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THE GENERALIZATION OF LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

BY

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Abstract

Does helplessness generalize across domains? This research tests whether subjects identified as helpless or mastery oriented make attributions across domains that are consistent with their dispositional category. Three separate domains were tested: intellectual (anagrams), social (hypothetical social situations), and nonacademic (art, music, and P.E.). Generalization was found in only one case; attributions for social rejection to attributions for performance in P.E. For this activity, mastery oriented subjects were shown to attribute successful performance to internal factors (ability and effort) whereas mastery oriented children made external attributions (ease or enjoyment of the activity and teacher's leniency in grading). Overall, the results support the notion of domain specificity of learned helplessness. The relationship between helplessness and childhood depression was also examined. Results showed that children who consistently made helpless attributions across domains scored significantly higher on a depression inventory than any other subjects.

The Generalization of Learned Helplessness

Introduction

Helplessness was originally defined as a learned noncontingency between aversive stimulation and escape attempts. The phenomenon was first observed in dogs during experiments on the relationship of fear conditioning to instrumental learning (Overmier & Seligman, 1967). It was shown that an experimentally naive dog placed in a shuttlebox will escape and eventually avoid painful electric shocks by jumping over a barrier to a nonshocked compartment. However, animals exposed to an inescapably aversive situation (shock) subsequently failed to learn the avoidance response despite the availability of an escape route and the animal's previously demonstrated capacity to escape.

In humans, it has been shown that learned helplessness is mediated by cognitions, especially beliefs about control over the situation (Dweck & Goetz, 1978). When individuals believe that there is no relationship between any response they make and the outcome of a given situation, the motivation to initiate any further instrumental response is undermined. The individual has learned to be helpless.

Research in the area of task performance associated with learned helplessness in children has identified two distinct groups: learned helpless and mastery oriented. These groups can be distinguished by their respective tendencies to neglect or emphasize the role of effort

in determining failure (Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980).

These studies have found that helpless children are characterized by cognitions that stress the inevitability and insurmountability of failure whereas mastery oriented children do not seem to categorize themselves as failing. This finding is not surprising in light of the fact that helpless children attribute failure to stable, internal factors such as ability. Failure, but not success is perceived to be predictive of future outcomes for the helpless child. For the mastery oriented group, failure is seen as a cue to increase effort or to search for a more effective problem solving strategy.

In contrast, success for the helpless child is typically attributed to external factors such as luck and other variables that are not indicative of future performance whereas mastery oriented children attribute success to replicable factors like effort.

Helpless children also have distorted perceptions of their performance. They tend to recall fewer successes and more failures than they have actually experienced. They see themselves as performing at a lower level than most children their own age.

In regard to sex differences, studies have shown that girls are more likely to display helplessness in achievement situations. They consistently underestimate their chances for success, even in areas where they outperform boys. In addition, girls show decreased persistence or impaired functioning after failure or increased

evaluative pressure (Dweck & Giliard, 1975) and this may explain why they have been found to avoid tasks that present a challenge.

Generalization

An important question in the study of learned helplessness is whether attributional patterns and associated deficits are limited to situations similar to those in which the original learning took place--or are these attributional patterns generalized to other situations? The basic finding in the learned helplessness research has been that subjects tend to overgeneralize experiences in the training phase to the later test phase (Dweck & Bush, 1976; Hiroto, 1974; Klein & Seligman, 1976). The evidence, however, is mixed.

Dweck & Reppucci (1973) demonstrated that decrements due to helplessness can be brought under stimulus control. Children in this study were given continued success in the presence of one adult and continued failure (insoluble problems) in the presence of another adult. Results showed that deficits suffered by the helpless subjects were specific to the "failure experimenter" (the adult in whose presence the child always failed).

Hiroto & Seligman (1975) investigated the transfer of helplessness from instrumental to cognitive tasks. They exposed subjects to an inescapable instrumental task (terminating a tone) or an insoluble cognitive pretreatment (discrimination learning). This was followed by either an instrumental (human shuttlebox) or cognitive (anagram) test

task. They found evidence of cross modal helplessness. Individuals pretreated with insoluble cognitive problems were debilitated at instrumental escape and those pretreated with an inescapable noxious tone were debilitated at anagram solving.

There has also been some evidence of a sex difference in regard to generalization of helplessness. Dweck, Goetz, & Strauss (1980) demonstrated that boy's expectancies of success following failure recovered significantly more than girls' when a new evaluator was introduced. Also, when both the task at which the children failed and the evaluator were changed, boys showed almost complete recovery of their success expectancies but girls did not. This result suggests that when girls make failure attributions to lack of ability, they blame an ability that goes beyond the task at which they have failed. They may attach a more general label to their incompetence and thus show helplessness effects across situations.

Although various studies have shown helplessness to generalize, the research has been restricted to generalization within one domain. Helplessness in one intellectual task (anagrams) is associated with decrements in another intellectual task (discrimination problems). Goetz (1980) has extended the generalization research into the social domain. She found that attributions for social rejection in hypothetical situations were related to responses to actual rejection by a peer. But this study again was limited to a single domain (social).

Causal attributions are critical in the generalization of failure experiences to new situations. In considering the question of generalization of failure effects, it is reasonable to assume that if the factors one views as causing failure remain constant then failure effects will persist, that is, helplessness will transfer because the individual will perceive continued failure as unavoidable. In this way, causal attributions can mediate the generalization of failure effects from one situation to another. However, if some meaningful change does occur in some factor perceived to be responsible for failure (e.g. different task, new experimenter, or if the internal attribution includes domain specificity), the individual should overcome the effects of prior failure and face the new task with greater confidence (Dweck, Goetz & Strauss, 1980).

Failure attributions to internal stable factors, which are characteristic of the helples groups are also apparent in childhood depressions. In painting a general picture of a depressed child Malmquist (1977) states that "sensitivity with a readiness to condemn themselves is common. There is a preference to be harsh and self critical." Beck (1967) also realised this negative self perception when he wrote, "In regard to the self, the depressed individual sees himself as deficient, inadequate and unworthy. Often times these individuals will attribute these unpleasant feelings/experiences to defects within themselves."

These studies then attest to the fact that negative self concept brought about by internal attributions may lead to depression. But do these attributions generalize that widely or are they more specific to situations?

In the present research, we made use of three distinct domains to see whether the attributional pattern found in an intellectual (anagram) pretest would generalize to a social and/or non-academic task. For example, will an attribution to lack of ability following failure on an anagram task lead to a similar attribution to incompetence at making friends in a social situation? Will children defined as helpless by the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Scale (IAR) make consistently helpless attributions across domains or are these areas too disparate for generalization to occur? Might children who appear helpless as measured by their attributions in one situation actually show the opposite tendency in a different domain? Do children who make helpless attributions across situations also experience depression as well? These are a few of the questions that this study will attempt to answer.

Method

Overview

Children identified as either helpless or mastery oriented were given a series of tasks or questions relating to different life domains (intellectual, social and nonacademic though school related). Attributions for outcomes and/or performance were obtained for each

area. Sociometric measures were also administered. Both self and peer ratings of popularity were assessed by these measures.

Subjects

Thirty nine fifth and sixth grade students (19 female, 20 male) were recruited from a school in a semi-rural midwestern community. Two females were excluded after subject selection because they changed schools. All participating children received parental permission.

Procedure

Measure of Helplessness. Past research (Diener & Dweck, 1978; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Floor & Rosen, 1975) has repeatedly indicated that helpless and mastery oriented children place differential emphasis on the role of effort in determining their failures. Helpless children typically tend to disregard effort while the mastery oriented group emphasizes it. This finding was utilized in dividing the children into helpless and mastery oriented groups. The Intellectual Achievement Responsibility (IAR) Scale (Crandall, Katkovsky & Crandall, 1965) was used to determine each child's relative emphasis on effort. The scale is composed of 34 forced choice items worded both positively and negatively. For each achievement experience presented, the child can either take personal responsibility for the outcome (internal responsibility) or s/he can attribute the result to some agent other than him/herself (external responsibility). A subset of 10 items (I-E scale) specifically taps the child's attributions of failure to lack of effort. (See Appendix A for details).

Subjects were divided at the median and placed into the appropriate group. Children receiving scores of 6 and below were placed in the helpless group while those scoring 7 and above were considered mastery oriented. The mean effort-attribution scores for the two groups were: helpless = 4.89, mastery oriented = 8.65.

Measures of Depression. At this time the Children's Depression Inventory (Kovacs & Beck, 1977) was also administered to the group. The measure seeks to identify depression by asking about relevant aspects of the child's life such as friendships, self perceptions, physical states, feelings, and home and school life. Three statements of varying degrees are presented and the child chooses the one which comes closest to describing how they have been feeling within the past two weeks. (For further details consult Appendix B). For every subject, there was an interim period of at least three weeks between administration of the group measures and the beginning of the experimental sessions. In these sessions, the subjects were required to perform the series of tasks described below.

Anagram Task. (For exact format, questions and response choices described in the remainder of the methods section consult Appendix C).

Children were taken individually from their classroom to a quiet, empty room by one of two male experimenters. (Both were blind to whether the child was helpless or mastery oriented). All children were then told that the first task would involve "making words out of

scrambled letters". They were then shown an example and asked whether they understood the task. As a check on this, three practice anagrams were introduced. Children were told that they would have 3 minutes to find a word. They were to stay on the same problem until (a) they found the correct word or (b) 3 minutes had passed. All children correctly identified at least one word from the practice set. After being assured that all subjects understood the task, the test phase was introduced. This involved 1 soluble anagram and 9 insoluble anagrams. The instructions were the same for the test phase as they were in the practice session.

