, in this case P7 was willing to do this as she wanted to complete her assignment, as well as understand the background material behind it.

Participant three (P3) similarly demonstrated an independent approach to her help seeking. In this case however, the session started off with the tutor beginning to deal with the assignment question that the student presented. This was the way the student wanted the session to proceed, so was happy for this to continue.

P3: Putting in a column in excel which held her assignment answer. The tutor outlined exactly where the information should go.
T: "I'll leave you to do that there" (Vid3, 0.01.55).

The student mentioned in the post interview that the tutor would not 'have been allowed to go anywhere' if she didn't know how to deal with the situation.

R: "Okay. He says 'I'll leave you to do that'. Did you expect that or to be checked there and then, rather than have to go away and finish that? So, it was okay?"
P3: 'It was okay"
R: "Alright. And does that happen normally, not just [*support tutor*] but other tutors as well?
P3: "Does it normally happen? Not – well–unless I don't know exactly what they're talking about. I won't let them go. But, if I know what they're talking about, they can go away, otherwise if I don't know what I was doing, he wouldn't be going anywhere. He'd be staying there until I knew what I was doing" (Post 3, p.3).

This supports the goal of the student to control the session, and the independent nature of her help seeking. The tutor attempted to initiate more instrumental help seeking strategies in the student as the session proceeded.

> T: "I think that's the approach to it"
> P3: "Yeah. You're right"
> T: "If you need any help doing that but come back and see me"
> P3: "Alright" (Vid 3, 0.10.18).

The student did not in fact attempt the problem on her own nor return, but received informal help around the issue from her classmates.

> R: "So, I think about 10 minutes in…But – so a little bit further on…Now okay. First of all, did you need help with that bit?"
> P3: "Well, once I did.  But I was with one of the other girls and we just went over it together" (Post 3, p.9).

The attempt at fostering more instrumental help seeking was not successful, because of the independent nature of the help seeking approach of the student. In this case the help seeking approach was both independent and executive.

An independent approach to help seeking involves a student wanting their own goals and wishes met in the learning support session. Whether nor not a student was independent in other aspects of their lives has not been ascertained in this thesis. Independent help seeking appears to be a constant approach from some participants in this study. Tutors often were unsuccessful in effecting changes in participant's help seeking, who displayed this underlying feature. Independent help seeking seemed to provide a background where executive, executive/instrumental, instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking also took place. Additionally, independence of help seeking approach seemed to provide students with resistance regarding the tutor's encouragement to seeking help instrumentally.

## Help seeking precipitators

A help seeking precipitator is behavior that sets into motion a discrete piece of help seeking. Precipitators can be internal or external. Help seeking precipitators have not been theorised in the help seeking literature, but they are an important area of consideration in a tertiary context since their

identification may provide opportunities for tutors to foster more independence in student learning, and an appropriate approach to student help seeking. The following section on help seeking precipitators is based on videoed learning support sessions, where the above participants were being supported in a one to one session with a learning support tutor. As described above the sessions exhibited aspects of Nelson Le Gall's (1987) executive and instrumental help seeking, but also highlighted some nuances of help seeking that this theory does not describe. The precipitators for these behaviours are considered in the next section.

**Executive help seeking precipitators**

In this tertiary context executive help seeking behaviour that occurs in a one to one learning support session is an outcome of tutor or student behaviour. This aspect of help seeking has been analysed from the videoed learning support sessions, and is possibly caused by the social interactions that take place between tutor and student during a learning support session and the approach that the tutor or student takes to the help seeking session. In the next two sub sections tutor precipitators and student precipitators of executive help seeking will be considered.

*Tutor precipitators of executive help seeking*

This section identifies in more detail aspects of tutor behaviours that seemed to precipitate executive help seeking. The following tutor precipitators were analysed from the videoed learning support session data: the tutor creating a situation where the student needed an answer in order to understand the session content more fully; the tutor spending a protracted time explaining material to the student, but where the student is unclear about an aspect that requires further explanation; the tutor being willing to provide the student with exact information as to how to address the presented issue or solve the assignment question.

Answer required to deal with tutor created situation
One tutor precipitator of executive help seeking found in this study occurred when the tutor created a situation where the student needed more information in order to understand the session content more fully. In some cases this

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seemed to be based on the tutor's deliberate teaching, in others the tutor was touching on an aspect of the material being covered that consequently elicited executive help seeking.

In the following situation participant five (P5) was confused in her learning support session, as the language she was attempting to grasp made no sense to her. She realised that what she was saying made no sense. In this case the tutor asked the participant a closed question.

> T: 'Right, so what's the difference there?"
> P5 asked "rod is job?" whilst looking at the tutor. She looked at the tutor for confirmation of the correct answer. She looked very confused with the content of the session. In this case P5's solution seemed to make little sense to her, as indicated by her doubtful expression on the video (Vid5, 0.02.02).

Here the student was unable either to answer the tutor's question or perform the task that was required. A similar instance of executive help seeking occurred later in the session, where she had to decide whether there should be an 'ed' or 'ing' ending on a word. She looked at the tutor with what I interpreted as a quizzical expression seeming to indicate that specific help was required. This help seemed to be required firstly to understand the material and secondly for her to be able to continue with the work.

In the following example participant one's (P1) executive help seeking was precipitated by the tutor introducing information that he needed to understand in order that he could deal with his presented problem.

> P1, a student with literacy needs asked for specific help regarding vowels, consonants and being able to decode text.
> T: "Look at it, the sound of it and also breaking it down"
> P1: "This is the thing I.."
> T: "You don't know"
> P1: "I know there's a, u and e or something, but I don't understand"
> The tutor takes over.
> T: "Vowels and consonants"
> P1: "This is what I don't understand" (Vid1, 0.14.22).

This help is executive as P1 is enquiring specifically about vowels and consonants. The precipitator for this behaviour was the tutor telling the student how to go about decoding words, but not explaining clearly enough to remedy the problem.

Protracted tutor explanation of material

Another tutor precipitator of executive help seeking found in this study was where the tutor spent a protracted time explaining material to the student, but where the student still did not understand the explanation. Consider the extract below:

> P1 had a protracted explanation from the tutor concerning study skills and the usefulness of maintaining hydration in order to have maximum brain function.
> P1: "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah I know that"
> T: "You know the reason for that?"
> P1: "Vaguely, yeah, keep going"
> T: "It's to make sure all the neurons in your brain keep firing" (Vid1, 0.32.43)

In the above case the precipitator for this behaviour seems to be the tutor's protracted explanation, and the student admitting his knowledge was only vague about the answer to the question that was being posed. Consequently, he resorted to executive help seeking in order to fill the gap in his knowledge. He did not seem to ask for help directly, but this could be because of his independent approach to help seeking. Similarly, participant six (P6) used executive help seeking after he did not understand an aspect of the computer program he was undertaking and the support tutor had spent a reasonable amount of time explaining aspects of it.

> P6: "Is it what?" (Vid6, 0.05.48).

Subsequently, the tutor gave an explanation regarding reserved words in C++. The student later confirmed he was unclear about reserved words.

> R: "Did you actually know what that word was?"
> P6: "Oh a reserved word is a word which is reserved for - like Cout is a reserved word. Cin is a reserved word"
> R: "That's right. I'd use that as a variable.
> P6: "No. It's a word which is used in a programme"
> R: "It is yes. When it compiles it, it's reading that as a command instead of a variable. You can't chuck it in the variable list. Did you know that?"
> P6: "Yes"
> R: "And here did you know that at the time? Because it – I mean [support tutor] said oh – explains what reserved word is, and you say something like "A what?" For a reserve word, I'm just wondering was it the context that it came up in that …"
> P6:"Close"
> R: "I'll rewind it here"
> Playing recording:

T: "A reserved word is the word you can't use as part of your code because it's got a risk; it's got a pre-determined value.  The classic one is print" (Vid6, 0.06. 30).
P6: "Maybe at the time I didn't, but I do now"
R: "So you learnt something?"
P6: "Yeah"
R: "I just thought maybe you knew"
P6: "Probably not at that time" (Post 6, pp. 12-13).

<u>Tutor being willing to focus on presented issue</u>
A further tutor precipitator of executive help seeking found in this study was when the tutor focussed solely on the presented issue in the learning support session. This could be an assignment question or other work that was being presented. This would replace general information that may help the student to solve the problem being considered. Consider the following example.

P3 stated "um hm I understand that", when the tutor was focussing on an accounting assignment (Vid3, 0.03.09).
She demonstrated executive help seeking behaviour by listening carefully to the tutor who said "..and the position that you're going to come to is..". presupposing that this would be where the student would end up. The student wanted the explanation to continue, so said "Okay" (Vid3, 0.06.21).

She later confirmed that she was very interested in the explanation, as it involved the assignment.

P3: "That was part of my assignment so I was definitely interested in it.  And I get the picture what he's trying to – that was a question that was in my assignment so I would have been listening.  Probably I don't look like I'm listening" (Post 3, p.4).

In this extract the tutor was focusing solely on the student's assignment question, which may have increased the likelihood of the student acting more executively and reinforcing the helping behaviour. In this case the participant allowed the tutor to keep providing specific help, as it closely involved the assignment she was completing. More instrumental help seeking behaviour might have occurred if the tutor had pulled away from the presented issue, perhaps offering general advice.

In the following extract after initially precipitating executive help seeking the tutor manages to deflect this by questioning the student about the work rather than by simply providing the answer.

P5 asked the tutor whether 'excited' had one t or two. The tutor dealt with this with the following interchange.
T: "How many have you got?"
P5: "One"
T: "Do you think that's right?"
P5: "No it's pretty strange"
T: "Does it look strange? It is right. I'll show you why" (Vid5, 0.14.20).

The precipitator for this behaviour was the tutor asking "What's your question?" before this exchange took place (Vid5, 0.14.04). This indicated that she was prepared to focus on P5's presented issue. Later the tutor deflected the executive help seeking behaviour by questioning the student, once the executive help seeking had occurred.

In the following case the tutor was willing to provide P6 with exact assignment based information. This precipitated executive help seeking.

The tutor provided exact information about the solution of a computing problem, to the point where he began coding himself. The following interchange occurred.
T: Types solution into computer.
P6: Watches and looks at notes.
T: "There we go"
T: "Getting there" (Vid6, 0.27.50).

In the above example the participant allowed the tutor to keep providing specific help in relation to the assignment that was being considered. The precipitator for this behaviour was the fact that the tutor was willing to provide specific help in answering the assignment question.

In one interaction with P6, the tutor takes on board the student's problem. This elicited this interchange.

P6: "So you're happy with that?"
T: "Yeah"
P6: "That looks alright"
T: "Do you want to give me a copy of that as well because then I can think about it over the next couple of nights"
P6: "Do you want it on the.."
T: "No"
T: "After all there's something on this side I can't figure out. Once I figure out what I'm missing I'll be fine" (Vid6, 0.47.09).

The precipitator for this executive help seeking behaviour is the tutor's willingness to offer to look at the solution, taking the problem on board. The

student later confirmed that he had hoped for a solution by the end of the learning support session, as it would have made the job of completing the assignment easier.

> R: "Did you expect in the session a complete solution at the end of it?"
> P6: "I hoped for it. So yes in a way I was hoping for a solution because it would make the rest of the code hopefully a lot easier" (Post 6, p.71).

Tutor precipitators of executive help seeking involved the tutor: introducing a situation where the student needed an answer in order to understand the session content more fully; spending a protracted time explaining material to the student, but where the student was unclear about an aspect that required further explanation; and being willing to provide the student with exact information as to how to address the presented issue or solve the assignment question.

In the above cases the tutor behaviour immediately preceded the executive help seeking behavior, which indicates that these acted as precipitators for the help seeking.

*Student precipitators of executive help seeking*
The sole student precipitator for executive help seeking that has been identified in this study was students realising that not all their goals for dealing with the assignment in the session were being met.

Student realization of goals unmet
In the following example the tutor had spent time providing an explanation that Participant three (P3) later confirmed she did not want (Vid 3, 0.13.19). This caused her to refocus the session so that the assignment again became the main focus.

> R: "So a little bit further on... [Video playing in background.] So those are the details, Okay, so he's correcting you"
> P3: "I didn't even ask him anyway" (Post 3, p.10).
>
> P3 showed the assignment to the tutor in order to refocus the session. He had already seen this however. The student then starts calling out labels for the tutor to agree with or tell her the correct answer (Vid3, 0.16.11).

The precipitator for this behaviour was the student wanting to ensure that her goals were met, as the tutor was outlining a previous assignment question

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and attempting to show where marks could be lost on the current one. The student seemed to want to focus on the assignment she was dealing with currently.

> P3: "Well, yeah.  I did have a problem.  He helped me out with where to read the budget and how to understand what's going on.  I did understand that" (Post 3, p.13).

In the above extract the student uses executive help seeking in order to ensure that her assignment task is dealt with during the session. A similar approach is taken by Participant six (P6) below.

> P6, a computing student outlined specifically what the assignment brief was to the tutor, so that it can be dealt with.
> P6: "But the thing is we've got to use a function that has one parameter, one argument, which is name of function"
> P6 then became quiet while the tutor considered the problem (Vid6, 0.39.43).

In this case the student refocused the session onto the assignment, so that the tutor would deal with the assignment more specifically. Just previous to this exchange the support tutor had pinpointed the issue that the student had to complete. The student seems to draw the tutor into the problem with the use of 'we'. He later confirmed that he was confused as to how he could complete the assignment, but knew exactly what the assignment requirements were.

> P6: "[Support tutor] wanted to do it a little differently which was to pass the name only to the function"
> R: "So that was the requirement of your assignment?"
> P6: "That was the requirement of the assignment"
> R: "So obviously [support tutor} didn't know that"
> P6: "Yes"
> R: "So I'm wondering were you – I mean you've stood up to him obviously at that point that you knew better in the sense that you …"
> P6: "Well I didn't know better, but I knew what the parameters of the assignment were"
> R: "You knew what you were trying to achieve at that point?"
> P6: "Yes.  But the how of achieving that was eluding me"
> R: "Right so you were confused a little bit"
> P6: "Greatly" (Post 6, p.41).

P6 wanted the support tutor to know exactly what the assignment was about so that he could have help with it.

> R: "You're explaining it to him.  Did that help you, the fact that you were explaining it, or were you telling him, helping him getting the picture?

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P6: "I wanted him to achieve it, the idea of what was actually going on with the assignment" (Post 6, p.41).

**Instrumental help seeking precipitators**

The precipitators for instrumental help seeking also seem to rely on tutor and student driven behaviours. In some cases tutor behaviour did more to inhibit executive help seeking than encourage instrumental help seeking. In such cases this provided the first step towards more instrumental type help seeking.

*Tutor precipitators of instrumental help seeking*

Tutor precipitators of instrumental help seeking seemed to involve tutors challenging students' approaches to particular problems. This occurred where the tutor provided information that was new to students or did not allow the students to use executive help seeking in the sessions. This kind of approach seemed to refocus participants so that they began to approach problems themselves rather than asking for specific help.

<u>Tutor providing information that was new to the student</u>
In the following example the tutor provided new information for P3, which caused her to seek more instrumental help.

> T: "The other thing I would do is at the top of these headings is put product, quantity, direct labour hours"
> P3: "Okay"
> T: "Just so that it's labelled to death"
> P3: "Product?"
> T: "Product, quantity. Just watch your format, it's a comma after that"
> P3: "How do I put a comma in there?"
> T: "You go to format, you go to tools, options, oh sorry, go tools, options, tools, customise, advance, toolbars, options. Take that tick out. It puts those on two different rows, as each of these is slightly more than one screen. So now you can go up there for your comma."
> P3: "Do I have to put something in there…Do I just go comma?" (Vid 3, 0.16.20).

In the above case the tutor had provided participant three (P3) with a series of instructions regarding being able to insert commas easily. This had initially caused her to seek more executive help in the form of her first question. However, possibly because of the newness and complexity of the instructions, P3 asked whether she needed to put 'something in there'. This help seeking is instrumental as P3 is interrogating the necessity of amending her assignment

question; however the tutor's response to this instrumental help seeking is to give precise instructions. Similarly, participant seven (P7)'s learning support tutor initiated the use of instrumental help seeking.

In the following example the tutor provided the student with new information concerning an accounting problem that was being considered.

> T: "Retained earnings are dollars we've earned that we haven't given to the shareholders. Now it only applies in a company and it's that one there"
> P7: "Owners equity"
> T: In a company you have a choice. You can keep your profit or you could give it to the shareholders, in which case it's dividends."
> P7: "Okay"
> T: "Mortgage?"
> P7: "Loan, ah liability"
> T: "Bank loan?"
> P7: "Liability"
> T: "Accrued expenses?"
> P7: "Accrued expenses is current assets"
> T: "They're amounts that we pay that we've spent but we haven't paid for yet"
> P7: "What's the difference between accounts payable and accrued expenses?" (Vid7, 0.04.15).

In this case, this example highlights how tutors' can affect the students' help seeking behaviour precipitating more instrumental help seeking behaviour, by providing new information based on a series of questions. In this case the questions were used to ascertain what aspects the student was initially familiar with. The help seeking is instrumental here as P7 is asking a general question in order to be able to better understand the material. This is borne out by P7's post interview.

> R: "So was it useful?"
> P7: "Useful?  What's useful – the session with [support tutor]?"
> R: "Mm."
> P7: "Yeah it was very useful.  Because I was able to understand how the financial position works and how the financial performance works and I was so comfortable asking questions.  And fortunately I was able to get the answers that I would like from him.  And that makes the lesson understandable" (Post 7, p.1).

Here the precipitator for this help seeking behaviour is the tutor's new information, since P7 wanted a better understanding of this material.

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<u>Tutor preventing executive help seeking</u>
In the following example, the tutor declined to proof read the participant's essay. This caused the participant to use more instrumental help seeking behaviours.

> P8, a psychology student realised that the tutor wasn't going to proof read her work, so asked for more general advice about how to go about proof reading it herself.
> P8: "So you don't even need to read it?'
> T: "No"
> P8: "But what about punctuation?"
> T: "We don't proof read here"
> P8 laughs
> P8: "What about..."
> T: "Sentence construction and grammar?"
> P8: 'Yes"
> T: "We're not... a lot of people come in and they say can you proof read, and what we have to do is, we have to look for ways to help you proof read your own. We can't just...otherwise we'd spend all our time proof reading peoples' essays"
> P8: "So when you say proof read, do you mean...like just flicking through this, you think that it's an okay essay?"
> T: "Yeah I do"
> P8: "Just flicking through it like that without even reading anything"
> T leaves to collect general handout. T returns with general handout.
> P8: "I was speaking to [support tutor] and I said, do many people fail their essays if they've been to learning support first. He said, there's not many people that do, probably all educational ones, but they haven't gone away..."
> T: "And taken on board..."
> P8: "The advice they've been given. What advice would you give me to take away. So that I can make it better?" (Vid8, 0.25.00).

The precipitator for this behaviour was the tutor's refusal to respond to executive help seeking. Since what the participant wanted in the session did not happen, she changed to requesting general advice that would help her make sure that her essay was at an acceptable standard.

*Student precipitators of instrumental help seeking*
Student precipitators of instrumental help seeking seem to involve the student realising that they need to understand the material being considered so that they can deal with their study issues without help from the support tutor. This is the sole student precipitator of instrumental help seeking.

In the following example the student realised that she needed to deal with the problem that was under consideration alone. This is evident from her assertion that she would deal with the problem herself.

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P5 decided to look up the meaning of a word in her electronic dictionary.
P5: "I will find the meaning in my.."
T : "In your dictionary"
P5: "Yeah" (Vid5, 0.24.57).
At this point the session was ending and the student possibly realised that she would need to be able to sort out the problem on her own at a later stage.

She later confirmed that she did not always ask in her class session as the tutor was busy with other students.

R: "So when you've got a question you just ask it do you?"
P5: "Yeah but now I don't ask any more."
R: "Why's that?"
P5: "Maybe because I never ask her already but I think she have a full lesson for the other people.  A lot of people to see her every day.  So therefore I don't want to …"
R: "No time?"
P5: "Yeah" (Post 5, p.2).

In the following extract the participant was keen to clarify her understanding of the accounting concepts under consideration, so that she could deal with the assignment question she was attempting at a later time.

P7, an accounting student queried the reason for the use of different dates in accounting reports.
P7: "So it can also happen that the dates are different?"
T: "Very, very, very,  very, very, very rarely"
P7 "What's the reason for a different date?"
The tutor then explains (Vid7, 0.15.14).

The precipitator for this behaviour was the student wanting a clear understanding of the accounting concepts that underpinned the assignment she had to do. In this case however she was concerned to clarify her understanding even in the instance of an unlikely date occurrence, and consequently asked questions that went beyond the remit of the assignment. This classifies the help seeking as instrumental, and the precipitator as her wish to understand the material that underpinned the assignment.

She later confirmed that being able to understand key aspects of the material was the best thing about the session.

R: "So what was the most useful thing about it?"
P7: "Well the best thing that happened was being understanding the – being able to understand the topic itself and to be able to get rid of the assignment, the questions.  So I can continue and carry on with the other questions. So that's the best thing (Post 7, p. 1).

**Executive/instrumental help seeking precipitators**

Executive/instrumental help seeking can also be categorised as having tutor precipitators and student precipitators.

*Tutor precipitators of executive/instrumental help seeking*

There were two categories of tutor precipitators for executive/instrumental help seeking. In some cases the tutor precipitators were similar to those that precipitated instrumental help seeking or executive help seeking. This was possibly because the tutor may have engendered more instrumental behaviour in the former case, and unintentionally more executive behaviour in the latter. In these cases the outcomes for the precipitators did not result in instrumental help seeking or executive help seeking, rather executive/instrumental help seeking which is a combination of these categories.

Tutor precipitators of executive/instrumental help seeking involved the tutors adding generally to the students' work as well as giving control to the students.

The first two precipitators helped to move the participants away from executive type help seeking behavior, whereas the last precipitator moved participants from more instrumental type help seeking behavior to executive/instrumental behaviour. The following extracts are some examples of the tutor precipitators for this type of behaviour.

Tutor providing general aspects to student's work
In the following example the tutor provided new information to participant six (P6), where the student used executive/instrumental help seeking by trying to contextualise the more general help that was being given.

> The tutor talked generally about the reason for the assignment, that is, to see if the student was able to write and pass an array. He talked more generally about arrays. The student looked disgruntled by this.
> P6: "That was the one that we did on Friday…I'll show you one of the one's that we found" (Vid 6, 0.41.32). The student continues to show the support tutor aspects of the code that he has completed, culminating in executive/instrumental help seeking four minutes later.
> P6:"I haven't looked at it. I was going to ask you if it would be alright for me to have help" (Vid6, 0.45.01).

The precipitator for this help seeking behavior is the tutor initially talking generally about the work that the student is undertaking. This was later confirmed by the student in the post interview.

> P6: "I think he was – I think he was testing the waters just to see how much I understood of the code which was – I must admit at this point in time my understanding of C++ at that point was not minimal, but it wasn't much more."
> R:"So really what you're saying [support tutor] was testing you a little bit on what was happening with the code"
> P6: "No, I think he was trying to get me to open up but because of my, shall we say partial understanding of the code, I could only go as far as what my knowledge would let me."
> R: "Okay, and you knew that did you?"
> P6: "I knew that but I don't know whether [support tutor] did. And I think at that point he was trying to find out" (Post 6, p.44).

So, in this case the participant eventually concludes that the tutor was trying to help him to solve the problem himself by his general comments about arrays.

In the following extract participant seven (P7), a second language hospitality degree student dealing with an accounting assignment displayed executive/instrumental help seeking in the following exchange, after she received general information from the tutor regarding accountancy statements.

> The tutor explains generally about statements of financial position
> P7 listens intently.
> T: "Notice the difference, 'for the period ending', whereas this one says 'as at'"
> P7: "What's the difference?"
> T:"Okay, the difference is, it shows how we did over a period of time" (Vid7, 0.13.54).

The precipitator for this executive/instrumental help seeking behaviour was the tutor's general explanation of accountancy statements. In this case even though it would seem that the tutor was attempting to help the student improve her knowledge generally, the student's concern appeared to be also to complete the assignment in addition to improving her understanding of the material in question. This was confirmed in the post interview.

> R: "So he's doing that for a little while, I'm wondering for you that whole activity, was that useful for you?"

P7: "Yeah it is for me. Just to check, also the understanding. And there is also something that I want to do. I wanted to give him the answers for it. So he asked about how I understood things. And I would like him to underline how I think and he would like me to understand – I would like him to underline how I think about that entries and correct me if I'm wrong. And I am expecting him to give the reasons behind them" (Post7, p.5).

So, in this case P7 not only wants to understand the issues surrounding her assignment, she also wants to ensure that her assignment is correct.

Tutor empowering the student
In the following example the tutor gave more control to the student by complimenting her about her level of oral English proficiency and telling her that she would be fine doing her proposed course. The session continued with the tutor warning her about Microsoft Access.

T: "But your oral English is very good"
P4: "Thank you".
T:"I think you'll be fine"
P4: "I'll do my best. I have studied power point, slide shows, yeah?"
T: "The biggest trap is Access"
P4: "Ah Access"
T: "Because it uses Access…"
P4: "Is it a lot of questions or a lot of practical work?" (Vid4, 0.18.23).

The subsequent executive/instrumental help seeking may have been precipitated by the latter warning, however the student confirmed in the post interview that she felt her skill with computers was not an issue. Since P4 tended to be dependent in her help seeking, then the tutor's attempts at empowerment possibly precipitated this executive/instrumental help seeking occurrence.

R: "I don't know. And then you say here, I'll do my best. I'm sure you will. Yes. [Video playing in background.] And then just a little bit later on – how did it make you feel talking about your computing skills?"
P4: "There?"
R: "Here."
P4: "He asked me have you done the computing before and I told him that I studied in the Institute. So I told him it will help me" (Post 4, p.19).

Similarly, the following extract is an example of executive/instrumental help seeking where, in this case, the tutor waited for the student to consider the problem rather than interrupt him to facilitate a solution. Here the tutor doubted his solution to the programming problem being considered, which

caused the student to seek executive/instrumental help. The student asks an executive type question, but to confirm his solution to the problem.

