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**A STUDY OF LEARNED HELPLESSNESS
IN SCHOOL CHILDREN**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree

of

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at the
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by

ENO MACAULAY UKPONG

University of Waikato
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**To my
Children**

ABSTRACT

This study grew out of the researcher's concern about the high rate of school failure and drop-out among students in Nigerian schools. It focussed on the phenomenon of Learned Helplessness, a factor that seemed likely to account for some school learning problems. In the course of the study, instruments and procedures that might be used to identify learned helpless school learners were developed and trialled and an in-depth investigation of their cognitive and emotional life was undertaken.

The first phase of the study which focussed on identification issues, involved the trial of four identification procedures - a written description of Learned Helplessness, Learned Helplessness Traits Checklist, an Interview and an Attribution Questionnaire. In the second phase of the study, a case study strategy was adopted to explore the cognitive and emotional life of six Form Two children identified as learned helpless as an outcome of the phase one investigation.

The data gathered during the first phase highlighted both strengths and limitations in each of the identification procedures and thus, the need to use several contrastive procedures to ensure accurate identification.

The case study data confirmed that the six children exhibited cognitive, motivational and emotional deficits that have been identified in previous studies as facets of Learned Helplessness syndrome. The data also indicated that in a school setting, Learned Helplessness develops over an extended time frame and may wax and wane as classroom conditions change.

Important individual differences in some aspects of the children's helplessness were also revealed. These differences were apparent in the children's perception of factors responsible for their learning difficulties, their coping strategies, and their emotional responses to some situations that prompted their helplessness.

Educational implications that followed from the case study centre on the need for more studies aimed at identifying school factors that might encourage the incidence of Learned Helplessness. Most importantly, teachers, counsellors and others who wish to work effectively with children who appear to have given up on learning should endeavour to gain insights into their inner life and consider the children's attributions seriously, in order to detect and correct attributions which are unrealistic. An understanding of the children's views of themselves and factors which account for their learned helplessness may also correct any faulty attributions that others might have made for their learning difficulties. Second, there is also a need to create awareness among educators and classroom teachers about conditions that might precipitate a feeling of helplessness and to suggest diagnostic strategies to help curb the occurrence of the phenomenon.

In the final stage of the study it was concluded that learned helpless learners characteristically exhibit certain overt and covert behaviours which understandably hamper their optimum school performance. To obtain a holistic view and understanding of these behaviours requires the use of several contrastive research strategies. Such, the researcher hopes might yield information that could assist in the planning of intervention programmes for learned helpless school learners.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Success in school learning is seen by most people as a prerequisite to a successful and happy life as an adult. It is understandable, therefore, that when a child experiences learning difficulties or failure and, as a result, 'gives up' in certain learning situations, considerable concern is usually felt by the child's teacher and parents. Their concern is justified because the links between school failure, dropout and various forms of social failure (e.g. involvement in crime) are well established. Associated with that concern are likely to be attempts to explain the child's learning problems and to find ways of overcoming them. Sharing the same concern, educational researchers have invested a great deal of time and effort in attempts to identify causal factors and in devising effective intervention programmes. Their catalogue of possible explanatory factors is extensive. The factors include negative attitude to schooling, low self-esteem, parental lack of interest, low intelligence, impoverished home background, lack of individualized attention, and low motivation. Such factors, however, do not always seem to provide an adequate explanation, particularly when there seems to be no obvious obstacle to the child's learning with respect to innate ability.

The present study originated from this dissatisfaction. As a teacher educator in Nigeria, the researcher was not able to come up with a completely convincing explanation for the disproportionate number of potentially capable students who were failing in, and dropping out of, Nigerian schools. It was in the course of a review of literature on school failure that a factor termed 'learned helplessness' was encountered which seemed to offer a more plausible explanation for many of the failures. That factor became the focus of the present study.

Learned Helplessness

The term Learned Helplessness has been coined to describe a particular set of ideas, motives, and feelings that some people learn, and which lead them to feel helpless in particular situations. Thus, we find many children in school who, although they might not have completely given up on learning, are still severely hampered by entrenched negative beliefs about their learning capacities. In the area of ideas, the following statement is typical of 'learned helpless' students:

'I can't read very well because I am dumb and the teacher is always unfair to me. She picks on me and doesn't really help me to do any better. I am always going to be dumb when it comes to reading and I am stuck with this teacher.'

Again, some motive-oriented statements tend to reflect a learned helplessness disposition:

'I can't really expect to do any better in the future even if I try harder and my friends try to help me. Those things don't make any difference if you haven't got enough brains and the teacher doesn't really like you.'

Other learned helplessness statements indicate negative feelings about one's self as a learner:

'When I look at those other kids who can read so easily, I feel ashamed and sad about myself. There just seems to be nothing I can do. I would like to be able to read better but I can't.'

Unlike mastery - oriented children who possess a repertoire of coping strategies which enables them to persist with a task until a solution is reached, 'learned helpless' children tend to pre-define a situation as failure-producing and withdraw. Indeed, they may well come to believe that they simply cannot learn; that certain stable and uncontrollable factors account for their learning difficulties and that they cannot therefore be expected to perform better in the future - regardless of their own efforts or others' help. Such factors to which attributions of learning difficulties are made may be internal (e.g. ability) or external (e.g. difficult work).

The motivational consequences of the belief that one is 'learned helpless' may include avoidance of certain tasks, or the investment of little effort in such tasks because of the expectancy of continued failure. Emotional consequences may include such feelings as shame, depression, and low self-worth. These negative consequences of learned helplessness are extremely robust and powerfully self-reinforcing. If children, for instance, believe firmly enough that they cannot read well, they will usually succeed in preventing themselves from doing whatever they recognize as involving reading. This self sabotage then reinforces the original belief, and may well be disastrous should no remedial steps be taken early enough to help correct the learned helplessness disposition.

In the past two decades, a number of studies have been conducted on learned helplessness. In an early study, Seligman and Maier (1967) experimentally illustrated that learned helplessness resulted from experiences with performance/outcome noncontingency. For example, if a child consistently fails in mathematics despite effort, he/she might come to believe that performance is not contingent on effort. As a result, the child might give up trying - hence a state of learned helplessness. In contrast, Klein, Fencil-Morse & Seligman, (1976) and Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, (1978) offer an interpretation of learned helplessness based on the Attribution Theory - a theory which holds that individuals are motivated to know why an event occurred and to what source it may be ascribed (Weiner, 1972). They propose that learned helplessness results when task failure is attributed to stable and uncontrollable factors. Another alternative perspective is taken by researchers such as Bindrea (1969), Bolles (1972), and Zuroff (1980) who, following the social learning school of thought, contend that learned helplessness results from changes in the reinforcement value of performance outcome and a drop in the generalized expectancy for success. The implication here is that the condition can be remedied by increasing the reinforcement value of a performance outcome. The reactance theorists (e.g. Wortman and Brehm, 1975) offer an explanation for learned helplessness in terms of changes in motivational energy. From their viewpoint, learned helplessness is a product of a heightened motivation in a situation which prevents an individual from performing optimally. Extreme motivation interferes

with the cognition process, thus inhibiting thinking and subsequent behaviours.

Despite research interest in the phenomenon of learned helplessness, the amount of research conducted in educational settings is not yet substantial. As a result, we cannot be sure of the explanatory power of the learned helplessness construct related to the learning difficulties experienced by many learners. While there is considerable consensus among different theorists on the negative effect of learned helplessness on the performance of cognitive tasks, supporting studies have generally been conducted in artificial settings such as laboratories and with contrived tasks (e.g. anagram learning) that are not characteristic of those confronted in normal school settings. It is not clear, therefore, whether the findings from such studies can be generalized readily to natural classroom settings. As Alloy (1982) points out, psychological phenomena that are well established and replicable in the laboratory setting often become elusive, less robust, and disappointing in their predictive power when applied to problems in the real world.

Silver, Wortman and Klos (1982) draw attention to a further problem with research studies on learned helplessness, namely, that they generally restrict themselves to quantitative methodology, and in so doing, exhibit the limitations that are characteristic of that technique. Thus, researchers focus on quantifiable behaviour only, with the result that any behaviour that cannot be quantified, remains unexplored. Another problem in studies on learned helplessness concerns the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments used. Buchwald, Coyne, and Cole (1978) point out that these instruments are often selected on the basis of face validity only. Generalization of findings obtained with the use of such instruments can therefore be misleading.

Although quantitative studies have contributed significantly to our understanding the phenomenon of learned helplessness, it can be argued that a more complete understanding of the cognitive and emotional life of 'learned helpless' cases will best be achieved by the use of qualitative research. Unlike research in the quantitative

or positivistic tradition, qualitative research taps into the phenomenology or mind world of subjects; it seeks to answer such questions as: 'Why do you think so?', 'Why do you do that?', thus exploring and seeking better understanding of the psyche. The addition of data along these lines would enrich our knowledge of the complex experiences and behaviours of 'learned helpless' learners. Moreover, the data produced would probably assist in the development of a range of intervention strategies that might later on be employed to help 'learned helpless' learners.

Purposes of the study

The present study took its direction from the concerns outlined above to use qualitative as well as quantitative methodology in research on the learned helplessness phenomenon. In addition to developing and trialling procedures and instruments that would help to identify students as cases of learned helplessness (the Identification Phase of the research), there was interest also in exploring in-depth the ongoing cognitive and emotional life, as well as actions, of such learners (the Case Study phase). Thus, the following broad research questions guided the study:

1. How can accurate identification of learned helpless learners best be achieved?
2. What are significant features of the on-going cognitive and emotional life of the learners?
3. What patterns of behaviour may be exhibited by learners experiencing learned helplessness?
4. What situations are likely to evoke a learned helplessness response?
5. What similarities and differences characterize learned helplessness in school learners?

The Nature of the Study

The Identification Phase of the study consisted of four stages. First, having been given a general description of the learned helplessness syndrome, the Form One teachers in a large Intermediate School were asked to identify children in their classes whom they perceived as learned helplessness cases. Second, these same teachers were asked to check the traits on a Learned Helplessness Traits Checklist that were exhibited by each pupil previously identified. Third, an interview session designed to uncover the children's thoughts and feelings about their present school performance and to assess the children's attributions for their performances in certain school learning tasks was conducted. Fourth, the children were asked to complete a questionnaire that required them to list such attributions and to categorize them in terms of their stability, controllability, and locus of causality. The criteria for the inclusion of a child in the study was a consistency in the pattern of data across the four identification strategies.

The second phase of the study involved an in-depth exploration of the cognitive and emotional life of six children identified as 'learned helpless'. The data for each case study were gathered in the course of six open-ended interviews, the last of which incorporated a stimulated recall procedure. In the course of these interviews, the similar and unique cognitive, motivational, and affective elements of each child's learned helplessness were explored, and the impact of these factors on their on-going school life and work monitored. Some of the data gathered during the identification phase were also drawn on for these case studies.

Significance of the Study

It is believed that the findings of the study will make a positive contribution to the work of researchers and classroom teachers who are concerned to identify and assist 'learned helpless' learners. In more specific terms, the findings should:

- (a) assist researchers and teachers to select sound identification instruments and strategies;

- (b) increase the knowledge that classroom teachers have of the factors that can account for school failure;
- (c) sensitize teachers to the complex and idiosyncratic inner life that students experiencing learning problems may have;
- (d) facilitate the development of remedial techniques that can be used by teachers, parents and school counsellors to help overcome the learning problems of learned helpless learners; and
- (e) prompt a reconsideration of the emphasis placed on particular areas of the school curriculum and emphasize the need to treat each learner as a unique individual.

Overview of the Report

In Chapter Two, a review of the theories that have been formulated to explain the phenomenon of learned helplessness and associated research findings is made. Criticisms that have been made of the different theories are highlighted, and the implications of these theories and findings for the objectives and design of the present study are pointed out.

In Chapter Three, a discussion of the methodological limitations of previous studies of learned helplessness - in particular, those which have been quantitative in character - is presented. A case for the use of a qualitative as well as a quantitative orientation in the present study is outlined.

In Chapter Four a detailed description of the research method adopted in each phase of this study is presented. Following this, a description of the sample and sampling procedure is given and the data-gathering and analysis procedures are detailed.

The data that surfaced from the Identification Phase of the study are reported, analyzed and discussed in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Six, the pattern of findings across the six case studies is presented. In addition the similar and idiosyncratic features of the six learned helpless learners are highlighted.

Chapter Seven provides a comprehensive report on two of the cases - (John and Evonne) who were perceived as contrastive in a number of respects. This is followed by a summary of findings of in the case study phase.

Finally, Chapter Eight summarizes the main research findings of the study, draws significant conclusions, and outlines some major educational implications of the study.

Note: In the interest of readability, it should be noted that the symbols LH and Lh are used in this and subsequent Chapters to refer to Learned Helplessness and Learned helpless respectively.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE : THEORY AND RESEARCH

As indicated in the introductory chapter, while theorizing and empirical research on LH have gained impetus in recent years, the field is legion with unanswered questions. Difficulties in answering these questions may well stem from the fact that research in LH is predominantly quantitative in nature - there is little, if any, information on the phenomenological perspectives of Lh cases that emanate from qualitative data gathered, for instance, during in-depth case studies. There are also a number of seemingly competing theories concerning the nature of LH and its origins.

This chapter reviews the theories and main-stream research studies on the concept of LH, in order to identify some major questions for further study. Chapter Three provides a critical review of the quantitative research methodologies that have predominated in the study of LH, and analyses the advantages of employing a qualitative or phenomenological orientation.

The present Chapter opens with a detailed review of the original theory of LH. This is followed by an appraisal of other theories which have been formulated in response to that theory. These are presented in the order listed below:

- A. The Original Theory of LH (Seligman & Maier, 1967)
- B. The Reformulated Theory of LH (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978)
- C. The Social Learning Theory (Rotter, 1966)
- D. The Reactance Theory (Wortman & Brehm, 1975)
- E. The Schedule-Shift Discrimination Theory (McReynolds, 1980)
- F. The Two-Process Theory of LH (Koller & Kaplan, 1978).

The appraisal of each theory includes a review of studies which might provide empirical support for the theory, as well as an assessment of the theory's strengths and limitations. The chapter is concluded with a review of studies on LH and learning in school settings, and the identification of the LH phenomenon that are still in need of investigation.

PART 1: THEORIES AND RESEARCH

The theory of LH was originally proposed by Seligman and Maier (1967) to describe and account for a situation in which some experimental animals became motivationally inhibited after their encounter with inescapable and aversive stimuli. Since that initial formulation, the theory has undergone a number of transformations (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978) in an attempt to fill gaps or limitations in the original model. Indeed, Oakes (1982) has argued that these transformations were defensive strategies against new experimental findings that have threatened the validity of the theory.

A. The Original Theory of Learned Helplessness

With the birth of the concept of LH, Seligman et al. (1967) theorized that when organisms are exposed to outcomes that are independent of their responses, they soon learn that the outcomes are beyond their control. This inability to control leads the victim to the expectation that outcomes will always be noncontingently related to responses in the future. This expectation inhibits the motivation to produce future responses thus producing a debilitating behaviour - in other words, helplessness.

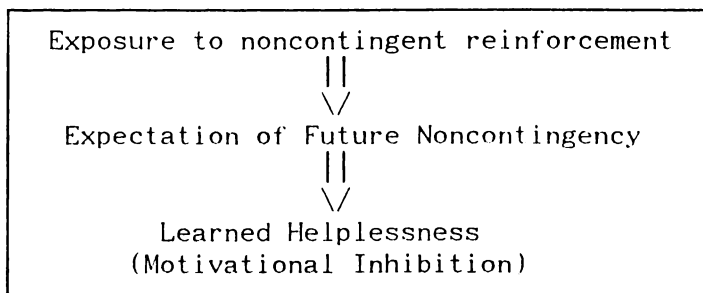


Fig. 1: The Original Account of the Occurrence of LH

The original theory saw LH as a motivational problem, the effect

being reflected in a reduced incentive to initiate responses. In support of the theory, Bolles (1972) explained that an organism's incentive to emit active instrumental responses is assumed to depend on its belief that responding will affect outcomes. In the absence of such expectation, the likelihood of responses being emitted decreases. In other words, the original model of LH assumed that an objective experience of response/ outcome noncontingency leads directly to the formation of an expectation of future response-outcome independence. The mechanism by which an initial experience with response/outcome noncontingency produced an expectation of future inability to control was not given. Also, as far as this school of thought was concerned, the nature of objective experience was irrelevant. That is, a response/outcome noncontingent experience with positive events can produce LH just as with negative events (Alloy, 1972).

In 1975 Seligman suggested that LH consists of three interrelated areas of disturbance: (a) motivational, (b) cognitive and (c) emotional. He went on to hypothesize that LH *"(1) reduces the motivation to control the outcome; (2) interferes with learning that responding controls the outcome; and (3) produces fear for as long as the subject is uncertain of the uncontrollability of the outcome, and then produces depression"* (Seligman, 1975, p.56). The cognitive inhibition was perceived as forming a link between the past and present experiences with response/outcome noncontingency. In other words, when an organism encounters information about the objective noncontingency between outcomes and its responses, it must establish a link with the past noncontingency before it can form an expectation of future noncontingency.

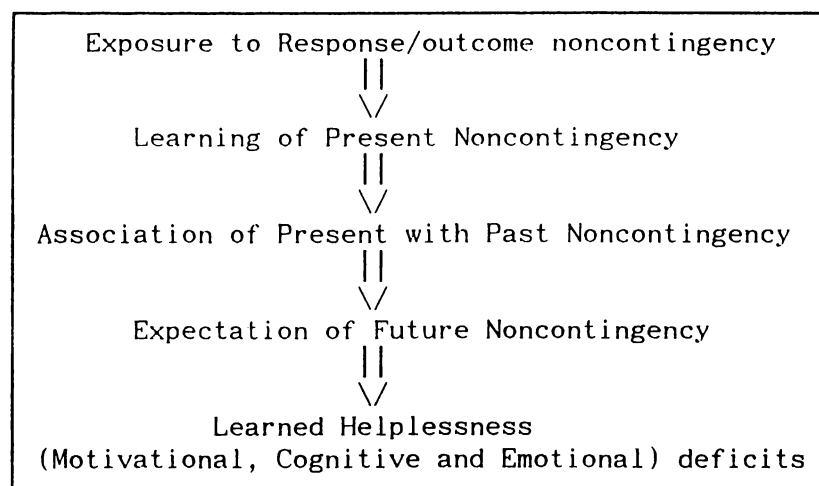


Fig. 2: The First Modified Account of the Occurrence of LH.

This implies that the cognitive products resulting from a perception of past and present response/outcome noncontingency are influenced by prior expectations as well as by subsequent new information about contingencies.

Several studies have been undertaken in an attempt to 'operationalize' Seligman's proposed motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits of LH. These are examined below.

Learned Helplessness and Motivational Deficits

The incentive to initiate responses in a traumatic situation has only one primary source : the expectation that responding will produce relief. In the absence of this incentive, voluntary responding decreases. In other words, when an individual learns that relief (outcome) is independent of responding, the expectancy that response will produce relief is negated and therefore, response initiation wanes (Seligman, 1975).

From two separate computer literature searches, 69 studies were identified that lend support to the view that LH produces some motivational deficits. A few of these studies (e.g. Krantz, Glass & Snyder, 1974; Hiroto 1974; Klein & Seligman, 1976) replicated tasks similar to those used in animal research by utilizing escape avoidance tasks with human subjects. Others (e.g. Miller & Seligman, 1975; Hiroto & Seligman, 1975; Gatchel & Proctor, 1976) made use of anagram solution tasks in which the experimental group was given a series of anagrams with a solution order to identify. Whether in the escape avoidance situation or with anagram tasks, three dependent measures were used :

- (a) "*Number of trials to escape (anagram solution) criterion.*"
- (b) "*Number of failures to escape (solve anagram).*"
- (c) "*Mean escape (anagram solution) latency.*" (Miller 111 & Norman, 1979, p.95)."

The number of trials to escape criterion was considered to provide information on the cognitive deficit. On the other hand, the

number of failures to escape and the mean escape latency in each case was viewed as a measure of the motivational deficit (Miller and Norman, 1979).

Thornton and Jacobs (1971) had in their study found that following inescapable shock, college students sat still and took escapable shocks. When they were asked why they did not respond appropriately, 60 percent of the subjects reported that they had no control over the shock, "So why try?" Such reports tend to affirm the belief that response/outcome noncontingency undermines the incentive to initiate responses.

In another study involving college students, Hiroto (1974) also demonstrated a profound interference with motivation. A post test of (a) the escape/unavoidable shock group (E), (b) the inescapable/avoidable group (I), and (c) a no-pretreatment group (NP), revealed that subjects in the inescapable/avoidable group became retarded in escape-avoidance measures compared to other groups. On average, the inescapable/avoidable subjects (I) failed to escape the aversive stimuli on over 50 percent of the 18 trials while E subjects failed on 13 percent and NP subjects failed on 11 percent of the trials. Approximately 34 percent of the I subjects failed to acquire the ability to avoid the shock. Only 8 percent of the E and NP failed to reach this shock avoidance criterion. Hiroto's study demonstrated, therefore, that the initial experience of inability to control a situation can 'sap' the motivation to try in a future situation.

In their study demonstrating motivational interference, Gatchel and Proctor (1976) compared students who were pretreated with a series of inescapable aversive tones with a group pretreated with escapable aversive tones. A t-test of mean response latencies indicated a significant difference between the groups. There was a significant decrease in the response latencies of the inescapable group. It was also found, with the use of a questionnaire, that subjects in this group were unable to learn how to terminate the noise compared with the escapable group.

Learned Helplessness and Cognitive Deficits

"Learning that an outcome is independent of response makes it more difficult to learn later on that response produces that outcome"
(Seligman, 1975; p.51).

In his explanation of the cognitive deficit component of LH, Seligman (1975) pointed out that response/outcome independence is learned actively and, like any other active form of learning, it interferes with learning about contingencies that contradict it. In other words, uncontrollability may retard the perception of a situation that can be controlled in future. This negative cognitive set was demonstrated by Miller and Seligman (1975) in one of their studies on LH. Three groups of students were exposed to escapable, inescapable, or no loud noise, after which they were made to confront two new tasks : a task of skill, and a task of chance. Subjects were then made to go through a pre-arranged run of successes and failures. At the end of each trial, subjects indicated (on a 0-10 point scale) what they thought their chances of succeeding on the next trial would be. Subjects previously exposed to inescapable noise showed very little change in their expectancy for success after each new success and failure - they had difficulty in perceiving how their response related to their success or failure. On the other hand, students in the control group, and those who had escaped noise, showed large expectancy changes following each success and failure. The authors thus explained that experience with uncontrollability may produce a difficulty in perceiving the relationship between action and responses, even in situations where the two are contingent.

In 1975, Hiroto and Seligman also reported the occurrence of another form of negative cognitive set when students were asked to solve anagrams after experiencing inescapable noise treatment. Analysis of data highlighted two kinds of deficits :

- (1) The students failed to find solutions more often than those in the 'escaped' and 'no noise' groups. The conclusion was that exposure to uncontrollable aversive events retards solution of cognitive problems in a non-aversive situation.

- (2) They also required many consecutive successes before mastering the anagram pattern, whereas students in the other groups needed three consecutive successes only.

A similar observation was also made by Gatchel and Proctor (1976) in an experiment designed to assess the physiological correlates of LH in human subjects. The group pretreated with inescapable tones demonstrated highly impaired performance at solving the anagrams, relative to other groups.

Griffith (1977) compared the performance of a noncontingent failure group with a noncontingent success group who received identical sequences of pre-determined feedback. Success subjects were informed that they had chosen the correct stimulus value at the end of each problem. As predicted by LH theory, the sample receiving either noncontingent positive or noncontingent negative feedback performed poorly on subsequent anagram tasks. O'Rourke Tyrone and Raps (1980) similarly reported impaired performance on an anagram task following noncontingent positive reinforcement.

Learned Helplessness and Emotional Deficits

"When a traumatic event occurs, it causes a heightened state of emotionality that can be loosely called FEAR. This fear continues until one or two things happen : if the subject learns that he can control the trauma, fear is reduced and can disappear altogether. On the other hand if the subject finally learns that he cannot control the trauma fear will decrease and become replaced with depression"
(Seligman, 1975, P.45).

Most studies investigating the emotional aspect of LH have supported Seligman's hypothesis that learned helplessness leads to anxiety and depression. For instance, research conducted by Roth and Bootzin (1974) vividly illustrates Seligman's (1975) explanation of this emotional deficit. Students were given solvable or unsolvable problems and then transferred to another room where they were presented with another set of solvable problems on a T.V. screen. On every tenth trial, the screen blurred. It was observed that the

subjects who first had unsolvable problems were the first to invite the experimenter to fix the screen. It seems that the group was made anxious and frustrated by unsolvability. Another observation was that the performance of students in this group was poorer. The researchers hypothesized, therefore, that uncontrollability first produces frustration which gives way to helplessness as more uncontrollability occurs.

Other evidence for the emotional consequence of LH has been provided by Miller and Seligman (1975) and Gatchel, Paulus and Maples, (1975). Subjects were given the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (Zuckerman, Lubin & Robins, 1965) before and after exposure to contingent and noncontingent reinforcements. Both studies reported significant increases in feelings of frustration, anxiety and depression following noncontingent reinforcements. Griffith (1977) obtained a similar result after administering a Paired Anxiety and Depression Scale (Mould, 1975) to subjects before and after exposure to noncontingent conditions. Findings indicated a significant increase in depression following noncontingent failure, and anxiety following noncontingent success. These findings paralleled those of Roth and Kubal's (1975) who after administering questionnaires to subjects following a LH training phase, reported increases in feelings of LH, incompetence, stress, frustration, hostility, depression, anger, and fatigue. They indicate emotional disruption to be one of the sure consequences of uncontrollability.

Summary and Comments on the Original Model of Learned Helplessness

With the emergence of the motivational, cognitive and emotional facets of learned helplessness, Seligman (1975) pointed out that:

"An adequate theory of learned helplessness must account for the three facets of learned helplessness disorder: motivational, cognitive, and emotional disturbances. It must be testable: there should be experiments that can be performed to confirm or disconfirm it. Finally, it must be applicable outside the laboratory: it must be useful in explaining helplessness as found in the real world."
(p.45).

The original theory of LH was found to have satisfied these conditions. However, as research on LH gradually shifted from animal to human subjects, and as research with human subjects progressed, some investigators noted conceptual limitations in the original model, particularly as it applied to human behaviour. For example, it was realized that the original model had ignored the issue of individual differences concerning responses to uncontrollable situations, as well as the fact that there may be more than one type of LH. In other words, the question as to why two people exposed to the same experience of uncontrollability may learn different things was not addressed by the original model. There was a need, therefore, to explain why with a similar experience, one person might ascribe his/her failure to personal inability, while another might think that the task was impossible and that no one could solve it. Emphasizing the need to address individual differences in their response to an uncontrollable experience, Bandura (1977) asserted that *"people can give up trying because they lack the sense of efficacy in achieving the required behaviour, or, they may be assured of their capabilities, but give up trying because they expect their behaviour to have no effect on an unresponding environment"* (pp.204-205). Subsequently, he suggested a conceptual distinction between efficacy and capability expectations.

Another area in which the original model of LH was heavily criticized concerned the generality of helplessness across situations and persistence over time. The original model could not explain when and where the expectation of no control is likely to occur and produce debilitation; according to its explanation, LH occurs when a person shows some motivational and cognitive deficits as a consequence of an expectation of uncontrollability. In contrast to the reformulated theory (e.g. Abramson *et al.* 1978), the original theory holds that LH occurs in a response/outcome noncontingent situation whether the expectancy is generalized appropriately or not. In other words, the theory holds that an uncontrollable success, just as an aversive stimulus, is capable of producing LH. However, the theory is mute about the difference in emotional consequence of LH attributed to uncontrollable success and failure.

To make up for these limitations, and in view of the fact that more complex and detailed hypotheses are required to explain human cognitive processes, a host of new theoretical positions have been adopted to explain the phenomenon of LH. For example, in 1978 the theory of LH itself underwent a major revision based on Weiner's (1966) theory of attribution. The revision was pioneered by Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale (1978) and is commonly referred to as the reformulated theory of LH.

B. The Reformulated Theory of LH

Weiner's Attribution Theory

In 1958, Heider drew attention to the commonsense explanations that ordinary people offer for human actions and events. According to him, *"if a person believes that the lines in his palm foretell his future, this belief must be taken into account in explaining certain of his expectations and actions"* (Heider, 1958, p.5). In his book, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations, Heider (1958) further proposed that the nature of people's responses to specific *"stimuli that they encounter, are determined by their causal explanation of the stimuli"*.

Since then, a number of attribution theories have been formulated, all based on the proposition that:

"People interpret behaviour in term of its causes and these interpretations play an important role in determining reactions to that behaviour" (Kelley & Michela, 1980, p.458).

Prominent among attribution theorists is Weiner who, along with his colleagues, has studied extensively attributions in educational contexts (e.g. Weiner, Kukla, Reed, Rest & Rosenbom, 1971, Weiner, Heckhausen, Meyer & Cook, 1972; Weiner, 1972, 1974, 1979, 1980). Weiner proposed that there were three dimensions on which attributions could be categorized and that the way in which people respond cognitively, emotionally, and motivationally to events depended on their perception that causal factors were:

- (a) Internal (e.g. effort and ability) or external (e.g. task difficulty or luck) - LOCUS dimension.
- (b) Stable (e.g. ability and task difficulty) or unstable (e.g. effort or luck) - the STABILITY dimension.
- (c) Controllable (e.g. effort) or uncontrollable (e.g. ability) - the CONTROLLABILITY dimension.

In his further work on attribution theory, Weiner (1972) suggested that people make attributions about their successes and failures to four main factors: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Ability and task difficulty were classified by Weiner as stable and uncontrollable causal factors, while luck and effort were seen as unstable and controllable.

Studies by Bar-Tal (1978), Weiner (1979), Marsh, Cairns, Relich, Barnes, and Debus (1984), and Covington (1984) have revealed that individual differences in the way attributions are made to such causes as ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck are related to school performance, self-concept and academic behaviour. For example, individuals who attribute failure to insufficient effort (an unstable and controllable factor) are more likely to persist longer and perform better in subsequent similar tasks, unlike those who make failure attributions to a lack of ability (a stable and uncontrollable factor). Thus, it is the classification of the success/failure causal factors that makes the Attribution theory relevant to a description of LH and provided the basis for the Reformulated Theory of LH.

Attribution and LH

In recent years issues involving attribution have been actively researched as researchers seek to know how individuals in everyday life figure out what causes their behaviour. One of these research areas is LH. It is the classification of the various 'springs of action' that makes the theory useful in the explanation of LH. For example, causal factors that are INTERNAL, STABLE, and UNCONTROLLABLE

are associated with LH (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). In other words, these dimensions predict in what circumstances and over what time span the expectation of uncontrollability is likely to be present.

Tennen and Eller (1977), in their LH experiment, subjected individuals to a "double helplessness experimental condition" in which subjects were told that each succeeding task was either easier or more difficult. Results revealed that the easier group, who attributed performance to ability, exhibited the LH syndrome but the group who made attributions to test difficulty did not. The researchers suggested, therefore, that the attribution of noncontingent failure to ability or personal competence leads to increased LH, whereas attribution to situational factors does not produce LH.

Similarly, Miller and Seligman (1975) and Klein and Seligman (1976) in their experiments to examine the conceptual similarity of externally oriented and Lh individuals had demonstrated that on skill tasks, Lh subjects exhibited belief in external control. The researchers' interpretation of these findings was that Lh subjects perceived skill tasks as tasks of chance, independent of response.

It was the findings of studies such as those cited above that formed the basis for the revised model of LH (Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale 1978). In the section below, the relationship between the attribution dimensions (i.e. locus, stability, controllability, and globality) and LH is discussed in more detail.

The Locus of Causality Dimension and LH: Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control theory holds that the locus of control orientation of people influences expectancies with 'internals' being more likely to use their past experience as a basis for generalizations for future performance. Because of research findings (e.g. Weiner, et al. 1971) that LH results from the attribution of failure-causing factors to an internal source and a decrease in success expectancy, Newman (1978) re-examined Rotter's locus of control interpretation of expectancy changes following success and failure. He pointed out that within the locus of control construct were two others: (1) perceived causality,

and (2) perceived personal control. For an explanation of LH, he suggested that these two constructs should be analyzed into different dimensions, - locus of causality and control.

In an attempt to clarify the relationship between locus of control and LH, Weiner et al. (1971) also postulated a dimensional link in which perceived locus of causality was related to the affective or emotional consequences of failure and success. Affective reactions of shame and pride were thought to be maximized given internal attributions for failure and success respectively. The reverse was expected to hold given external attributions. When the occurrence of LH was considered, Weiner (1972), Weiner, Hekhausen, Meyer and Cook (1972), argued that it was the classification of the causal factor along the stability dimension rather than the locus of control dimension that primarily influenced changes in expectancy and the resulting LH when there was a decline in expectancy.

The Stability Dimension and LH: As mentioned previously, Weiner and his colleagues (Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Read, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971; Weiner, 1972) had identified further dimensions for the classification of causal attribution factors, the stability dimension being one of these. This dimension classifies causes as either stable (invariant) or unstable (variant). The primary conceptual linkage of the stability dimension is with the expectancy for success. For example, attributions to intelligence (an internal factor) and task difficulty (an external factor) perceived as stable factors are capable of producing greater increments in expectancy after success and greater decrements in success expectancy after failure. With attributions to unstable factors such as mood and effort, the nature of future performance is uncertain. This self-defeating attribution schema has been demonstrated as typical of Lh children with failure being ascribed to stable causes such as lack of ability (e.g. Dweck & Goetz, 1978; Andrew & Debus, 1978; Weiner, 1979).

The difference in the effort versus ability representing unstable and stable attributions for failure has also been used as a conceptual basis for attempts to retrain Lh persons in their attribution patterns

in achievement situations. For example, Dweck (1975) showed the efficacy of training failure-prone children to attribute failure to lack of effort, instead of to lack of ability.

Taking into account the stability dimension of attribution and its relationship with expectancy, Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale, (1978) proposed that helplessness was chronic when it is long-lived or recurrent and 'transient' when it is short-lived and non-recurrent. Speculating that a secondary linkage existed between stability to esteem-related emotions, Weiner (1979) suggested that attributions conveying that events will not change in the future produce feelings of helplessness, and depression. Similarly, Newman (1978) pointed out a cyclical or self-reinforcing relationship between self-concept and pattern of attributions along the stability dimension. A person who feels competent ascribes failure to unstable factors so that subsequent expectancy of success is not reduced, and a high ability self-concept is sustained. The converse type of cycle occurs with an individual who has a low self-concept of ability.

The Control Dimension and LH: Controllability is another attribution dimension. Some authors refer to it as perceived competence. It is the capacity to produce desirable effects or reverse undesirable ones. Seligman (1975) defined controllability as the ability of an individual to make a response that actually modifies an aversive event. The response could be active or passive, meaning that an individual can escape or mitigate the stimulus impact.

The controllability dimension was introduced by Weiner (1979) to replace a dimension of causality labeled 'Intentionality' which was introduced by Heider (1958). Heider (1958) asserts that causation implies the actor's intention to bring about an event. For one to be motivated to act, there must be an intention. According to Heider, if one has intention but is lacking sufficient power, (i.e. he/she cannot do the desired thing), there may be sufficient motivation, but the desired end state cannot be achieved. Failure despite the high motivation would be therefore attributed to ability (which he called 'can') and would be personal.

Rosenbaum (1972), in agreement with Heider's classification system, incorporated the concept of 'intentionality' in the achievement domain. She classified causes such as effort or teacher's bias as 'intentional', and ability and task difficulty as 'unintentional'. Rosenbaum argued that the dimension of intentionality is needed to differentiate, for example, between mood and effort which are both internal and unstable. She described mood as unintentional and effort as intentional. In contrast, Weiner (1979) argued that "*Intent connotes a desire or want*" and failure attributed to a lack of effort, does not necessarily mean that there was an intent to fail. Weiner went on to argue that the difference between effort and mood is that effort is subject to volitional control. He thus proposed 'Controllability' versus 'Uncontrollability' as a third dimension. According to Attribution Theory of LH, it is the failure to control that leads to a feeling of helplessness. Lh individuals perceive themselves as personally unable to exert any volitional control over factors that account for undesired outcomes. In other words it is the perception of a personal lack of control that accounts for a state of helplessness.

Lh and the Globality of Attribution: The attributional dimension of globality, which was formulated in Abramson et al.'s (1978) LH model of Depression, has implications for the generalisation of deficits. Seligman (1975) proposed that organisms are aware of noncontingencies in their environment, and that the experience of noncontingency in one situation can cause inappropriate expectation of noncontingency in a subsequent situation. This generalization, according to Dweck and Goetz (1978), is brought about when attribution of noncontingency is made to stable factors such as ability and task difficulty. Thus, they concluded that particular attribution patterns can be used to predict the extent of generalization to new situations and the amount of helplessness that will be exhibited.

Based on the above proposition, Abramson et al. (1978) suggested the 'Global'/'Specific' dimensions of LH as an analogue to internal and stability dimensions. Global factors affect a wide variety of outcomes whereas specific factors do not. According to Abramson et al,

a global attribution implies that helplessness will occur across various situations. A specific attribution on the other hand implies the experience of helplessness only in the original situation.