After the test phase was completed each child was informed, "Time is up. That is all for this part. The rest of the pages contain questions. Please answer all of them. The instructions are printed on the pages but if at any time you have a question please stop and ask me. This section will not be timed." At this point the child was asked, "How well do you think did on the word task?" A series of choices were presented ranging from very well to very poorly. Next, each child was asked to choose an attribution for his or her performance on the anagram task. Ability, effort, luck, task difficulty, and the experimenter were the five choices. These particular attributions were chosen because the most widely used attribution scales (IAR and MMVS by Lefcourt, 1978) concentrate on these causes. Finally, subjects were asked to make a guess as to how other children their own age would do on the task.

Social Rejection. To get at children's attributions in the social domain, four hypothetical rejection situations were presented (adapted from Goetz & Dweck, 1980). Forms were designed for boys and girls so that same sex rejection would be described. (The social rejection questions included in Appendix C are from the boys form. The girls form is identical except for the word she or her substituted for he and him.) After interviewing a test population of fifth graders, Goetz (1980) found that 5 causal attributions for rejection emerged: (a) personal incompetence at making or keeping friends (incompetence attribution), (b) some negative trait of the rejector (rejector attribution), (c) some trait of the child that the rejecting person dislikes (incompatibility attribution), (d) the rejector's misconstrual of the child's behavior (misunderstanding attribution), and (e) circumstances of the moment that affect the rejector's outlook (chance mood attribution). Following each scenario the subject was asked to choose an attribution for social rejection from among these possibilities.

Sociometric Measures. In order to obtain an assessment of each child's popularity two measures were taken. First, children were asked to rate their own popularity on a scale of 1-5 (lower scores reflecting lower popularity). After this was completed, a peer roster-and-rating questionnaire (Roistacher, 1974) for ratings of liking was administered. Again, only same sex assessments were studied due to previous findings in sociometry that children this age demonstrate a strong same sex bias

(Gronlund, 1959). Each child was presented with a list of all same sex peers participating in the study along with a 5 point rating scale adjacent to each name. The scales ranged from 1 (don't like to be with) to 5 (like to be with). So that they could make honest ratings, all subjects were assured that neither their teachers nor other students would see their responses.

Nonacademic Subjects. Attributions for performance in art, P.E., and music were chosen to test for generalization of helplessness to the nonacademic domain. These are activities that take place in school but do not require intellectual or cognitive skill as do the academic subjects such as math or science. The list of attributions for this area includes: (a) ability, (b) effort, (c) ease or difficulty of the activity, (d) enjoyment or boredom with the class, and (e) teacher bias. Children's perceptions of their performance in these area were obtained as well as their actual performance as measured by teacher grade reports. Data for three subjects could not be obtained in this particular area.

Finally, in order to prevent children from feeling discouraged about their performance, the experimenter explained at the end of each session that the test words were taken from a very difficult eighth grade reading list. It was further stated that very few children were able to solve any of the anagrams.

Results

The IAR

(The results reported in this section were obtained using the IAR to divide children into helpless and mastery oriented groups).

Anagram Task. Helpless and mastery oriented children showed almost identical results in this area. In both groups, an overwhelming majority (84% of the helpless subjects, 90% of the mastery oriented subjects) perceived themselves as having performed below average or very poorly on the task. On a scale of 1-5 with higher scores indicating poorer performance, the mean rating of the helpless group was 4.32 while the mastery oriented group's mean was 4.45, $F(1,31) = .934$, $p > .05$. The two groups also showed parallel results in the attribution of their poor performance. The majority of children (64% of the helpless, 65% of the mastery oriented) chose lack of ability to explain their failure, $F(1,31) = .049$, $p > .05$. See Figure 1 for pattern of attributions.

Insert Figure 1 here

In addition, subjects in both groups (85% of the helpless, 90% of the mastery oriented) felt that other children their age would be more successful in solving the anagrams. None of the subjects responded that other children would do any worse than themselves on the task, $F(1,31) = .455$, $p > .05$.

An interesting sex difference was uncovered. As reported earlier only one of the anagrams was soluble (#7). Of the boys, 70% correctly identified the scrambled word. Only 26% of the girls, however, were successful at solving the anagram, $F(1,31)= 8.2, p<.01$. As predicted, a significant effect of dispositional category was also obtained on this variable, showing the mastery oriented group to be much more likely to discover the soluble anagram, $F(1,31)= 5.5, p<.05$. (65% of the mastery oriented subjects solved it, 32% of the helpless group solved it). A breakdown of the results by sex and dispositional category is shown in Figure 2 below.

Insert Figure 2 here

Scores on the CDI were also found to correlate with ability to discover the one soluble anagram, $r(37)= .48, p< .01$. Children who solved the anagram tended to have lower CDI scores ($X= 11.84$) than those who failed at this task ($X= 13.50$).

Social Rejection. In the social domain, a significant difference was found between groups for only the first social rejection vignette. The attributions of the helpless children tended to emphasize some chance mood of the rejector whereas mastery oriented children stressed incompatibility, $F(1,31)= 10.50, p<.01$. For the remaining three episodes, no significant differences were obtained. The pattern of

attributions within groups varied from question to question but a change in one group was followed by a parallel change in the other. For further clarification, see Figure 3.

Insert Figure 3 here

No significant correlation was found between attributions for poor performance on the anagram task and attributions for social rejection, $r(37) = -.07$, $p > .05$. This result was found for the social rejection questions taken both individually and as a whole. Lack of ability, as stated earlier, was the most common attribution for both helpless and mastery oriented children on the anagram task. Neither group, however, consistently chose incompetence attributions (the social equivalent of lack of ability) for rejection.

Sociometrics. No significant differences were found between the helpless and mastery oriented subjects on either self-rated or peer-rated popularity (see figure 4).

Insert Figure 4 here

Nonacademic Subjects. The two groups did not differ significantly in regard to attribution for performance in the nonacademic subjects of art, P.E., or music. (In art, $F(1,28) = .34$, $p > .05$; in music, $F(1,28) =$

.13, $p > .05$; and in P.E., $F(1,28) = .23$, $p > .05$. Across the three activities, ability and the ease of the class were the two attributions endorsed most frequently by both the helpless and mastery oriented children (see figure 5).

Insert Figure 5 here

Redefinition of Groups

In an effort to partially replicate the findings of Goetz (1980), the subjects were redivided according to their attributions on the social rejection vignettes. Seventeen of the 39 subjects (44%) were reclassified based on this measure. When social rejection attributions were used as the basis for grouping, 16 children (11 girls, 5 boys) were identified as helpless and 23 subjects (8 girls, 15 boys) were classified as mastery oriented. (Attributions to incompetence and incompatibility were considered "helpless" responses due to the fact that for these two choices, children take responsibility for the rejection). This redistribution reflects a significant sex difference. The correlation between dispositional category and sex of subject was $r(37) = -.3343$, $p < .01$.

Anagram Task. Helpless children perceived themselves as having performed significantly worse on the anagram solving than did the mastery oriented group, $F(1,31) = 7.84$, $p < .01$. One hundred percent of

the helpless subjects said that they performed below average or very poorly in comparison to 78% of the mastery oriented children. On a scale of 1-5 with higher scores indicating poorer performance, the mean rating of the helples group was 4.75 while the other group's mean was 4.13.

The attributions for performance, however, were not significantly different. Both groups once again chose the lack of ability most frequently. No differences were found between groups with respect to how other children would do on the anagram task (87% of subjects in both groups felt that other children would do better than themselves on the task).

The IAR. Neither analysis of variance nor correlations revealed any significant relationship between scores on the IAR and attributions for social rejection. This result held for the social rejection questions considered both individually and as a whole.

Sociometrics. A significant difference between groups was obtained for self rated popularity, $F(1,31) = 4.46, p < .05$. Helpless children rated themselves lower in popularity than they actually were; mastery oriented subjects showed just the opposite tendency. Peer ratings actually showed the helpless children to be slighty more popular (see Figure 6).

Insert Figure 6 here

A sex difference was also revealed. Although boy's and girl's self rated popularity was almost identical (boy's mean self rating= 3.20, girl's mean self rating=3.16), girls rated their peers significantly higher than did boys, $F(1,31)= 5.08, p<.05$. Mean peer rating by boys=2.82, girls mean peer rating was 3.33 (see Figure 7).

Insert Figure 7 here

Nonacademic Subjects. A significant difference was found between dispositional category and P.E., $F(1,31)= 13.12, p<.01$. For this activity, mastery oriented children attributed their success to internal factors (68% of the group chose ability or effort attributions). In contrast, the helpless subjects attributed their successes to many more external variables (70% making attributions to ease or enjoyment of the class and teacher's leniency in grading). In art and music, the pattern of attributions for the helpless and mastery oriented children was similar although not significant (see Figure 8).

Insert Figure 8 here

Helplessness and mastery orientation was found to correlate with scores on the CDI. Helpless subjects revealed a greater degree of depression with a mean score of 10.94. Mastery oriented subjects

averaged a much lower 6.17, $r(37) = -.332$, $p < .02$. Sex was also correlated with the CDI measure, with girls showing higher scores. (Girl's mean score = 10.11, boys mean score = 6.25), $r(37) = .273$, $p < .05$.

Dispositional category (helpless or mastery oriented) was also correlated with type of student (all subjects taken into account), $r(37) = -.313$, $p < .05$. (Subjects were labelled as good, average or poor students on the basis of teacher evaluations.) The helpless and mastery oriented groups did not differ in the percentage of average students (both had 50% of the students in this category). The helpless group, however, had half as many good students and more than double the percentage of poor students in comparison to mastery oriented subjects (see figure 9).

Insert Figure 9 here

Significant relationships were discovered between type of student and several other variables. Scores on the CDI correlated highly with this factor, $r(37) = -.440$, $p < .005$. In general, as the students got poorer, their CDI scores got higher, reflecting a greater degree of depression. Means of the two groups are shown in Figure 10.

Insert Figure 10 here

In the nonacademic areas, strong correlations were obtained between

type of student and attributions for performance in each nonacademic activity. (In art, $r(37) = .591$, $p < .01$; in music, $r(37) = .418$, $p < .01$; and in P.E., $r(37) = .433$, $p < .01$), see Figure 11.