> P6, a computing student asks the tutor specifically about an aspect of the assignment he was undertaking (Vid6, 0.06.59; Vid6, 0.08.28).
> The tutor pauses.
> P6: "Well hang on a minute. Isn't that the same as that?"
> The precipitator for this help seeking behaviour was the tutor not providing the solution immediately, giving the student time to consider it.

In the first case the precipitator for the executive/instrumental help seeking is the tutor attempting to reassure the student about her ability to undertake the course, thus empowering her. In the second case the tutor gives the student control by waiting for him to produce an answer to the question being considered.

*Student precipitators of executive/instrumental help seeking*
There were three distinct student precipitators for executive/instrumental help seeking by the participants in this study. Student precipitators of executive/instrumental help seeking involved the student: being unsure of what to do in a given situation; wanting to balance results with skill development; and wanting an answer that works generally.

The following extracts are some examples of executive/instrumental help seeking, together with the student precipitators for this type of help seeking behaviour.

<u>Student being unsure of a solution or what to do in a given situation</u>
In the following example participant six (P6) was unclear about an explanation given by the tutor which prompted him to query this. The help seeking in this case is executive/instrumental as even though the student is questioning the tutor's assertions, the focus of the help seeking is still closely aligned with the assignment question.

> T: "Doesn't mean…"
> P6: "Why?' (Vid6, 0.09.03).
> T: "Because..".
> P6:  "What happens if you get somebody who puts in an age of six months?"
> T: "0.5 of a year"
> P6: "No because one of them is going to be constant" (Vid6, 0.09.58).

The precipitator for this behaviour was the student being unclear about the explanation that was proffered. This changed the dynamics of the session, allowing student and tutor to work on the problem together. For example participant six (P6) disagreed with the tutor regarding the presented solution, highlighting his confusion. Often his form of help seeking took the form of statements that he expected the tutor to comment on.

> P6: "That's not right…float, float int"
> T: "No, you can't have float int"(Vid6, 0.24.09).

The emphasis of the help seeking was on the assignment, but the student was attempting to produce a new idea to solve it. The lack of clarity is highlighted by the misuse of 'float' and 'int' together. The precipitator here is the student being unsure about what to do to solve the problem. He later confirmed this in the post interview, where he states that he needed help sorting his programming problem out.

> R: "So how important was it that you twigged at about 2259 – you twigged what was going on – how important was it to have someone next to you to help you do that? Would you have done that without the support or would you have needed someone there?"
> P6: "I think if [support tutor] hadn't been there then the whole session wouldn't have taken place and I would have still been left with this file error and I'd be trying to sort the bloody thing out from now until Doomsday" (Post 6, p.36).

In the following example participant eight (P8) was unsure whether her assignment answer was correctly structured, and consequently sought help that could be classified as executive/instrumental.

> P8: "…what I did was I did an overview of narrative therapy before I started comparing the two."
> T: "Okay"
> P8: "Which I'm thinking well maybe there are some bits that I could put into the other?" (Vid 8, 0.03.00).

In this case the student was thinking about restructuring her assignment, but wanted some support to do this. She later confirmed in the post interview that she was concerned that she did not have the correct points in her essay, but was prepared to rewrite parts of it to deal with any problems. This classifies the help seeking as executive/instrumental.

R: "You're having a little chat just about here, you look really quite – sort of really worried. Is that how you felt?" [Video tape playing].
P8: "I don't really know. Maybe I was concerned that I didn't have the points that I needed, because of the things I mentioned about discussion and then thinking have I done everything"
R: "Have you done that?"
P8: "Yeah" (Post 8, p.4).

In this case P8 was concerned about whether her discussion section was satisfactory, and hence in the light of the learning support session changed it. The precipitator for this help seeking behaviour is P8's confusion about what to do to make sure that her assignment was satisfactory.

<u>Student wanting to balance results with skill development</u>
In the following example participant three (P3) was motivated by the assignment but later confirmed that she had forgotten a process that she needed to revisit. Here the student started the help seeking process executively, but this became executive/instrumental as she required a more general explanation of the work being considered. This was to revisit a general process that she needed to know, not only for the assignment but also for her learning at a later stage in the course she was studying.

P3 listened carefully to an explanation around the assignment that was being dealt with in order to facilitate her upskilling (Vid3, 0.17.08).

The motivation for the upskilling was the assignment, but the student later was concerned to assure me that she had learnt the material being covered.

R: "You thought you had a better chance on your assignment. Is that true?"
P3: "No".
R: "That you felt you had a better answer to your assignment with the help?"
P3: "How do you mean better answer?"
R: "Well because he's given you help for it."
P3: "Well, yeah. I did have help. He helped me out with where to read the budget and how to understand what's going on. I did understand that" (Post 3, p.13).

In the next example participant eight wanted to discuss theoretical issues with the tutor but in the context of the work that was being done. This took the form of executive/instrumental help seeking, because P8 located the discussion within the framework of her assignment.

T: "But the theory came hard on the heels"

> P8: "But it…one's a tool and one's a therapy, so it's not like they're in the same, they're not the same sort of things"
> T: "But they are approaches to counselling" (Vid 8, 0.06.28).

The precipitator for this behaviour was her wanting to balance the sorting out of the theoretical issue, with her completion of her assignment.

<u>Student wanting a specific answer that worked generally</u>
In the following extended example participant one (P1) wanted a general rule to be able to deal with his reading difficulties. He had difficulties with sounding words out, and wanted the tutor to provide an explanation to develop a general rule for doing this. The help seeking to deal with reading and pronunciation emanated from a discussion around the definition of vowels. This moves the help seeking behaviour to executive/instrumental as the student is seeking a general rule to deal with his difficulties that he could use in other situations.

> T: "Now your vowels are?"
> P1: "This is the thing, I don't think I ever…"
> T: "You don't know?'
> P1: "No, I don't. I know there's a and…"
> T: "Right"
> P1: "..u and e or something like that"
> T: "Well we'll talk some more about that"
> P1: "I don't understand"
> T: "All the alphabet…"
> P1: "Yeah"
> T: "..can be broken down into and I'm going to write down here so you can see what I'm writing"
> P1: "Yeah"
> T: "Vowels and consonants"
> P1: "This is what I don't understand"
> T: "It's quite easy. I'll give you examples and then you can go away and work out from the alphabet exactly what fits into this category and what fits into that one. I've also got another book out there which I'll bring out and show you, which is very useful"
> P1: "Mm"
> T: "Now. Vowels are a,e,i,o,u"
> P1: "Mm"
> T: "Right. Open sounding sounds, a,e,i,o,u and you can break these up. Look at the word 'vowel'. How many vowels and what are they in that word?"
> P1: "One. That's e"
> T: "No. Listen. Vow – el, owl"
> P1: Ah, oh"
> T: " That's right. We've got those two, o and e…"
> P1: "So, how would you…"
> T: "…and there's two, hang on, the two sounds are vow – el. See you can break each word down into different chunks by sounding…"

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P1: "So that…"
T: "And that's good practice, sorry, good practice for you"
P1 picks up a pen.
P1: "How you sound that word out?"
T: "Vowels"
P1 points with the pen.
P1: "So, you would, say, go there?"
T: "Yes well, there is a strict procedure, step by step rule for this, you initially, wherever the break is. Where do you think the break comes?"
P1: "Just after the w" (Vid1, 0.16.15).

The precipitator for this behaviour was the student wanting a general rule to be able to deal with his difficulties. P1 later confirmed that he wanted this as it would be useful in his daily life when filling in his quote book for his employment.

P1: "You know they were all – you know they are relevant things that – the whole thing is I look at my daily – my quote book and I try to sound words and stuff now you know in that daily quote book. And then I go back and correct them or make the actual physical effort to correct that stuff. And then to see how it's spelt. So yes. The end result is that the whole thing of that conversation has been of benefit when I apply the information I get – which I already knew" (Post 1, p.5).

In the following example P7 wanted specific information in order to clarify an aspect of the theory about which she was seeking help. In this case she asked a more executive type question, in order to resolve her theoretical query. The help seeking can thus be categorised as executive/instrumental. The precipitator for this behaviour was the student wanting a specific answer to help her understand an aspect of the theory being covered.

P7: "How would it look like in the accounting equation using the depreciation, accumulated depreciation under negative assets?"
T: "Yes"
P7: "And the other side is expenses?"
T: "One side's expenses the other side's assets"
P7: "Oh yeah, which is the same amount" (Vid 7, 0.05.24).

A similar example of this precipitator occurred a little later in the session.

P7: "Each of us or it's a company?"
T: "It's a company. It's a combination"
P7: "…of our share" (Vid 7, 0.06.15).

Here, the student required specific information in order to advance her understanding of the theory being covered in the session. She later confirmed this in the post interview.

P7: "I just wanted to know the information or the answer to that question in mind. Because by answering that question it would make the information understandable or it makes sense to me. I would be asking the first question and I would try to think of the first part of the answer" (Post 7, p.15).

## Instrumental/executive help seeking precipitators

Instrumental/executive help seeking can be categorised as having tutor or student precipitators. There were fewer tutor precipitators for instrumental/executive help seeking than student precipitators.

*Tutor precipitators of instrumental/executive help seeking*

In some cases the tutor precipitators of instrumental/executive help seeking mirrored those of instrumental or executive/instrumental help seeking. There was one distinct tutor precipitator of instrumental/executive help seeking in the videoed learning support sessions, which was the tutor providing a new perspective on the presented issue.

<u>Providing a new perspective on a presented issue</u>
In the following example the tutor commented on the student's work which caused the student to reassess what he had done and then apply an instrumental/executive help seeking approach.

> T: "It's a real number because someone could put 20.6"
> P6: "Yeah, that's what I mean, so it's got to be a float"
> T: "I think you're probably better to go for float"
> P6: "Why?"
> T: "The reason I say that is because if somebody is going to be a pain in the neck and add in 20.567 years old, that's the only way you're going to be able to handle that"
> P6: "Plus, also if you get an even number of ages…[thinks and falters]…if you get an odd number of ages…if you average it out you'll get point something" (Vid6, 0.10.34).

In this case the student queries the reasoning behind the information given by the tutor. The precipitator for this help seeking is the different perspective presented by the tutor. This help seeking is instrumental/executive since the student wants to know why he should use float, as opposed to integer in his program. This explanation gelled with the student since his last comment is indicative of his understanding.

He later confirmed that it was the force of the tutor's argument that made him change from his previous coding to this new approach.

R: "Oh okay what made you agree with him?"
P6: "I think it was just the – I would say the force of his argument. Yeah I think it was just the force of his argument – it made more sense doing it his way than what I'd done" (Post 6, p.47).

Instrumental/executive help seeking behaviour occurred in the following session, when the tutor introduced a new study technique to the student.

T: "Then you would move on. Once you've done that revision you would move on and do another chunk, then another. You would repeat that process across those two."
P1: "Yeah, I hear that, yeah"
T: "Then you've still gotta go back again, but your timing and your amount is individual"
P1: "Mm".
T: "But, you've gone back over that then you need to go back over there again"
Tutor pointing at the paper on the desk.
P1: "Yeah"
T: "And onto there. So you constantly have to hark back"
P1: "Revise, revise, revise"
T: "Then you get it into your long term memory. Now, another pointer is this…'
Tutor falters trying to think of a word. Tutor and P1 laugh.
P1: "You alright?"
T: "Don't try and remember if you're learning information that you're trying to memorise, don't try and remember it word for word. A lot of people do…"
P1: "So you put it in your own words?" (Vid1, 0.29.11).

In this case the student wanted to clarify that he should put material that he was trying to learn into his own words. The precipitator for this help seeking is the tutor providing information that is new to the student. The help seeking is instrumental/executive as the student is attempting to sort out a study technique that he will use later.

P1 talked in the post interview about the session and its application to his life.

P1: "Then she went on to ask about the manual thing - were they easy to read and stuff like that on the computer course."
R: "Yes".
P1: "Yeah basically it was just about sort of getting into that classroom environment. I was just getting a little bit dizzy in the head."
R: "So the specifics of that?"
P1: "I don't think there's anything negative about it. She was trying to…what do you call the word, paraphrase?"
R: "Yep.'
P1: "I apply stuff out of that conversation to my everyday life and…it will stand me for better things" (Post 1, pp.1 – 2).

In the following case the tutor provided a new perspective by producing a situation where the student realised that her analysis of the situation was

wrong. The tutor explained an aspect of accounting theory to P7, who listened intently.

> Tutor explanation with student intently listening.
> P7: "So there is an increase because every share here is two dollars for every five dollars?"
> T: "22c"
> P7: "Ah no, it doesn't increase"
> T: "No, it doesn't" (Vid 7, 0.08.15).

In this case the tutor's explanation caused the student to seek instrumental/executive help. The help seeking can be classified as instrumental/executive as the student is attempting to clarify her understanding of the accounting concept under consideration using the assignment as a context. The precipitator for this behaviour was the new perspective produced by the tutor via his explanation.

*Student precipitators of instrumental/executive help seeking*
There were three distinct student precipitators of instrumental/executive help seeking in the videoed learning support sessions. The student precipitators for instrumental/executive help seeking were where the students: expanded on the tutor's explanation; were unclear about an aspect of the work; or wanted to relate presented theory to their situation.

<u>Student expanding on tutor's explanation</u>
In the following example P6 elaborated on the tutor's explanation; this caused him to seek instrumental/executive help.

> T: "Now I think that what we need to do is…have you still got the code?...the$_1$ piece of code you did the other day"$_2$
> P6: "What for?"$_3$
> T: "That one that we did on Friday. Cos that was a set controlled loop which$_4$ had the AND in it which stopped it if someone put a less than zero, before it$_5$ got to the end of the array"$_6$
> P6: "My flat mate figured out some errors in that. Mega errors"$_7$
> P6 laughs.$_8$
> T: "Mega errors"$_9$
> P6: "And I don't know whether I can open it in Borland. So anyhow, you're$_{10}$ happy with that at the moment?"$_{11}$
> T: "Yep"$_{12}$
> P6: "Basically, all we've got to do is prompt and read the data"$_{13}$
> T: "Yep, and as we pass through it"$_{14}$
> P6:"That from here as we pass through the loop..this point is a function call"$_{15}$
> T: "Yes"$_{16}$
> P6: "Now that function call would be nested"$_{17}$

T: "Yes" $_{18}$
P6: "Because this returns a float…which is the average" $_{19}$ (Vid 6, 0.38.18).

The precipitator for the instrumental/executive help seeking is the student adding to the tutor's explanation in line 13. The help seeking in this case is instrumental/executive as P6 was confirming that an aspect of general theory he applied was correct.  Even though the help seeking takes the form of a statement which the tutor confirmed, P6 is seeking help since the context of the learning support session was to provide help to the student. P6's approach to help seeking often took the form of statements which he expected the tutor to agree or disagree with.

In the following example P7 expanded on the tutor's explanation by trying to generalise from it regarding the treatment of two accounting concepts.

Tutor explained the treatment of expenses, owner's equity and retained earnings
T: "So now, you can do a standard one of those...once again put a line through the things as you use them"
P7: "But you can still use them under expenses because there's expenses in the financial position"
T: "Yes. No there aren't. There are prepaid expenses. They're not true expenses"
P7: "Yeah, but the financial position is assets equals liabilities plus owners equity, and under owners equity, it's revenue minus expenses"
T: "There's a difference"
T continues with the explanation.
P7: "You would add that to owners equity, it's retained?"
T: "Yes"
P7: "So you always add the owner's equity to the retained earnings and the net profit after tax?"
T: "There's your revenue minus expenses coming through as a single number" (Vid 7, 0.17.50).

The precipitator for this help seeking behaviour was the student wanting to develop a general understanding of the concepts involved, which he attempted by expanding on the tutor's explanation. His expansion of the explanation led to instrumental/executive help seeking. This is an example of instrumental/executive help seeking as the student was attempting to sort out a general rule for the treatment of two accounting concepts.

Student being unclear of an aspect of the work
In this example, P7 similarly displayed instrumental/executive help seeking in the following exchange, as she was unclear of the accounting concepts

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beyond the assignment and wanted to clarify their relevance in order to upskill.

> P7: "We have earned but we have not yet received?"
> T: "We could ring up the people that owe us that money and say 'pay up' ".
> P7: "So it's like accounts receivable?" (Vid7, 0.02.05).

The precipitator for this behaviour was the student's confusion.

In the following example P8, a psychology student demonstrated instrumental/executive help seeking in the following exchange regarding whether or not counsellor had one 'l' or two.

> P8: 'If I do it on the computer it comes up as two, but it's American. I think American is two. Okay. Alright?"
> T: "Just go by that"
> T: "Oh wait a minute"
> P8: "See? Is it one of those things which doesn't matter?" (Vid8, 0.17.25).

The precipitator for this help seeking behaviour was the student being unclear about whether counsellor has one 'l' or two and wanting to know for future reference.

<u>Student wanting to relate presented theory to their situation</u>
In the following example the same student wanted clarification about how to relate the tutor's advice to his own specific situation.

> T: "But at the same time you have to consistently keep practising. So let the two methods run parallel and don't worry about it".
> P1; "So what you are saying is…as an example with my quote book when I'm on the phone I take your details really quickly then you're saying that I could go back and…
> T: "and practice"
> P1: "…Find out what the correct spelling is or sound the correct spelling?"
> T: "That's a good idea. If you have time" (Vid 1, 0.22.02).

The precipitator for this behaviour is his wanting to relate the help provided in the session to his own working situation.

Similarly P6 wanted to relate programming theory to his assignment. This caused him to seek instrumental/executive help, as he was attempting to resolve his programming problem with reference to the text book as he felt that he and the support tutor needed to do some research to address the programming problem.

The tutor explains an aspect of programming theory.

P6: "So you put in the…how quickly can you reach that C++ book there?"

Tutor hands student C++ book.

Student refers to book.

P6: "Now he [course tutor] has put in a further thing here…instead of putting in the 100 pieces of data and averaging…he's then gone and put…I want all ages under 21 averaged…we've got…if the person's age is that…counter is…total is added by person's age" (Vid 6, 0.34.06).

The precipitator for this help seeking is the student wanting to relate general theory to his assignment. In this case the student is attempting to solve the problem using theory he has read in the textbook. P6 later confirmed that he felt that he needed further input to give him a different slant on his presented problem. This categorises the help seeking as instrumental/executive as the student is attempting to improve his problem solving skills using the assignment as a context to do this.

R: "So you're still working on it. You've found some other input. So what made you get the book? Was it that you – were you both confused about what variable to use? The variable you'd like to use. Or was it that you were both – you weren't sure?"

P6: "I think it was sort of like you get to a certain point in anything and it doesn't matter what a person actually throws at you. It's still not hitting the target. So the only way you can really find out is to go back to a reference."

R: "So you weren't sure that you were getting anywhere so you went and looked in a book?"

P6: "I wasn't sure whether we weren't getting anywhere – no we were getting some place. I just wanted a particular slant on the reference out of the book" (Post 6, pp. 29 - 30).

## Conclusions

The data for this project has been collected in three stages: pre video interview data; video data; and post video interview data.

The pre interview data was used to find out what motivates participants of this study to seek academic help. Motivation to seek academic help with these participants seems to involve recognition of the need for help, the help seeker's confidence and the help seeker's view of both themselves as help seekers and of help seeking.

Videoed learning support sessions were used to ascertain the approaches that help seekers demonstrated in their help seeking, and the precipitators for particular help seeking types. Participants not only used both instrumental and

executive help seeking types, but also combinations of these, that is, executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive types. Often precipitators for particular help seeking types relied on external sources, that is, the material being covered or the tutor attempting to foster a particular help seeking approach. However, in some cases the precipitator for the help seeking relied on the help seeker themselves.

Help seeking sessions in this study also seemed to fall into student driven sessions (independent help seeking approaches), and tutor driven sessions (dependent help seeking approaches). Whether help seekers' approaches were dependent or independent allowed the help giver to attempt to foster any of the four types of help seeking identified above.

The data that forms the body of this chapter will be considered in more detail in the discussion chapter.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# DISCUSSION

## Introduction

The discussion in this thesis builds a tentative theory of tertiary help seeking incorporating the following core categories: motivation to seek help; help seeking approach; help seeking type; and help seeking precipitators. Help seeking approach and help seeking type are dissimilar in that help seeking approach appears to be a background effect against which the other three categories interact in the help seeking process. Each category will be analysed in sequence in terms of the findings from the videoed learning support sessions and the pre and post interviews.

## Motivation to seek help

Four major factors have been identified in this study in relation to why help seekers sought the help that they did. These factors were: a recognition that help was needed with an issue relating to the course that they were studying; an acknowledgement that confidence played a part in whether help was sought or not; students' seeing themselves as people who would seek help; and students viewing help seeking as legitimate.

### Student goals and needs

All participants in this study identified that there had to be a need for them to seek help, which confirms O'Donnell's (1995) finding that when students see a need for help, then they may subsequently seek it. The two distinct aspects of need identified, that is, help with basic skills and help with an academic problem, seem to relate to participants wanting to improve facets of their numeracy and literacy in order to make general progress in their study, rather than only seek help for presented assignments. The difference between these seemed to be the intent or goal of the help seeker. Both these aspects would be described by Oberman (2002) as being underpinned by task or performance – avoidance goal structures, which are stronger predictors of academic help seeking in students than self efficacy or students' self concept. In contrast, according to Collins and Sims (2006), a student focus on learning

and understanding would be classified as a mastery goal orientation (p. 210). However, task or performance – avoidance goal structures held a premier position as a motivator among the participants in the Collins and Sims study.

Needing help with basic skills as a motivator might be thought to be a precursor to more instrumental help seeking by participants, since the aim appears to be to upskill. For example, P5, P2 and P3 seemed to have goals that were fairly generic, that is to improve their language and literacy proficiency. However, this did not always equate with an instrumental approach in this study, as only one of the participants (P1), who reported this as a motivator, displayed one instance of instrumental help seeking behaviour. This seems to reflect Oberman's (2002) and Collins and Sims (2006) results, which found that task or performance goals were positively associated with adaptive or an instrumental help-seeking type. Additionally, task goals were negatively associated with other types of help seeking behaviour such as seeking executive help or avoiding help-seeking. However, each participant who reported this particular motivator was just starting a tertiary course or was referring to a time when they had just started a tertiary course; consequently this may have had a confounding effect on participants' responses in this study.   For example, P3 refers to a time when she 'couldn't write anything' (Pre3, p.5), and reports that she dealt with this by using executive help seeking when she asked '...how do you write that?' (Pre3, p.5). Her subsequent video session exhibited executive and executive/instrumental help seeking. Similarly, P1, who wanted help to improve his spelling, also sought help using mainly executive and executive/instrumental approaches, but at times used an instrumental/executive approach. This seems to be typical as participants who reported that needing help with basic skills was their motivation, generally used executive, executive/instrumental and (in rare instances) instrumental/executive types of help seeking. This resonates with achievement goal theory (Butler,2006; Butler, 1992; Karabenick, 2004). According to this theory, executive help seeking is considered to be the result of students having performance related goals. For example, their concern was to complete their tertiary course or avoid looking incompetent as opposed to

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trying to deepen their learning through a mastery orientated approach. It would seem that student goals are an influence on help seeking type.

Needing help with academic problems as a motivator was more specific than participants who presented as needing help with their basic skills as participants identified the need for help around assignments they were dealing with on their course. Consequently, it might be construed that this motivator would only produce executive help seeking. However, participants who reported this as a motivator not only used executive help seeking but also exhibited the other three approaches.  This is counter to the results of help seeking studies using achievement goal theory, which state that students displaying or using 'performance avoid goal orientations' do not seek help or only seek executive help (Karabenick, 2004; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). For example, P3, P6, P7 and P8 all exhibited executive, executive/instrumental, instrumental/executive and instrumental types of help seeking. Those participants who identified the motivator, needing help with an academic problem, were by this time well into their tertiary study and had had some experience dealing with assignments. Consequently, having learning support help was not new to them and their goals for the help that they did seek seemed to be more focussed. For example P7 knew she had a marketing report to do and she needed 'to know how to structure the report' (Pre7, p.5). By the time she sought help for her accounting assignment, she was able to focus her questioning in order to find out the information she needed in the timeframe of the session. Newman (2006) indicated that specificity of a help seeker's questions related to a more instrumental help seeking approach (p.230), a situation that occurred with P7.