A few studies have been used to support the notion of globality of LH. One such study is Tennen and Eller's (1977) where subjects were given unsolvable discrimination problems that were labelled either progressively 'easier' or progressively 'difficult'. The assumption was that failure on easy problems should produce attributions to lack of ability (stable and global factor). Failure on difficult problems should produce attribution to task difficulty (external, stable and specific). Subjects were then asked to work on anagrams which were supposed to be unrelated to the first task. Results showed that attribution of poor performance (on easy problems) to inability debilitated performance on the subsequent task (anagram task), whereas attributions to task difficulty facilitated performance on the anagrams. It was subsequently explained that subjects in the task-difficulty group did not show a performance deficit because they made attributions to situation-specific factors, and thus did not have an expectation of uncontrollability in the test task. In other words, there was no generalization of expectancy.

Another study is Roth and Kubal's (1975) which tested helplessness across different situations. Subjects participated in two different experiments that were conducted on the same day in the same building. Subjects were made to fail the pretraining test and then underwent the test task. Results indicated that subjects who were told that the first test was a "really good predictor of grades in college" (important), showed performance deficit in the cognitive problem in the test phase. The other group who were told that the test was merely "an experiment in learning" (unimportant), showed no cognitive deficits. In the first case, subjects attributed their failure to intelligence or ability which is an internal, stable and thus global factor. Their expectation, therefore, recurred in the new situation, producing deficits. The authors reasoned that subjects in the 'unimportant' condition attributed their failure to unstable and specific factors, and so did not generalize their expectation of failure to a new experimental situation.

The common observation in these studies is that when subjects attribute their helplessness in the training phase to global and stable factors, a broad transfer of helplessness effects is observed. Alternatively, attributing helplessness to very specific and unstable factors predicts very little transfer of helplessness. Of concern to teachers, as well as to psychologists, is the affective consequence of this faulty but global transfer.

Personal versus Universal Learned Helplessness: One of the inadequacies of the first LH model was its failure to account for individual differences in response to uncontrollability, and the fact that there may be more than one type of human helplessness (Abramson et al. 1978). According to the Reformulated Theory of LH, when an individual perceives a task as contingent on a certain action, but feels personally unable to effect that outcome, she/he is said to have experienced Personal Helplessness. On the other hand, if LH is characterized by the belief that an outcome is independent of all of one's responses, as well as the responses of other relevant people, it is labelled Universal Helplessness (Abramson et. al, 1978). The understanding is that when people believe that outcomes are more likely or less likely to happen to them than to relevant others, they attribute the outcomes to something about themselves. That is, attribution is made to an internal factor such as ability. Conversely, if people believe that the outcomes are as likely to happen to themselves as to relevant others, they make external attributions. Thus the dimension of Internality/Externality was used to explain the difference between Personal and Universal helplessness and to resolve the limitation of the first LH model that had to do with individual differences in response to uncontrollable experience.

The Personal and Universal types of LH have been illustrated by Hiroto (1974). In this study, a child was assigned to a condition in which he received uncontrollable noise with the instruction that he could do something to turn off the noise (although the noise was actually uncontrollable). After repeated unsuccessful attempts to turn off the noise, the child came to believe that the problem was unsolvable: that is, neither he, nor any other children, could terminate the noise. Alternatively, the child might have believed that

the problem was solvable but he, as a person, lacked the ability to solve it. This would mean that although the subject could not control the noise, other children could successfully do it. It is the distinction of these two states in the Reformulated Theory of LH that constitutes another difference between the original and new models. The original model envisages the occurrence of LH only when the causal factors are within the individual (internal dimension). In other words, while the old theory postulates the occurrence of debilitating behaviour only in case of personal LH, the Reformulated Theory of LH holds that performance deficit should occur in cases of both universal and personal helplessness since, in both cases, people expect that outcomes cannot be controlled. The distinction between Personal and Universal LH further accounts for the emotional consequences of LH.

The Reformulated Theory Account of the Emotional Deficit of LH

LH theorists (e.g. Seligman, 1975; Klein et al. 1978, and Rizley, 1978) have contended that failure to perceive a reward which follows a particular response as response/contingent leaves an individual in a state of depression. Seligman (1975) and his colleagues argued that when exposed to a circumstance in which a response has no systematic outcome, persons tend to be apathetic, depressed and deficient in learning new responses.

Explaining these emotional deficits from the attribution theory stance, Weiner (1977) points out that attributions to internal or external factors produce the affective reactions of pride and shame. Thus, people feel proud and satisfied with themselves when they attribute their success to ability and effort, which are both internal causes. Attribution of success to good luck or ease of task leads to less pride and does not really bolster one's ego.

"Pride and shame, as well as interpersonal evaluation, are absolutely maximized when achievement outcomes are ascribed internally and are minimized when success and failure are attributed to external causes. Thus, success attributed to high ability or hard work produces more pride and external praise than success that is perceived as due to the ease of the task or

good luck. In a similar manner, failure perceived as caused by low ability or lack of effort results in greater shame and external punishment than failure that is attributed to the excessive difficulty of the task or bad luck. In sum, locus of causality influences the affective or emotional consequences of achievement outcomes." (Weiner, 1977, p. 183)

On the other hand, failure attributed to lack of effort or lack of ability results in shame and dissatisfaction with self, while failure attributed to task difficulty or lack of luck leads to less shame. The reason is that the affected individual does not accept personal responsibility for his failure (Weiner, 1985).

Bar-Tal and Frieze (1977) argued for an association of some demographic characteristics with attribution patterns. Using studies with different sexes, they demonstrated that females tend to be more external and to employ more luck attributions than do males. In addition, females often under-rate their ability. Thus females experience less guilt in a failure situation compared with their male counterparts.

Of importance, too, is variation in the severity of these affective problems. For example, shame may be very strong or mild depending on the type of attribution made. A number of researchers have examined the disparate affective consequences of self-ascriptions of success and failure to ability as opposed to effort. In one of such studies, Nicholls (1975) reported that the extent to which one is pleased about success varies with ability, effort, task difficulty and luck ascriptions. Given success, pleasure is positively related to internal (personal) attributions and negatively related to external factors. Pride over success is associated with high effort, and low ability. On the other hand, shame over failure is associated with low effort and high ability (Nicholls, 1976). Sohn (1977) also suggested that pride and shame are associated with effort attributions. To test this idea, he conducted three studies to examine attributional preferences and/or ratings of happiness, pride, and shame for success and failure. Results confirmed that pride and shame were associated with effort attributions, with lack of or less effort leading to guilt.

However, the findings above by Nicholls (1976) and Sohn (1977) have been refuted by Covington and Omelich (1979) who contended that increased effort with a subsequent failure leads to shame. They argue that shame is a global emotion and has both ability-linked (humiliation) and effort-linked (guilt) components. Although increased effort acts to reduce guilt in subsequent test failure, (reducing the guilt of not having tried), increased effort with subsequent failure increases suspicion of inability. Since lack of ability (low intelligence) is linked up with shame, then a combination of high effort and failure simultaneously increases shame (humiliation at being revealed incompetent). In other words, the harder one must work to achieve success, the more likely intellectual ability will be perceived as limited, while success without much effort promotes an assumption of brilliance. Hence *"failure despite greater effort is a compelling evidence of low ability and therefore should maximize shame"* (Covington and Omelich, 1979b, p 688).

While some researchers perceive poor self-worth as one of the affective consequences of LH, others have, on the contrary, demonstrated low self-esteem or self-worth as an important causal factor in LH. Taking cognizance of personal dimensions of LH, Abramson, Garber and Seligman (1980) predict that individuals who attribute their helplessness to internal factors (personal helplessness) will show lower self-esteem, than those who make external attributions (universal helplessness).

In contrast to Abramson et al.'s (1980) prediction, Ickes and Layman (1978) had identified self-perception as a causal factor in helplessness. They reported that individuals with low self-esteem tend to attribute negative outcomes to internal factors and positive outcomes to external factors. The opposite holds for high self-esteem individuals. Fitch (1970) and Krovetz (1974) had reported similar findings from their attribution studies. They pointed out that self-esteem could be enhanced by attributing success outcomes to sources within the person and failure outcome to causal sources outside the person.

Covington and Omelich (1979a, 1979b) also associated self-ascription of success and failure to self-worth. Their assumption is that individuals try to maintain a self-concept of high ability because of the "society's tendency to equate personal worth with the ability to achieve" (Covington & Omelich 1979b, p 688). The self-worth theory assumes that personal worth depends heavily on one's accomplishments and, because ability is perceived as a prime ingredient for success and inability as a major cause of failure, ability becomes critical to self-definition. The theory focuses on the attempts of individuals to protect self by the kind performance attributions they make (Covington and Omelich, 1984). Attribution of failure to external factors can thus be perceived as an attempt to protect one's self-worth, just as is the case when success is attributed to internal factors. As previously pointed out in this chapter, the Reformulated Theory of LH holds that helplessness results from the attribution of failure to stable factors such as ability which cannot be controlled by the individual. Thus, individuals who personalize causality for failure more than causality for success are more prone to helplessness. Based on the above discussions of 'attribution' and 'self-worth' theories, it could be concluded that LH children who more often personalize failure causality than success causality are bound to have a very poor perception of themselves or low self-worth.

Summary and Comments on the Reformulated Theory of LH

In 1978, the Reformulated Theory of LH was developed to overcome some shortcomings inherent in the original model and also to supplement it by providing more in-depth explanations of aspects of LH. For instance, the reformulated model advanced a step further to explain why expectation of uncontrollability can transfer to new situations and survives the time interval between tasks (Wortman and Dintzer, 1978).

Unlike the original theory, the reformulated theory not only predicts conditions where helplessness is most likely to occur, it describes also the processes involved and suggests means for prevention and cure.

Although the Reformulated Theory of LH has been acknowledged as a major step in the study of LH, it is not free from criticism. Zuroff (1980) points out that

- (a) the theory's crucial mediating variables (attributions) are only sketchily linked to antecedent variables;
- (b) the Reformulated Theory does not account for the facilitating effect of response-outcome noncontingency that usually precedes LH; and
- (c) it has not explained adequately the individual difference variable (e.g. why different people may respond differently to LH training).

Covington and Omelich (1979) also contend that even when attributions are elicited, they are not well described by Weiner's (1975) attributional dimensions of stability, controllability, and locus of causality, on which the Reformulated Theory bases its explanation of LH.

Some basic assumptions of the reformulated model have also been questioned. For example, Zuroff (1980) has questioned if the learning of uncontrollability is a sufficient cause of helplessness, or must the outcome in question be aversive and/or highly important? The second question is whether it is the attribution of causality that one makes about his/her inability to exert control alone that influences the subsequent cognitive, motivational and affective components of LH (Koller & Kaplan, 1978).

In the quest for answers to these questions, researchers (e.g. Snyder, Smoller, Strenta & Frankel, 1981), have suggested a variety of mediators that might account for impaired performance following 'helplessness training'. One is that performance decrement may occur in helplessness studies because subjects work half-heartedly on the test task. By expending little effort, subjects can presumably protect their self-esteem in case of subsequent failure. In support of this

hypothesis, Snyder et al. (1981) found that some manipulations such as the description of a test task as highly difficult, or the playing of some distracting music during performance on a task, can improve performance and eliminate LH deficits.

Reactance Theorists (Wortman & Brehm, 1975) also suggest that performance decrement in LH experiments may result from frustration, and hostility elicited by helplessness training. Thus, instead of cognitive inhibition as predicted by the Reformulated Model, they contend that performance decrement might be due to the hostile and negative behaviour elicited by poor performance and lack of effort. However, the researcher notes that these behavioural variables, namely hostility and negativism, would make no impact on subsequent task performance without cognitive processing. So Wortman and Brehm, rather than disproving the reformulated LH theorist's stance that LH produces cognitive deficit, were in fact lending more support.

Coyne, Metalsky and Lavelle, (1980) also advanced increased anxiety as another possible mediator of helplessness. Their stance was supported by Roth and Kubal's (1975) study which indicated that anxiety is heightened among subjects who are exposed to uncontrollable aversive outcomes. Similarly, Kurl (1978) had argued that a state of high arousal rather than attribution categorization may interfere with people's ability to process information relevant to successful task performance. It can lead to self-preoccupation that interferes with task-focused cognitions and behaviour.

Another criticism of the Reformulated Theory of LH resides in its inability to explain what Wortman and Brehm (1975) considered to be of 'potential importance' in LH. These authors contend that the LH model of depression is mute about how important the uncontrollable outcome must be to affect emotion. They also argue that "*a comprehensive theory of reactions to uncontrollable outcomes must specify precisely when people will react to lack of control by becoming helpless and when they will exhibit invigoration and performance increments*" (Wortman and Dintzer, 1978, p 85). This explanation, according to them, is absent in the reformulated model.

Contrary to the criticisms above, however, McReynolds (1980) asserts that it is not feasible that a single theory can satisfactorily explain the phenomenon of LH. He went on to argue that *"all LH phenomena do not appear to be of the same ilk and accordingly, a single theory will not encompass them all"* (McReynolds, 1980, p 155).

Interest in LH phenomena, coupled with the zeal to propound a 'more efficient' theory to explain it' or supplement the already existing theory of LH has led researchers to draw on other theories to help account for aspects of the phenomenon. These include: Rotter's Social Learning Theory (Rotter, 1966), Reactance Theory (Wortman & Brehm, 1975), Schedule Shift Discrimination Theory (McReynolds, 1980) and the Two - Process Theory (Koller and Kaplan, 1978). However, these subsequent theories have been even less successful in their attempts to experimentally demonstrate the relationship between uncontrollability and the three helplessness deficits. The next sections discuss each of these theories and their explanation for LH.

C. The Social Learning Theory And LH

Rotter's Social Learning Theory

"If a person perceives a reinforcement as contingent upon his own behavior, then the occurrence of either a positive or a negative reinforcement will strengthen or weaken potential for that behavior to recur in the same or similar situation. If he sees the reinforcement as being outside his own control or not contingent, that is, depending upon chance, fate, powerful others, or unpredictable, then the preceding behavior is less likely to be strengthened or weakened." (Rotter, 1966, p 5).

The basic components of Social Learning theory have been identified as: behaviour potential, expectancy, reinforcement value and psychological situation. The theory postulates that *"The potential for behaviour X to occur in situation I in relation to reinforcement a, is the function of the expectancy of occurrence of*

reinforcement a, following behaviour X in situation I" (Rotter, Chance and Phares, 1972, p.14). This means that people acquire generalized expectancies that events are contingent or noncontingent upon their own behaviour.

Most research on perceptions of personal control is grounded in Social Learning Theory where locus of control is perceived as the determinant of the nature of expectancy (Stipeck and Weisz, 1981). In other words, the magnitude of expectancy change and behavioural potential following success or failure is influenced by the perceived locus of control of the event. (The 'term locus of control' refers to the origin of possible causes of success and failure. This origin is seen as either 'internal' or 'external'). Thus, 'internal control' refers to an individual's belief that an event or outcome depends on his/her own relatively permanent characteristic (e.g. ability, attitude, emotional states, and motivation). On the other hand, 'external control' refers to the belief that an event is caused by factors beyond the individual's control (e.g. luck, task difficulty, and powerful others). Studies (e.g. Phares, 1957; James & Rotter, 1958; Rotter, Liverant & Crowne, 1961) provide support for the distinction between internal and external orientations. That is, some people (internals) perceive the factors responsible for their performance as within them (e.g. effort and ability) whereas externals think those causes lie outside themselves (e.g. task difficulty and luck).

In 1966, Rotter in his seminar monograph on 'The Locus of Control', associated the locus construct with task performance. He maintained that individuals who perceive contingencies between performance on task and outcomes are likely to perform differently than those who perceive performance outcomes as beyond their control. Stating it more specifically, if reinforcement is not perceived as contingent on a person's own behaviour, then the expectancy that a particular response will be followed by reinforcement in future situation, will diminish. He stated further that "*expectancies in each situation are determined not only by specific experiences in that situation, but also to some extent by experiences in other situations that the individual perceives as similar*" (Rotter,

1975, p.57). Thus, the debilitating behaviour usually observed in LH experiments was explained in terms of expectancy changes.

The Social Learning Theory Account of LH

Social learning theorists believe that the occurrence of LH typically involves repeated failures within a context where success is possible. Based on what they perceive as the principle determinants of expectancy change outcome (i.e. success or failure and perceived locus of control), LH is explained in the light of fluctuations in a subject's expectancy as she/he continues to fail. In his explanation for LH in humans, Zuroff (1980) distinguishes among three types of expectancies: overall expectancy, specific expectancy and generalized expectancy. The overall expectancy which according to Zuroff, determines an individual's behaviour "*includes contributions from both specific expectancies based on experiences in the same situation ... and generalized expectancies for reinforcement based on related experiences in other situations.*" (Zuroff, 1980, p. 132). It is predicted that repeated failure will lead to the reduction of a subject's specific expectancies. It is also expected that as the contribution of the generalized expectancies to the overall expectancies drops over repeated trials, the overall expectancy also reduces. The subject's behaviour potential (motivation) also reduces simultaneously with the reduction in expectancies, so that little goal directed behaviour is manifested eventually (motivational deficit). This, according to Social Learning Theory (SLT), is the state of debilitated performance associated with LH. This is demonstrated by Brown and Inuoye's (1978) study. In this study, the observed high correlation between the subjects' expectancy statements and their persistence on task is perceived as clear proof that a fall in expectancy inhibits one's willingness to act.

An initial rise in problem solving behaviour - which is often observed in LH training sessions - and then a subsequent decline has also been explained by SLT in terms of expectancy changes. Zuroff (1980), in his explanation of the reactance phase and the subsequent decline in performance in LH Experiments, points out that after a certain number of failures on the first task, the individual realizes

that the behaviour she/he has been utilizing is ineffective. If the problem solving general expectancies (self-confidence in problem solving) are sufficiently strong, the individual will begin to be involved in active problem solving behaviour. When this problem solving effort fails, the general expectancies are superseded by low specific expectancies for each strategy. Consequently, there is no basis for maintaining the overall expectancies even at a moderate level, so that passive behaviour ensues.

Motivational Deficit: Motivational difficulty usually observed in LH experiments is perceived by SLT as resulting from shifts from perceived internal to external locus of control as an individual works on a task. The explanation is that although a person's initial expectancies may be high, if she/he is exposed to many disconfirming failures, she/he may come to believe that reinforcements occur randomly or are under the control of an external factor. This switch to an expectancy for external control, according to Zuroff (1980), would lead to decreased problem-solving behaviour and thereby decrease performance and produce deficits that debilitate subsequent task performance.

Some studies have also been conducted to support the fact that the degree of motivation to persist on a task is a factor of the perceived locus of control. For example, Phares (1957) in his study instructed one half of his subjects that performance on a matching task was only a matter of luck (external control), while subjects in the other half received information that performance was determined by skill (internal control). Subjective probability of success was assessed prior to each trial, with a fixed order of partial reinforcement given to both experimental conditions. The data revealed that typical expectancy shifts (i.e. increase in the expectancy of success after a success, and a decrease in the expectancy of success after a failure) were more frequent and of greater magnitude in the skill than in the chance condition. Thus, as predicted by social learning theory, and in accordance with the LH model, the recurrence of the debilitating performance was believed to be more likely, given internal (skill) rather than external (luck) perceptions of control. Phares (1957), furthermore, found that atypical shifts (decreases in

the expectancy of success following a success and increase after a failure) were more evident in the chance than in the skill condition.

Cognitive Deficit: The SLT account for the learning difficulty (cognitive deficit) usually observed in LH experiments is explained in terms of the subject's external locus of control orientation. A number of problem solving behaviours have been associated with subjects' perceptions of tasks as externally controlled. In addition, externals have been described as showing less awareness of information relevant to future behaviour (Seeman & Evan; 1962; Seeman, 1963), less attentiveness and less time and effort expended on tasks (Gregory, 1978) and less efficient information processing strategies on memory tasks (Bartel, Ducette & Wolk, 1972).

Emotional Deficit: Though Social Learning Theorists recognize the affective problems that usually accompany the LH state, they refrain from making use of affective state constructs on the grounds that: (1) the referents for a specific affect frequently co-vary only weakly with one another, and (2) referents for different affects frequently overlap. For example, complaining might be an indication of sadness, anxiety, frustration or the three simultaneously, so that it might be erroneous to make specific reference to an affective state based on an observed overt behaviour. To avoid making inferences that might be misleading, the theory makes only tentative predictions about the occurrence of certain emotions based on observed behaviours.

In contrast to the Reformulated Theory of LH, SLT holds that both overt and covert emotional behaviours are likely to occur when there is a high expectancy for aversive events or a very low expectancy for obtaining highly valued rewards (Rotter, 1954). "*Affective expression should occur therefore in LH situations when overall expectancies are low and reinforcement values are high*" (Zuroff, 1980, p 136). In other words, affective reaction correlates positively with task importance. Secondly, an affective deficit will occur when an individual perceives a failure causing factor to be of an internal locus.

Unlike the original theory of LH, SLT does not predict a specific relationship between helplessness and depression. It has, in fact, argued for a nil relationship between the two. This argument is based on Buchwald, Coyne, and Cole's (1978) study which indicated little support for the notion that LH is related to depression. However, many other studies on LH and depression have established a relationship between the two (e.g. Roth & Kubal, 1974; Miller & Seligman, 1975; and Gatchel, McKinney, and Koebernick, 1977).

Summary and Comments on the SLT Account of LH

Though the SLT analysis of LH was introduced in response to the perceived limitations of the Reformulated Theory of LH, the two theories cannot be viewed as simply contradictory. The reason is that both have made use of some related constructs such as expectancy, and internal-external locus of control, and also have made similar predictions. However, proponents of the use of SLT in this context believe that the theory has some advantages over the Original and the Reformulated Theories of LH in that:

- (1) It offers analysis of both the process of becoming helpless when initially exposed to uncontrollable events and the process of generalization of helplessness from the initial situation to other potentially controllable situations. It thus provides further confirmation for the view that helplessness in a new learning situation is caused by an inappropriate shift in expectancy.
- (2) The process analysis of LH helps in the specification of a wide range of individual and situational differences-variables that are usually observed in helplessness training programs. The theory is thus perceived as having more predictive power than the attribution theory.
- (3) The SLT analysis accounts for all the crucial empirical findings, including the facilitating effect.

- (4) It is believed that the use of general theory such as the SLT rather than a specific "helplessness theory" integrates the LH phenomena with other bodies of psychological knowledge (Zuroff, 1980).

Unlike the Reformulated Theory of LH, SLT in its explanation of LH, also postulates two sources of LH generalization: (1) Primary stimulus generalization which refers to generalization based on the physical similarity of situations, and (2) mediated stimulus generalization which is based on perceived similarity along some psychologically meaningful dimension. Generalization is also seen to vary according to:

- (a) *"Novelty: The more familiar the second task is, the less generalization will occur and the less likely it is that helplessness will occur too."* (Zuroff, 1980, p.140). This implies that it should be difficult to induce helplessness in a situation where an individual has an extensive experience with the activity.
- (b) Physical similarity: On the grounds that physical similarity determines the extent to which a primary stimulus is generalized, one would not expect to find helplessness on a subsequent task that is quite different from the first.
- (c) Need relatedness of tasks: Greater generalization of expectancy change will occur between tasks leading to related rewards than between those leading to dissimilar rewards (Chance, 1959).
- (d) Locus of control reinforcement in task: It is predicted that there will be greater generalization if two tasks are seen as internally controlled, than if one is perceived as internally and the other externally controlled.
- (e) Perceived relevance of the first task: The fact that some outcomes are better predictors of future than others, and expectancies are adjusted accordingly.

Although the SLT may be more specific in its account of the nature and function of tasks that are likely to produce LH, it is obvious from the factors listed above that it is to a certain extent similar to the Reformulated Theory of LH in its explanation for the occurrence of LH. Also like the Reformulated Theory, SLT has made suggestions for the prevention and alleviation of helplessness that arises in natural settings. According to these theorists, helplessness can be prevented, or the susceptibility to it can be reduced, by experiences that foster high expectancies and internal locus of control orientation. Thus, the alleviation of helplessness requires the manipulation of either expectancies or reinforcement value or in some cases, both (Zuroff, 1980). Zuroff further pointed out that carefully arranged experiences of success can increase specific expectancies, but training in problem solving is still better because future occurrence of helplessness can then be avoided and the existing one terminated.

From the above discussion, it would appear that the Social Learning Theory has made a significant contribution to the understanding of LH. However, it should be noted that most of these propositions have yet to be empirically tested and that conclusions based on them need to be tentative.

D. The Reactance Theory and LH

The Reactance Theory

The assumption of Reactance Theory (Brehm & Wortman, 1975) is that individuals are motivated to maintain control over their environment (Lerner, 1970, 1971) because they find it difficult to view the world as an unpredictable and uncontrollable place. According to Brehm (1966), when a person's behavioural freedom is threatened, one becomes motivationally aroused in an attempt to restore freedom or control. This, he referred to as reactance. If this attempt to acquire a positive outcome or avoid a negative one is lost, a feeling of dejection, apathy and apparent unwillingness to respond ensues. Relating 'reactance' to task performance, Wortman and Brehm (1975) suggested that mild experiences with situations in which outcomes

cannot be controlled should create reactance and result in improved performance on subsequent tasks. On the other hand, more extensive experience with uncontrollability should lead eventually to lowered performance. This pattern of performance and mood effects was confirmed by Pittman and Pittman (1979). It also fits Roth and Kubal's (1975) finding that in helplessness training, the first reaction by subjects to experience of no control is an attempt to re-establish control through active striving which they referred to as 'facilitation'.

In view of the similarity of the behaviour of subjects in LH experiments and individuals whose freedom is threatened, Wortman and Brehm (1975) advocated the integration of the Reactance and LH theories. Their reasons were to provide a richer and more comprehensive explanation for the phenomenon and also address issues which, according to Wortman et al. (1975), were not covered sufficiently by the previous theories. For instance, they alleged that in the Reformulated theory of LH, factors that determine the extent to which an individual generalizes his or her LH had not been given much attention. They argued that the evidence that LH generalizes to some 'complex' new situations is minimal.

The Reactance Theory Account of LH

Reactance Theory postulates a curvilinear relationship between exposure to action / outcome noncontingency and LH. That is, an individual confronted with an action / outcome noncontingent experience will first of all react in an attempt to gain control of the situation. This effort to be in control will decline with repeated failure which seems to be a convincing evidence that the situation is beyond the individual's control. With such convictions, an individual finally learns that he/she is helpless in that situation.

The theory also makes specific predictions about how people will evaluate options that are eliminated or forced on them, and how their behaviours, mood or state of mind will be affected. According to Wortman and Brehm (1975), the reactance that is usually observed in the early LH training phase should occur only if the affected person

expected to have control over outcomes, and also depend on the extent to which the outcomes are important. They theorized, therefore, that "If a person expects to be able to control or influence outcomes that are of some importance to him/her, finding those outcomes to be uncontrollable should arouse psychological reactance" (Wortman & Brehm, 1975, p.308). The explanation is that individuals who initially expect control will perceive the first few trials of helplessness training as a threat to their freedom. Consequently, they should be motivated to exert control, and this might result in improved performance. However, with a lengthy experience of failure to control, an individual comes to learn that she/he cannot control the outcome and passivity ensues. The stronger the expectation of control over outcomes, the longer it should take a person to become helpless in the face of noncontingent outcomes and the more controlling behaviour or persistence she/he will show before giving up. (See Fig. 3).

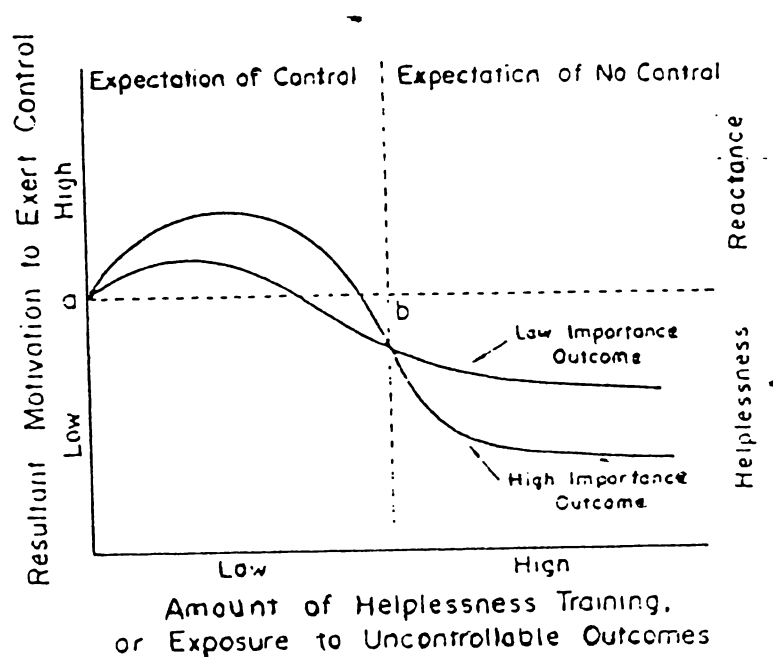


Fig. 3. The Integrative Model.
(After Wortman and Brehm, 1975)

Though no specific studies have been conducted just to demonstrate that reactance usually precedes helplessness, evidence

has been obtained from a large number of LH experiments. Studies by Hanusa and Schulz (1977) and Wortman, Panciera, Shusterman and Hibscher (1976) in which subjects were led to attribute their failure to lack of ability constitute typical examples. Results indicate that subjects exposed to noncontingent reinforcement performed better on subsequent problems than those exposed to contingent reinforcement or the control group. Thornton and Jacobs (1971) found that introductory psychology students who were given inescapable shocks performed better on a subsequent mental ability test, than did subjects who experienced avoidable shock or no shock training at all. In their studies, Roth and Bootzin (1974), subjected introductory psychology students to a condition where they received random reinforcement (assumed to produce perceptions of uncontrollability or independence between behaviour and consequences) on a concept training task. They found that these subjects showed better control of their behaviour in a subsequent problem solving situation compared to subjects who were previously given contingent reinforcement and to a control group. Tennen and Eller's study (1977), designed to assess the effect of task difficulty on learning behaviour, also evidenced the initial facilitation and subsequent inhibited reaction - support for the view that LH occurs only after a given amount of failure had been experienced with a task of high as opposed to low importance (cf. Fyans, JR. 1980).

Although most helplessness experiments have demonstrated the reactance effect, it is important to note that the condition in which the helplessness model is usually tested is quite different from that employed in most reactance experiments. Most reactance experiments have put subjects in a situation in which they expected to have choice about certain options, so that subjects only find out later in the course of the experiment, that their free choice had been eliminated (Worchel, 1974). In contrast, most LH experiments have simply exposed subjects to uncontrollable aversive stimulation and examined their subsequent behaviour. The reason why the explanation of behaviour in such different experimental settings should be transferred uncritically to the behaviour observed in LH situations is what those advocating the integration of the two theories have failed to provide.

Summary and Comments on The Reactance Theory Account of LH

In the reactance model, it is believed that the expectation of control, learning that one has no control, and the importance of the outcome to be controlled, combine to determine one's response behaviour. In other words, both reactance and helplessness effects are directly proportional to the importance of the outcome over which control is lost.

Although proponents of reactance theory (Wortman & Brehm, 1975) feel confident that the above variable, that is, 'task importance' affects reactions to helplessness training, it appears that theorist's focus is only on the initial motivation to control. Only a limited number of studies with empirical support have been undertaken to demonstrate the cognitive, motivational and emotional deficits of LH. However, in their criticisms of some variables used by SLT and the Reformulated theory to explain LH, reactance theorists Wortman and Brehm (1975) have made suggestions that provide cues to areas of LH phenomenon which still require more research. First, in their assessment of the nature of outcome that usually ensues from LH trainings, reactance theorists point out that the amount of uncontrollability accruing to the helpless individual has been neglected by previous investigators. Accordingly, they suggest that a person or animal who has experienced many uncontrollable negative outcomes may feel more helpless than one with rare experience, or one who is a lucky recipient of uncontrollable positive outcomes. This suggestion is supported by Lewnsohn, Weinstein and Shaw (1969) who argued that the absolute number of positive and negative reinforcers accruing to a person is an important determinant of depression.

Second, Reactance theorists also recognize that a person's perception of the outcome of his/her action, relative to appropriate comparable others may influence the severity of LH. For instance, uncontrollable aversive outcomes that affect a large number of people, may have less affective consequences for the individual than outcomes of equal magnitude that are perceived as more unique or rare. Like the Reformulated theory of LH, Reactance Theory holds that failure attributed to personal lack of control may be more upsetting to the

individual. This assignment of control to a personal or global dimension not only affects the magnitude of reactance and affective responses, but also the extent to which this inadequacy or inability to control is generalized.

Third, Wortman et al. (1975) questioned further the relationship between experienced and observed uncontrollable outcomes and helplessness. *"Must an individual experience uncontrollable outcomes personally in order to become reactive or helpless, or can these states stem from merely observing lack of contingency between other people's behaviour and their outcomes?"* (Wortman and Brehm, 1975, p 320). It was on the basis of such a question on the relationship between experience and LH, that Brown and Inuoyen (1978) conducted a study on "Learned Helplessness Through Modeling : The Role of Perceived Similarity in Competence." Results indicated that a state of helplessness can be acquired by observing helplessness in similar others.

A fourth, significant contribution of the Reactance Theory to the understanding of the LH phenomenon is its explanation of the phenomenon as a state of physiological arousal, where motivational arousal is predicted during the initial stages of helplessness training. This physiological arousal increases along with uncontrollability. However, while moderate arousal facilitates performance on a test task, excessive arousal leads to performance decrement and a behaviour that 'looks like passivity' (Hebb, 1955).

While criticizing Seligman's (1975) 'immunization training' for the prevention of LH as a dangerous technique that might cause people to respond maladaptively when faced with uncontrollable situations that were real, Wortman et al. (1975) suggested that the 'best' type of therapy was to give individuals experience with both controllable and uncontrollable outcomes and to instruct them on how to tell the difference between the two. This proposal is vividly summarized in a prayer adopted by 'Alcoholics Anonymous' from Reinhold Niebuhr's sermon: *"Oh God, give us a serenity to accept what cannot be changed, courage to change what should be changed, and wisdom to distinguish the one from the other"* (cf. Wortman and Brehm,

1975, p.331). Unfortunately, the ability to distinguish one from the other can be a problem on its own.

In assessing the contributions of Reactance theory to an understanding of LH and the arguments to justify the stance, it must be pointed out that since Wortman and Brehm (1975) proposed the integration of the two models, only a few studies have been conducted to assess the viability of the proposal. The result is that while other theories forwarded to explain LH are gradually making their impact on this field of study, the use of reactance theory in this context has been relegated to the background.

E. The Schedule-Shift Discrimination Theory Account of LH

While Seligman (1978) and his colleagues perceived LH as a motivational, cognitive and emotional problem resulting from a learned inability to control the nature of performance/outcome, other researchers who do not adopt the Social Learning or attribution perspective, perceive the lack of control and the linked low expectancy shift as insufficient to generate helplessness. In his critical analysis of Maier and Seligman's (1976) expectancy account of LH effect, McReynolds (1980) finished up with a proposal that the LH phenomenon was simply a reflection of a particular case of a schedule-shift effect involving two different schedules or conditions of relief - namely, response-independent relief and response-dependent relief - and the effects of shifting from one training schedule (independence) to the other testing schedule (dependence) in a relatively short period of time and under fairly constant conditions. Consequently, the theory suggests that the noted deficit in responding in the test phase is a result of the organism's inability to detect or discriminate changes in reward/relief scheduling. Applying discrimination theory to LH phenomenon, McReynolds (1980) states that:

"An organism subjected to continuous free or no relief is slower to begin responding when contingent relief is abruptly instituted compared to an organism operating under two conditions of contingent relief and

an untrained organism, because the former must discriminate the changes in relief scheduling before it can begin responding appropriately to that change whereas the later conditions require no such discrimination." (p. 152).

He thus challenged Maier and Seligman's (1976) view that *"response/outcome independence retards the ability of an organism to perceive that his responding has contingent consequences"*, (p.14) and that where controllability is prominently present, emotional disruption is the frequent result. Alternatively, he argued that in the experimental condition where such findings emerged, what the helpless subjects might have lacked was opportunity, rather than ability to perceive a newly introduced response/outcome pattern.

Referring to LH as a cognitive theory of learning, McReynolds asserted that the theory was nothing new ("something borrowed"). The difference, according to him, was that while other cognitive learning theories (e.g. Bruner, 1966; Rotter, 1966, and Ausubel, 1968) explained the *"acquisition of learned responses in terms of cognitions, expectancies, maps etc., learned helplessness theory explained the absence of learning in those terms"* (McReynolds, 1980,p.149). That being the case, he thought some precious time and energy would be saved by perceiving LH as a learning theory rather than as a new cognitive theory.

Of significance, also, was the analogy drawn from McReynolds's (1980) comparison of non-responding animals in LH experiments, and many depressed people. According to him, both suffer weight losses, heightened emotionality and slowed learning of new responses. He therefore reiterated that LH should neither be taken as a model of reactive depression nor helpless individuals viewed as disturbed. This opinion was based on Fester's (1973) persuasive argument that 'the reduction of forcible behaviour' that characterized clinical depression can be explained by:

1. positive reinforcement of passive behaviour;
2. negative reinforcement of avoidance behaviour;
3. high behavioural demands for reinforcement;

4. losses of reinforcers;
5. removal of discriminative stimuli; and
6. limited behavioural repertoire. (Fester, 1973)

Subsequently, no single factor can be properly spoken of as the cause of depression, just as no laboratory demonstration of their behavioural effects can be taken to represent an exclusive model of clinical depression. The same applies to LH. Adding that animals that respond at a comparatively high rate during extinction following partial reinforcement cannot be said to be disturbed, deluded, or manic, McReynolds suggested that the alleged relationship between LH and clinical depression could not be supported. Thus, he argued for a return of the LH theory to the Stimulus/Response frame.

