

**DO EXPECTANCIES INFLUENCE CHOICE OF HELP-GIVER?**  
**AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF ADOLESCENTS' HELP-SEEKING**  
**FROM MOTHERS, FATHERS, AND FRIENDS**

by

KELLI SULLIVAN

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Department of Family Studies

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

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## Abstract

Of the research examining adolescent help-seeking in the family and peer context, there have been several consistent findings showing that the gender of the adolescent, age of the adolescent, and the specific topic of the problem all influence an adolescent's choice of informal help-giver. The purpose of this present study was to unite the adolescent help-seeking literature regarding gender, age, and specific problem type (e.g., Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995) with that of expected quality of responses by mother, father, and friend to better understand what criteria an adolescent uses when choosing a parent or friend as a potential help-giver. A sample of 89 adolescents in grades 8 and 11 answered questions in relation to 4 different scenarios. Findings indicate that adolescents are most likely to choose friends to help with interpersonal problems and most likely to select mothers to help with health and school problems. Expectations of expertise are important in selecting a mother or father as a potential help-giver while expectations of nurturance are influential in choosing a friend as a help-giver. Furthermore, when dealing with a stressful problem, early adolescents have higher expectations that their mothers will know how to help them, while girls have higher expectations that their friends will be supportive. Results are discussed in terms of adolescent help-seeking as having a dual function, that of a coping response and relationship development.

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As adolescents emerge from the highly dependent phase of childhood, they require a substantial amount of support and assistance in dealing with their many pressures and concerns (Burke & Weir, 1979). These pressures and concerns involve a series of complex and interrelated developmental tasks (Boldero & Fallon, 1995), and coping with these normative demands is thought to be important for adolescent health and well-being (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). Of those adolescents who experience stress, many attempt to alleviate their distress by approaching some type of helping agent, either informal (parents, friends) or formal (mental health professional, clergy) (Offer, Howard, Schonert, & Ostrov, 1991). Such behavior is called help-seeking and it has been consistently shown that most adolescents, when dealing with problems or concerns, seek help primarily from parents and friends (e.g., Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Burke & Weir, 1978; Offer et al., 1991).

Of the research examining adolescent help-seeking in the family and peer context, there have been several consistent findings showing that the gender of the adolescent, age of the adolescent, and the specific topic of the problem all influence an adolescent's choice of informal helping agent. First of all, male and female adolescents engage in different patterns of help-seeking from parents and friends. One important difference is that female adolescents seek help from friends more than males (e.g., Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996). Secondly, there are age differences in adolescent help-seeking from informal agents, in that older adolescents ask for help more frequently from peers, while early adolescents ask for help more often from parents (e.g., Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990). Finally, whether or not an adolescent chooses to seek help from a parent or friend is related to the specific topic of the problem. Adolescents tend to turn to friends for



help with interpersonal concerns, like dating problems, while parents are sought out for help for school and career concerns (e.g., Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). The examination of the three variables, gender, age, and problem type has contributed to understanding help-seeking during adolescence. Unfortunately, the research has rarely gone beyond describing patterns of help-seeking. Consequently, it is unclear what criteria an adolescent uses when choosing a friend or parent as a help-giver. In other words, when an adolescent makes a decision about whether to seek out a parent or friend, what characteristics of the help-giver influence the adolescent's choice?

Another area of research into adolescent informal help-seeking focuses on adolescents' perceived quality of relationships and its association with help-seeking behaviors. However, perceptions of relationship quality have been studied in a limited fashion in that adolescents' perceptions of relationships in help-seeking situations have been investigated almost exclusively with parents (e.g., Fuligni & Eccles, 1993), while perceptions of peer relationships have been neglected. Research in this area has consistently found that parental support is positively associated with whether or not an adolescent will seek out a parent as a helping agent (see Elmen & Offer, 1993; Wills, 1990). This line of reasoning posits that if the adolescent's perceived quality of the parent-child relationship is low, they will seek their parents' advice less often and turn more frequently to friends (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993). In contrast, however, adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with peers have been, for the most part, overlooked in help-seeking research. Burke and Weir (1979), in a study of the helping responses of parents and peers, did find that if an adolescent judged a peer's response as supportive, they were more likely to disclose to peers, and in higher frequencies, than to parents. However, it is still unclear as to whether or not adolescents will choose to seek out their parents or friends based on perceptions of relationship quality. Hence, the criteria an

adolescent uses when deciding whether or not to seek out a parent or a friend for help with a specific problem are still ambiguous.

In order to understand why an adolescent will choose a friend or a parent as a help-giver, it is necessary to examine adolescents' perceptions of relationship quality with both parents and friends, as well as other expectations that may influence their choice of help-giver. In addition, it is also necessary to include the personological variables of age and gender in this investigation. Previous studies have found age and gender patterns in adolescents' informal help-seeking from parents and friends, however, past usage has generally overlooked the relationship in which the help-seeking occurred.

The purpose of this present study, therefore, is to unite the adolescent help-seeking literature regarding gender, age, and specific problem-type with that of perceived relationship quality to expand understanding of why adolescents choose a particular help-giver. More specifically, this study will explore adolescents' expectations of their parents' and friends' nurturance and expertise when deciding on how appropriate the helping agent is in helping with specific everyday stressors. This objective mirrors a proposition put forth by Youniss and Smollar (1985) who state that adolescents seek advice based on their perceptions of how expertise is distributed in their social networks and how the other person will react to them. What is important to highlight here is the underlying notion that adolescents are making active decisions about why they select specific individuals to help them with a problem based on what they know about their potential help-givers and the relationships they have with those help-givers.

In order to achieve an understanding of what criteria adolescents use when deciding to choose a particular help-giver, it is necessary to study expectancies, as opposed to retrospective accounts, as retrospective accounts fail to acknowledge the planning process that adolescents go through when making a decision about who to seek out for help. An

expectation is defined as an anticipated outcome of a probabilistic situation (Reber, 1985) and it is believed that an individual's expectancies about likely outcomes, and expectancies about the reactions of others, play an important role in many aspects of the help-seeking planning process (Miller & Read, 1987). For instance, Miller and Read, when describing a process of self-disclosure, which can include help-seeking (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993), state that an individual's expectancies influence which particular plan of action will be chosen and even whether a developed plan will be enacted. As well, according to Windle, Miller-Tutzauer, Barnes, and Welte (1991), not only may adolescent help-seeking behaviors reflect various beliefs and attitudes about the relationship environment, like expectations of help-givers, but such attitudes may continue into adulthood and may influence social resource utilization during the lifespan as well as during adolescence.

### Background Literature

#### Stress and Coping Theory

Stress is a pervasive feature of human development throughout the lifespan, and the adolescent period is definitely no exception (Compas, Orosan, & Grant, 1993). According to Peterson and Spiga (1982), adolescence is defined as a period of transition characterized by accelerated processes of change in cognitive, social, and psychological functioning, accompanied by significant physical changes. More than any other developmental period, adolescence has been identified in the psychological and sociological literature as packed with struggles that are both interpersonal and intrapersonal in nature (Compas & Wagner, 1991). However, despite these struggles, research indicates that the majority of individuals travel from childhood to adulthood without significant disturbance (see Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992, for a review). Nevertheless, adolescence is still considered to be a particularly vulnerable period in the life cycle (Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996), and

mastering the various developmental tasks in adolescence may be best described as solving ill-defined and highly complex problems (Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1993). According to Seiffge-Krenke and Shulman, during this vulnerable period in the life cycle, life changes can be too rapid or extreme, can occur simultaneously, or can be unusually timed. As a result, individuals are subjected to varied and extreme challenges in coping with their stressful situations.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress is defined as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (p. 19). Stress is not seen as a unitary phenomenon but rather as being comprised of a set of heterogeneous events and circumstances that differ along a number of dimensions (Compas et al., 1993). These dimensions include the degree to which the stressor is normative or atypical, large or small in magnitude or occurrence, and acute or chronic in nature (Compas, 1987). Important to this present discussion is that of generic or normative stress, as opposed to severe acute stress or severe chronic stress, although all 3 categories are not assumed to be mutually exclusive (Compas et al., 1993). For, according to Compas et al. (1993), all adolescents will be exposed to some level of generic stress as an ongoing part of development. This includes normative daily stress and hassles, as well as more significant circumstances such as going to a new school. More specifically, Boldero and Fallon (1995) state that common concerns that are most significant in adolescence include school work, teachers, parents, peers, opposite sex relationships, personal development, health, and career skills. As a result, it is these types of stressors, or topics, that have been the focus of the various research studies presented in this paper.

In light of the findings that adolescents encounter stressful situations in their lives, of special relevance is the way adolescents adaptively cope with these minor and major

stressors (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993), especially because the majority of adolescents manage to cope successfully. Lazarus, Averill, and Opton (1974) define coping as “problem-solving efforts made by an individual when the demands he or she faces are highly relevant... and tax his or her adaptive resources” (p. 250). In this conceptualization, coping styles do not imply the presence of an enduring trait or style of the individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Rather, coping styles may reflect the inclination to respond in a particular way when confronted with a specific set of circumstances (Compas, 1987). According to Compas, the resources available to cope with stress and the way in which individuals actually cope may be important factors that influence patterns of positive growth and development, as opposed to the onset of a host of psychological and somatic problems.

### Help-Seeking

Research examining coping has used a variety of systems to classify these behaviors, or processes: problem-focused and emotion-focused (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), or functional and dysfunctional (Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1993). Regardless of which system is used, all include asking for help with a problem as an adaptive mode of coping with concerns or problems (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). Thus, help-seeking behavior is an important subset of coping behaviors which includes some type of helping agent, informal (parents, friends) or formal (school counsellors, mental health professionals) (Schonert-Reichl, Offer, & Howard, 1995). While there is a large literature on adolescent coping, adolescent help-seeking has been relatively neglected (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). Until recently, research on help-seeking has focused primarily on medical help-seeking, psychiatric help-seeking, and help-seeking as a response to extremely stressful life events (DePaulo, 1982). However, researchers have begun to show an increasing interest in adolescent informal help-seeking, as findings (e.g., Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Dubow, Lovko, & Kausch, 1990; Feldman, Hodgson, Corber, & Quinn, 1986; Kuhl, Jarkon-

Horlick, & Morrissey, 1997; Offer et al. 1991) indicate that adolescents prefer to discuss problems primarily with parents and friends, not professionals. For example, Offer et al. (1991), in examining the formal and informal helping agents that adolescents seek out for help for emotional problems, found that both disturbed and nondisturbed adolescents preferred to seek help from friends and parents, as compared to siblings, teachers, high school counsellors and mental health professionals. Boldero and Fallon (1995) found that with a group of 1013 school-aged children who had identified a specific problem which had caused them considerable distress, family and peers were the most commonly used sources of help. Finally, Kuhl et al. (1997) found that the central barriers to formal help-seeking in adolescents were perceiving family and friends as sufficient to deal with problems. It is clear, then, that family and peers serve as important social resources to adolescents when they are faced with stressful situations.