It would seem that seeking help is a skilful activity. Not only do participants have to perceive gaps in their knowledge, they also have to be able to ask relevant questions in order that useful information is available for them to be able to construct coherent meanings. Consider P3's comment: 'I just don't have the questions there to ask because sometimes I just don't know the questions to ask' (Post3, p.15). Again this confirms Newman's (2006) analysis; executive help seeking, which was P3's preferred type, relies on

either open ended questions or passively waiting for help to be given without formulating specific questions. Such questions may facilitate the help giver in giving enough information to assist the help seeker without providing a complete solution. Perhaps, with more experience, this student could be in a better position to know what questions to ask, which may affect the nature of how she seeks academic help. Figure 5.1 summarises the two motivating factors of needing to improve basic skills and needing help with an academic problem and the subsequent help seeking type that occurred with these participants. In this thesis the arrows in the figures and diagrams indicate the connections that occurred between the various help seeking concepts that were researched.
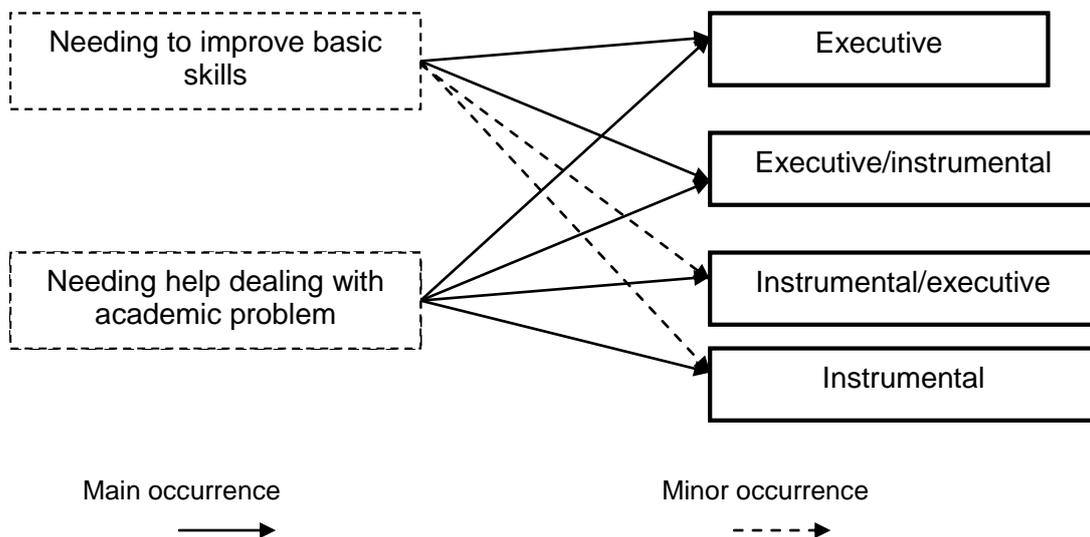


**Figure 5.1** Relationship between recognition of need for help and help seeking type

The authors of earlier studies of achievement goal theory (Butler, 1995; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) postulated that the situation in figure 5.2 occurred regarding executive and instrumental help seeking and the mastery and performance

goals of individuals.
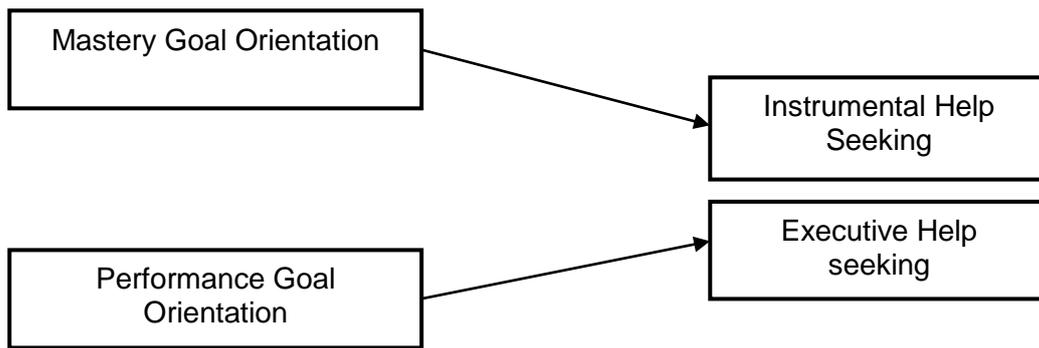


**Figure 5.2** Relationship between goal orientation and help seeking type

However, Stavrianopoulos's (2007) study of 137 college students found no relationship between students' goal orientations and their help seeking approaches. The participants in this research have produced results counter to earlier achievement goal studies (Butler & Neuman, 1995; Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) and in line with Stavrianopoulos's (2007) results. Figure 5.3 highlights where the results from this study confirm and are counter to achievement goal theory predictions of the type of help that students will seek given their goal orientations.
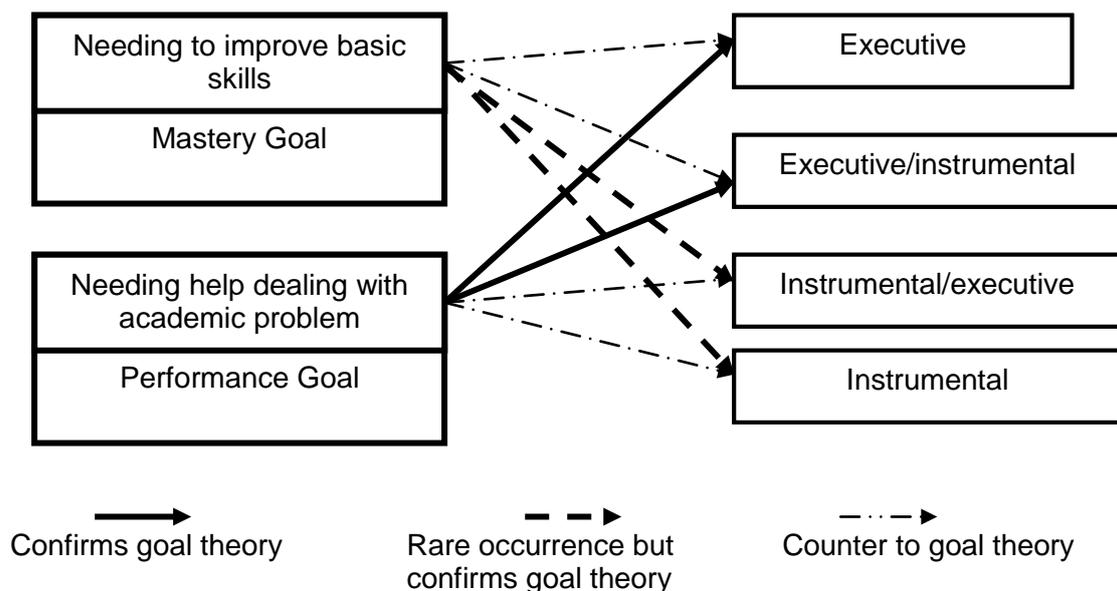


**Figure 5.3** Relationship between recognition of need for help and help seeking approach incorporating goal theory

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The responses of participants in this study do not substantiate Butler's (2006) claim that students are more likely to engage in adaptive (instrumental) help seeking if they use a mastery orientated goal approach (p.38). In some cases participants in this study sought help that was executive using a mastery orientated approach. Additionally, counter to earlier goal theory studies with younger students (Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) and with tertiary students (Karabenick, 2004), participants also sought instrumental help from a performance goal orientation. One explanation of these phenomena is that participants in this study were at tertiary level, and as such were able to manage their help seeking type despite their underlying goal orientations. For example, P7 and P8 sought help for academic problems, and were concerned about assignment completion. However, they exhibited a range of help seeking types in their sessions. It must be noted however, that the above researchers who employed quantitative techniques in their studies would probably not suggest that all students would prefer one type of help seeking exclusively over another. However the variety and changeability of help seeking types that occurred in this study seemed to rely on precipitators produced by students themselves and by the tutor, which only became apparent because their interactions were being videoed and subsequently closely analysed. This would not be the case using a quantitative approach. However, this study suggests the situation is more complex than this. Albeit small scale, it has highlighted students' willingness to change their type of help seeking, whether they use performance or mastery goals. For example, in P7 and P8's cases even though these participants displayed what could only be described as a performance orientated approach, they displayed instrumental help seeking type in their one to one learning support situation.

Karabenick's (2004) seminal study confirmed the relationship between help seeking and goal orientation and brought it into a tertiary context. This was originally investigated by Newman (1990) and Ryan and Pintrich (1997) in a school context where quantitative data was collected. They do have large samples but do not always capture the complexity that becomes apparent in smaller sampled studies where students help seeking is being considered in depth. This current small sample qualitative study has produced a more

detailed view of the relationship between student goals and their help seeking approach. Goals are an important motivator in student help seeking and form part of the help seeking model outlined in this thesis.

The next section examines how participants' confidence levels affected how they sought academic help.

**Confidence**

The three aspects of confidence that participants saw as important in whether or not they sought help were: self confidence was necessary for participants to seek help; having help builds confidence; and conversely that a lack of confidence in their ability to cope with academic requirements motivates help seeking.

Stajkovic (2006) defined confidence as "a certainty of being able to handle something" (p.1208). He used this common sense definition, as he claims that there was no academic definition in the 30 theories he reviewed. Participants in this study offered no definition of confidence, but it is probable that they had this definition (or something closely approximating it) in mind when they claimed that they felt that confidence was necessary for them to feel able to ask for help.

In some cases participants talked about a time when they were not very confident. For example P3 talked about the change in her confidence levels in relation to her help seeking from a previous time and concluded that "where I am now and where I was back then, I wasn't all that confident. Confidence has a lot to do with it" (Pre3, p.3). Similarly, P1 talked of "being young and stupid" and "doubting himself" (Pre1, p.5). Each of these participants was middle aged and possibly saw a change in their approach to their help seeking because they reported being more confident than they had been in the past.

This ties in with Stajkovic's (2006) definition as he claims the opposite of being confident is where there is uncertainty about being able to deal with something (p.1208). Noticeably, P7, a participant in her early twenties, did not

delineate such a change. Instead she outlined how her confidence levels might vary and consequently impact on the help that she could be seeking.

Participants also perceived that if they had academic help then their confidence levels would grow. For example P6 reported that having help had caused his "confidence levels to shoot up…and consequently if I want help, I will go out and find it" (Pre6, p.12).  Similarly, both P7 and P5 indicated that having help made them feel more confident (Pre7, p.2; Pre5, p.8). This is counter to P8 who had had a lot of help with her academic work, yet was still diffident with her approach to it. She was ambivalent about whether or not her confidence had increased by having academic help. She hoped at the beginning of the pre interview that her confidence would "come, but whether or not I don't know" (Pre8, p.3), and then as the interview progressed felt that she "may be getting a little bit more confident" (Pre8, p.6). The majority of participants felt that they had increased in confidence because of the help they received.

Stajkovic (2006) claimed that confidence is comprised of four aspects. These are hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience. It may be the case that P8's lack of confidence could be because of a low level in one or more of these aspects. It is clear that P8 seemed to be resilient, as she continued to attend her course sessions, and she certainly hoped to be able to complete her studies. Possibly, her levels of self-efficacy and optimism were low in comparison to the other components. Similarly, P7 reported losses of confidence on occasions, which may also be attributed to reduced levels of self efficacy and optimism.

The two confidence based motivators for help seeking seem to link together. If having help required a measure of confidence and yet receiving help caused participants to become more confident, then people who are able to take the first step and receive help may be motivated to carry on receiving help because of the growth in their confidence levels.

This situation could be depicted as a circular process.
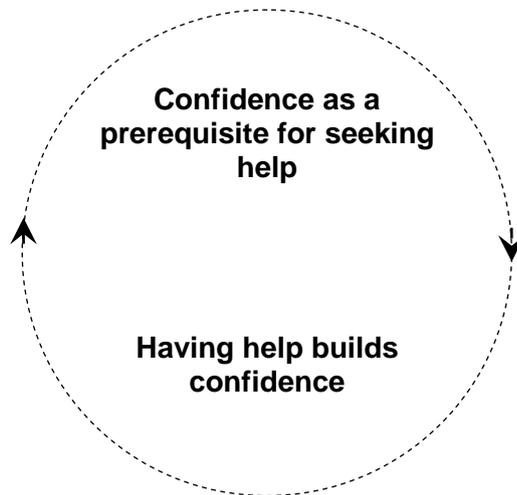
**Figure 5.4** Circular connection between confidence and help seeking

In P8's case the model in figure 5.4 does not describe her situation, as she is seeking help because of her lack of confidence, and the received help was reported as not making an impact on her confidence levels. So, P8's circular connection between confidence levels is shown in figure 5.5.
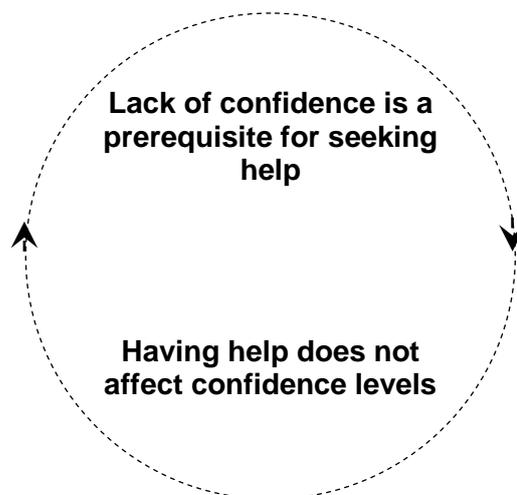


**Figure 5.5** P8's circular connection between confidence levels and help seeking

P8 also identified a time when she was quite confident dealing with academic study, and in this situation did not receive any help.

> P8: "I did work for a law office when I left school and did a legal executive diploma and passed it and I don't know how I did that, but I think the reason I did it was because I was working within the area and I felt quite confident of what I was doing because I was working with the terms that we were using and what I was studying. It was all relevant to what I was actually doing with work. And I think I only just passed. But I did pass. I did get my diploma"
> T: "Did you have any help for that?"
> P8: "Well I didn't think so" (Pre8, p.21).

Consequently, the following figure describes participants who need a measure of confidence to seek help or who feel that a lack of confidence is the main motivator.
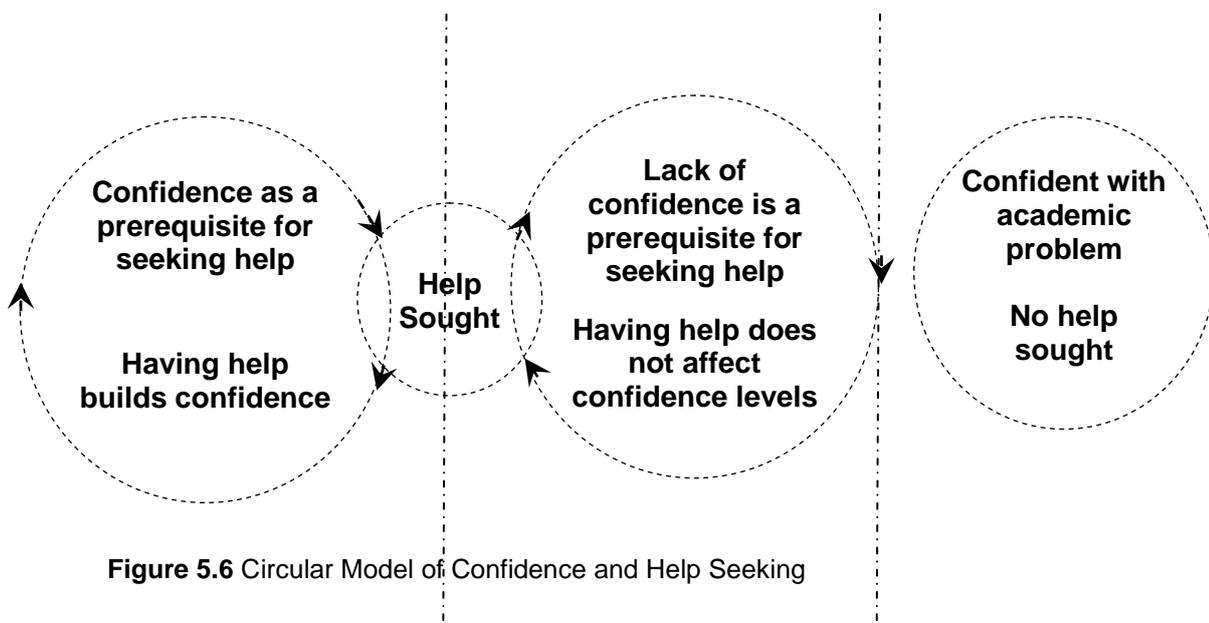


**Figure 5.6** Circular Model of Confidence and Help Seeking

The middle section of figure 5.6 describes P8's situation, where she received help and did not increase in confidence in dealing with her academic problems. This caused her to seek more help. The right hand side of figure 5.6 describes a time when she had felt confident in the past and did not seek help. In contrast, the left hand side describes those participants who felt that a measure of confidence was required in order to seek help. In this case the circular process continues as more confidence causes more help seeking.

This model indicates that there is no transference from one side of the diagram to the other, which is descriptive of the participants in this study. However, a situation may arise where the help given increases the confidence

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of an initially diffident help seeker who could then seek further help, as in the left hand side of the diagram, or stop seeking help, as in the right hand side.

Figure 5.7 shows how Stajkovic's (2006) core construct model of confidence can be incorporated in the above circular model as a motivator for participants seeking help. This is a new approach to help seeking theory, linking help seeking and confidence, and forms an aspect of my tertiary help seeking model.

**High self efficacy as a prerequisite for seeking help**

**Having help increases hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience**

**Help Sought**

**Hope, optimism, and resilience increase to a point where help is no longer needed. Self efficacy is already high.**

**Low self-efficacy and low optimism is a prerequisite for seeking help**

**Having help does not build self-efficacy and optimism levels**

**Confident with academic problem**

**No help sought**

**Figure 5.7** Circular Model of Help Seeking and Confidence using the Core Construct Model.

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Confidence or lack of it was a motivator for participants in this study. The next section outlines how participants' views of themselves as help seekers and of help seeking affected how they sought help.

**Participants' views as help seekers and of help seeking**

Participants in this study expressed views in their pre and post interviews regarding the nature of help seeking and their relationship to it.

*The help seeking self*

A complete study of the self is not within the scope of this thesis, however participants' view of themselves as help seekers has been included in the final help seeking model since six out of the eight participants reported a view of themselves as the kind of person who would seek help, and that this was a factor in whether they sought academic help or not. Participants identified two aspects to this view; these were seeing themselves as help seekers or seeing themselves initially as people who would not seek help.

Five participants in this study saw themselves as help seekers initially, and the sixth participant reported a change in her view of herself as a help seeker once she had entered tertiary study. For example, P1 saw that there were no barriers as far as his help seeking was concerned, he saw himself as someone who would listen. Similarly, P8 stated that if 'I ever got stuck on something, or whether I'm unsure I'd ask for help' (Pre8, p.2). P2, P4, P5 and P7 reported a similar view of themselves as help seekers. The majority of these participants used all four types of help seeking in their videoed learning support sessions. The one exception was P4 who only used executive/instrumental help seeking. However, these participants' perceptions of themselves as help seekers seem to relate generally to the number of approaches that the help seekers used in the sessions.

Conversely, P3 did not initially see herself as a help seeker, and did not expect help as she was a mature student. She felt that she 'should have known how to do…things' (Pre 3, p.3) because of her experience. However, her view of herself changed when she entered tertiary study, as she felt that she was making life hard for herself by not having help. P3 only used

executive, and executive/instrumental help seeking in her learning support session. P3's initial view of herself as someone who would not seek help confirms Addis and Mahalik's (2003) hypothesis, that people are more likely to seek help if they feel that it is not their fault that they have to do so, that is if the cause of the help seeking is something external to the individual then help seeking is more likely (p. 10). This is termed the ego-centrality problem. In P3's case she saw the new situation of dealing with tertiary study as external to herself, and consequently her view of herself was not threatened to the point where she continued to avoid help seeking. Her reasons for seeking help, although concerned with her individual difficulties, could also be seen as external to herself because of her realisation of the difficulties of tertiary study. P3 used executive and executive/instrumental help seeking in her videoed learning support session.

P6 made no specific reference to himself as a help seeker and yet did seek academic help and was clear that he had sought it.

> R: "When you first came here (learning support centre), when was the first time you asked for help here?"
> P6: "Asked for help here?"
> R: "Mmm".
> P6: "When I was doing CIRC"
> R: "Okay, right.  How did that – what was that about?"
> P6: "That was – we had to do a web page and [support tutor] helped me with the graphics of it and showed me how to – how to use PhotoShop and Flash and all the rest of it" (Pre 6, p.5).

P6 began questioning his approach to help seeking after he had completed his pre interview and videoed learning support session.

> P6: "But you then in your questioning you're actually then got me thinking in relation to what I'd actually felt in the past prior to my actual commencing studies here at [tertiary institute].  The way I felt about getting help.  Was I too staunch?  Was I too macho?" (Post6, p.1).

Here, reflecting on what happened during the research process caused P6 to reflect on his view of himself as a help seeker.

There does not seem to be a consistent connection between how participants viewed themselves as help seekers and the type of help seeking approach used in the videoed learning support session. It could be argued that P6

clearly had a view of himself as a help seeker, and that the research process highlighted this for him.

The diagram below summarises the situation, where participants reported that they thought of themselves as help seekers.
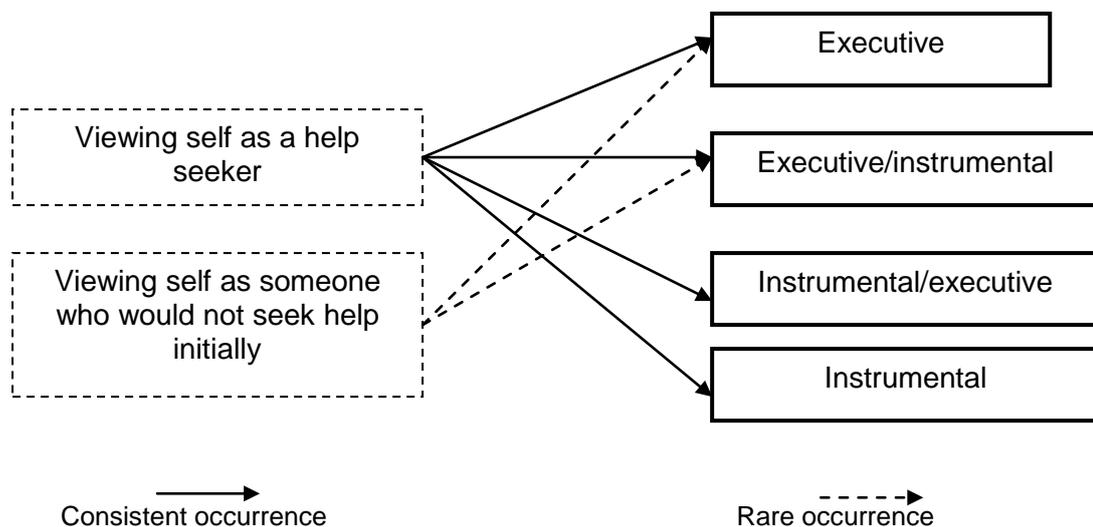


**Figure 5.8** Relationship between participants' view of self as a help seeker and type of help seeking

As can be seen in figure 5.8, even though there does not initially appear to be a relationship between how participants viewed themselves as help seekers and the type of help seeking they used, participants who viewed themselves as help seekers sought help using all four help seeking types. It must be emphasized however that there was only one participant who reported viewing herself as someone who would not seek help initially. This particular participant's view of herself changed however, so that she felt able to seek help. This seems to indicate that if students are to seek help, then they must firstly view themselves as help seekers. This is indicated by the arrows from the first box.

The next section considers how participants viewed help seeking.

*Help Seeking Acts*

Participants' view of help seeking seemed to be a major factor in whether they sought academic help or not. The two aspects that were thought to be

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important as motivators for participants were: seeing help seeking as positive; and seeing help seeking as having costs.

P2 described being able to have help as 'brilliant' (Pre2, p.12). Similarly, P4 and P7 reported their help seeking experiences as being positive. All three participants used executive/instrumental help seeking with P2 and P7 also using executive help seeking in their videoed learning support sessions. P7 who reported help seeking as a positive experience was the sole user of instrumental help seeking.

These results are in line with Verhasselt's (2008) study, where 77% of her sample of 369 undergraduates reported seeking help to successfully complete their course. This adds weight to Moncada and Sanders' (1995) results where, in a sample of 364 college students, 64% viewed help seeking as a positive way to solve academic problems (p.10). Whether these students were seeking executive or executive/instrumental help is unclear as this was not addressed in Moncada and Sanders' work. However, it is possible that they used a more executive type approach as the focus of the help seeking appeared to be specific problems that the students represented.

Similarly, Karabenick & Knapp's (1991) study of 612 college participants indicates that students see help seeking as another route for dealing with academic problems (p.224). Additionally, these participants sought help for specific problems, which classifies the help sought as executive or possibly executive/instrumental.

The results for the participants' of this study are outlined in diagram 5.9
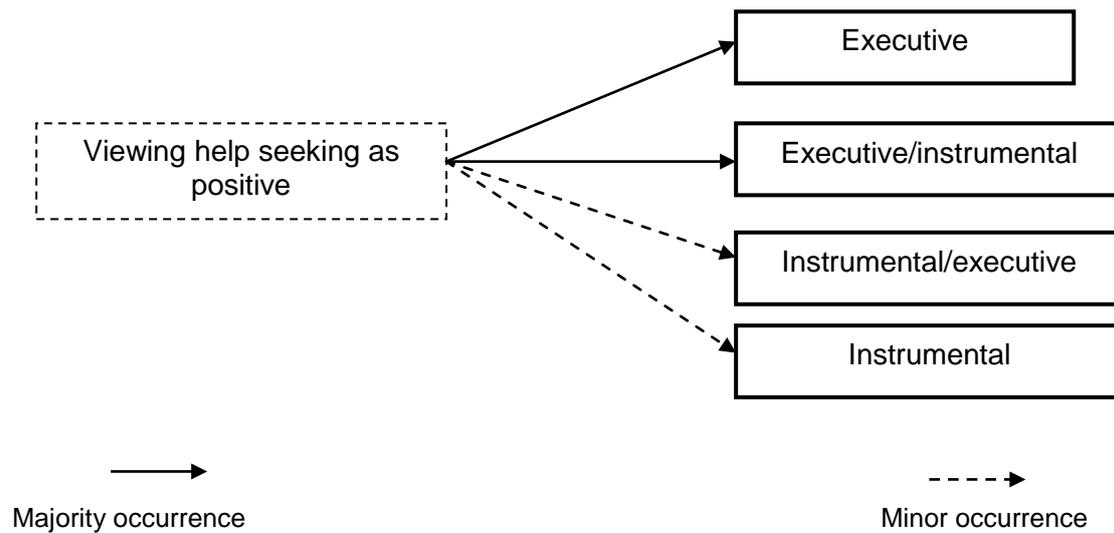
**Figure 5.9** Relationship between participants' view of help seeking as positive and type of help seeking type used

Participants who reported having a positive view of help seeking appeared to use executive and executive/instrumental help seeking types more often than instrumental/executive or instrumental types. Since these types focus on the presented material more than an instrumental or an instrumental/executive type, then possibly participants were more positive about help seeking if they knew that they would be dealing with their assignment or presented issue in the session.