While McReynolds's explanation of the phenomenon of LH has added more to knowledge, there appear to be some missing links in his analysis of LH behaviour. For instance, after proposing that LH is a result of an organism's inability to recognize a shift in the schedule, he has failed to explain what processes take place in the organism cognitively so that its ability to recognize changes is inhibited. Again, the validity of the Schedule Shift explanation of LH to date has not been supported empirically and thus its position as an alternative explanation of LH phenomenon is weak.

F. The Two-Process Theory Account of LH

The two-Process theory (Koller & Kaplan, 1978) is described as a unique model for the LH phenomenon. The theory appears to be an integration of the Original and the Reformulated models of LH.

Like the original model of the LH theory, Two-Process theory holds that noncontingent feedback will produce impaired learning and subsequent performance decrement, following either success or failure conditions. However, unlike the original model of LH, the theory in addition predicts that noncontingent success will produce greater expectation of continued success and hence will not lead to depressed

affect, as would be the case with noncontingent failure (Koller and Kaplan, 1978).

Assuming that any problem can be solved if the necessary information is available and there is sufficient motivation to act, the Two-Process theorists (Koller & Kaplan, 1978) argued that the motivational and cognitive difficulties of LH in humans can be reversed by providing accurate information about the reinforcement contingencies. In other words, by informing subjects that they had previously been operating within a noncontingent system of reinforcement, but that in future, reward and punishment would be administered contingent upon their performance, debilitating effects can be removed. Koller and Kaplan argued, therefore, that by excluding the information value contingent feedback by not providing information about the reinforcement contingencies, the previous theories have failed to account for the observed performance difference between subjects experiencing an equivalent amount of contingent or noncontingent reinforcement. Their line of thinking is supported by Eisenberger, Kaplan and Singer (1974) who had found that the effects of noncontingent reinforcement could be eliminated by providing subjects with the correct information about a given task. In addition, Tennen and Eller (1977) have reported that telling subjects that they were facing a difficult task reversed the effects of helplessness training and actually facilitated performance. Two-Process theorists (e.g. Koller et al. 1978) perceive the Tennen et al. (1977) instructions to have provided positive information because they cue subjects (a) that the task is solvable, thereby increasing motivation, and (b) that they should be active in exploring alternative strategies. However, Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale (1978) have suggested an opposing hypothesis which indicates that though self-esteem is improved by debriefing subjects, cognitive and motivational deficits remain unaffected.

Although Two-Process theory at first appears to offer a potentially useful explanation of LH (since it is a combination of the Motivational and Information models of LH), due to lack of research in the area, reference to the theory in the LH context remains limited. In addition, the theory has failed to answer most of the questions

posed by the LH phenomenon in relation to the time frame of development, and its origin.

PART 2: LEARNED HELPLESSNESS AND IN SCHOOL LEARNING SETTINGS.

Although studies of LH have burgeoned since Seligman's initial conceptualization of the phenomenon, only a limited number of these have been conducted in natural school settings or involved Lh subjects drawn directly from school populations. As noted previously, the investigation of LH in school contexts was initiated by Dweck and her colleagues (e.g. Dweck & Repucci, 1973; Dweck, 1975; Dweck & Bush, 1976; Dweck & Goetze, 1978; Diener & Dweck, 1978; Dweck, Davidson, Nelson & Enna, 1978). More recently, other researchers have studied the phenomenon in the context of learning in school settings. Following Dweck, these researchers have defined Lh children in terms of their attribution disposition in the face of sustained learning difficulties or failure.

The studies that have been conducted fall into two main categories. In the first, the researchers have sought evidence that groups of school learners, previously identified as having some form of learning difficulty or as 'at risk' because of some other impairments, also show traits associated with LH. In the second, the researchers have investigated intervention strategies that might be used to reduce LH. (In the third, more limited set of studies, the focus has been on classroom factors that might trigger or reinforce LH).

LH in Special Groups of School Learners

McCrone (1979) assessed the presence and effects of helplessness in deaf adolescent students who were labelled as either mildly or severely underachieving. Students in each group were initially assigned randomly to one of three treatment conditions: a solvable

block design test; an unsolvable Block design test; and no treatment. The post-treatment performance of the students was then assessed on a solvable test. The researchers reported deterioration in the performance of the severely underachieving students who were originally confronted with the unsolvable Block design test. This was interpreted as indicating the "influence of" LH. McCrone concluded that a disposition of LH is another feature of deaf school learners - particularly those who are severely underachieving. A limitation of this study was the use of a 'pre-treatment' procedure which assesses the sensitivity of the subjects to situations that have the potential to produce a helplessness response. The researchers did not directly tap naturally occurring traits in the subjects that may be evidence of LH.

Based on their view that the "*parallel between this brief description of learned helplessness and descriptions of children with reading difficulties are striking*" (pp.410-411), Butowsky and Willows (1980) explored the possibility that poor readers would exhibit many of the traits associated with LH. They categorized 72 subjects who had a mean age of 10 years and 6 months into three groups - good, average or poor readers. Their expectancies for success, persistence following failure experiences, attributions for success and failure and expectancies following failure were assessed as they completed two sets of anagram and line drawing tasks. Each set incorporated either unsolvable or solvable items. One half of the sample had success-only experiences while the other experienced repeated failure. The data gathered included the children's estimate of the number of items they would be successful on, persistence time on the unsolvable items, attributions for success or failure and expectancy statements. In contrast to the other two groups the poor readers showed significantly lower expectancies for success, persisted for much less time in the face of difficulty, were more likely to make external attributions for success and internal attributions (particularly ability) for failure and showed greater decrement in expectancies for future performance when confronted with repeated failure. The researchers concluded that these findings were "*consistent with an interpretation of learned helplessness*" (p. 420). As they point out, a strength of this

study is that it assesses the extent to which children with a particular area of learning difficulty "*naturally manifest learned helplessness in some situations in their environment*" (p.420). Limitations of the study, however, include the closed assessment of attributions (i.e. only four potential attributions according to Weiner et al.'s (1971) model were considered). Another limitation concerned the artificial nature of the tasks.

A similar strategy was adopted by Johnson (1981) whose concern was to study 'naturally acquired' rather than 'experimentally induced' LH. In this study, the attributions made by chronically failing, average achieving and remedial children were examined. The sample of 60 nine to twelve year olds were administered the IAR scale and then required to complete three maze drawing tasks, one of which was impossible, under two contrastive incentive conditions. In one of the latter, the children were told "*This game shows if a person is good at school work*"(p.177); in the other the children were told that they would receive a monetary reward for success. The results indicated that the failing group were less likely to internalize attributions for success and more likely to make internal attributions for failure. This attribution disposition was seen as evidence of LH.

Taking account of Dweck and associates' work and the contention of other researchers that a link between LH and learning disability was likely to be found (e.g. Thomas, 1979; Canino, 1981) Chapman (1985) conducted a study of the 'self-perceptions, learned helplessness, and achievement expectation' of Form 1 children (average age of 11 - 12 years) identified as learning disabled (LD). When 78 LD children and 71 normally achieving (NA) were administered the IAR scale, the results indicated a greater tendency for the LD students, particularly LD boys, to adopt an external orientation for both success and failure. The LD group perceived lack of teacher help and task difficulty as important causal factors for failure and did not rate ability or effort as important determinants of either success or failure. Chapman concluded that "*the relatively external control orientation of LD children is consistent with the learned helplessness interpretation - they see themselves as less in control of their school successes and failures*" (p. 104).

The researcher was interested also in the relative stability of locus of control orientation for academic outcomes. When monitored over a two year period, the LD children's external control tendency was found to be consistent. In contrast, the NA children showed an increase in internal orientation over the same period. Concern with the stability of these attribution tendencies is a particular strength of this study.

Luchow, Crowl and Khan (1985) investigated the possible influence of LH on the academic performance of emotionally handicapped (EH) and emotionally handicapped/learning disabled (EH/LD) elementary school children. Analysis of the children's score on the IAR Questionnaire revealed that the EH children took significantly more personal responsibility for their academic failure than did the EH/LD children. These researchers also reported significant correlations between IAR scores and the children's performance in reading, maths and language arts but negative correlation was reported for the EH/LD group. The researchers concluded that these children's poor performance in basic academic subjects and their attribution of their performance to lack of ability in particular (an internal stable and factor) was indicative of LH.

Abating Learned Helplessness in School Learners

The first researcher to develop and evaluate LH "alleviation" programmes was Dweck (1975). The sample of 12 Lh children in the study was drawn from a population of 750 elementary school children who had been categorized as Lh by school staff using a helplessness rating scale. In order to confirm the accuracy of this selection, Dweck compared the response of this group to that of 10 'persistent' children on the IAR scale and an ability - effort attribution measure. The former showed a significantly stronger tendency to attribute academic outcomes to either external factors that were uncontrollable, or to lack of ability.

The attribution alteration programmes involved the following procedures. Daily, for some 25 days, the LH group was presented with

some arithmetic problems. While half of the children experienced continuous success with their problems, the other half had two or three failure experiences built into each day's set of problems. The later group received attribution retraining which involved the researcher verbally attributing failure to lack of effort whenever the children failed (i.e. "That means you should have tried harder"). Following this treatment phase, the sample were required to complete a further set of problems, some of which were unsolvable. The findings indicated that the Lh children in the success-only condition continued to show marked deterioration in performance following failure experiences whereas the attribution retraining either maintained or improved their performance. The attribution retraining group also showed a post-treatment increase in their tendency to emphasize effort rather than ability when making attributions for their outcomes. There was no comparable increase in the success-only treatment group.

Several studies have been undertaken subsequently in which the researchers have partially replicated and extended the Dweck study in order to assess alternative explanations for the training effects or to explore modifications to the attribution retraining procedures.

Thus, Chapin and Dyck (1976) examined the possibility that the different reinforcement schedules associated with the success-only (continuous) and attribution-retraining (intermittent) conditions account for the development of persistence. Thirty Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Form children who were identified as underachieving in reading were exposed to five contrastive treatment conditions that differentiated as to attribution-retraining elements. This study demonstrated that both the attribution-retraining and the reinforcement schedule contributed to the effects. It did not, however, involve subjects who were identified as LH.

Fowler and Peterson (1981), in a further elaboration of the Chapin and Dyck study, investigated the effectiveness of four contrastive attribution-retraining strategies in modifying the attribution tendencies of 28 Lh children (aged 9 - 13). The researchers employed selection procedures and instruments similar to those used by Dweck (1975) and also assessed the persistence of the

children pre and post the treatment when confronted with 'difficult to read' sentences. The result of the study confirmed that attribution-retraining resulted in a significant increase in persistence and an increase in effort as opposed to ability attributions. There was evidence also that a direct attribution-retraining technique where children covertly rehearsed and said to themselves - "*No I didn't get that right. That means I have to try harder.*" (p. 255), was more likely than an indirect technique in which case the researcher tells the children "No, you didn't get that. You have to try harder" (p. 255) to result in an increase in effort attributions.

It is also of interest that the researchers observed that children's self-reports might be attended to more closely in further research. This was prompted by children's responses during a follow-up interview focussed on their thoughts during the treatment phase.

A further small group of studies have focussed on classroom factors that might encourage incidents of LH in school learners. One such study was conducted by Perry (1978). Though the present researcher has not been able to gain access to the full study report, in the summary it is indicated that the effect of test performance feedback (contingent, noncontingent and control) and teacher expressiveness (low or high) on students' achievement in a 'simulated' college classroom were investigated. Subjects completed a series of tests which provided either contingent or noncontingent feedback. That is, while working on some of the tests it was possible for the children to obtain correct information on their performance (contingent) whereas in the noncontingent conditions subjects were unsure of their performance. After this, subjects viewed a video-taped lecture presented by either a low or a high expressiveness instructor. Immediately after the lecture, they completed a teacher evaluation and a multiple-choice test. Perry and associates report results which indicate that the high expressive instructor produced greater achievement than the low expressive instructor in both the contingent and noncontingent feedback conditions. Also, achievement was greater in the noncontingent than in the control condition under high instructor expressiveness. Thus, the authors concluded that in a noncontingent condition (usually associated with LH), the

characteristic of the teacher can actually trigger or perpetuate LH in students.

In 1980, Perry conducted a similar study. Again, response/outcome contingency conditions were varied and video-taped lectures in which the instructors varied their expressiveness and lecture content were used. Subjects took an "*analogies test*" which provided contingent, noncontingent or no feedback. They then completed a teacher evaluation, an examination and an attribution questionnaire. Results indicated that contingency training (i.e. training a child on problem solving) influences students' academic achievement and attributions. Subjects without contingency training were more likely to give lower estimates of their performance and to consider ability and effort to contribute to their test results than subjects with such training. This was interpreted as indicating that lack of contingency training in a school classroom might prompt and reinforce a state of LH.

Contending that repeated academic failure can actually reinforce LH in a college classroom, Omelich and Covington (1980) suggested a remedial strategy. The study sample comprised a group of undergraduates enrolled in a modified mastery oriented psychology course, who perceived their test performances as a series of failures. To assess the effect of repeated 'subjective' failure, questionnaires were administered to tap the students' causal ascriptions for performance, expectancy for future success and affective reactions to failure. It was observed that as failure accumulated, attribution to lack of ability not only increased but also "*became more salient*" in determining variations in shame and expectancy. In the light of this finding, the researchers suggested regular and frequent success experience in the classroom might not only help prevent the occurrence of LH, it might also reverse the state.

Dickens and Perry (1981) also conducted a study that focussed on certain classroom conditions that reduce incidence of LH. In their study, the effects of variations in amounts of exposure to response/outcome independence (i.e. the number of times that one is exposed to a situation in which what he/she does does not necessarily

yield the expected result) and teacher expressiveness on students ratings of the instructors, achievement test performance, and attributions were assessed. University students completed an aptitude test that provided contingent or noncontingent feedback and varied in length (short, medium or long). All subjects, including the control group who did not complete the aptitude test, viewed a video-taped lecture in a 'simulated' classroom. Following this, students completed a teacher evaluation, an achievement test and an attribution questionnaire. The results showed that students in the contingent group and those who viewed the high expressive lecture performed significantly better than the students in the low expressive condition. After viewing the low expressive lecture, noncontingent subjects performed less well than contingent subjects, but there were no performance differences between the contingent conditions. The authors concluded that although exposure to noncontingent outcomes had a negative effect on achievement, instructor expressiveness had a larger overall effect on the students' performance. It was suggested that teacher behaviours such as expressiveness may attenuate the effects of exposure to noncontingency.

An evaluation of the studies reviewed in the section above reveals both strengths and limitations. Strengths associated with specific studies include:

- (1) Use of multiple identification procedures (e.g. Dweck, 1975).
- (2) Consideration of the stability of the attribution disposition of subjects over time (Chapman, 1985).
- (3) Consideration of the subjects' unique thoughts as Lh learners (Fowler & Peterson, 1981).

The limitations include:

- (1) Lack of opportunity provided for subjects to identify the full range of factors that they believe influence their learning outcomes (McCrone, 1979; Johnson, 1981).

- (2) Lack of attention to the phenomenology of the learners when their attributions are being categorized (Butowsky & Willows, 1980; Johnson, 1981; Chapman, 1985).
- (3) Use of indirect procedures to assess LH (Perry et al. 1978; McCrone, 1979; Dickson & Perry, 1981).
- (4) Use of tasks that are not characteristic of those encountered in classrooms (McCrone, 1979; Butowsky & Willows, 1980; Johnson, 1981;
- (5) Subjects may not identify with all the situations described in IAR items. Their responses thus, may represent speculations about, rather than recall of their own or other responses to these situations (Johnson, 1981; Luchow, Crowl & Khan, 1985; Chapman, 1985).
- (6) Only the cognitive dimension of the LH is assessed (Luchow, Crowl & Khan, 1985).

PART 3: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the 21 years since Seligman first formulated the concept of LH, theory and research into the phenomenon has flourished. A review of the associated literature, however, reveals that there is a need for further theory development and research particularly with reference to the school learner who is LH.

Theory

As the preceding review confirms, there is no lack of theorizing in this field as a number of contrastive theories have been developed to describe the nature of LH and to account for its origins and effects. While these theories vary in terms of their underlying assumptions about human nature, some of the explanations that they offer for the onset of LH and its effects are very similar and there

is a common core in most of the conceptualizations of LH. Thus, most theorists describe LH in terms of a similar cluster of cognitive, motivational and emotional deficits. However, variation occurs in the significance attached to particular deficits.

Different theorists have also given more attention to particular aspects of the phenomenon and their work highlights the need for continued refinement of theory concerning aspects or issues such as the following:

- (a) The range of factors to which Lh individuals attribute their LH.
- (b) Individual differences in the attributions Lh learners make for their learning difficulties.
- (c) The attributions that Lh individuals offer for other's success versus their own performance difficulties.
- (d) The feelings Lh individuals may experience when anticipating the requirement that they undertake tasks which they regard as impossible.
- (e) Factors that determine whether the helplessness response is generalized across contexts and over time.
- (f) Factors that might account for the 'fluctuation' of LH over time and situations.
- (g) The time frame of the development of LH.
- (h) The significance of the value Lh individuals place on tasks which they believe they cannot handle.
- (j) Strategies that Lh individuals may adopt to cope with their helplessness.

In the context of the present study, it was believed that further exploration of these aspects of LH, particularly for the Lh school learner, was essential and that this could be facilitated if a case study approach were used. Such an approach would allow these aspects to be investigated concurrently and a more holistic account of LH thereby offered.

Research Findings

An extensive body of research findings on aspects of LH now exists and provides support for the various theoretical positions. These research findings are particularly confirming of the motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits of LH.

As acknowledged previously, there are, however, some areas of LH which have not received sufficient attention and there is a paucity of studies as well as information in those areas. One of these areas is the study of a naturally occurring LH among the so called normal children in natural settings (e.g. school classrooms).

Another area that requires much more attention is the identification of Lh learners. In many studies in which researchers have attempted to induce a state of helplessness, the observation of impaired cognitive and motivational performance has been assumed to provide satisfactory evidence of LH. There has been no systematic attempt, however, to monitor the subjects' cognitive, motivational and emotional status over a period of time, in order to confirm these conclusions. In other studies, diagnosis of LH is based on the data obtained using a single instrument or strategy such as the Crandall, Katkovsky and Crandall's (1965) Intellectual Achievement Responsibility (IAR) Scale, and Dweck's (1975) Ability-Effort Measure. Given the nature of LH, both of these approaches may be 'risky' if not deficient. Certainly, there is a need for a systematic examination of the strengths and limitations of different identification strategies and the manner in which they may best be used to ensure accurate identification.

A feature of studies of LH in school learners is that they have tended to involve learners who have been defined as having learning

difficulties across all areas of school learning (i.e. the learning disabled), and the severely impaired in one or more learning areas who are placed in special classrooms. A case exists for studies in which the subjects are experiencing learning difficulties in only one or a limited number of subject areas, and who are not placed in special classrooms and programmes.

There is also a need for studies which focus on the everyday conditions and events in classrooms and homes as well as other environments which may contribute to and follow from LH. Such studies should also delve, in depth, into the cognitive and emotional life of such children. To date, relatively few studies have attempted to explore aspects of the inner life of these children in a holistic fashion. Others have been neglected entirely. Based on this review of existing theory and research, the following themes and related research questions shaped the present study:

Identification of Lh learners

1. What facets of the behaviour and cognitive and emotional life of learners should be taken into account when their Lh status is assessed?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of the selected identification instruments and procedures?
3. What specific features of identification instruments and procedures should be considered when they are selected for use by researchers and teachers?
4. What criteria need to be fulfilled before conclusions about the Lh status of learners are reached?

The Cognitive and Emotional Life of Lh Learners

5. How do Lh learners describe their cognitive and emotional life when in context that evoke Lh?
6. How do Lh Learners describe their cognitive and emotional life when in other contexts?
7. What is the nature of the expectancies that Lh learners have with reference to future performance in their 'problem' school subject(s) and their job aspirations.
8. To what factors do Lh learners attribute their current learning difficulties and how do they categorize those attributions on the locus, stability and control dimensions?
9. What similarities and idiosyncrasies exist in the cognitive and emotional life of Lh learners?

The Actions of Lh Learners

10. What patterns of behaviour are exhibited by learners experiencing LH?
11. What similarities and idiosyncrasies exist in the behaviours exhibited by Lh learners?

Situations that Evoke LH

12. What circumstances and contexts are likely to prompt the LH syndrome in Lh learners?

In order to study effectively the aspects of LH identified above, there is a need to adopt a research approach somewhat different from that used in the majority of LH studies in the past. The nature of the latter studies and the case for adopting an alternative approach in the present one, are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACHES

An analysis of research literature on LH reveals a strong bias methodologically towards the use of a quantitative approach. More recently however, researchers in this field (Johnston, 1984; Chapman, 1985; Lipson & Nixon, 1986) have explored the application of qualitative methodology. It is argued that while quantitative research identifies surface features of LH, it is wanting in terms of uncovering the etiology of this condition and its impact on the emotional and cognitive life of its victims, because it does not reach into the phenomenological world of these people. This chapter critically reviews this position.

PART 1: The Quantitative Approach

While LH research has burgeoned, it has not been without its critics. Silver, Wortman, and Klos (1982), for example, have observed that most LH studies have been conducted in laboratory-like settings and have used the hypothetico-deductive methodology that characterizes much quantitative research in the social sciences.

Consequently, understanding of the intrinsic behaviour of Lh persons has been hampered. Four areas of criticism in particular may be highlighted:

1. Choice of Sample.
2. Instrumentation.
3. Research design.
4. Experimental setting and ethical problems.

1. Choice of Sample

Most social science research involves a sample of subjects with research findings being generalized to a whole population. Sampling can be random, stratified, double, systematic, or cluster-oriented (Kerlinger, 1973).

The sampling procedure most commonly used by researchers in studies of LH is random sampling (e.g. Skinner, 1979; Klein, Fencil-Morse & Seligman, 1976). In some cases, however, in addition to randomization researchers administer tests to their subjects to ensure that they are matched on chronological and mental ages, language proficiency and educational level which could otherwise cause variance (e.g. Dweck, 1975; McCrone, 1979).

Danzin (1978) has warned that, prior to any research, researchers must locate and enumerate their population so that an unbiased and genuinely representative sample can be drawn from it. Reviews of studies on LH (e.g. Feather and Simon, 1971; Skinner, 1979; Cullen and Boersman, 1982) have revealed that most studies have either completely failed to define their population or are not precise in reporting on the population from which their samples were drawn. Skinner (1979), for example, simply reported that his sample comprised 30 male and 30 female volunteers whom he randomly assigned to three study groups. The omission not only poses a problem with the generalizability of the findings, but also with a replication of the study.

Another problem with LH studies resides in the nature of the sampled population. A number of researchers (e.g. Hiroto, 1974; Tennen and Eller, 1977; Nation and Massad, 1978; Pittman and Pittman, 1980) drew their sample from psychology classes, the probable reason being that they were readily accessible. Yet psychology students, because of the nature of their study, are expected to be overly sensitive to experimental conditions. It would not be out of place, therefore, to suspect that the responses of such subjects in experimental conditions could be more planned than natural, thus producing invalid results.

2. Instrumentation

Borg has stated that "*No research is better than the measures used in it*" (Borg, 1981: p.82). Researchers working on LH have made use of various strategies in their studies, but the most commonly used is the direct observation technique (Mark, 1983). Several of these studies (e.g. Dweck, 1975; Dweck and Bush, 1976; Ames, Ames and Felker, 1976) have based conclusions solely on the experimenter's observations of the subjects' laboratory behaviours. In addition, the task content of these studies is usually achievement orientated with an emphasis on written and quantitative problem solving abilities (for example, performance on anagram tasks). In Brown and Inuoye's (1978) study the group who persisted less on an anagram task was said to have learned that the given task was insurmountable, and a state of helplessness was induced. There were no corresponding tests to ensure that LH and not any other phenomenon was responsible for the observed lack of persistence on task.

Other studies (e.g. Feather & Simon, 1971; Nicholls, 1975; Klein, Fencil-Morse & Seligman, 1976; Rosenfield & Stephan, 1978) have also labelled some of their subjects as Lh based only on observed 'given up' behaviour (lack of persistence on task). While these studies often yield the hypothesized result, the unsupplemented use of observation techniques has met with some serious criticisms.

As noted by Kerlinger (1972), the observational power of the researcher and the researcher's inferences often pose validity problems. When an observation technique is used in a study, the observer is both a crucial strength and a crucial weakness. The reason is that the observer must digest the information derived from his observation and make inferences about constructs. For example, if the experimenter observes a subject sitting down idly when others are still on a task, she must process this observation to make an inference that the behaviour is, for example, a manifestation of LH. The basic problem here is that there is no way to test the accuracy of an inference made by a single observer. Different observers can make different inferences about the sample behaviour. Again, in many LH studies subjects have been presented with some achievement tasks

without a pre-test of their ability, aptitude and interest, with subsequent failure on a task being associated with helplessness (e.g. Dweck and Reppucci, 1973; Hiroto, 1974; Teasdale, 1978; Skinner, 1979; McCrone, 1979). The problems with such associations is that helplessness is not the only factor that could lead to failing and giving up on a task. Other factors such as anxiety (Coyne, Metalsky, & Lavelley, 1980); anger, (Cole & Coyne, 1977); negativity, (Roth & Kubal, 1975) could well produce the same effect. The assumption is that the researcher, having made up his/her mind on what to look out for, tends to associate anything observed with the phenomenon that is being investigated.

A further problem with the observation technique has to do with the presence of the observer in the experimental room. Mark (1983) pointed out that behavioural assessment is very sensitive to specific situational and experimental demands on the subject's behaviour at a specific time. Addressing the psychological states of both subjects and the experimenter in a laboratory study, he argued that information regarding the objective contingency between events is often overridden by the individual's own cognitive contributions to the situation. Whether the experimenter in laboratory studies on LH will detect any particular event contingency accurately, depends on the nature of interaction between the available situational information and his/her expectations or beliefs. In view of the biased response that such sensitivity could lead to, Mark therefore suggested that the behavioural observation technique be incorporated along with projective techniques for data collection when studying helplessness. This combination of techniques, he said, will lead to important information on the validation of the construct of LH.

Attribution questionnaires are frequently used to assess LH (e.g. Klein et al., 1976; Oakes & Curtis, 1982). For instance, after the completion of an anagram test, Tennen et al. (1982), asked the subjects to rate the extent to which they thought skill, luck, task difficulty, and experimental control affected their progress on the task. The limitation of this procedure has been pointed out by Tennen et al (1982) as being the subjects' unwillingness to offer such explanations as 'not having tried enough' because lack of effort is usually associated with guilt.

Another problem with the use of questionnaires in LH studies is related to the lack of comprehensiveness and validity of some of them. In criticizing LH studies where questionnaires are employed, Silver et al. (1982) assert that in some studies, only a limited number of questions (one or two) are used to assess subjects' attributions to causal factors. Oakes and Curtis's (1982) experiment constitutes a typical example. In this study, only two questions were used to assess subjects' awareness of non-contingency between performance and outcome. Expectancy was assessed with one question which asked the extent to which subjects felt they could be successful. Similarly, Tennen, Drum, Gillen and Stanton, (1982) used a single question to assess subjects' attributions, as did Pasashow (1980) in a study of the relationship between an attribution dimension and LH. As Campbell and Fiske (1959) have pointed out, single measures of a construct often tend to be quite unreliable.

In summary, then, the problems outlined above suggest that it would be advantageous to adopt more than single measures for LH studies, and thus gather a wider range of comparative information that might ensure more valid and reliable conclusions. A few studies of LH (e.g. Dweck, 1975; Price, Tyron & Raps, 1978; Pittman & Pittman, 1980) have adopted this approach. Still in the effort to obtain accurate findings, some researchers have pretested their subjects and equated groups before the training phase of an experiment with the aim of controlling for factors that might cause variation between groups or interfere with the treatment and, in turn, affect findings. Other researchers have used more than one instrument to measure a particular variable, trying to arrive at a more valid and reliable result. For example, McCrone (1979) in his study to assess the effect of LH on the level of academic achievement of deaf adolescents, first of all ensured that study participants were similar in their intelligence level as reflected in the Revised Beta non-verbal IQ measure and Stanford Achievement Test scores. The sample was then classified into mildly under-achieving and severely under-achieving groups on the basis of the position of individual students' Beta IQ -SAT IQ Equivalent (Heriot & Medvene, 1975) discrepancy scores in a distribution of such scores for all the students who were qualified to participate in the study. All the subjects were under-achieving.

Teasdale (1978) selected his subjects based on their scores on the Nufferno Level Test and possession of good command of English. He grouped subjects further on the basis of their scores on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI, Beck, 1967). Pittman and Pittman (1980), in a study on Deprivation of Control and the Attribution process, first of all assessed subjects' mood using the Multiple, Affect Adjective Check List (MAACL; Zuckerman, Lubin & Robins, 1965) and then, to assess helplessness, used both an attribution task and a test anagram task. This means that after examining the LH status of these children by assessing their attributions, an anagram test was administered to assess their cognitive states. In Price, Tyron and Raps' (1978) study on LH in a clinical population, subjects who agreed to participate in the study were administered the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI :SF), and then the Jastak Short Form of Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale Vocabulary Subtest, to establish verbal facility. This integration of research instruments within a single study produces an investigative style which makes it possible for more information to be gathered about the researched factor than would have been possible with the use of just one measure.

It must be pointed out, however that a good number of studies of LH have adopted just one research technique (e.g. Tennen & Eller, 1976; Brown & Inuoye, 1978) and sometimes with the use of just one measuring instrument (e.g. Ames, Ames & Felker, 1976; Dweck & Bush, 1976). As noted before, the problem in this case is that since each research technique and each measurement tool has its own limitations. It follows that study findings based exclusively on any one of them cannot be as complete they as would be otherwise. A more serious problem is the fact that study conclusions based on such partial information can be very misleading.

3. Research Design

Depending on the research aims and the hypotheses to be tested, different research designs have been adopted for LH studies. Some researchers have made use of the true experimental design (e.g. Tennen & Eller, 1977; Nation & Massad, 1978; Baucom & Danker-Brown, 1979; Cullen & Boersma, 1982), while others have used a quasi-experimental design (e.g. Dweck, 1975; Diener & Dweck, 1978).

In post-test only-control group design (e.g. Baucom & Danker-Brown, 1979; Cullen & Boersma, 1982; Price, Tyron & Raps, 1975) subjects are randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. After a helplessness training phase for the experimental group, all subjects are given a post-test that measures the dependent variables. This design allows only a short interval between selection and post testing, thus preventing changes in experimental conditions that could be caused by time changes (Borg, 1981). However, though the design may be quite appropriate for laboratory studies of LH, as in the examples cited above, findings arising from such studies may have little or no relevance to the natural situation. The reason is that LH that is naturally acquired is a form of behaviour change, and only takes place over a period of time (not just after a few hours of treatment or training). Also, the internal validity of such studies could be threatened by the fact that the two groups might have been originally different on the tested variable, a fact which cannot be judged since there was no pretest.

The quasi-experimental design that is more frequently used for studies on LH is the non-equivalent control-group design where subjects are pretested to determine whether the two groups are equivalent, even though they were not formed by random assignment. After the treatment of subjects in the experimental condition, the two groups are post-tested. For example, Dweck (1975) first of all attempted to equate two groups in their level of test anxiety and intelligence. After treating the experimental group, subjects in both the control and experimental groups were post-tested to determine the extent they attributed failure to either effort or ability. The difficulty with the quasi-experimental design, of course, is the lack of guarantee that matching of groups covers all possible influential factors.

The single group pretest-post test design (e.g. Dweck & Reppucci, 1973) is a design in which all subjects are pretested, given experimental treatment, and are finally administered a post test. This design has been used only once or twice to study LH. The problem is that since there is no control group which is subject to extraneous factors that occur between the pretest and post-test (but does not receive treatment), the effects of these factors cannot be estimated.

Therefore, findings cannot be confidently attributed to treatment since they could be due to a combined effect of treatment and some extraneous factors.

The pre test, post-test, control group design (e.g. Nation & Massad, 1978; Hiroto, 1974; Tennen & Eller, 1977) which involves pretesting of experimental and control groups is the most commonly used in studies of LH. The experimental group receives treatments while the control group receives none. Finally, both groups are given a post test. The use of a pre-test, as well as a control group, seems to make this design more rigorous from the experimental standpoint. The only problem is that researchers seem to have neglected the use of a placebo on the control group. As a result, one cannot be sure if the observed difference in the groups behaviour is due to the experimental treatment or the subjects' awareness of the differential treatment of the two groups.

Whatever the research design used, however, on the whole researchers have presented LH as an immediate reaction to a single situation experience with lack of control. The fact that some significant results have been obtained, despite the brief periods of helplessness training, forces one to wonder if the observed behaviour resulted from LH or some other untested factors.

4. Experimental Setting and Ethical Problems

Laboratory studies of LH are rather artificial. As with other laboratory studies, they are usually planned and controlled to suit laboratory conditions. Whereas uncontrollability in the real world usually occurs unexpectedly, and individuals have little or no choice about whether to be exposed to uncontrollable situations or not, in laboratories, the subjects generally, are first of all conditioned to a state of helplessness. For example, Dweck and Bush (1976), Brown and Inuoye (1978) and Teasdale (1978) reported "*training*" their participants to be helpless. Moreover, the consequences of uncontrollable outcomes in natural settings also tend to be more serious and, in case of treatment, might require longer periods of time.

The uncontrollable outcomes employed in laboratory inductions of LH are also qualitatively different from the kinds of events that are likely to result in helplessness in real life. For example, laboratory induced helplessness is usually affected by procedures like establishing non-contingency between shooting into a bullseye (target-shooting) and reinforcement (e.g. Oakes & Curtis, 1982); uncontrollable noise blast (e.g. Tennen, Gillen & Drum, 1982; Tennen, Drum, Gillen & Stanton, 1982), or unsolvable anagrams (e.g. Brown & Inouye, 1978).

With reference to the objectivity of most of these studies, it is noted that the researchers approach their studies with stated hypotheses, a situation which might bias them to see what they set out to see or expect to see and not what really happens in the experiment. Thus Alloy and Tabachnic according to Alloy (1982), have argued that judgements of contingency will be relatively accurate when people lack strong and prior expectations about the relationships between the events in question, or when the situational information is in line with their preconceptions about relationships between events. In other words, when objective data and preconceptions are incongruent, judgement of contingency will frequently be erroneous and biased in the direction of initial expectations. In his assessment of laboratory studies, Crocker (1981) also pointed out that the mechanisms by which preconceptions interact with situational information involve numerous cognitive processes such as selective attention, selective and constructive memory, categorization and the ability to combine information which can influence perception. If that is the case, it means that some steps must be taken to ensure that the perception of non-contingency in LH experiments is not a result of some preconceptions. Outside this, it might be misleading to conclude that the observed helplessness experience is a consequence of helplessness training.

Unfortunately, despite these perceived limitations of laboratory studies of LH, most of these studies have not been validated in any way. Therefore, Alloy (1982) points out that participants in LH studies "*enter experimental situations with strong, well articulated schemata about their personal control or lack of control*

over a wide range of things based on every day experience with response/outcome relations or cultural norms" (Alloy, 1982, p.466). Thus, expectations can interact with some other variables in the experimental setting to influence subjects' attention, memory, and ultimately, their response. The conclusion is that the attribution of resulting behaviour to helplessness can be erroneous.

Cialdini (1980) has argued that, although the rigour and precision of laboratory studies may provide us with information regarding the validity of psychological theories, the findings may be trivial in the sense of having little or no applicability to real life. As he puts it, *"our finely tuned traps allow us to capture phenomena without regard to their importance in the course of naturally occurring human behaviour"* (Cialdini 1980, p.23). Similarly, Alloy (1982) has noted that the domain of psychological phenomena that are well established and replicable in the laboratory setting often become elusive, less robust, and disappointing in their predictive power when applied to problems in the real world. More specifically, because of the context specificity of the phenomenon, it is difficult to transfer laboratory study findings uncritically to the real world. Frieze and Snyder (1980) point out that the factors to which individuals ascribe their performance may vary with achievement context. For example, the causal factors that one might provide for poor performance on anagrams in an experimental condition might be quite different from those relevant to poor performance in a classroom test. Silver, Wortman and Klos (1982) have also argued that there are several fundamental differences between uncontrollable stresses encountered in the laboratory and those encountered in the real world. Referring to the positivistic tradition, Haigh (1981) stated that *"certain conceptual premises and modes of inquiry largely borrowed from the natural sciences and traditionally associated with research on teaching may not be appropriate when we attempt to understudy the reaction of people in social contexts such as classrooms"* (Haigh, 1981. p.1). If these arguments are valid, then it means that studies on LH that have been confined to laboratories are forced to rely on relatively weak and artificial experiences with noncontingency.

On the other hand, in support of the so-called artificial studies, Aronson and Carlsmith (1962) have argued that a laboratory experiment need not be similar to real life as long as it is "*realistic to the subject, if it involves him, if he is forced to take it seriously*" (p.22). According to these two researchers, lack of similarity between what happens in the laboratory and how helplessness is learnt in a naturalistic situation should not be any strong point against laboratory studies of LH.

While one might wish to adopt this lenient view, unfortunately most laboratory studies on LH do not even fulfill the conditions that Aronson et al. consider important - subjects taking the study seriously and being involved. To illustrate, many experiments on LH (e.g. Tennen & Eller, 1977; Teasdale, 1978; Pittman & Pittman, 1980) involve subjects who were either paid to participate, or chosen because of being handy (proximity) to the researcher. Yet the use of subjects who are personally involved in the problem that is being studied may not be the best since subjects might tend to be too sensitive, thus producing unnatural responses.

Other reasons that have been forwarded to explain why traditional laboratory paradigms are not very suitable for the study of reaction to uncontrollable outcomes include :

- (1) The restraint on researchers to examine reactions to relatively minor outcomes that occur for relatively short durations.
- (2) The researchers' inability to study subjects' responses over time and across a variety of settings. This limits the generalization of findings and leads to inappropriate generalizations.