Insert Figure 11 here

Good and average students attributed nonacademic successes to ability and effort. (67% of the good students, 65% of the average students taking responsibility for their success). In contrast, only 17% of the helpless group made these attributions. Ease of the activity was chosen most often (61% of the time) to explain their good performance (see figure 12).

Insert Figure 12 here

Discussion

The results of the present investigation indicate that learned helplessness is generally a domain specific phenomenon. Generalization across domains was found in only one instance (social rejection to attributions for performance in P.E.). Perhaps the reason for making similar attributions for these two situations is that P.E. is perceived as more of a social situation than an intellectual school activity. It

would appear, however, that art and music are not perceived in this way. In fact, attributions for performance in art and music correlate higher with attributions for the anagram task (for art, $r(37) = .19$, $p = .13$; in music, $r(37) = .27$, $p < .05$) than with attributions for social rejection (in art, $r(37) = -.14$, $p = .21$; in music, $r(37) = -.05$, $p = .38$). So while art and music appear to be in a category of their own, these activities are seen as being closer to intellectual tasks. Perhaps the reason that art and music are perceived this way is due to the setting in which they are conducted. Art and music are classroom activities like every other academic subject (English, math, etc.). The P.E. period on the other hand, takes place in a gym. This setting may have more social connections for the children and may explain why social rejection attributions generalized to this activity only. Art and music may also require more ability than a typical P.E. class and therefore academic types of cognitive mediators may play a more important role in those activities.

Another result supporting domain specificity of helplessness is the fact that 44% of the subjects switched categories across the intellectual and social domains. That is, 44% of those showing the attributional pattern characteristic of group A in the intellectual/cognitive domain showed the pattern characteristic of group B in the social domain. In fact, only 18% of the children made consistently helpless or consistently mastery oriented attributions

across domains. For example, 56% of the subjects made helpless attributions for failure on the anagram task. Only 23% of the children consistently made similar attributions for social rejection.

Children who made consistently helpless attributions across domains, were significantly more depressed as measured by the CDI ($X=12.6$) than either subjects who made mixed (helpless and mastery oriented) attributions ($X=5.7$) or those who made consistently mastery oriented choices ($X=4.0$), $r(37)=.33$, $p<.05$. This is an important finding because it identifies a stable attributional style for depressed children. It also suggests that generalizing helpless attributions across domains may be a cause of depression in children.

In regard to sex differences, boys and girls did not differ significantly in their attributions on the anagram task or the social rejection vignettes. A difference was obtained, however, for the nonacademic subjects. Sixty eight percent of the girls made helpless attributions (for 2 out of 3 or all three activities) while only 20% of the boys did so. Why should this be so?

It has been suggested (Dweck, Davidson, Nelson & Enna, 1978) that boys do not show the helpless pattern in the classroom as often as girls because failure feedback to boys is ambiguous. They stated that "frequent and widespread use of failure feedback for boys negates failure feedback from adults as an indicant of their ability. It makes it more likely that they will view their negative feedback as either

irrelevant to performance or due to lack of motivation," (p.269). But perhaps even more importantly, they found that teacher's failure feedback to boys was often accompanied by an attribution to lack of effort. This is important because attributions to controllable factors such as effort do not cause helplessness but in fact combat it.

Problems with the present study

It is important to note the lack of variability in the data obtained for the anagram task. This is certainly a contributing factor if not the chief reason why generalization from the intellectual task to the other domains was not found. In fact, this variable did not correlate significantly with any other.

Perhaps the reason for this lack of variability is that the task used was not ambiguous. All subjects knew that they failed at solve at least 90% of the anagrams and therefore an attribution to low ability is reasonable. Also, subjects only needed to solve one of the solutle practice anagrams to be included in the study so low ability may again be an objective and reasonable task-specific attribution.

Also, due to the large concentration of subjects in two of the classrooms, experimental sessions with children from the same class had to be conducted over a period of 3-4 days. This raises the question of how much the children knew about the task beforehand and if this may have affected their attributions in some way.

The use of male experimenters may have also altered the results. All

prior studies have used female experimenters and there is some classroom observational data to suggest that male teachers have different effects than female teachers.

Directions for Future Research.

This study gives evidence relating learned helplessness to depression in children. It also suggests an attributional style in depressed children. Further research needs to be devoted to the link between these two phenomena in children. Some questions this study has raised are:

- 1) Does helplessness lead to depression or does depression lead to making helpless attributions?
- 2) Do depressed and helpless children show the same performance deficits? If so, are they restricted to one domain?
- 3) If depression does carry over to various areas of the child's life, what causes this generalization?

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Appendix A

The IAR Questionnaire

Name _____

Grade _____

Sex (Male or Female) _____

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: This questionnaire describes a number of common experiences most of you have in your daily lives. The questions about these experiences are presented one at a time and following each one there are two possible answers. Choose the one that most often describes what happens to you. Put a circle around the "A" or "B" in front of that answer. Be sure to answer each question according to how you really feel.

1. If a teacher passes you to the next grade would it probably be
 - A. because she liked you, or
 - B. because of the work you did?
2. When you do well on a test at school is it more likely to be
 - A. because you studied for it, or
 - B. because the test was easy?
- *3. When you have trouble understanding something in school is it usually
 - A. because the teacher didn't explain it clearly, or
 - B. because you didn't listen carefully?

-2-

- *4. When you read a story and can't remember much of it, is it usually
- A. because the story wasn't well written, or
 - B. because you weren't interested in the story?
5. Suppose your parents say you are doing well in school. Is this likely to happen
- A. because your school work is good, or
 - B. because they are in a good mood?
6. Suppose you did better than usual in a subject at school. Would it probably happen
- A. because you tried harder, or
 - B. because someone helped you?
7. When you lose at a game of cards or checkers, does this usually happen
- A. because the other player is good at the game, or
 - B. because you don't play well?
- *8. Suppose a person doesn't think that you are very smart or clever
- A. Can you make him change his mind if you try to, or
 - B. are there some people who will think you're not very smart no matter what you do?

-3-

9. If you solve a puzzle quickly, is it
- A. because it wasn't a very hard puzzle, or
 - B. because you worked on it carefully?
10. If a boy or girl tells you that you are dumb, is it more likely that they say that
- A. because they are mad at you, or
 - B. because what you did really wasn't very smart?
- *11. Suppose you study to become a teacher, scientist, or doctor and you fail. Do you think this would happen
- A. because you didn't work hard enough, or
 - B. because you needed some help and other people didn't give it to you?
12. When you learn something quickly in school, is it usually
- A. because you paid close attention, or
 - B. because the teacher explained it clearly?
13. If a teacher says to you, "Your work is fine," is it
- A. something teachers usually say to encourage students, or
 - B. because you did a good job?
- *14. When you find it hard to work math problems at school, is it
- A. because you didn't study hard enough before you tried them, or
 - B. because the teacher gave problems that were too hard?

-4-

- *15. When you forget something you heard in class, is it
- A. because the teacher didn't explain it very well, or
 - B. because you didn't try very hard to remember?
16. Suppose you weren't sure about the answer to a question your teacher asked you, but your answer turned out to be right. Is it likely to happen
- A. because she wasn't as particular as usual, or
 - B. because you gave the best answer you could think of?
17. When you read a story and remember most of it, is it usually
- A. because you were interested in the story, or
 - B. because the story was well written?
18. If your parents tell you you're acting silly and not thinking clearly, is it more likely to be
- A. because of something you did, or
 - B. because they happen to feel cranky?
- *19. When you don't do well on a test at school, is it
- A. because the test was especially hard, or
 - B. because you didn't study for it?
20. When you win at a game of cards or checkers, does it happen
- A. because you play really well, or
 - B. because the other person is a bad player?

-5-

21. If people think you're smart, is it
- A. because they like you, or
 - B. because you usually act that way?
22. If the teacher didn't pass you to the next grade, would it probably be
- A. because she had it in for you, or
 - B. because your school work wasn't good enough?
- *23. Suppose you don't do as well as usual in a subject at school. Would this probably happen
- A. because you weren't as careful as usual, or
 - B. because somebody bothered you and kept you from working?
24. If a boy or girl tells you that you are smart, is it
- A. because you thought up a good idea, or
 - B. because they like you?
25. Suppose you become a famous teacher, scientist, or doctor. Do you think this would happen
- A. because other people helped you a lot, or
 - B. because you worked very hard?

-6-

26. Suppose your parents say that you are not doing well in your school work. Is this likely to happen
- A. because your work isn't very good, or
 - B. because they feel grouchy?
27. Suppose you are showing a friend how to play a game and he has trouble with it. Would this happen
- A. because he wasn't able to understand how to play, or
 - B. because you couldn't explain it very well?
28. When you find it easy to work math problems at school, is it
- A. because the teacher gave you easy problems, or
 - B. because you studied your book well before you tried them?
29. When you remember something you heard in class, is it usually
- A. because you tried hard to remember, or
 - B. because the teacher explained it well?
30. If you can't work a puzzle, is it more likely to happen
- A. because you aren't very good at working puzzles, or
 - B. because the instructions weren't written clearly enough?

-7-

31. If your parents tell you that you are smart or clever, is it more likely
- A. because they are feeling good, or
 - B. because of something you did?
32. Suppose you are explaining to a friend how to play a game and he learns it quickly. Would that happen more often
- A. because you explained it well, or
 - B. because he was able to understand it very well?
- *33. Suppose you're not sure about the answer to a question your teacher asks you and the answer you give turns out to be wrong. Is this
- A. because she was more particular than usual, or
 - B. because you answered too quickly?
- *34. If a teacher says to you, "Try to do better," would it be
- A. because this is something she says to get students to try harder, or
 - B. because your work wasn't as good as usual?

Questions marked with (*) comprised the I-E scale, which taps the child's attributions of failure to lack of effort.