The second aspect, that the participants in this study elucidated, concerned seeing help seeking as having costs. For example, P7 was concerned about answering questions incorrectly and P2 saw the costs in terms of the extra time he had to spend in addressing his problems. P7's concerns are typical of what the help seeking literature considers to be the threat to a help seeker's self esteem when they seek help. For example, Nadler (1991) postulates that people with high self esteem would react differently to seeking or receiving help than those with low self esteem (p.75). People with high self esteem would not use available help, because having help would pose a threat to it. Conversely, students with low self esteem would use available help far more. The concept of self esteem threat is reiterated by Clegg et al. (2006), who saw the threat to self esteem 'infusing' her qualitative data (p.112). However,

she claims that generalising this effect is not possible, as each of the participants in her study had their own view as to what constituted a threat.

The last cost identified in this study was the necessity of having extra support. P2's concerns regarding the extra sessions he had to attend in dealing with his academic problems seem to be in line with Newman's (2006) perspective that help seekers see the costs of help seeking because of their work-avoidance goal orientation. In this case P2 could have work-avoidance goals, that is, where the help seeker is attempting to complete their work quickly, so that they could move on to more preferable activities. However, P2's interviews indicated a mixture of approaches that were not solely work-avoidance, and during his videoed learning support session he demonstrated executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking as well as executive help seeking. P2's help seeking behaviour may not be indicative of work-avoidance goals, as he demonstrates behaviours that could emanate from Newman's (2006) and Butler's (2006) mastery or learning goal and performance or task goal orientation. Therefore, assessing a help seeker's goal orientation from their help seeking approach may not be possible, as in P2's case his goals seem to be to learn the material in question, yet his help seeking in some cases belies this. Figure 5.10 summarises the above analysis.
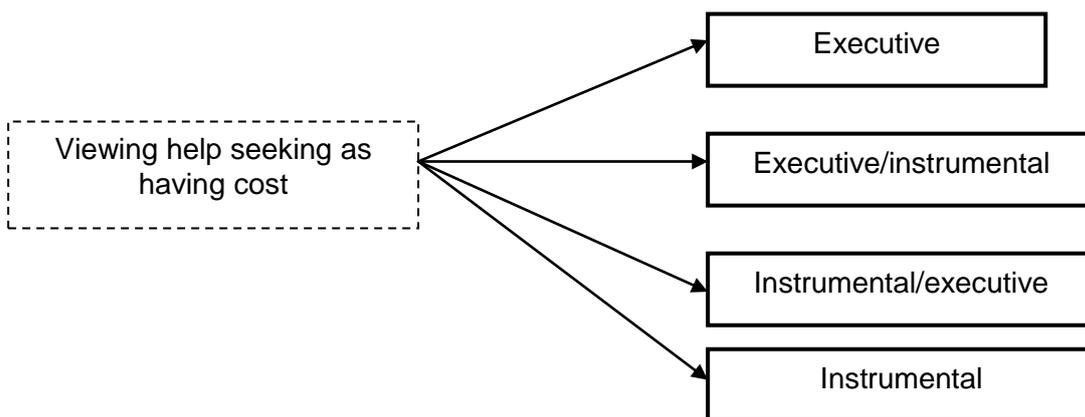


**Figure 5.10** Relationship between these participants' view of help seeking as having costs and type of help seeking they used

Participants who viewed help seeking as having costs used all four approaches in their learning support session. This would indicate that once

participants had sought help, even though they saw the process as having costs, this would not prevent them using any of the help seeking types to seek help.

The above analysis regarding participants' views of help seeking and the type of help seeking used in their videoed learning support sessions is outlined in figure 5.11.
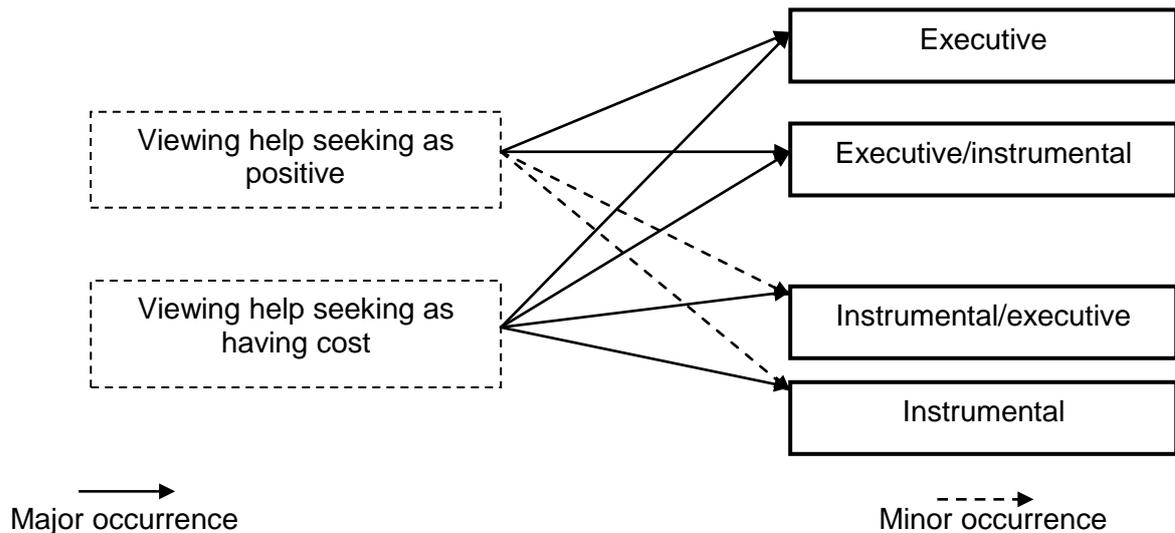


**Figure 5.11** Relationship between the view of help seeking and type of help seeking approach used

Participants' views of help seeking affected the type of help seeking they employed. Those who reported that they thought help seeking was positive mainly used executive or executive/instrumental types. This could be because those participants had help seeking sessions that dealt with their assignment or presented issues, and as such saw that help seeking had positive effects. Participants who saw the costs employed all four types of help seeking.

**A Model of Motivation and Help Seeking**

The above discussion regarding participants' motivation to seek help contributes to my tentative model of help seeking in a tertiary context in two ways. Firstly, confidence is an important motivator in seeking help and is different from the other motivators in that it has a circular structure in relation to help seeking. Additionally, this circularity persisted, even if a help seeker reported a lack of confidence in seeking help, since in this case help seeking

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sessions do not appear to change the help seeker's confidence levels. Secondly, participants' views of their goals and needs form a crucial component of help seeking behavior. Each of these aspects affects help seeking behavior. These components are displayed in Figure 5.12.
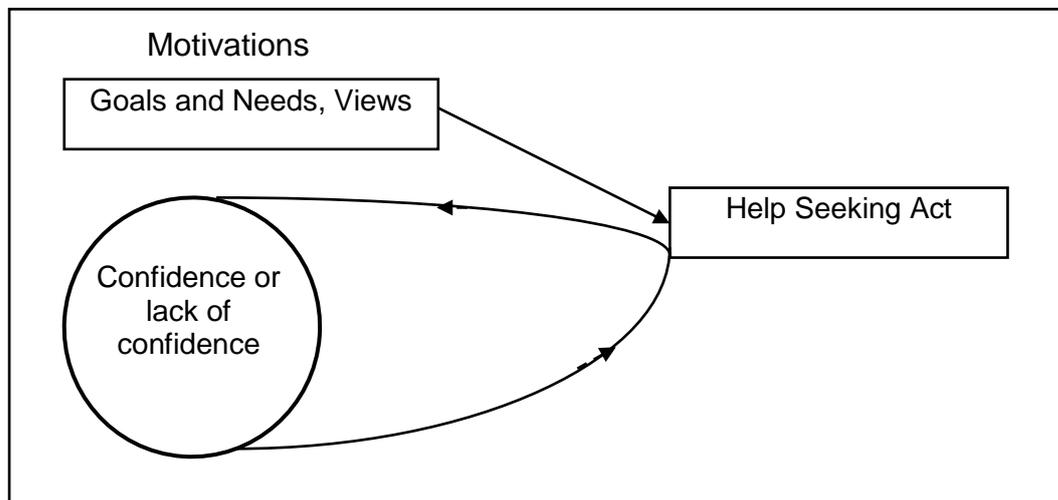


**Figure 5.12** Relationship between help seeking and motivation

## Participant Help Seeking Approaches

Participants in this study seem to follow two underlying approaches in regard to their help seeking. These were a dependent help seeking approach and an independent help seeking approach. These approaches seem to be a background to the four help seeking types that will be considered in the next section.

### Dependent Help Seeking Approach

Dependency as a construct has been theorized using many psychological theories. Bornstein (2005) combines the essential elements of each theory to define an interactionist model of dependency and postulates that dependency has cognitive components, motivational components, affective components, and behavioral components. Some aspects of this model describe the dependent help seeking that occurred in this study. Dependency involves individuals seeing themselves as controlled by other people or events. Additionally, they feel powerless to influence the outcomes of events, and consequently are not responsible for the consequences of their actions (Bornstein, 1993, p.2). Dependency as defined in this study in relation to help

seeking is distinct from Nadler's (1998) definition, which equates it with executive help seeking (p.64).

Four of the eight participants, P2, P4, P5 and P8, sought help in their videoed learning support sessions using a dependent approach. This entailed allowing the help giver to run the session and being amenable to the advice or method that the help giver used. For example, P4 exhibited dependent tendencies during her session, and consequently the tutor set the pace of the session. These dependent tendencies always exhibited themselves from the start of the sessions. In P4's case the tutor set the agenda in the session, and P4 seemed content to allow this to happen. P4's tutor did not attempt to effect a change in her approach to the session or help seeking strategies.

> T: "Historically this has proved to be one of the most difficult papers that students do. The two really hard ones are this one and 140 the communications paper."
> P4: "Really?"
> T: But a lot of the things that you have picked up in the other papers come through in this one really, really well…and I think you've got to work with same sort of things..so if we have a look quickly what the book goes through.."(Vid4, 0.01.00).

P4 and the tutor then consider the text book that the student would be using in the course. The student later confirmed that she didn't want to look through the text book in the session.

> R: "Now, a little bit later on [video playing in background].  Now what he – he started off by saying we're going to look at the book.  Did you actually want to do that?  Did you want to look at the book in the session – the textbook?"
> P4: "Yes, I looked at it"
> R: "Yeah, but did you want to do that with [support tutor]?"
> P4: "No"
> R: "You didn't.  Okay.  But you did.  You ended up doing that didn't you?
> P4: "Yeah, that's right, yeah.  Case study too" (Post 4, p.3).

This example is typical of other dependent sessions in this study. The major help seeking categories that dependent help seekers used were executive, executive/instrumental and on rare occasions instrumental/executive. Interestingly, P8 who similarly displayed dependent tendencies also exhibited one instance of instrumental help seeking mainly because the tutor was able to foster this approach during her learning support session.

According to Bornstein (2005) cognitive components are a central element in a dependent help seeking context, as the help seekers see themselves as powerless and ineffectual in relation to the help giver. This seemed to be the case for P8 and P4. Similarly, motivational components are important as dependent help seekers may need guidance and approval from the help giver. In their help seeking sessions, P2, P8 and P4 elicited this kind of support from the help giver.

P8 exemplified Bornstein's (2005) conclusion that people using a dependent help seeking approach become anxious when they are asked to work on their own (p.15). P8 needed a measure of reassurance before she felt able to hand in the assignment she had brought to the videoed learning support session to be considered. P4 similarly needed reassurance that she was studying the correct courses, and also an explanation of what those courses consisted, from the learning support tutor.

Behavioural components similarly contribute to help seeking dependency. Bornstein (2005) sees these as relationship facilitating self representation strategies to strengthen attachments to others (p.17). He claims that dependent help seekers would use the following techniques with their help giver: ingratiation, supplication, exemplification, self promotion, and intimidation. There were some instances of these behaviours in dependent help seekers in this study. For example, P8 complimented the tutor on her ability to detect errors in her work, and P4 quietly listened to the tutor rarely interrupting him. However the main indicator of dependent help seeking with the participants in this study was the help seeker consenting to conduct the session as the help giver wished.

It seemed possible for a help seeker to have a dependent approach to their help seeking, and yet have instances of their help seeking categorized as any one of the four types. However, participants who displayed a dependent help seeking approach in this study tended to use executive and executive/instrumental types of help seeking. Figure 5.13 summarises this situation.
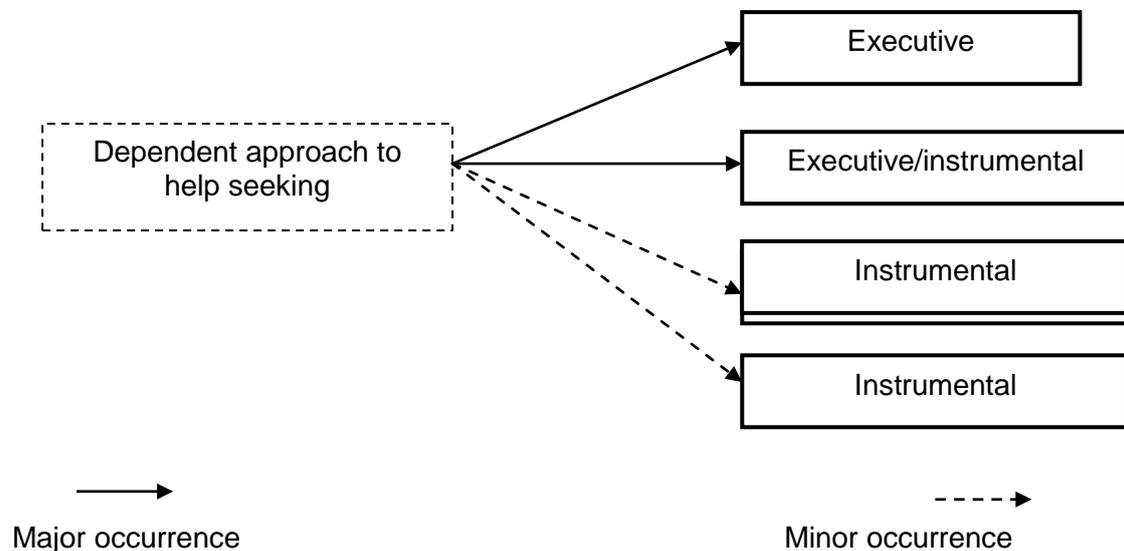
**Figure 5.13** Relationship between dependent help seeking approach and help seeking type

This finding seems to confirm Nadler's (1997) view that dependent help seeking equates with executive help seeking. In the majority of cases a dependent help seeking approach by the participants produced executive or executive/instrumental help seeking. However, my model of help seeking is more finely tuned than Nelson Le-Gall's (1985) model which was the one that Nadler used. The results of this study indicate that dependent approaches to help seeking do not equate with executive help seeking, because there were many occurrences of executive/instrumental help seeking type from those participants using a dependent approach. My model seems to be more descriptive of the help seeking situation in a tertiary context.

The next section considers the converse situation, where help seekers demonstrated an independent approach to their help seeking.

**Independent Help Seeking Approach**

Independence has been theorized by Kitayama and Uchida (2004) as an internal state from which a person's goals, needs and desires emanate (p.139). Consequently, other people in relation to a person in this state are made meaningful in terms of these goals, needs and desires. Additionally, a

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person with an independent approach to their interactions with their environment would try to control whatever situation they were in, which would include other people's relationships with them. Markus and Kitayama (1991) claim that other people in a social situation may be important, but only in terms of being able to affirm the independent person's needs, desires and view of self (p.226).

Four participants in this study P1, P3, P6 and P7 demonstrated an independent approach to their help seeking. In each case the participant took control or tried to take control of the videoed learning support session. Independence was often exhibited with different behaviour. For example, P1 tried to set the agenda for the session, but the tutor did not allow this to happen. He confirmed this in the post interview.

> P1: "Yeah I'm – everything she said was – she just took the conversation – she took control of the conversation back by going back to the steps."
> R; "Right. And that was useful?"
> P1: "Um well of course it – well it wasn't unuseful. It wasn't negative was it?"
> R: "No."
> P1: "I'm just saying that's how she – you asked me what I thought about that – this thing. So I would have just accepted it as the fact that um she was just taking control of it. And I mean I already knew her ploy, but I couldn't tough her off" (Post1, p.5).

P1 saw having help in his learning support session in terms of trying to wrest control from the tutor. His independence comes through from time to time, but the tutor always dominated the interactions and set the agenda.

P6 similarly had an independent approach to his help seeking session, but in this case the tutor did his best to accommodate what the participant wanted. P6 set the agenda by telling the tutor what was required, worked on the problem with the tutor and occasionally became upset if progress on his problem did not eventuate. P6 seemed very clear as to what he wanted out of the session, and the approach he wanted from the tutor.

> P6: "I wanted things to be as simple as possible and to sort of like sort of in line with the way that [course tutor] had shown me"
> R: "Is that so that you could not be confused?"
> P6: "Oh I don't know about confused. But I mean there's – once – if I was more au fait as far as the programming or coding went, then I probably may not have wanted it to show or show me a sort of way. I probably might have said okay fine. Just go for it. Then show me this other way. But seeing I

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wasn't au fait with the coding part of it, I wanted things more or less still to stay in line with how it had been shown before" (Post6, p.5).

This confirms Kityama and Uchida's (2004) analysis of what constitutes independent behaviour, as P6's goals and needs are at the centre of the learning support session.

Similar to the dependent approach, the independent approach to help seeking seemed to be a background against which participants used the four help seeking types. The majority of independent participants used all four types of help seeking in this study, with the exception of P3 who only used executive and executive/instrumental.

P3's independent approach is confirmed in the post interview, where she made it clear that her goals and needs had to be met or the tutor "wouldn't be going anywhere. He'd be staying there until I knew what I was doing" (Post 3, p.3). Despite this she felt that she was not in control of the session as she did not know the content of the accounting material that she wanted to cover.

> R: "I'm just wondering how – what I was trying to get at I think was how much of it you felt you controlled in the session?"
> P3: "Not a lot."
> R: "No, okay, right."
> P3: "Not a lot of it all.  Why?  The simple reason is because I don't know it"
> R: "Okay."
> P3: "No.  I didn't control a heck of a lot, if any of it at all. I need to know how to do this accounting problem and off we went.  And then at the same time although I did know I had my books and things that I had to brush up on" (Post3, p.13).

Despite this view, P3 made sure that her needs and goals were met in the session and consequently her approach can be categorized as independent. The tutor's attempts at eliciting a more instrumental approach in P3's help seeking in the videoed learning support session were unsuccessful as she was resistant because of her independent approach.

Figure 5.14 summarises the relationship between an independent approach to help seeking and the type of help seeking used by participants in this study.
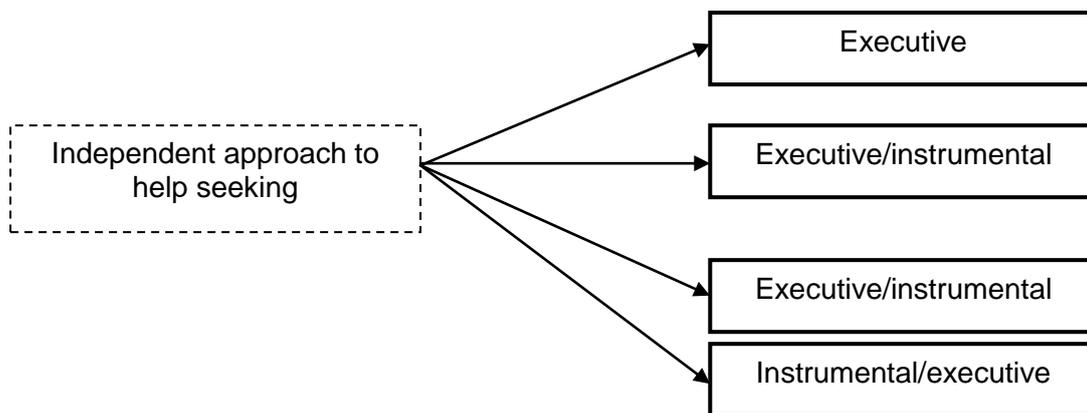
**Figure 5.14** Relationship between independent help seeking approach and help seeking type

Students who used an independent approach to their help seeking in this study may be using the tutor as a way to achieve their own academic goals. Such students may be using an executive or executive/instrumental help seeking type because it is the most expedient method of solving their academic problem. Since they are controlling, or trying to control, the session then they are able to use this type effectively. They may also use instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking type because they are independent and wish to display their autonomy by solving the problem themselves.

Although help seeking approach seemed to be a background effect, this finding is only based on one learning support session with participants and consequently must be treated with caution. However, the concept of a background effect does support Bornstein's (2005) view. Help seeking approaches seemed to be something that participants brought to the help seeking sessions, whereas help seeking types were behaviours that they used during the sessions.

Figure 5.15 summarises participant approaches to help seeking and the type of help seeking used in the videoed learning support sessions. If participants used an independent approach then they tended to use all four types of help seeking, whereas if their approach was dependent, they tended to use executive and executive/instrumental types.
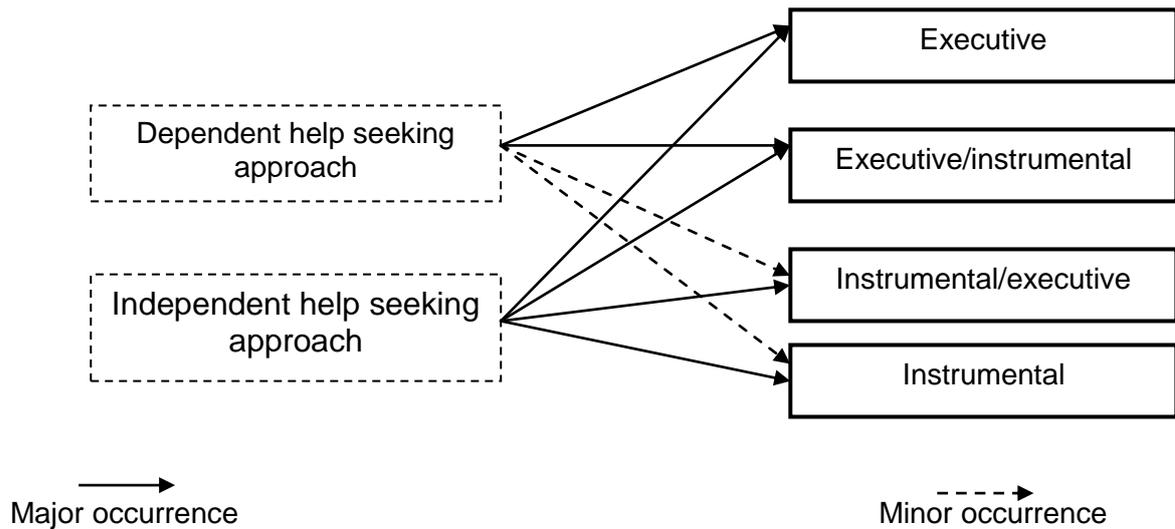
**Figure 5.15** Relationship between participant approaches to help seeking in this study and type of help seeking used

## Help Seeking Types

Help seeking types are distinct from help seeking approaches. The last section discussed the two help seeking approaches identified in this study. These seem to be more fundamental participant states than the types of help seeking that participants used. Help seeking types are instances of help seeking behaviour that occurred in this study in videoed learning support sessions.

### Existing Theory and Tertiary Help Seeking Types

The existing theory of help seeking (Nadler, 1997; Nelson Le-Gall, 1981, 1985) has not produced such a finely tuned model as has been developed in this thesis. Existing theory postulates that help seeking is exemplified by two distinct categories that are quite different from each other. The more nuanced model presented in this thesis is more descriptive of the help seeking these tertiary students used, and posits that there are two further categories that better describe how tertiary students seek help. The sub sections below offer idealised versions of both executive help seeking and instrumental help seeking in order to demonstrate the differences between them and ultimately to act as a gauge to show the subtle differences that exist between

executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking types. These are discussed further in the next section.

*Executive Help Seeking*

Participants used Nelson Le Gall's (1981) executive help seeking during the videoed learning support sessions. I have classified this as a 'type' of help seeking. Executive help seeking was exemplified by the participants attempting to solve their problems by directly asking the tutor to solve them for them, or by using a more indirect approach. This indirect approach occurred with help seekers acting in such a way as to elicit help without expressly asking for it (Bornstein, 1998, p. 782). In some cases participants sat quietly whilst the tutor helped solve particular problems or dealt with presented issues for them. For example, P3 sat quietly while the tutor provided specific help for her assignment, whereas P6 asked the tutor directly for help with his assignment question.

All the participants in this study used executive help seeking and this form of help seeking occurred more often than instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking. There were more instances of executive help seeking type by participants who used an independent approach to their help seeking, than those that used a dependent approach. This is possibly because dependent help seekers had their help seeking type affected more by the tutor in the videoed learning support session than those participants who used an independent approach. Additionally, if a participant displayed an independent approach, then they may have preferred an executive type of help seeking as this would focus on their immediate need of solving their presented problem efficiently. Participants using this may also not have been effected by external influences such as the tutor.

To give a sense of executive help seeking, the following idealised examples have been created.

> $P_E$: "I need some help with doing the analysis on my assignment"
> T: "Okay. What do think you have to do when you do some analysis?"
> $P_E$: "I don't know, that's why I've come for help. Can you help me do the analysis on my assignment?"
> T: "Okay. Let's have a look at what you've been doing then".

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P_E: "I'm stuck actually. I've got findings, but could you help me interpret them?"
T: "Okay. Let me read your findings first, then I'll tell you what I think".

In this idealised example the student asks the tutor explicitly what to do. In this case the help seeker wants the answer to the problem possibly without doing any further work. He or she wants the help giver to outline specifically the solution in order to address the presented problem, or finish the assignment. This type of help seeking is at one end of the help seeking spectrum and forms the extreme end of the help seeking model outlined later.

*Instrumental Help Seeking*

Participants in this study also exhibited behaviour consistent with Nelson Le Gall's (1981) instrumental help seeking type. Sometimes participants used more direct help seeking with closed questioning as they were asking for only enough information to help them be able to solve their problems on their own. On other occasions the incidence of instrumental help seeking took the form of open ended questions. For example, P7 sought instrumental help by asking the tutor the reason for using a different date on accounting reports.  This is counter to Newman's (2006) claim that for help seeking to be adaptive (instrumental) then the help seeker must ask a question that is intended to elicit specified information through more directed closed questions (p.231). Participants in this study sought instrumental help using open and closed questions. Although five out of the eight participants sought instrumental help, its incidence was less than the other types. Independent help seekers all sought instrumental help during the course of their learning support session, whereas only one dependent help seeker used instrumental help seeking and that was precipitated by the learning support tutor.