However, although this is the case, because of the extent of the contribution that these laboratory studies have made to the understanding of the phenomenon, it would be unwise to ignore them. Rather, the strategy should be to solve the problem of artificiality in LH studies.

For this purpose, two main lines of attack have been suggested: First, LH should be researched in laboratory paradigms that more closely parallel the real world with naturally occurring events being utilized to study the problem. Second, strategies should be adopted for a careful analysis of cognitive, motivation and affective indicators of LH. For instance, efforts should be made to ensure that the observed behaviour is caused by a feeling of helplessness and not by some other untested factors.

A number of LH studies also face ethical problems. Since human beings are not mere objects or lower organisms without personal feelings, experimenters are expected to give them sufficient information on what the research is about and the after-effects, if any. This particular ethical guideline has been neglected by most LH researchers. For example, in Dweck and Reppucci's (1973) study, subjects were even asked to declare any information that they might have gathered about the research prior to it. Only individuals who were ignorant of everything about the experiment were allowed to participate in it. A similar condition was observed in other studies on LH (e.g. Pittman and Pittman, 1980; Nation and Massad, 1978; Baucom and Danker-Brown, 1979; Diner and Dweck, 1978).

Another ethical problem that exists in most studies of LH has to do with the treatment of participants. Most LH researchers (e.g. Nicholls, 1975; Stephan, Rosenfield & Stephan, 1976; Dweck & Bush, 1976) after training their subjects in the experimental condition to feel helpless, usually allow these subjects to leave the laboratory at the end of the study without any form of retraining to remove their sense of helplessness. There is no doubt that the feeling of failure in a situation in which success was possible, and in which others did succeed can have a negative consequence on the self-concept of the participants. This poor self-perception can be carried beyond the experimental situation if nothing is done to counter it at the end of the experiment.

Finally, concerning the focus and the manner of reporting, there is a case that laboratory LH studies focus mainly on the overt behaviour of subjects and assume behavioural meanings. The covert

factors that underpin the nature of a subject's responses to questions and behaviour are really unknown. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that a researcher's interpretation of a subject's behaviour is always correct. Even when questionnaires are used, there is still nothing to show that a subject's interpretation of questions is the same as the investigator's. Consequently, we are left with somewhat restricted understanding of the mental and emotional lives of Lh learners. Also, quantitative researchers present their data in highly statistical terms, which limits the understanding and usefulness of such research to those with the appropriate technical background. Yet, good concerned people such as teachers and parents who could make use of such studies to help Lh victims can neither read nor understand many quantitatively orientated research studies.

Since the assessment of intrinsic behaviours is beyond the scope of quantitative studies which have dominated LH studies to date, there exists a need to assess the phenomenon with a combination of research techniques and measures. This strategy would certainly afford a better insight into the world of Lh learners and possibly produce more valid and reliable explanations for their unique behaviours. Such studies might also provide information for a better understanding of helpless children. The information might aid in the development of strategies that can be used by parents, teachers, counsellors, and others in the helping professions to help Lh learners overcome their problems.

PART II: The Qualitative Approach

The issues cited immediately above have been picked up by qualitative researchers. This section examines qualitative research under three headings:

1. General features of qualitative research.
2. Qualitative research strategies.
3. Limitations of the qualitative approach.

1. General Features of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is defined as that which produces data that is not numerical and/or not amenable to quantification. Based on the

theoretical perspective of phenomenology, the approach is concerned with a systematic understanding of human actions and direct experiences, taken at face value (Cohen & Manion, 1980). This means that researchers who adopt the qualitative approach are interested in descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviours.

While those who adopt a quantitative research approach generally assume that phenomena can best be studied by breaking them down into parts and then focussing on a limited number of these parts and their relationships, those who undertake qualitative research tend to assume that a holistic understanding of the studied phenomena should be sought. Thus, they attempt to gather and integrate information in such a way that the unified characteristics of a phenomenon are portrayed. Qualitative researchers may also be interested in studying the relationships between parts of a phenomenon but they do not do so on the basis of the use of statistical procedures which are intended to establish whether hypothesized relationships (causal or probabilistic) exist and can be generalized beyond the study sample and setting. Rather, they attempt to describe systematically the characteristics of all parts of a phenomenon and then discern and generate propositions about the presence of relationships. Claims about the generality of relationships are based on evidence of their presence across different contexts.

Such studies are not typically constrained by narrowly defined research questions or hypotheses and emergent research questions are anticipated as a pool of data accumulates and initial analysis begins. Thus, as possible attributes, categories and relationships are noted, the researcher's attention might be drawn to new or previously unrecognized features of the phenomenon which then become a further research focus.

The strategy is an inductive one that can usually be characterized as exploratory, discovery-oriented and flexible. Such an approach helps the researcher gain a deeper understanding of what is being investigated than can be achieved in a more restrictive data collection approach and makes the objective of a holistic perspective more feasible.

The objectives and features of qualitative studies noted above understandably mean that they often entail a great deal of time and accurate assessment of the time required may not be possible at the outset of the study. For example, the researchers may require considerable time to familiarize themselves with the study setting, the research goals or design may need to be modified as the study is underway, it may be necessary to 'wait' for naturally occurring events to occur, the course of interview may be unpredictable and the analysis of qualitative data is almost always a very time-consuming activity.

The primary tools of qualitative researchers are their eyes and ears. Data collected in the course of observation and interviews are customarily recorded by hand in field notes or using aids such as a video and audio recorders. In the case of the former, the field note format will vary with the research problems and the skills and styles of individual researchers. The notes may include verbatim accounts of what people say as well as narratives of behaviour and descriptions of settings. Interpretative comments may also be included. Video or audio records ensure that a complete record can be preserved intact and revisited over time. As Goetz and LeComte (1984) note, however, "whichever means of recording data is chosen, researchers should select only what they can use well" (p.161). Complex, sensitive equipment, for example, may interfere with the data collection process unless used by skilled practitioners.

Concerning the validity and reliability of qualitative data, the researchers can adopt a number of techniques to help ensure that they obtain a complete and accurate record of the phenomenon. Two of the main techniques used by qualitative researchers are 'triangulation' and 'informant confirmation'. In the case of the former, the researcher looks for concurrence between data gathered from several different perspectives (e.g. pupil, teacher, parent) or using different data gathering techniques (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, observations). In the latter, the researcher asks informants to confirm the accuracy of their descriptions and interpretations of the informant's own statement or the researcher's observation.

2. Qualitative Research Strategies

Qualitative research strategies come under different names such as 'life history', 'field work', 'ethnography', 'field studies', 'case study', 'naturalistic study', and 'ethnomethodology' (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Each term portrays the method used by the investigator to collect data. There are three data collection strategies central to qualitative research: participant observation, interviewing and personal document analysis. Rist (1982) pointed out that while none of these strategies is especially unique to qualitative work, the opportunity to triangulate the data gathered when they are used in combination is what contributes to the strength of the approach.

Observation: Observational strategies in qualitative studies do vary. They may be 'detached' or 'non-participant' in which case the researcher is neither involved in the group's activities, nor identified to be. On the other hand, they might be 'participant' where the researcher participates totally in group activities and is clearly identified as an active member (Becker, 1963; Spradly, 1979, 1980; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). In the latter instance, the observer may speak with subjects, joke with them, be empathetic, and also share their concerns and experiences. Prolonged contact with the setting allows such observers to view the dynamics of conflict and change and thus see organizations, relationships, groups and individual definitions in process (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). Becker (1963) provides a concise example of participant observation :

"I gathered the material for this study by participant observation by participating with musicians in the variety of situations that make up their work and leisure lives. At the same time I made the study, I had played the piano professionally for several years and was active in musical circles in Chicago (pp. 83-84)."

Interview: The second of the main data collection strategies in qualitative research is that of interviewing. In this case, ideas and

perceptions are exchanged, information is shared, and the researcher and subjects come to know more about each other in the process. The conversational aspect of interviewing emphasizes the importance of human interaction in qualitative studies (Seiber, 1973). Such interviews may be carefully structured and scripted or be relatively unstructured and informal.

Personal Documents: Selection of personal documentation is the third mode of data collection in qualitative studies. Roller according to Wood (1986) describes Personal documentation as those materials in which people reveal in their own words, their view of their entire life, or some other aspect about themselves. Personal documents include such diverse materials as diaries, letters, autobiographies, court records, and school files .

Where a mix of these methods are used for the purpose of an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, the approach is referred to as a case study. As previously mentioned, the case study is one of the research designs which is frequently associated with qualitative data and is particularly appropriate to an in-depth study of the phenomenon of LH. Case studies involve an intensive exploration of behaviours, thoughts and feelings of a single individual or a group of people who share a common purpose and they are seen as providing a good basis for the development of theoretical constructs and propositions rather than the testing of hypotheses. Johnston (1985) notes the capacity of case studies to highlight *"substantial individual differences in experiences and important dimensions of behaviours (both overt and covert) which are as critical as the commonalities between individuals"*(p. 155).

According to Yin (1984), case studies are a preferred design when 'what', 'why' and 'how' questions are asked and when the researcher has little or no control over events. Other strengths that have been associated with the strategy include the following:

- (i) the researched phenomenon is investigated in its natural context;

- (ii) an in-depth and holistic account of the phenomenon can be developed;
- (iii) the uniqueness of people's behaviour, thoughts and feelings is acknowledged; and
- (iv) the researcher is allowed to re-orientate the study in the light of new and unexpected findings.

Wax (1957), Becker and Geer (1957) summarize the problems that accompany a case study research strategy as revolving around the difficulty researchers may experience when attempting to develop relationships with subjects and gain access to their inner lives, both of which are time consuming. Also, the objectives of case studies may be too ambitious. Thus, Becker and Geer argued that because the case study is expected to deal with a great variety of descriptive and theoretical problems, it is difficult for researchers to focus on specific propositions. Also, pointing to the fact that the various processes uncovered by the researcher must all be incorporated into the case study report and then be given some theoretical relevance, they asserted that the aims of case study are too involving and demanding to be realized. The laborious nature of data collection and analysis overloads the researcher with so much to be observed, recorded, coded, analyzed, and written up. They conclude that "*it is utopian to suppose that one can see, describe, and find the theoretical relevance of everything*" (Becker & Wax, 1968, p.233). Finally, the case study strategy has been criticized for providing very little basis for scientific generalization.

A point of interest is the fact that in spite of this stereotype, the case study design has recently gained a great deal of popularity in social science studies. This reflects acceptance of the case study as a data gathering strategy in its own right and recognition that it is possible to develop general procedural guidelines. Another probable reason is that either these criticisms or stereotypes are wrong as argued by Yin (1984), or the advantages of the procedure outweigh its pitfalls and problems. Strengths credited to the case study strategy includes the following:

- Data is gathered systematically in 'real' settings with other factors operating and interacting naturally, so that a comprehensive valid and reliable body of data can be amassed.
- It allows the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of the real life event.
- Its flexibility which allows the researcher to orient the study in the light of new and unexpected findings.

3. Limitations of the Qualitative Research Approach:

Despite its acknowledged contributions, the qualitative research approach has not escaped all criticisms. Mile, (1979), a distinguished researcher in the field of qualitative studies, describes the research techniques as "*intuitive*", "*primitive*", "*unmanageable*" and not transcending "*story telling*". Other critics have also argued that the methods of data collection lack rigour, which together with the high risk of researcher bias can lead to ambiguous and distorted conclusions (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). In summarizing the criticisms of qualitative research that have been made (e.g. the language of qualitative research reports not being better than that of a bad novel and the use of subjective procedure that does not allow the replication of study), Katterns (1985) has suggested that proponents of quantitative research methodology seem happy for qualitative researchers to undertake some exploratory 'skirmishing' in a particular field, but feel that 'the real research' occurs when they take over in the next stage with their hypothetico-deductive approach.

The apparent absence of hypotheses in qualitative studies has also been criticized. Gage (1978) asserts that qualitative findings can only be verified by quantification. Thus, he suggested that the hypothetico-deductive methods were the only validating yardstick. Gage's criticism has, however, ignored the fact that research validity can also be assessed by other criteria and procedures.

It has also been observed that the researcher's presence in the study field may effectively change the social situation being studied. In addition, if the researcher is in the setting for an extended period of time, his/her capacity to perceive important features may become blurred. The latter problem has been referred to as 'researcher blindness'. However, Stainback and Stainback (1984), have argued for a possible resolution of these problems if researchers consciously monitor and reflect on their own actions and possible influence on the setting.

Finally, qualitative studies have been criticized for their inability to fulfill the criteria employed in quantitative studies to establish the generalizability of findings. Researchers undertaking qualitative studies respond to this criticism by pointing out that an assessment of generalizability is not one of their research objectives. Their main concern is to provide a rich, detailed account of the phenomenon.

As discussed above, qualitative studies in education do have their own dangers or potential limitations which make them vulnerable to misuse. In view of this, Rist (1980) has cautioned that qualitative research methodology could become a mantle to legitimate much work that is shoddy, poorly conducted, and ill-conceived. It is important, therefore, that researchers carefully examine assumptions that underpin qualitative research and the purposes for which the methodology is best suited before adopting the approach for any study.

PART 111: Complementary Use of Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.

Though different in a number of respects, quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are not mutually exclusive. As Reichardt and Cook (1979) noted, far from being antagonistic, the two types of research methods are complementary and when used together help to correct the inevitable biases in each method. Furthermore, quantitative knowledge is built upon qualitative, common sense understanding. In other words, the qualitative findings provide the

context of meanings in which quantitative findings can be understood. Campbell (1979) explains that :

"Too often, quantitative social scientists, under the influence of missionaries from logical positivism, presume that in true science, quantitative knowing replaces qualitative, common sense knowing. The situation is in fact different. Rather science depends upon qualitative, common sense knowing even though at best it goes beyond it. Science in the end contradicts some items of common sense, but it only does so by trusting the great bulk of the rest of common sense knowledge"(p.50).

Also, qualitative research is often viewed as a method of scholarly inquiry for gaining a common sense understanding, whereas quantitative research is considered as a method for establishing whether particular phenomenon are predictable and controllable (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979). Considering the fact that the two methods have different purposes or aims, using them together would provide a depth of perception or a binocular vision that neither one can provide alone (Eisner, 1977). In view of this, perhaps it would be more reasonable to stop arguments about which approach is more useful and to direct efforts to ensuring that researchers recognize that the choice of one or both orientations will depend on the nature of the questions they seek to answer. In the case of the present study, most of the questions call for the gathering of qualitative data. For some questions, however, quantitative data is also required. Thus to obtain a complete picture of the lives of Lh learners, the present study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data gathering strategies.

Summary and Conclusions

Since Seligman et al. (1967) originally proposed the theory of LH, numerous studies have been conducted on the phenomenon. These

studies have furnished us with information about a number of aspects of LH: "specific" and "general"; "cognitive", "motivational", and "emotional" deficits, surface patterns of behaviours, and strategies that might be used to ameliorate LH. As highlighted in the previous chapter, however, there is little research in which those defined as Lh have been asked to describe their own inner life as well as behaviour. The present study is based on the premise that an appreciation of LH through the eyes of its victims will assist in the development of a theory and the design of strategies for reducing its incidence in school learners. In order to realize these objectives, a case study design was seen as a necessary feature of the study. To answer all the questions posed, however, it was concluded that no single approach was appropriate. A combined, complementary use of quantitative and qualitative approaches was required. Details of the study procedure are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The problems identified in Chapter One, together with the questions raised in the review of literature on LH, shaped the major purposes of this study which included (a) a systematic appraisal of instruments and strategies that might be used for identifying LH learners (Phase One), and (b) an in-depth investigation of the patterns of behaviour and the cognitive and emotional life that characterize such learners (Phase Two). Bearing in mind the limitations of previous studies, it was decided that a qualitative, as well as a quantitative, research orientation needed to be adopted if the researcher were to gain access to, and an understanding of, the inner life of Lh learners.

In the present chapter, the design and methodology of each of the two main phases of the study are detailed. The organization of the chapter is summarized in Figure 4 below.

THE IDENTIFICATION PHASE OF THE STUDY
Overview
The Subjects and Study Site
The Schedule for the Identification Phase of the Research
The Identification Instrument and Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LH Description Instrument - The LH Traits Checklist - Interview - The Attribution Questionnaire
Subject Selection

[Contd. on next page]

THE CASE STUDY PHASE OF THE STUDY
Overview
The Sample
The Case Study Approach
Data Gathering Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Piloting of interview - Interview Schedules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview 1 Interview 2 Interview 3 Interview 4 Interview 3 Interview 5 Interview 6 - The Stimulated Recall Procedure
Revisit to Study Site
Data Analysis

Fig. 4 : Organization of Chapter Four.

Phase 1: The Identification of Subjects

Overview

During this phase, the researcher selected, designed, and trialled instruments and procedures that could be used to identify Lh pupils. The main research activities included:

- (a) familiarization visits to the Intermediate School in which the study was to be conducted;
- (b) presentation of a written description of the Lh syndrome to all teachers of Forms One and Two pupils and the subsequent identification of Form One pupils whom the teachers believed exhibited the syndrome;

- (c) completion of the Learned Helplessness Trait Checklist by teachers for each of the children they had identified as Lh;
- (d) familiarization visits to the classrooms by the researcher;
- (e) administration of an Attribution Questionnaire to the teacher identified Lh pupils, and
- (f) interviews with each of the children.

The Subjects and Study Site

The population from which the subjects were drawn was Form One pupils in an Intermediate School in Hamilton in New Zealand. When the study commenced, the school had a total Form One population of 421 pupils. Because the study extended over two years, the status of the subjects changed as the children were promoted from Form One to Form Two.

The decision to study learners at this class level was based on the premise that they would generally have developed the cognitive and language capacities required to develop, review and articulate ideas about their school learning experiences. It was also assumed that they would have developed expectancies for their future academic performance and it was hoped that the selection of this age group (11 - 14) would allow the development of LH to be traced. In addition, given the time schedule of the study, there were advantages in working in an Intermediate School as continuity of contact with the pupils and the teachers was guaranteed for the total duration of the study.

The Schedule for the Identification Phase of the Research

With the choice of an Intermediate School as a possible study site, the principal of the school was met, briefed on the purpose of

the study and his permission for the use of the school sought. After obtaining his verbal approval, a letter seeking consent for the use of the school was forwarded to the Regional Education Board. Accompanying the letter was a formal research proposal describing briefly the nature and aims of the proposed study as well as the anticipated duration of the study. In November 1985, formal approval for the use of the school was granted by the Regional Education Board.

Following this approval, the researcher spent the next three months familiarizing herself with life in a New Zealand school by meeting teachers and children and, on an informal basis, learning their colloquialisms. As Becker and Geer (1957) have acknowledged,

"Any social group to the extent that it is a distinctive unit, will have to some degree a culture differing from that of other groups, a somewhat different set of common understandings around which action is organized and these differences will find expression in a language whose nuances are peculiar to that group and fully understood only by its members" (Becker & Geer, 1957, p. 29).

The sequencing and time frame of the first phase of the study is summarized below.

Date:	1985	Term III September and November	School visits to familiarize the researcher with the New Zealand school system Classroom familiarization visits and the initial identification of subjects. (40 children were identified)
		(Vacation)	
	1986	Term I February	Familiarization visits to the classrooms. Completion of the LH Traits checklist by Form One teachers.
		March	Pilot interviews with Form One pupils, 11-13 year olds (n = 11)
		March-May	First interview with Teacher - identified subjects (n = 35)

Term II	Administration of an Attribution questionnaire to prospective subjects (n = 30)
July to August	Final selection of subjects for the Case Study phase (n = 8)

The Identification Instruments and Procedures

Four instruments were used for identification purposes: the instrument which described the traits associated with LH syndrome, the LH Traits Checklist, the Attribution Questionnaire, and an Interview.

Learned Helplessness Description: On the basis of the review of theoretical literature on the LH construct, a written description of the LH phenomenon was prepared (See Appendix A). This was distributed to all teachers in the school. The Form One teachers were asked to use this description to identify pupils in their class whom they believed showed evidence of the syndrome. The Form Two teachers were given the description also as they might be involved in the study in the subsequent year when the subjects were promoted to Form Two. This procedure also helped ensure that all the teachers in the school were aware of the focus of the study.

It was hypothesized that with a clear description of LH, teachers would be able to readily identify such students given the opportunities they had had over an extended period of time, to talk with and observe their pupils. Such opportunities would enable them to recognize recurrent patterns of behaviour characteristic of the Lh learner and to gain some insight into their pupils' perceptions, thoughts and feelings in various learning situations. Such a strategy appeared to have potential for overcoming certain limitations of some other procedures. For example, the strategy helped to minimize the possibility of researcher bias occurring if the researcher had attempted to identify Lh children on the basis of her observation of children's classroom behaviour. However, the strategy had its own limitations. These included the lack of detailed information about the children's attributions for their learning difficulties.

The LH Traits Checklist: This was developed by the researcher drawing on the research literature concerning the motivational, cognitive and emotional traits that have been associated with LH, as well as her assumption that certain types of classroom behaviour would be likely consequences of LH. The Checklist contained 24 items representing traits or possible correlates of LH. Figure 5 shows examples of checklist items.

- Frequently fails to complete assigned tasks
- Readily discouraged when success is not immediate
- Shows consistent pattern of poor performance
- Often complains about subject difficulty
- Lacks confidence in personal academic ability
- Dislikes being asked to perform publicly in class

Fig. 5: Examples of Traits Associated with LH.

A complete list of items in the LH Traits Checklist is provided in Appendix B .

Two weeks after they had made an identification based on the written description, the teachers were asked to check items on the Checklist that they believed the pupil(s) they had identified as LH exhibited. In addition, a section was provided for teachers to write down other traits that they observed in the learners ("Write down any other traits of learned helplessness that you observe in the learner"). They were also asked to indicate if each identified child's academic performance was up to his or her intellectual capacity ("In your own judgement, would you say this pupil has been performing academically up to his/her intellectual capacity?"). Lastly, provision was made for teachers to write down any other comments that they could make about the children.

It was assumed that those pupils who exhibited a greater number of the traits were more likely to fall into the LH category.

The wording and format of the Checklist was assessed by three university lecturers and the teachers who used the instrument were asked to check through the compiled list for possible language bias and also to comment on the clarity of statements.

The potential strengths of the Checklist strategy include its ability to confirm the presence of a range of LH-related traits in the teacher-identified Lh children, as well as to provide information on the assumption that particular traits are exhibited. The limitations include lack of consideration of the learner's perspective concerning the presence of these traits and the dependence on teachers' inferences and opinions which could produce biased or even spurious results.

Following an initial analysis of this Checklist data, the researcher revisited some of the teachers who had completed the questionnaire to clarify any comments they had provided about particular children which were unclear. This was done by arranging brief meetings with the teachers concerned. All discussions were treated as confidential.

Interview: To overcome limitations arising out of lack of consideration of learners' perspective on the LH Traits Checklist, an interview was conducted to obtain direct information from the children about their perceptions of themselves as school learners. The information gathered during this first interview was expected to assist in the identification. The data gathered concerning the children's attitude to some school subjects, their perceptions of their performance and performance expectancy, and their attributions for the way they were performing at school.

A more comprehensive description of the first interview is provided in the Case Study Section of this chapter, where the other interviews are outlined in detail.

The Attribution Questionnaire: This instrument was developed originally by Lillas (1986) to uncover childrens' perceptions of their most and least successful school subject, the meanings they associated with the terms success and failure, their causal explanations (attributions) for their success and failure in those school subjects, and their categorization of those attributions on the locus of control, stability and control dimensions (See Appendix C). The format of the questionnaire called for open-ended responses. This was considered to be of advantage in that it made it possible for the subjects to respond naturally to the questions, prevented the problem of cueing subjects towards considering causal explanations that they would not have spontaneously offered, and, most importantly, did not restrict subjects to a pre-selected group of attributions. Details of the procedure adopted to validate the instrument are reported in the original source.

With respect to identification, the researcher was interested primarily in the children's attributions. It was assumed that children who were LH would categorize their failure attributions predominantly in the stable and uncontrollable dimensions.

The administration of the questionnaire was completed in one day. As an introduction to the exercise, the children were told that the purpose of the research was to gather information about the factors that they saw as responsible for the nature of their performances in some school subjects. It was further explained to them that such an exercise might provide a better understanding of their learning problems and thus assist in the development of strategies that could be used to help them. They were then told that there were no right or wrong answers, and that all that was required was an honest response. The confidentiality of their responses was assured. The questionnaire was initially administered to the children in a group. Because of the reading as well as writing inefficiency of most of the children, it became apparent, that the questionnaire was best administered by taking each child through it individually. Thus, the exercise was repeated taking the children individually.

Subject Selection Procedure

On the basis of the LH description, the Form One teachers identified forty Form One pupils as LH.

Table 1 : Teacher-Identified Lh Learners.

Ethnic Group	Male	Female
Maori	14	6
Pakeha	13	6
Others	1	0

(n = 40)

The same teachers completed the behavioural traits checklist for each of the 40 pupils. When the attribution questionnaire and interview identification procedures were used, the children had moved on to the Form Two class level.

As the pupils were now in new classrooms and with new teachers, it was necessary to re-establish contact with them. The new teachers, particularly those new in the school who had no knowledge of the study, were also provided with information about the purpose of the study and their co-operation sought.

Over the vacation period, one of the original teachers and three members of the teacher-identified Lh learners were lost through transfer to other schools. As a result, in the 1986 school year, the research subjects were distributed as follows:

Table 2 : Initial Sample in 1986

Ethnic Group	Male	Female
Maori	11	6
Pakeha	13	6
Others	1	0

(n = 37)

With the shift in class status, the researcher considered it important to encourage the new teachers' involvement in the study. One of the ways this was done was by seeking their opinion of the LH status of the subjects previously identified by their Form One teachers as Lh and who were now in their classrooms. Thus, they were also asked to complete the behavioural traits checklist for the 37 children. For 36 of the children in the original group, the responses of the new teachers were similar to those of the previous ones. There was only one controversial case. At the time contact was re-established with the original sample, the new teacher had had the pupil for about two months.

The 37 subjects were interviewed individually by the researcher. Following this first interview, the parents of the 37 children identified as LH were sent a letter seeking their approval for the participation of their children in the study. The letter was prepared in consultation with the School Principal and the class teachers (see Appendix K). With the letter was a reply form on which parents could indicate their response. Of the 37 parents contacted, 35 gave consent for the involvement of their child. Two parents, without offering reasons, did not give their approval. The researcher was then left to choose the final sample from this group of 35 pupils. Thirty out of these completed the Attribution Questionnaire and thus constituted the population from which a sample for the case study sample was selected.

The conditions and procedures which were considered necessary for the success of the interviews are discussed in detail in the next section where the case study phase is reviewed.

Phase 2: The Case Studies

Overview

In this section, the researcher made in-depth case-studies of the patterns of behaviour, as well as aspects of the cognitive and

emotional life, of six Lh learners. Initially, eight children were selected for this phase of the study, two of whom were treated as reserves in case of the attrition of students from the group. Interviewing took place on some six occasions over a period of four months. At the end of the interviews, a stimulated recall procedure was also used. Data gathered during the identification phase of the study was also drawn on as the case studies were prepared.

The Sample

The case study sample comprised six out of the thirty subjects who participated fully in the identification phase of the study. The criteria for selection included:

1. The consistency of their pattern of responses across the four identification procedures. Only those pupils who were shown as exhibiting 50 percent or more of the traits in the LH Traits Checklist, categorized 50 percent or more of their failure attributions as both stable and uncontrollable, and offered a number^{of} failure attributions that have been identified in previous studies as typical of Lh learners, were considered for the case study phase.
2. Subject Areas : Only those children who were having learning difficulties with mathematics or reading were selected for the case study. The selection of these two school subjects was due to the emphasis they received in the school curriculum. Secondly, reading and mathematics were the two subject areas that most of the subjects indicated they had learning difficulties in.
3. Gender : As a precaution against obtaining a study result that was gender-biased, equal numbers of males and females were involved in the case study.
4. The Pupils' Willingness to Participate: As will be seen later when a detailed report on the first interview is

presented, at the end of the first interview children were asked whether they would like to continue to participate in the study. Only those children who were willing to continue were considered for case study work.

5. Parent Approval : Only the children whose parents gave consent to their participation in the study were considered for selection.
6. Ability and willingness to introspect and report on ones cognitive and emotional life .

The Case Study Approach

In contrast to the numerous studies that have been conducted in the field of LH, the present study adopted a phenomenological stance and focussed, in particular, on the everyday experiences of individual Lh learners. Thus, the perceptions that the learners had of themselves and their surroundings, the explanations that they had for their perceptions, were all of interest and concern. The reality that was studied was the reality that each learner imagined it to be (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). In order to tap into that day-to-day reality, it was necessary to adopt a case study method. The essential features of the case study approach have been reviewed in the previous chapter and are summarized below.

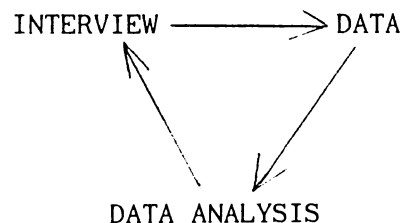
- It involved a range of data gathering procedures - self-reports, questionnaire, checklist and stimulated recall.
- Data was obtained from various perspectives - teacher, children, researcher.
- Data was gathered over time and with reference to different school learning contexts.
- The strategy was intended to provide a holistic account of the LH phenomenon as experienced in a school learning situation.

Data Gathering Strategies

The aims of a case study suggest the use of particular techniques for data collection. In the context of the present study, those techniques included observation, questionnaires, interviews and a stimulated recall technique. As the interview was the dominant method, general features of the strategy are reviewed now and then the focus of each interview is outlined in detail.

The Interviews - General Features: Whilst each interview had a pre-determined agenda, they were also flexible and open so that responses could be clarified or extended, and unanticipated matters followed up. The focus of each interview was, in part, shaped by an initial analysis of responses obtained in the preceding ones.

i.e.



With such a procedure, it was possible also to trace links between constructs so that a holistic view and a logical understanding of the children's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions were obtained.

The questions supplied a frame of reference for respondents' answers and, at the same time, allowed each person to respond in his/her own way. Because some of the children's reports were not particularly articulate, guidance and prompts were necessary at times to ensure coverage of the scheduled topics. Also, for the purpose of accuracy and completeness, Wood's (1986) recommendations on how to assist the interviewee were followed. These involved asking questions and providing prompts that could:

1. check on apparent contradictions or inconsistencies (e.g. Yes, but sometime you told me that...., how can that be so if.....);

2. search for opinions (e.g. Some children think or believe that.... In your own case, what do you think.... or believe....);
3. seek clarification (e.g. I don't think I understand you. Can you explain that again?);
4. seek explanations and pose alternatives (e.g. What if one....., what do you think would happen?);
5. seek argument, for the interest of finer understanding (e.g. You said that you would do better in..... if the teacher likes you. How do you think that would help you?);
6. pursue the logic of an argument (e.g. Are you then saying that there is nothing you can do to?);
7. probe for further information where there appear to be gaps in the account (e.g. Do you feel the same way in class when is being taught?); and
8. seek more comprehensive information (e.g. Do you want to tell me more about it?).

At times, in order to gain a fuller understanding, the researcher also had to put statements made by a child in a different way (e.g. Do you mean?); express incredulity and astonishment (e.g. Hmm!, Really, You mean it?); summarize and ask for corroboration (e.g. Would it then be correct to say that)and ask hypothetical questions (e.g. But what if you have a new teacher, do you think that would help you in anyway?).

The effort to make these interview tactics sound natural and interesting, occasionally required a certain level of pretence on the part of the researcher. For instance, she sometimes had to pretend to have not heard or understood just as it would be in a natural situation.

To fulfill the conditions and techniques that seem necessary for an interview strategy to be successful, the researcher also took into

account the potential significance of the interviewees' non-verbal behaviour. As Shertzer and Stone (1980) have pointed out, such behaviour - gestures, body movements, blushing, etc. - supplements and indeed sometimes belies the words. Thus effort was made to remain sensitive to the degree of accord between the children's verbal and non-verbal expressions. To be able to observe all the non-verbal behaviours in the course of the interview and maintain a comfortable level of eye contact, the researcher assumed a side by side sitting position with the subject. This position was also expected to minimize the researcher's influence on the interviewing situation and leave the children more relaxed to talk.

With respect to the recording of the children's responses during the interviews, the initial plan was to write down some condensed notes as well as audio tape record the actual interviews. This was to avoid the loss of data which might occur if anything went wrong with the tape recorder. However, in practice the researcher soon realized that most of the children talked so fast that it was impossible to write down even some skeletal notes of their responses without disrupting attention or their lines of thought. To avoid these problems, most data recording was restricted to the use of an audio tape recorder. Each child was interviewed separately, and all interviews were recorded with the permission or understanding of the children.

Concerning the manner of discussion, each interview opened up with an introduction during which the interviewee was reminded about the focus of the preceding interview. The purpose of the day's interview was then stated and the confidentiality of reports was re-emphasized. In the first interview the researcher also introduced herself as well as the general purpose of the study to the children. (See Appendix E for the researcher's self-introduction just before the first interview was started.)

Interview sessions were usually concluded by the researcher thanking the child for his/her co-operation and reminding him/her about the time for the next meeting.

Piloting of Interviews: Once the first interview was planned, pilot interviews involving eleven Form One children (6 males and 5 females) were conducted in order for the researcher to gain competence and confidence in the interview strategy. Another purpose of the pilot interview was to try out the effectiveness of the interview questions in terms of their ability to stimulate a good flow of discussion. Though the pilot run did not involve any of the children who were going to be interviewed later, it gave an indication of a probable range of problems to be expected.

The interviewing performances were evaluated by the researcher and, where appropriate, the wording and style of questions and feedback were modified at the end of each. With a final examination of the questions and responses, observed omissions were remedied, the order of some parts of the questions revised, and ambiguities or points where there had been confusion, rectified.

The Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW	TERM	MONTH	YEAR
1	1	March-May	1986
2	2	July	1986
3	2	July-August	1986
4	3	August	1986
5	3	September	1986
6	3	September	1986
Stimulated Recall	3	November	1986

Fig.6 : The Interview Schedule

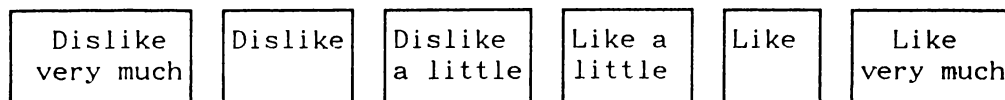
Interview 1: The main purpose of this first interview was to discover the children's perceptions of their school learning performance and to uncover their attributions for their poor performances in certain areas of school learning.

As a technique to get the children underway comfortably, the

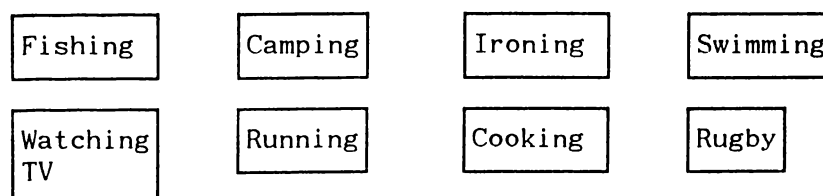
researcher began by asking them to talk about their 'liked' and 'disliked' non-academic activities. This also provided the researcher with a view of what these children do in an out-of-school context. (The background data highlighted the fact that although these children may be Lh in some school subject areas, there were some out-of-school activities that they liked and were good at).

For this first interview, each child was accompanied by the researcher from the classroom to the interview room. On the way to the interview room, the researcher chatted informally with the child about the weather, the day and other factors not related to the study. Spradley (1979), points out that such casual discussions can make the interviewee more relaxed during the actual interview. This was the aim of the researcher. The interview followed the procedures presented below:

1. An introduction reminded the subject of the purpose of the study. It was emphasized that the session was not a test and so the questions had no right or wrong answers. What the researcher wanted to know was how they were finding school and what they thought about school, and the different school subjects they were studying. The confidentiality of responses was also stressed, and the explanation for the use of an audio tape recorder was offered (see Appendix F for a full record of the introductory statements).
2. A set of six cards indicating different levels of 'like' and 'dislike' were placed on a table in front of the interviewee:



3. Another set of 12 cards, each naming an out-of-class activity that the children might like or dislike doing was also given to them. Eight samples are shown below:



These activities were identified in the course of earlier informal conversations with the children during the initial familiarization visits to the school by the researcher. During these visits, children were asked such questions as:

- (i) "What are the things that children in New Zealand like to do?"
- (ii) "What things in school and outside school do you like to do? do?"
- (iii) "What are the things that you don't like to do?"

This exercise was repeated four times with different groups of children totalling 38 and the 12 most frequently nominated 'like' and 'dislike' activities were selected.

Table 3 : List of Liked and Disliked Activities.

Activities	Like	Dislike
* 1. Camping	29	4
2. Bush walk	4	8
* 3. Watching Television	38	-
* 4. Rugby	20	9
5. Soft ball	13	-
* 6. Pushing a bike	14	7
* 7. Going on holidays	27	-
* 8. Cooking	6	20
* 9. Fighting	1	21
10 Volley ball	12	1
* 11 Doing dishes	-	28
* 12 Swimming	23	6
13 Darkness	-	1
* 14 Running	13	6
* 15 Ironing	8	14
16 Cricket	15	-
* 17 Fishing	31	-
18 Schooling	-	1
19 Vacuum cleaning	6	8

* Activities selected for use in Interview 1.

After explaining the source of the activities to the children, they were asked to place each card under one of the 'Like' rating cards. Once this task was completed, they were asked to pick out one of the activities which they liked most, and another which they disliked most and explain why they liked or disliked it (e.g. *"You told me that you liked _____ (activity). Can you tell me why you like it?"*). The researcher probed ideas that seemed to warrant further exploration.