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

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Appendix B

CD INVENTORY

Name _____

Date _____

Kids sometimes have different feelings and ideas.

This form lists the feelings and ideas in groups. From each group, pick one sentence that describes you best for the past two weeks. After you pick a sentence from the first group, go on to the next group.

There is no right answer or wrong answer. Just pick the sentence that best describes the way you have been recently. Put a mark like this (X) next to your answer. Put the mark on the line next to the sentence you pick.

Here is an example of how this form works. Try it. Put a mark next to the sentence that describes you best.

EXAMPLE:

- I read books all the time.
- I read books once in a while.
- I never read books.

-2-

Remember, pick out the sentences that describe your feelings and ideas in the past two weeks.

1. ___ I am sad once in a while
 ___ I am sad many times
 ___ I am sad all the time

2. ___ Nothing will ever work out for me
 ___ I am not sure if things will work out for me
 ___ Things will work out OK for me

3. ___ I do most things OK
 ___ I do many things wrong
 ___ I do everything wrong

4. ___ I have fun in many things
 ___ I have fun in some things
 ___ Nothing is fun at all

5. ___ I am bad all the time
 ___ I am bad many times
 ___ I am bad once in a while

-3-

6. ___ I think about bad things happening to me once
 in a while
 ___ I worry that bad things will happen to me
 ___ I am sure that terrible things will happen to me
7. ___ I hate myself
 ___ I do not like myself
 ___ I like myself
8. ___ All bad things are my fault
 ___ Many bad things are my fault
 ___ Bad things are not usually my fault
9. ___ I do not think about killing myself
 ___ I think about killing myself but I would not do it
 ___ I want to kill myself
10. ___ I feel like crying every day
 ___ I feel like crying many days
 ___ I feel like crying once in a while

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

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-4-

11. ___ Things bother me all the time
 ___ Things bother me many times
 ___ Things bother me once in a while
12. ___ I like being with people
 ___ I do not like being with people many times
 ___ I do not want to be with people at all
13. ___ I cannot make up my mind about things
 ___ It is hard to make up my mind about things
 ___ I make up my mind about things easily
14. ___ I look OK
 ___ There are some bad things about my looks
 ___ I look ugly
15. ___ I have to push myself all the time to do my schoolwork
 ___ I have to push myself many times to do my schoolwork
 ___ Doing schoolwork is not a big problem

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

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-5-

16. ___ I have trouble sleeping every night
 ___ I have trouble sleeping many nights
 ___ I sleep pretty well
17. ___ I am tired once in a while
 ___ I am tired many days
 ___ I am tired all the time
18. ___ Most days I do not feel like eating
 ___ Many days I do not feel like eating
 ___ I eat pretty well
19. ___ I do not worry about aches and pains
 ___ I worry about aches and pains many times
 ___ I worry about aches and pains all the time
20. ___ I do not feel alone
 ___ I feel alone many times
 ___ I feel alone all the time

-6-

21. ___ I never have fun at school
 ___ I have fun at school only once in a while
 ___ I have fun at school many times
22. ___ I have plenty of friends
 ___ I have some friends but I wish I had more
 ___ I do not have any friends
23. ___ My schoolwork is alright
 ___ My schoolwork is not as good as before
 ___ I do very badly in subjects I used to be good in
24. ___ I can never be as good as other kids
 ___ I can be just as good as other kids if I want to
 ___ I am just as good as other kids
25. ___ Nobody really loves me
 ___ I am not sure if somebody loves me
 ___ I am sure that somebody loves me

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

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-7-

26. ___ I usually do what I am told
 ___ I do what I am told most times
 ___ I never do what I am told
27. ___ I get along with people
 ___ I get into fights many times
 ___ I get into fights all the time

THE END

THANK YOU FOR FILLING OUT THIS FORM

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

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Appendix C

Name _____ Grade _____ Sex _____

Teacher _____

Below you will find a group of five letters. Your job is to try to make a word using all five letters. Here is an example:

I H L D C _ _ _ _ _ (CHILD)

Try these:

A) B L A E T _ _ _ _ _

B) T E A R W _ _ _ _ _

C) I Z R E P _ _ _ _ _

D) P L P E A _ _ _ _ _

E) O O P N S _ _ _ _ _

F) O S R S C _ _ _ _ _

-2-

1)	G H I E R	—	—	—	—	—
2)	T O I B S	—	—	—	—	—
3)	C A U F L	—	—	—	—	—
4)	I R U M E	—	—	—	—	—
5)	R C A T U	—	—	—	—	—
6)	E D E B T	—	—	—	—	—
7)	U C R K T	—	—	—	—	—
8)	O Y W A B	—	—	—	—	—
9)	Q D L A U	—	—	—	—	—
10)	C E E N R	—	—	—	—	—

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

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-3-

How well do you think you did on the word task? (Circle One)

- A) Very well
- B) Above average
- C) Average
- D) Below average
- E) Very poorly

If you circled A, B, or C, answer the following question (#1) If you circled D or E, answer question 2.

- 1) Why do you think that you did well on the word task?
 - A) I am good at this kind of problem
 - B) I was trying very hard
 - C) I was lucky
 - D) The problems were easy to solve
 - E) The experimenter explained the rules very well

- 2) Why do you think that you had trouble solving the word problems?
 - A) I am not good at this kind of problem
 - B) I wasn't trying hard enough
 - C) I had bad luck
 - D) The problems are impossible to solve
 - E) The experimenter didn't explain the rules well enough

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

4/1

-4-

How well do you think other kids your age would do on the word task
(Circle One)

- A) Other kids would probably do a lot better than I did
 - B) Other kids would probably do a little better than I did
 - C) Other kids would do about the same as I did
 - D) Other kids would probably not do as well as I did
 - E) Other kids would probably do a lot worse than I did
-

1) Suppose a friend of yours stops telling you his/her secrets.

Why might this happen to you?

- A) It is hard for you to keep friends
- B) He is a selfish person
- C) He doesn't think that you'll keep his secret
- D) He got the wrong idea about something you did
- E) He was in a bad mood

2) Suppose you move to a new neighborhood and your next door neighbor says that he doesn't like you very much. Why might this happen to you?

- A) You're not good at making friends
- B) He isn't very friendly
- C) He doesn't like how you act
- D) He got the wrong impression about you
- E) He was angry at someone when he met you

-5-

- 3) Suppose someone goes away from you whenever they can. why might this happen to you?
- A) Because it is not easy to get people to like you
 - B) He likes doing mean things
 - C) He does not like the kind of person you are
 - D) He probably thinks you did something bad
 - E) He likes to be by himself
- 4) Suppose you go to a park. A kid you want to play with doesn't want to play with you. Why might this happen?
- A) Because it is hard to get along with people
 - B) He is rude
 - C) He thinks you're no fun to be with
 - D) He got the wrong idea about something you did
 - E) He didn't feel like playing that day
-

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

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-6-

On the scale below, rate yourself on how popular you think you are. (If you think that you are very popular, put an X on the line above #5, if you think that you are sort of popular, put an X on the line above #4. If you feel that you are average or in between, mark an X above line 3. If you think that you are sort of unpopular, check the line above #2 and if you feel that you are very unpopular, mark an X on the line above #1.) If you have any questions please ask!

1 2 3 4 5

Now, I would like you to tell me how much you like to be with certain children in your school. Below is a list of names. After each name is a scale like the one you just completed. If you like being with the person listed very much, put an X above line 5, if you sort of like to be with that person, put an X above line 4. If you sometimes like being with the person and sometimes you don't, mark an X above line 3. If you sort of dislike being around the person listed, mark an X above line 2 and if you really dislike being with that person, check the line above #1. Nobody else will see this!!!

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

-7-

1) Subject 1	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2) Subject 2	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3) Subject 3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4) Subject 4	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5) Subject 5	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6) Subject 6	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7) Subject 7	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8) Subject 8	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	1	2	3	4	5

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

-8-

9)	Subject 9	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10)	Subject 10	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11)	Subject 11	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12)	Subject 12	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13)	Subject 13	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
14)	Subject 14	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
15)	Subject 15	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16)	Subject 16	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		1	2	3	4	5

Generalization of Learned Helplessness

-9-

17)	Subject 17	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
18)	Subject 18	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
19)	Subject 19	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
20)	Subject 20	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		1	2	3	4	5

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

-10-

- 1) How well would you say you were doing in art class?
- A) very well
 - B) above average
 - C) average
 - D) below average
 - E) poorly

If you circled A, B, or C, answer part A below; if you marked D or E, answer part B.

- A) Why do you think you're doing well?
- a) I work hard
 - b) I am good at art
 - c) Art class is easy
 - d) The teacher is an easy grader
 - e) The class is fun
- B) Why do you think you're not doing so well?
- a) I'm not trying hard enough
 - b) I'm not very artistic
 - c) The projects in class are too difficult
 - d) The teacher grades too hard
 - e) The class is boring

-11-

2) How well would you say that you were doing in music class?

- A) very well
- B) above average
- C) average
- D) below average
- E) poor

If you marked A, B, or C answer part A below; if you marked D or E, answer part B.

A) Why do you think you're doing well?

- a) I work hard
- b) I am good at music
- c) Music is easy
- d) The teacher is an easy grader
- e) I like the class

B) Why do you think you're not doing so well?

- a) I'm not trying hard enough
- b) I'm just not musical
- c) The class is too hard
- d) The teacher grades too hard
- e) The class is boring

-12-

3) How well would you say you were doing in P.E. class?

- A) very well
- B) above average
- C) average
- D) below average
- E) poor

If you marked A, B, or C answer part A below; if you marked D or E, answer part B.

A) Why do you think you're doing well?

- a) I work hard
- b) I am good at physical things
- c) The class is easy
- d) The teacher is an easy grader
- e) I enjoy the class

B) Why do you think that you're not doing so well?