An idealised example of instrumental help seeking is outlined below.

P_I: "I need some help with the analysis for my assignment"
T: "Okay. What do think you have to do when you do some analysis?"
P_I: "I'm not sure, that's why I need some help."
T: "Okay. When you analyse you would look at the books or papers you've read and firstly decide what you think about them"
P_I: "So I could do that for the literature I've read for the assignment?"
T: "Yes. You could often think of some questions you could ask about what you've read"
P_I: "Right, thanks. What I'll do is go away and have a think about this and use it on the stuff I've read and then I'll come back and see you"

T: "Okay."

The above example highlights the approach that participants took in their instrumental help seeking in this study. Help seekers who use instrumental help seeking want enough information to be able to solve the problem themselves. This could include only wanting one or two pieces of information, so they can carry on dealing with the presented problem or wanting information so that they can solve new problems or improve their study methods.

Executive and instrumental help seeking are extreme types of help seeking in the tentative model constructed in this thesis.

**New Tertiary Help Seeking Types**

As discussed previously, the current theory provided a starting point for the data analysis in this study, but as I studied the videotaped learning support sessions, I realised that it was incomplete in that it did not describe aspects that I was observing. It was apparent that not all help seeking was either instrumental or executive, but that on some occasions other types were manifest. These appeared to be a combination of instrumental and executive help seeking types, which led me to call the new types executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive.

*Executive/Instrumental Help Seeking*

In this case the help seeker wants to complete their assignment or deal with the presented issue, but is also interested in being able to solve new problems. However, they specifically want the assignment dealt with. Therefore the help seeker wants to finish the assignment, but also is receptive to being presented with general methods that can be used later. For example, P4 exhibited executive/instrumental help seeking. Although her questioning of the tutor seemed to be executive in nature, she was trying to discover more general aspects of the course she was undertaking. Similarly, P8 sought executive/instrumental help. Her help seeking seems initially to be more specific but she is, in fact, attempting to improve her writing skills.

This type of help seeking was used by all the participants in this study; that is, they all seemed concerned to have their assignment or 'presented issue' dealt with, but also wanted to gain skills so that they could address the same type of problem at a later time. This would not be surprising as the participants in this study were all tertiary students and had chosen to undertake their courses of study. Additionally, all of them were willing to have help in a learning support session, so consequently they were aware that they needed to be able to solve problems themselves rather than simply be given answers.

Executive/instrumental help seeking was the preferred type for participants in this study. This partially confirms Newman's (2008) hypothesis that more experienced learners tend to seek more instrumental help (p.320). Participants probably preferred this type because it dealt firstly with their need for dealing with their assignment or 'presented issue' and secondly provided an increase of skills. Newman cites Nelson Le Gall and Jones' (1990) study, in which they found that younger students tend to seek more executive help. Possibly, younger students who use executive type help seeking become tertiary students who use executive/instrumental help seeking. This may be because tertiary students realise that they need to be able to deal with their problems themselves, and executive/instrumental help seeking is a move towards instrumental help seeking.

An idealised instance of executive/instrumental help seeking is outlined below.

> $P_{E/I}$: "I need some help with doing the analysis on my assignment"
> T: "Okay. What do think you have to do when you do some analysis?"
> $P_{E/I}$: "I don't know, that's why I've come for help. What do you need to do analysis? Can you show me using my assignment?"
> T: "Sure. When you analyse you would look at the books or papers you've read and firstly decide what you think about them"
> $P_{E/I}$: "So, on my assignment I would look at what I've read and see what I think about it. Could you give an example from my assignment?"
> T: "Sure, like here, you could say this study only had three people in it, which would not be a large enough sample for the authors to base their conclusions on".
> $P_{E/I}$:"Oh okay. What would I do if they had a good number of participants, like this one. What sort of statement could I make? What would I say for the other parts of the assignment?"

In the above example $P_{E/I}$ is locating their help seeking around the assignment in question, yet at the same time trying to improve skills so that they could deal with an analysis situation on another assignment. The main emphasis is for the help seeker to deal with their assignment, and the improvement in skills is a by-product.

*Instrumental/executive Help Seeking*

Participants in this study also exhibited a slightly different combination of help seeking type. I have called this instrumental/executive as there is more emphasis on the part of help seekers on upskilling and less on assignment completion or having their 'presented issues' resolved. In this case, help seekers want new information related to their assignments, so that they can see how to proceed with their specific assignments themselves. They may realise that the help offered is general, but still want the links to the assignment or 'presented issues' elaborated specifically. Although the emphasis of the help seeking is to improve their basic skills, help seekers using this type of help seeking are still emphasizing their assignment or presented issue to a certain extent. The assignment or presented issue is still the focus of the help seeking, yet an improvement in general skills to improve their ability to cope with such issues in the future is mostly to the fore. This is distinct from executive/instrumental help seeking where the help seeker's focus is more on having their assignment or presented issue resolved.

Five out of the eight participants demonstrated instances of instrumental/executive help seeking, with three of the five using an independent approach and two of the five a dependent approach. For example P6 exhibited instrumental/executive help seeking when he asked more general questions around his assignment in order that he learnt the principles behind it, and P5 similarly used the same type in order to grasp the language essentials around her assignment. There were fewer instances of instrumental/executive help seeking and fewer participants used it than either executive or executive/instrumental help seeking in this study. Instrumental/executive help seeking was used slightly more often than instrumental help seeking.

An idealised instance of instrumental/executive help seeking is outlined below.

> P$_{I/E}$: "I need some help with the analysis on my assignment".
> T: "Okay. What do think you have to do when you do some analysis?"
> P$_{I/E}$: "I'm not sure, that's why I need some help. What do you have to do when you do analysis? If you show me, I'll try and apply it to my assignment".
> T: "Sure. When you analyse you would look at the books or papers you've read and firstly decide what you think about them".
> P$_{I/E}$: "Okay. If you show me some examples I'll have a go with my assignment but could you show me how I can do some of it with my assignment?"
> T: "Okay, like here, you could say this study only had three people in it, which would not be a large enough sample for the authors to base their conclusions on".
> P$_{I/E}$: "Oh okay. Is that always the sort of thing I could say or does it depend on the context. I mean, if there were a study with three participants and the conclusions didn't try to generalise quite so much, would that be okay?"

Instrumental/executive help seeking is an important category of help seeking type, and adds to the presented theory, as it focuses on the help seeker's wanting to upskill and yet does this within the confines of the assignment. This category allows greater conceptualisation and provides the opportunity to explain nuances of student help seeking behaviour.

Instances of instrumental/executive help seeking type seemed to occur more often with participants who exhibited an independent approach to their help seeking. Participants who used a dependent help seeking approach rarely used this help seeking type. Possibly a dependency approach mitigates against help seekers trying to use this type, because its use would necessitate improving their skills and working more independently (Bornstein, 2005). Since one aspect of a dependent approach is to relinquish control to the tutor, then dependent help seekers might find using this type of help seeking more difficult as it conflicts with their underlying approach.

**A Model of Help Seeking Type**
One way of conceptualizing types of help seeking would be to see them as forms of behavior that are available to help seekers. That is, help seekers can use a particular type or not and this constitutes a help seeking act. In some cases help seekers' help seeking approaches facilitate the use of particular types, but more often they are precipitated by either their own behavior or that of the tutor's. In constructing this model of help seeking type and placing it in

the tentative overarching model of tertiary help seeking I am not ascribing a relative value to any of the four identified types.  Rather, I am saying that that all help seeking acts constitute a particular help seeking type.

Figure 5.16 shows one possible conceptualization of the relative positions of each of the help seeking types outlined above.

**Help Seeking Act**

| Executive | Executive/Instrumental | Instrumental/Executive | Instrumental |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
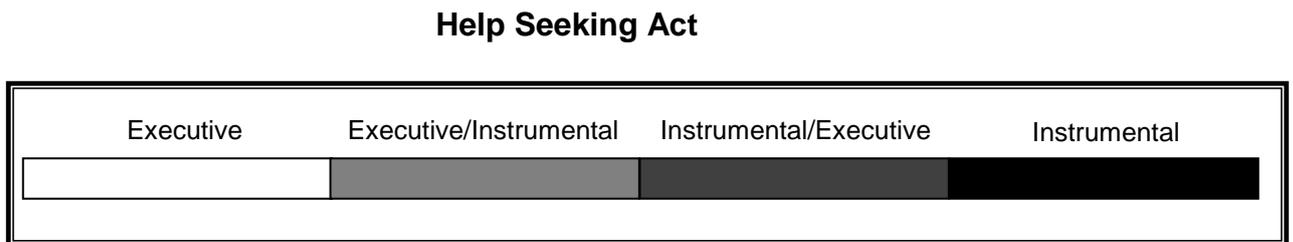
**Figure 5.16** Help seeking types constituting a help seeking act.

This figure is intended to show that help seekers can opt for any of the help seeking types during a help seeking session, dependent on the precipitators that occur prior to the help seeking behaviour. No hierarchical order is intended with any help seeking type. I am not claiming that instrumental help seeking is a more appropriate state than executive help seeking, as I feel that help givers should accept the type of help seeking used initially. It may be that help givers might prefer help seekers to use instrumental help seeking since they would then deal with their presented issue themselves. However, any of the help seeking types constitute an act of help seeking, and thus may be an apposite form of help seeking relative to the help seeking context, the help seeker and help giver. Nevertheless, this is not to say that a help giver should not try to move help seekers towards instrumental/executive or instrumental help seeking. However they need to accept the type of help seeking the help seeker uses initially.

## Motivation, Type and Approach to Help Seeking

As outlined earlier help seeking approach and help seeking type are different entities. Help seeking approach is a more underlying aspect of participants' help seeking, whereas help seeking type is reflective of participants' behaviour in the videoed learning support sessions. 'Help seeking approach'

is a stable aspect that the participants brought to the sessions, whereas 'help seeking type' varied as the learning support sessions unfolded for each participant.

**Relationship**

Figures 5.1, 5.8, 5.11 and 5.15 have the same structure. In each case an aspect of the overall structure of a help seeking session either produces an executive and executive/instrumental help seeking type or all four types. The overall structure can be observed in Figure 5.17. This table also includes aspects such as mastery and performance goals, which I am equating with a wish for 'basic skill development' and a wish for 'help with an assignment' respectively. However, mastery and performance goals were not measured in this research, but aspects that seemed to relate to them were elicited and the same help seeking types occurred. This is an argument based on 'reverse engineering' (Pinker, 2009).
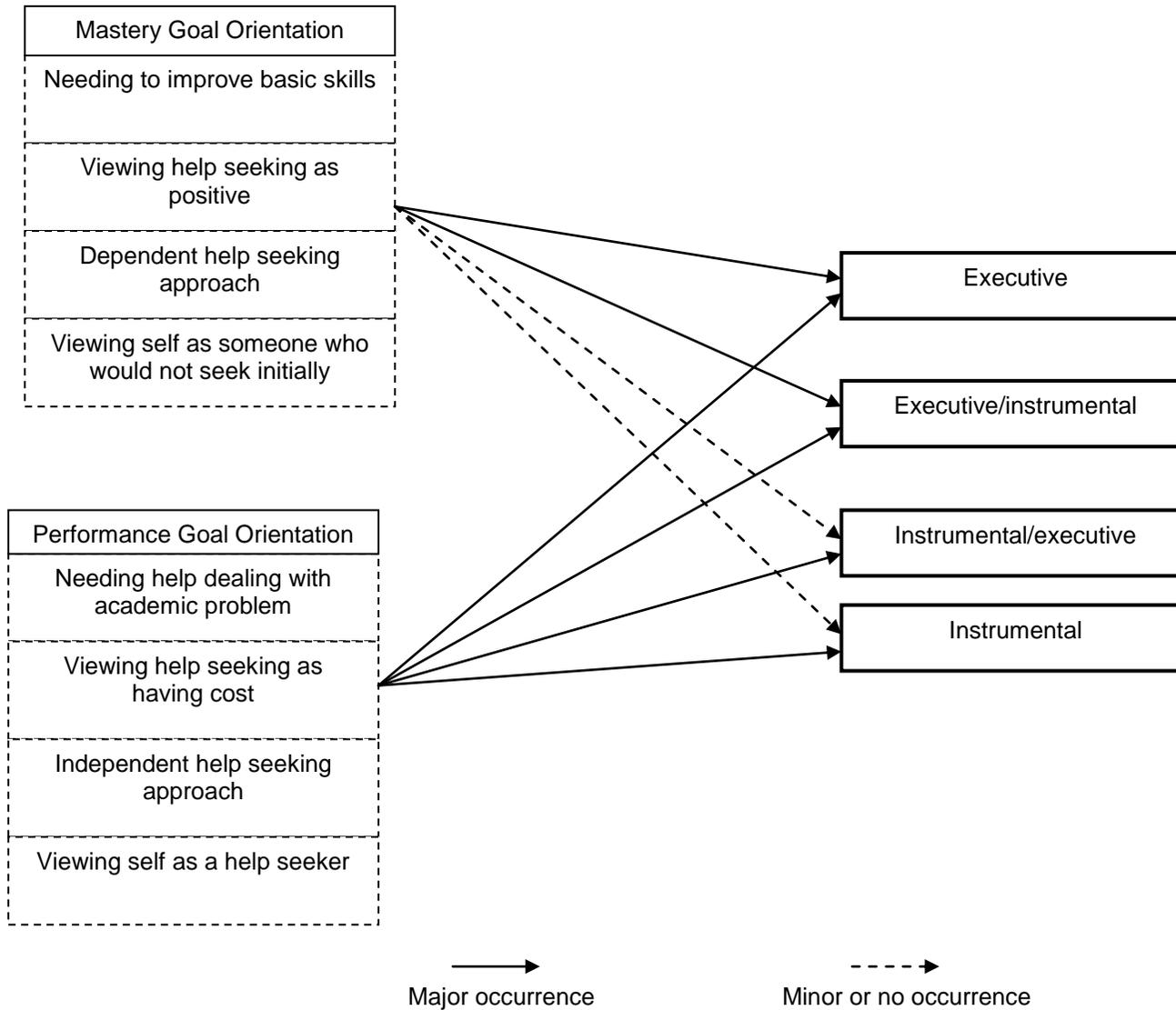
**Figure 5.17** Relationship between needs, goals, views, approaches and help seeking type used in help seeking sessions

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Each of the aspects that produce the same type of help seeking could possibly be classified together. Needing to improve basic skills, viewing help as positive, viewing oneself as one who would not necessarily initially seek help, and dependent approaches to help seeking, all produced executive and executive/instrumental types of help seeking. At first glance, these aspects could all be seen as manifestations of dependent help seeking; however, some participants displayed various combinations of these in their help seeking. Moreover, needing help with specific academic problems, viewing help seeking as having costs, viewing oneself as a help seeker and independent approaches to help seeking produced all four types of help seeking. These aspects could all be viewed as an independent approach to help seeking.

Consequently, dependent and independent approaches to help seeking seem to link the disparate aspects of motivation, views of self as a help seeker and views of help seeking. So, if a student has a dependent approach to help seeking then it is possible that he or she will exhibit the majority of the other three aspects that are related to it; that is viewing oneself as someone who would not initially seek help, seeing help as positive, and wanting to improve their basic skills. However, this does not mean that help seekers would exclusively exhibit these aspects. They may also exhibit some aspects from the other approach. For example P4, a dependent help seeker saw help seeking as positive, felt the need to improve her study skills, yet always saw herself as being a help seeker. Additionally, P3, an independent help seeker saw her need as dealing with an academic problem, saw help seeking as having costs but did not view herself as a help seeker initially. Furthermore, P2, a dependent help seeker, at different times reported that help seeking was positive, and also had costs.

It seems clear that dependence and independence do not rely on the reasons that participants reported for seeking help, but seem to be related to the type of help they did seek. So, for example seven out of the eight participants reported that they saw themselves as help seekers, and this did not rely on the approach that they took to their help seeking. This may have been

because all eight participants in this study were seeking help, and were confident enough to allow their help seeking session to be videoed.

All four dependent help seekers saw having help as positive, whereas this was only the case for two independent help seekers. However, two dependent and two independent help seekers saw help seeking as having costs. Perhaps dependent help seekers reported help seeking as positive because of the affective nature of dependency; that is, if they are asked to work alone they become anxious. Having help alleviates their anxiety. Conversely, independent help seekers may be able to work alone, as long they feel that their goals are being met.

Two out of the four independent help seekers reported that they did not always see themselves as help seekers initially, whereas none of the dependent help seekers reported this. Additionally, independence seems to relate to participants seeking more help for academic problems rather than basic skills, whereas dependent participants sought help for both equally.

Dependent help seekers in this study sought executive and executive/instrumental help more often than independent help seekers, who used all four help seeking types. Since independent help seeking seems to relate strongly to the achievement of individual goals and needs, and the external environment is negotiated in terms of the achievement of these goals, needs and desires then the use of all four approaches to achieve this would seem reasonable. In contrast, more dependent help seekers may have different aims; that is to facilitate strategies to strengthen attachments to others (Bornstein, 2005, p.17) by allowing the tutor to run the learning support session and achieve the tutor's aims for the dependent participant. In this case executive and executive/instrumental help seeking may help the participant achieve this.

The relationship between participant approaches to help seeking and help seeking type is clearer than between motivation and help seeking approach and type. It could be thought that because of the similar arrangements to the diagrams between needs, approaches, views and help seeking type that each

aspect of the needs and views could be categorised as either dependent or independent; that is as a help seeking approach. For example, in Figure 5.17 each of the aspects 'needing help with an academic problem', 'viewing help as having costs', and 'viewing oneself as a help seeker' related to all four help seeking types. This was also the case with participants who exhibited an independent approach to their help seeking.

Consequently, each of the first three aspects could be seen as a facet of an independent approach to help seeking because each represented itself in terms of all four help seeking types. Similarly, a dependent approach could be linked to 'needing to improve basic skills', 'viewing help seeking as positive' and 'viewing oneself as someone who would not seek help initially'. However, the participants in this study belie this by providing too many counter examples for this to be an adequate description of the help seeking relationship. Rather, help seeking approaches appear to be a background within which motivations and help seeking types sit. In order to examine this further, it is necessary to look at the composition of the help seeking that occurred in the videoed learning support sessions.

## Help Seeking Composition

As stated earlier, dependence and independence provide a background against which types of help seeking occur. For example, it is possible to exhibit a dependent help seeking approach and yet still seek help instrumentally. Additionally, it is possible to be independent in one's help seeking and also seek help executively. Some participants in this study exhibited all four types of help seeking whilst having differing underlying approaches.

P2, P4, P5 and P8 all approached help seeking in a dependent way, and mainly sought help using executive and executive/instrumental types. However, P8 used an instrumental approach once in response to the support tutor initiating this type of help seeking whereas P1, P3, P6 and P7 used all four types in pursuit of their goals. Figure 5.18 summarises the structure, together with participants, their help seeking approaches and types.
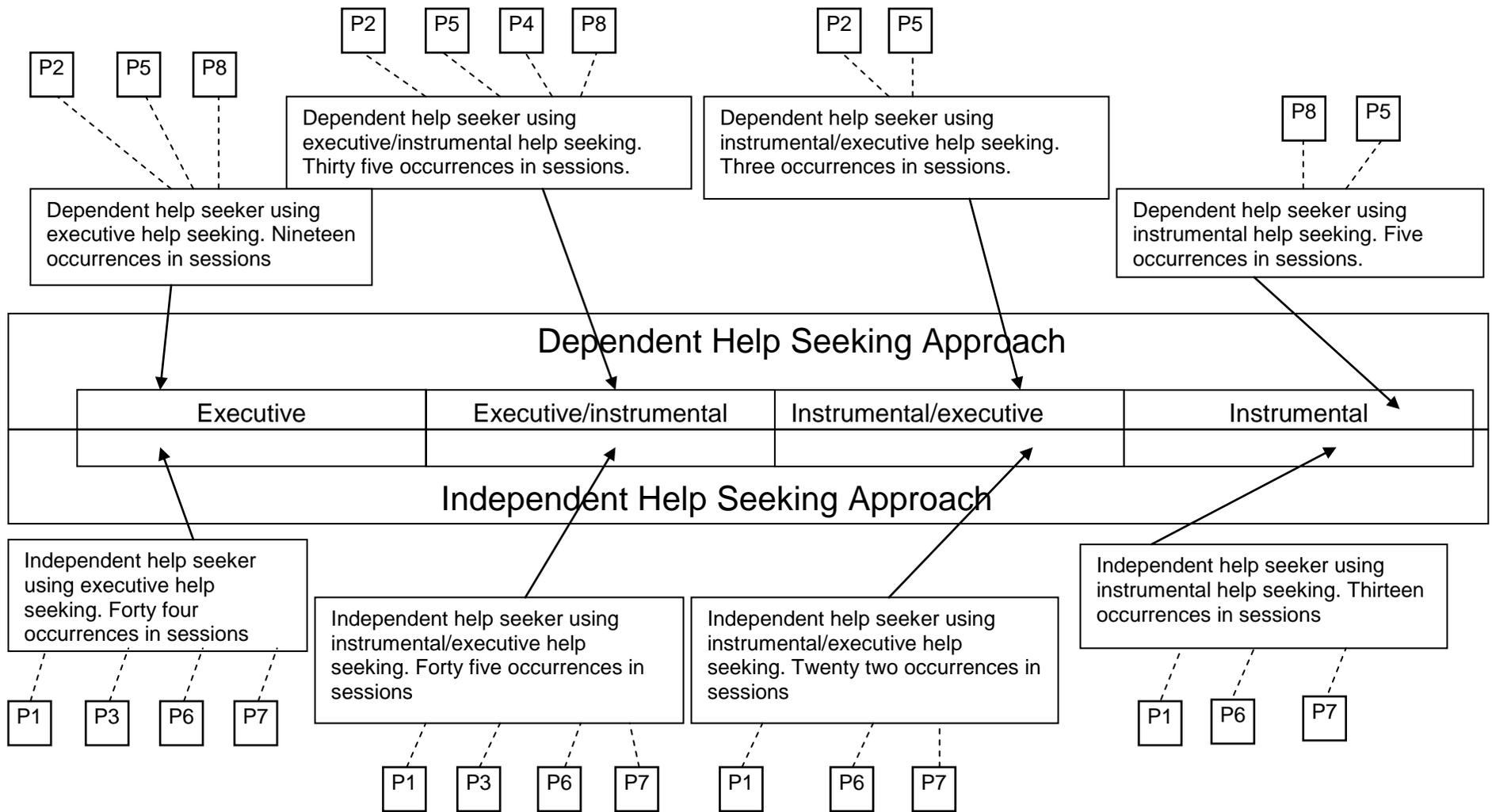
**Figure 5.18** Participant approaches and types of help seeking in this study.

Dependent help seekers used executive and executive/instrumental help seeking more often than instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking. The incidence of the latter two types with dependent help seekers in this study was very rare. As discussed in the last section, this could be because dependent help seekers approached their learning support session with the intention of acceding to the tutor's style or method for the session. Executive help seeking occurs because the help seeker wants direct help or clear directions from the help giver (Bornstein, 2005, p.18). In this sense dependent help seekers are trying to find others to solve their problems for them. This kind of behaviour does seem to tie in with dependency more generally, where participants are depending on the help giver for a solution. The low incidence of instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking by participants who used a dependent approach to their help seeking supports Newman's (2006) result, where he found executive type help seeking occurred more often than instrumental help seeking (p.231).

The nature of instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking types may mean that students with dependent approaches to help seeking do not often use these types. This would be in line with the situation in Figure 5.18. Although, instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking could still take place, this would be due to the help giver attempting to initiate this because of the dependent approach of the help seeker.

However, in contrast to Bornstein's (2005) claim that dependent people seek more help than independent people (p.65), the participants with an independent approach to their help seeking in this study exhibited a similar amount of help seeking as participants with a dependent approach. Those participants used the four types of help seeking during their learning support sessions. The one exception was P3, who used executive and executive/instrumental and only on one occasion instrumental help seeking types during her session, mainly resisting the tutor's attempts to facilitate the use of other types of help seeking. P3 seemed intractable regarding her help seeking type, because of the independent nature of her approach. The one instance of instrumental help seeking was the result of the tutor providing new

information to the participant and she sought instrumental help in order to realize her goals for the session.

Changes to participants help seeking types occurred in this study, but changes to their help seeking approaches did not. Effecting changes to students' help seeking types seems to be possible, but effecting changes to their underlying help seeking approaches may be more difficult and take more time than was available in this study.

Dependent and independent help seeking approaches seem to be more deeply rooted than particular help seeking types. This means that particular help seeking types may be affected, whereas dependent and independent approaches may be more entrenched. This does tie in with the two sets of theories linking dependency and help seeking identified in chapter two (Bornstein, 1993, 2005; Nadler, 1997). However the model presented in this thesis synthesises these two aspects, and describes how they interrelate within a help seeking session. Help seeking precipitators and their relationship to help seeking types will be considered in the next section.

## Help Seeking Precipitators

The help seeking acts that occurred during the videoed learning support sessions in this research seemed to be precipitated by behaviours that were internal or external to the participant. Wortley's (2008) conception of precipitators as events and influences that occur prior to contemplated behaviour has been used to theorise the precipitators that occurred. I have extended his theory to include the concepts of external and internal precipitators.

Wortley (2008) classifies a trigger as a particular type of precipitator (p.49), that is, as an aspect of prompting.  Some of his work seems to apply to help seeking behaviour. For example, in P8's case the tutor triggered particular help seeking types by signalling to the help seeker the expectancies in the help seeking session. Both these forms of precipitator, triggers and signals, are classified by Wortley as prompts. For the purposes of this thesis, a help seeking trigger has been defined as a behavioural act by the tutor or student

that precipitates a help seeking type. External and internal precipitators are a new conceptualisation of Wortley's (2008) work and will form part of the tentative model of tertiary help seeking that has developed in this thesis.