4. The children were asked to name the subjects they were studying in school and a similar exercise was then repeated with those school subjects. Reasons were also sought why they liked or disliked any two of their previously identified subjects.
5. Questions such as *"Can you tell me what sort of marks you usually get in _____ (name of the disliked school subject)?"* were then asked to investigate their perceptions of their performances in the disliked school subjects.
6. Their causal explanations for the nature of their own performances were sought (e.g. *Can you think of reasons why you get _____ (repeat reported grades) grades in _____ (name the disliked school subject)?*
7. Acknowledging the fact that children can sometimes suppress some attribution information that might hurt their ego, they were asked to focus on the behaviour of other children in class and make attributions (e.g. *Do you think anybody in your class is doing well in _____ (name of identified disliked school subject)? Can you think of any reason why X is doing so well?*
8. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the children for their co-operation and asked whether they would like to continue to participate in the study.

Interview 2: The second interview focussed on the children's attitude to schooling and their usual classroom (observable) behaviours when mathematics or reading was being taught. The children were asked about how they felt about schooling (e.g. *"If it were just your own decision to make would you continue schooling after this year? Can you tell me why you would decide (not) to do so?"*).

Information was also sought concerning the children's classroom interaction and relationship with the teacher (e.g. *"I would like you to tell me what you normally do in class, when you do not understand:*

- *something that the teacher explains?*
- *some parts of your homework?*
- *the thing that you are reading?"*

The format for the interview was as follows:

1. After introducing the session, children were encouraged to think before responding to any question.
2. This was followed by questions on their attitude to schooling.
3. Their overt classroom behaviours and possible explanations for those behaviours were explored.
4. Responses and ideas that were considered important were further probed.

Interview 3: Although studies on LH have established the fact that LH precipitates cognitive and emotional behaviour deficits, only a few studies have attempted to assess these characteristics from the child's perspective. The purpose of this particular interview was to

create a situation whereby the children identified as Lh learners could describe their own feelings, and thoughts in those learning situations where they found themselves feeling helpless. Questions were thus focussed on the children's thoughts and feelings in situations which concerned the learning or use of the problem school subject. The interview assumed the following format:

1. The children were asked to think about the last class that they attended when the subject was being taught.
2. After having about five minutes to think, they were asked questions such as:
 - (i) How do you usually feel when mathematics/reading is being taught?
 - (ii) What sort of thoughts usually go through your mind when you are in mathematics/reading class.
 - (iii) How do you usually feel when home work is given on the mathematics/reading?
 - (iv) How do you usually feel when a test is given on mathematics/reading?
3. Reasons were sought for any answer that the children gave for their feelings and thoughts.

Interview 4: Two weeks after the second interview, the third was conducted. The purpose of the third interview was to investigate the origins of the children's learning difficulties with reference to their identified school subject.

Questions in this particular interview were intended to help the child to retrospect and report on his/her experiences with the problem school subject at different stages of his/her schooling. The report was carefully monitored in order to try to pin-point the exact stage that the decision to give up on learning was taken and to explore the reasons. This appeared to be the most difficult interview session both for the children and the interviewer as some children were either unable, unwilling or found it uncomfortable to think back. The

researcher, on the other hand, had to try different strategies such as rewording of questions, using illustrations and repetition of questions to help them. However, the procedure of the interview was as follows:

1. The children were encouraged to retrospect and report, as much as was possible, on when they first started to learn mathematics/reading, their attitude to the school subject at that time and how they found it in terms of the difficulty level, (e.g. *"Thinking about when you were first taught mathematics/reading. Can you tell me how you found it then?. Can you think of why you found it so."*)
2. With questions and probes, the researcher focussed the children on their kindergarten (if any), Primary School, and then the Intermediate School experiences. At each stage, attempts were made to help them remember their experiences with the named school subject, using such questions as: *"I guess you were taught a bit of mathematics/reading in primary one. Just think about it and tell me how you found it then?"*
3. Questions were also posed to gather information on the academic performance expectancies (e.g. *"You might be going to Secondary School next year. How do you think you will be performing in mathematics or reading?"*).
4. Reasons were sought for reported experiences and expectancies.

Interview 5: The focus of the fifth interview was 'the home'. Being aware of the significant influence that such home-related factors as parent expectations have on the psychological (including intellectual) development of a child and the resulting effect on academic performance, the researcher decided to explore such home related factors as:

- Available educational help at home (e.g. *"If you have difficulties when you are studying mathematics/reading at home do you usually get help?"*);
- Time spent on school work at home (e.g. *"About how much time do you spend to do your homework at home everyday"*;) and
- Parents' interest in a child's school progress (e.g. *"Do your parents know that you are having difficulties with mathematics/reading?"* (If yes) *"Are they doing anything to help you?"* (If yes) *"Can you tell me some of the things that they are doing to help you?"*).

The children's job prospects were also explored with questions such as *"Have you ever thought about the type of job that you would like to do when you leave school?"* The purpose was to assess the transferability of their LH to other life situations.

The interview proceeded as follows:

1. The purpose of the day's interview was introduced.
2. Being aware of the sensitive nature of the day's interview, they were told that they were free to decline to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable responding to.
3. The children were then asked questions about their homes. More specifically, the children were asked about the availability of study help and aids at home, time allocation for home work and the type of educational encouragement they received at home. The educational and job modelling of the parents and elder sibling(s) (if any) was also explored. This was done in a very gentle and cautious manner.
4. Responses were further probed where the interviewer thought it necessary and reasonable, but that was done only when a child felt comfortable to say more about a particular subject.

Interview 6: Research evidence clearly indicates a persistent and significant relationship between self-concept and academic performance (e.g. Gowan, 1960; Brookover, Thomas & Patterson, 1964). Thus, it was decided that the sixth interview should focus on the children's self-concept of their academic ability and their expectancies for future performance in mathematics or reading. The children were also asked a set of 20 dichotomous questions that revisited topics and issues discussed in the earlier interviews. The aim was to check out the consistency of the children's self-reports by comparing the responses. A 'Yes' or 'No' response was required for statements such as:

- Missing too many days of school.
- Not spending enough time on homework.
- Can't see any use going to school.
- Not really interested in books.
- Afraid to speak in class discussions.
- Can't keep my mind on my studies.
- Text books too hard to read.
- Teachers not friendly.
- Having a poor memory.

The interview assumed the following format:

1. Children were presented with questions which examined their perception of ability in mathematics/reading (e.g. (i) "*How do you rate yourself in mathematics/reading ability compared with the other children in your class?*" (ii) "*Forgetting about the sort of marks that your teacher gives you in tests or assignments, what sort of marks do you think you are capable of making?*").

The second series of questions dealt with the children's educational prospects and expectancies e.g (i) "*Thinking about yourself in college next year, how well do you think you will be doing in mathematics/reading compared with your peers?*" (ii) "*How well do you think you will perform in your School Certificate examination in your last year at college?*"

2. Reasons were sought for responses and, where necessary further probing of points was also done by the researcher.
3. Subjects were presented with the twenty dichotomous questions.
4. At the end, participants were told that they may not be invited out for anymore interviews unless problems warranting their help were encountered while the data was being analyzed. In some cases, the researcher recalled some of the less sensitive study problems that the child had at one time or another discussed with her and offered some suggestions. The researcher then asked the subject if he/she had any questions. If none, he/she was thanked for assisting.

The Stimulated Recall Procedure: The data collection procedure in the present study was dominated by interviews during which the children were asked to recall and verbalize their experience with the particular subject in various learning situations. In other words, subjects were expected to retrospect and introspect. The use of introspective verbal reports is a controversial matter, however. Thus, stressing that self-reports should not be completely relied on, Purkey (1970) wrote:

"Self report is what the subject is ready, willing able, or can be tricked to say"
(p.15)

Nisbett and Nilson (1977) argue that individuals are often inaccurate in their causal reports about their behaviours because they lack access to their cognitive processes. In their view, verbal protocols are a reflection of an individual's tacit knowledge about causes for his/her responses. Simon (1980) similarly argued that individuals cannot accurately report their mental processes. Cavanaugh and Perlmutter (1982) point out that verbal reports are particularly problematic when used with children and other individuals who are limited in their verbal ability. They also note that even for people who are articulate, it is sometimes a difficult task to discuss certain forms of knowledge. According to Nisbett and Wilson (1977),

the methodological difficulty of accessibility to cognitive processes for study purposes is the problem of accurate or honest verbalization of such processes. They contend that this problem stems from the following:

1. *"Subjects frequently cannot report on the existence of the chief response that was produced by the manipulations.*
2. *Even when they are able to report the existence of the responses, subjects do not report that a change process occurred; that is, that an evaluational and attitudinal response underwent any alterations.*
3. *Subjects cannot correctly identify the stimuli that produced the response" (1977, p.233).*

However, Nisbett and Wilson's (1977) stance has been criticized by Smith and Miller (1978) on the grounds that the authors are unclear about what a cognitive process is, and what access to one implies about answers to causal questions. In their own view, subjects may be able to report on *"their process of generating behaviour in the situation in which they find themselves"* (p.356). Also, Ericson and Simon (1980), in defence of the reliability of verbal reports, argue that such reports are valid when they correspond to behaviour. They present research findings to support their view that individuals can comment meaningfully on how they undertook different tasks and also suggest that such reports are most accurate when the interval between processing and reporting is minimized. When individuals report information in short term memory, they are likely to be more accurate than when retrieving information from long term memory.

Given potential problems and limitations of the self-report procedure and the researcher's own difficulties at times in eliciting such reports, it was decided to adopt a Stimulated Recall procedure to verify the accuracy of the self-report data. This involved having students listen to parts of a tape recording of a recent lesson and report on their thoughts as the lesson was underway.

Strictly speaking, the use of stimulated recall procedure in the final interview in the present study was therefore a data validating strategy as well as an information gathering technique. To ensure the validity of the information gathered through this procedure, three steps were taken:

- (i) In accordance with Ericson and Simon's (1980) suggestion, the interval between the lesson and the stimulated recall session was short (10 minutes).
- (ii) Prior to the meeting, children were observed by the interviewer (without their knowledge) in class during the recorded lesson. This was to enable the verification of some of the childrens statements by matching them with actual behaviour (Ericson and Simon, 1980).

The stimulated recall procedure took place six weeks after the sixth interview and the format was as follows:

1. Within one minute after the audio tape recorded lesson, the subject was asked by his/her teacher to meet the researcher in the usual meeting place. (This was in accordance with the researcher's prior arrangements with the class teacher).
2. As an introduction, the researcher told the children that she thought it would be nice for the two of them to listen to the lesson together as that could help her to understand their problems more and perhaps know how to help.
3. The children were instructed to listen attentively and carefully to the teacher and to tell the researcher about the thoughts that went through their mind while the teacher was saying or doing any particular thing. They were told that while the researcher might sometimes stop the tape to ask a few questions, they were free to stop the tape at any point that they had something to say.
4. Another audio tape recorder was turned on to record the session.

5. Reported thoughts by the children that were considered to be important or unclear were further probed and more explanations were sought.

A Re-visit to the Study Site

When all of the interview data was examined, it became apparent that further discussion with three of the participants was necessary in order to clarify and confirm the meanings of some of the statements that they had made during the interviews. An arrangement was then made for a meeting with the three children. The children were met individually and the follow-up interviews were completed in one day. By the end of the exercise, the benefits of creating a research setting in which a subject is allowed to be the interpreter of his/her own thoughts feelings, and behaviours became even more clear.

In November, a week after the completion of data collection, letters were sent out by the researcher to thank the school Principal, his deputy and the participating teachers for their concern, understanding and assistance in the course of the field work.

Data Analysis

The review and analysis of the interview data was on-going throughout the data gathering phase. This was undertaken (a) to check on the clarity and completeness of children's self-reports (if incomplete or unclear, statements were discussed further in a succeeding interview); (b) to begin the formulation or 'testing' of constructs and propositions; and (c) to identify topics that warranted further exploration.

Once all data-gathering was completed, a more thorough analysis of the data from one case was made in order to establish both a set of 'domains' for the final data analysis and a format for the summary and presentation of the case study data. The framework constituted the

following general domains of the LH phenomenon.

- the LH Syndrome
- Contexts in which LH is experienced
- Learner's Attribution for their LH
- Learner's Perceptions of the Onset of LH
- Time frame for the Development of LH

Several data analysis processes occurred as the study progressed from the initial interviews to the final development of constructs and propositions. In essence, these were consistent with the processes of a qualitative data analysis described by Goetz and Le Compte (1984) and associated by them with a 'grounded theory' approach. The approach adopted in the present study cannot be described as a pure grounded theory one, however, as aspects of the data analysis were constrained by the application of theoretical frameworks employed in previous studies of learned helplessness (e.g. Attribution Theory).

The data analysis incorporated the following processes:

1. Perceiving: All interview data were recorded and transcribed fully and every response was considered potentially important. In the course of a careful scrutiny of the data, discrete categories of response were marked off and the domain the data was associated with was identified.
2. Comparing, Contrasting, Aggregating and Ordering: As the interview data continued to emerge, a 'constant comparative analysis' procedure was adopted to ensure an on-going systematic organization of the data into appropriate categories and domains. Data that fitted a particular category was continually aggregated and where applicable ordered. The latter occurred, for example, when the 'history' of each child's LH was being traced.
3. Establishing Relationships: In the process of categorizing, aggregating and ordering data, possible links or associations between constructs were looked for. Certain constructs were perceived to be associated, to co-vary or to cause one another.

4. Speculating: This involved 'playing with ideas probabilistically'. Based on the children's self-reports and findings from previous studies, speculations about possible features of LH (e.g. the time-frame for the development of LH) were explored in succeeding interviews.

The sequence in which data was selected for analysis was in part based on a 'Discrepant Case Selection' strategy (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984). This involved a search for data discrepant with that already analyzed. The analysis of such data resulted in the modification, elaboration or refinement of particular categories. Thus, for example, this process occurred as the focus of the children's attributions for their school performance was examined. The category - 'Inside School Attribution' was broken down to sub-categories: 'Teacher-related attributions', 'Peer-related attributions', and 'Self-related attributions'. With further data analysis, these sub-categories were collapsed and referred to as 'In-class attributions'.

Note: The data analysis process outlined above was not a linear process. There was a continuous revisiting and re-analysis of previous data.

Summary

The objective of this chapter has been to describe the research sample and the multi-instruments and procedures which were adopted to investigate the research questions outlined in Chapter Two. The instruments used in the Identification Phase of the study were: the LH Description Instrument, LH Traits Checklist, Interview and Attribution Questionnaire. The Case study data gathering techniques included Checklist, Interviews, Questionnaires and Stimulated recall.

In the Chapter that follows, a detailed description of the procedures adopted to identify a LH sample for the Case studies is given.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: THE IDENTIFICATION OF 'LEARNED HELPLESS' PUPILS

The development and trialling of instruments and procedures to identify Lh learners was one of the major objectives of the present study. As outlined in the previous chapter, four such strategies were trialled. These included:

1. Sample Identification by Teachers.
2. The LH Traits Checklist.
3. Interviews.
4. The Attribution Questionnaire.

In this Chapter, the data gathered using each of these four strategies are presented and, following discussion of the results, the strengths and weaknesses of the identification strategies are summarized.

1. Sample Identification by Teachers Based on LH Description

The initial selection of the subjects was carried out by eleven Form One teachers based on their understanding of a written description of the LH syndrome. Using this description, a sample of forty pupils was identified as Lh by their teachers. Table 1(p.92) shows the distribution of the sample when categorized according to gender and ethnic group.

The accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' behaviour has been debated in the research literature. Some studies (e.g. Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986; Levine & Haus, 1987) indicate that such judgements are only accurate if they are based on data gathered using standardized tests. Rosenthal and Rubin (1978), and Smith (1980) point out that biasing information can influence the presumably objective process of evaluation and social judgement. They believe that teachers' judgements of pupils are a form of attitudinal cognition, influenced

by personal likes and dislikes, racial prejudices, halo effects, and other non-rational factors. Expectancy research also calls into question the accuracy of teachers' ratings of pupils' ability. However, based on an extensive review of studies (e.g. Cronbach, 1961; Cronbach & Turby, 1970; Cronbach, 1972) on teachers' judgements about students' ability, Egan and Acher (1985) have argued that there is a lack of compelling evidence for the assertion that teachers' judgements about their pupils are inaccurate.

In view of the conflicting research evidence on the accuracy of teachers' judgements of students' ability and behaviour, it was considered wise to regard the sample selection based on the teachers' judgements as tentative. Therefore, other measures such as the LH Traits Checklist were adopted for the identification of the sample.

2. The LH Traits Check-list

A list of traits that were possible correlates of LH syndrome was generated. There were two sources for these traits: (a) previous research findings (e.g. Oakes & Curtis, 1982; Gatchell & Procter, 1976; Seligman & Teasdale, 1978) which identified particular patterns of behaviour as characteristic of Lh learners, and (b) the researcher's expectation that certain behaviours would be likely consequences of the state of LH in school learners.

Teachers were asked to complete the LH Traits Checklist for the children they had previously identified. Although it was recognized that the traits in the Checklist would not invariably have their origins in LH, it was considered reasonable to assume that where a significant number of these traits was present, there was a strong likelihood that LH was their origin. In other words, if teachers were accurate in their initial identification, it was expected that the students would show a significant number of these traits. Where this was not evident, it was believed that the validity of the teachers' initial selection might need to be reappraised.

The traits which teachers associated with each pupil were also examined to determine whether (a) certain specific traits are more

predictive of LH, and (b) the degree of similarity/difference in LH traits apparently exhibited by individual pupils.

Teachers Responses on the LH Traits Checklist: Fig.7 provides a summary and diagrammatic presentation of the responses on the checklist for each of the teacher-identified subjects.

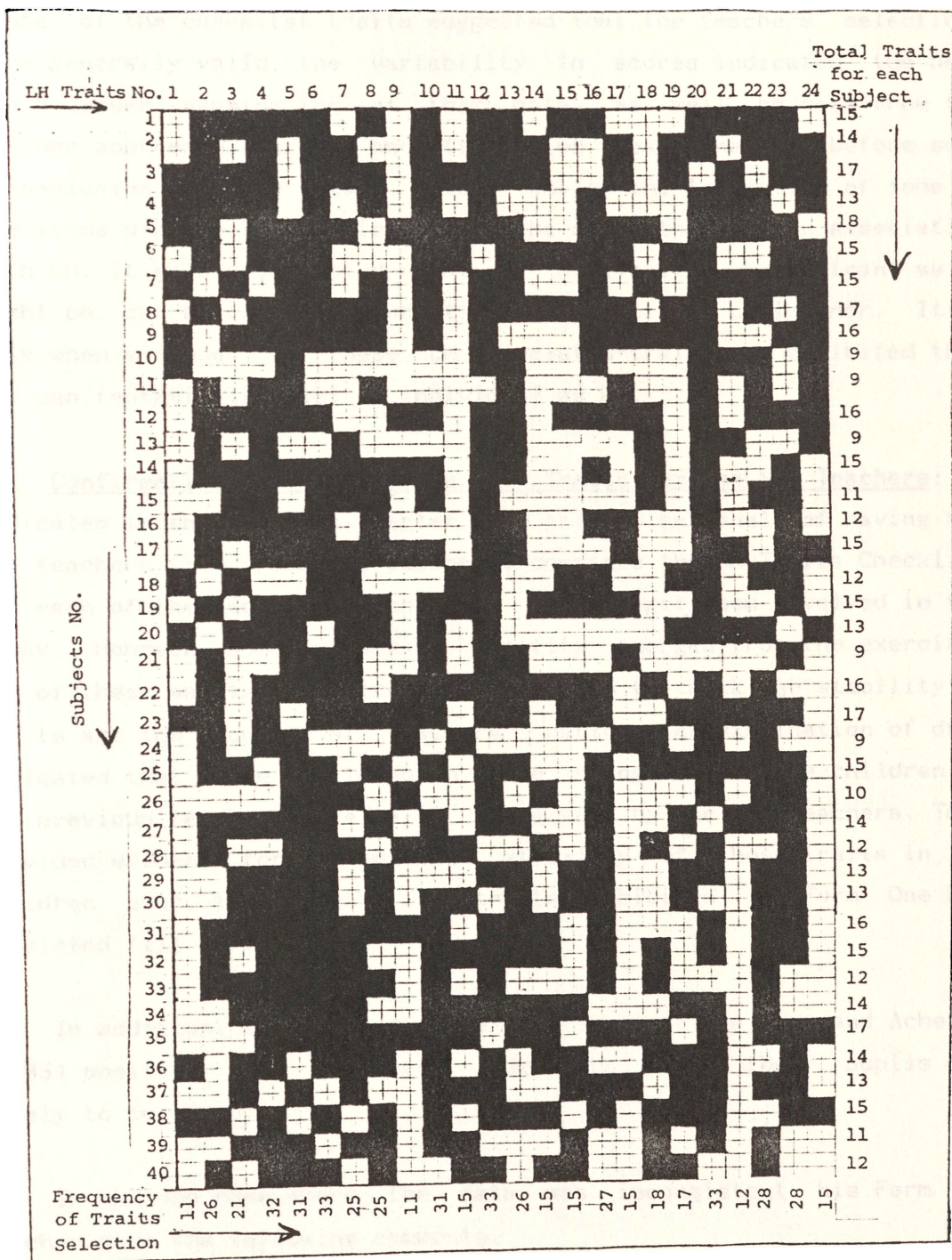


Fig. 7 The Summary of Teachers' Responses on the Learned Helplessness Traits Checklist.

Analysis of these responses revealed that the number of traits that were associated with the 40 children ranged from 9 to 18 with a mean of 13.58 (S.D.= 2.5). On average, a little over half of the set of items were selected by teachers for the children they had identified. However, many of the traits that are documented in literature as related to LH were in fact exhibited by the pupils.

Whilst the fact that most subjects exhibited a considerable number of the checklist traits suggested that the teachers' selections were generally valid, the variability in scores indicated the need for a closer examination of this data, as well as data from two further sources (interview and attribution questionnaire), before such a conclusion could be drawn. Also, while the low rating of some of the items might pose questions about the strength of their association with LH, it should be noted that no single item, significant as it might be, can be used independently to identify a Lh learner. It is only when a number of these LH associated-traits are exhibited that one can tentatively label an individual as Lh.

Confirmation of the Presence of Traits by the New Teachers: As indicated in the previous chapter, the primary rationale of having the new teachers (i.e. Form Two teachers) complete the LH Traits Checklist for each of the identified children was to get them involved in the study. However, some secondary benefits emerged from the exercise. One of these was the opportunity it provided to check the stability of traits and the accuracy of teachers' ratings. An examination of data indicated that those traits which were recognized in the children by the previous teachers were also perceived by the new teachers. This provided evidence for a possible stability of those traits in the children over time. That is, traits exhibited in Form One had persisted till Form Two.

In addition, the data gave further support for Egan and Acher's (1985) position that teachers' judgements about their pupils are likely to be sound.

In the one case where the data was inconsistent, his Form Two teacher made the following comments.

"An important aspect to be considered here is that Graeme may have been judged as being 'learned helpless' due to his relationship with his last teachers. Also, those teachers inexperience in realistically interpreting such behaviours, need to be considered. Although his progress/achievement is slow/limited in some areas. I don't really believe that Graeme exhibits behaviour or learning difficulties that should cause him to be considered as a child with Learned Helpless." (sic)

Because of the differing perceptions of the teachers, this subject was dropped from the study.

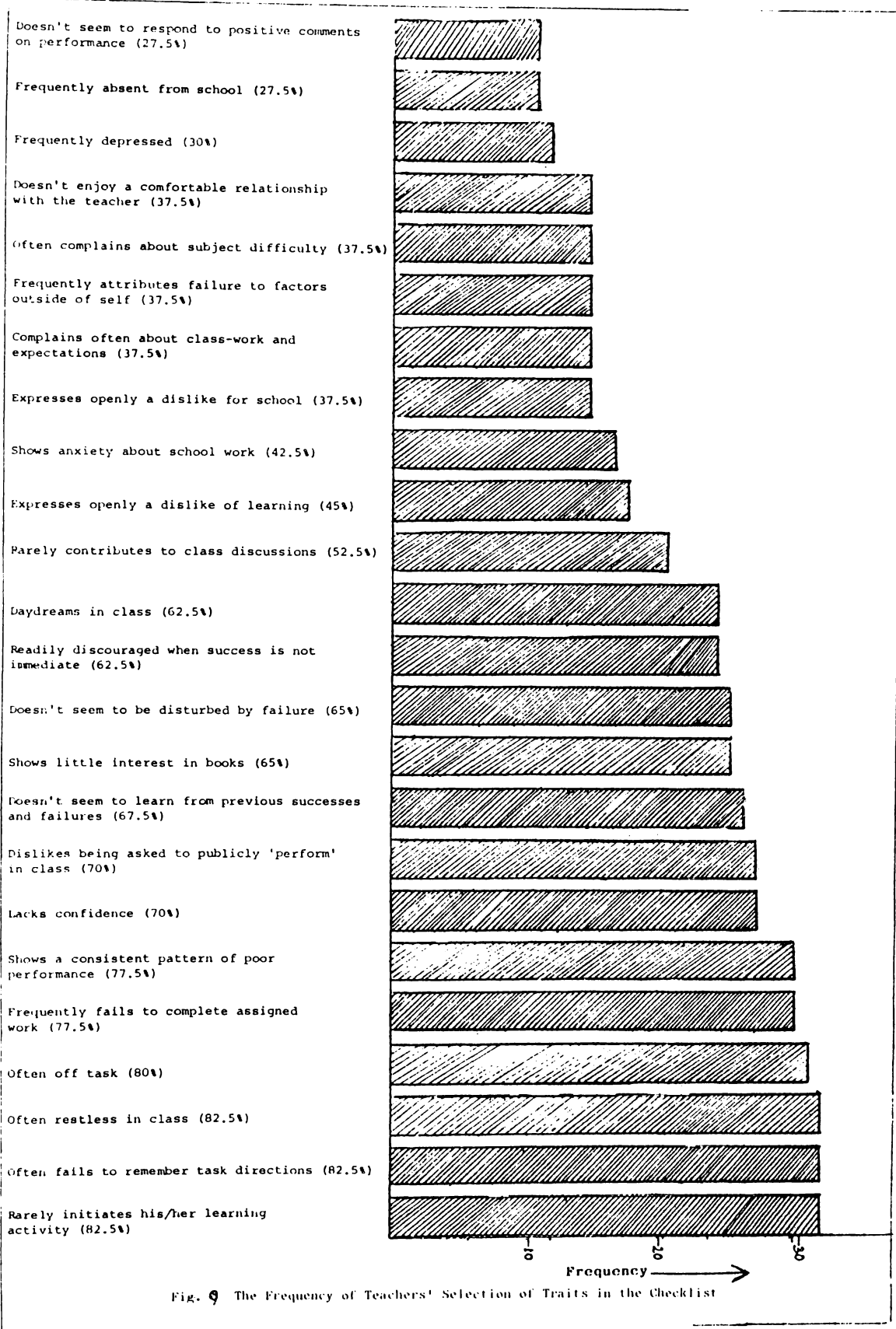
Individual Traits: As mentioned previously, it was recognized that the traits on the Checklist were possible but not necessary, correlates of the LH syndrome. Given their motivational, cognitive and emotional states, Lh children might be anticipated to show some of the following traits:

- | |
|---|
| <p>Rarely contributes to class discussion.*</p> <p>Low persistence on tasks.</p> <p>Frequent failure to complete assigned work.*</p> <p>Rarely initiates learning activities.</p> <p>Consistent poor performance.*</p> <p>Complains about task difficulty.</p> <p>Forgets task directions.*</p> <p>Does not learn positively from past failures and success.</p> <p>Anxious about school work.*</p> <p>Lacks confidence in self.*</p> <p>Frequent depression.</p> <p>Dislikes to perform publicly in class.</p> |
|---|

Fig.8 Examples of LH Syndrome Behavioural Correlates.

* Researcher's anticipated LH Correlate.

Of interest was the considerable disparity observed in the teachers' responses for individual traits on the Checklist. As can be observed in Fig.9, some of the behavioural traits were more frequently selected by teachers as correlates of LH than others.



Among the likely motivational traits which were most frequently associated with LH were traits 4 and 6. Thus 82.5 per cent of the sample were described as being rarely able to initiate learning activities and 80 per cent as often off-task. This finding is consistent with Seligman's (1975) description of LH as a phenomenon which saps an individual's ability to initiate action. Studies (e.g. Thornton & Jacobs, 1971; Hiroto, 1974; Gatchell & Procter, 1976) have associated this reluctance or failure to initiate action with the belief that actions don't produce the desired results. The explanation was subsequently supported by the children's complaints about their constant poor performances in the problem school subject despite their efforts.

Reasons for the off-task behaviour observed in most of the children could be found in the nature of expectancy for future performance. Seligman and Maier (1967), and Maier et al. (1969) provide some empirical evidence indicating that when children experience repeated failure while attempting to control a situation, they usually come to adopt the belief that the situation is beyond their control and that future outcomes will always be noncontingently related to responses. It is this belief that creates a negative expectancy, so that effort is perceived as pointless, the children become discouraged, give up trying and turn their attention to other activities (Thornton & Jacobs, 1971).

While in some cases, as cited above, teacher's responses were consistent with the literature, there were discrepancies in other cases. For example, while the tendency to avoid the difficult school task is frequently associated with learned helplessness, teachers did not mark this trait on the check-list frequently. Among the traits that are likely motivational correlates on the checklist, the one that was least associated with learned helplessness by teachers, was "*frequent absence from school*". Only 27.5 per cent of the children were thus identified. It is apparent, however, that a variety of factors such as sickness or problems in the family can be responsible for frequent school absenteeism, and that this trait may not, therefore, necessarily mean that a child is suffering from LH. On the other hand, because of parental persuasion and checks, even Lh children may attend school regularly.

Concerning possible cognitive-related traits of LH, the children were more frequently described as often failing "to remember task directions" and also showing a "consistent pattern of poor performance". 82.5 percent and 77.5 per cent of the sample were identified as showing these traits respectively. The finding thus supports the existence of the cognitive syndrome of LH. Difficulty in remembering task directions could be attributed to either anxiety, lack of interest or distractibility following from the state of helplessness.

The least frequently noted item among possible cognitive-related traits was No. 11 - "Complains about task difficulty". 37.5 per cent of the sample were said to exhibit this characteristic. Although several studies (e.g. Dweck & Repucci, 1973; Tennen & Eller, 1977; Klein & Seligman, 1976) have established a consistent relationship between attribution of poor performance to task difficulty and LH, children may find it difficult to verbalize such attributions publicly. The reason, as pointed out by Covington and Omelich (1979), is that failure attribution to task difficulty is associated with low ability. Since failure due to low ability brings about shame, children may rather attribute their failure to other factors which do not suggest their personal incompetence.

Among the traits that might be associated with the emotional facet of LH, 'lacking confidence' and 'disliking performing publicly', were more frequently selected. 70 percent of the subjects were described by the teachers as exhibiting each of these traits. Although these traits may not be seen as sure indicators of learned helplessness, Covington and Beery (1976) indicate that abstinence from 'public performance' could be a defensive strategy to cover up a lack of ability and leave others uncertain about one's ability status. Seligman (1975), Miller & Seligman (1975) similarly indicate that Lh learners have a natural tendency to adopt these behavioural strategies to protect their self-respect in a failure situation, since failure, especially in the academic context, is a threat to self-esteem.

Although previous studies (e.g. Seligman, 1975; Roth & Kubal, 1975; Gatchel & Procter, 1976) have identified depression as the main

emotional consequence of LH, the responses on the Checklist provided no strong support for this. Only 35 percent of the sample were identified as being often depressed.

This lower tendency might be attributed to two factors : the concealment of feelings to protect self and/or the greater degree of inference called for when making judgements about emotional states. Thus, if unsure, teachers might have chosen not to note them.

Concerning the concealment of feelings to protect self in a learning situation, Covington and Beery (1976) observe that failure-prone pupils are likely to adopt strategies to protect their self-worth, especially in situations where chances for success are very slim. Such children can also disown personal responsibility for failure or devalue the importance of the task. When such strategies are adopted, little or no shame may be experienced when failure occurs.

Another plausible explanation for the slightly lower score on the item about depression might be that other unpleasant experiences may result in feelings of depression. Thus, depression is not necessarily a component of the syndrome of LH and on its own, may not be a reliable indicator of it. This finding is consistent with the Two-Process theorists' stance which holds that depression is not an inevitable outcome of LH.

Another significant and interesting observation was that while there was commonality of some of the LH traits across the sample, other traits were observed only in some of the subjects. These findings point to the need to acknowledge and be sensitive to similarities and uniqueness of the traits exhibited by individual Lh learners when remedial measures are being considered.

Teachers' Comments: A number of comments ranging from school life in general to children's behaviours in learning situations, attitudes, likes and dislikes and the estimated intellectual capacity of a child were obtained from teachers in response to Sections C, D and E on the LH Traits Checklist.

Although some of the information contained in the teachers' comments were not of immediate relevance, most statements were consistent and supportive of the 24 dichotomous statements presented in Section B of the LH Traits Checklist (see Fig.10).

Item No.	Trait list items	Corresponding statements by teachers
20	Often restless in class	"Becomes very disruptive, by continually wandering around the room, and won't settle." "Always fiddling."
		"Tends to distract others". "Constantly roaming around room."
22	Lacks confidence	"Lacks confidence although not obvious." "Anticipate failure before he even starts." "Lack of confidence evident in all areas."
3	Rarely contributes to class discussions	"Very quiet pupil who does not participate in any discussions." "Keeps to herself." "Very quiet."
4	Often "off task"	"Rarely on task." "Prefers to just sit and do nothing." "Content to sit down and do nothing."
8	Readily discouraged when success is not immediate	"Has the attitude that it is pointless trying to read as he gets a 5 all the time regardless."

[Contd. on next page]

Item No.	Trait list items	Corresponding statements by teachers
		"Appears to think 'I can't do this' and doesn't listen to any more of Teacher's explanation."
23	Dislikes being asked to publicly 'perform' in class	"Works very well in a 1-1 situation." "Keen to learn on one to one (pupil/teacher)." "Likes to keep 'a low profile' in order to escape any attention."
5	Frequently fails to complete assigned	"Never does his homework."
	work	"Does not read at all at home."
2	Shows little interest in books	"Little interest in academic performance or improvements."

Fig. 10 Consistency of Teachers' Comments with items on the LH Traits Checklist.

Despite this support for the teachers' identification, it was assumed that the teachers' observation and their subsequent inferences might have been biased due to individual differences in perception. At this stage, there was no way to verify the accuracy of teachers' responses on the checklist from the children's perspective. Also, since the checklist was not used across other groups (e.g. mastery-oriented) to assess its discrimination power it was considered inappropriate to use the Checklist alone for the identification of Lh learners. However, the instrument also had some strengths, one of which concerned its clarity. None of the teachers reported difficulty in interpreting and subsequently using the instrument.

Summary: Analysis of teachers' responses on the LH Traits Checklist yielded results which were generally supportive of the presence of LH in the teacher identified subjects.

The examination of responses for individual items on the Checklist revealed that:

- (a) Certain specific traits might be more predictive of LH (assuming that the teachers' initial selections were valid).
- (b) There are some significant differences as well as similarities in the behavioural traits exhibited by individual children.

The additional comments by teachers concerning the children's behaviour also suggested the appropriateness of the LH trait items on the Checklist. However, due to the limitations of individual items, and the strategy as previously discussed, it was considered reasonable to employ other identification strategies before a final decision could be made concerning the LH status of the teacher-identified children.

3. The Interview

The main concern of this first interview was to obtain information that might assist with the identification of Lh children. The interview produced data concerning the children's explanation for their 'liked' and 'disliked' school subjects, their opinion on how they were performing academically, attributions for the nature of their performances and certain patterns of behaviour they exhibited.

The first part of the interview which explored the children's reasons for liking or disliking some school subjects was a way to introduce the children to the interview exercise and its format. It was also a preamble for discussions about how the children were performing in particular school subjects. Therefore, among the data which emanated from this section of the interview, only those relevant to the children's academic performance were followed up.

The following dialogue is illustrative of relevant parts of the first interview with Jack - one of the teacher-identified Lh children.

Int. *"Okay, now we want to talk about one of these subjects that you say you dislike very much. Spelling. Can you just think and tell me why you dislike it very much?"*

Jack *"Because it is boring."*

Int. *"Oh is it? Some kids find it exciting. Why do you think it is boring?"*

Jack *"I don't like it. It is boring. You can't do much. You don't learn from it."*

Int. *"You say that you don't learn from it. Can you explain what you mean to me?"*

Jack *"I don't like spelling because I cannot spell."*

Int. *"Sure? You cannot spell? What makes you think that you cannot spell?"*

Jack *"I try hard but I cannot spell."*

Int. *"I see. What sort of grades do you normally get in your spelling?"*

Jack *"Hm-m-m 4, sometimes."*

Int. *"And that is not good enough?"*

Jack *"No"*

(Note: Similar questions were asked earlier on concerning school subjects that children liked very much.)

In Fig.11 examples of reasons that the children provided for disliking particular school subjects are presented.

"Because I can't read."

"Sometimes I don't really know my times table"

"Some of the questions are hard."

"Maths is hard. I don't really think I can do them."

"Because I don't like it."

"Because I am a slow writer."

Fig. 11 Examples of Reported Reasons for Disliking
Certain School Subjects.

These responses and similar ones were usually followed by questions exploring the children's performances on the disliked school subjects. A below-average performance was reported in each case.