But do all adolescents choose to seek help from parents and friends in the same frequency and for all problems? The available literature suggests that this is not the case. These consistent findings show that: (1) adolescent females and males have different patterns of help-seeking from parents and friends; (2) there are age differences in adolescent help-seeking from informal agents; and (3) whether or not an adolescent chooses to seek help from a parent or friend is related to the specific topic of the problem. Explanations pertaining to these three patterns in adolescent help-seeking are the foundation from which the proposed expectancies of nurturance in friendships and parents' and friends' expertise, as influential in determining choice of help-giver, were constructed.

#### Adolescents' Expectations of Nurturance in Friendships

Nurturance is defined as an individual's expectation that a help-giver will give them support (Tinsley, 1982). Within help-seeking literature the notion of nurturance from friends has not been directly addressed. However, examination of gendered patterns of

help-seeking behavior is suggestive of a link between nurturance and the selection of a friend as a help-giver. First of all, studies have shown that there are gender differences in adolescent help-seeking friends. For instance, Schonert-Reichl and Muller (1996) report that adolescent females seek help from friends more than adolescent males. Boldero and Fallon (1995) found that help-seeking behavior was predicted by sex in that males were less likely than females to ask for help from friends, and more likely to ask parents. Offer et al. (1991) also found that adolescent females go to friends more in help-seeking situations while adolescent males go to parents. Belle's (1988) review of several studies that directly address social support among adolescents led her to conclude that girls seek more help and support from peers than do boys. Although research examining why adolescent females and males have different choices in helping agents has yet to be conducted, a framework for future research in this area has been offered by Boldero and Fallon (1995). Boldero and Fallon reason that adolescents may have certain ideas about the specific suitability of their helping sources and that adolescents may make inferences about others in their social network based on these specific ideas. Furthermore, adolescent males and females may choose to turn to friends for help in different quantities due to their different expectations of friendships. Bigelow and La Gaipa (1980) proposed that adolescents develop expectations and notions about the qualities that friends should possess. For instance, Clark and Ayers (1993) argue that adolescent boys and girls expect different levels of loyalty, commitment, and understanding from their friends. They state that because girls, more than boys, expect friends to be high in empathetic understanding, their friendships are characterized by more intimacy and self-disclosure. Hence, it is also plausible that adolescent girls, as compared to boys, have higher expectations that their friends will be nurturing.

Another pertinent finding in the adolescent help-seeking literature is the finding that suggests there are differences between early and late adolescents in terms of self-disclosure, which can include advice-seeking (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993), and informal help-seeking. Boldero and Fallon (1995) found that older adolescents asked friends more frequently for help while greater numbers of younger respondents asked family members. Papini et al. (1990), in a study examining emotional self-disclosure of adolescents to parents and friends found that older adolescents report a higher degree of emotional self-disclosure to friends while younger adolescents have a higher frequency of emotional self-disclosure to parents. Papini et al. reason that this finding shows indirect support for the emotional distancing hypothesis (Steinberg, 1989). In other words, adolescents adapt to age-related developmental changes by increasingly communicating their emotional concerns with those who are experiencing similar developmental changes – their closest friends (Papini et al., 1990). Many researchers have demonstrated that as adolescents grow older they become more autonomous and depend on their parents less for advice and help (see Galbo, 1984, for a review). For instance, Solomon (1961) compared the influence of parents with that from other sources in trying to explain why youths often do not accept advice from parents when it is offered. One conclusion that Solomon reached is that adolescents are slowly moving away from parents as they try to become more independent.

Another possible explanation for the differences in help-seeking behaviors between early and late adolescents could be that discussions with parents and adults become less important as the adolescent grows older; while, on the other hand, social support from friends increases with age (Seiffge-Krenke & Shulman, 1993). As well, according to Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990), the benefits of close friendship may depend on the stability and reciprocity of friendships, as these characteristics are likely to increase from



early to late adolescence. Savin-Williams and Berndt note that key features of stable and reciprocated friendships is that friends tend to have similar attitudes and behaviors and are best predicted by the willingness of friends to help and support one another.

### Adolescents' Expectations of Expertise

Expectations of expertise, or an individual's expectation that a help-giver will know how to help them (Tinsley, 1982), and its relevance to adolescent help-seeking from parents and friends, is based on the literature pertaining to the relation between the specific type of problem and the helping agent chosen for support. Boldero and Fallon (1995) found that adolescents, when deciding where to go for help, choose the help source based on the specific problem type. For example, friends were asked for help more often for interpersonal problems. However, Boldero and Fallon conclude that whether this choice is based on the perceived effectiveness of the different helping sources or is simply a function of the nature of the relationship between an individual and potential helping agent is not known. Furthermore, past research in the area of self-disclosure has also found that the conversations between adolescents and their parents differ from the conversations that adolescents have with their peers. With parents, adolescents are likely to talk about school and career goals; with peers they talk about problems with dating or sexuality and about personal experiences, interests, and aims (Raffaelli & Duckett, 1989; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). A possible explanation, according to Youniss and Smollar, is that an adolescent's tendency to seek out friends, mothers, and fathers for advice depending on the specific issue suggests that adolescents seek advice based on their presumptions of how expertise is distributed in their available network.

The understanding that parents and friends are knowledgeable about certain topics implies that they have social power because of their special knowledge, and this can influence adolescents' choice of help-giver. According to French and Raven (1959, as

cited in Sears, Peplau, & Taylor, 1991), individuals tend to defer to experts and follow their advice because of the belief that their knowledge will help the individual to achieve their goals. Thus, an adolescent's choice of mother, father, or friend may depend on the adolescent's expectation of how much the helping agent knows about the topic. For example, on the one hand if an adolescent is experiencing stress when choosing a university, they may decide that their parent is the most appropriate helping resource because the parent is more familiar with the university system. On the other hand, if an adolescent is having problems with a student at school, a close friend may be the most appropriate helping resource because that friend is knowledgeable about the situation and is familiar with the other student. Wintre, Hicks, McVey, and Fox (1988) found evidence for the importance of expertise in choice of help-giver. In their study of age and sex differences in choice of consultant, results showed that 73.4% of 192 participants, ages 8 to 17, justified choosing a consultant for a problem based on the consultant's knowledge of the problem. Males in this study valued expertise on consultant choices more than females and older adolescents valued expertise more than that of younger adolescents. Furthermore, Cash, Kehr, and Salzbach (1978) found that participants who perceived counselors as experts had favorable attitudes towards help-seeking.

From the available research, it is clear then that gender of the adolescent, age of the adolescent, and the specific topic of the problem influence adolescent patterns of help-seeking from parents and peers. Unfortunately, these studies fail to take into account the perceived quality of the adolescent's relationship with the helping source as a possible influence on an adolescent's choice of help-giver. Evidence shows that the informal helping sources that people choose are perceived as being highly supportive (Wills, 1991) and that these perceptions of social support do influence adolescents' help-seeking behaviors from informal agents.

### Adolescents' Expectations of Nurturance in Parental Relationships

The notion that adolescents' expectations of nurturance from their parents can influence their choice of help-giver comes from research examining the relation between parental support and adolescent help-seeking. Research in this area has shown that the perceived support that adolescents receive from their parents can have a tremendous impact on their coping behavior (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995) and can serve as a buffer from the negative effects of stress that adolescents experience (Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983). This link between parental support and adolescent coping and well-being has encouraged many researchers to investigate the relation between adolescent help-seeking behaviors and parental support. For instance, Elmen and Offer (1993) found an inverse relation between disturbance and closeness to parents; those adolescents with emotional problems (who could use help from their parents the most) were less likely than their peers to turn to their parents. In an earlier study, Offer et al. (1991) also found that disturbed adolescents more frequently chose friends and nondisturbed adolescents chose parents to go to when they have an emotional problem. Finally, evidence that parental support is associated with adolescent help-seeking behaviors comes from a survey of 1,771 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993). Findings indicated that adolescents who perceived fewer opportunities to be involved in decision-making (a measure of parent-child relationship quality), as well as no increase in such opportunities, tended to seek less advice from their parents and more from their friends about personal and future issues.

Stress-coping theory, as previously discussed, posits that social networks have beneficial effects because the availability of supportive functions from other persons helps an individual to deal better with concerns and problems (e.g., Thoits, 1986; Wills & Filer, 1996). Wills (1990) states that parents' perceived availability to talk about problems and worries may influence adolescents' emotional regulation and, therefore, parents as helping

agents is one aspect of the parent-child relationship that is paramount in supporting healthy relationships in the family context. Parents are in a unique position to assist their adolescents in mastering their emotional distress, and to offer advice, teach skills, and provide material aid (Barrera, 1981). If parents respond by reassuring the child, showing that they are interested in his or her point of view, and showing that they respect the adolescent as a person, then supportiveness is likely to be perceived as high (Wills, 1990). These supportive responses are essentially comparable to the supportive responses that are deemed to be "therapeutic" in professional helping relationships (Elliot, Stiles, Shiffman, Barker, Burnstein, & Goodman, 1982; Wills, 1987). Consequently, based on findings from the available literature, an adolescent's perceived supportiveness of their parents is positively associated with adolescent help-seeking from parents.

In contrast, if adolescents perceive a low quality of relationship with their parents, adolescents may be less likely to seek out their parents for help. According to Wills (1990) if parents respond by criticizing or blaming the adolescent; ordering or commanding him or her to do something; denying the existence of the problem; or lecturing the adolescent about how they should have done things differently, then subsequently the adolescent is likely to turn to someone else when dealing with a problem. Fagot, Luks, and Poe (1995), who conducted several studies in an attempt to shed some light on why children may be willing to share their feelings or other information with their parents, were able to demonstrate such an occurrence. Fagot et al. found that children's refusal to disclose to a parent is dependent on the parent's behavior. Using a communication task, they found that some parents use strategies that very quickly shut down the child's attempts to give information. In other words, parents who use negative and intrusive techniques in trying to obtain information from the children not only fail to gain information about the situation, but also fail to read the child's emotional state correctly. Fagot et al. speculate that if

parental behaviors like these are repeated over and over in everyday situations, one would expect that children will soon give up trying to discuss issues with parents. As a result, children may not view parents who exhibit these ineffectual behaviors as a helping resource.