Help seeking approaches were not precipitated in the videoed learning support sessions. However, instances of executive, executive/instrumental, instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking types were. The next sub sections will consider how both external and internal precipitators seem to have affected help seeking types.

**External Precipitators**

The external precipitators that were apparent in this study involved the tutor precipitating help seeking type behaviours. The tutor precipitators that were manifest in the videoed learning support sessions can be classified using Wortley's (2008) analysis as 'pressure', 'permission' or 'prompt' precipitators. Tutors precipitated all four types of help seeking, and the nature of the precipitators seemed to affect the help seeking type that was used. Tutors precipitated executive and instrumental help seeking using 'pressures' and 'permissions', and executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive using 'prompts'. It is unclear if these instances were intentional, as post interviews were not conducted with tutors.

*External Pressure Precipitators*

Pressure involves the tutor exerting social pressure on the student to act in a particular way. Students would react to this pressure based on their dependent or independent approaches to help seeking and also may comply with- rather than defy the tutor in their management of the session. This is an aspect of the precipitator 'pressure' category (Wortley, 2008, pp.51-53).

The majority of executive help seeking that was precipitated by the tutor was fostered with participants who used an independent help seeking approach, but which involved some form of pressure on the part of the tutor. For example, P1 exhibited executive help seeking after the tutor created a situation for which he did not have an answer. This seems to have created a pressure situation in the learning support session. Similarly, P6 was the focus

of pressure when he did not receive a completed solution from the tutor and he appeared to be struggling to understand the content of the session. Again, this could be construed as a pressure precipitator for the subsequent executive help seeking.  Both these students exhibited independent approaches, and executive help seeking could have occurred because these students might not be as amenable to tutor 'pressure' as participants who used a dependent approach. Additionally, if the tutor created a situation where the student needed more information in order to fully understand the concept being covered, then the help seeking type was likely to be executive since the participants would want to address their incomplete knowledge as quickly as possible in order to refocus the sessions onto dealing with their goals. Similarly, if the tutor provided a protracted explanation of material to the help seeker, then help seekers seemed more likely to use an executive help seeking type in order to refocus the session onto their own goals.

Pressure precipitators also seemed to produce instrumental help seeking behaviour. For example, both P3 and P8 sought instrumental help when the tutor provided information in the session that was new to them.  This could be construed as a pressure precipitator as the students in both cases were put in a situation where they had to produce work in the session, rather than listen to the tutor. In both cases participants had to deal with a series of instructions that ultimately led to instrumental help seeking. Here, both participants used an independent approach to their help seeking. The precipitator possibly had the effect of making both participants seek instrumental help because of the newness and complexity of the information presented and because one participant wanted to be able to fully understand the new material being presented. In this case she asked a closed question in order to elicit this information from the tutor.

The second tutor precipitator of instrumental help seeking was the tutor preventing executive help seeking by refusing to provide this type of assistance. This occurred only once in this study. Again this is an example of a pressure precipitator; as in this case, P8 wanted the tutor to proof read her work. The tutor's refusal seemingly pressured the student into instrumental

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help seeking. There is little data for this precipitator, however, I believe it constitutes what Charmaz (2006) has termed as a negative case (p.102). As such, it can add to and help to refine the theory I am tentatively constructing.

Similar to instrumental/executive help seeking, instrumental help seeking was precipitated more often in participants using an independent help seeking approach. This could be because participants in this study who displayed independent approaches seemed to be able to use all four types of help seeking. Possibly, such participants are more able to use a variety of help seeking types, and react to 'pressure' precipitators differently than participants displaying a dependent approach. This could be because they have more help seeking types at their disposal.

*External Permission Precipitators*
One external permission precipitator occurred in this study, where the tutor was willing to focus on the students' presented issue. This could be termed a permission precipitator as the tutor could possibly be seen to validate the students' help seeking behaviour by minimising their responsibility in completing the presented work (Wortley, 2008, p.55). For example, P3 listened very carefully to the tutor's explanation, where he was completely focussing on her assignment. She continued to listen for as long as he was willing to give her specific information relating to her assignment completion. Additionally, the tutor focussing completely on P5's and P6's assignment seemed to encourage them to seek similar executive help. Again, this could be seen as a form of minimisation of student responsibility (ibid.). This was the only precipitator that could be classified as a 'permission' precipitator, and it seemed to precipitate executive help seeking. The incidence of this precipitator could have prevented these participants from standing back and viewing their presented issue more globally. This would ultimately focus the help seeking onto more of the details of the presented issue, and hence causing it to become an executive type.

*External Prompt Precipitators*
External prompt precipitators seemed to lead to executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking types with the participants in this study.

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Prompts involve environmental cues that make it possible for the individual to behave in a particular way (Clarke & Homel, 1999, p.21).

Executive/instrumental help seeking was precipitated by the tutor when he or she talked more generally about the participants' presented issues. This precipitator can be classified as a 'prompt' as it seems to be modelling an approach to the presented problem (Wortley, 2008, p.52), and may have allowed the participants to view the presented issues more globally. For example, the tutor in P7's session modelled the difference between financial position and performance statements (Vid7, 0.13.54). In P6's case, the tutor explained the reason for the assignment, which seemed to have the effect of signalling to him what the expected help seeking behaviour in the session was (Vid6, 0.45.01). Where this precipitator was in play, the tutors' more general approach seemed to affect participants and move their help seeking to one where although they were still focusing on their presented issue, they were also attempting to improve their skills.

To a lesser extent this help seeking type was also precipitated by tutors when they attempted to allow participants to manage the learning support session more. This can be classified as a prompt precipitator as it provides a signal (Wortley, 2008, p.52) to the participant that they may be able to complete the presented work. For example, P4 was complimented on her level of English, and this seemed to have the effect of precipitating executive/instrumental help seeking. Additionally, the tutor is perhaps showing the participants that there is an expectation that they would be able to solve the problems for themselves. Expectancy is also an aspect of Wortley's (2008) theory of 'prompt' precipitators.

The only tutor precipitator for instrumental/executive help seeking in this study involved the tutor providing a new perspective on a presented issue for the participant. This could also be categorised as a 'prompt' precipitator, as in P6 (Vid6, 0.10.34) and P7's (Vid7, 0.08.15) cases the tutors' explanations seemed to have the effect of signalling the errors in the presented work. In P1's case the tutor modelled a new study technique to the participant (Vid1, 0.29.11).  This precipitator could also be classified as a 'prompt', as it

provides a signal to the student about what is appropriate in the help seeking session (Wortley, 2008, p.52; Sheldon, 1982, 176), as prompts are environmental cues about the appropriateness of particular behaviours in a given context (ibid.), and in a help seeking context seemed to have precipitated these instrumental/executive help seeking types. For example, P6 queries the reasoning behind the new information presented by the tutor, P1attempted to clarify whether or not he should put information into his own words and P7 attempted to develop a general understanding of the work he was attempting for his assignment.

This precipitator is similar to the tutor instrumental help seeking trigger of providing new information for the participant. However, in this case, the resulting help seeking type was instrumental/executive possibly because this precipitator involved presenting a new perspective on the presented issue rather than just providing new general information. Additionally, this precipitator seems to have preceded instrumental/executive help seeking rather than instrumental help seeking possibly because of the independence of the help seeking approaches exhibited by the participants where this trigger took effect. The 'prompt' nature of the trigger may have had an effect on the help seeking types eventually used by the students. Also, the tutor in each case could have been attempting to foster more instrumental help seeking types in the participants, but because of the independent approaches that the participants displayed, instrumental/executive help seeking was the result. No participants with a dependent approach to their help seeking exhibited instrumental/executive help seeking because of prompt precipitators.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show the number of external precipitators that occurred in this study for students demonstrating a dependent and independent approach to their help seeking respectively.

| | Executive | Executive/ Instrumental | Instrumental/ Executive | Instrumental | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prompt** | 1 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 17 |
| **Permission** | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| **Provocation** | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Pressure** | 15 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 26 |
| **Total** | 16 | 27 | 2 | 3 | 48 |

**Table 5.1** External precipitators and dependent help seeking approach

| | Executive | Executive/ Instrumental | Instrumental/ Executive | Instrumental | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prompt** | 5 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 23 |
| **Permission** | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| **Provocation** | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| **Pressure** | 20 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 35 |
| **Total** | 34 | 24 | 13 | 6 | 77 |

**Figure 5.2** External precipitators and independent help seeking approach

## Internal Precipitators

The internal precipitators that were apparent in this study involve the students precipitating their own help seeking type behaviours. The precipitators can be classified using Wortley's (2008) analysis as either 'prompts' or 'provocations'. All four help seeking types were precipitated by the student, although executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive occurred more frequently than executive or instrumental help seeking. Executive and instrumental help seeking types seemed to be preceded by provocation precipitators, whereas executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking types seemed to be preceded by prompt and provocation precipitators.

*Internal Provocation Precipitators*

Internal provocation precipitators involve students producing an emotional response in themselves that leads them to reduce frustration or dissonance (Homel & Thompson, 2005, p.4).

The internal provocation precipitators in this study involved 'students realising that their goals were not being met', and 'students realising they needed to understand the material'. The first resulted in executive help seeking, whereas the second in instrumental help seeking. Internal provocation precipitators for instrumental/executive help seeking types were 'the students expanding on the tutor's explanation' and 'being unclear about an aspect of the work being covered'. Executive/instrumental help seeking seemed to be provoked by the students 'being unsure what to do in a given situation'.

The one student precipitator for executive help seeking could be seen as a provocation precipitator since students may feel provoked as their goals in the session were not being met. For example, P3 and P6 seemed to be provoked into refocusing their sessions onto their presented assignments so that the tutor could deal with them more specifically (Vid3, 0.16.11; Vid6, 0.47.09). Both these students used an independent approach to their help seeking and may have felt provoked in these situations since independent approaches to help seeking necessitate, by definition, that the participants see their own goals as predominant (Nagurney, Reich & Newsom, 2004). Since independence manifests itself through seeing others as a means to reach personal goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p.226) then it may not be unusual that executive help seeking was used to alleviate the provocation that precipitated the executive help seeking type.

The one student precipitator for instrumental help seeking involved participants 'realising that they needed to understand the material being covered'. This can be classified as a provocation precipitator as the students seemed to be provoked into help seeking by the realisation that to solve their presented issue they would have to become more conversant with essential information (Wortley, 2008, p.51). For example, this was the case when P5 realised that she would have to understand the material and deal with her

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problem herself (Vid5, 0.24.57), and P7 who, precipitated her own instrumental help seeking as she seemed to realise that she did not understand the material fully (Vid7, 0.15.14).  This precipitator may have occurred with P7 who had an independent help seeking approach as she seemed to have wanted to ensure that she was able to stand alone when dealing with problems (Nagurney et al., 2004, p. 215). This precipitator occurred because there were aspects of the subject that both participants presented that they did not understand, and that they needed to complete their work. In such cases both the dependent and independent approach and the provocation involved may have led to the precipitators and consequently the instrumental help seeking types.

Students who display a dependent approach in their help seeking excel at eliciting help (Bornstein, 1993, p.162). In P5's case the above provocation precipitator seemed to have occurred as she may have been attempting to fit in with the goals that the tutor had for her. The realisation that she did not understand the material seemed to produce instrumental help seeking behaviour because of the provocation of not understanding what she needed, and at the same time attempting to fit in with the goals that the tutor had for her.

The internal provocation precipitators for instrumental/executive help seeking involved the 'students expanding on the tutors' explanations' and the students 'being unclear about an aspect of the work being covered'. The first precipitator could be seen as a provocation precipitator as the students were provoked into expanding on the explanation in order to understand the material in question. For example, P6 seemed to be provoked (Wortley, 2008, p.56; p.59) into adding to the tutor's explanation as he found some errors in previous work (Vid6, 0.38.18), whereas P7 was provoked as she wanted to develop a general understanding of the presented material (Vid7, 0.17.50). Both P6 and P7 used an independent approach to their help seeking. Participants with an independent approach see their goals and needs as distinct from the help givers', so expanding on the tutors' explanations would reinforce their individual distinctiveness from the tutor as well as provide them

with an acceptable way to deal with the tutors' goals for the sessions. This internal help seeking precipitator was precipitated by the tutors' explanations, and consequently the help seeking that emanated, was instrumental/executive since in each case the participants were either attempting to confirm that an aspect of general theory that had been used was correct, or to develop a general understanding of concepts regarding the presented issue.

The second internal provocation precipitator for instrumental/executive help seeking involved the 'student being unclear about an aspect of the work that was being covered'.

This could be categorised as a provocation precipitator as the participants displaying this precipitator indicated frustration at not fully understanding the presented work. For example, P7 seemed to be frustrated at not understanding aspects of the accounting work she presented (Vid7, 0.02.05), and P8 seemed frustrated that she could not elicit an immediate answer from the tutor (Vid8, 0.17.22). P7, who used an independent approach seemed to have her help seeking precipitated in this situation as she seemed to want to ensure that she was able to deal with her presented issue and yet develop the skills necessary in dealing with it. Alternatively, P8 who used a dependent approach may also have had her help seeking activated by this precipitator as she seemed to want to reinforce her dependent approach to the help giver by asking about a situation where she needed specific input.

The internal provocation precipitator of 'being unsure of a solution or what to do in a given situation' occurred with participants using both independent and dependent approaches to their help seeking. This precipitator caused executive/instrumental help seeking to occur and could be classified as a provocation, as the participants in question seemed to display some frustration.  Frustration has been categorised as a provocation precipitator (Wortley, 2008). For example, P6 seemed frustrated during his session (Vid6, 0.09.58), and P8 was concerned that she did not have the correct points that she needed in her work (Vid8, 0.03.00; Post 8, p.4). In this case, P6 who used an independent approach seemed to want his goals achieved in the session

and consequently if he was unclear of an aspect, he would then seek help. The frustration experience seemed to lead to help seeking. Similarly, being unclear of an aspect of a solution amounts to a lack of control, which P6, with an independent approach may have wanted to remediate. Here, the help seeking type would be executive/instrumental, as the participant using an independent approach would be locating the help seeking around their presented issue whilst attempting to take on board new information. The use of executive/instrumental help seeking might also alleviate the frustration that the student was experiencing.

A different situation seemed to occur with P8 who displayed a dependent approach. In this case, her concern with having the correct answer on her assignment, seemed to lead to executive/instrumental help seeking. Her concern seemed to provoke her as she carefully followed the tutor's directions and explanations. If she was unclear regarding an aspect of these, she seemed to become frustrated. This locates this form of precipitator as a provocation. P8's dependent approach to the session seemed to amplify this situation.

*Internal Prompt Precipitators*
Internal prompt precipitators involved the 'students wanting specific answers that worked generally' and the 'students wanting to balance specific results obtained from the sessions with skill development', both of which resulted in executive/instrumental help seeking types. Additionally, the 'students wanting to relate issues that were presented in the session to their work' could be seen as a prompt precipitator, which resulted in instrumental/executive help seeking types.

The first internal prompt precipitator, the desire to relate the presented theory to a specific context could be classified as such, because the student is attempting to make use of what the tutor is telling them. This could be seen as a way of modelling the tutor's behaviour, as a method to solve their own problem. For example P1 wanted to use what was being taught in order to model how he collected customer information in his quote book (Vid1, 0.22.02) and P6 wanted to relate the theory he was shown as a model for his

coding problem (Vid 6,0.34.06). Both these modelling examples can be classified as prompts (Wortley, 2008, p.52).The desire to balance dealing with a presented issue or assignment with developing skills, could also be classified as a prompt precipitator. For example, P3 stated that the help that she did have, modelled how she could do the assignment, in that it showed her where to read the budget she was dealing with, as well as how to understand it (Post 3, p.13). Conversely, the desire by P8 to balance dealing with the assignment with developing her skills seemed to precipitate her help seeking (Vid 8, 0.06.28). This precipitator seems in the first instance to be a model and in the second a trigger. Both have been characterised as behavioural prompts (Wortley, 2008; Cornish & Clarke, 2003).  Again, this occurred with participants who used both a dependent and independent approach.

Nagurney et al. (2004) claim that desire for independence involves reliance on the self rather than on others (p.208). Consequently, participants displaying an independent approach may be likely to be concerned to ensure that they had the skills necessary to do their assignments or solve their presented issues. Alternatively, participants who displayed a dependent approach might want to balance their skill development with completing their assignments, as the latter may be the goals that the learning support tutor has for them. This would be an aspect of participants' use of a dependent approach.

The second internal prompt precipitator involved participants wanting specific answers that worked generally for them, and also resulted in executive/instrumental help seeking. Again this could be classified as a prompt precipitator as students possibly had expectations that problems could be ameliorated with specific solutions.  For example, P1 seemed to expect that his literacy difficulties would be dealt with through a general approach (Vid1, 0.16.15), and P7 that her problems with her assignment would be dealt with through the use of a general rule (Post 7, p.15). Both these participants used an independent approach to their help seeking. This may be because the essential aspect of an independent self view involves a conception of the self as an autonomous, independent person (Markus & Kitayama, 1991,

p.226). Having a specific solution that works generally reinforces this view of self as the participant would no longer need to seek help. Additionally, such participants may expect that the help seeking session would provide them with sufficient information to be able to solve a range of problems related to the specific ones they presented.

The third internal prompt precipitator involved the participant wanting to relate the presented theory to their work, and which resulted in instrumental/executive help seeking. This precipitator could again be classified as an expectancy, as the participant is expecting that they would be able to apply the help that they received to their situation. For example, both P1 and P6 wanted to relate the given advice to their own situations (Vid1, 0.22.02; Vid6, 0.34.06).  Again, both these participants were following an independent approach to their help seeking. Since independence requires making one's behaviour meaningful, mostly by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and action (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226), then relating the help giver's presented theory to their situation is how participants using an independent approach may operate. Additionally, the instrumental/executive help seeking behaviour that emanated from this precipitator provides another means by which independence could also be reinforced. These participants seemed to be trying to upskill and could possibly need less help in the future as well as having their presented issue considered. Possibly, such participants would expect that their help seeking session would provide them with strategies to become more independent. No participants with a dependent approach to their help seeking displayed this precipitator, possibly because they would be ascribing to the help giver's goals for the session.

Table 5.3 shows the number of internal precipitators that occurred in this study for students demonstrating a dependent approach to their help seeking.

|  | Executive | Executive/ Instrumental | Instrumental/ Executive | Instrumental | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prompt** | 1 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| **Permission** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Provocation** | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| **Pressure** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Total** | 3 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 14 |

**Table 5.3** Internal precipitators and dependent help seeking approach

Table 5.4 shows the number of internal precipitators that occurred in this study for students demonstrating an independent approach to their help seeking.

|  | Executive | Executive/ Instrumental | Instrumental/ Executive | Instrumental | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prompt** | 3 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| **Permission** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Provocation** | 6 | 14 | 8 | 6 | 34 |
| **Pressure** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | 11 | 20 | 8 | 8 | 47 |

**Table 5.4** Internal precipitators and independent help seeking approach

**A Tentative Theory of Help Seeking Precipitators**

Both external and internal behavioural precipitators preceded different help seeking types during the course of the videoed learning support sessions. Eight tutor and eight student behavioural precipitators were identified. There were six precipitators by students for executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking whereas there were only three tutor precipitators for these types. Conversely there were five tutor precipitators of executive and instrumental help seeking behaviours as opposed to two student precipitators.

Although student and tutor precipitators seem to generate all four help seeking types, participants' help seeking approaches seemed not to change. It is possible that these approaches could be amenable to change. However, a longer time frame than the course of this study would be required to ascertain if this were the case.

*Tutor Help Seeking Behavioural Precipitator Classification and Help Seeking Type*

The nature of help seeking precipitators seemed to elicit differing help seeking types and these seemed to depend on the classification of the behavioural precipitator in question. That is tutors who used pressure or permission precipitators on the whole tended to elicit executive or instrumental help seeking, whereas tutors who used prompt or pressure precipitators seemed to elicit executive/instrumental or instrumental/executive help seeking.

This situation is depicted in figure 5.19 which is based on the data from tables 5.1 to 5.4.

|  | **Independent Approach** | **Dependent Approach** |
|---|---|---|
| **Executive** | Permission/Pressure<br>{4 participants}<br>{ 26 occurrences } | Permission/Pressure<br>{3 participants}<br>{15 occurrences } |
| **Executive/Instrumental** | Prompt<br>{3 participants}<br>{10 occurrences} | Prompt<br>{3 participants}<br>{16 occurrences} |
| **Instrumental/Executive** | Prompt<br>{3 participants}<br>{6 occurrences} | Prompt<br>{1 participant}<br>{1 occurrence] |
| **Instrumental** | Permission/Pressure<br>{2 participants}<br>{4 occurrences} | Permission/Pressure<br>{2 participants}<br>{3 occurrences} |

**Figure 5.19** Tutor precipitator classification and help seeking approach and type

The above figure indicates that if tutors use pressure or permission precipitators then students seem to employ an executive or instrumental help

seeking type, irrespective of whether they are using an independent or dependent help seeking approach. In contrast, if tutors prompt students, then they tend to use executive/instrumental or instrumental/executive help seeking types. This result is very tentative because of the small numbers of participants in this study.

This situation resonates with Reactance Theory which postulates that students may react to threats to their freedom to behave as they want (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Fisher, Nadler & Whitcher-Alagna, 1983; Miller, Lane, Deatrick, Young,& Potts, 2007). For example, a help seeker using an independent approach to their help seeking may use an executive help seeking type in order to restore their loss of freedom from the pressure placed on them by a tutor using pressure precipitators. Executive help seeking type would presumably solve their problem and hence alleviate the pressure. This may be the case for both dependent and independent help seekers.

In some cases however, help seekers may alleviate the pressure by seeking help using an instrumental help seeking type. For independent help seekers this may be their preferred help seeking type, whereas for dependent help seekers this may be a reaction to the tutor who may want them to use this type of help seeking. Reactance Theory may also be useful to theorise the situation where prompt precipitators elicited executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking type, since in this case students may not experience a loss of freedom (Brehm & Brehm, 1981, p.194), as they were being prompted. The prompt precipitators seem to have resulted in help seeking types that deal with the participants' presented work.

Figure 5.20 summarises the situation
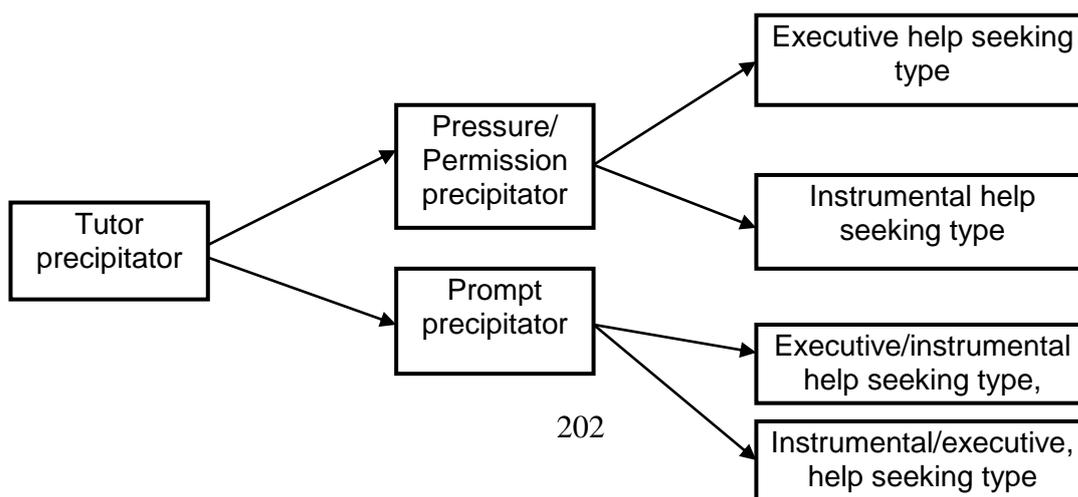
**Figure 5.20** Tutor precipitator and help seeking type

*Student Help Seeking Behavioural Precipitators, Help Seeking Approach and Type*

Certain types of precipitator seemed to elicit differing help seeking types reliant upon the help seeking approach that help seekers brought to the session. For example, students using both dependent and independent approaches precipitated their own instrumental/executive help seeking type through precipitators that could be characterised as either prompts or provocations. Similarly, students using both approaches precipitated executive or instrumental help seeking through provocation precipitators. Figure 5.21 which is based on tables 5.1 to 5.4 summarises the situation.

| | **Independent Approach** | **Dependent Approach** |
|---|---|---|
| **Executive** | Provocation<br>{4 participants}<br>{6 occurrences} | Provocation<br>{I participant}<br>{1 occurrence} |
| **Executive/Instrumental** | Prompt/Provocation<br>{3 participants}<br>{21 occurrences} | Prompt/Provocation<br>{4 participant}<br>{8 occurrences} |
| **Instrumental/Executive** | Prompt/Provocation<br>{3 participants}<br>{9 occurrences} | Provocation<br>{1 participant}<br>{1 occurrence} |
| **Instrumental** | Prompt/Provocation<br>{3 participants}<br>{7 occurrences} | Provocation<br>{I participant}<br>{1 occurrence} |

**Figure 5.21** Student precipitators, help seeking approaches producing help seeking types

Students using an independent approach to their help seeking sought executive or instrumental help through the use of provocation precipitators. This could be because they were provoked as they realised during the course of their sessions that their goals were not being met. It may have been the

realisation during the session and the subsequent loss of freedom in their sessions that led them to executive help seeking to alleviate this situation. Quick and Stephenson (2008) would claim that this executive help seeking is a method of reactance restoration and may be one way for students to restore their lost freedom (p.451).

There were no internal precipitators for dependent help seekers, using executive help seeking. This could be because students using a dependent approach would be attempting to fit with the tutor in the session and hence their help seeking would be precipitated by external events (Bornstein, 1994, p.176). However, students using both approaches sought instrumental help as the result of an internal provocation precipitator. Students using both approaches realised they needed to understand the material in question in order to deal with their presented issues.  It may have been the student's realisation during the sessions that provoked the help seeking. Additionally, since provocations cause stress (Wortley, 2008, p.56), then an independent approach may cause the provocation precipitator because participants' goals were not being met, whereas a dependent approach might produce a provocation precipitator because the students were attempting to fit with the tutors' goals for the session and were hence internally provoked into instrumental help seeking.