In order to help assess the LH status of these children with the present data, their attributions for the reported performance pattern and certain of their behaviours were examined. The analysis of the attribution data revealed a match between the children's attributions for their limited performances in the respective school subjects, and the documented attributions of Lh learners for their learning difficulties (e.g. Fyans & Maehr, 1979; Alloy & Seligman, 1979; Alloy, Abramson, Peterson & Seligman 1984). Examples of the attribution data and other data which emerged when certain of the learning behaviours and the performance standard of these children were examined are presented in Fig.12 (p.128).

Question	Response	Researcher's Interpretation
Why do you think you are still doing badly in reading though you have tried?	1 "I can't remember things" (poor memory). 2 "I am getting it from my father. My father is never good at reading."	Stable and uncontrollable traits.
How do you think you will be getting on as a learner of in the middle of the year.	"I don't know." "Might get worse because I don't know it."	Low expectancy of future performance.
Talking about do you think you can get better marks if you work harder on it?	"I work hard. It doesn't help." "Well. Can't tell."	Statement suggesting stability of factor.
How do you usually feel when you cannot answer a question in?	"Doesn't bother me." "Annoyed." "Sad."	Statements reflecting affective states that might be associated with LH.

Fig. 12 Example of Statements Reflecting the Children's Attributions and other Behaviours that could be Associated with LH.

Here the children were commenting on internal states that could be expected to go with LH. This self description data in most instances matched the Checklist data for each child.

The children's statements, in conjunction with the data already gathered using the other identification procedures, were a major input in the final selection of the sample. However, it was acknowledged that the interview technique even with its unique advantage of providing direct information from the sample, also had its limitations. One of them was the possibility that the children could withhold from the interviewer some information about themselves. Also, though the researcher was aware of the need to consider the

children's categorization of these attributions on the locus, stability and control dimensions, the children were not asked to discuss this during the interview. They were only asked for possible explanations. As a result, decisions on identification could not be based on the interview data at that stage. This omission in the study was, however, taken care of by administering the Attribution Questionnaire.

4. The Attribution Questionnaire

An analysis of the data gathered using the attribution questionnaire revealed a total of 204 attributions made by the children. Of these, 90 were cited by the pupils for their most successful school subjects. 114 reasons were given by the children for their least successful school subjects. Attributions were coded into thirteen categories. These categories are consistent with those identified by Cooper and Burger (1980). The percentages of attributions cited by the children were as follows (see Table 4).

Table 4: Percentages of Cited Attributions

Attribution	Percentage of Attribution	
	Most Successful Subject	Least Successful Subject
1. Ability	6.3	23.1
2. Previous experience	2.1	5.3
3. Typical effort	6.2	-
4. Physiological processes	1.8	1.8
5. Interest	27.1	6.4
6. Attention	13.3	12.3
7. Immediate effort	7.5	-
8. Task difficulty	10.8	26.1
9. Teacher	6.4	4.2
10. Other pupils	2.3	7.1
11. Family	7.6	5.3
12. Acquired characteristic	-	2.2
13. Miscellaneous	5.6	6.8

The factors that clearly dominated the attributions for performance in the most successful subject were Interest and Attention.

This data coincides with that from Little's (1985) study which indicated 'interest' as the most frequently cited attribution for school success.

The fact that 'Attention' was the second most frequently cited attribution was not surprising as interest is usually portrayed in an increased amount of attention as well as effort in personal studies (Wilson, 1971).

Attribution of success to ability was not as frequent as expected. This result contradicts findings from a majority of LH studies in which ability was shown as one of the most frequently cited attributions for success. The explanation for this finding, however, could be sought in a phenomenon similar to 'Fear of Success' (Horner, 1972; Kara-benic & Marshall, 1974; Fleming, 1978) which refers to a situation where individuals, particularly females, deliberately hold back their achievements for the fear of being socially rejected. The children in this present case might have suppressed their ability attribution for success for the fear of being perceived as boasting.

Results presented in Table 4 also reveal 'Task difficulty' and 'ability' as the most frequently cited attribution for the children's performance on their least successful school subjects. This is consistent with the LH Reformulated Theory's position, that Lh individuals attribute failure on task to lack of ability - a factor usually perceived as stable and uncontrollable.

Another interesting observation in the study results was the complete absence of effort attribution for performance on the least successful school subject. This finding is at odds with Frieze's (1976, 1980) classroom attribution research finding that academic success is attributed primarily to effort or lack of it. The explanation for this response might reside in the view that since effort attribution for failure precipitates a sense of guilt (Covington & Beery, 1976), to avoid this sense of guilt, individuals might choose to attribute their failure to other factors which can arouse sympathy rather than blame. Hoffman (1982) has noted that "It is only when the cues indicate that the victim had no control that the

..... transformation of empathetic into sympathetic distress may apply" (p. 296).

There appeared to be a contradiction in the results which indicated that the children attributed their failure to lack of ability, but reported no significant relationship between their success and ability. The reasons for this might be one of the following: the children were not reporting honestly or fully on their attributions for success or, alternatively, failure to these children might have become an accepted way of life, so that even when success was experienced, they failed to attribute it to a stable factor such as ability. In effect, it might be that these children were denying the possibility of continued success.

Comments

One of the most interesting findings of the present attribution survey concerns the range of factors (some which are not even documented in literature) identified by the children as responsible for their being very successful or least successful in a particular school subject. In contrast to Weiner and associate's (1971) model where individuals are seen to generally utilize four factors (ability, effort, task difficulty and luck), to interpret and to predict the outcome of achievement-related events, attributions were also made to 'Enjoyment', 'Interest', 'Liking', and 'Sex Stereotype' (miscellaneous). It was also striking to note that of the 30 children who completed the attribution checklist, only one indicated luck as a factor responsible for her success. The observation is similar to Cooper and Burger's (1980) findings where performance was attributed to luck only 0.4 percent of the time. This led them to conclude that there is no evidence that luck is used substantially as an explanation for academic outcomes. Also, Connell (1982), after extensive interviews with students, found that there were no systematic attributions to luck in relation to test performance. Little (1985) similarly reported an infrequent occurrence of luck attribution in his study. In explaining this pattern of findings, Covington and Omelich (1978) argue that success attributed to luck neither results in pride

nor high self-esteem. This is because luck is usually seen to be an external factor. Moreover, success attributed to luck is unlikely to be seen as guaranteed. Although failure attributed to lack of luck would reduce a feeling of shame and do no harm to self-esteem, individuals may in future choose to be silent or make performance attribution to factors other than luck which tends to be viewed as an unstable factor.

It was also interesting to note the various terms the children used to identify some factors which they thought were responsible for the nature of their academic performance. For example "*It has to do with the brain*", "*I am not in Room 3*" and "*Sleepy head*" were used to denote a lack of ability. While accounting for poor performance in particular, perhaps these terms were chosen to avoid the use of some well known terms such as 'poor memory', 'being dumb' and others which usually elicit feelings of shame and inadequacy.

However, the use of this procedure for identification purposes also required consideration of the children's categorization of the attributions they offered.

Sample Categorization of Attributions

Research (e.g. Little, 1985; Kun, 1977; Kun, Parsons & Ruble, 1974; Nicholls, 1978, 1979) has revealed that the perception of attribution varies developmentally and that the explanations given by children for their academic success or failure differs from those of adults. To avoid the criticisms that usually follow when researchers assume the responsibility for categorizing attributions in the locus, stability and control dimensions the children were asked to do this task.

The reformulated theory of Learned Helplessness holds that Lh learners will attribute causes for their failure mostly to stable and uncontrollable factors (Weiner & Kukla 1970; Bar-Tal & Daron, 1979; Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed; Rest & Rosenbaum, 1971). With this in mind, the children's perceptions of the attribution dimensions were

assessed and compared with that of so called mastery oriented (M.O.) children. The latter group of children were in fact a sample of Form Two Intermediate school children whose attribution for 'least successful' and 'most successful' school subjects were examined by Lillas (1986). Because of (a) the match (with respect to class level, chronological age, and school system) between this group and the present researcher's sample, and (b) the use of the same measure in both studies, it was considered appropriate to contrast results obtained in each study. The strategy was expected to produce results that might be used to assess the discrimination power of the LH Traits Checklist as well as confirm or disconfirm the study sample as being made up of Lh children. It was hypothesized that the Lh children would be more likely to attribute their academic failures to external, stable and uncontrollable factors.

The Locus of Causality Dimension: Tables 5 and 6 contain results of Chi square analysis of the children's categorization of their success and failure attributions in the locus dimension.

Table 5 : Locus of Causality Dimension of Attribution for Success

Dimension	Lh (Counts)		M.O.(Counts)		Row Total
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.	
Internal	24	32.13	61	52.87	85
External	38	29.87	41	49.13	79
Column Total	62		102		164
$X^2 = 6.873$ $df = 1$ Not significant					

Table 6 : Locus of Causality Dimension of Attribution for Failure

Dimension	Lh (Counts)		M.O. (Counts)		Row Total
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.	
Internal	31	41.83	60	49.17	91
External	43	32.17	27	37.83	70
Column Total	74		87		161
$\chi^2 = 11.927$ $df = 1$ Not significant					

Note: There were also some missing observations in each of the tables due to some attributions being rated as '2' (i.e., Undecided) on the rating scale.

The results revealed no significant difference between the Lh and M.O. children, in their perception of the locus of causality of factors which they perceived as responsible for their success. Attributions were made to a mix of internal and external factors.

A similar result was obtained when data on children's perception of the locus of their perceived failure causing factors was examined (see Table 6). There was no significant difference between the two groups.

While the similarity of these two groups in their perception of locus for success causing factors was consistent with previous studies (e.g. Abramson et al., 1978; Lillas, 1986), a similar pattern of result for failure causing factors were examined was unexpected. The finding was at odds with several previous studies (e.g. Weiner et al., 1971, Neale & Friend, 1972; Bartal & Barzohov, Dixon, 1985. Lillas, 1986) which have reported that Lh learners were more likely to attribute failures to external factors.

Although this particular finding did not really contribute to the identification, it did offer support to Weiner's (1972). and Weiner and associate's (1971) contention that it is not the perceived locus of causality that determines an individual's reaction to an outcome,

but the perception of that factor on the stability and control dimensions.

Stability Dimension: Tables 7 and 8 show the results of Chi-square analysis of the children's categorization of their attributions on the stability dimension.

Table 7: Stability Dimension of Causal Attribution for Success.

Dimension	Lh (Counts)		M.O.(Counts)		Row total
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.	
Stable	26	22.69	40	43.31	66
Unstable	40	43.31	86	82.69	126
Column Total	66		126		192
$X^2 = 1.123$ $df = 1$ Not significant					

Table 8: Stability Dimension of Causal Attribution for Failure.

Dimensions	Lh (Counts)		M.O.(Counts)		Row Total
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.	
Stable	41	29.61	27	38.39	68
Unstable	50	61.39	91	79.61	141
Column Total	91		118		209
$X^2 = 11.508$ $df = 1$ $P < 0.05$					

Results revealed no significant difference between the Lh children and mastery-oriented children in their categorization on the stability dimension of factors responsible for their success. However, when the categorization of failure-causing factors of two groups was compared, a significant difference was observed. The children in the Lh group rated their attributions as more stable than

the mastery oriented children for the least successful school subjects. This finding is consistent with Licht and Dweck's (1983) study findings where children who attributed their poor academic performance to a stable factor, such as insufficient ability, were observed to withdraw from future problem solving situations - a trait of LH syndrome.

Weiner (1979) noted that outcomes attributed to stable causes will be "anticipated to be repeated in the future with a greater degree of certainty than are outcomes ascribed to unstable causes" (Weiner, 1979, p. 559). The implication of Weiner's comment for the present study is that those children who attributed their poor performance to stable factors were more likely to anticipate failure in future similar situations - a condition which has been found to precipitate LH (Abramson et al, 1978; Diener & Dweck, 1978).

Control Dimension: The analysis of the children's categorization of factors on the Control dimension is presented in Tables 9 and 10

Table 9: Control Dimension of Causal Attribution for Success.

Dimension	Lh (Counts)		M.O.(Counts)		Row Total
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.	
Controllable	45	47.24	91	88.76	136
Uncontrollable	21	18.76	33	35.24	54
Column Total	66		124		190
$X^2 = 0.574$ $df = 1$ Not significant					

Table 10: Control Dimension of Causal
Attributions for Failure.

Dimension	Lh (Counts)		M.O.(Counts)		Row Total
	Obs.	Exp.	Obs.	Exp.	
Controllable	23	35.93	57	44.07	80
Uncontrollable	52	39.07	35	47.93	87
Column Total	75		92		167
$X^2 = 16.209$ $df = 1$ $P < 0.05$					

Again, the results revealed no significant difference in subjects' designation of factors responsible for their success on the controllability dimension. However, when the two groups' categorization of attributions for their least successful subjects was examined, the difference was significant. Children in the Lh group were more likely to perceive their failure causing factors as uncontrollable.

Licht and Dweck (1983) noted that individuals who perceive their failure causing factors as stable and uncontrollable tend to have reduced expectancies for success in a future similar situation. In addition, compared with other children, they are less likely to invest or even increase their effort when confronted with similar tasks in future. This motivation sapping state has been associated with the phenomenon of LH (Seligman, 1975; Gatchel et al. 1976). Therefore, based on the result presented in Table 10, it was tentatively concluded that the group in which the children attributed their failure to uncontrollable factors was more likely to be composed of Lh children.

The strong trend for the presence of LH associated attribution dispositions in the LH group lends support to the teachers' initial identification. However, there was an awareness that within this group, tentatively characterized as Lh, there would be variations

between individuals with respect to their categorization of their attributions. For example, some children in the group categorized most of their attributions as both stable and uncontrollable while others categorized just a few in this manner. It was assumed that the former would be more likely to be Lh. Thus, for identification purposes the proportion of attributions that each child made that were categorized as both stable and uncontrollable was examined. Those children for whom half or a greater proportion of attributions were perceived as both stable, and uncontrollable, were considered more likely to have LH status.

In Table 11 (P.139) a detailed summary of the children's categorization of their attributions on the Control and Stable dimensions is provided.

Table 11: Categorization of Attributions in the Stability and Control Dimensions by Subjects

Subject No.	No. of Attributions	Controllability		Stability		Total of attributions categorized as both stable and uncontrollable
		Controllable	Uncontrollable	Stable	Unstable	
2	4	1	2	2	2	2
3	3	1	2	2	1	2
4	4	1	1	2	2	1
5	5	1	3	3	1	3
6	3	1	1	2	1	1
8	4	1	3	2	1	2
9	4	1	2	2	1	2
10	4	1	1	2	2	1
12	4	2	2	1	1	1
14	4	-	2	-	2	2
16	4	-	1	2	2	1
17	3	1	2	1	1	1
18	4	1	2	-	2	-
19	5	2	3	3	1	3
20	3	-	2	1	1	1
23	3	-	2	2	1	2
24	5	-	1	3	2	1
25	4	1	2	1	2	1
26	4	1	2	2	2	2
27	3	1	-	1	2	-
28	4	-	2	1	1	1
29	4	1	2	2	2	2
31	2	1	1	-	1	-
33	3	-	2	2	1	2
34	3	2	1	-	2	-
35	4	1	2	2	2	2
36	3	-	2	1	1	1
37	4	2	2	2	2	2
38	3	-	3	2	1	2
40	3	1	-	1	1	-

The data that emerged from this attribution analysis made a significant contribution to the identification exercise. However, the strategy has its own limitations. The most obvious of these was reflected in the children's inability to clearly explain in written form, some of their thoughts. Also, probably due to the 'paper-pencil' nature of the task which might have given the children the impression of test taking, the children seemed to have been hesitant about recording all of the attributions they could make. Thus, they volunteered some attributions in the course of the interview that were not identified when they completed the Attribution Questionnaire.

Because of the potential limitations of each of the identification strategies, final decision-making on the LH status of each subject called for careful consideration of the pattern of data for each subject overall.

Final Sampling

As indicated in the previous chapter, forty pupils were initially identified for the study. This constituted the tentative sample. Further identification procedures were used before the final sample was obtained. Out of the thirty children who were involved in the four identification strategies, there was a consistent indication of the presence of LH traits in 12. In other words, twelve out of the thirty children who were shown as exhibiting 50 percent or more of the traits in the LH Traits Checklist, categorized 50 percent or more of their attributions as both stable and uncontrollable, and who also made significant documented LH related attributions during the interview, were selected for the Case Study. Table 12 (p.141) shows the pattern of results for the 30 subjects who participated fully in the identification phase of the study. Subjects who fulfilled the initial selection criteria and those selected for the case study phase are indicated.

Table 12: Identification of Lh Subjects and Selection for Case Study.

Subject No.	Scores on Checklist	No of Attributions Categorized as both Stable & Uncontrol.	Subjects considered as Lh	Subjects selected for Case Study
2	14	2 (4)	*	
3	17	2 (3)	*	*
4	13	1 (4)		
5	18	3 (5)	*	*
6	15	1 (3)		
8	17	2 (4)	*	*
9	16	2 (4)	*	*
10	9	1 (4)		
12	17	1 (4)		
14	15	- (4)		
16	12	1 (4)		
17	15	1 (3)		
18	12	- (4)		
19	13	3 (5)	*	*
20	13	1 (3)		
23	17	2 (3)	*	*
24	9	1 (5)		
25	15	1 (4)		
26	10	2 (4)		
27	14	- (3)		
28	12	1 (4)		
29	13	2 (4)	*	
31	16	1 (2)		
33	12	2 (3)	*	
34	14	- (3)		
35	17	2 (4)	*	*
36	14	1 (3)		
37	13	2 (4)	*	
38	15	2 (3)	*	*
40	12	- (3)		

NOTE: The totals of attributions offered are bracketed beside the proportion categorized.

The subjects who were finally selected:

- (1) achieved scores at the mid point or above of the range of scores on the Checklist;
- (2) volunteered attributions on the Attribution Questionnaire and in the first interview that are reported as typical of Lh learners; and
- (3) categorized 50 percent or more of their attributions^{as} both stable and uncontrollable.

In addition, the researcher took into account the sex of subjects and the subject area(s) in which LH was experienced. The sample size was also governed by the use of a case study strategy which involves indepth interviews over time with individual subjects. Six subjects were considered to be manageable within the time constraints of the study. Thus, the final sample comprised of 4 male and 4 female. In terms of ethnic origin, the sample comprised 5 Pakeha pupils and 3 Maori pupils. Two out of the eight children selected, were kept as a reserve in case any of the six subjects failed to participate in the study. Fig.13 (p.143) is a summary of the pattern of data for the Case Study sample.

Child		Scores on the LI Traits Checklist (Traits total 24; Range: 9-18)	Questionnaire Attributions	Attributions Proportion categorized as both stable and uncontrollable	First Interview Attributions
No.	Name				
3	Lynne	17	Ability Attention Task difficulty	2/3	Lack of ability Subject difficulty Lack of interest Not listening during lesson
5	Evonne	18	Ability Attitude Task difficulty Other pupils Acquired characteristic	3/5	Subject difficulty Disruption by peers Dislike for reading Not listening during lesson Lack of ability Genetically determined deficit
8	Andrea	17	Ability Attention Task difficulty Other pupils	2/4	Ability Task difficulty Family Subject boredom Poor memory
9	Ronny	18	Ability Attitude Attention Task difficulty	2/4	Subject difficulty Dislike for subject Lack of ability Not listening to the teacher
19	John	13	Ability Previous experience Attitude Task difficulty Teacher	3/5	Lack of ability Subject difficulty Subject boredom Dislike for subject School absence Teacher
23	Robin *	17	Ability Task difficulty Other pupils	2/3	Lack of interest Lack of ability Subject difficulty Other pupils
35	Ian	17	Ability Attitude Attention	2/4	Dislike for subject Difficulty of subject Lack of ability Not listening to teacher
38	Roseline	15	Ability Attitude Task difficulty	2/3	Lack of ability Subject difficulty Lack of interest Subject boredom

Fig.13 A Summary of the Pattern of Data for the Case Study Sample.

*Child No.3 and 23 were not involved in the study.

In order to fully detail and illustrate how the final selection of the sample was undertaken, the case of Evonne is presented.

Evonne : Identification Procedure

Evonne was identified as a suitable subject for study on the grounds that she was consistently identified as a learned helpless learner in each of the identification strategies. The data associated with each of the identification procedure is now presented.

1. LH Description: Based on his understanding of the description of the phenomenon of LH, Evonne's teacher identified her as one of the Lh pupils in his class. Because this identification was based solely on the teacher's inferences, further verification was undertaken. This involved the use of the LH Traits Checklist.

2. Teachers' Response on the LH Traits Checklist: Analysis of the completed Checklist for Evonne revealed the presence of eighteen out of the twenty-four traits on the Checklist which were seen as likely correlates of LH in school learners.

When the 'score' was compared with those of other children in the study (See Fig. 7, p.116), Evonne's total score of 18 out of 24 was one of the highest. Based on this result, it was assumed that since she exhibited most of the traits usually associated with LH (e.g. Hiroto, 1974; O'Rourke, Tyron & Raps, 1980; Griffith, 1977), there was a high probability that Evonne was a Lh learner.

In his comments about other observable traits of LH in Evonne, the teacher wrote:

"Covers inability to cope by working in depth at irrelevant activities i.e. will write the same sentence over and over. In maths will race through an exercise writing anything for an answer. At times becomes very depressed at inability to succeed. Has had remedial reading for years with very little progress. Too bright for special class. Copies research with no understanding.

In addition, the teacher indicated that Evonne was performing below her intellectual capacity. Some of these traits which the teacher spontaneously referred to were ones that previous studies have revealed as typical of Lh learners.

Though the above result was obtained, the fact that some previous studies (e.g. Wilson, 1963; Halsey 1972) have revealed the tendency of teachers to be biased in their judgements of the students, further data were obtained to help confirm or disconfirm Evonne's status as a learned helpless pupil.

3. Interviews: The first interview was undertaken to tap responses that could help in the identification of Lh learners. It contained questions which investigated the children's liked and disliked school subjects, nature of performance, attribution for type of performance and expectancy.

Talking about the school subjects that she liked and those that she did not, Evonne identified Reading as her most disliked school subject. Her reason for disliking Reading was: "*Because I am slow and I miss out words when I read.*"

Int. "*Do you think you have tried hard to read and you still miss out words?*"

Evon. "*Yeh. Sometimes I take a book and I want to read it.*"

Int. "*Hm, and do you usually read it?*"

Evon. "*Yep and I miss out like twenty words.*"

Int. "*Yes, you really work hard. Why do you think you have not been able to read better though you have tried?*"

Evon. "*I am like my father. He was never good at reading. My brother he is like me. He can't read.*"

Other attributions that Evonne made for her poor reading include task difficulty, distraction by peers, inability to listen in class, and a dislike for reading.

Her response to the question on her reading performance expectancy by the end of the school year was:

"Still the same. I have been working real hard so that I can be like my friends. But I miss out words when I am reading."

These attributions and statements by Evonne reflect some of the traits that have been associated with LH, for example, (a) the attribution of failure to task difficulty (c.f. Andrew & Debus, 1978; Dweck & Goetze, 1978; Weiner, 1979). Subsequent data from later interviews indicated categorization of this attribution by Evonne as stable and uncontrollable. (b) negative expectancy for changes in future - a characteristic which Weiner (1974), and Weiner, Nierenberg and Goldstein (1976) identified as characterizing Lh learners.

Her LH status was further suggested as Evonne reported on her behaviour in certain classroom learning situations. For example, she reported depression ("*Then I am sad*") in situations where she was unable to answer the teacher's question. This was consistent with Evonne's teacher's description of her, previously cited.

In view of the exhibition of these traits and from the Attribution Theory perspective, Evonne was tentatively considered as an Lh child, thus a likely participant in the Case Study.

4. Attribution Questionnaire: The examination of Evonne's categorization of her success/failure attributions on the Attribution Questionnaire revealed the pattern of results presented in Table 13.

Table 13 : Evonne's Responses on the Questionnaire

School subject	Perceived causes (examples)	Stability		Controllability		Locus	
		Un-stable	Stable	Control-lable	Uncontrol-lable	Inter	Exter
Most successful subject (PE/Sports)	Liking	1	3	3	1	3	-
Least successful school subject (Reading)	Genetically determined deficit	-	3	-	3	3	-

As shown on Table 13 Evonne categorized her perceived failure causing factors as stable, uncontrollable and of internal locus. This pattern of response is analogous to previous reports (e.g. Tennen & Eller, 1977; Abramson et al., 1978, Newman, 1978) that Lh children perceive reasons for their failure on academic tasks as stable uncontrollable and of internal origin.

With the consistency of this pattern of result for Evonne across the four different identification strategies, she was regarded as a Lh learner and subsequently involved in the case study.

This same procedure was followed for each of the 30 children who participated in the 4 identification activities.

Summary

The primary aim of the first phase of the study was to develop and trial strategies that might be used in the identification of Lh learners. The strategies included teachers' identification based on the written description of the LH phenomenon, teachers' responses on the LH Traits Checklist, An Interview and an Attribution Questionnaire.

With the LH Description and LH Traits Checklist, forty children were identified as Lh by their teachers. The first interview was conducted with thirty-seven children. The interview yielded data concerning the children's 'liked' and 'disliked' activities and school subjects, their reasons for this attitude, nature of performance on the 'disliked' school subject, attribution for poor performance and behaviour in classroom learning situations. This data evidenced traits that are synonymous with those documented in LH literature as correlates of LH syndrome.

Data on the children's attribution for their least successful school subject, and the categorization of those attributions was conducted for thirty children out of the forty originally identified. A Chi-square test of the frequency with which the Lh children and a group of M.O. children categorized their failure causing attributions in the three dimensions; stability, control, ^{locus} and also revealed a significant difference between the two groups in terms of their categorization of factors in the stable and control dimensions. The Lh group tended to categorize most of their attributions as stable and uncontrollable. This helped confirmed the difference in attribution dispositions of this group.

When the pattern of data for these children was examined across the four identification procedures, twelve out of the thirty children who participated fully in the identification exercise consistently exhibited LH-related traits. Eight out of these were selected for the case study.

While the instruments and procedures used in this study phase allowed a sample of children to be identified as Lh, and for the researcher to have some confidence in the selection process, it was observed, as anticipated, that each had both strengths and limitations. In Fig.14 (p. 149), these are summarized.

Instrument/ Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
LH Description Instrument	It is easy, comprehensive and quick to use.	Allows a possibility of bias or wrong inference since surface behaviours do not always reflect particular underlying traits
LH Traits Checklist	<p>It restricts responses to the most obvious and persistence traits in learners.</p> <p>It is easy and quick to use.</p> <p>The nature of data obtained is manageable and easy to analyze.</p>	<p>Responses could be biased due to individual user's perceptions and relationships with the child.</p> <p>Some of the items are relative in meaning and might be interpreted differently by users.</p>
Interview	<p>It provides direct data from the subjects thus minimizing information distortion in the course of transfer.</p> <p>It is flexible and allows clari- fication of unclear questions and pursuit of promising lines of discussion</p> <p>It allows subjects the opportunity to qualify or expand on their answers when necessary.</p> <p>It takes into consideration the subject's pheno- menology.</p>	<p>The procedure is time consuming.</p> <p>Occasionally, it is consistent information about behaviours at different times.</p> <p>May not yield the expected data if subjects decide to reveal certain aspects of their life, or lack the ability to recollect their past behaviours and express their thoughts.</p> <p>The analysis of data is difficult and time consuming.</p>

[Contd. on next page]

Instrument/ Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
Attribution Questionnaire	<p>Allows the researcher access to the subject's past behaviours and inner life.</p> <p>The interviewing conditions made it possible for the researcher to observe the subjects during the interview thus checking the match between physical expressions and what is reported.</p> <p>It is quick to administer.</p> <p>It recognizes the phenomenology of the child in the categorization of attributions</p>	<p>It does not allow the expansion and clarification of reports. Produced limited responses due to the subjects' inability to express their thoughts clearly in writing.</p>
Case study	<p>Provides rich and comprehensive data. It allows the comparison of data gathered by the various instruments.</p> <p>It gives consideration to the subject's phenomenology.</p>	<p>Create a test-taking impression which might inhibit natural and honest responses.</p> <p>The procedure is time consuming.</p> <p>Presents great difficulties in organizing and interpreting the data.</p>

[Contd. on next page]

Instrument/ Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
	<p>Allows the verification of the accuracy of data obtained about a particular situation or behaviour with different instruments.</p> <p>Creates a situation in which the researcher comes to have a better understanding of the subjects.</p> <p>Provides a holistic view of the studied phenomenon.</p>	

Fig 14: Summary of Strengths and Limitations of the Study Instruments and Procedures.

Details of the Case Study reports are presented in the next two Chapters.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: THE SIX CASE STUDIES

As described in Chapter Three, the objective of the first phase of the study was to develop and trial instruments and procedures that could assist researchers and teachers in the identification of students exhibiting LH. In the second phase, the researcher made an in-depth examination of the patterns of behaviour and the cognitive and emotional life of six out of the twelve children who were identified as Lh. These case studies were intended to provide the basis for a detailed and rich portrayal of both similar and idiosyncratic features of the lives of Lh learners. The six cases were selected based on the following criteria:

- (i) The consistency of the evidence for their LH status.
- (ii) School subject area (mathematics/reading).
- (iii) Gender.
- (iv) Ability and willingness to introspect and report on their mental and emotional lives.

While the data incorporated in the case studies included teacher and researcher observations and interpretations of the children's behaviours, it mainly consisted of the children's self-reports. Thus, the data gathered during interviews with the children were of primary significance.

The following steps were followed in the analysis of the data.

First, on the basis of an initial review of the data gathered for one of the six cases, a tentative framework that could be used subsequently for differentiating and comparing features of the cases was developed.

Second, based on the framework, data analysis was conducted in some depth for all the six cases simultaneously. Similarities and differences in the data gathered for the cases were identified.

Third, a comprehensive case study report was prepared for two out of the six cases (John and Evonne) who were perceived as contrastive in a number of respects. The aim here was to illuminate further the similarities and idiosyncrasies in the lives of Lh learners.

These findings are reported in this and the next chapter. In the present chapter, brief portraits of the six cases are presented. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of the overall pattern of data for all the six cases.

In Chapter Seven, the two full case studies of John and Evonne are presented. Finally, the case study findings are summarized and commented upon.

Brief Portraits of the Six Cases

John, who at the time of our first meeting was eleven years old, was naturally very friendly and easy to talk to. The eldest child in a family of five, his interests were sports and athletics. His favourite school subjects were metalwork and cookery - the reason being that he liked to see the product of his effort. On the other hand, he confessed his dislike for spelling and mathematics which he perceived as hard and boring. Despite his repeated poor performances in mathematics John described himself as hard working - *"I read hard - but it doesn't help."*

Evonne, was twelve years of age at the time of our first meeting. She was very eloquent in speech, bright looking - often with a smile on her lips. Like John, Evonne was very social and friendly. Her interests included horse riding and camping. With reference to her attitude to subjects taught in school, Evonne liked Sports and Social Studies and disliked Reading. To put an end to her school problems, which she partly attributed to the difficulty of some school subjects, Evonne's plan was to leave school as soon as it was possible. Her 'job' ambition was to model clothes and own a fabric shop.

*The names of the six Case Study children have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

Andrea, unlike Evonne, generally had a 'dull' and 'sleepy' look, and appeared to think seriously about anything she had in mind, before commenting. Although she would 'open up' sometimes, it was noticed that she only did so when she was repeatedly assured of the confidentiality of her reports. Andrea liked Sports and Cooking and was "*not interested*" in mathematics and spelling.

Roseline, a Maori girl, was an eleven year old when she was first met by the researcher. According to Roseline, she had no favourite school subjects at all though she could cope better with metalwork. Mathematics was the most disliked. Her hobby was to "*watch T.V.*" It was noticed that Roseline looked sullen most of the time and her main desire was to leave school and "*sleep in*" at home.

Ronny, who at the time of our first meeting was twelve years old, was a very bold and noisy boy. He had a heavy build and, according to his teacher, was a big bully - often threatening and hitting smaller peers. With reference to his social life, Ronny complained about his inability to keep friends - "*Like the class that I am in, at the moment, I haven't got any friends. Last year, I made some good friends, here, but now they don't like me anymore.*" His favourite school subjects were Writing and Physical Education. The subjects he had least liking for were reading and spelling. Ronny's interests included Cricket and Karate. While he appeared to be very inconsistent in his thinking, Ronny was very interesting to work with, provided one was sensitive to his mood changes.

Ian was twelve years old when we first met. He was the youngest in a family of ten and was a member of the 'Mongrel Mob' gang. His major interests were Rugby and Rugby League which he could play very well. When talking about his attitude to school and school subjects, Ian reported his dislike for reading in particular. His main wish was to leave school as soon as was possible to take up a job. Generally speaking, Ian appeared to be very casual and apparently undisturbed about anything around him. This behaviour was also obvious in his nonchalant attitude to the nature of his performance in school.

All the six children were described by their teachers on the Checklist, as not performing up to their intellectual capacities. In their self-reports, the children too indicated a pattern of poor performance in the school subjects that they were encountering difficulties in (See Fig. 15).

Student	Statement
John	<i>"And though I study a lot, I still get 15 or sometimes 25."</i>
Evonne	<i>"Yes, when we get a test I used to go very down below like sometimes I get 10."</i>
Ronny	<i>"I don't know. Sometimes I get very low."</i>
Roseline	<i>"Hm, Yeah. Sometimes about that (5+)."</i>
Ian	<i>"I work very hard but my marks are always low. I'm last."</i>
Andrea	<i>"Very low."</i>

Fig. 15: Reported Performance in Mathematics/Reading.

The data also portrayed these children as having very poor self-concepts concerning their ability in mathematics/reading, and they manifested certain behaviours in terms of their performance expectancies, learning habits, and feelings which matched the literature description of the LH syndrome.

A. The LH Syndrome

Data from each of the six cases consistently confirmed that they exhibited the traits of the syndrome that define LH. In Fig. 16, these traits are defined and illustrated with self-report data from cases.

In succeeding sections, the results of a detailed analysis of the data associated with each of these traits are presented.

<i>Characteristics/Definitions</i>	<i>Statements</i>
<u>Low Expectancies:</u> <i>Perceived as unlikely that engaging in an activity could lead to success.</i>	<i>"Not too much hope. The more we go high, the more things become hard."</i>
<u>Learning Avoidance Behaviour:</u> <i>Tendency to avoid situations which require learning or use of the "problem" school subject.</i>	<i>"I just end half way to school."</i>
<u>Inhibited Success Oriented Actions:</u> <i>Non-involvement in specific activities that would lead to the attainment of set academic goals.</i>	<i>"No! I don't (ask questions in class). When I put up my hand, they find me amusing. The kids laugh at me and I get picked on. So I don't get answered."</i>
<u>Negative Feelings:</u> <i>Feelings of shame, fear, embarrassment, aggression, discouragement, frustration, self-worth.</i>	<i>"People look at you and your face goes red. Then you feel low down and embarrassed."</i>

Fig.16 : Statements Portraying Traits of LH Syndrome

Low Expectancy

As illustrated in Fig.17 (p. 157), the children's responses to the interview questions portrayed a reduced expectancy about their future performances.

<i>Case</i>	<i>Statement of low Expectancy</i>	<i>Reasons</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>"Not, too much hope."</i>	<i>"The more we go high up, the more things become hard."</i>
<i>Roseline</i>	<i>"Way down too."</i>	<i>"Because I am not good in maths."</i>
<i>Ian</i>	<i>"Not very good."</i>	<i>"Because it might be a lot harder. When you get to Form three, it is harder harder than form two."</i>
<i>Evonne</i>	<i>"It might get better, but can't be very good."</i>	<i>"Because I can't read. I try a bit, but it keeps going up and down."</i>
<i>Ronny</i>	<i>"Not much hope."</i>	<i>"Because my friends talk to me and I don't get my work done."</i>
<i>Andrea</i>	<i>"More problems."</i>	<i>"Because I am not learning much this year."</i>

Fig.17:Statements Portraying the Nature of Expectancies of Lh Learners.

The reported pessimism about future performance is consistent with Feather, (1968, 1969) and Roth and Kubal's (1975) explanation that, following past repeated failure experiences, individuals expect failure in future similar tasks even before they are presented with such tasks.

Several theories possess some explanatory power for the decline in expectancy behaviour that normally follows repeated failures. For example, the LH theory (Maier & Seligman, (1976) holds that when the effort invested in a task and the outcome are not contingent, an

individual comes to view the situation as constant and generalizes or transfers it to new learning situations. It is this anticipation that performance and outcome will always be independent that results in a state of helplessness.

The social learning theorist Zuroff (1980) holds that expectancy declines with a decline in reinforcement value. In other words, for expectancy to increase or remain positive, the outcome of a performance should be sufficiently reinforcing. When an outcome is repeatedly not reinforcing, then expectancy will decline, followed by performance. It is at this point where expectancy and performance are low that LH results.

Attribution theorists (e.g. Weiner & Kukla, 1970 and Frieze & Weiner, 1971) explain the decline in expectancy for future success in a learning situation in terms of the nature and dimension of the attributions for past failures. They postulate that if, for example, a child attributes learning difficulty to lack of ability which is then perceived as an internal, stable and uncontrollable factor - then there will be a decline in the expectancy for better future performance, since it is beyond the child's ability to change or reverse that factor. It is this perceived limitation, imposed by factors beyond one's control or evasion, that leads one to a state of helplessness. Examples of such attributions have been cited in Fig.12 (p.127) and will be discussed in detail in a later section.

According to Feather (1982), the experience with repeated failures not only affects an individual's expectancy, but also his/her learning behaviour. This was confirmed in the present study by some of the expectancy data, particularly when their performance aspiration was examined.