- a) I'm not trying hard enough
- b) I can't do physical things well
- c) The class is too hard
- d) The teacher expects too much
- e) The class is boring

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR FILLING THIS OUT

Figure 1

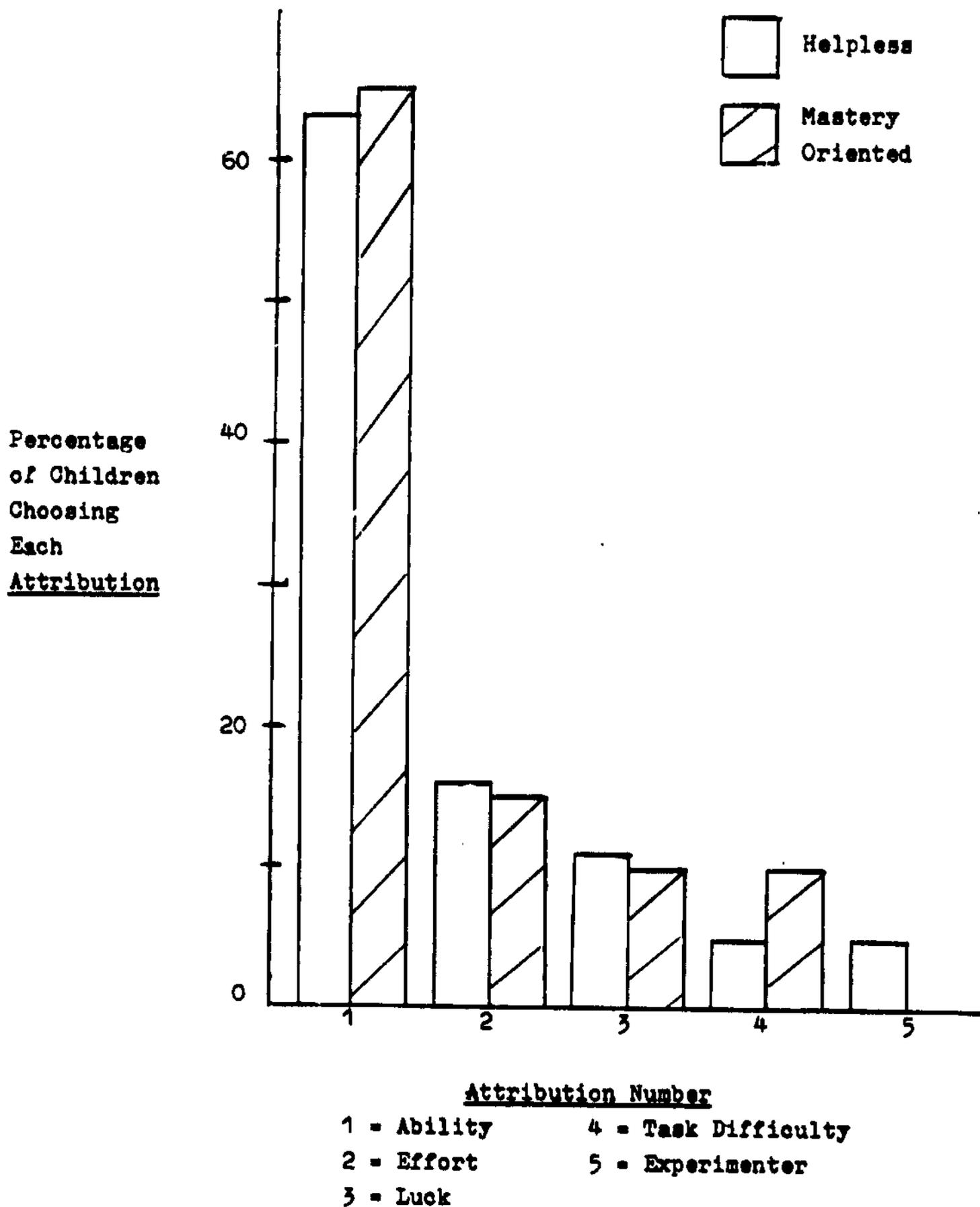


Figure 2

Percentage of Children Solving the
ANASTAS

Dispositional Category

	Helpless	Mastery Oriented	Overall
Girls	11	50	26
Boys	40	90	70
Overall	32	65	

Figure 3

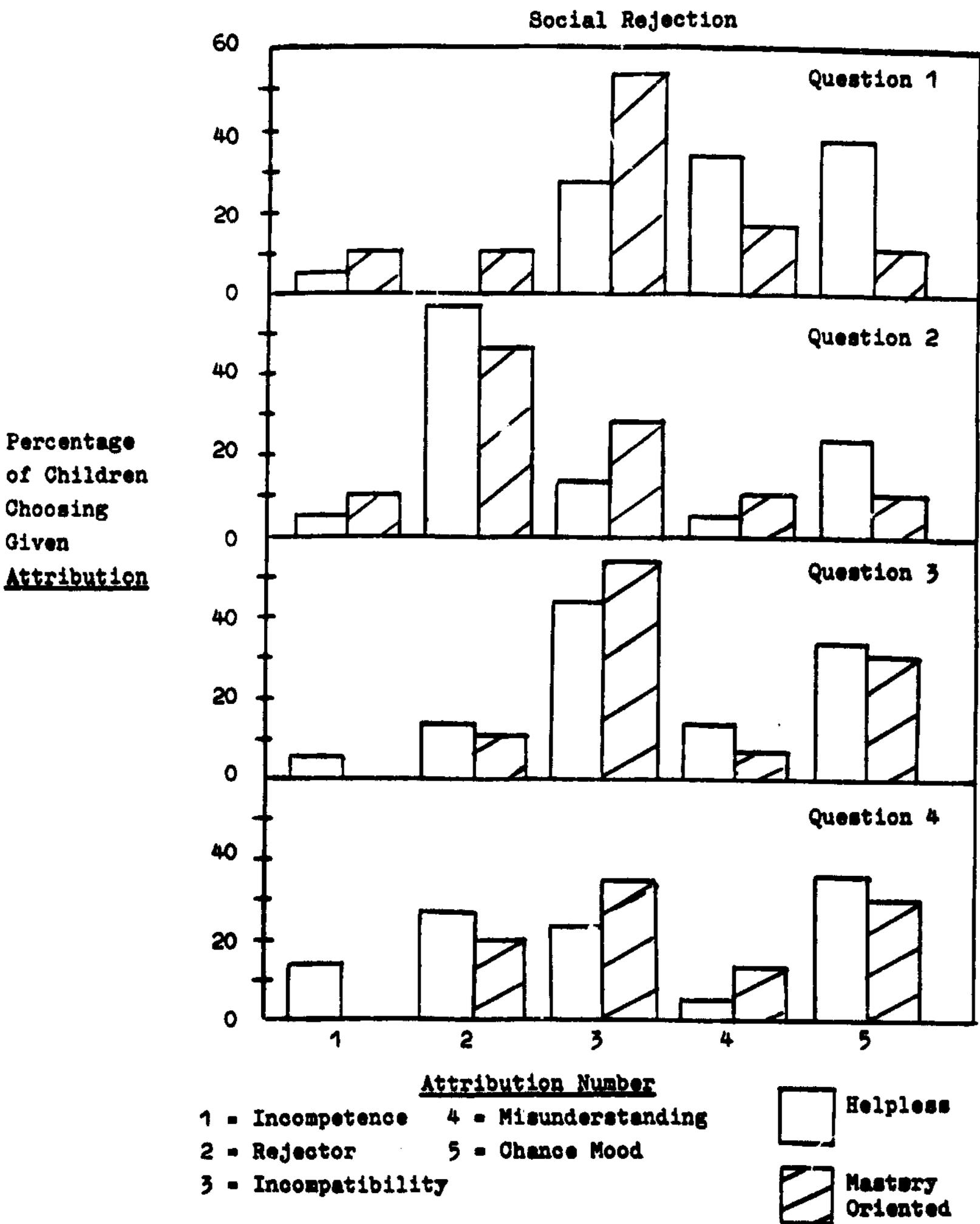


Figure 4

Popularity Measures

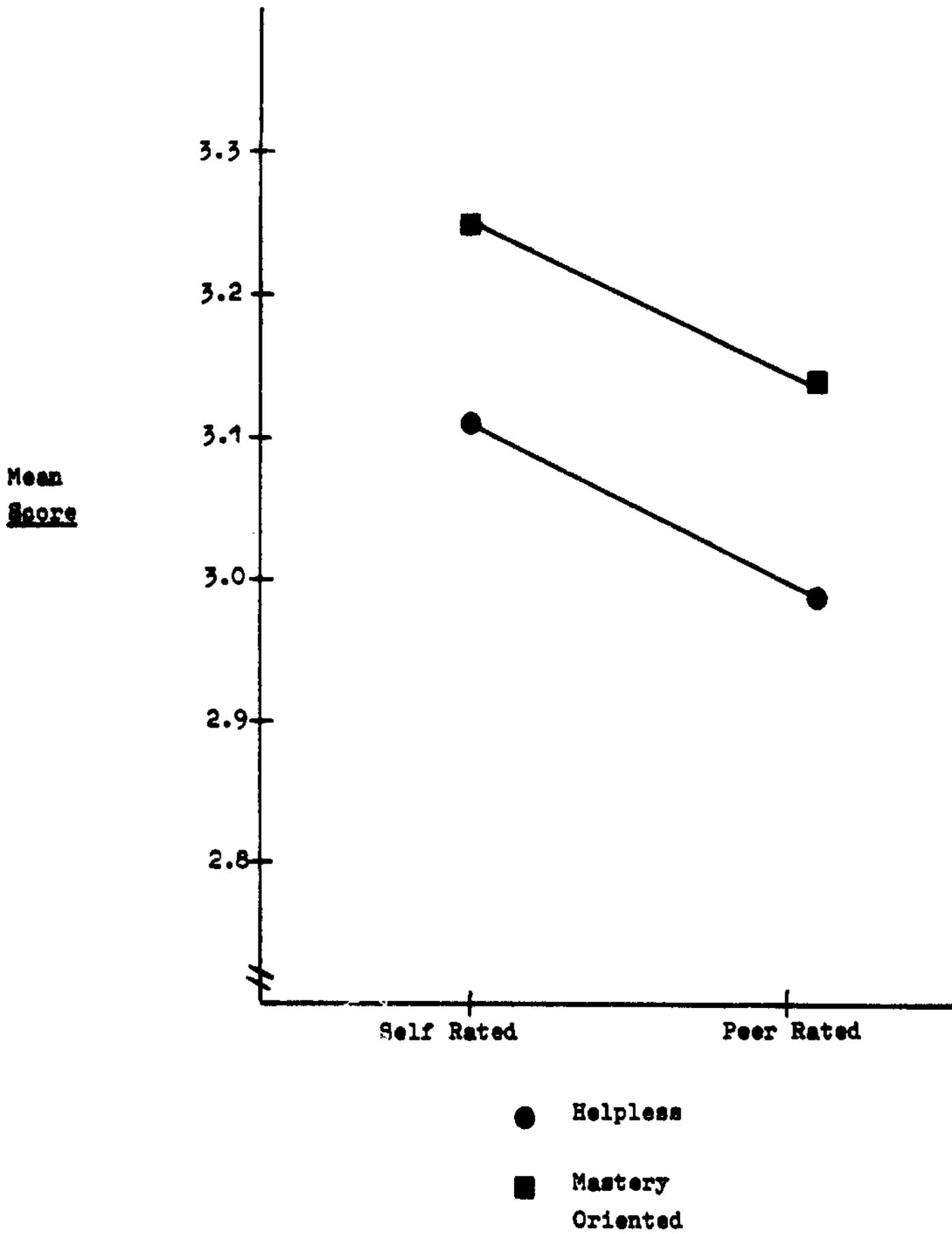


Figure 5

Attributions for Performance in:

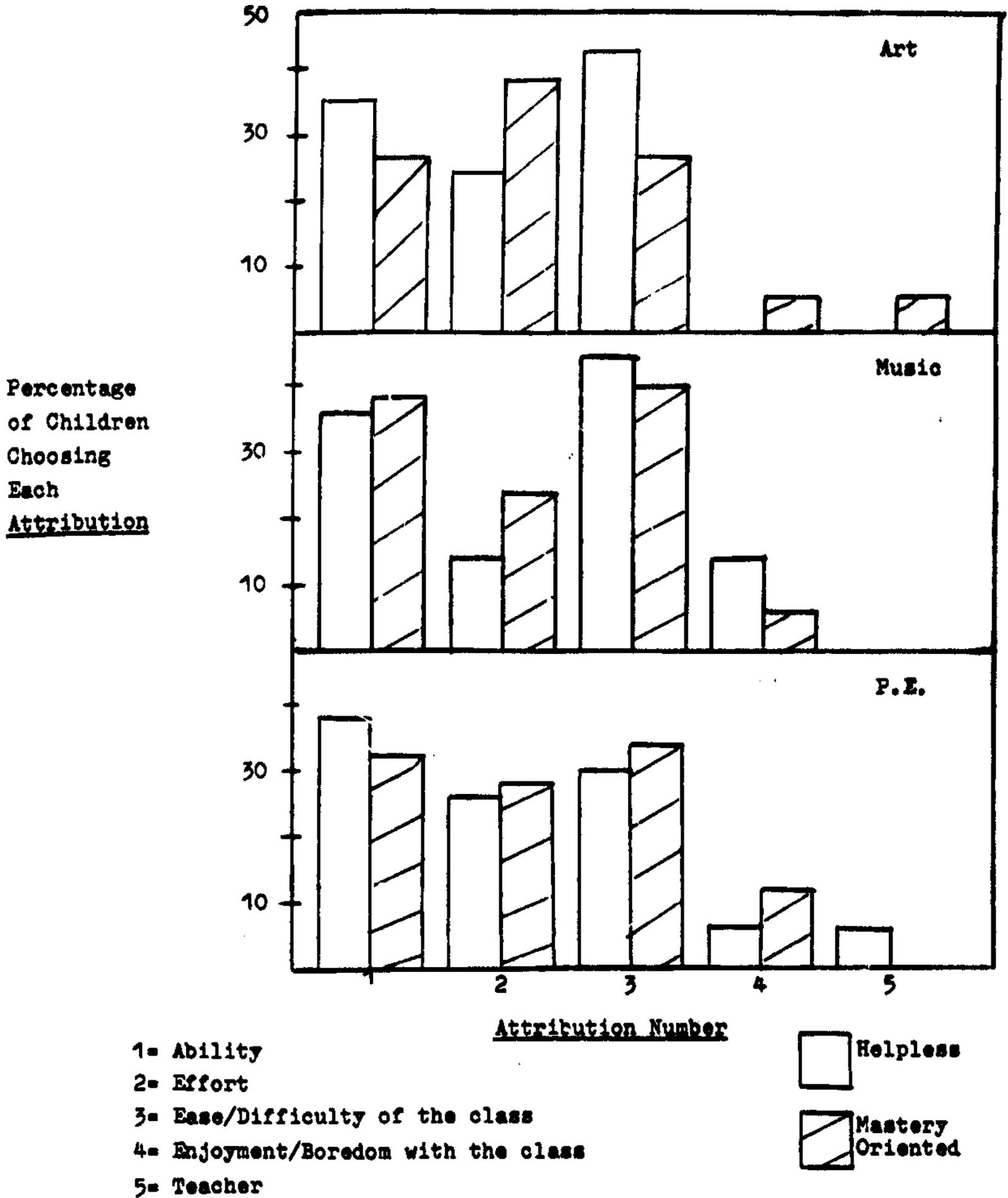


Figure 6

Popularity Measures

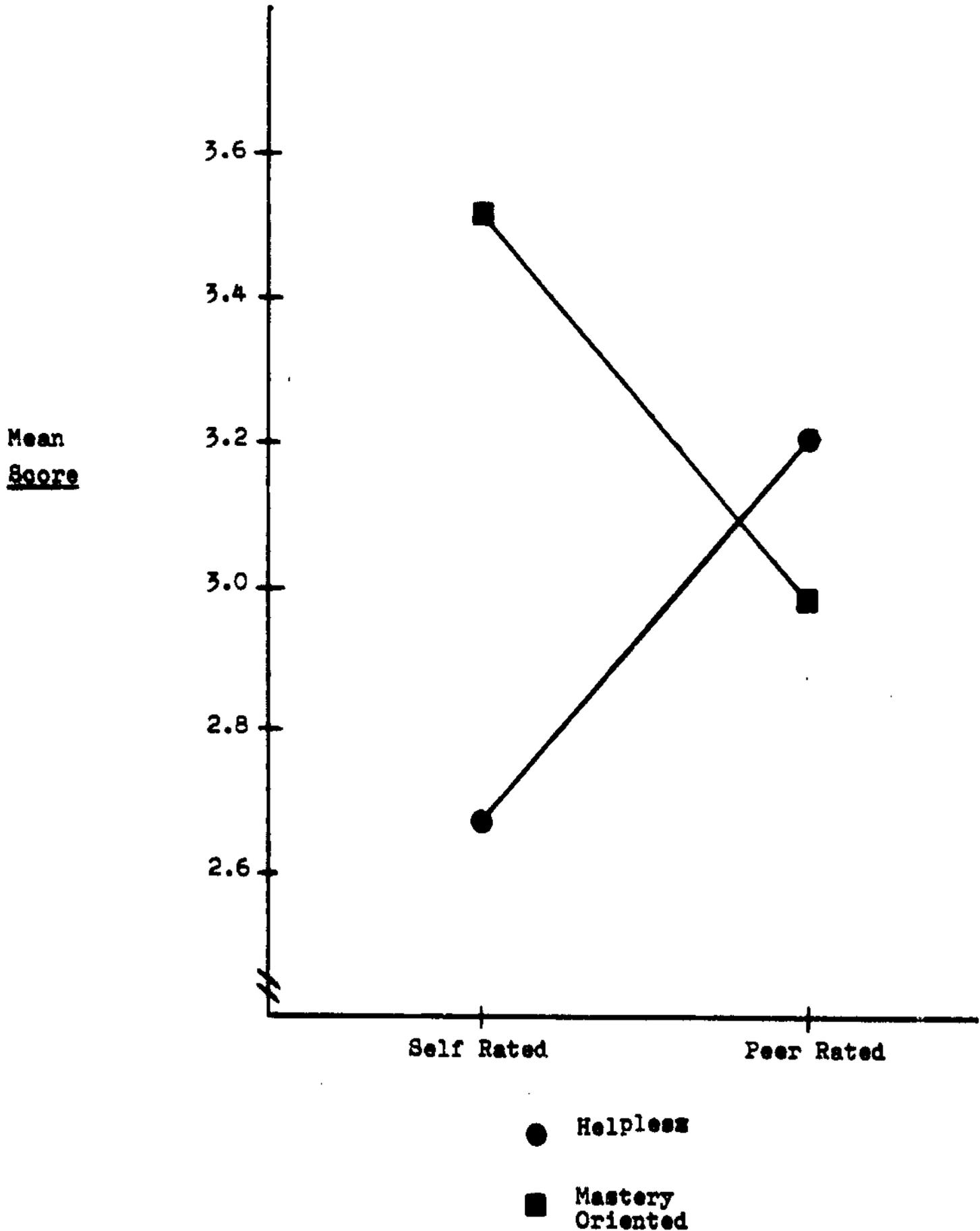


Figure 7

Popularity Measures

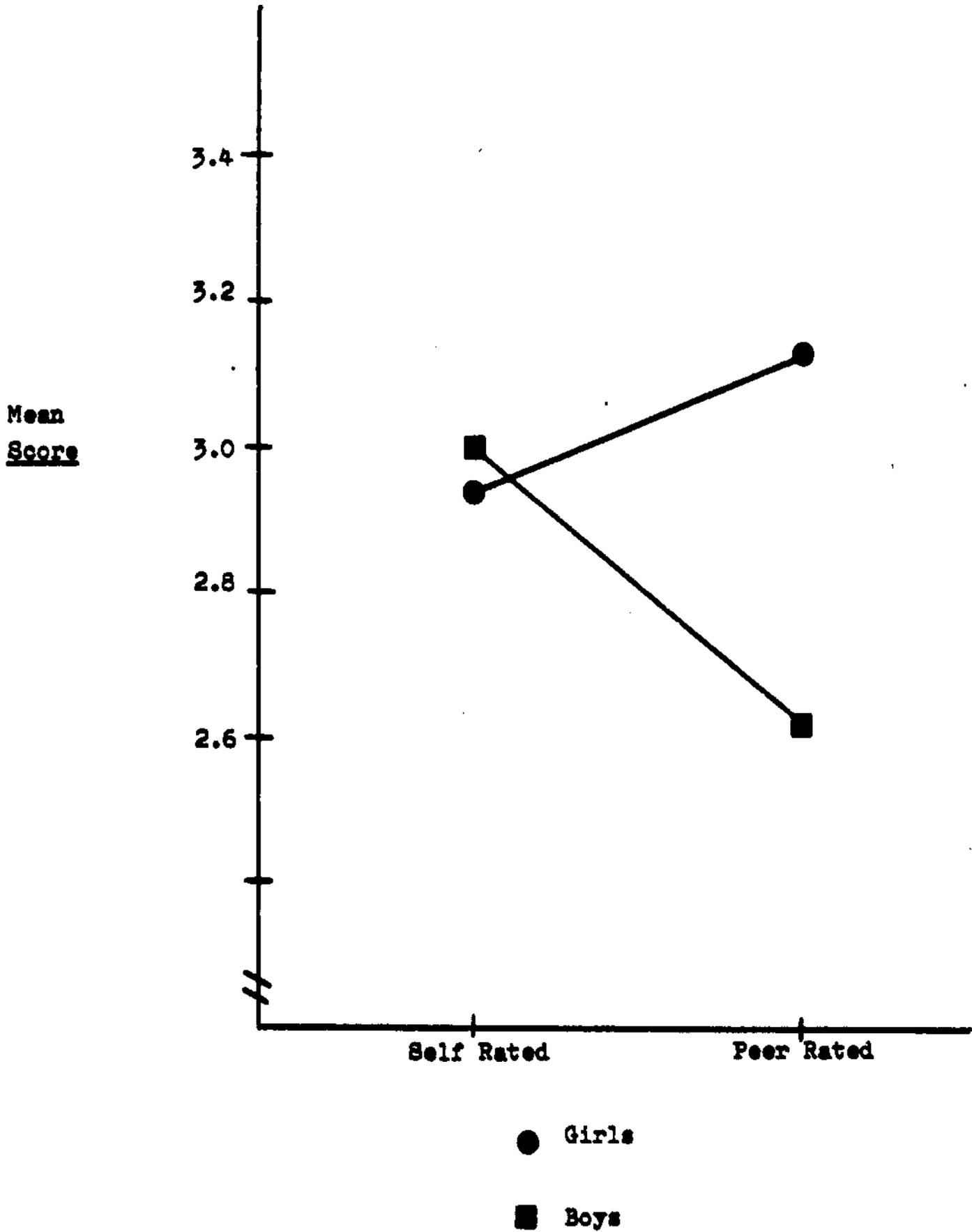


Figure 8

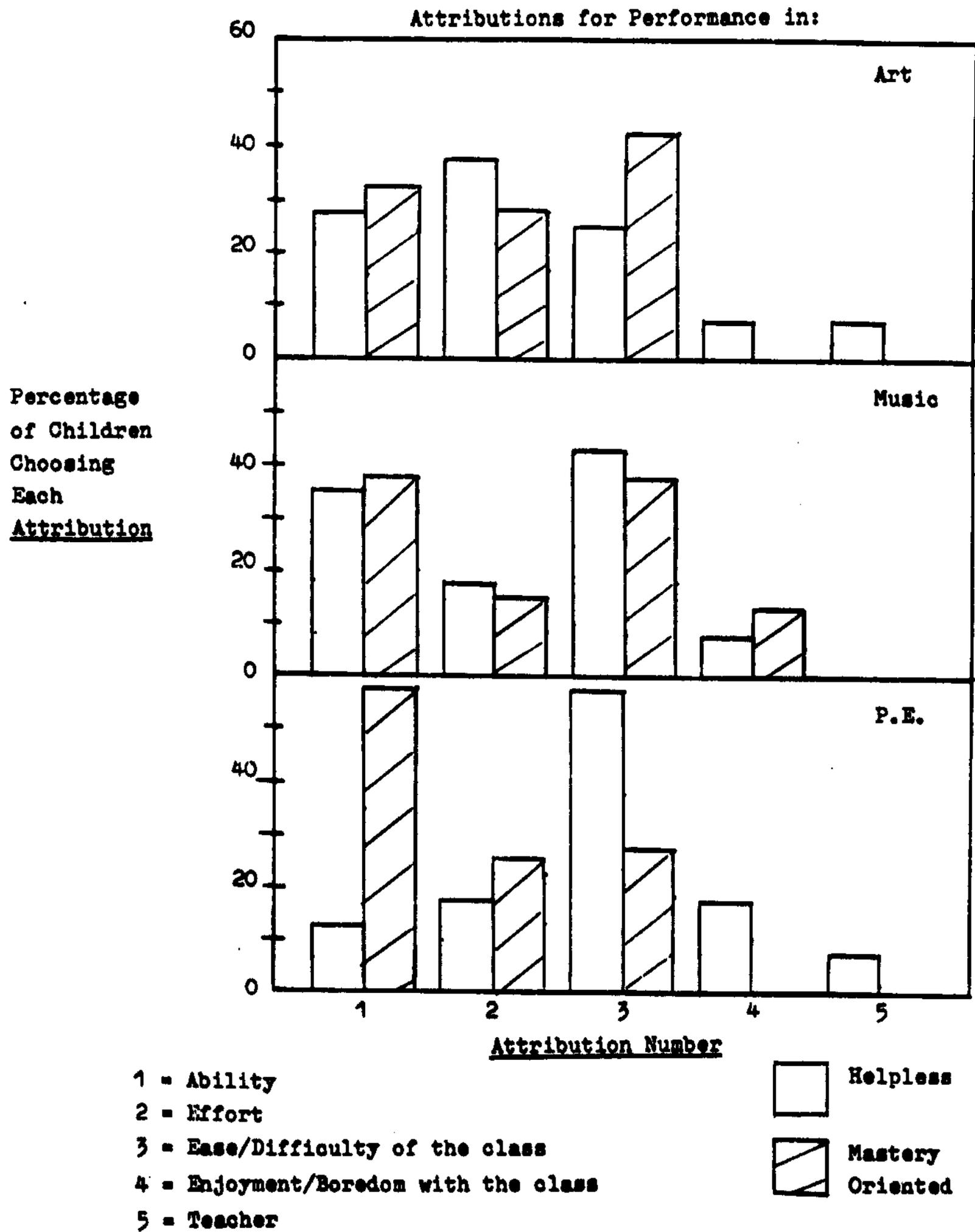


Figure 9

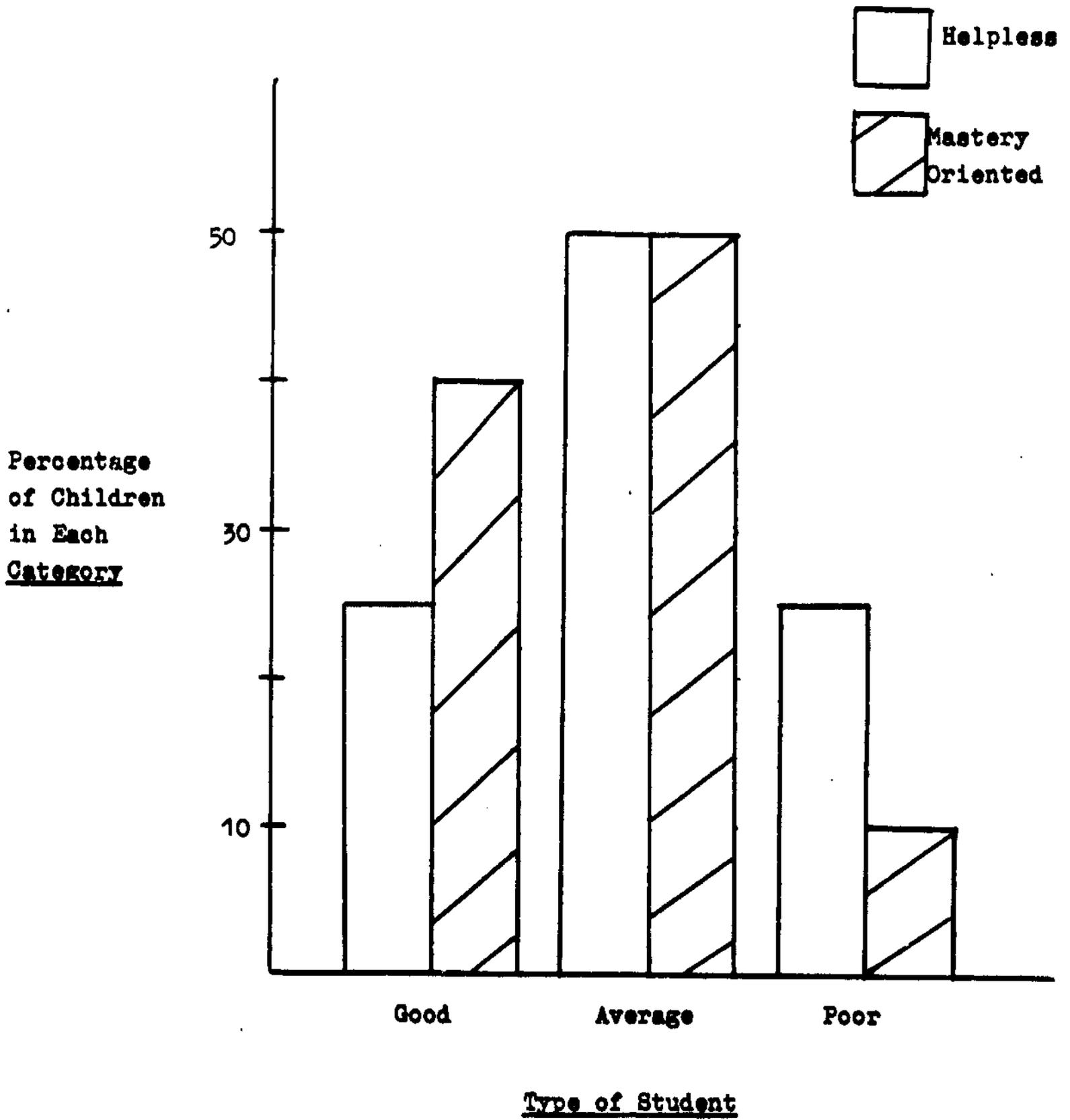


Figure 10

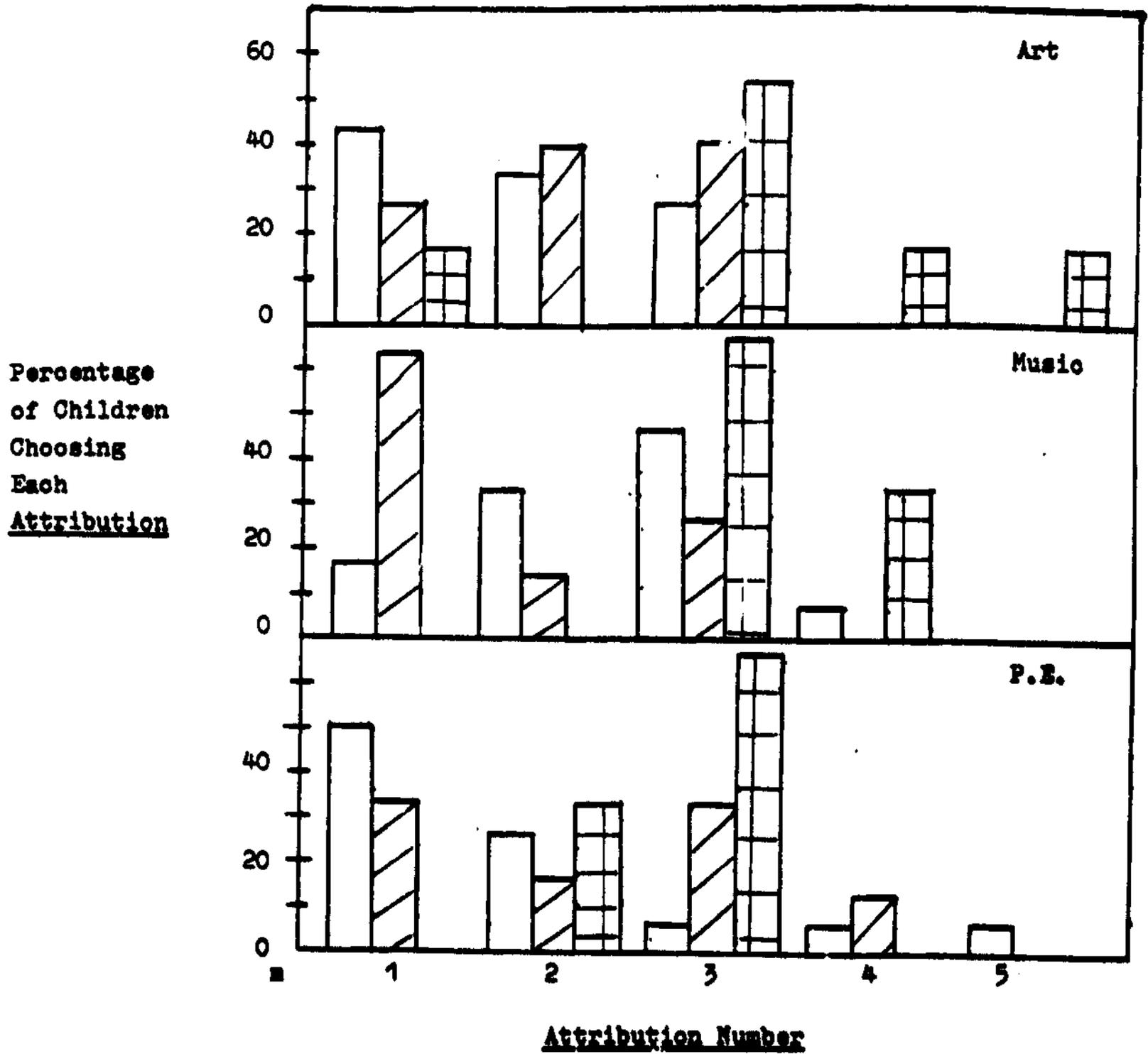