As mentioned, the literature on parental support and adolescent help-seeking proposes that adolescents turn to their friends when they perceive low levels of parental support. What is perplexing then is that available data indicate that the majority of adolescents seek out friends more than parents when they are in need of a helping resource. For example, Burke and Weir (1978) found that for most adolescents, peers were the first choice of helper. Next in order were mothers and then, fathers. Does this suppose then that the majority of adolescents in the Burke and Weir study, and other studies that have found similar results (e.g., Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996), perceived low enough levels of support to lead them to turn to their friends for help first, then their parents? The answer to this question is still unclear. Furthermore, help-seeking research has rarely considered adolescent's perceived relationship quality with parents and peers simultaneously. Indeed, only one such study was found which examined both parent and peer responses to adolescent help-seeking. Burke and Weir (1979) assessed the typical helping responses of mothers, fathers, and peers, and found positive correlations between supportive responses and adolescents' likelihood of informing helpers and the number of problems discussed with mothers, fathers, and friends. Furthermore, Burke and Weir demonstrated that adolescents judged their peers' responses as emotionally supportive, unlike parents' responses, which were correlated with a higher frequency of help-seeking from peers. However, does an adolescent's perceptions of response quality from parents and peers predict adolescents' choice of help giver? This question remains unanswered. Furthermore, are expectations based on perceived quality of relationship the only

expectations that influence whether or not an adolescent will choose to seek help from a parent or peer? This, too, is not known.

Further to explaining why adolescents may not seek out their parents for help, perception of relationship quality has also been the variable most often used when discussing why adolescents seek out their mothers more frequently than seeking out their fathers. In terms of the Burke and Weir (1979) study, the finding that mothers were preferred over fathers in help-seeking situations by adolescents is not an isolated discovery. Schonert-Reichl and Muller (1996), when examining the demographic and psychological variables associated with seeking help from parents, friends, and professionals, found that 68% of the adolescent female sample sought out mothers, while only 36% sought out fathers. As with females, a similar pattern was found with the adolescent male sample whereby 50% went to mothers and only 33% went to fathers when they needed help. Other studies have also shown that adolescents talk more with their mother, across a wider range of topics than they do with their father (Barnes & Olson, 1985; Norrell, 1984; Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxen, & Wilson, 1983). According to many researchers, the reasons that adolescents give for their choice of mother over father include various dimensions of support, such as maternal warmth, acceptance and understanding (Jourard, 1971; Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

Evidently, perceived support could explain some of the variance as to why adolescents seek out mothers and fathers at different rates, but it could also be argued that adolescent males and females hold different expectations about their mothers and fathers. Although this proposition has yet to be offered in the context of adolescent help-seeking from mothers and fathers, the notion of expectations based on gender roles is not new to the self-disclosure literature. Males are stereotyped in North American society as being less emotional and open than females and such a stereotype may lead people to evaluate

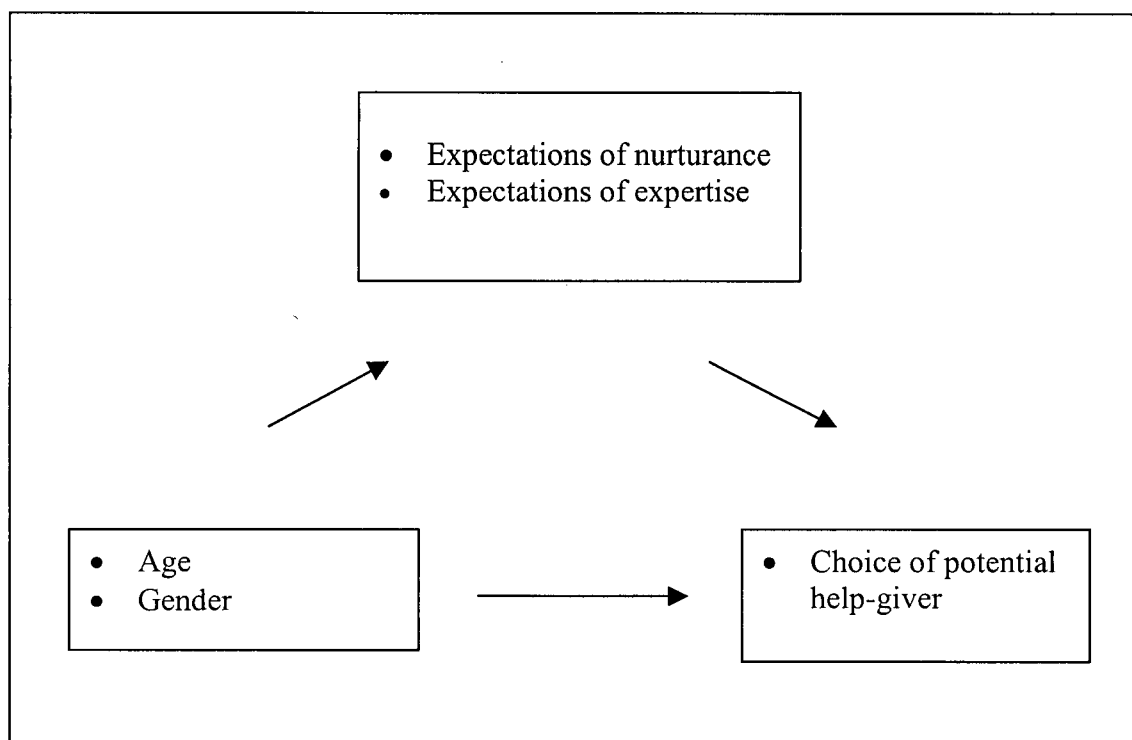
self-disclosures by men and women in different manners (Kleinke, 1979). One could argue that adolescents talk more with mothers than fathers due to the gender socialization of the maternal role. Mothers are expected to be nurturing and supportive, and available to their children; and adolescents may turn to them for help more often because they feel more comfortable as a result of the expected qualities found in the maternal role. Similarly, adolescents may not feel as comfortable, or perceive as much support, from fathers because of their expectations based on the father's paternal role.

In summary, it is apparent that more research needs to be conducted to explore the variables affecting an adolescent's likelihood of choosing a parent or peer as a helping-agent, as it is still unclear what criteria adolescents use when choosing a friend, mother, or father as a help-giver. Although it is evident that adolescents' perceived relationship quality with parents is positively associated with adolescent help-seeking from parents and friends, the role of perceived relationship quality with friends has been essentially overlooked. In addition, studies on perceived quality of relationship and adolescent help-seeking need to be linked with research investigating the variables of age, gender, and problem type, as these are also factors that influence adolescent informal help-seeking but, to date, have generally overlooked the relationship in which adolescent help-seeking occurs. Furthermore, there are other indications from various empirical investigations that show that perceived relationship quality may not be the only factor of interest, or as salient as previously proposed.

The goal of this present study, therefore, is to build upon extant research by uniting the adolescent help-seeking literature on gender, age, and problem type with that of expected quality of responses by the parent and friend helper. In addition to examining the role of expectancy of nurturance as a variable in an adolescent's choice of help-giver, a second variable, that of expertise, will be considered. Figure 1 illustrates a heuristic model

of the proposed processes involved in adolescents' likelihood of choosing a potential help-giver. The pathways will be considered in this present study separately for mother, father, and friend as a potential help-giver for four different problem types.

Figure 1. Pathways to Choosing a Potential Help-Giver.



Adolescents' expectations are the focus here because retrospective accounts are unable to clearly detail how an adolescent thinks about outcomes and the reactions of others, and how these play a vital role in terms of the adolescent's process of making a decision about who to turn to for help. Accordingly, the following research questions are put forth:

Research Question 1. In general, it would appear that age and gender would predict selection of help-giver. Specifically, in seeking a help-giver, females would be more likely to choose a close friend, males would be more likely to choose a parent, and both males and females would be more likely to choose their mother. As well, older adolescents would be more likely to choose a friend, as opposed to younger adolescents who would be



more likely to seek out the help of a parent. However, in this present study, the selection of help-giver will be analyzed within the context of a specific problem type and there is no prior research examining age and gender effects with choice of mother, father, or friend help-giver in reference to these specific problem types. As a result, it is not possible to predict age and gender by problem type. Therefore, while controlling for current levels of perceived relationship quality and prior experience of the problem, the relation between age and gender and expected choice of help-giver will be explored by problem type.

Research Question 2. The relation between age and gender and expectations of nurturance and expertise of potential help-givers will be explored, while controlling for current levels of perceived relationship quality and prior experience of the problem.

Research Question 3. The association between adolescents' expectations of nurturance and expertise of potential help-givers and the likelihood of choosing a parent, and likelihood of choosing a friend as a help-giver will be explored.

Research Question 4. While controlling for perceived relationship quality and prior experience, the present study will also explore expectancies of nurturance and expertise as mediators in the relations between gender and age and choice of help-giver.

## Method

### Sample

The sample consisted of 89 adolescents in grades 8 ( $n = 40$ ) and 11 ( $n = 49$ ) at two high schools in a rural area in the North Okanagan region of British Columbia. These two grades were selected to obtain a selection of both early adolescents and late adolescents. Overall, the sample consisted of 50 females and 39 males ranging in age from 13 to 17 years with an average age of 14.91 years. In terms of ethnicity, 92% ( $n = 82$ ) of the sample self-reported that they are Caucasian, 3.4% ( $n = 3$ ) of the sample reported being First Nations, another 3.4% ( $n = 3$ ) of the sample indicated that they are Indo-Canadian,

while 1.1% ( $n = 1$ ) reported an ethnicity other than those listed as choices in the survey. The majority of the students reported living with both biological parents (57.3%,  $n = 51$ ), while 19.1% ( $n = 17$ ) reported living with one biological parent, 12.4% ( $n = 11$ ) indicated living with their biological mother and a stepfather, 1.1% ( $n = 1$ ) indicated living with their biological father and a stepmother, and 10.1% ( $n = 9$ ) reported living with other family members or other circumstances (e.g., living with boyfriend and his family).

On the second page of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate who they were going to refer to when answering questions about their mother/stepmother, father/stepfather, and a close friend. Instructions asked the respondents to think about the same person throughout the entire survey. The majority of the sample, 93.3% ( $n = 51$ ), selected their biological mother, 1.1% ( $n = 1$ ) indicated that they would be thinking about their stepmother, 3.4% ( $n = 3$ ) chose another female guardian, and 2.2% ( $n = 2$ ) indicated that they did not have a female parent or guardian. These latter two respondents are excluded from analyses involving mother as choice of help-giver. In terms of selecting a male parent/guardian, 85.4% ( $n = 76$ ) of the respondents selected their biological father, 9% ( $n = 8$ ) chose their stepfather, 3.4% ( $n = 3$ ) selected another male guardian, while 2.2% ( $n = 2$ ) indicated that they did not have a male parent or guardian. The two respondents who indicated that they did not have a male parent or guardian are excluded from those analyses involving father as choice of help-giver. Lastly, when adolescents were asked to select a particular close friend as a referent in the survey, 89.7% ( $n = 35$ ) of the males chose a male friend, while 10.3% ( $n = 4$ ) of the male sample chose a female friend. The average age of the close friends chosen by the male respondents was 15.15 years ( $S.D. = 1.79$ ). Similarly, 80% ( $n = 40$ ) of the female sample selected a female friend as a referent in the study, 18% ( $n = 9$ ) chose a male friend, and one respondent failed to indicate the

gender of their close friend. The average age of the close friends selected by female respondents was 16.12 years (S.D. = 3.30).