However, in subsequent interviews, when the expectancy issue was further explored with questions similar to previous ones, the pattern of responses obtained was different. The children claimed a state of uncertainty concerning the way they may be performing in the subsequent year. Fig.18 (p.159) is illustrative.

Student	Statement of Expectancy	Reasons
John	<u>Uncertain</u> : "I don't know. Just wait and see."	"Maths might get harder in college and if the teacher gives you hard work, then you cannot get it done."
Roseline	<u>Uncertain</u> : "I don't really know."	"I don't like maths, it is boring."
Ian	<u>Uncertain</u> : "I don't know. Doesn't worry me."	"I never like maths."
Evonne	<u>Uncertain</u> : "Might be same as this year."	"Don't know."
Ronny	<u>Uncertain</u> : "I don't know."	"I don't look into the future."
Andrea	<u>Uncertain</u> : "I don't know."	"I don't have to."

Fig.18: Statements Indicating Uncertainty About Future Performance.

It should be noted that the children seemed uncomfortable with this exercise that required them to think about their future with their 'disliked' school subjects. Clearly, some of them felt threatened. Andrea, for example, said she would have preferred "to leave school and just sleep at home." The apparent reminder that she was going to be 'stuck' with reading for a few more years was very upsetting as her angry tone when responding indicated.

This lack of certainty about future performance was uniform across the group although the reasons varied with individuals. Roseline, when asked to explain her "I don't really know" response, replied, "I don't like maths. It is boring." These reasons coincided with those that she gave on the attribution questionnaire for her least successful school subject (maths). As

revealed by her responses on the questionnaire, she perceived the two causal factors - her attitude (not liking) and boredom (*mathematics is boring*) as uncontrollable. The categorization of failure - causing factors along this dimension suggests a state of helplessness. A similar picture emerged with John and Ian whose explanations for their uncertainty were task difficulty and attitude (not liking) respectively.

The reasons offered by Ronny and Andrea were to some extent, self-defensive. Ronny's reason was that he does not "*look into the future.*" Exploration of this statement with him suggested two possible interpretations. Either this was another instance of avoidance behaviour or Ronny was incapable of projecting his thoughts into the future and consequently could not predict his performance.

However, the ascription of failure to factors that are beyond one's control has been established as being typical of Lh learners (e.g. Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale, 1978, Diener & Dweck, 1978). So, while trying to exonerate himself from any blame by disclaiming responsibility for the future, Ronny was actually identifying himself as a Lh learner.

Evonne thought that her reading performance might remain stable over the subsequent year though she was a bit uncertain. This seemed to contradict her previous statement - "*It might be better, but can't be very good.*" The observation prompted questions about the fidelity of Evonne's report and also her ability to retrospectively report accurately on her past life. However, she gave no reason for her line of thinking.

Two assumptions were made concerning the children's reported uncertainty about their performance expectancies. One was that this might have been a cover-up strategy. That is, the children might have been unwilling to make clear, pessimistic statements which might be derogatory to their ego. Second, their reported uncertainty might possibly imply that performance could become worse or even better in future. In the case of the latter, then the credibility or nature of the LH status of these children would need to be reappraised.

Learning Avoidance Behaviour

Noticeable in the six children's self-reports was the tendency to avoid tasks or situations which concerned the school subjects they were having learning difficulties with. Data indicating this feature of LH surfaced particularly when the children responded to questions concerning their attitude to homework, feelings about school work, and behaviours in class. In answer to the question *"What do you usually do when you are given homework in mathematics/reading?"* the children said:

Student	Statement
Evonne	<i>"If it is hard and boring, I just leave it."</i>
Roseline	<i>"I don't do it. I can't be bothered."</i>
Ronny	<i>"It depends. I am too tired sometimes."</i>
John	<i>"I just leave it. I don't really think it is important."</i>
Ian	<i>"I don't take any work home. I don't do homework."</i>

Fig.19: Statements Indicating the Children's Reaction to Mathematics/Reading Homework.

Statements suggesting the children's tendency to avoid mathematics/reading learning situations also emerged as the children explained why they sometimes feel like 'sleeping in' and 'staying away' from school (See Fig.20 p. 162). In his study, which explored the nature of reading disability in disabled adult readers, Johnston (1985) also noticed that his subjects exhibited avoidance behaviour by excusing themselves (e.g. *"Forget my glasses"*) from situations which required them to read.

Student	Statement
Evonne	<i>"When I am going to have a full day of work."</i>
John	<i>"When I know that I am going to have a test in maths, I end half way to school."</i>
Andrea	<i>"If we have heaps to do."</i>

Fig. 20: Statements Suggesting Learning Avoidance Behaviours.

Data concerning the children's classroom behaviours when their 'problem' school subject was taught, also provide evidence for the six children's unwillingness to seek help and their limited participation in class discussions. This is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

It was particularly interesting to note that the group's avoidance behaviours were not only evidenced in school learning situations, but also in their plans for attaining their career goals. Although the children thought that the school subjects that they were having difficulties with, were in fact necessary requirements for their ideal jobs, they were already thinking of strategies to get around the problem. Thus, in their explanation of how they were going to cope with that requirement, all the children except Ronny planned to either circumvent the part of their jobs which required knowledge of mathematics/reading by seeking help from others, or to take on jobs that did not require the skill.

Evonne, for example, wanted to model clothes and own a fabric shop, but she admitted her need to be a good reader.

"Need reading, because you have to say, like you see some advert for cloth sale and you want to go and get some from there. You must be able to read what colours they have and you have to be good in that."(sic)

To cope with the situation, she hoped to work together with a few others who were more competent readers. Another exemplary case was

Andrea. She wanted to be a seamstress, but admitted the need for help from co-workers to cope with a situation such as taking measurements which required some knowledge of mathematics (See Fig.21).

Student	Statement
Evonne (Cloth Model)	<i>"Well my teacher says I might be able to scratch in with everybody else. They might do the reading for me."</i>
John (Mariner)	<i>"In that case the only way out is to talk about it with the major if he can put you in another work in the marine."</i>
Andrea (Dressmaker)	<i>"I will need help. I will get people to work with me."</i>
Ian (Disco jockey)	<i>"It does not matter if I fail in school. Or I can be a shunter."</i>
Roseline (Hairdresser)	<i>"I don't know. I might need help."</i>

Fig. 21: Statements Indicating Learning Avoidance Behaviour in the Children's Prospective Job Plans.

Notably, none of these children had any plans to invest more effort in the learning of the job relevant school subject so as to be able to cope. Rather, they planned to 'detour' the 'barrier' by seeking some external help. Similar avoidance behaviour has been documented in past studies (e.g. Weiner & Kukla, 1970; and Covington & Beery, 1976) as typical of failure-prone students, especially in an academic context where failure is a threat to self-respect. Avoidance behaviour in such a situation becomes a strategy to minimize any threat to self-respect. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Covington and Beery (1976), *"it is this defensiveness coupled with increasing anxiety and self-defeating attributions that literally guarantees failure"* (p.72) and Lh children are victimized by the above dynamics (Dweck and Reppucci, 1973).

Inhibited Success Oriented Actions

It has been proposed that in the presence of lowered expectancy, motivation dwindles and is ultimately replaced by anxiety and avoidance behaviour (Atkinson, 1982). Findings in the present study support this position.

In Fig.22 data concerning the children's actions and behaviours which reflect the absence of motivation to act are presented.

Student	Action and behaviour	Illustrative Statements
John	(i) Does not do homework. (ii) Does not ask questions in class.	<i>"Just leave it. It is boring."</i> <i>"I just keep quiet."</i>
Roseline	(i) Does not do homework. (ii) Does not ask the teacher questions.	<i>"I don't do it. I can't be bothered."</i> <i>"I don't ask the teacher. I can ask my friend sometimes."</i>
Ian	(i) Does not seek help in class.	<i>"No. I just miss out the words that I don't know and just carry on."</i>
Evonne	(i) Difficulty initiating learning actions. (ii) Reluctant to ask questions in class.	<i>"Sometimes I would try to get my book out and read. But. Oh no!"</i> <i>"Keep quiet. I'm afraid I might say the wrong thing."</i>
Ronny	(i) Gives low priority to homework.	<i>"I can't really do them because I've got to do some work in the shop."</i>

[Contd. on next page]

Student	Action and behaviour	Illustrative Statements
Ronny Contd.	(ii) Reluctant to seek help.	<i>"Sometimes you can't get up to him because he is doing something else and he says "Oh go away!"</i>
Andrea	(i) Uncomfortable about asking questions if her teacher's statement is not clear.	<i>"I am a bit shy to ask questions."</i>

Fig.22: Statements Portraying Inhibited Success Oriented Actions.

Highlighted here are some behaviours that were common to all the six children and that reduced the likelihood of learning. These included:

- (i) Inadequate classroom participation.
- (ii) Failure to do and complete assigned tasks.
- (iii) Failure to seek academic help.

Other relevant behaviours not listed in Fig 22 were the children's listening, concentration, and task persistence difficulties. The behaviours noted above are discussed in more detail below.

Inadequate Classroom Participation: Failure to participate maximally in class was one of the behaviours that appeared to characterize the whole group. For example, while John complained that he disliked *"being called on"* to answer questions in class, Roseline said that she *"just couldn't be bothered"* about asking and answering questions in class. Ian also wished the teacher would just leave him alone. These self-reports of unwillingness to become involved in class were consistent with their teacher's description of each child as rarely contributing to class discussions. ("Rarely contributes to class discussion" - Item 3 on the

LH Traits Checklist). Non-participation in a classroom learning situation has been identified by Covington and Beery (1976) as one of the most direct and obvious behaviours of failure prone students. Such children are also likely to re-direct their attention to distracting features of the environment (talking to friends and/or working on unrelated tasks) or to themselves.

Failure To Do and Complete Assigned Tasks: Covington and Beery (1976) also associated non-participation with attitude to homework. According to them, it is manifested by unwillingness to do work assignments which are necessary for academic success. Findings in the present study fit the above assertion as the following dialogue with Roseline and Ian reveals.

Roseline

Inter: *"Roseline, when you are given homework by your teacher, do you usually do it?"*

Rose: *"I don't do it."*

Inter: *"Do you want to tell me why you don't do it?"*

Rose: *"I can't be bothered."*

Ian

Inter: *"When the teacher gives you reading homework, do you usually do it?"*

Ian: *"No."*

Inter: *"Can you tell me why?"*

Ian: *"I don't do homework."*

Inter: *"Yes. I understand you, but do you have any reason for that?"*

Ian: *"Because in the weekends I play rugby and go for practice."*

Inter: *"What do you usually do when the teacher asks you for it?"*

Ian: *"It doesn't bother me."*

This finding is affirmed by Hiroto (1974) and Gatchel and Proctor (1976) who established that resistance to the performance of assigned

tasks was apparent among Lh learners. Another interesting finding was the children's claim of not being perturbed by the way they were performing in those school subjects that they were having learning difficulties with. The claim of not being worried (e.g. Ronny) or not being bothered (e.g. Roseline and Ian) seemingly contradicted previous findings (Seligman, 1975 and Covington & Beery, 1976) that failure produces depression and lowers self-esteem. However it was envisaged that a plausible explanation for this claim could reside in what Arkin and Maruyama (1970) referred to as 'ego defense'. By professing to be undisturbed by the nature of their performances, the children were apparently conveying a message that the task was not important to them. The devaluing of the significance of a task as a strategy to defend a threatened self, has also been acknowledged by Bradley (1978) and Arkin & Maruyama (1979).

Failure to Seek Academic Help: Another behaviour that evidenced the children's non-participation in class and which was common to all the children studied was their limited help-seeking behaviour. Researchers (e.g. Anderson & Messick, 1974, Neilsen-Le Gall, Gumerman, and Scott-Jones, 1983) have asserted that the ability to utilize others (adults and peers) appropriately to cope with learning difficulties is one of the most important factors that can improve learning. Reasons that were frequently put forward for their refusal to seek help from their friends or teachers included the fear of being laughed at by the other children, (e.g. "*They find me amusing*") and secondly, a lack of concern (e.g. "*I can't be bothered*").

The failure to seek help, especially when confronted with learning problems, has been established by previous studies (e.g. Good, 1980; Brophy, 1983; Kay, 1986) as being typical of failure prone students. Help-seeking behaviour in these studies however, was examined in relation to children who were withdrawn and isolated in learning situations. The common conclusion in these studies is that a positive correlation exists between help-seeking behaviours and academic performance. The more help is sought from appropriate sources, the higher the probability of improved performance.

Although there is little literature concerning help-seeking behaviour and LH, some meaningful inferences could be made by deducing some logical relationships between relevant study findings. For example, a number of studies (e.g. Canino, 1981; Licht, 1983) have established that Lh learners internalize failure responsibility. The internalization of failure responsibility reduces self-esteem (Nicholls, 1976a; Ames, 1978; Ames & Felker, 1979; Weiner, 1979). Since Lh children tend to attribute failure to internal, stable and uncontrollable factors, they have been found to have very low academic self-concepts (Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv & Levit, 1983; Marsh, Cairns, Relich, Barnes and Debus, 1984). Gall (1985) points out that because low self-concept individuals have few positive cognitions, they are more vulnerable to self-threatening information and subsequently avoid the self-threatening situation of seeking help more frequently than high self-esteem individuals. Thus the absence of help-seeking behaviour might be another ego defence strategy since help-seeking signifies lack of ability.

On the other hand, commonsense suggests that since Lh individuals already believe that there is no possibility of performing better in a given learning situation, they might understandably consider help seeking as a 'fruitless act'. Some support for this was provided by the children's explanations for why they would not ask questions in class because:

e.g. *"It doesn't help."* (John)

"Can't be bothered." (Andrea)

If the above arguments and reports are reasonable enough, then the absence of help-seeking behaviour might be a pointer to their LH status. However, further research aimed at investigating the nature of the relationship between LH and help-seeking behaviour is needed before this hypothesis can be confirmed.

Negative Feelings

It became apparent during the interviews that some of the children were uncomfortable disclosing their feelings. Evonne and Ian, however, were exceptions. These students were very candid in their reports. Thus, Evonne reported that she got upset when her performance expectancy failed to be realized - *"Sometimes I feel I am going to get a high mark but I get 10, 12 and that. Then I am sad and discouraged."* When asked how she normally felt when she was given another test after being disappointed with the previous one, Evonne replied, *"Well, if I am getting something like way down below ten I feel sad because I tried it hard the other time. It puts me off."* She also reported that she felt embarrassed and ashamed sometimes when she said something in class that she thought was correct, but got it wrong. Ian reported a similar state of frustration and aggression when he was unable to answer a question correctly about a book he had read. These reported affective reactions to failure experiences are consistent with previous studies (e.g. Seligman, 1975; Covington & Beery, 1976; Garber, Miller & Seaman, 1979; Weiner, 1980) which associated feelings such as shame, frustration, depression low self-worth, anxiety, and aggression with LH.

The children also reported anxious feelings when confronted with situations concerning mathematics/reading. For example, John reported that his heart *"beats fast"* and he might *"get a red face"* when he was about to take a mathematics test. Roseline reported fear of being asked questions in mathematics class - *"I'm scared he might ask me questions."* Evonne reported that she felt scared when asked to read in class - *"Afraid I might miss out some words."* These reported feelings of fear and anxiety were found to be in line with the description of all the children on the LH Traits Checklist as *"shows anxiety about school work."* It is also consistent with Miller and Seligman (1975) and Roth and Kubal's (1975) studies which found that anxiety is heightened among individuals who are exposed to uncontrollable outcomes.

Although little self-report data was gathered on the affective lives of the other four children, the amount of information obtained was sufficient to provide a basis for a decision on their LH. This was particularly so when such data was analyzed in conjunction with data obtained on other aspects of their lives. John's explanation for his reported nonchalant attitude to the nature of his performance in mathematics is illustrative. Responding to the question on how he usually felt when he got low marks in a mathematics test, John said "*It doesn't disturb me.*" His explanation for his reaction was that it was "*always so when a test comes.*" While this reason may indicate an immunity to mathematics tasks failure, it also suggests a state of frustration and desperation.

Based on attribution theory, John's explanation for not being worried by his poor performance could be taken as signifying his admission that the situation was beyond his control. His being worried cannot change it.

B. Situational Effects: Settings and Events

In order to understand the dynamics of LH and to devise possible remedial measures, it is necessary to examine not just the syndrome but also the contexts in which the LH syndrome show itself. The analysis of the children's reports revealed that they only experienced the feelings of helplessness in situations that directly involved the school subjects with which they were having problems.

For example:

- (i) when contemplating doing home work for the subject.
- (ii) when asked any mathematics/reading related questions in class by the teacher.
- (iii) when becoming aware of an impending test on the subject concerned.
- (iv) when in mathematics/reading class.

In fact, it could be said that the children's reports consistently revealed that the feeling of powerlessness came over them whenever a thought about the school subject that they were having

problems with crossed their minds. Interestingly, these children reported dissimilar behaviours in learning situations which concerned their most liked school subjects.

In other words, their LH did not generalize to every aspect of school learning. Evidence for this finding emerged when the children were asked if they experienced similar feelings in test or lesson situations which concerned their most liked school subjects. (*"Do you have similar thoughts when mathematics/reading is being taught?"* [If No.] *"Can you explain why?"*) Fig.23 is illustrative of the children's responses.

Subject	Response
Evonne	<i>"No. Because I can do it."</i>
Ronny	<i>"No. I know that one."</i>
John	<i>"No. Because it is not hard."</i>
Andrea	(Shook her head) <i>"That one is easy."</i>
Ian	<i>"No. I like it. I can do it."</i>
Roseline	<i>"Not really. It is not as hard."</i>

Fig. 23 Reported Reasons for Dissimilar Experiences in other School Learning Situations.

The cases of Ian and Roseline are illustrative of this general picture.

Ian: When commenting on his reaction to reading home work, Ian reported that he usually does not do his homework. Though he initially complained that he was always busy with other things after school so that he was left with no time for his homework, he subsequently admitted that it was his *"choice"* not to do it. When asked to explain what he meant by *"Just my choice"*, Ian said:

"If I don't want to read, I don't have to. It is my choice."

Inter: *"Why do you choose not to read?"*

Ian: *"I don't know. I would like to be able to read, but I can't!"*

Inter: *"Hm. You would like to read better. What are you doing about it?"*

Ian: *"Nothing. I am good."*

Inter: *"What do you mean by that?"*

Ian: *"It doesn't bother me."*

Inter: *"You mean whatever you get in your reading doesn't bother you?"*

Ian: *"No. That is what I decide to do now because I get nought in most of it."*

Two inferences were made from Ian's self-report. One was that his preconceived idea about his reading ability (a low self-perception of reading ability) had discouraged him from any effort to do his reading homework. Secondly, because he was getting zero for his work most of the time, Ian was discouraged from trying. This explanation gained support from the teacher's description of Ian on the LH Traits Checklist as a child who gets *"readily discouraged when success is not immediate."* Being discouraged by previous poor performances, and without hope for better performance in future, the motivation to attempt given homework dwindled. This reaction fits Aronson (1968) and Yaryan and Festinger (1961)'s Dissonance Theory which proposes that the expenditure of effort on task is *"dissonant with the expectation"* that one would not do well on the task, and hence would be curtailed.

Ian, like the other children, also reported his feelings of powerlessness in specific classroom situations. One of these was when he was aware of an impending reading test. Although he had made up his mind not to be bothered by his poor reading performance, his first reaction was always fear. As he reported:

"I will get scared and say Oh no! Here comes a test! But I just have to sit down and do it."

While Ian's reported test fright and subsequent poor performance was found to be in line with his teacher's comment that Ian "*shows anxiety about school work*" (See Appendix B: LH Traits Checklist), his continued poor performance may also be accounted for by his anxiety. As previously noted, studies (e.g. Saranson, 1975, 1978, and Wine, 1980) have established a curvilinear relationship between test anxiety and performance.

During actual reading classes, Ian reported that he was constantly in fear of being called on by the teacher to answer a question or to read during the lesson: "*Sometimes I feel a 'shrink' because we are in a group and when the teacher asks me to read, I will miss out some words.*" To avoid such a situation, Ian preferred to remain quiet in class. This withdrawal behaviour was confirmed by his teacher who identified him on the LH Traits Checklist as a child who "*dislikes being asked to publicly 'perform' in class.*"

In addition to such withdrawal behaviour, Ian reported re-directing his attention to something other than the lesson content.

Ian: "*I think about stuff that I can do after school, think about what I will do at the weekend with my mates, think about the game I will play on Saturday.*"

Inter: "*And do you sometimes see yourself doing other things when the reading lesson was going on?*"

Ian: "*Sometimes I draw. Sometimes I just talk with my friend. We talk about what we will do after school.*"

Here, Ian's description of his classroom behaviour was consistent with his teachers', who indicated that he was "*often restless in class.*" In his verbal comment about Ian, the teacher also said "*He flatly refuses to work - says he can't and makes excuses for himself or blames others.*"

However, when Ian was asked whether he behaved similarly when learning 'metal work' (one of his most liked school subjects), his answer was "No", with the reason, "*I like it. I can do it.*"

Roseline: When Roseline was asked about her usual reaction to homework in mathematics, her reply, like Ian's, was "I don't do it." Her explanation for refusing to do her homework was, "Can't be bothered." Her motivation to work appeared to have been sapped by her consistent poor performances in mathematics in the past, and a form of immunity developed to help her cope with failure in this situation.

As with Ian, Roseline also reported her feelings of nervousness and powerlessness at any time she was given a test in mathematics. Her explanation for feeling scared when she was about to take a mathematics test was that she always got very low marks in maths, and she always knew that she was going to 'flunk' again. This reasoning suggests that Roseline usually approached a maths test situation with a failure expectancy. The resultant effect was a vicious circle of negative expectancy and task failure.

As with the other five children, Roseline reported her constant state of fear when mathematics was being taught. She was afraid of being asked any question by the teacher because she might not be able to answer it. This reported classroom behaviour was confirmed by her teacher who indicated on the LH Traits Checklist that Roseline "lacks confidence" in herself. As would be expected, the subsequent behaviour was to withdraw and unconsciously become trapped by other distracting stimuli, as she reported:

"I draw on scraps of paper and when Mrs X looks around the class, I go back to my maths book."

Such inattentive classroom behaviour has been documented as typical of failure prone students (Covington & Beery, 1976). It reinforces failure, hence the state of helplessness.

Concerning her classroom behaviour when her most liked school subject was taught or when taking a test on it, she reported a different experience.

The data presented above suggest that in any situation where the school subject they were having difficulties with came into the

children's mind, or they were directly engaged in related learning tasks - particularly those requiring them to make a 'public' response - there was a reflexive feeling of helplessness and a simultaneous manifestation of some of the associated aspects of the syndrome. However with the emergence of subsequent data it was realized that this was the case only in situations where the necessary 'help' was not forthcoming. While this data is consistent with 'specific LH', it did not support the notion that LH can be generalized across unrelated tasks as proposed by Hiroto and Seligman (1974) and Seligman (1975). However there is a need for further investigation into this issue. For example, where LH is experienced in the context of reading lessons, it might be expected that LH will be experienced in all situations where reading is called for. All subject areas require reading. This possibility was not explored in the present study.

C. The Six Cases' Attributions for their Least Successful School Subjects

Data on the attributions that the children made for their 'least successful' school subject were gathered during the first interview, when the Attribution Questionnaire was administered, and during the Case Study phase.

The attribution data gathered during the first interview was used in the first instance, for identification purposes. Many of the attributions offered fitted the literature description of the types of attributions typical of Lh learners. However these attributions were not categorized in the stable, control and locus dimensions at this stage.

Acknowledging that the researcher's categorization of these attributions may be hazardous since they may not accord with the children's perspective, an Attribution Questionnaire, capable of tapping the children's attributions along with their dimension categorization, was administered. It was noted that some of the

attributions which the children volunteered in the first interview were not offered when a questionnaire was used. Possible explanations for this were noted previously (See Chapter 5, p.140). The dimension categorization of the attributions which the children made on the questionnaire for their least successful school subject is presented in Fig. 24.

Child No. Attributions		3 Lyn		5 Ivonne		8 Andrea		9 Konny		19 John		23 Kolin		35 Jan		38 Koseline	
		Sta	Unst	Sta	Unst	Sta	Unst	Sta	Unst	Sta	Unst	Sta	Unst	Sta	Unst	Sta	Unst
1. Ability	Con																
	Unc	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
2. Previous experience	Con																
	Unc									✓							
2. Typical effort	Con																
	Unc																
4. Physiological processes	Con																
	Unc																
5. Attitude	Con									x				✓			
	Unc			/				+									/
6. Attention	Con		✓			+		x									
	Unc													+			
7. Immediate effort	Con																
	Unc																
8. Task difficulty	Con																
	Unc	/		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
9. Teacher	Con										✓						
	Unc																
10. Other pupils	Con											+					
	Unc			x		x											
11. Family	Con																
	Unc																
12. Acquired characteristic	Con																
	Unc				+												
Miscellaneous	Con																
	Unc																

Fig. 24 Dimension Categorization of Attributions on the Questionnaire and their groupings following Cooper and Burger's (1980) Model.

Key

✓	Any one attribution categorized both in the Stable and Control dimensions
+	Attributions categorized only in the Stable dimension
x	Attributions categorized only in the Control dimension

Note:

1. Due to the children's inability to categorize some of their attributions, the number of categorized attributions in Fig. 24 for each child may not necessarily match the number of attributions that child made.
2. Child No.3 and 23 were not involved in the case study. They were only selected as a reserve in case any of the six children failed to participate in the study

The attribution data gathered in the first interview and with the Attribution questionnaire were incorporated in the Case Study data.

Case Study Attribution Data

In the course of the Case Study interviews, other attributions surfaced. These were simultaneously categorized by the children on the stable and control dimensions. Again, a wide range of attributions were made by the children for their least successful school subject. Fig.25 lists the attributions made by the children in the case study and also indicates how frequently each attribution was made as well as the children who made them.

Attributions	Frequency of Attributions	Cases					
		Ian	Ronny	Roseline	John	Evonne	Andrea
1. Frequent school absence	2				*		*
2. Mobility or change of school	2		*		*		
3. Interactions with teacher	4	*	*	*	*		
4. Task difficulty	6	*	*	*	*	*	*
5. Classroom seating position	1				*		
6. Negative attitude to school subject	5	*	*	*		*	*
7. Low self-perception of subject ability	6	*	*	*	*	*	*

[Contd. on next page]

Attributions	Frequency of Attributions	Cases					
		Ian	Ronny	Roseline	John	Evonne	Andrea
8. Lack of help	4	*	*	*	*		
9. Lack of attention in class	6	*	*	*	*	*	*
10. Genetically-determined deficit	1					*	
11. Short memory	6	*	*	*	*	*	*
12. Other students behaviour	4	*		*	*	*	
13. Boredom with school subject	3		*			*	*
14. Lack of understanding	6	*	*	*	*	*	*

Fig. 25: Case Study Attributions, Their Frequencies, And The Children Who Offered Them.

In the subsequent section data concerning some of these specific attributions are presented and discussed. These factors were selected either because they have not been reported previously in the LH literature or they have been previously given particular significance in that literature. The data also includes the researcher's inferences about factors that might have contributed to the children's learning difficulties.

(i) Frequent School Absence: Two of the six children - John and Andrea- attributed their feelings of helplessness in mathematics learning situations to their frequent absence from school. Though the two children gave different reasons for their frequent school absences, the effect on their actual performance and the processes

which led to such effects were similar. For example, while Andrea explained:

"Sometimes I am at home with my sister and when I come, Mr will just get on and I don't understand."

John said:

"Sometimes I am not in school when they do it. I am sick and then I won't understand what she is talking."

These reports suggest that their frequent absences from school had created a gap in their learning. The resultant effect was their failure to understand subsequent lessons - thus, encouraging a circle of poor performance.

While there are no previous studies documenting a possible relationship between school absenteeism and LH, many (e.g. Elliot, 1966; and Polk, 1975) have established negative correlations between delinquency/truancy and academic performance.

(ii) Mobility or Change of School: Attributions to mobility or change of school have also not been associated previously with LH. Ronny and John made such attributions and associated their poor performances in maths and reading respectively with their inexperience in the subjects compared to their peers in class. Ronny explained that the other children could read better than him because he was not used to reading "such books" and had no friends in his new school to help him. John on the other hand was not as experienced in the learning of mathematics as the other children. More so, the teacher's teaching style was hard to understand.

Levine (1966) observed, (though not in relation to LH), that "there was enough variation in curriculum and materials even within the same school system to suggest that a child might have to unlearn some things while learning new procedures for the same task" (p.67). Under such conditions, mobility or change of schools can be associated with poor academic performance. Green and Daughtry (1962) similarly indicated some mobility related learning

difficulties for non-military children. This finding was inconsistent with those of Cramer and Dosey (1970), Collins and Coulter (1974), and Merchant and Medway, (1987) whose studies with military children indicated a neutral relationship. However, the difference might have been due to the fact that none of these studies included children below the age of sixteen. Secondly, as pointed out by Merchant and Medway (1987), the curriculum of military schools is fairly standard so that a change of school might not involve such significant changes as in non-military schools.

Merchant et al. (1987) also have observed that mobility or change of school implies psychological as well as geographical changes. With the adjustments needed to cope with the new environment, concentration on a task may be reduced as is comprehension, so that a child comes to view the given task as difficult and insurmountable as is the case with Lh children.

(iii) Task Difficulty: Subject difficulty was one of the causal attributions which were common to all six children who participated in the case study. For example, Andrea's complaint was:

"Maths is hard. It takes time."

Ronny: *"The division is hard. I don't really like the long way they do it because I can't do it."*

Roseline: *"I don't get the equations right. They are hard."*

Evonne: *"It is hard."*

John: *"Some of the times the work is too hard for me."*

Ian: *"Some of them are just too hard."*

With the exception of Evonne, these self-reports were consistent with the teacher's description on the LH Traits Checklist that the children *"often complain about subject difficulty."* On the Attribution questionnaire, each of them classified task difficulty as external, stable and uncontrollable (see Fig.24, p.176). Attributions to task difficulty have been reported in a number of studies of failure-prone or Lh children.

(iv) Self-Concept of Academic Ability: The ascription of poor school subject performance to lack of ability was another failure causal attribution that was common to all six cases. Of particular interest was the children's choice of words when making their failure attribution to lack of ability. To cite some illustrative cases, John said:

"I am not in room three."

Evonne: *"This is sleeping"* (touching her head).

Roseline: *"Up here is not working well"* (pointing to her head).

Ronny: *"It has to do with the brain."*

It was only by seeking further explanations from the children that their statements were understood to mean lack of ability. John, for instance, later on explained that room three was exclusively for the very clever children in Form Two. None of the children described his/her lack of ability in the usual terms like *"I am dumb"* or *"I am not brainy."*

An explanation for this attribution style could reside in the affective implication of ability attribution. Covington and Omelich (1979b) point out that failure attribution to ability causes shame and lowers self-worth. By masking the term 'ability', the children may have been trying to reduce the affective consequence. However, these attributions were observed to be synonymous with the *"I don't know it"* and *"I can't do it"* reasons that they gave on the attribution questionnaire for their least successful school subject where ability was categorized by each of the children as stable and uncontrollable. With such a pattern of attribution, these children may understandably feel that they are *"at the mercy of capricious forces beyond one's control, a view that is likely to be demoralizing, especially in an academic context where failure threatens self-respect"* (Covington & Beery, 1976, p.71). Also, the claim that they needed help from their teachers, special teachers and friends confirmed their awareness that they lacked the capacities to deal with their learning problem.

(v) Interactions with the Teacher: Four of the children thought their poor performance was partly due to insufficient help from the teacher. The exceptions were Evonne, who thought that her teacher was helping her a lot because she was feeling sorry for her, and Andrea who thought that her problem originated from home. Ronny, for instance, reported that he was having problems with his reading because he was *"not getting help."* John thought that other children were doing better *"because the teacher was helping them."* Ian said *"I think I am not having help"*, while Roseline reported that she *"needed more help."*

It was very interesting to observe that the same children who were found to be very reluctant to ask for help were so aware of the importance of help for an improved performance. This provided a further confirmation to Rosen's (1983) assertion that help-seeking may be perceived as indicating a perceived personal inadequacy and is then negatively related to affect.

Another observation was the tone with which the children talked about the limited help that they were getting from teachers. They sounded angry and aggressive. This prompted an investigation into their perceived personal relationship with their teachers.

To obtain related information without creating a sensitive situation, the children's views were sought on the view that students perform better academically when they are liked by the teachers.

Responses were unanimously in support of the view. Ian, for instance said that he *"will be able to listen to her more."* Ronny's view was that *"if the teacher likes you, then you can take your work to him. He won't tell you 'go'!"* Even Andrea who earlier on had claimed that her teacher was doing his part. explained that she *"wouldn't be shy anymore to ask questions."* John said that he would like to be able to repeat questions until he fully understood the teacher's explanation. Roseline's explanation was a summary of the others. She reported that people would do better *"because the teacher would explain things more to them and they would listen better."*

To these children, being liked by the teacher appeared to be synonymous with better interaction and communication and thus, their limited help seeking behaviour may well have stemmed from their lukewarm relationship with their teachers. In summary, then, a possible implication of the finding is that the lukewarm relationship with their teachers, and the resultant alienating behaviour, may well have contributed to a deterioration in their learning performance, which kept their LH constantly reinforced.

(vi) Attitude to School Subject: Two attitudes were explored in the Case Study - 'Liking' and 'Interest'. When each of the six children rated their school subjects, in the first interview, to show how much they liked or disliked each, the school subjects which they were perceived to be experiencing helplessness was invariably given a 'dislike very much' assessment.

Further confirmation of their negative attitudes emerged when they were asked to give reasons for their responses. While Roseline's response was "*it is just not my favourite*", Ronny, Evonne and Andrea complained that their problem subject was "*boring*". Ian's explanation was that "*That is me. I don't like reading.*" The children's dislike and lack of interest for mathematics/reading was further confirmed by Andrea's, Ian's, Roseline's and Ronny's teachers who on the LH Traits Checklist indicated that these children showed "*little interest in books*" and expressed "*openly a dislike of learning.*"

Although negative attitudes to mathematics/reading were not reported by John and Evonne's teachers, they did record a low persistence on task. Task persistence has been identified as a mediator between interest and performance (Wilson, 1971). In previous studies, lack of interest and lack of persistence have been identified as conditions that can ensue from LH. The fact that the children made attribution to attitudes points to the likelihood that a vicious circle will be established. That is, there is a cause and effect relationship between LH and lack of interest/lack of persistence on task.

(vii) Attitude to School and Schooling: Although one of the criteria for the sample selection was the children's ability and willingness to communicate their thoughts and feelings, in some instances they clearly lacked the capacity to do this readily. Further probing, however, did result in clearer expression of their views, from which reasonable inferences could be made. This was the case with some of the children when the generality of their LH was examined. The question was: Were these children giving up on the learning of the particular school subject they had identified as difficult or would they like to abandon schooling as a whole?

With the exception of John, the other children who participated in the case study in one form or another reported their dislike of school and schooling as a whole. They all had complaints or grievances about the school. A common complaint by all the six children was in relation to the sort of treatment that they (students) received from some members of the school staff. Ronny, for example, complained about too much interference by his teacher. Complaining that he hated being stopped by the teacher from doing what he wanted to do, he added: *"You can get sick of being on your own when you are not allowed to go anywhere at lunch to talk to your friends."* Roseline, explaining why she found school boring, said:

"You don't do what you like, like when you go for manuals. Then sometimes the teacher talks too much. You just sit down there and listen and you just stare at the teacher as she talks and talks and talks. It is boring."

A similar complaint was also made by John who thought that the teachers were being too intrusive and domineering:

"You always sit down there and Mrs X will talk and talk and talk. All you do is sit down. She will not listen to you! It is boring."

When asked why he would choose to quit school, Ian replied:

"Well, go out and do some job, instead of sitting down all day and listening to the teacher. So I can be free when I work and all that."

Although these children complained very angrily about school and indicated their willingness to leave school if possible, it was

surprising to note that with the exception of John whom his teacher said *"expresses openly a dislike for school"*, none of the other children was similarly described by the teacher.

The question that follows from this finding is why a child's LH in a single school subject should be associated with a general dislike of school. The answer to this question was found in the children's explanation of what they understood school success to mean. It was very interesting to note that with the exception of John and Ronny, the other four children associated school success with success in their respective 'difficult' school subjects. The children's meanings of school success are presented in Fig. 26.

Student	Meaning of School success.
John	<i>"Read hard. Ahm. Get my homework done."</i>
Roseline	<i>"Get some maths right."</i>
Ian	<i>"If I can read."</i>
Evonne	<i>"If my reading is good."</i>
Ronny	<i>"If you have friends and they help you."</i>
Andrea	<i>"You've got to get 1⁺, 2⁺ and that (in maths)."</i>

Fig.26 The Children's Meanings of School Success

While this present study offers no explanation for this finding, perhaps it can be reconciled with Filler's (1952) assertion that the attractiveness of a goal object increases concurrently with ones difficulty in attaining the goal. The finding, however, offers a likely explanation as to why Lh children usually perceive their academic future as bleak (e.g. Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest and Rosenbaum, 1971) and subsequently drop out of school.

D. Perception of the Onset of Learned Helplessness

The children's perception of the origins of their LH was another set of information that surfaced, as data on the academic life history of each of the cases were analyzed. Fig.27 (p.187) represents the children's report on their learning experiences with mathematics/reading in Primary One to Four, Standard One to Four and Form One and Two.