The majority of executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking type was precipitated by both prompt and provocation precipitators. Prompt precipitators seem to manifest from the students wanting something in the sessions. That is, 'wanting a specific answer that worked generally', 'wanting to balance the results from the session with skill development' and 'wanting to relate their presented issue with their work'. However, provocation precipitators resulted from the frustration of their problem not being dealt with. For example, when they were unclear about an aspect of the work they were dealing with, or being unsure what to do. In one case the student was provoked into expanding on the tutor's explanation prior to instrumental/executive help seeking.
This situation is summarised in figure 5.22.
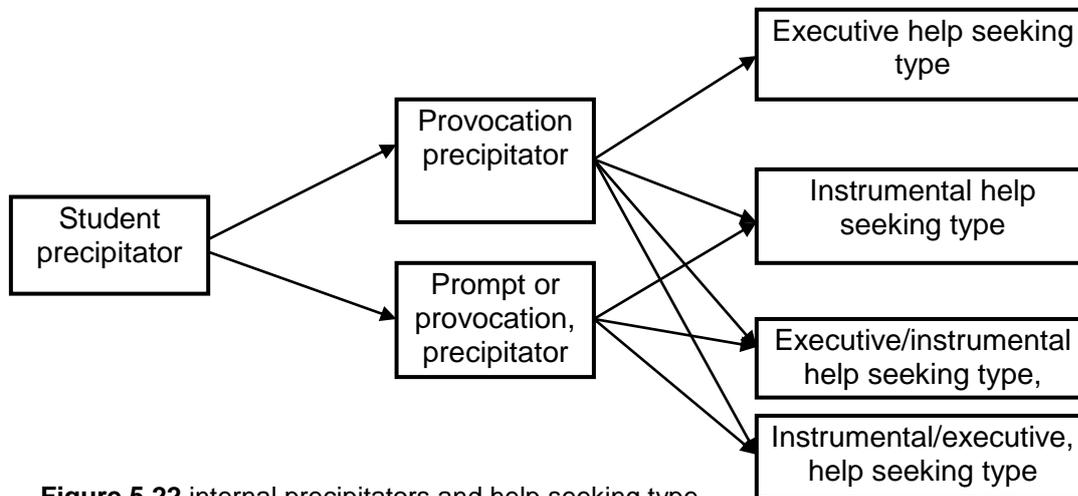
**Figure 5.22** internal precipitators and help seeking type

Figure 5.23 summarises the model of tutor and student precipitators and help seeking type and approach.
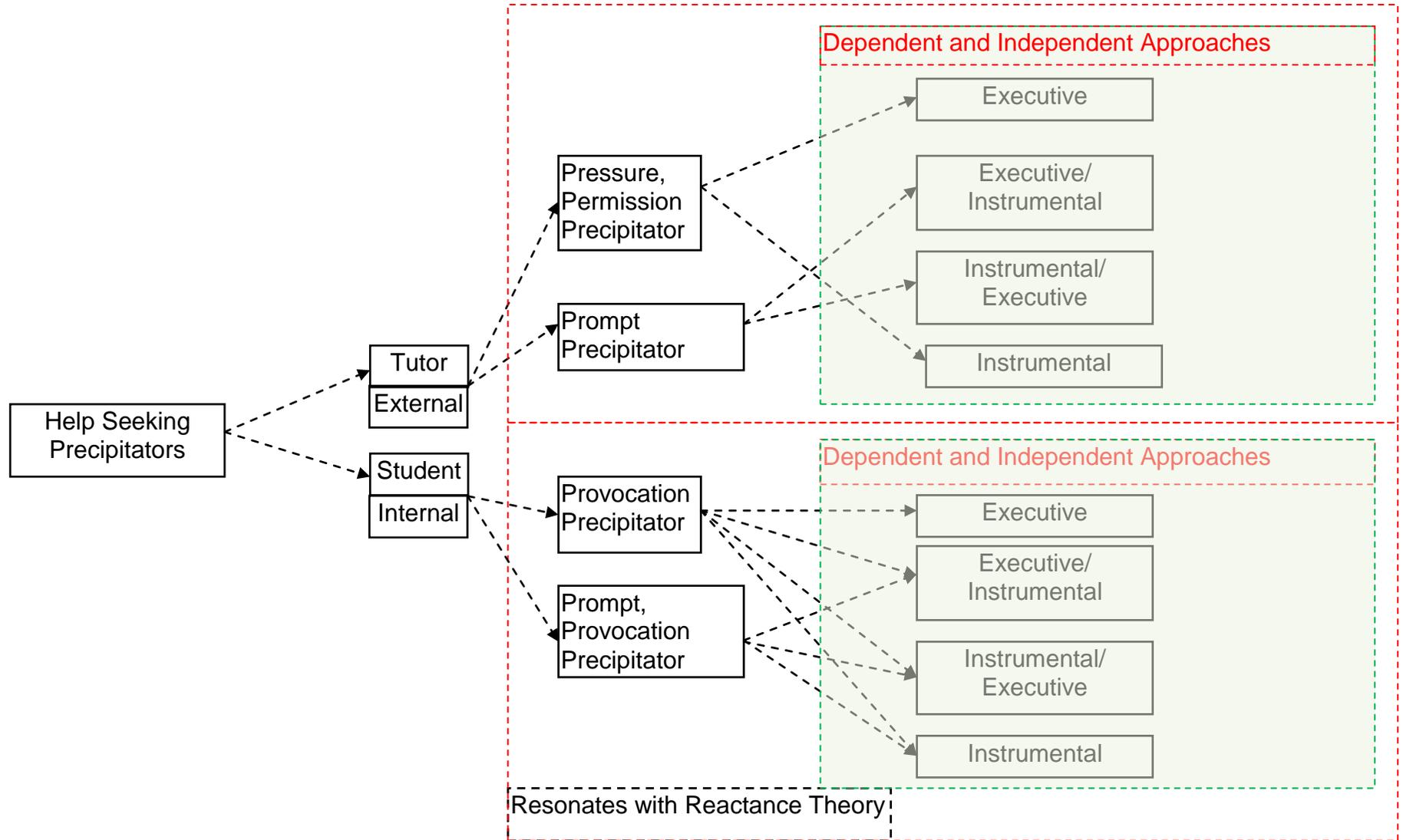
**Figure 5.23** Help seeking precipitators, types and approaches

## Tentative tertiary help seeking model

In order to model tertiary help seeking, this section will cover the background effect of help seeking approaches that participants displayed in this study, summarise the motivators for participant help seeking, and detail the help seeking types and precipitators that occurred. Each element forms a component of the tertiary help seeking model that has been constructed.

The two background approaches to help seeking identified in this study are important, as they seem to affect the type of help seeking participants used and what precipitated their help seeking. Figure 5.24 shows the two background approaches that were exhibited by the participants in this study. These background effects may be amenable to change over time, but participants in this study did not seem to exhibit any changes in their dependent or independent approaches when they sought help. This would be highly unlikely to occur in this study, because of the learning support sessions were only an hour.

Participant Approaches to Help Seeking

Dependent Help Seeking Approach

Independent Help Seeking Approach
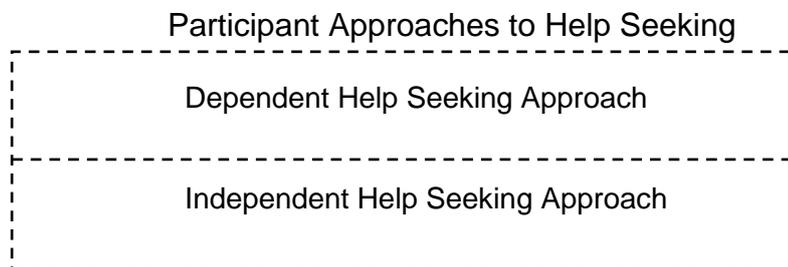
**Figure 5.24** Participant's approach to help seeking.

I interpreted from participant responses four motivators to their help seeking: confidence to seek help; their need for help; how they viewed themselves as help seekers or not; and their views of help seeking. Each of the last three motivators seem to be unidirectional since need, views of self and views of help seeking were identified as motivating help seeking. However, confidence was identified as bidirectional, since participants reported they needed confidence to seek help, and that having help increased confidence levels. This is shown in Figure 5.25 with a double headed arrow.

Figure 5.25 shows how the four motivators to seek help identified by me from the participants' responses in this study relate to their help seeking.

Motivators to Seek Help
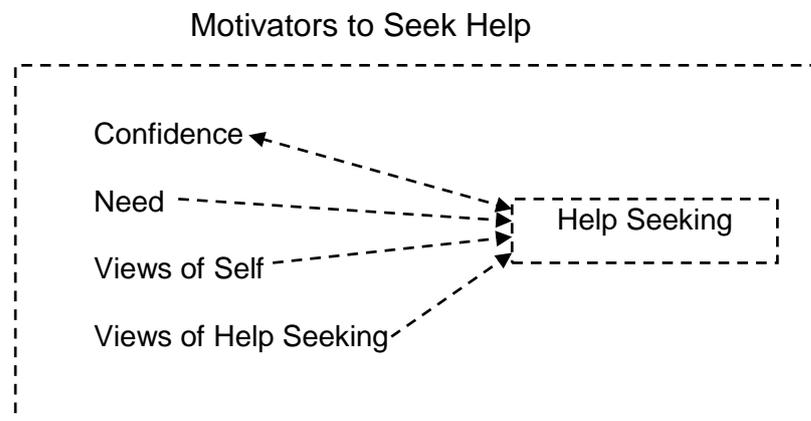


**Figure 5.25** Relationship of motivators to help seeking

The help seeking precipitators that preceded instances of help seeking type in this study could broadly be categorised as tutor initiated or student initiated. As outlined in Figure 5.18 there were more student precipitators for executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking than tutor precipitators. Similarly, there were more tutor precipitators of executive and instrumental help seeking behaviours than student precipitators. Figure 5.26 shows the relationship between help seeking precipitators and help seeking type.

Help Seeking Precipitators and Help Seeking Type
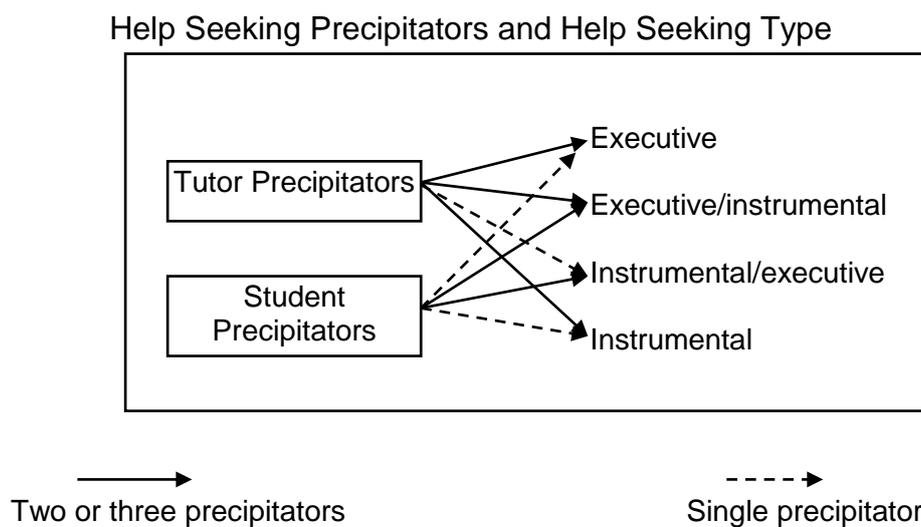


**Figure 5.26** Relationship between student and tutor help seeking precipitators and help seeking type

The components of figures 5.20 to 5.26 can be combined to form a tentative model of tertiary help seeking which is shown in Figure 5.29. This shows the connections between tertiary students' motivations to seek help in this study and the help seeking type they used. It also shows the connection between the precipitators that produce the type of help seeking used in this study. The double headed arrow connecting help seeking type and motivation accounts for the circular relationship of the confidence motivator in the help seeking process. There was no circular relationship between the other motivators and help seeking type.

The relationship between help seeking type and help seeking approach is outlined in Figures 5.27. and 5.28.

Help Seeking Approach and Help Seeking Type
Dependent Approach
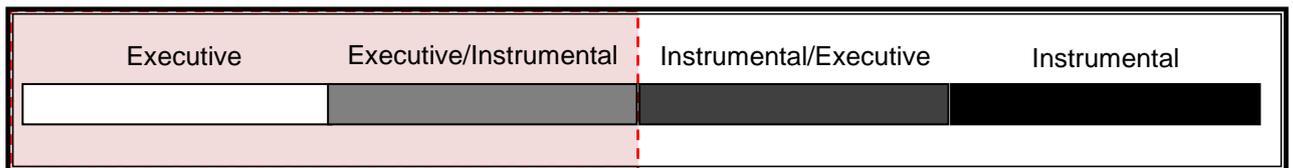


**Figure 5.27** Relationship between dependent help seeking approach and help seeking type

Independent Approach
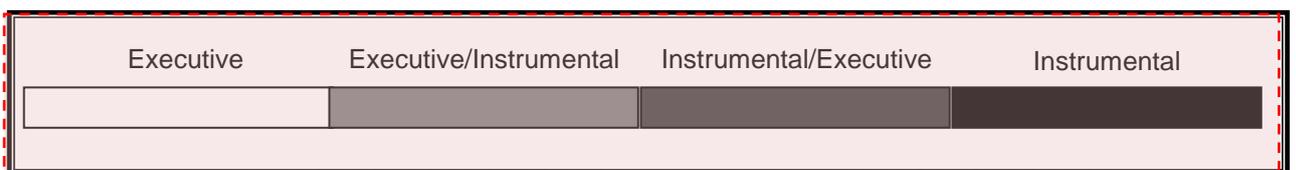


**Figure 5.28** Relationship between independent help seeking approach and help seeking type

Figure 5.29 shows the relationship between help seeking approach, help seeking type, motivation and behavioural precipitators for the participants in this study.

# Tentative Tertiary Help Seeking Model
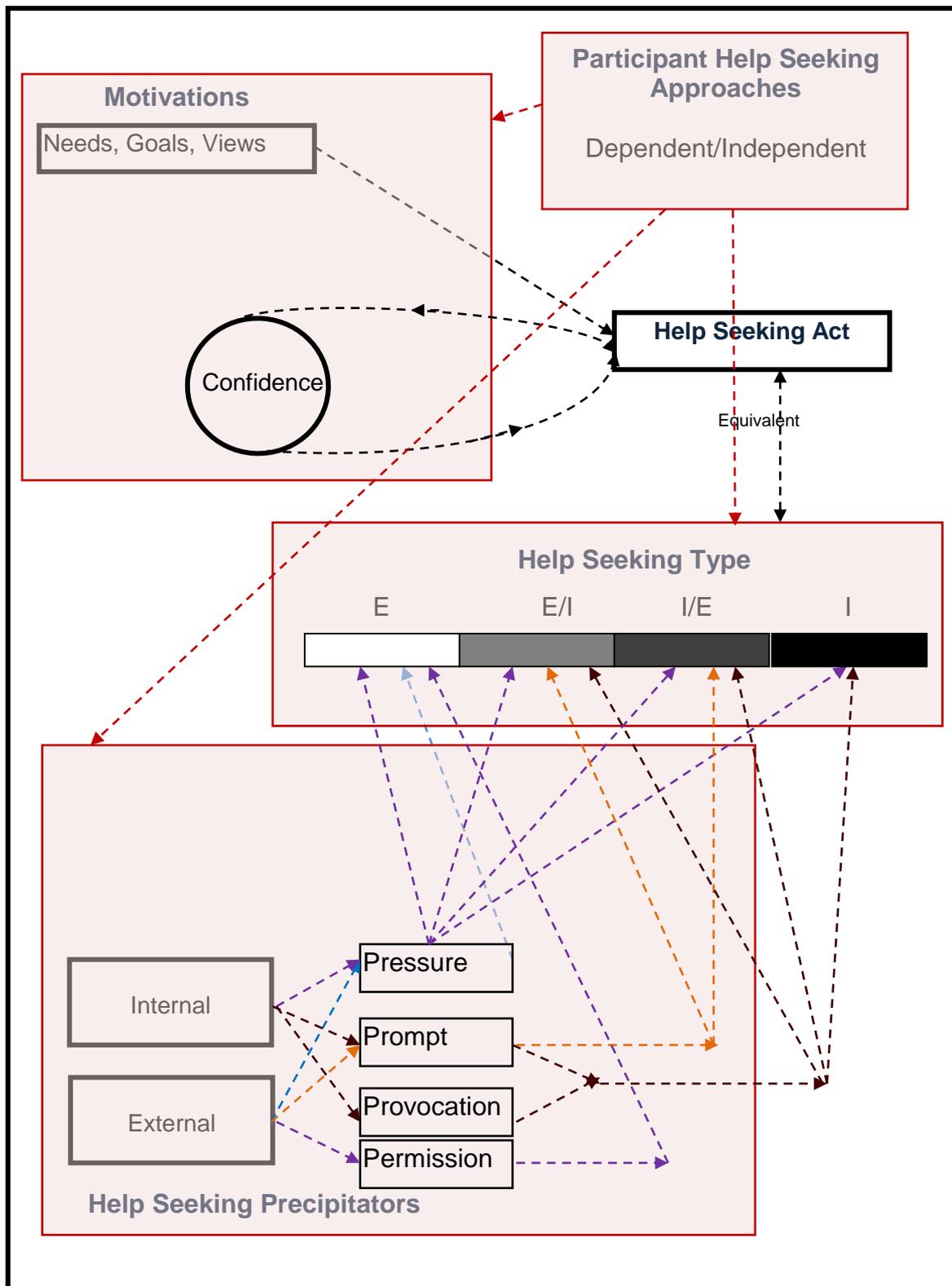


**Figure 5.29** Relationship of the four core categories, motivations, help seeking approach, help seeking type and help seeking precipitators in a proposed tertiary help seeking model.

The basic social process revolved around the background participant help seeking approach which provided a setting against which motivation produced the help seeking type, which is configured by individual precipitators within a help seeking session. Core categories are participant help seeking approach, motivation, help seeking precipitators and the help seeking type which comprises executive, executive/instrumental, instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking.

In this study there appeared to be no relationship between help seeking motivations and help seeking precipitators. Motivation to seek help seemed to be focused on participants deciding they would seek help because they had the confidence to do so. They saw that they needed help. They saw themselves as help seekers, and that help seeking was positive even though there were costs attached. Individual precipitators to help seeking type occurred in the videoed learning support sessions, and did not seem to be connected to the reasons that participants initially sought help.

In Figure 5.29, confidence has been separated from the other motivators because of the circular nature of its effect with help seeking. Participants reported needing a certain amount of confidence to seek help, and having help built their confidence. Additionally, in this model the act of seeking help has been equated with the use of a help seeking type. This is because participants in this study who did seek help used a help seeking type to do this. Figure 5.29 also displays how participant help seeking approaches are a setting to motivation, help seeking precipitators and help seeking type.

This tentative model of tertiary help seeking, which provides new knowledge about tertiary help seeking, is a contribution to help seeking theory in several ways. Firstly, help seekers may present for a help seeking session with a particular approach to their help seeking, which may affect the type of help seeking that they use. This could have consequences for the help giving approach that the help giver may adopt in a help seeking session.

Secondly, help seekers may use combinations of executive and instrumental help seeking in order to achieve their aims in regards to their tertiary study. An awareness of these types of help seeking may assist the help giver in producing help seeking from the help seeker that is beneficial to their learning.

Thirdly, both tutor and student actions precipitate help seeking in students during help seeking sessions. Help givers may find this information useful, as they could precipitate desired help seeking types in help seekers.

Fourthly, tertiary students reported seeking help because they saw the need for help, they saw themselves as help seekers and they viewed help seeking as a positive process. Additionally, they saw that they needed confidence to seek help, but that having help also built their confidence. The circular nature of confidence in this help seeking model is a new and important aspect.

This model incorporates what seemed to occur within the tertiary help seeking context for the students in this study. However, further research would have to be undertaken to see whether this model predicts help seeking behaviour in a tertiary context, and whether relationships between core categories of the model reoccur in other tertiary help seeking contexts or in other more general help seeking contexts.

## Summary

The discussion in this chapter has built a theory of tertiary help seeking incorporating the following core categories as shown in figure 5.29. These categories are: motivation to seek help; help seeking approach; help seeking type; and help seeking precipitators. Help seeking approach and help seeking type are dissimilar in that help seeking approach appears to be a background effect against which the other three categories interact in the help seeking process. Help seeking type can also be seen as an act of seeking help, since all acts of help seeking in this study involved a help seeking type.

# CHAPTER SIX
# RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

## Introduction

This chapter will consider implications for practice for learning support tutors based on the discussion in this thesis. It will also revisit the initial research questions of this study, and will provide tentative answers that take into account the approaches to help seeking and types of help seeking that I interpreted from the data generated by the participants in this study. The latter part of the chapter outlines some of my reflections regarding my role; participants' help seeking; the methodology used; the data collection and analysis methods; how the thesis was written and how the project had to be driven. This chapter will also consider further research in the form of future research questions that I think are interesting or important to consider taking into account the results from this study.

## Recommendations

The following section presents recommendations for learning support tutors regarding student help seeking, and is based on the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis. They are based on help seeking motivations, types, approaches, and precipitators and the tentative model of tertiary help seeking that has been developed.

Learning support tutors could:

➤ Emphasize to a student during a learning support session that students accessing extra help for their studies is not an unusual occurrence, and that help seeking is a legitimate approach to improving their achievement with their studies. This would have the effect of validating the help seeking undertaken, thus not stigmatising it.

➤ Try to build students' confidence in their ability to cope with the course they are studying or deal with their presented issue. This may have the

effect of helping them deal with their course more confidently, and also seek future help if they needed it.

➢ Emphasize to students that they should try to have help at least once during their course in order that they can experience help seeking. This would have the dual effect of introducing the helping services to them and also allowing them to the opportunity to see themselves in a help seeking role.

➢ Through an appreciation of the four types of help seeking that students might employ, not negatively evaluate students if they seek executive or executive/instrumental help. Rather, they should try to move student help seeking to instrumental/executive or instrumental, but also be aware that in order to function effectively on a course some students need to seek help executively or executive/instrumentally initially.

➢ Recognise that a student's approach to help seeking is less amenable to change than their help seeking type. Therefore, they should attempt to fit their support practices around the student's approach. This might include attempting to provide help for students with an independent approach by focusing on the goals that these students have for the session. Alternatively, for students exhibiting a dependent approach to their help seeking, the learning support tutor could provide help that takes into account their approach whilst dealing with their presented issue but also attempts to lay the foundations to foster a more independent help seeking approach in the future.

➢ Realise that their actions have an effect on the type of help seeking that students use, depending on their help seeking approach. As such, learning support tutors need to be aware that if they pressure students they may produce executive as well as instrumental help seeking. A safer approach may be to prompt students as this tends to produce executive/instrumental or instrumental/executive help seeking types.

## Conclusions

### Research questions

At the beginning of this research study the following questions were posed regarding academic help seeking in a tertiary environment.

➢ What motivates tertiary students to seek academic help?

➢ What help seeking behaviours do tertiary students use?

➢ To what extent is the instrumental-executive model of help seeking applicable to tertiary students?

➢ What behaviours precipitate instrumental and executive help seeking in tertiary students?

➢ What model could describe tertiary students' help seeking behaviours at one tertiary institution?

Each research question will be considered and tentatively answered in terms of the data provided by the participants in this study.

*What behaviours precipitate instrumental and executive help seeking in tertiary students?*

Both student and tutor behaviour precipitated executive and instrumental help seeking types in the participants in this study. Tutor behaviours that precipitated executive help seeking involved the tutor initiating a situation where an answer was required by the student; giving a protracted explanation of a phenomena; and being willing to focus on the issue that the student presented in the learning support session. The sole student precipitator observed for executive help seeking was the student realising that their goals in the session were not being met.

Tutor behaviour that precipitated instrumental help seeking involved the tutor providing information that was new to the student about the presented issue

and actively preventing executive type help seeking. The sole student precipitator of instrumental help seeking involved the student realising that they needed to understand the material being presented.

*What help seeking behaviours do tertiary students use?*

Participants in this study used two help seeking types in addition to instrumental and executive help seeking – executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive. Each participant displayed a help seeking approach, dependent or independent, which acted as a background effect to their help seeking.

*What factors combine to motivate tertiary students to seek academic help?*

Participants identified several factors that motivated them to seek academic help. These were the recognition of the need for help; having confidence to seek help; seeing oneself as a help seeker; and seeing help seeking as legitimate.

They saw their need for help in terms of having help for academic problems or for basic skills. The majority of participants thought that having help increased their confidence levels and this helped them to seek more help. Additionally, all participants saw themselves as help seekers, even if in the past they had been reluctant to seek help. They also saw that having help was legitimate, even though there were some costs attached to seeking it.

*To what extent is the instrumental/executive model of help seeking applicable to tertiary students?*

The instrumental-executive model of help seeking provided a starting point in describing tertiary help seeking. However, on its own it does not describe completely these students' help seeking. They produced more nuanced help seeking approaches than this initial model describes. For example, these tertiary students produced executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking types. Additionally, these help seeking types seemed to sit against a background of dependent and independent approaches to help seeking. Participants also reported that they were motivated to seek help

because of the factors outlined in the previous sub section. This was not considered in the initial instrumental-executive model.