### Procedures

To obtain the adolescent sample, parental informed consent forms were sent home with students (see Appendix A). Information detailing the purpose and procedures of the study was included in the consent form and parents were to acknowledge whether or not they consented to their child(ren) participating in the study by signing the form. Students were then to return the form to their classroom teacher. As incentive, all students who returned their signed parental consent form by the designated deadline were entered into a draw to win a gift certificate for \$15.00 at a local music store. There was one draw per classroom and all students who returned their signed parental consent form were eligible, regardless of whether or not their parents consented to their participation in the study.

Consent was received from 62% of the total population that was solicited (90 students out of a possible 145). Three students returned consent forms that declined participation. The limited response rate may have been due to a school support staff strike the previous week during which time students were not in class. The principal investigator administered two versions of the survey to the respondents to randomize any testing effects. At one of the high schools, the survey was administered in the classrooms to those students who had parental consent. At the second high school the survey was administered in the school library to all students who received parental consent. Students at both high schools were presented with information about the study and informed of their ability to not participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Student consent to participate in this research was assumed upon completion of the questionnaire, which took about 30 minutes. Of the 90 completed questionnaires, one was removed from the analyses due to incomplete responses in the survey.

## Measures

Demographics. Students were asked to self-report their gender, age, grade, ethnic background, and living circumstances, as displayed in Appendix B.

Expectations About Counseling – Brief Form. The Expectations About Counseling – Brief Form (EAC-B) is a 66-item questionnaire developed by Tinsley (1982) to measure students' expectations about counseling. The EAC-B consists of 17 scales and this present study employs two scales from the EAC-B. These scales are Nurturance ("expect the counselor to give me support") and Expertise ("expect the counselor to know how to help me"), which are measured by three items each. The items are answered using a 5-point Likert scale with response options that range from "not true" to "definitely true". The use of a 5-point Likert scale is an adjustment from the EAC-B in that the EAC-B is measured using a 7-point scale. The change to a 5-point was implemented because it is thought to be more appropriate for adolescent respondents. Further modifications include replacing the term "counselor" with "mother", "father", and "close friend" in order to measure adolescents' expectancies of their potential help givers. Each question was prefaced by the stem "I expect my". An example of an item is "I expect my mother/father/close friend to give me encouragement and reassurance. As well, item 50 ("Praise me when I show improvement.") now reads "Praise me when I deal with the problem". Item 55 ("Decide what treatment plan is best.") now reads "Decide what plan of action is best."

Based on this present study, internal consistency of the nurturance scales for each potential help-giver (mother, father, and friend) ranged from .71 to .88. The internal consistency reliability of the expertise scales for each potential help-giver in this present study ranged from .79 to .93.

Hypothetical Situations. The 6 items that measured adolescents' expectancies of nurturance and expertise were assessed four times, each time in reference to a different

hypothetical “generic” situation. These scenarios pertain to an interpersonal problem with a friend, an interpersonal problem with a parent, a health problem, and a school problem.

The two interpersonal problems were derived from Wintre et al. (1988):

1. *An Interpersonal Problem with a friend:* It often happens that people who are friends have a disagreement. In this situation I want you to imagine that you are having a problem getting along with one of your friends. This is a person that you like. Lately you don’t like the way that s/he has been treating you. You think that s/he is being mean. You still want to be friends but you don’t know what to do.
2. *An Interpersonal Problem with parents:* In this situation I want you to pretend that you are having a problem getting along with [your parents]. Everyone has disagreements with their mother or father once and a while and that is normal. But in this case I want you to pretend that you are arguing and unhappy often. You can’t understand why this is so. You think that things should be different.

The following school-related problem was constructed from an unpublished data set (Schonert-Reichl, 1996) that asked grade 9 and 11 students to state a problem that has caused them the most stress since the start of the school year:

3. *A School Related Problem:* High school can be stressful at certain times for many students. In this situation I want you to imagine that you have been feeling a lot of pressure at school lately. You have been really busy working on an assignment for one of your classes and you just found out that you have two exams next week and you’re worried because you don’t think that you will have enough time to prepare for them. You want to do

as well as you can on these exams but you aren't too sure how you can manage all that work and study.

The last hypothetical situation was also created specifically for this study:

4. *A Health Related Problem:* In this situation I want you to imagine that over the last two weeks you haven't been able to sleep as well as you usually do. This normally wouldn't be stressful for you but you've also noticed that you are not very hungry either. In the daytime you are very tired, so tired that you don't even feel like hanging out with your friends or playing sports. You don't know what's wrong and you would like to know what's causing you to feel this way.

Following each of the four hypothetical situations, participants were required to indicate, by checking the appropriate box, whether or not they have experienced that particular problem before. Next, for each scenario, participants were asked to rate how likely they would be to choose each of the three potential help-givers (mother, father, close-friend) for help with each situation. A 5-point scale, with options that range from "least likely" to "most likely", was used.

Intimacy Questionnaire. Current levels of perceived intimacy were assessed using the Relational Provisional Loneliness Questionnaire (RPLQ; Hayden-Thomson, 1989). This instrument contains 28-items that ask participants to indicate the level of personal intimacy and social integration that they perceive is provided to them in their relationships. Two sets of parallel items are used in reference to both family and peers. Each set contains 14 items. A 5-point Likert scale is used to indicate the degree to which participants feel that each statement is true about their relationships (i.e., always true, true most of the time, sometimes true, hardly ever true, not true at all). An example of parallel items used in reference to both peers and parents is, "I have someone who is really interested in hearing

about my private thoughts and feelings” and “I have someone in my family who is really interested in hearing about my private thoughts and feelings”. For the purposes of this present study, the referent in items that relate to family was changed to specify mother and then was duplicated with reference to father. As a result, the final instrument contains 3 sets of parallel items referring to peers, mother, and father.

In this present study, the internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha, was .90, .96, .97 respectively for the friend, mother, and father versions.

### Results

Preliminary analyses involved assessing the means of responses to the statement for how likely adolescents were to choose each of the three potential help-givers (mother, father, and close friend) to help them in 4 different scenarios. The analyses were carried out for each situation to explore whether the likelihood of choosing a particular help-giver varied across contexts. One-way repeated-measures analysis of variance was conducted and the within-subject factor was the likelihood of selecting each help-giver. Simple contrasts were used to determine whether there was a difference in the level of likelihood of selecting either mother, father, or friend. For Scenario A, involving a problem with a friend at school, the within subjects model was statistically significant ( $F(2, 83) = 37.17, p < .001$ ). It was found that the mean for likelihood of choosing a friend to help with Scenario A was significantly greater ( $p < .01$ ) than mothers and fathers, and the mean for likelihood of choosing mother was significantly greater ( $p < .001$ ) than fathers. See Table 1 for means and standard deviations.

For Scenario B, involving a problem getting along with parents, the within subjects model was statistically significant ( $F(2, 83) = 23.99, p < .001$ ). As seen in Table 1, results show that the mean for the likelihood of choosing a close friend to help with this problem

is significantly greater ( $p < .001$ ) than the means for the likelihood of choosing mothers and fathers.

For Scenario C, involving stress in high school, the within-subjects model was also significantly significant ( $F(2, 83) = 12.64, p < .001$ ). Here, it was found that mothers were significantly more likely ( $p < .01$ ) to be chosen as the help-giver with this problem involving stress in high school than were fathers and friends. The means for the likelihood of choosing a father or a close friend for help in Scenario C were exactly the same (see Table 1).

Finally, the within-subjects model for Scenario D, a health related problem, was also statistically significant ( $F(2, 83) = 12.52, p < .001$ ). As shown in Table 1, the likelihood of choosing a mother for help with this health related problem was significantly greater ( $p < .001$ ) than that of fathers and significantly greater ( $p < .01$ ) than that of friends. The means for fathers and friends did not differ significantly from one another.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of the Likelihood of Choosing a Help-Giver For Each Problem Type

	Means (Standard Deviations)			Contrasts <sup>a</sup>
	<u>Mother</u> [N = 87]	<u>Father</u> [N = 87]	<u>Friend</u> [N = 89]	
Scenario A	3.19 (1.37)	2.38 (1.28)	3.95 (1.12)	FR>MO>FA
Scenario B	2.68 (1.23)	2.45 (1.19)	3.79 (1.28)	FR>MO, FA
Scenario C	3.82 (1.22)	3.20 (1.31)	3.20 (1.25)	MO>FA, FR
Scenario D	3.69 (1.12)	3.04 (1.39)	3.20 (1.24)	MO>FA, FR

Note: MO = *Mother*, FA = *Father*, FR = *Friend*



Prior to analyzing the 4 research questions, zero-order correlations between the control variables, perceived relationship quality and prior experience of the problem, and the selection of help-giver and nurturance and expertise of the help-giver were examined. As shown in Table 2, intimacy is positively correlated with choice of mother, father, and friend in all 4 scenarios. Intimacy is also positively correlated with adolescents' expectations of their mother's, father's, and friend's nurturance and expertise across all scenarios. Results in Table 2 also indicate that prior experience is positively correlated with selection of help-giver and expectations, although these correlations are less consistent.

Table 2

Correlations between Perceived Relationship Quality and Prior Experience of the Problem with Selection of Help-Giver and Nurturance and Expertise of the Help-Giver

Scenario <sup>b</sup>	<u>Mother</u>			<u>Father</u>			<u>Friend</u>		
	Choice	Nurt	Expt	Choice	Nurt	Expt	Choice	Nurt	Expt
<u>A</u>									
Intimacy	.65**	.68**	.62**	.62**	.69**	.69**	.30**	.30**	.33**
Prior Exp <sup>a</sup>	-.02	-.18	-.08	-.11	-.12	-.14	.40**	.37**	.16
<u>B</u>									
Intimacy	.49**	.64**	.64**	.52**	.68**	.67**	.38**	.41**	.41**
Prior Exp	-.22*	-.22*	-.18	-.21*	-.26*	-.26*	.00	-.14	-.18
<u>C</u>									
Intimacy	.59**	.60**	.50**	.64**	.64**	.60**	.38**	.32**	.25*
Prior Exp	.17	.15	.21	.03	.00	.00	.24*	.07	.21
<u>D</u>									
Intimacy	.57**	.62**	.60**	.66**	.73**	.77**	.33**	.35**	.29**
Prior Exp	-.15	-.19	-.24*	-.25*	-.32**	-.41**	.14	.01	.02

Note: Prior Experience is coded 0 = No, 1 = Yes. Scenario A = *problem with friend*; Scenario B = *problem with parents*; Scenario C = *stress at school*; Scenario D = *not feeling well*.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

### Research Question 1

The first research question proposed to explore the relation between age and gender and choice of help-giver by problem-type. Analyses were conducted using hierarchical ordinary least squares regression. The two control variables, relationship intimacy and prior experience of the problem, were entered in step one of each regression. Next, age and gender were entered as predictors of the likelihood of choosing the help-giver to assist with the particular problem. For example, scenario A involved a problem with a friend at school. For the first regression, the dependent variable was the likelihood of selecting mother as help-giver in relation to the problem involving a friend. Intimacy with mother and prior experience of the problem were entered in step 1, followed by age and gender. This regression was repeated for father (using the respective indicator for intimacy with father) and then for friend. All regressions were repeated for each scenario. The findings are summarized in Table 3. The F change is reported in the table to illustrate the change in the regression model when the effects of age and gender on the likelihood of choosing a particular help-giver are considered, over and above the control variables of perceived intimacy and prior experience of the problem. The standardized betas indicate the strengths of these effects. Bivariate correlations are included to illustrate the pattern of relations between variables prior to entry into the regression.