Mean CDI Scores

Dispositional Category

		<u>Dispositional Category</u>		
		Helpless	Mastery Oriented	Overall
<u>Type of Student</u>	Good	6.8	1.9	3.5
	Average	11.1	8.2	9.3
	Poor	15.8	10.0	13.3
	Overall	10.9	6.2	

Figure 11

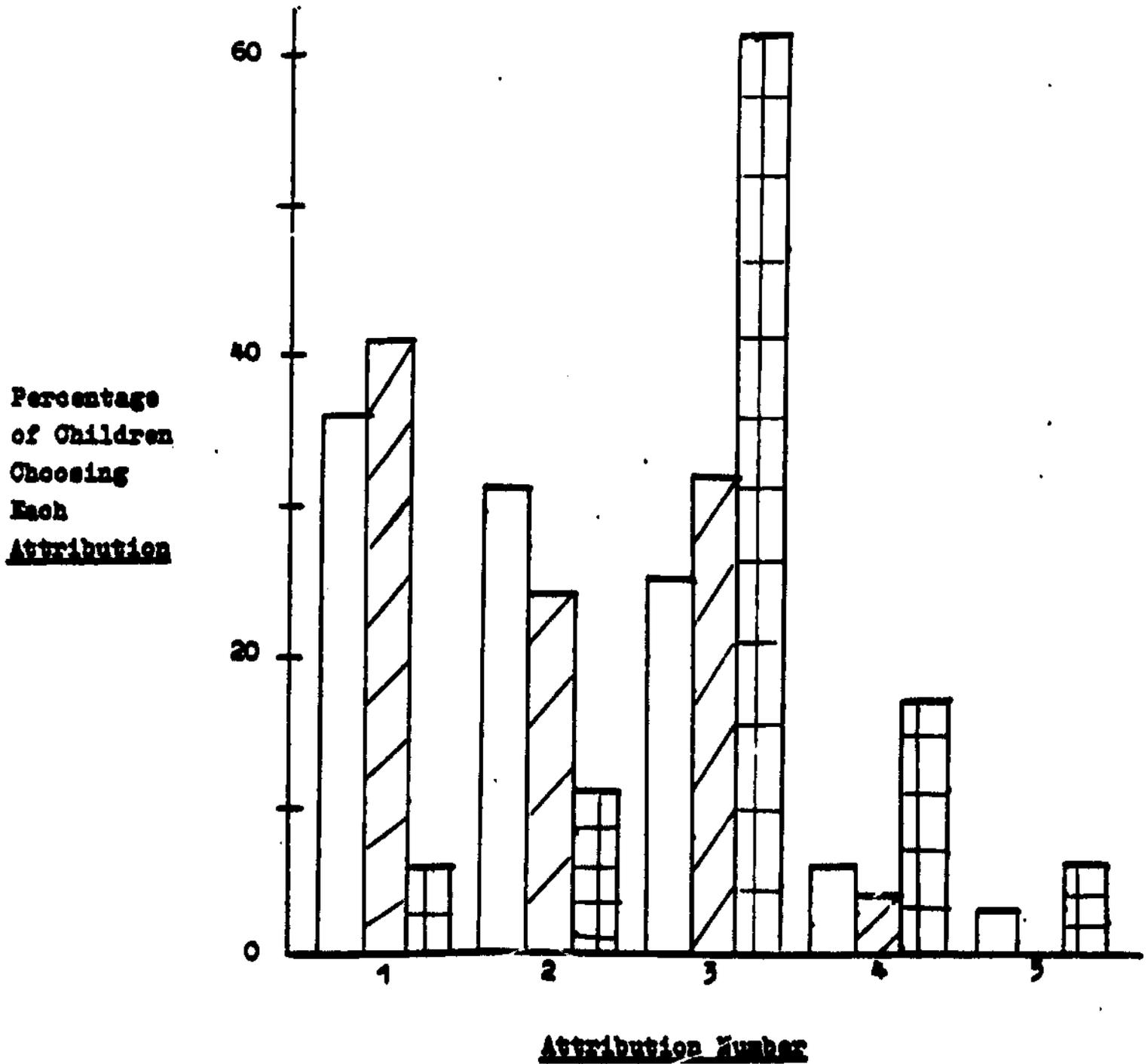
Attributions for Performance in:



- 1 = Ability
- 2 = Effort
- 3 = Ease/Difficulty of the class
- 4 = Enjoyment/Boredom with the class
- 5 = Teacher

-  Good Student
-  Average Student
-  Poor Student

Figure 12



- 1 = Ability
- 2 = Effort
- 3 = Ease/Difficulty of the class
- 4 = Enjoyment/Boredom with the class
- 5 = Teacher

-  Good Student
-  Average Student
-  Poor Student