CHAPTER   VIII

FINDINGS REGARDING ASSISTANCE

Amount of Assistance

When a self-teacher experiences some difficulty or wants some advice, he may seek assistance from one or more persons. They can assist his learning by making suggestions, providing encouragement, lending books, and so on. In general, the 40 self-teachers obtained a very large amount of assistance. This was indicated in several ways.

1. For each task that he had performed, the subject was asked whether he had "definitely received some assistance with this task from at least one person" or had, on the contrary, "performed this task without any assistance from any person."

The subjects obtained help with a mean of 6.5 tasks of the 8.8 they performed. The respective medians were 6 and 9. Therefore, a self-teacher representing the central tendency performed only about one-third or one-quarter of his tasks unaided.

2. All but two subjects were assisted with at least 4 or 5 tasks. The two exceptions were assisted with 2 and 3 tasks respectively.

3. When the tasks are examined separately (Table 6), it can be seen that for most tasks the number of subjects who obtained assistance was quite large. All but one of the tasks were performed more often with assistance than without.

4. The large amount of assistance is also shown by the subjects' responses when asked to indicate "to what extent did all other people help you perform this task?" A self-teacher representing the mean performed 2.3 tasks without assistance, 2.8 with only "some" assistance, 1.8 with "a large amount" of assistance, and 1.8 with so much assistance that without it he "could not have performed" those tasks successfully.

5. Every one of the tasks required at least "a large amount" of assistance during at least a few self-teaching projects (Table 6).

6. The number of individuals who helped the self-teachers was remarkably large. If a subject obtained assistance with a task, he was asked to indicate on a list each person who "definitely assisted with part of this task, and thus contributed to your efforts to learn." Each person who helped with one or more tasks is, for convenience, called an *assistant*. The self-teachers obtained assistance from a mean of 10.6 individuals; the median was 9.5. Every subject used at least 4 assistants. One subject used 31, and three others used more than 20.

7. With most tasks, the typical self-teacher who received assistance with that task obtained it from at least 4 or 5 individuals (right-hand column in

47

Table 6). Even with the lowest task on the list, the typical subject used about three assistants.

TABLE 6

AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR EACH TASK

Task	Number Who Performed the Task Without Assistance	Did Obtain Assistance	Obtained at Least "a large amount" of Assistance	Mean Number of Assistants[a]
Deciding activities	2	38	22	5.2
Obtaining resources	5	35	28	4.2
Dealing with difficult parts	3	29	18	6.2
Choosing the goal	10	29	19	6.0
Estimating level	11	28	22	7.2
Deciding about time	13	24	10	4.5
Dealing with doubts about success	6	21	8	4.6
Dealing with lack of desire	4	13	5	4.2
Dealing with dislike of activities	9	12	2	3.2
Deciding about place	10	12	6	4.1
Deciding about money	9	10	4	3.9
Deciding whether to continue	12	9	3	2.9

[a]Each mean is based on the number of subjects who did obtain assistance with the given task.

8. The 424 assistants helped with 1301 tasks. Consequently, the mean number of tasks with which an assistant helped was 3.1.

9. During the interviews it became evident that one person was especially helpful or important to the learner in some self-teaching projects. Sometimes this person was a spouse or other fellow learner with whom the self-teacher practised some sport or other skill. In other projects this person acted as a tutor; a "boy friend" helped one young woman learn to drive, for example, and a business partner helped one man learn certain skills related to the business.

It is possible that the data reported in sections 6, 7, and 8, above do not include all of the individuals who assisted the self-teachers. Near the beginning of the interview, the subject listed all the individuals who had helped him in any way or had had some important contact with his project. Then, as he dealt with each task in turn, the subject selected from his list the individuals who had assisted with that task. Some individuals on some lists were never selected. Perhaps some of these individuals assisted in some general or particular way that was not closely related to any one of the twelve tasks used in the present study. The use of additional tasks or a different interview technique might have increased the number of assistants reported.

In particular, certain individuals who unintentionally motivated the subjects may not be adequately reflected in the data. Several subjects mentioned that at least one person, by being unpleasant, smug, critical, or obstructive, unintentionally increased the subject's motivation. In short, a person's attempt to block or criticize the learning may actually increase the motivation. A few subjects, for example, found that their desire to learn was increased by a person who proclaimed his superiority ("If my father can learn it that well, so can I," said one subject) or who said that the subject was not capable of learning the subject matter. One subject said, "Stupid people spur me on because I want to be able to argue effectively with them." A school superintendent's efforts to find ways of dealing with potential delinquents increased when some citizens complained that school officials should not become involved in helping such adolescents.