Overall, as shown in Table 3, significant changes in the regression models, when the effects of age and gender on the likelihood of choosing a particular help-giver are considered, were consistently found in Scenario A, and when a friend is the potential help-giver. In Scenario A, age was found to be significantly negatively related to the choice of mother as a help-giver; early adolescents were more likely to choose mothers as potential help-givers than older adolescents. When the outcome for Scenario A is father as the potential help-giver, both age and gender had significant effects on the outcome. Early

adolescents and boys were more likely to choose fathers as potential help-giver when faced with a problem involving a friend. When the likelihood of choosing a friend is the outcome, in 3 of the 4 scenarios, gender was found to be significantly positively associated with choice of friend as help-giver. In other words, girls were more likely to choose a friend as a potential help-giver as compared to boys.

### Research Question 2

The second research question proposed to explore the relations between age and gender and expectations of potential help-givers' nurturance and expertise. First, in terms of the outcome of expectations of nurturance, analyses were conducted using hierarchical ordinary least squares regression. The two control variables, relationship intimacy and prior experience of the problem, were entered in step one of each regression. Next, age and gender were entered as predictors of expectations of nurturance of help-giver. For example, scenario A involved a problem with a friend at school. For the first regression, the dependent variable was expectations of mother's nurturance in relation to the problem involving a friend. Intimacy with mother and prior experience of the problem were entered in step 1, followed by age and gender. This regression was repeated for father (using the respective indicator for intimacy with father) and then for friend. All regressions were repeated for each scenario. The findings are summarized in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, when age and gender are entered into Step 2 of the regression models, after entering the control variables in Step 1, significant F changes in the models were found. Significant univariate effects were found between gender and expectations of friends' nurturance. Girls, as compared to boys, had higher expectations of their friend's nurturance across 3 of the 4 scenarios. Significant univariate relations were not found between age and expectations of potential help-giver's nurturance, nor were any significant relations found between gender and expectations of mother's and father's nurturance.

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing the Relation Between Age and Gender and Likelihood of Choosing Help-Giver

Scenario <sup>b</sup>	FΔ	(df)	<u>Age</u>		<u>Gender<sup>a</sup></u>	
			β	(r) <sup>c</sup>	β	(r)
<u>A</u>						
Mother	6.16**	(2, 82)	-.30**	(-.30**)	-.03	(-.08)
Father	8.56**	(2, 81)	-.24**	(-.25*)	-.29**	(-.36**)
Friend	7.90**	(2, 84)	.16	(.22*)	.37**	(.49**)
<u>B</u>						
Mother	.49	(2, 82)	-.09	(-.13)	.04	(-.02)
Father	.09	(2, 81)	.04	(-.01)	.00	(-.13)
Friend	7.37**	(2, 84)	.09	(.11)	.36**	(.42**)
<u>C</u>						
Mother	1.7	(2, 82)	-.16	(-.21*)	-.03	(-.10)
Father	1.86	(2, 81)	-.09	(-.16)	-.14	(-.28**)
Friend	.25	(2, 84)	.06	(.02)	.04	(.15)
<u>D</u>						
Mother	2.05	(2, 82)	-.12	(-.16)	.14	(.06)
Father	.13	(2, 81)	-.03	(-.08)	.03	(-.14)
Friend	6.19**	(2, 84)	.15	(.16)	.34**	(.39**)

Note: Gender is coded 1 = *Males*, 2 = *Females*. Scenario A = *problem with friend*; Scenario B = *problem with parents*; Scenario C = *stress at school*; Scenario D = *not feeling well*. (r) = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

Table 4

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing the Relation Between Age and Gender and Expectations of Nurturance

Scenario <sup>b</sup>	FΔ	(df)	<u>Age</u>		<u>Gender<sup>a</sup></u>	
			β	( <i>r</i> ) <sup>c</sup>	β	( <i>r</i> )
<u>A</u>						
Nurturance, Mother	1.39	(2, 82)	-.10	(-.15)	-.19	(-.21*)
Nurturance, Father	.02	(2, 81)	.02	(-.05)	.01	(-.19)
Nurturance, Friend	1.9	(2, 84)	.12	(.21)	.18	(.33**)
<u>B</u>						
Nurturance, Mother	.36	(2, 82)	-.05	(-.10)	-.05	(-.13)
Nurturance, Father	.22	(2, 81)	-.05	(-.10)	.02	(-.16)
Nurturance, Friend	4.62*	(2, 84)	.10	(.09)	.28**	(.35**)
<u>C</u>						
Nurturance, Mother	.78	(2, 82)	-.04	(-.10)	.10	(.04)
Nurturance, Father	.24	(2, 81)	.00	(-.06)	.06	(-.11)
Nurturance, Friend	3.97*	(2, 84)	.09	(.09)	.27*	(.33**)
<u>D</u>						
Nurturance, Mother	1.10	(2, 82)	-.13	(-.17)	.01	(-.08)
Nurturance, Father	.14	(2, 81)	-.02	(-.08)	.04	(-.18)
Nurturance, Friend	5.94**	(2, 84)	.00	(-.01)	.36**	(.38**)

Note: Gender is coded 1 = *Males*, 2 = *Females*. Scenario A = *problem with friend*; Scenario B = *problem with parents*; Scenario C = *stress at school*; Scenario D = *not feeling well*. (r) = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

Second, in terms of the relation between age and gender and the outcome of expectations of expertise, analyses were conducted using hierarchical ordinary least

squares regression. The two control variables, relationship intimacy and prior experience of the problem, were entered in step one of each regression. Next, age and gender were entered as predictors of expectations of expertise of potential help-givers. For example, scenario A involved a problem with a friend at school. For the first regression, the dependent variable was expectations of mother's expertise in relation to the problem involving a friend. Intimacy with mother and prior experience of the problem were entered in step 1, followed by age and gender. This regression was repeated for father (using the respective indicator for intimacy with father) and then for friend. All regressions were repeated for each scenario. The findings are summarized in Table 5.

As indicated in Table 5, significant negative relations between age and expectations of mother's expertise were found across all scenarios. In other words, early adolescents, as compared to older adolescents, had higher expectations of their mother's expertise when faced with a stressful situation. These significant univariate findings resulted in significant changes in the regression model F values in 3 out of the 4 scenarios. Thus, age, when entered in Step 2 after controlling for perceived intimacy and prior experience in Step 1, added significantly to explaining the variance in expectations of mother's expertise in helping.

Age was found to be negatively related to expectations of father's expertise in Scenario A and D, however, the overall change in the F value was only significant for Scenario A. There was no relation between age and expectations of friend's expertise. When examining the relation between gender and expectations of expertise, changes in the F value of the regression models were non-significant, with the exception of expectations of father's expertise in Scenario A. Here gender was negatively related to expectations of father's expertise. Boys, as compared to girls, had higher expectations of their father's

expertise. This, along with the effect of age of expectations of father's expertise for this scenario, significantly increased the F value.

Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing the Relation Between Age and Gender and Expectations of Expertise

Scenario <sup>b</sup>	FΔ	(df)	<u>Age</u>		<u>Gender<sup>a</sup></u>	
			β	( <i>r</i> ) <sup>c</sup>	β	( <i>r</i> )
<u>A</u>						
Expertise, Mother	4.52*	(2, 82)	-.25**	(-.28**)	-.11	-.17
Expertise, Father	6.32**	(2, 81)	-.16*	(-.19)	-.26**	(-.38**)
Expertise, Friend	.01	(2, 84)	.02	(.07)	.00	(.12)
<u>B</u>						
Expertise, Mother	2.42	(2, 82)	-.18*	(-.21)	-.05	(-.14)
Expertise, Father	.46	(2, 81)	-.05	(-.10)	-.06	(-.23*)
Expertise, Friend	1.77	(2, 84)	.04	(.03)	.18	(.26*)
<u>C</u>						
Expertise, Mother	5.63**	(2, 82)	-.29**	(-.35**)	-.07	(-.12)
Expertise, Father	3.09	(2, 81)	-.16	(-.21*)	-.15	(-.29**)
Expertise, Friend	.71	(2, 84)	-.10	(-.13)	.08	(.15)
<u>D</u>						
Expertise, Mother	3.12*	(2, 82)	-.22*	(-.26*)	.00	(-.09)
Expertise, Father	2.10	(2, 81)	-.14*	(-.21*)	-.02	(-.25*)
Expertise, Friend	3.05	(2, 84)	-.03	(-.04)	.26*	(.30**)

Note: Gender is coded 1 = *Males*, 2 = *Females*. Scenario A = *problem with friend*; Scenario B = *problem with parents*; Scenario C = *stress at school*; Scenario D = *not feeling well*. (r) = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

### Research Question 3

It was proposed that the likelihood of choosing a parent and the likelihood of choosing a friend help-giver would be predicted by adolescents' expectations of nurturance and expertise. Analyses were conducted using hierarchical ordinary least squares regression. Both nurturance and expertise were entered as the predictors and the outcome was the likelihood of choosing a potential help-giver. This regression analysis was conducted for each help-giver, mother, father, and friend. All regressions were repeated for each scenario. The findings are summarized in Table 6.

Significant changes in the F value were found for each regression model examining the effect between nurturance and expertise on choice of potential help-giver. Interestingly, patterns across scenarios emerge in the significant relations between nurturance and likelihood of choosing a help-giver as compared to the significant relations between expertise and likelihood of choosing a particular help-giver. More specifically, the significant effects of expectations of expertise on choice of a mother and father as potential help-giver were more consistent and more frequently stronger than the effects of expectations of nurturance on the likelihood of choosing a parent as a help-giver. In contrast, the significant effects between nurturance and choosing a friend as a potential help-giver were more consistent and more often stronger than the effects between expertise and choosing a friend as a potential help-giver.