*What model could describe tertiary help seeking behaviours at one tertiary institution?*

A model that could describe the help seeking by the tertiary students in this study incorporates motivations, help seeking approaches, help seeking types and help seeking precipitators. This model has been proposed in this thesis, and is repeated in figure 6.1

# A Tentative Tertiary Help Seeking Model
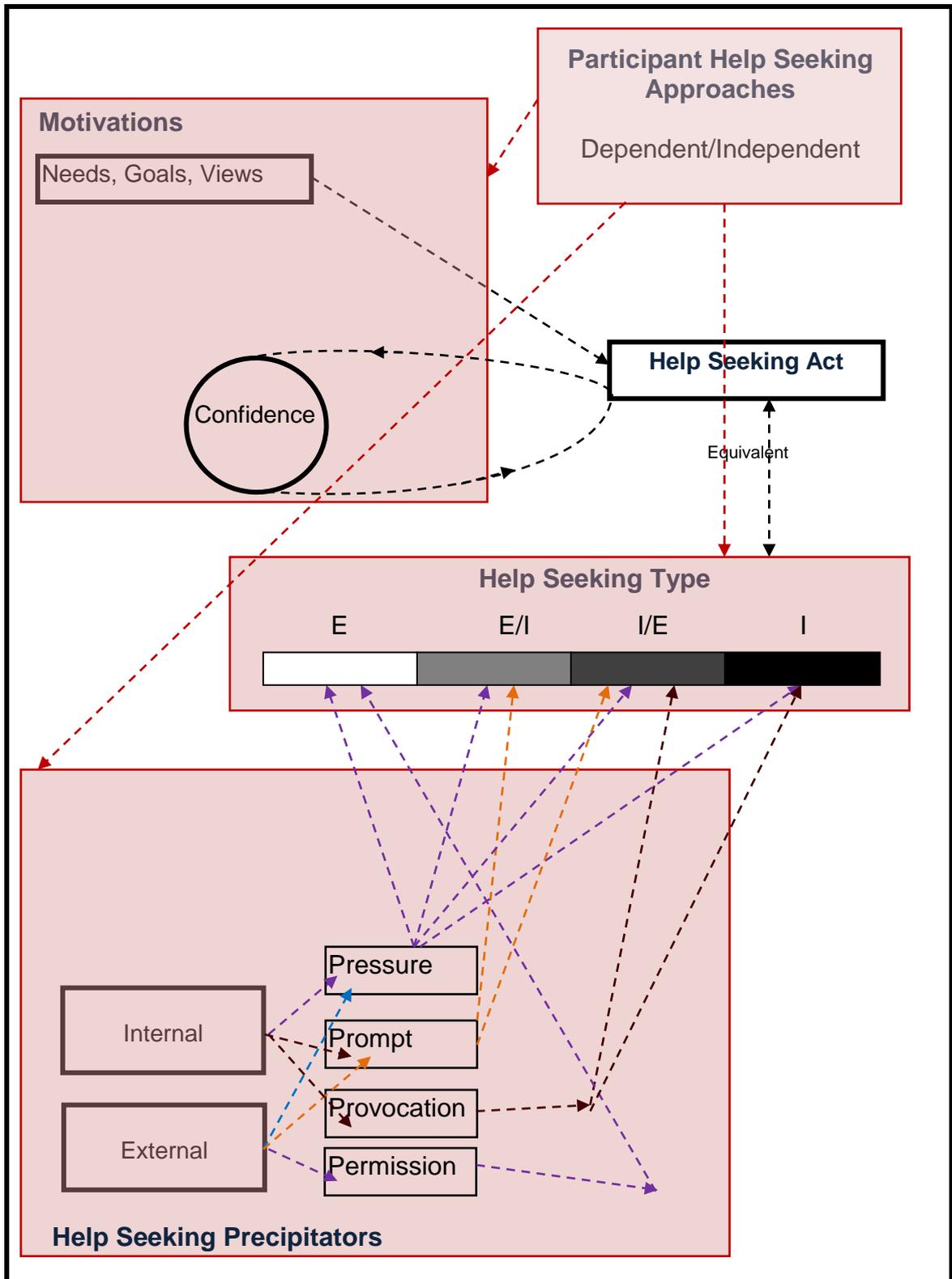


**Figure 6.1** A tentative tertiary help seeking model. Different coloured arrows show how different help seeking types result from different precipitators.

**Limitations**

It must be noted that this is a small scale qualitative study, and consequently the tentative model of help seeking that has been constructed from the data needs to be considered with care.

*Participants*

As has been mentioned previously in this thesis, the sample in this study was self selective. Each participant decided whether or not to participate. Each of them was willing to have their help seeking session videoed, and also seemed to feel at ease enough to be interviewed about their help seeking and their videoed learning support session. This provides limits to the results of this study, since no data has been collected regarding students who may want to seek help but may also want to be discrete about their help seeking and no data has been collected from students who have not sought academic help. The results of this study do not 'represent' any particular student body and the findings cannot be generalised.

*Sample Size*

This study was based on a small sample of participants. This was because the research design was complex and required that participants volunteer a significant amount of time to the study. Also the complexity of the research design meant that there were more opportunities for participants to leave the study. Several participants did this. This again limits the results as the participating students are not a representative sample of the tertiary institution where the data was collected. Therefore, the results, model and theory developed should be considered in this context and treated with care.

**Reflections**

*Researcher Role*

This project has been integral to my professional life for the past seven years, as I am a learning support tutor in a tertiary institution's learning support centre. As such I was conscious of the dual role I played as a researcher and practitioner, and how much I relied on the goodwill of the participants contributing their time, and other learning support staff for allowing me to

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video sessions where they were supporting participants. Although participants were aware that they were involved in a research study, it was not apparent to other staff or students in the learning support area that research was taking place. I was concerned that this study did not make an impact on the workings of the learning support centre, and as such kept the project as discrete as possible. Since I was always aware, however, of my dual role I tried to ensure that my role as a researcher was secondary to my role as a learning support tutor. This had an adverse effect on the research study as in some cases participants' data could not be included in the final results because of these conflicting roles. However, I gained key experience by completing the data collection with these students, which enriched the data collection process with other participants.

Spencer et al. (2003) state, that a measure of the quality of a qualitative study is the inclusion of participants in its design, conduct and evaluation (p.71). Although the participants were central to this study, I could not include them in the design, because I did not have ethical approval at that stage to approach them. However, they did play a central role with their reflections of their videoed learning support session. Participant annotation of interview and video transcripts did not take place and may have provided an additional source of data. I would like to carry out this process in future projects.

My position as a learning support tutor may have effected participant responses during the interviews. Being in a tutorial position gave me positional power, which I was anxious to mitigate. Whether I was successful in doing this or not is unclear. If I were to carry out such a project in future, I might choose a setting where I was unknown or employ peer interviewers. On a positive note, I think that the videoing of learning support sessions worked well, particularly as I was not present at the videoing. However, participants knew that I would be viewing the videos at a later time, so this may have affected their responses.

*Help Seeking*
Completing this project has given me the incentive to explore the help seeking literature. My initial impression was that this was an extensive body of work

because of the amount of writing about psychological help seeking. However, I now realise that academic help seeking has not been the focus of much theorising, particularly in a tertiary context. One of the reasons that this project was started was that I wanted to gain a theoretical overview of what seemed to be apparent to me on a day to day basis. For example students knowing that support was available, yet not using it even if others judged they needed it; students seeming to think that major academic problems could be solved in one or two sessions; students seeming to be embarrassed when they asked for help and when they subsequently had it; students often emphasising to me that others in the group needed help, and that it was not just them that needed support; some students often becoming dependent on their learning support sessions to complete their courses; and students feeling they had to reciprocate for the help that they had been given. Completing this project has given me the opportunity to see aspects of my work in another light and has made me a more reflective practitioner.

*Methodology*

I was interested in completing a qualitative study because I had only previously used quantitative approaches in the educational research I had been involved in. With these other quantitative projects, although I obtained statistically significant results, I always felt that the conversations I had with students led to a richer view of what they felt about their studies and their lives as students. I felt that a qualitative approach would be the most appropriate for this study as I wanted to collect a richer vein of data to answer my research questions. Given that this was the most appropriate approach, I was excited in being able to work in a paradigm that was new to me.

However, I was concerned to conduct a qualitative study that used a systematic approach, and thought that grounded theory fulfilled this criterion since Glaser and Strauss (1967) claimed that it was a general qualitative social scientific research method that could be applied to any social context. Initially this seemed to be a complete process to me, as I thought it would parallel the scientific approach used in many quantitative studies. I hoped a grounded theory approach would help me to add legitimacy to my study.

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Nevertheless, after I read some of the critiques of this approach, I realised that I would have to think about which type of grounded theory I would use based on my ontological, axiological, epistemological approach. Eventually, I decided to use a constructivist approach, mainly because I believe that each person constructs his or her own world, and through conversations with others can share these constructions. But, the sharing of these constructions constitutes a reconstruction, particularly if they are taped, transcribed and closely analysed.

*Data Collection*

A semi structured approach was used during the interviews in this study, which allowed me to have some focus to the sessions. Though, once participants began to talk freely, I kept quiet and attempted not to interrupt participants' flow of ideas and 'stories'. I attempted to keep participants' talking usually by making affirming noises so that they felt comfortable continuing to talk. Occasionally, I would interject with questions that occurred to me at a natural break in the participant's flow of ideas. Unlike the approach recommended by Glaser (2007), I decided to record the interviews rather than take field notes. I felt that taking field notes would have provided a barrier to participants in the provision of their data, since this method would be more obvious and possibly intrude on the sessions. The tape recorder and video camera were useful devices as they were unobtrusive, and provided a more complete picture of interviews and learning support sessions than if field notes had been taken during the data collection sessions. The pre interviews and post interviews were transcribed by an outside agency, which removed me from this aspect of the data collection. However, I transcribed pertinent aspects of the videoed learning support sessions, which also produced a large amount of data to analyse.

Kvale (2007) claims that interview situations are individualistic, and do not reflect a person's everyday social situation (p.140). This may have been true for the participants in this study, although as stated above I tried to ensure that participants were able to respond as they wished to the questions I asked.

*Data Analysis*

Analysing the pre interview data using a grounded theory method worked fairly well, and I was systematic in recording how I generated codes and categories from the initial data. However, as a researcher, I am aware that the results of this study have been generated from my perspective of participants' responses. As a learning support tutor, I undoubtedly brought some 'baggage' to the research process and the results must be considered in this light. I would have liked to have been able to code the pre interview data together, but could not because participants joined the research study at different times. This necessitated the pre interviews and video data being coded prior to the post interviews. This may have initiated a different set of codes from the collected data. Ideally, I would have liked to have completed the coding process twice, or been able to ask someone else to look at the data and generate their own codes to confirm or contradict mine. This was not possible from a time or an ethical perspective. Viewing the videos to generate questions to pose in the post interviews seemed to work reasonably well, although it would have been preferable to analyse the videos in greater depth prior to the post interviews. The videos were analysed in depth together over a focussed six week period when I was on leave. This allowed me time to become well acquainted with what had happened in the learning support sessions that comprised part of the study, which provided the basis for the generated codes and categories and subsequent tentative theory of tertiary help seeking. Confirmation of what had occurred in the video sessions was found in the post interviews.

*Writing the Thesis*

Thesis writing occurred throughout the whole of the project. This enabled me to develop my knowledge of the help seeking literature and my approach to the methodology used. Writing from the beginning of the project was a useful exercise as it provided support for my initial tentative positions on aspects presented in the help seeking literature, my approach to the research and my analysis of the data. Writing seems to be a way for me to explore ideas and distance myself from them, to see if they make sense. This contributed to the findings chapter going through many changes before it reached its final form.

Initially, I found this discouraging, but the process helped me reconsider the data and reflect on the codes that I had created. This process informed the writing of the discussion and recommendations chapters. I completed the first draft of the literature review and findings chapter in the third person, and consequently I continued using the third person for the discussion and recommendations chapter, with the exception of the recommendations to students who seek help which I structured to form the basis of a series of handouts that would be used later. Subsequently, I decided that the thesis would read better and reflect my voice more if I rewrote it using the first person active voice. Where possible I have changed my writing from the passive to the active voice, and I hope that this has had the effect of emphasizing that this thesis is made up of my constructions of participants' responses. This has been a major development in my academic writing style. It was only at the end of this project that I began to realise the responsibility and power that is construed by writing this thesis. I was responsible for reconstructing participants' responses, with the possibility that I was misconstruing them through my analysis and written style.

*Driving the Project*

I was aware throughout the project that I was responsible for ensuring that it progressed efficiently, and that deadlines were not only completed on time but that they were also generated by me in consultation with the supervision team. This sometimes became problematic because of the nature of my job as I could not always spend focussed time on the thesis, and consequently progress was slow. An example of how focussed time helped to advance the work was the completion of Massey University's ethical approval. This occurred during the end of a summer trimester when there were fewer students at the tertiary institution where I worked, and I was relocated to a satellite campus for a week. This allowed me to spend more focussed time completing the ethics application and proposal. Towards the end of the project, I was able to take two months off over the summer period and could therefore spend focussed time completing a first draft of the thesis. Delays to the completion of this project occurred while I waited for ethical approval at the institutions where I hoped to collect data. I found this frustrating. In one

case the supervision team and I decided that the proposed collection of data at another tertiary institution would not take place, despite the considerable time spent developing the requisite ethics application and project proposal. Being able to collect data at this second institution may have enhanced the project, but making the decision only to use the one institution where ethical approval had been obtained was sensible and allowed me to further the data collection and analysis in a timely manner.

**Further Research**

Academic help seeking in a tertiary environment has been under-researched worldwide and particularly in New Zealand. This is an area of study that needs to be further researched so that local theories of tertiary help seeking can be developed, which may contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon. I suggest pursuing the following research questions, which arise from the results of this study:

➢ To what extent do students' help seeking histories impact on their help seeking approach and help seeking type?

➢ To what extent would executive/instrumental and instrumental/executive help seeking be apparent in the academic help seeking types of other tertiary students?

➢ To what extent would dependent and independent approaches be apparent in the academic help seeking types of other tertiary students?

➢ To what extent are dependent and independent academic help seeking approaches intractable, and to what extent can a learning support tutor effect a change in a student's help seeking approach?

➢ What are the ranges of tertiary academic help seeking behaviours that can be adequately classified as executive, executive/instrumental,

instrumental/executive and instrumental help seeking types? To what extent would it be possible to develop a typology of these behaviours?

➢ To what extent does age and gender affect academic help seeking behaviour? To what extent are help seeking types affected by age and gender? To what extent are help seeking approaches affected by age and gender?

➢ To what extent would it be possible to develop a method for learning support tutors to use to move students' academic help seeking types from executive or executive/instrumental to instrumental/executive or instrumental?

It would be feasible to repeat this study in other institutions, in particular to collect and analyse data over a number of years.

## Summary

This chapter has considered implications for practice for learning support tutors based on the discussion in this thesis and recommendations for students in their approach to help seeking. It has also focussed on the initial research questions of this study, and has attempted to provide tentative answers taking into account the approaches to help seeking and types of help seeking that the participants in this study reported and exhibited. The latter part of the chapter outlines some of my reflections regarding my role, participants' help seeking, the methodology used, the data collection and analysis methods used, writing the thesis, and how the project had to be driven. This chapter also considered further research in the form of future research questions that I think are interesting or important to consider.

### Concluding Remarks

As a result of my research, I have constructed a tentative model of tertiary help seeking based on the differing concepts of help seeking type, help seeking approach, student motivation to seek help and tutor and student

precipitators. Further research needs to be done with other participants to review this model, which I am keen to do since this thesis has been part of my life for the last seven years and consequently, finishing this work will leave a gap in my life. A day has not gone by when I did not think about my research. Because of this, I feel that I will continue to evaluate this tertiary help seeking model and to answer some of the research questions outlined in the last section.

Completing this research project has been stimulating, challenging, frustrating but ultimately satisfying. My understanding of help seeking theory and research has improved and has helped me to see what I do on a daily basis in a more informed light.

# Appendices

## Appendix One: Letter to participants

Name
XXXXX Institute of Technology
Private Bag
XXXXX
XXXXX
XXXXX

Student Participant
## Study Street
Course Town

Dear Student

I work at [Institute of Technology] and am writing to you on behalf of Mervyn Protheroe who you probably know works in the Learning Centre at [Institute of Technology]. Your name has been randomly selected from the Learning Support Centre's Database, and at the moment Mervyn doesn't know that you have been selected or written to.

He is very interested in finding out about the ways students go about seeking help and is doing a research project to investigate that. I am writing to you to see if you would be interested in being part of Mervyn's research project.

I have enclosed an information sheet that outlines Mervyn's project, and what it involves if you agree to participate.

If you would like to be part of the project please complete the attached form and post it back to Mervyn in the envelope provided. He will then contact you and arrange a time at your convenience to talk to you.

Thank you for considering this letter.

Best Wishes

Name
Marketing

## Appendix Two: Consent form for participants

**Massey University**

**College of Education**   Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

An investigation into student academic help seeking behaviours in a tertiary institution's learning support centre.

## Consent Form for Participants

**I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.**

**I know that:**

➢ **My participation in the project is voluntary;**

➢ **I can withdraw from the project at any time if I want to;**

➢ **The videotapes and audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of the project.**

➢ **Any raw data will be retained in secure storage for five years, and then they will be destroyed;**

➢ **I can choose not to answer any particular question;**

➢ **I can withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind;**

➢ **The results of the project may be published but I will not be identified.**

**I agree to the interviews being audiotaped.**

**I agree to a learning support session being videotaped.**

**I agree to take part in this project under the conditions set out in the information sheet.**

.................................................................         ...............................
       **(Signature of participant)**                              **(Date)**

…………………………………………………………

    *(Name of participant)*

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.*

**Appendix Three: Pre-Interview Questions**

# Initial Questions
- o Tell me a bit about yourself
- o Tell me about what happened when you first asked for help at [tertiary institute]
- o When did you first experience getting help from someone
- o What was that like? What did you think then? How did you happen to ask for help? Who influenced you to ask for help? Tell me about how they influenced you
- o Could you describe the events that led up to you asking for help
- o What was going on in your life then? How would you describe how you viewed asking for help before you got some at XXXX? How has your view changed?
- o How would you describe the person you were then?

# Intermediate Questions
- o What if anything did you feel about asking for help
- o Tell me about your thoughts and feelings when you knew you could ask for help in the Learning Centre.
- o What happened when you asked for help?
- o Who was involved?
- o What positive changes have occurred for you since you had some help in the Learning Centre
- o What negative changes have occurred for you since you had some help in the Learning Centre
- o If you needed to get some help, tell me how you would go about getting it.
- o As you look back on times when you sought help, what stands out in your mind? Can you describe it?
- o Could you describe the most important lessons you learnt through getting some help in the Learning Centre.
- o Who has been the most helpful to you during your time at [tertiary institute] so far? Has [tertiary institute] been helpful?
- o What did [tertiary institute] help you with? How helpful was it? What effect has this had on you?

## Ending Questions
- o What do you think are the most important ways to seek help? How has your experience at [tertiary institute] changed how you go about seeking help?
- o Tell me about how you would seek help now that you've been here for a while? Tell me about how your views have changed about seeking help?
- o Tell me about any strengths you have found out about yourself since you had some help at [tertiary institute]
- o After having this experience, what advice would you give someone who has just discovered what the Learning Centre is about

- o Is there anything you might not have thought about before this occurred to you during this interview
- o Is there anything else you should think I should know about or understand better?
- o Is there anything you would like to ask me?

## Appendix Four: Post-interview questions

<u>Earlier Post Interview General Questions</u>
- o Was the session useful?
- o What was the most useful thing about the session?
- o Did you enjoy the session?
- o What did you learn in the session?
- o Did you learn what you wanted in the session?
- o Can you tell me why you wanted the session?
- o Did the session meet your expectations?

<u>Later Post Interview General Questions</u>
- o Was the session useful? If so, how was it useful?
- o What was the most useful thing about the session?
- o Did you achieve what you wanted to in the session?
- o Did you enjoy the session?
- o What did you learn in the session?
- o How confident were you during the session?
- o Did you learn what you wanted in the session?
- o Can you tell me why you wanted the session?
- o Did the session meet your expectations?
- o Did you follow all of the session?
- o Did you know the camera was there?
- o Did you feel in control of the session or did [support tutor] control it? Was this what you wanted?

## Appendix Five: Video specific post-interview questions

Participant One (40 specific questions)
0.00.02.35    How did you feel about the start of the session?
0.00.05.52    Did you ask for help at school?
0.00.06.20    Were you conscious of the camera?
                        .
                        .
                        .
0.56.51.00    Was the review of the session helpful?

Participant Two (45 specific questions)
0.00.10.12    T: "One thing we're ready, are we?" P2: "We must be"
0.00.27.12    T: "What will be happening is this will be a continuation of today
                and also..." [Support tutor] seems to be setting the agenda here.
                Is that what you wanted?
0.00.52.01    T: "We'll do that". Did you want to do that?
                        .
                        .
                        .
0.34.22.00    Did you want the session to finish?

Participant Three (29 specific questions)
0.00.22.00    You started off then [support tutor] set the agenda. Is this how
                you expected the session to start?
0.00.52.00    You were concentrating on the screen. What made you look at
                [support tutor]?
0.01.00.00    P3: "Don't you have to be in the picture?" Were you aware of the
                camera?
0.01.51.00    You seem into it here. Were you?
                        .
                        .
                        .
0.19.32.00    T: "That's good". P3: "That's great". What was?

Participant Four (57 specific questions)
0.00.10.12    How did you feel when [support tutor] said that historically this
                was one of the most difficult courses students do?
0.00.29.16    Did you want to go through the book?
0.00.59.21    Do you know what a case study is?
                        .
                        .
                        .
0.22.08.03    Are you embarrassed asking questions?

Participant Five (32 specific questions)
0.00.54.12    [Support tutor] sets the agenda with adjectives. Did you need
                help with adjectives that end in 'ed' and 'ing'?

| 0.01.14.11 | Confused and confusing. Would you have thought of that if [support tutor] hadn't said 'confused'? Were you confused, i.e. did you know what it meant? |
| 0.01.26.00 | Did you want to go through the material? |

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## Participant Six (69 specific questions)

| 0.00.18.05 | Did you want to see what was going on, on the screen? |
| 0.00.55.24 | [Support tutor] seems to carry on after you said you'd done that one another way. Did you want [support tutor] to do it your way? |
| 0.01.28.21 | You interrupted [support tutor] here. Did you have specific views about what you wanted to cover in the session? |
| 0.01.50.08 | Were you aware of the camera? |

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| 0.47.53.24 | Did you expect a complete solution at the end of the session? |
| 0.52.15.00 | P6: "Can I borrow your photocopier?" How important is a positive response? |

## Participant Seven (65 specific questions)

| 0.00.07.11 | [Support tutor] finished your sentence here, did you need him to do that? |
| 0.00.13.17 | You looked at the camera. Were you aware of it during the session? |
| 0.00.25.12 | Did you expect [support tutor] to be asking you questions/ how did that make you feel? |

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| 0.22.54.11 | P7: "Alright". Was it? Your tone indicated it wasn't. |

## Participant Eight (67 specific questions)

| 0.00.04.12 | T: "It's 200 words over, too much". Was this an issue for you? Is this why you wanted the session? |
| 0.00.11.17 | T: "But with this extra". Were you able to find a solution? |
| 0.00.27.15 | T: "Don't know". Were you trying to get [support tutor] to agree with you here? Did you need her confirmation re the word length? |

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| 0.46.24.00 | P8: "Alright, but don't confuse me" Were you confused? Were you trying to end the session? |

**Massey University**

**College of Education**

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

# An investigation into student academic help seeking behaviours in a tertiary institution's learning support centre.

## Information Sheet

I am Mervyn Protheroe and I work in the Learning Centre at [Institute of Technology]. I am really interested in finding out about the ways students go about seeking help and am doing a research project to investigate that. The project is part of my Educational Doctorate (EdD) studies and I am being supervised by Dr. Linda Leach. I am writing to invite you to be part of my research project and to tell me about the ways you seek help when you are studying.

Your name has been selected at random from the Learning Support Centre's database, and I am writing to you to invite you to take part in this project.

You are invited to take part in the project, but you can choose not to do so. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way.

This project has been designed to find out how you seek help in the Learning Centre, and the results will help you sort out how you do this. This will help you with further courses that you do.

If you agree to participate you would**:**

➢ Be interviewed about whether, when, how and why you went about seeking help for your study when you needed it in the past.

➢ Be videotaped during one of your learning support sessions.

➢ Watch the video with me and discuss the help seeking strategies you used during the session.

I expect this would take a total of three hours approximately. The tape of the interviews and the videotape of your learning support session would be stored securely by me for five years and then destroyed.

You will not be identified in any reports or articles I write about the project.

Sometime, after your last session I will send you a summary of your help seeking strategies and how you can improve them in order to do better on future courses.

As a participant you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

> Decline to answer any particular question;

> Withdraw from the study at any time;

> Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

> Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;

> Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

As audio and video tapes are being used during the project, I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview or learning support session.

## Project Contacts

If you have any questions about this research project please feel free to contact either:

Mervyn Protheroe
Learning Support Tutor
Learning Support Centre
XXXX Institute of Technology
XXXX
XXXX

XX XXXXXXX
mervyn.protheroe@xxxxx.ac.nz

Dr. Linda Leach
Senior Lecturer
Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education
Massey University
Private Box 756
Wellington

04 801 5799, ext 6947
L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz

## Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Application __/__ *(insert application number).* If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr John O'Neill, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8635, email humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz.

**Appendix Seven: Confidentiality agreement**

**Massey University**

**College of Education** | Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

*An investigation into student academic help seeking behaviours in a tertiary institution's learning support centre.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I ........................................................................................ (Full Name - printed)

agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project ................................................

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project.

**Signature:**                                                 **Date:**

....................................................................................................       ....................................................

# Appendix Eight: Ethics approval

**Massey University**

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT
TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR
(ETHICS & EQUITY)
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North
New Zealand
T 64 6 350 5573
F 64 6 350 5622
humanethics@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz

17 March 2006

Mr Mervyn Protheroe
150 Blue Mountains Road
RD1
**UPPER HUTT**

Dear Mervyn

**Re: HEC: WGTN Application – 05/72**
**An investigation into student academic help seeking behaviours in a tertiary institution's learning support centre**

Thank you for your letter dated 16 March 2006.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Acting Chair
**Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B**

cc  Dr Linda Leach                          Prof Wayne Edwards, HoD
    Dept of Social & Policy Studies          Dept of Social & Policy Studies
     in Education                             in Education
    PN900                                    PN900

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

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