Desire for Additional Assistance

It has just been seen that self-teachers obtain a great deal of assistance from many other persons. Would they like even more assistance? The following question was asked for each task: "With this task, would you have liked *more* assistance than you actually did receive from other people?"

TABLE 7

NUMBER OF TASKS WITH WHICH EACH SUBJECT WOULD HAVE
LIKED MORE ASSISTANCE

Number of tasks	Number of subjects
0	7
1	12
2	6
3	8
4	3
5	1
6	2
7	1

Median number of tasks: 2

All but seven subjects replied affirmatively for at least one task (Table 7). The majority of subjects would have liked more assistance with one, two, or

three tasks. Remembering that the mean number of tasks performed was 8.8, one realizes that the amount of additional assistance desired by the self-teachers was fairly great.

The responses are shown separately for each task in Table 8. Almost half of the subjects would have liked more help while deciding which activities would be most effective, and fourteen subjects wanted more help with grasping difficult parts of the subject matter. With each task, at least one or two subjects would have liked more assistance.

TABLE 8

FOR EACH TASK, THE NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WHO
WOULD HAVE LIKED MORE ASSISTANCE

Task	Number
Deciding activities	18
Dealing with difficult parts	14
Choosing the goal	11
Obtaining resources	9
Estimating level	9
Dealing with doubts about success	7
Deciding about place	5
Dealing with dislike of activities	3
Deciding whether to continue	3
Deciding about time	2
Deciding about money	2
Dealing with lack of desire	1

Types of Assistants

The discussion now moves to the types of persons who provided assistance to the subjects. Each assistant was classified as one of the following types: intimate, librarian, sales person, fellow learner, acquaintance, personal-relationship expert, and business-relationship expert. These types were described in some detail in Chapter IV. Each type excluded all individuals who could also fit into a previous type; for example, a spouse who was also a fellow learner was classified as an intimate.

Table 9 shows the number of individuals from whom each subject obtained assistance. Each subject used at least two different types, and the majority of subjects used three or four types. One subject, for example, might have obtained assistance from several acquaintances, several personal-relationship experts, two intimates, and one sales person.

Table 10 compares the importance of the seven types of assistants according to four different measures.

The self-teachers used more acquaintances than any other single type of assistant. Of the 424 assistants used by all the subjects, 156 (37%) were

acquaintances (friends, relatives, colleagues, and all other people who were not experts). Thirty-six subjects obtained assistance from at least one acquaintance, and these subjects used a mean of 4.3 acquaintances.

TABLE 9

NUMBER OF TYPES OF ASSISTANTS USED BY EACH SUBJECT

Number of types	Number of subjects
2	5
3	12
4	14
5	7
6	2

Mean number of types: 3.7
Median: 4

Almost every subject obtained assistance from at least one intimate (immediate family plus the two or three closest friends). These subjects used a mean of 2.4 intimates, which is not especially large compared to several other types. However, the typical adult probably does not have much contact with more than four or five intimates, excluding his children. One indication of the helpfulness of intimates is shown in the right-hand column; each intimate assisted with an average of four tasks. (In considering this statement, one must remember that the typical self-teacher obtained assistance with 6.5 tasks.)

TABLE 10

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EACH TYPE OF ASSISTANT, ACCORDING TO FOUR MEASURES

Type	Total number of assistants	Number of subjects who used at least one assistant	Mean number of assistants used by those subjects	Mean number of tasks with which each assistant helped
Acquaintances	156	36	4.3	2.8
Intimates	87	37	2.4	4.0
Business-relationship experts	71	24	3.0	2.8
Personal-relationship experts	52	25	2.1	3.5
Sales people	28	11	2.6	2.9
Fellow learners	23	9	2.6	2.5
Librarians	7	7	1.0	1.9

More than half the subjects used at least one personal-relationship expert (a friend, relative, or colleague who was an expert in the subject matter) and almost the same number used a business-relationship expert (an expert approached on a business or professional basis). An additional analysis showed that thirty-four (85%) of the subjects used at least one expert of either type. The two types of experts made up 29% of all assistants.

Relatively few subjects used sales people (including sales clerks in book-stores and other stores) and fellow learners (persons whom the subject knew primarily because they were trying to learn the same sort of subject matter). Subjects who did use a sales person or fellow learner, however, used a mean of 2.6 such assistants. Librarians ranked lowest in each column in Table 10.