Table 6

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing the Relation Between Nurturance and Expertise and Selection of Help-Giver

Scenario <sup>a</sup>	FΔ	(df)	<u>Nurturance</u>		<u>Expertise</u>	
			β	( <i>r</i> ) <sup>c</sup>	β	( <i>r</i> )
<u>A</u>						
Mother	32.91**	(2, 84)	.03	(.51**)	.64**	(.66**)
Father	38.92**	(2, 84)	.18	(.54**)	.61**	(.69**)
Friend	23.77**	(2, 86)	.55**	(.60**)	.07	(.45**)
<u>B</u>						
Mother	37.38**	(2, 84)	.05	(.55**)	.65**	(.69**)
Father	37.08**	(2, 84)	.22	(.61**)	.50**	(.67**)
Friend	22.06**	(2, 86)	.49**	(.58**)	.11	(.49**)
<u>C</u>						
Mother	47.38**	(2, 84)	.40**	(.67**)	.39**	(.67**)
Father	58.39**	(2, 84)	.25*	(.68**)	.55**	(.75**)
Friend	40.06**	(2, 86)	.25*	(.62**)	.48**	(.68**)
<u>D</u>						
Mother	66.29**	(2, 84)	.64**	(.78**)	.16	(.70**)
Father	61.42**	(2, 84)	.40**	(.74**)	.40**	(.74**)
Friend	28.50**	(2, 86)	.46**	(.62**)	.21	(.55**)

Note: Scenario A = *problem with friend*; Scenario B = *problem with parents*; Scenario C = *stress at school*; Scenario D = *not feeling well*. (*r*) = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01

#### Research Question 4

The previous research questions, taken together, suggest a mediated model. That is, age and gender predict choice of help-giver but it is likely that the effect of age and gender on the likelihood of choosing a particular help-giver are mediated by expectancies of the degree of nurturance and expertise of the help-giver. Analyses involved a series of hierarchical ordinary least squares regression following the protocol described by Baron and Kenny (1986). According to Baron and Kenny, to conclude that there is evidence of a mediated relationship, the following conditions must be met: (a) there must be significant relations between the predictors and the outcomes; (b) there must be significant relations between the predictors and the mediators; and (c) there must be significant relations between the mediators and the outcomes when all of the variables are entered into the same equation, and these relations must reduce the direct effects of the predictors on the outcomes. Therefore, only when there were significant relations between the predictors and outcomes, predictors and mediators, and mediators and outcomes, as analyzed in the previous research questions, were tests of mediation conducted.

In total, the criteria for testing a mediated relationship were met in four out of a possible 12 times (3 potential help-givers multiplied by 4 different scenarios). The first was with Scenario A with mother as a potential help-giver. In this scenario, adolescents are asked to imagine that they are having a problem getting along with one of their friends. Age was found to be significantly negatively related to choice of mother as a help-giver. In other words, early adolescents were more likely to choose mothers as a potential help-giver. Age was also negatively related to expectations of mother's expertise. Also, expertise was found to be significantly related to the likelihood of choosing a mother to help with this problem. These significant univariate findings made it appropriate to test whether expertise mediates the relationship between age and choice of mother as a

potential help-giver. As indicated in Table 7, the two control variables, relationship intimacy and prior experience of the problem, were entered in step 1 of the regression. Next, age and gender were entered as predictors of choice of help-giver. In step 3 nurturance and expertise were added to explore the possibility of a mediated relationship. Evidence for a mediated model was not found because the beta for age remains significant in Model 2. Interestingly, expertise adds to the explanation of choice of mother as a help-giver.

The second situation in which it was appropriate to test for a mediated relationship was also in Scenario A, with father as the potential help-giver. With respect to univariate findings, age and gender were found to be both negatively associated with choice of father as a help-giver. This means that early adolescents and boys were more likely to choose fathers as a potential help-giver to help with this problem than were late adolescents and girls. Age and gender were also significantly negatively related to expectations of fathers' expertise. These results suggest that early adolescents and male adolescents expect their fathers to know how to help them with this problem as compared to late adolescents and girls. As well, expertise is positively associated with the likelihood of choosing father as a help-giver in this situation. These significant results allowed for the testing of the mediated model. As reported in Table 8, the two control variables, relationship intimacy and prior experience of the problem, were entered in step 1 of the regression. Next, age and gender were entered as predictors of choice of help-giver. In step 3 nurturance and expertise were added to explore the possibility of a mediated relationship. Results indicate that the betas for both age and gender remain significant after entering expertise into the equation. Expertise adds to the explanation of choice of father as help-giver.

Table 7

Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing Mediated Model for Scenario About a Friend With Mother as Possible Help-Giver

Choice of Mother as Help-giver	r with criteria	<u>Multiple regression results</u>			
		$\beta$	$R^2$	F $\Delta$	<u>df</u>
<u>Model 1</u>					
Step 1					
Intimacy with mother	.65**	.65**	.42**	30.32**	2, 84
Prior experience	-.02	.00			
Step 2					
Intimacy with mother	.65**	.63**	.50**	6.16**	2, 82
Prior experience	-.02	.12			
Age	-.30**	-.30**			
Gender	-.08	-.03			
<u>Model 2</u>					
Step 3					
Intimacy with mother	.65**	.47**	.57**	7.29**	2, 80
Prior experience	-.02	.08			
Age	-.30**	-.20*			
Gender	-.08	.00			
Nurturance	.51**	-.16			
Expertise	.66**	.44**			

Note: Gender is coded 1 = *Males*, 2 = *Females*; Prior experience is coded 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.

$r$  = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

Table 8

Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing Mediated Model for Scenario About a Friend With Father as Possible Help-Giver

Choice of Father as Help-giver	$r$ with criteria	<u>Multiple regression results</u>			
		$\beta$	$R^2$	$F\Delta$	<u>df</u>
<u>Model 1</u>					
Step 1					
Intimacy with father	.62**	.62**	.39**	26.60**	2, 83
Prior experience	-.11	-.03			
Step 2					
Intimacy with father	.62**	.55**	.50**	8.56**	2, 81
Prior experience	-.11	.15			
Age	-.25*	-.24**			
Gender	-.36**	-.29**			
<u>Model 2</u>					
Step 3					
Intimacy with father	.62**	.31**	.56**	5.14**	2, 79
Prior experience	-.11	.12			
Age	-.25*	-.19*			
Gender	-.36**	-.21*			
Nurturance	.54**	.06			
Expertise	.69**	.32*			

Note: Gender is coded 1 = *Males*, 2 = *Females*; Prior experience is coded 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.

$r$  = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

The third situation in which it was appropriate to test for a mediated relationship was in Scenario B with friend as help-giver. In this scenario, adolescents were asked to imagine that they are having a problem getting along with their parents. In the previous analyses, a significant positive relation was found between gender and choice of friend as a help-giver, indicating that girls were more likely to choose a friend as help-giver than boys. A significant positive relation between gender and adolescents' expectations of their friends' nurturance, as well as between nurturance and choice of friend as a potential help-giver was also found. These significant betas allowed for the testing of whether nurturance mediates the relation between gender and choice of friend as a help-giver. As reported in Table 9, the two control variables, relationship intimacy and prior experience of the problem, were entered in step 1 of the regression. Next, age and gender were entered as predictors of choice of help-giver. In step 3 nurturance and expertise were added to explore the possibility of a mediated relationship. Evidence for a mediated model, as shown in Table 9, was not found because the beta for gender remains significant in Model 2. Interestingly, although gender remains significant, nurturance does diminish the effect of gender on choice of friend as a help-giver suggesting that nurturance adds to the explanation of choice of friend as a help-giver for this particular problem.

Table 9

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Scenario About Parents With Friend as Possible Help-Giver

Choice of Friend as Help-giver	<i>r</i> with criteria	<u>Multiple regression results</u>			
		$\beta$	$R^2$	F $\Delta$	<u>df</u>
<u>Model 1</u>					
Step 1					
Intimacy with friend	.38**	.39**	.15**	7.34**	2, 86
Prior experience	.00	.06			
Step 2					
Intimacy with friend	.38**	.30**	.27**	7.37**	2, 84
Prior experience	.00	.03			
Age	.11	.09			
Gender	.42**	.36**			
<u>Model 2</u>					
Step 3					
Intimacy with friend	.38**	.15	.42**	10.40**	2, 82
Prior experience	.00	.08			
Age	.11	.05			
Gender	.42**	.24*			
Nurturance	.58**	.36*			
Expertise	.49**	.10			

Note: Gender is coded 1 = *Males*, 2 = *Females*; Prior experience is coded 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.  
 $r$  = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

Lastly, in Scenario D with friend as help-giver, preliminary regression analyses were found to be significant which allowed for the testing of a mediated relationship. In this scenario, adolescents were asked to imagine that they have been feeling physically unwell. Gender was found to be significantly related to choice of friend as a potential help-giver. Gender was also found to be positively associated with both nurturance and expertise, and nurturance was significantly associated with choice of friend as help-giver. In testing for a mediated relationship, see Table 10, the two control variables, relationship

intimacy and prior experience of the problem, were entered in step 1. Age and gender were then entered as predictors of choice of help-giver. In step 3, nurturance and expertise were added to explore the possibility of mediation. Results indicate that the addition of nurturance significantly reduces the effect of gender on choice of friend as a help-giver. This finding supports the notion that adolescents' expectations of nurturance mediates between gender and the choice of a friend as a help-giver.

Table 10

Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing Mediated Model for Scenario About Feeling Physically Unwell With Friend as Possible Help-Giver

Choice of Friend as Help-giver	r with criteria	<u>Multiple regression results</u>			
		$\beta$	$R^2$	F $\Delta$	<u>df</u>
<u>Model 1</u>					
Step 1					
Intimacy with friend	.33**	.33**	.13**	6.40**	2, 86
Prior experience	.14	.14			
Step 2					
Intimacy with friend	.33**	.26*	.24**	6.19**	2, 84
Prior experience	.14	.00			
Age	.16	.15			
Gender	.39**	.34**			
<u>Model 2</u>					
Step 3					
Intimacy with friend	.33**	.11	.47**	17.41**	2, 82
Prior experience	.14	.05			
Age	.16	.16			
Gender	.39**	.15			
Nurturance	.62**	.37**			
Expertise	.55**	.20			

Note: Gender is coded 1 = *Males*, 2 = *Females*; Prior experience is coded 0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*.  
 $r$  = zero-order correlations between criterion and dependent variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$



## Discussion

The results of this study offer both confirmatory evidence and additional findings that build on the existing literature regarding adolescent help-seeking from mothers, fathers, and friends. The findings show there are age and gender differences in expectations of help-givers' nurturance and expertise, that adolescents choose potential help-givers based on problem type, and adolescents' expectations of expertise and nurturance predict the likelihood of choosing a potential help-giver differently for parents and friends.

Results in this study provide confirmatory evidence that adolescents are more likely to select a friend as a potential help-giver when dealing with interpersonal problems, while potentially choosing parents to help with school and health problems. These findings are similar to those reported by Seiffge-Krenke (1995), Raffaelli and Duckett (1989), and Youniss and Smollar (1985), who report that adolescents talk to peers about problems with friends and other interpersonal issues, while preferring to talk to parents about school and other matters. Furthermore, similar to previous studies (e.g., Barnes & Olsen, 1985; Burke & Weir, 1979; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1985) mothers were more likely to be chosen as a potential help-giver than were fathers despite problem type. It is noteworthy to add, however, that adolescents view themselves as probably seeking more than one help-giver when faced with a stressful situation. Although it is evident that adolescents tend to select one help-giver over the other, depending on the situation, they also indicate that they are fairly likely to turn to other help-givers as well.

The conclusion that adolescents choose friends and parents as help-givers according to problem type is not new. What has been not subject to empirical investigation until now is the criteria that influences an adolescent's likelihood of choosing their close friend, mother, and father to help them deal better with concerns and problems. Whether

the choice of help-giver is based on perceived effectiveness of different help sources or is a function of the nature of the relationship between an individual and potential help sources has been previously unknown (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). However, it is evident in this present study that not only do expectations of nurturance and expertise predict the choice of a potential help-giver but the effect is different for choosing parents and friends as help-givers. More specifically, high expectations of nurturance, or expectations that the help-giver will be supportive, are more influential when deciding whether or not to choose a friend to help. On the other hand, high expectations of expertise, or expectations that the help-giver will know how to help, are generally more influential when potentially selecting a parent to help with a problem. These findings have implications for the way researchers theorize about the role of help-seeking in adolescence. It could be argued that adolescent help-seeking behavior may serve two separate functions, and this ultimately affects what criteria are most important when choosing a specific help-giver. Adolescents may seek help from parents for sound advice, thus expertise of the parent is important. On the other hand, help-seeking from friends gives adolescents an opportunity to not only seek advice, but more importantly, it promotes relationship development and maintenance. Thus, adolescent's expectations of their friends' nurturance become crucial in potentially choosing a friend as a help-giver.

According to Rosenberg (1973), children and adolescents have great confidence in the credibility and value of their parents' knowledge and expertise. The effectiveness of a communicative message not only depends on what is said but on who says it, and children's attitudes toward his or her significant others, namely parents, is one of strong faith and trust in their knowledge. Because children feel that parents know them best, it is likely that they also expect their parents to know how to help them the best, when they are faced with a stressful situation. Therefore, when mothers and fathers are potential help-

givers, adolescents' expectation of their parents' expertise influences the likelihood of choosing them as a help-giver. Moreover, the present results indicate that early adolescents have higher expectations of their mother's expertise, as compared to late adolescents. This trend is not dependent on problem type and is contrary to the findings of Wintre et al. (1988) who report that older adolescents value expertise in their help-givers, more than younger adolescents. The finding is however complementary to Rosenberg's (1973) suggestion that confidence in adults' judgement depends strongly on the age of the respondent. In childhood and early adolescence, individuals have relatively strong confidence in the judgements of parents. However, as they grow older this confidence declines. As a result, it is likely that early adolescents believe their mothers are more credible in terms of knowing how to help them when they are faced with a stressful situation.

On the other hand, the likelihood of selecting friends as help-givers due to expectations of nurturance can be seen not only as a coping response but also as a way to create closeness and intimacy in friendships. Donelson and Gullahorn (1977) define friendship as "an intimate, personal, caring relationship with attributes such as reciprocal tenderness and warmth of feeling; reciprocal desire to keep the friendship; honesty and sincerity; trust; intimacy and openness of self; loyalty; and durability of the relationship over time" (p. 156). Consequently, it is these relational features that can increase adolescents expectations of the friends' nurturance and the likelihood of selecting them as potential help-givers, especially for interpersonal problems. Help-seeking behavior serves not only to aid in coping but also in friendship development and maintenance as adolescents disclose their problems to one another.

Although it was found that expectations of expertise and nurturance influence adolescents' choice of mother, father, and friend as help-giver, these expectations were

generally not found to mediate between age and gender and choice of potential help-giver. In fact, the findings in previous research showing that early adolescents are more likely to choose parents to help with a problem, and that older adolescents select friends more than parents, while males prefer to ask parents to help, were not consistently found. The inability to find significant relations between these variables indicated that it was inappropriate to test for mediation. The only consistent finding in terms of age and gender effects on choice of help-giver was that females were more likely to choose friends as help-givers, as compared to males. This finding supports Clark and Ayers' (1993) notion that adolescent girls and boys have different expectations about their friends. Clark and Ayers found that girls and boys expect different levels of loyalty, commitment, and understanding from their friends. Consequently, this present study builds on their findings by adding that girls and boys also have different expectations of their friends' nurturance.

Expectations of nurturance as a mediator between gender and the choice of a friend as a help-giver was found in one situation, and expectations of nurturance as a mediator was found to add to the explained variance in choice of help-giver in other circumstances. However, as mentioned, for the most part the conditions outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) were not met in order to test for mediation. One possible reason for the inability to detect significant relations between age and gender and choice of help-giver, thus deeming it inappropriate in most circumstances to test whether expectations of nurturance and expertise are mediators, is due to the usage of age and gender as variables. According to Asher (1997) it is harder to correlate a scale with few items with other measures than it is to correlate a scale with many items with other multi-item measures. Furthermore, with a short scale, or in the case of this study, dichotomous variables, researchers are less likely to obtain an observed relation that is statistically significant. Additionally, using a 14-item intimacy scale as a control variable made it even more difficult to find significant relations

between age and gender with choice of help-giver. The variable of intimacy is much more able to correlate with the dependent variable due to its many items rendering the variables of age and gender incapable of accounting for enough of the variance in choice to help-giver to reach statistical significance.

Taken together the results found in this study add important information to the topical area of adolescent help-seeking. Although past research has consistently shown that most adolescents, when dealing with problems or concerns, seek help primarily from parents and friends (e.g., Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Burke & Weir, 1978; Offer et al., 1991) very few studies have actually examined the nature of this phenomenon. Further, most research has not controlled for quality of relationship and that may influence age and gender effects on choice of help-giver. Consequently, it was the aim of this present study to explore the criteria that adolescents use when choosing a potential help-giver. As well, for the first time, adolescent help-seeking from mothers, fathers, and close friends, has been examined simultaneously in different contexts. Moreover, by studying adolescents' expectations of their informal agents' nurturance and expertise and how these expectations influence the likelihood of choosing help-givers, the literature is able to move away from being primarily demographic in nature (e.g., Papini et al., 1990) to more of a phenomenological approach. In other words, by asking adolescents to identify how their expectations of their potential help-givers might influence whether or not they choose that help-giver when faced with various stressful problems, the literature can move beyond basic age and gender effects on choice of help-giver.

As with any study, this study is not without its' limitations. First, there are those limits imposed by measurement techniques. Knowledge gained in research is constrained by the types and forms of questions asked (Antonucci & Depner, 1982). In this study, despite using four different contexts to examine adolescent help-seeking, it is difficult to

generalize these results to other contexts not represented in this study. Furthermore, though using closed-ended questions was an extremely efficient way to collect the data, much of the information that adolescents could have offered was constrained by forcing them to respond to a limited number of questions. Without such constraints, respondents might have provided more detail regarding their expectations of nurturance and expertise of their mothers, fathers and friends, and might have also listed a number of other expectations they hold about their informal social support systems. As well, respondents were asked to answer the same questions for mother, father, and friend for each situation, this may have resulted in testing effects, although two versions of the questionnaire were randomly distributed to adolescents in an attempt to randomize these effects.

Further limitations are imposed by the study of expectations. This study examined the likelihood of choosing each help-giver. Whether or not adolescents would actually choose their mother, father, or close friend to help with the situations presented is unknown. In addition to not knowing which help-givers adolescents actually turn to, selection bias is always a possible limitation in cross-sectional studies. This study was interested in early adolescent and late adolescent comparisons but did not use the same sample over time. Instead different samples at different ages were used and there is always the chance that the groups being compared differ not just in terms of age but in other unaccounted for ways which may have ultimately affected their scores on the dependent variables.

In light of the findings, strengths, and limitations of this study, it is important for future research to take a more theoretical approach in the area of adolescent help-seeking. First, researchers can adopt a social-cognitive developmental perspective by using research such as Rosenberg's (1973) investigations of self-understanding, as it appears to have implications for how adolescents conceptualize potential helpers. Adoption of a social-

cognitive developmental approach to self-understanding would help in identifying the mechanisms that seem to influence expectations of help-givers.

Second, future research can examine the possibility that adolescent help-seeking behavior from parents and friends may serve a dual purpose. Adolescents' expectations of their parents' ability to know how to help them influences the likelihood of an adolescent choosing a parent as a potential help-giver. Yet, adolescents are less concerned with the expertise of their friends when choosing a friend as a potential help-giver. Instead, adolescents' expectations of their friends' nurturance is more influential when choosing a friend as a potential help-giver. In explaining this difference researchers can examine the possibility that adolescent help-seeking can be both a coping strategy, as well as a way to build intimacy in friendships. In terms of adolescent help-seeking as a way to build intimacy in friendships, the social-penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) may provide a useful framework for this type of investigation because it postulates that intimate self-disclosure signals a desire to develop closeness. According to Altman and Taylor, relationship development is characterized by an increase in both depth and breadth of intimate self-disclosure. Thus, the emphasis of help-seeking as a self-disclosure process may make this theory particularly relevant when discussing adolescent help-seeking from friends.

In addition to taking a more theoretical approach to the study of adolescent help-seeking from parents and friends, in order to increase our knowledge of the criteria that adolescents use when choosing a potential help-giver, more variables need to be examined. Expectations of nurturance and expertise may be two of many variables that influence the likelihood of choosing help-givers. For example, one possible factor that may influence who an adolescent chooses as a helping agent could be related to a helper-recipient comparison process. Fisher and Nadler (1982) state that research on help-giving indicates

that, in everyday interactions, we are more likely to receive aid from similar than dissimilar others. Perhaps it is the perception of similarity, according to the problem type, between the adolescent and the help-giver that influences their choice of who to turn to when they need support. Finally, since the topic of adolescent help-seeking from informal help-givers is understudied, research that involves open-ended questions and interview techniques would be fruitful in offering an array of possible variables that may affect adolescent help-seeking from informal helping agents. Such exploratory research can provide a foundation on which to build our knowledge of adolescent help-seeking from mothers, fathers, and friends.



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## Appendix A

### Parent and Student Consent Forms



classroom and all students who return this parental consent form will be eligible, regardless of whether or not you consent to their participation in this study.