The assistants can be divided into those with whom the learner probably had some personal relationship (intimates, acquaintances, personal-relationship experts, and fellow learners) and those who were approached primarily on a business or professional basis (the other three types). According to this classification, exactly three-quarters of all assistants were approached on a personal basis and only one-quarter on a businesslike basis.

In addition, the assistants can be divided into those who were probably not experts in the knowledge and skill (intimates, acquaintances, and fellow learners) and those who were experts (the other four types). An analysis using this classification revealed that every self-teacher used at least one assistant who was not an expert.

Types of Assistants for Each Task

How frequently was each type of assistant used for each task? Two approaches to the question will be taken with each task. First, for each type of assistant, the percentage of subjects who used *at least one* assistant of the given type will be noted. Second, the *percentage* of assistants who were of each type will be noted. The discussion in the present section will deal primarily with general findings; the ways in which particular tasks deviated from the general tendencies will be noted in the next chapter.

Table 11 shows, for each task and each type of assistant, the percentage of subjects who used at least one assistant of that type. For example, 58% of the subjects who were assisted while deciding activities used at least one intimate. Imagining that exactly 100 subjects obtained assistance with each task may make it easier to understand this table.

Acquaintances, as well as intimates, were frequently used with most tasks. The percentage of subjects using at least one acquaintance ranged from 33% with two tasks to 71% with two other tasks. The mean percentage was 54. Mean and median percentages for the other types of assistants, too, are shown near the bottom of Table 11.

Table 12 provides a second approach to the question of which types of assistants were used for which tasks. It shows, for each task, the *proportion* of assistants who were of each type. The actual number of assistants ranged from 26 with one task to 203 with another, but Table 12 is arranged as if exactly 100 individuals assisted with each task. Consequently, one task can readily be compared with another.

TABLE 11

FOR EACH TASK, THE PERCENTAGE[a] OF SUBJECTS WHO USED AT LEAST
ONE ASSISTANT OF THE GIVEN TYPE

Task	Intimates	Acquaintances	Personal-relation-ship experts	Business-relation-ship experts	Sales people	Fellow learners	Librarians
Deciding activities	58	61	45	50	18	16	13
Estimating level	68	71	43	36	18	25	7
Dealing with difficult parts	69	41	52	55	24	21	3
Obtaining resources	80	60	31	46	17	9	11
Choosing the goal	76	69	45	31	14	14	3
Deciding about time	79	54	29	33	8	8	
Dealing with doubts about success	76	71	38	29	10	5	
Dealing with dislike of activities	83	33	33	25	8		
Deciding about place	92	67	17	8		8	
Dealing with lack of desire	100	38	38	31	8	8	
Deciding whether to continue	89	33	33	11	11		
Deciding about money	90	50	20	10	40	10	
Mean percentage[b]	80	54	35	30	15	10	3
Median percentage	79.5	57	35.5	31	12.5	8.5	

[a]Each percentage is based on the number of subjects who obtained assistance with the given task (Table 6). The original data on which the percentages are based are shown in Table 36 of Tough, "The Teaching Tasks Performed by Adult Self-teachers."

[b]The mean of the twelve percentages for the given type of assistant.

With seven tasks the self-teachers used more acquaintances than any other single type of assistant. Indeed, 55% of the individuals who helped the self-teachers decide about place were acquaintances. With five tasks the percentage of intimates was greater than any other type.

In general, the number of personal-relationship experts and business-relationship experts was less than the two types just discussed, but greater than

the other three types. With no task did the three remaining types (sales people, fellow learners, and librarians) together make up more than 16% of the assistants. The mean and median percentages near the bottom of Table 12 provide a quick comparison of the seven types of assistants.

TABLE 12

FOR EACH TASK, THE PERCENTAGE[a] OF ASSISTANTS WHO WERE OF EACH TYPE

Task	Intimates	Acquaintances	Personal-relation-ship experts	Business-relation-ship experts	Sales people	Fellow learners	Librarians
Deciding activities	18	27	17	22	8	5	3
Estimating level	24	39	13	12	4	7	1
Dealing with difficult parts	19	30	14	22	9	4	1
Obtaining resources	29	23	11	21	10	3	3
Choosing the goal	27	39	16	10	5	3	1
Deciding about time	30	33	12	16	4	6	
Dealing with doubts about success	31	36	16	11	4	1	
Dealing with dislike of activities	36	23	26	13	3		
Deciding about place	31	55	4	2		8	
Dealing with lack of desire	39	28	17	13	2	2	
Deciding whether to continue	42	31	12	8	8		
Deciding about money	41	38	5	3	10	3	
Mean percentage[b]	31	33	14	13	6	3	1
Median percentage	30.5	32	13.5	12.5	4.5	3	

[a]For each task, the percentage is based on the total number of individuals who assisted with that task. The original data on which the percentages are based are shown in Tables 15 and 37 of Tough, "The Teaching Tasks Performed by Adult Self-teachers." The sum of each row is 99, 100, or 101 because the percentages have been rounded.