Consent:

I understand that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to allow him/her to participate in this study.

I have received a copy of the consent information for my own records.

Please indicate below your decision as to whether your child may participate in this study. Keep the first page of this form for your records and return this page to the school. Thank-you for your help.

**Circle one** of the following:

I consent to my child's participation in this study.

I do not consent to my child's participation in this study.

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

Appendix B

Demographic Measure

### **TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF**

We are interested in learning about your background. Please follow the directions carefully, and answer **all** of the questions. **Remember that your answers will remain private and will be seen only by the researchers.**

Are you male or female? (**circle one**)      Male      Female

How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ (years)

What is your birth date? \_\_\_\_\_

(MONTH)    (DAY)    (YEAR)

What is your grade? (**circle one**)      8th      11th

How do you describe yourself in terms of ethnic or cultural heritage? (**check one**)

- ☐ White (Anglo, Caucasian, etc.)
- ☐ Black (African, Haitian, Jamaican, etc.)
- ☐ First Nations
- ☐ Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.)
- ☐ Indo Canadian
- ☐ Latin (Spanish, Mexican, South American, etc.)
- ☐ Other (If you would describe your ethnic or cultural heritage in some way that is not listed above, please describe it in the space provided)

\_\_\_\_\_

Who do you live with most or all of the time? (**check one**)

- ☐ I live with both of my biological parents, who are married to each other and/or living together.
- ☐ I live with one of my biological parents **only**, most of the time.  
**Circle one: Mom   Dad**
- ☐ I live with my biological mom and my "stepdad" (a man married to or living with my mom).
- ☐ I live with my biological dad and my "stepmom" (a woman married to or living with my dad).
- ☐ I live with a family member other than my parents.  
Who? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I live in a situation different from any of the ones listed.  
Describe it:  
\_\_\_\_\_

### WHO DO YOU CHOOSE?

Throughout this survey you will be asked to think about your mother or stepmother, your father or stepfather, and one close friend.

#### Parents

Who will you refer to when answering questions about your mother/stepmother?  
(check one)

- ☐ mother
     
 ☐ stepmother
     
 ☐ other female guardian
     
 ☐ I do not have a female parent or guardian

Who will you refer to when answering questions about your father/stepfather? (check one)

- ☐ father
     
 ☐ stepfather
     
 ☐ other male guardian
     
 ☐ I do not have a male parent or guardian

#### Close Friend

Now, we want you to choose **one** of your close friends.

What is the age of your close friend? \_\_\_\_\_(years)

What is the gender of your close friend? (check one)      ☐ male      ☐ female

**Again, please think about the people that you chose for the rest of this survey.**

Appendix C

Adolescent Help-Seeking Measure

### Situation #1

*It often happens that people who are friends have a disagreement. In this situation I want you to imagine that you are having a problem getting along with one your friends. This is a person that you like. Lately you don't like the way he or she has been treating you. You think that he or she is being mean. You still want to be friends but you don't know what to do.*

Have you ever had this problem before? Please check ☐ Yes ☐ No

- Pretend that you are experiencing this problem right now.
- Think of **your** mother, father and close friend and assume that each of these people are equally available to help.
- Please circle the words **for each person** that indicate how likely you are to choose each of them to help you with this problem with one of your friends.

<b>My close friend</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Father/Stepfather</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Mother/Stepmother</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely

**Still thinking about this problem, please continue on the next page.....**

**Imagine that you are experiencing this problem with one of your friends right now. Using the following numbers, please indicate how well your mother/stepmother, father/stepfather, and close friend would rate on the following statements. For each statement, please fill in the appropriate number for your mother, father and close friend.**

1	2	3	4	5
not true	somewhat true	fairly true	very true	definitely true

**In this situation involving a friend, I expect my...**

**close  
friend**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving a friend, I expect my...**

**father/  
stepfather**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving a friend, I expect my...**

**mother/  
stepmother**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

## Situation #2

*In this situation I want you to pretend that you are having a problem getting along with your parents. Everyone has disagreements with their mother or father once in a while and that is normal. But in this case I want you to pretend that you are arguing and unhappy often. You can't understand why this is so. You think things should be different.*

Have you ever had this problem before? Please check ☐ Yes ☐ No

- Pretend that you are experiencing this problem right now.
- Think of **your** mother, father and close friend and assume that each of these people are equally available to help.
- Please circle the words **for each person** that indicate how likely you are to choose each of them to help you with this problem with your parents.

<b>My close friend</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Father/Stepfather</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Mother/Stepmother</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely

**Still thinking about this problem, please continue on the next page.....**



**Imagine that you are experiencing this problem with your parents right now. Using the following numbers, please indicate how well your mother/stepmother, father/stepfather, and close friend would rate on the following statements. For each statement, please fill in the appropriate number for your mother, father and close friend.**

1	2	3	4	5
not true	somewhat true	fairly true	very true	definitely true

**In this situation involving my parents, I expect my...**

**close  
friend**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving my parents, I expect my...**

**father/  
stepfather**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving my parents, I expect my...**

**mother/  
stepmother**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

### Situation #3

*High school can get stressful at certain times for many students. In this situation I want you to imagine that you have been feeling a lot of pressure at school lately. You have been really busy working on an assignment for one of your classes and you just found out that you have two exams next week and you are worried because you don't think that you will have enough time to prepare for them. You want to do as well as you can on these exams but you aren't too sure how you can manage all that work and study.*

Have you ever had this problem before? Please check ☐ Yes ☐ No

- Pretend that you are experiencing this problem right now.
- Think of **your** mother, father and close friend and assume that each of these people are equally available to help.
- Please circle the words **for each person** that indicate how likely you are to choose each of them to help you with this problem with school.

<b>My close friend</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Father/Stepfather</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Mother/Stepmother</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely

**Still thinking about this problem, please continue on the next page.....**

**Imagine that you are experiencing this school problem right now. Using the following numbers, please indicate how well your mother/stepmother, father/stepfather, and close friend would rate on the following statements. For each statement, please fill in the appropriate number for your mother, father and close friend.**

1	2	3	4	5
not true	somewhat true	fairly true	very true	definitely true

**In this situation involving school, I expect my...**

**close  
friend**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving school, I expect my...**

**father/  
stepfather**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving school, I expect my...**

**mother/  
stepmother**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

### Situation #4

*In this situation I want you to imagine that over the last two weeks you haven't been able to sleep as well as you usually do. This normally wouldn't be stressful for you but you've also noticed that you're not very hungry either. In the daytime you are very tired, so tired that you don't even feel like hanging out with your friends or playing sports. You don't know what's wrong and you would like to know what's causing you to feel this way.*

Have you ever had this problem before? Please check ☐ Yes ☐ No

- Pretend that you are experiencing this problem right now.
- Think of **your** mother, father and close friend and assume that each of these people are equally available to help.
- Please circle the words **for each person** that indicate how likely you are to choose each of them to help you with this health problem.

<b>My close friend</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Father/Stepfather</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely
<b>Mother/Stepmother</b>	Least Likely	Somewhat Likely	Fairly Likely	Very Likely	Most Likely

**Still thinking about this problem, please continue on the next page.....**

**Imagine that you are experiencing this health problem right now. Using the following numbers, please indicate how well your mother/stepmother, father/stepfather, and close friend would rate on the following statements. For each statement, please fill in the appropriate number for your mother, father and close friend.**

1	2	3	4	5
not true	somewhat true	fairly true	very true	definitely true

**In this situation involving my health, I expect my...**

**close  
friend**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving my health, I expect my...**

**father/  
stepfather**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

**In this situation involving my health, I expect my...**

**mother/  
stepmother**

1. to give me encouragement and reassurance \_\_\_\_\_
2. to know how to help me \_\_\_\_\_
3. to give me support \_\_\_\_\_
4. to help me solve this problem \_\_\_\_\_
5. to praise me when I deal with this problem \_\_\_\_\_
6. to decide how best to deal with the problem \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Relational Provisional Loneliness Questionnaire (Hayden-Thomson, 1989)

**DIRECTIONS:** For the following sayings, think about yourself and the people your age when you answer. Just circle the appropriate box indicating how true the statements are for you.

- 1. I feel part of a group of friends that do things together.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
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- 2. There is someone my age I can turn to.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

- 3. I have a lot in common with other people my age.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

- 4. There is someone my age I could go to if I were feeling down.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

- 5. I feel in tune with other people my age.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

- 6. I have at least one really good friend I can talk to when something is bothering me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
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- 7. I feel other people my age want to be with me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

- 8. I have a friend who is really interested in hearing about my private thoughts and feelings.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

- 9. I feel that I usually fit in with other kids around me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

- 10. I have a friend I can tell everything to.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**11. When I want something to do for fun, I can usually find friends to join me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**12. There is somebody my age who really understands me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**13. When I am with other people my age, I feel I belong.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**14. There is a friend I feel close to.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**DIRECTIONS: For the following statements, think about yourself and your mother/stepmother when you answer. Again, just circle the appropriate box.**

**15. I feel that my mother/stepmother and I can do things together.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**16. I can turn to my mother/stepmother.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**17. I have a lot in common with my mother/stepmother.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**18. I could go to my mother/stepmother if I were feeling down.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**19. I feel in tune with my mother/stepmother.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**20. I can talk to my mother/stepmother when something is bothering me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**21. I feel like my mother/stepmother wants to be with me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------



**22. My mother/stepmother is really interested in hearing about my private thoughts and feelings.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
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**23. I feel that I usually fit in with my mother/stepmother.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**24. I can tell everything to my mother/stepmother.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**25. When I want to do something for fun, I can usually get my mother/stepmother to join me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**26. My mother/stepmother really understands me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**27. When I am with my mother/stepmother, I feel like I belong.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**28. I feel close to my mother/stepmother.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**DIRECTIONS: For the following statements, think about yourself and your father/stepfather when you answer. Again, just circle the appropriate box.**

**29. I feel that my father/stepfather and I can do things together.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**30. I can turn to my father/stepfather.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**31. I have a lot in common with my father/stepfather.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**32. I could go to my father/stepfather if I were feeling down.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**33. I feel in tune with my father/stepfather.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**34. I can talk to my father/stepfather when something is bothering me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**35. I feel like my father/stepfather wants to be with me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**36. My father/stepfather is really interested in hearing about my private thoughts and feelings.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**37. I feel that I usually fit in with my father/stepfather.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**38. I can tell everything to my father/stepfather.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**39. When I want to do something for fun, I can usually get my father/stepfather to join me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
----------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**40. My father/stepfather really understands me.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
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**41. When I am with my father/stepfather, I feel like I belong.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
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**42. I feel close to my father/stepfather.**

Always True	True Most of the Time	Sometimes True	Hardly Ever True	Not At All True
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