[b]The mean of the twelve percentages for the given type of assistant.

The *mean* number of assistants of each type who helped with each task is shown in Table 13. This table shows, for example, that the typical self-teacher who obtained assistance in choosing his goal used 1.6 intimates, 2.3 acquaintances, 1.0 personal-relationship experts, 0.6 business-relationship experts, 0.3 sales people, 0.2 fellow learners, and no librarians.

TABLE 13

FOR EACH TASK, THE MEAN[a] NUMBER OF ASSISTANTS OF EACH TYPE

Task	Intimates	Acquaintances	Personal-relation-ship experts	Business-relation-ship experts	Sales people	Fellow learners	Librarians
Deciding activities	0.9	1.4	0.9	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.1
Estimating level	1.7	2.9	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.5	0.1
Dealing with difficult parts	1.2	1.9	0.9	1.4	0.6	0.3	
Obtaining resources	1.2	1.0	0.5	0.9	0.4	0.1	0.1
Choosing the goal	1.6	2.3	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.2	
Deciding about time	1.3	1.5	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.2	
Dealing with doubts about success	1.4	1.7	0.7	0.5	0.2		
Dealing with dislike of activities	1.2	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.0	
Deciding about place	1.2	2.2	0.2	0.1		0.3	
Dealing with lack of desire	1.6	1.2	0.7	0.5	0.1	0.1	
Deciding whether to continue	1.2	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.2		
Deciding about money	1.6	1.5	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.1	

[a]Each mean is based on the number of subjects who obtained assistance with the given task (Table 6). The original data on which the means are based are shown in Table 37 of Tough, "The Teaching Tasks Performed by Adult Self-teachers."

Three additional analyses of the types of assistants that the self-teachers tended to use with each task point up certain differences among the tasks.

One analysis examined whether, for each task, there was a tendency to use more assistants approached on a business or professional basis than with other tasks. Table 14 shows that the percentage of such assistants varied from about 33% with some tasks to 2% with another task.

Another analysis examined the ratio of close relatives and friends (intimates) to more distant ones (acquaintances) for each task. Table 15 shows that 66% of all intimates and acquaintances who helped with one task were acquaintances; therefore, 34% were intimates. With the lowest task, 39% were acquaintances. The ratio of closest and more distant friends and relatives clearly varied from one task to another.

TABLE 14

FOR EACH TASK, THE PERCENTAGE OF ASSISTANTS WHO WERE APPROACHED
ON A BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP[a]

Task	Percentage
Obtaining resources	34
Deciding activities	33
Dealing with difficult parts	32
Deciding about time	20
Estimating level	17
Dealing with doubts about success	16
Choosing the goal	15
Dealing with dislike of activities	15
Deciding whether to continue	15
Dealing with lack of desire	15
Deciding about money	13
Deciding about place	2

[a]Assistants who were business-relationship experts, sales people, and librarians.

TABLE 15

FOR EACH TASK, THE PERCENTAGE OF ACQUAINTANCES AMONG
ALL INTIMATES AND ACQUAINTANCES

Task	Percentage
Deciding about place	66
Estimating level	62
Dealing with difficult parts	62
Deciding activities	59
Choosing the goal	59
Dealing with doubts about success	54
Deciding about time	52
Deciding about money	48
Obtaining resources	45
Dealing with lack of desire	42
Deciding whether to continue	42
Dealing with dislike of activities	39

Finally, Table 16 indicates which type of *expert* was commonly used with each task. With one task, 65% of the experts were business-relationship experts. With three other tasks, however, 67% of the experts were approached because of a personal relationship. Again a fairly large variation between certain tasks is evident.

TABLE 16

FOR EACH TASK, THE PERCENTAGE OF BUSINESS-RELATIONSHIP
EXPERTS AMONG ALL BUSINESS-RELATIONSHIP AND
PERSONAL-RELATIONSHIP EXPERTS

Task	Percentage
Obtaining resources	65
Dealing with difficult parts	61
Deciding about time	57
Deciding activities	56
Estimating level	48
Dealing with lack of desire	44
Dealing with doubts about success	42
Deciding whether to continue	40
Choosing the goal	38
Deciding about place	33
Dealing with dislike of activities	33
Deciding about money	33