Noticeable in the figure is the variation of the children's recalled experiences in the different classes. In Primary One to Four, only Ian and Evonne referred to subject boredom and lack of interest respectively. None of the children reported having learning difficulties with the concerned school subjects at that stage. However, for various reasons the children's experiences started to vary in later years. While Evonne, Ronny and Andrea reported still finding the subjects easy in Standard One, for John, Roseline and Ian, that was when their difficulties became obvious. In Standard Four, the situations apparently reversed for John, Ronny and Andrea. For John, mathematics was becoming easy, while for Ronny and Andrea, reading and mathematics respectively were getting more difficult. For the other three children, their experiences were not changed from standard one. In the intermediate school, where the researcher actually made the first contact with these children, the reported experiences were different at each of the two form levels. All the children, except Evonne, reported that they were able to cope with the learning of mathematics/reading in Form One. They only found it hopelessly difficult in their second year. In Evonne's case it was the reverse. However, she attributed her improved performance in her second year to help from friends.

<u>Class</u>	<u>John</u>	<u>Roseline</u>	<u>Ian</u>	<u>Evonne</u>	<u>Ronny</u>	<u>Andrea</u>
Primary 1	Good. Not hard.	I knew everything that was taught.	I was not interested.	It was okay but boring.	Simple.	Can't remember.
2						
3			Well, it was okay. I could do it.			It was easy. We only did pluses.
4					I can't remember that one.	Take aways they were easy too. Times I didn't know.
Standard 1	A little harder.	It was starting to get hard then.	I couldn't understand Mr Y.	I started to be interested. Started to get better marks.	It was alright.	It was still okay.
2				It was still easy.		
3	I think it was a little easier.	Quite hard.		Hard and boring		
4	Hm. It was easy. Nobody really bothered about maths.	It was harder than in Standard Three.	Hard	The teacher was helping me and it was good.	Harder.	I was not paying attention to the teacher. It was hard.
Form 1	Fairly easy.	I don't really know.	It is easier here than in Standard Four.	Hard. When we get a test I will get low, like ten.	Most of it was getting a bit easier and I could understand it more than in Standard Four.	Mr C. he was helping and I was catching up with others.
2	I find it hard.	Hard.	Hard again.	All my friends are helping me. I am getting good marks for my test.	Very hard, pluses and takeaways, I do that anytime. But times I can't do it.	It is hard.

Fig. 27: Mathematic/Reading Learning Experience at Various School Stages.

Although the initial identification activities conducted when the children were in Form One did not take into account the children's self-report of their experiences, their retrospective account of their experiences with mathematics/reading in Form One was rather surprising and unanticipated. John, for example, reported that he found mathematics "*fairly easy*", Ian thought reading was easier in Form One than it was in Standard Four. A similar response was made by Ronny, and by Andrea who even thought she "*was catching up with others*" in her mathematics. These statements appear to be incompatible with LH status. Yet, it was at this stage (Form One) that the children were identified as Lh by their teachers, using the LH description and the LH Traits Checklist.

This data is not only at odds with the teacher's view of the children, but the children's own self-reports in previous interviews, as well as the attribution data gathered with the Attribution Questionnaire. It was unclear why the same children who spontaneously identified the school subjects that they disliked and had learning difficulties in, would three months later make such inconsistent reports as presented in Fig. 27. What could this apparent discrepancy suggest?

Three possible explanations of this observation are forwarded by the researcher. These include:

1. The credibility of children's retrospective report:

Detailed comments on the limitations of retrospective self-report as a strategy for data collection has been presented in Chapter Four. Among these was the fact that children are sometimes unable or unwilling or both to provide accurate reports of their life retrospectively.

The fact that this data is also inconsistent with the children's self-reports in the other interviews raises concern about the accuracy and fidelity of the data gathered in this particular interview and negates the option that the

children's view concerning the degree of difficulties they had with mathematics/reading might have been different from the teacher's.

Moreover, as can be observed in Fig.27, none of the children reported experiencing continuous difficulties in learning a particular school subject in all the classes from Primary One to Form Two. Such would inevitably indicate lack of ability (Kun & Weiner, 1973), and who ever wants to 'paint a black portrait' of him/herself? It might not be out of place, therefore, to assume that the inconsistent reports by the children, revealed an effort to protect their self-worth.

2. The nature of the LH syndrome:

Looking at the data from the Reformulated LH theory perspective, the pattern of report might not be viewed as contradicting but rather, a reflection of the type of LH that the children were experiencing.

Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale (1978) point out that the time course of helplessness varies from individuals to individuals. *"Some helplessness deficits may last only minutes and other may last years. Helplessness is called Chronic when it is either long-lived or recurrent and transient when short-lived and nonrecurrent."* (Abramson, et al. 1978 p. 56.) On the basis of their self-report data, it would appear that the children's LH was recurrent - a condition that might account for their different experiences in each of the classes.

3. Research Effect:

With reference to the nature of reports in Form One in particular, the researcher draws attention to the unappraised effect that the on-going research might have had on the teachers.

One of the findings in this present study is that environmental factors suppress the manifestation of LH syndrome. One of such factors is the availability of the necessary learning assistance. It is possible that following their initial identification of the Lh children in their class, the Form One teachers began to give them more attention and help than they did previously. If so, the children may have begun to feel less helpless and given the recency of this experience reported it when reviewing their Form One experiences.

Lastly, it might be important to note that this particular interview in which children made retrospective reports of their experiences, took into consideration only one LH trait - namely - 'perception of task' as difficult. Consequently, it would be spurious to base decisions concerning the LH status of the children exclusively on data which emerged from it.

The Nature of the Children's LH

Although great effort was made by the children to pinpoint exactly when and how the problems originated, because of the 'fluctuating' nature of the phenomenon as experienced by the studied group, it was difficult to make definitive statements concerning the origin of the children's LH. Rather, interesting information was obtained on the time frame for the development of LH.

In contrast to most laboratory studies (e.g. Seligman, 1975; Tennen & Eller, 1977) which give an impression that LH occurs spontaneously once an individual is exposed to a performance/outcome non-contingent situation, the children's reports suggested that LH does not result from a brief period of exposure to an uncontrollable situation. Rather, it stems from what might initially be regarded as common learning problems such as difficulties in understanding lessons, perceived task difficulty, and occasional poor performance on task. (These experiences that precede the LH syndrome will henceforth

be referred to as traces). These traces if not attended to promptly, with time begin to influence the ability self-concept negatively. The negative view of self is usually manifested by complaints such as "*It is hard for me*" and "*I am not as good as my friend.*" The teacher's responses on the LH Traits Checklist for each of the children, as well as the children's own attributions for their poor performances in certain school subjects confirm complaints of this nature to be typical of the studied sample. It is the persistence of such perceptions, usually accompanied by task avoidance behaviours and consistent poor performance, that ultimately culminate in a state of helplessness.

While Abramson et al. (1978) recognize LH as a phenomenon that can wax and wane (recurrent) over time, they have failed to provide explanations for the fluctuations. The present study has stepped a little beyond this position to indicate that LH does not only fluctuate over time but also situations that are capable of prompting LH syndrome. Secondly, it has highlighted some of the factors that might be responsible for the fluctuation in the experience of LH. 'External Help', 'Lesson Comprehension' and 'Instructional Style' were specifically identified. For example, talking about her learning experiences, Evonne said:

"In Standard Four, the teacher used to help me and I had one person who was helping me too. Sometimes we used to read four in a group and myself, I was getting better."

A similar report was made by Andrea while giving a history of her experience of ease with mathematics, and how her LH reoccurred:

"Mr C, he was helping and I was catching up with others. But I was always away any time we had maths and I couldn't understand the teacher"

Because of the time limit of the present study, it was not possible to investigate further to identify other factors that may

control the occurrence of the LH phenomenon. However, recognizing the significance of such knowledge for remedial purpose, future researchers who are interested in the phenomenon are encouraged to explore further and identify factors which may cause LH to wax and wane.

In the next chapter, data for two cases - John and Evonne - are presented and discussed in detail.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CASE STUDIES: JOHN AND EVONNE

As indicated in the previous Chapter, an analysis of the data from the six cases revealed significant differences, as well as similarities, in the children's cognitive and emotional lives. In order to highlight further the nature of those differences and similarities, and to provide the reader with a more complete portrayal of the origins, character and impact of LH for individual students, the case studies for two children (John and Evonne), who were considered as being contrastive in some respects, are now presented.

The basis for the selection of these two cases for a more detailed report of data included (a) gender, (b) school subject, and (c) the richness of data available for comparison. The format for the presentation of data for each case is the same as that adopted in the previous Chapter.

Data from John's case study is presented first, and then Evonne's. Following this, a summary comparison of the two children is given and conclusions are made. Finally, the case study overall are summarized and conclusions thereto are drawn.

PART 1

THE CASE STUDY OF JOHN

A. Learned Helplessness: The Syndrome

In the course of the analysis of John's self-reports, a number of his statements were found to refer to traits that define Lh learners (see Fig. 28).

Learned Helplessness Traits	Illustrative Statements
Low Expectancy	<i>"I don't know. Just wait and see."</i>
Learning Avoidance behaviour	<i>"When I know I am going to have a test I just end half-way to school."</i>
Inhibited Success Oriented Actions	<i>"If it is a test that one mark is taken off for every wrong, I just leave it."</i>
Negative Feelings	<i>"I don't like to think about school. It makes me sick."</i>

Fig. 28: John's Reports Illustrating LH Syndrome.

His past experience of poor performance in mathematics had resulted in negative feelings and low expectancies which, in turn, discouraged him from undertaking activities that required the learning of mathematics.

Further evidence of these traits are presented and discussed in the section below.

Low Expectancy

As the following discussion confirms, John's expectancy for his future mathematics performance was low.

Inter: *"Next year you will be at college. How do you think you will be getting on with maths?"*

John: *"I don't really know. Not too much hope."*

Inter: *"Not too much hope because?"*

John: *"The more we go high up, the more things become hard."*

To John, mathematics was a difficult school subject and his change of school would not alter that. In other words, his mini theory - *"The more we go high up, the more things become hard,"* had contributed to a decline in expectancy for good performances in the future.

This was also reflected in John's response to a question concerning his likely performance in maths, in the following year:

"Maths might get harder in the college and if the teacher gives you hard work, then you cannot get it."

John's statement here also suggests an attribution of failure to task difficulty. When responding to the Attribution Questionnaire, he categorized this factor as stable and uncontrollable.

Learning Avoidance Behaviour

The analysis of John's self-reports revealed his occasional, intentional withdrawal from activities that might have helped him improve his maths knowledge and skills. Because past efforts yielded no worthwhile results, further effort in similar situations was often perceived as a waste of time. Thus, he reported:

"When you know that you are not going to get it, then you waste time."

This statement suggests a motivation problem.

In response to questions concerning his classroom interaction, he revealed that he felt unhappy on occasions about being involved by his teacher in certain learning activities. As he complained:

"I don't like being called on, and then you have to stand and go to the board, and the kids will look at you and stuff like that. And if you cannot, kids start laughing."

This non-participatory attitude and behaviour was confirmed by John's teacher who indicated on the learned helplessness trait checklist that John *"Dislikes being asked to publicly 'perform' in class."*

John's avoidance of maths activities was also manifest in his unwillingness to do his mathematics homework and assignments. He excused himself, and probably protected his ego, by devaluing the importance of homework: *"I don't really think it is important."*

Further evidence of this pattern of avoidance behaviour was his limited help-seeking behaviour. Reporting on his behaviour in maths class when he did not understand his teacher, John said, *"I just keep quiet."* He blamed this behaviour on his peers:

"It is that Bill. When the teacher asks me a question, he will laugh and the other kids in class, they will laugh. They think I cannot answer the question."

On another occasion, John explained that he sometimes refused to ask questions in class because the teacher's explanation *"doesn't help."*

In summary, John's unwillingness to seek help would have contributed to his repeated poor performances and the ensuing affective consequences which are discussed in the next section.

It was noted that John's avoidance behaviour as related to the learning of mathematics was not limited to the classroom learning situation, but also extended to his anticipated job. John wanted to be a mariner. Unfortunately some aspects of the job, according to John, required a good knowledge of mathematics - *"If you go in as a navigator, you have got to be real good in mathematics."* It was interesting to note that despite his awareness of this requirement, he neither contemplated taking another career nor invested more effort in the study of mathematics to cope with the demand. His strategy, rather, was to find a way of avoiding aspects of the job which required mathematics:

"In that case the only way out is to talk about it with the major if he can put me in another work in the marine."

While this indicates that John's longer-term goals remained in place, the strategy he had in mind for realizing them was clearly unrealistic.

Negative Feelings

Although some of his statements suggested a degree of desperation and frustration ("*it's always like that when a test comes.*"), John rarely acknowledged explicitly, such feelings.

His responses to questions concerning his feeling about his mathematics learning difficulties were often "*I am not worried*", "*It doesn't worry me.*" There was no report of feelings such as shame, guilt or even depression which is documented in the research literature as a likely trait of LH. However, John did report a feeling of anger in situations where he failed to perform well after investing great effort into his study. Again, while reporting on his usual feeling when he contemplated taking a test in mathematics, he talked about feeling scared, with the reason that he might find the test hard. This feeling is likely to ensue from a lack of confidence in personal ability. Commenting on the link between attributions and anger, Weiner (1985) notes Averill's (1983) observation that anger is "*More than anything else, an attribution of blame*" (p.1150).

It is possible that his attribution of failure to such external and/or uncontrollable factors as subject difficulty, instructional method, and lack of help and ability, may have reduced the likelihood of his actually experiencing such emotions as shame or guilt. It is also possible, however, that he made a conscious effort to protect his ego.

B. Situational Effects: Settings and Events

John's self-report complied with the theory that what a child already knows plays a significant part in subsequent learning behaviour (Biggs & Telfer, 1987). His LH thoughts and feelings were experienced only in situations that had to do with mathematics. For example:

- (i) When contemplating doing homework in mathematics
- (ii) When asked a question in mathematics class and
- (iii) When given a test in mathematics

When commenting on his thoughts and feelings about homework John said that he usually does not care, he "*just leave it.*" One of his explanations for his reaction was that "*mathematics is hard*", and when he knew that he was not going to get it right, he just left it. Otherwise it would be a waste of his time. This self-report explained and confirmed his inability to persist at a task.

John also reported his experience of LH when he was aware of an impending test in mathematics. Anxiety and fear would overwhelm him. As he reported, "*I get scared.*"

Inter: "*Why is that? Why do you get scared?*"

John: "*It might be hard.*"

Inter: "*Hm. I see. How do you normally feel when you are given the test?*"

John: "*Scared. Sometimes my heart beats.*"

Inter: "*Yeah. Can be scary. And do you normally feel the same way when you are taking a test on another thing? Say reading or metal work?*"

John: "*No. No.*"

Inter: "*Can you tell me why?*"

John: "*Because I can do it. It is easy to do.*"

The consequence of John's fearful and anxious approach to the test situation was repeated poor performance.

Understandably, John reported that his LH thoughts and feelings were awakened during mathematics lessons. He was constantly afraid that he might be called on by the teacher to answer a question. "*That is what I don't like*", he complained. As noted previously, if that happened, his usual choice was to remain quiet for fear of saying the wrong thing and being laughed at. However, John was never idle in mathematics class. According to him, he usually occupied himself with unrelated activities such as drawing on scraps of paper, reading some other book, looking out through the window or just day dreaming.

From these reports made by John, it was apparent that it was the prospect of doing maths and participation in maths lessons or activities that usually evoked John's LH.

C. Attribution Data : The Case of John

In the course of commenting on his life as a Lh learner, John made causal attributions for his mathematics learning difficulties. Fig.29 provides a summary of the attributions that he made during Interview One, and on the attribution questionnaire. Also noted are attributions offered during subsequent interviews.

Attribution Source	Attributions
First interview	Subject difficulty Attitude (not liking reading) Subject boredom Lack of ability School absence Teacher
Attribution Questionnaire	Lack of ability Insufficient previous experience Negative attitude (not liking) Subject difficulty Teacher
Other interviews	Frequent school absence Change of school Relationship with teacher Subject difficulty Lack of ability (reflected in low self-perception of mathematics ability) Classroom seating position Negative attitude to mathematics Insufficient previous experience Subject boredom

Fig. 29 : John's Attributions for his Mathematics Learning Difficulties.

These factors are now discussed in depth.

Frequent Absence From School

"Sometimes I am not in school when they teach it."

This was one of John's explanations for the difficulties that he was having in understanding mathematical ideas. Although sickness ("*sometimes I am sick*") and tiredness ("*sometimes I am too tired and just want to sleep in*") were in turn offered as attributions for frequent school absence, further questioning revealed that sometimes his non-attendance was deliberate. This suggested the possibility that John stayed away from school at times in order to avoid mathematics. The suggestion was confirmed by his response to the question concerning things that might discourage him from attending school. His response was:

"When I have plenty to do. When I know that I am going to have a test, I just end half way to school. With my friend or just by myself. I go down town or go and have fun. And then go back home at about three O'clock as though I am from school to make up the home walk." (sic)

His school truancy resulted in his failure to attend some lessons on mathematics. Consequently, there were gaps in his learning which made it difficult for him to understand subsequent lessons when he was in class. However, to John, his poor performance was not of his making. This denial was later on found to be at odds with his explanation for the good mathematics performance by some of his peers in class. According to John, the other children were doing better in maths because:

"They are always doing it. They like it and always listen and work it with the teacher when she is doing it. They know it and the teacher always give them 80%, 90% and that."

Highlighted in the above report were John's attribution of good performance by his peers to:

- (i) Sufficient effort
- (ii) Attitude to mathematics (liking)

- (iii) Attentiveness in mathematics class
- (iv) Ability and
- (v) Either encouragement from previous good performances mathematics or the teacher's favouritism (to determine which of the two John had in mind required further questioning as will be seen later).

The implication of these explanations was that John believed he was not doing as well due to his

- (i) Insufficient effort investment
- (ii) Dislike for mathematics
- (iii) Inattentiveness in maths class
- (iv) Lack of ability and
- (v) Either discouragement from previous poor performances or the unfairness of his teacher.

It must be emphasized that these are a researcher's inference. In John's own view, he had done his best.

Self-Concept of Mathematics Ability

Like most of the other children who were interviewed, John had developed a concept of his own ability with reference to the learning of mathematical ideas. This was revealed as he ranked himself in comparison with his peers in the class on mathematical ability:

"I am the last. No, one person. Lyn. Am better than Lyn. But we are the bottom two."

His reason for placing himself at the bottom of the class was that he always got very low marks and grades in mathematics tests, while *"others will get 80, 90 and that."* As he explained, with particular reference to learning mathematical ideas, his problem was poor memory. He found it difficult to remember anything the teacher said *"unless it was not hard, like 1 + 1."*

From John's report, it appeared that he considered that factors such as

- The teacher's differential treatment of students in class
- Seating arrangement
- The grouping of students into small study groups, and
- The behaviours of peers in class

never helped the situation. It was also apparent that his concept of his own ability was based in part on his interpretation of the teacher's differential treatment of students. This was revealed in his comments about the intellectual worth of students who were seated at the back of the class:

"Mrs X, when you are good, she helps you when you are having problems. But when you are bad, she will just get on and don't worry. And then she can put you at the back of the class sometime."

Although John did not directly attribute his mathematics learning difficulties to his seating position, it appeared this was 'nested' in his notion of the intellectual worth of children who sat at the back of the classroom. To John, sitting at the back of the class was a cue to low ability, and usually resulted in less attention from the teacher. The resulting perception of self as inadequate and incompetent was confirmed in further discussion:

Inter: *"Do you mean that all those children who sit at the back are bad in maths?"*

John: *"Mathematics, reading, or spelling (another thing I am bad), she will just send you to the back. Doug, Joan, Tam and myself (counting with his fingers), four of us, we sit at the back and we do things together."*

Inter: *"Hm. And do the other kids sometimes help you?"*

John: *"My friends, they are like me. They don't know."*

Inter: *"I see. Does your group usually get much help from the teacher?"*

John: *"No. Not really."*

Inter: *"What does the teacher do when you cannot answer her question then?"*

John: *"Nothing. She knows we don't know it!"*

This last statement by John revealed his awareness of the mathematics performance expectancy imposed on him and his study group. In John's mind, his failure, or his group's failure to answer the teacher's question, was not a surprise to the teacher. She knew their ability status. Their behaviour just matched her expectation. With this sort of awareness, the motivation to try may understandably be squashed.

Subject Difficulty

With reduced effort and a resultant deterioration in performance, John increasingly perceived mathematics as a difficult school subject. His frequent failure to complete assigned work (as indicated by his teacher on the learned helplessness trait checklist) was because *"sometimes the work is too hard."* Sometimes he even perceived such assigned work as unnecessary. Commenting on the nature of maths tasks, John also observed that *"sometimes it is boring, if I am working on a sum and I just keep going like that and would not work it out."* He appeared to have been convinced by his previous effort without success that mathematics was difficult and that effort was accordingly a waste of time; *"it doesn't really help."*

Interestingly, it was also noted that John made some attributions for his feelings of incompetence which are not documented in Attribution or LH literature. These attributions are now discussed:

Mobility or Change of School

Discussions with John revealed that change of school can have some bearing on the pathology of LH. From his explanation:

"Before I came here the others, they had done it over and over. In my school, we didn't actually do mathematics the way they do it here."

Two mediating factors were obvious:

- (i) John was not as experienced in the learning of mathematics as the other children in class; and
- (ii) He found the approach to solving mathematical problems different from what he learned in his former school.

Consequently, it was difficult for him to understand the teacher and perform at a level similar to that of the other children.

Another factor that discouraged John from trying, even though he was in a new school, was the amount of work that he had to cope with. According to him, *"It is too much."* In the previous school, as he explained:

"It was just a few things to do. The teacher he didn't make it many at all. We just wrote one or two things in our books. But that was not here. It was before I came here."

Although John did not attribute his learning difficulties directly to any teacher-related factor, his mood and facial expressions while comparing the expertise of his previous teacher and the current one prompted some hypotheses about his relationship with his present teacher. This was investigated accordingly.

Relationship with Teacher

While John did not state that he had a poor relationship with his teacher, he never claimed a good one either. However, some clues emerged in support of the first possibility as he made attributions for the success of some of his peers in class. According to John:

"The teacher just gives them special stuff for their age and that. Like last year, they had started getting better than me."

Inter: *"Why was that?"*

John: *"The teacher was helping them."*

Inter: *"And do you think you have not been given so much help?"*

John: *"No. Not really."*

Because this line of discussion was considered to be a bit sensitive, some neutral questions were asked to help highlight how John perceived his relationship with his teacher. His opinion was sought on the view that students perform better academically when they were liked by the teacher. His answer supported this proposition:

"If the teacher likes you, and you like the teacher, then you can ask her questions when it is not clear and ask and ask and ask, and she will answer. If the teacher doesn't like you, she will answer just once and you will sit there."

To John, free or good communication with the teacher was founded on a good relationship - liking and being liked. On another occasion, he had reported that he rarely did ask questions in class. These data suggest that John's relationship with his teacher was a cool, or at best a lukewarm one. Such a relationship was also reflected in his complaint that sometimes the teacher sent him out of class for talking with other children during lessons, *"Then she will tell the other kids to come in, and leave me out. She wouldn't call me in."*

In addition, in the teacher's responses on the check list, it was noted that John *"day dreams in class"* and *"rarely contributes to class discussions"*, the teacher also indicated that John *"doesn't enjoy a comfortable relationship with the teacher."*

As previously documented, his limited classroom involvement contributed to his difficulty in understanding lesson content.

Perception of Actual Performance

Data revealed that John was dissatisfied with the way that he was performing in mathematics despite his effort to achieve better results.

"... and though I study a lot, I still get 15 or sometimes 25."

Inter: *"And how do you usually feel when you get 15 or 25 though you study hard?"*

John: *"Doesn't worry me."*

Inter: *"Hm. I know that some children really feel bad when they get low marks. Why is it that it doesn't worry you?"*

John: *"Because it is always so when a test comes."*

It was not possible to confirm whether John was sincere in his claim of immunity to failure in mathematics or not. From the teacher's point of view, John was a child who was *"readily discouraged when success was not immediate"*, was *"often off task"*, and who *"frequently fails to complete assigned work."* John himself contradicted his initial claim of continued effort (*"though I study a lot, I still get 15 or sometimes 25"*) on several occasions. For example, he noted that he only tried hard on a maths task if he was sure he was going to be successful in the end. Otherwise he just left it. The effort invested in the learning of mathematics had declined due to previous failure experiences which had created a negative expectancy for future performance.

Attitude to Mathematics

Although one could not be sure if the posture was an ego-defensive one, John attributed his learning difficulties in part to

his attitude to mathematics. On different occasions during the interview he stated, "*I don't like maths*"; "*I don't like it.*" "*I just don't like maths*"; "*I am not interested.*"

This negative attitude by John was not without an influence on his mathematics learning behaviour. As noted by his teacher on the LH Traits Checklist, he was "*often off task.*" During the interviews, John personally reported that if he found his maths assignment difficult, he would "*just leave it.*" In fact, there appear to have been a lack of willingness to persist on mathematics tasks.

Attitude to School and Schooling

Unlike some of the other children interviewed, John did not state that he disliked most aspects of school and schooling, although his reported discontent with a number of factors in the school suggested that to be the case. His dissatisfaction did focus on things more general than maths but without embracing all aspects of school life. For example, John was particularly dissatisfied with the way some teachers treated students. As John reported:

"You always sit down there and Mrs X will talk and talk and talk. All you do is sit down. She will not listen to you! It is boring."

Inter: *"Yeh. It could be boring."*

John: *"And they yell at you. I don't like people yelling at me. Like that one yelling out there (looking in the direction of the noise), he is a very mean teacher. He is always yelling at people. If he sees you outside, he will not ask you why you are there. He will just shout!"*

His disgust with some members of the school staff prompted him to suggest that some changes should be made in their relative status.

Although this line of discussion was not pursued because of its sensitive nature and John's emotional reaction, the data obtained from the brief discussion highlighted his strong grievances against some

aspects of school life. The resultant effect seemed to be a desire and tendency to avoid the situation that brought him in contact with such personalities. This was acknowledged by John when he was asked what his thoughts and feelings were likely to be at times when he contemplated returning to school the next day. John replied that he tries to think about something else:

"Because I don't want to remember school. It makes me sick to think of those long, long, hours. You sit down there and Mrs X will talk and talk. It is boring."

As was noted previously, John sometimes acted out this desire to avoid school by truanting. His other strategy aimed at school avoidance was to play sick. It was interesting to listen to John as he reported on his most recent incidence of such attempts:

"That was yesterday. I just put my hand in my throat, down, down and uh-h-h (pretending to be vomiting) but Mum knew!"

Inter: *"Why did you do that?"*

John: *"Don't want to come to school."*

Inter: *"Why?"*

John: *"My homework. I didn't do it, and Mrs X, she will just send you out to go and do it."*

John's observed negative attitude to school was confirmed by his teacher who on the LH traits checklist indicated that John *"expresses openly a dislike for school."*

However, a unique and interesting observation about John was his determination to persist in school despite such attitudes and feelings. Even without the hope for much improvement in mathematics, he still believed that school as an institution served worthy ends and that he would need to persist and acquire college education in order to attend his ideal career goal - to be a mariner. A case of unrealistic goal setting re-affirmed.

D. Perception of the Onset of Learned Helplessness

According to John, mathematics was "*no problem at all*" at primary school. From his point of view, all the class needed to do was to copy what the teacher did. As he explained, "*the hard parts were not talked about.*"

However, it was not the same story in Standard One, Two and Form Two. Although John reported that his learning of mathematics concepts became less difficult in Standard Four and Form One it appeared his mathematics learning difficulties actually started in Standard One. According to John, it was in Standard One that the teacher "*just came and threw it (the hard parts) on us*" for the first time.

How did John react to this sudden and threatening situation? He appeared to have at this point formed the view that "*Mathematics is hard.*" However, he kept trying.

Perhaps as a result of increased effort - reactance (Wortman & Brehm 1975), a different experience was reported in Standard Three. "*It was a little easier.*" John attributed his improved performance to good teaching by the teacher:

"Because the teacher taught us more about those things we thought were too hard when we first started."

With reference to his LH status, a discordance was observed in John's claim that he found mathematics easy at this stage, and his attribution of that ease to his teacher's effective teaching. Normally, one would not expect a Lh learner to say that he/she finds the concerned school subject easy. But while John's perception of the difficulty level of mathematics at this stage, as low, would pose questions about his LH status, his attribution of the experience to an external assistance, outside his own control, suggests the contrast. In other words, by failing to acknowledge that his own capacities or actions may have also contributed to his success, John was apparently declaring his perceived personal incompetence:

In Standard Four, again, John reported that maths was "*fairly easy.*" "*Nobody really bothered about mathematics.*"

Inter: "*What, do you mean by that?*"

John: "*In other classes we do a lot of tests so that we can move into the next class. But this time, we couldn't be bothered about that because we were moving to a new school.*"

Although John's judgement on how he found mathematics in Standard Four might have been biased because of his reported unperturbed attitude to it, his report was taken at face value: as in Standard Three, Mathematics in Standard Four was "*fairly easy.*"

In his first year at intermediate school, John reported that he still found mathematics easy. A detailed discussion of John's experience of task ease in Form One, has been made along with reports from other four cases in Chapter Six.

In Form Two, however, the story changed. Mathematics became hopelessly difficult. As John reported:

"Last year we were doing things like 31×20 and things like that, but this year, we are doing things like 6221.031×9.072 divided by 7.08 . It is hard!"

Inter: "*I see. It is long.*"

John: "*Then we got to also learn long division, short division, medium division and stuff like that.*"

Inter: "*Hm. Maybe you need time to learn them. Things might change.*"

John: "*Not much. It is hard!*"

Although some of John's statements suggested that he began to experience difficulties in mathematics learning in Standard One, it appeared that he became fully aware of the seriousness of his learning difficulty while in his present class. There was a clear loss of confidence in himself concerning his future performance in mathematics. But who knows how he was going to perceive his experiences in maths in the subsequent year? His occasional

indication of uncertainty when reporting on his performance expectancy in the subsequent year implied the situation might improve or get worse. While the finding here affirms the fact that LH has a development time frame, it also suggests a fluctuating nature of the LH phenomenon. In addition, the data here highlights difficulties associated with attempts to determine exactly when individuals learn that they are helpless and can be accordingly labelled as Lh learners.

Concerning the time frame for the development of learned helplessness, as previously pointed out, John's self-report, in line with the group's, suggested that LH does not result from just a single or few experiences of an action/outcome non-contingency. Rather, it develops as a response to daily learning problems which are not given any particular attention by others (e.g. teachers, school counsellors and psychologists and parents).

The self-report also revealed that some learning situations may actually nurse the development of LH. Examples of such situations include one where a child can devalue the importance of hard work and 'get away' with it. Academic mass promotion, a situation where everybody gets promoted simultaneously irrespective of the nature of performance, creates one such situation as was the case with John. With reduced effort and subsequent poor performance, his LH was triggered and reinforced over time.

The Stable or Fluctuating Nature of Learned Helplessness

From his self-report, there was clear evidence of fluctuations in John's mathematics learning experiences especially between Standard One and Form Two (see Fig.30).

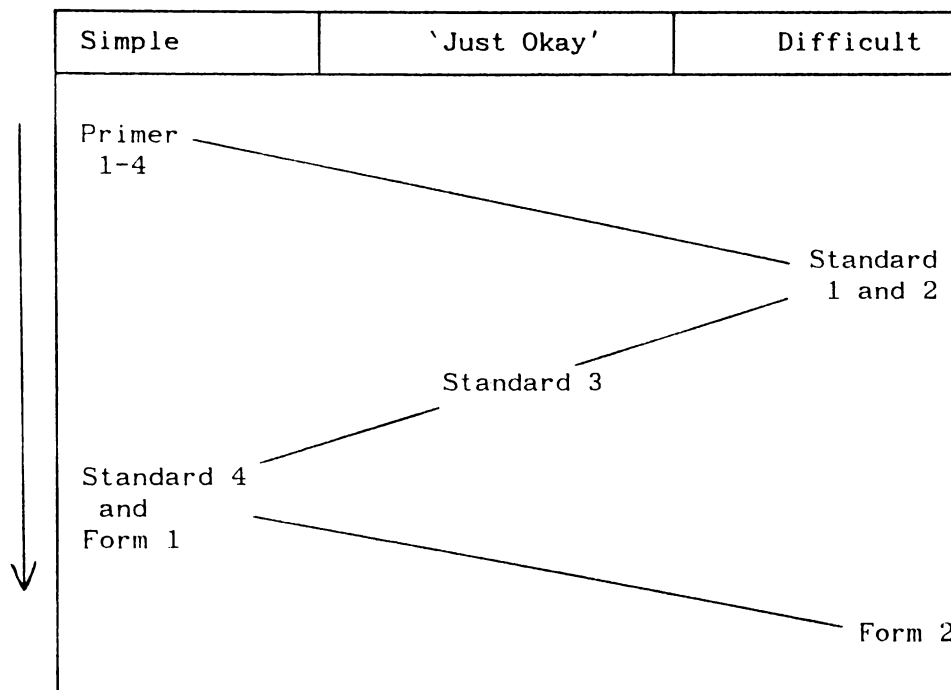


Fig. 30 John's Mathematics Learning Experiences at Various School Classes.

This feature of the LH phenomenon as observed in the children's reports was discussed in some detail in Chapter Six.

As with the other children, while it was not possible to establish whether John's first experiences of difficulties with maths were indeed associated with LH thoughts and feelings, the data clearly indicates that he experienced some of these traits. However, if it is the 'giving up' behaviour that is an absolute indicator of the phenomenon, then a follow up study spanning over several years would be required before definite conclusions could be made concerning John's LH status. This observation seems to emphasize the need for teachers to avoid 'writing off' children who might have some learning difficulties on the assumption that such children are doomed to fail.

PART II

THE CASE STUDY OF EVONNE

This second part of Chapter Six presents data on Evonne's LH. In the course of the presentation, differences and similarities between Evonne's and John's experiences as Lh learners are highlighted.

A. Learned Helplessness: The Syndrome

As with John, Evonne's self-reports were found to contain statements referring to low expectancies, avoidance behaviours, inhibited success oriented actions and negative feelings which identified her as experiencing LH. Fig.31 provides illustrative statements.

Traits	Illustrative Statements
Low Expectancies	<i>"It might get better but may not be very good."</i>
Learning Avoidance Behaviour	<i>"If it is hard and boring, I just leave it."</i>
Inhibited Success Oriented Actions	<i>"I try, but not as the rest of my work."</i>
Negative Feeling	<i>"Sad and discouraged."</i>

Fig. 31 Evonne's Reports Indicating LH Syndrome.

Low Expectancy

Like John, Evonne was not very optimistic about her future reading performance. However, she occasionally indicated some hope. For example, in her reply to a question concerning her future performance, Evonne said that it might get better, but may never be very good. Her reason for this view was that her father, from whom she thought she acquired her reading difficulties, was improving with age and *"can read a little better than myself now."* It was noted that the comment *"It may not be very good"*, an indication of her doubt for a better performance, was repeated frequently for questions that required her to look ahead. Aware of the stable and/or uncontrollable nature of the factors to which she ascribed her poor reading ability, Evonne set no high performance goals for herself. Reporting on her performance aspirations for the next year, Evonne said that they were not going to differ from the current year's. Her unwillingness to aim higher stemmed from previous failure experience despite effort. *"I make attempts to read and I do all I can, but miss out some words."* Not anticipating better performances, she became less enthusiastic about undertaking learning activities which concern her 'problem' school subject (reading).

Learning Avoidance Behaviour

As was observed in the other cases, including John, Evonne's past disappointments resulting from repeated failures appeared to have reduced her desire to engage in activities that might help to improve her reading performance. This was portrayed in statements such as: *"I tried my best but not as the rest of my work".(sic), "sometimes I would try to get my book and read, but oh no!", "I try to read well, but I miss out words and I get put off."* Data indicated that these traits were manifested mainly in her classroom participating behaviour, attitude to homework and help seeking behaviour.

Like John, Evonne's withdrawn behaviour in a reading class was first pointed out by her teacher who on the LH Traits Checklist indicated that she *"rarely contributes to class discussion."* Further confirmation was obtained when Evonne reported that she would rather not talk in class than say the wrong thing:

"Sometimes I say something and think I got it right, but I get it wrong."

Inter: *"So what do you usually do?"*

Evonne: *"I keep quiet, or the other kids will say ooh! and I will be ashamed."*

Inter: *"So you choose to keep quiet?"*

Evonne: *"Yep. Sometimes I wish the teacher will leave me alone."*

This last statement by Evonne was consistent with her teacher's remark on the LH Traits Checklist that she *"dislikes being asked to publicly 'perform' in class."*

Evonne's non-participation behaviour was also obvious in the way which she treated her work assignments. As with John, she never persisted on them especially *"if it is hard and boring."* She would *"just leave it."* On another occasion, Evonne reported that she sometimes made an effort to do her homework, but such efforts did not usually yield success. So she would rather spend that time watching the T.V. *"That is better"*- according to her.

Evonne's report on her reaction to homework, especially when it was *"hard"* and *"boring"*, prompted an investigation into her help-seeking behaviour. In normal circumstances, one would expect a child to seek help from the teacher or friends when confronted with some learning difficulties. With Evonne that was not the case. For some reason, she would even reject voluntary help from her peers:

"My friends will say, 'that word is so and so' and I will say 'close your mouths! I want to do it by myself.'"

Though Evonne might be commended for her decision to try and do things by herself, according to her the result was not usually the best. She was always 'stuck' with those "tens" and "twenties." In other words, her refusal to seek academic help only led to repeated poor performance and negative feelings.

Evonne's avoidance behaviour, like John's, also extended to her anticipated ideal job. Her ambition was to model clothes and own a fabric shop. However, according to her, she really needed to be good at reading in order to cope with requirements of the job such as reading sales adverts, colours and patterns. It is of interest that, like John, rather than work harder to improve on her performance, her plan was to avoid the challenge. She hoped to work with a group who could help her out with reading when the situation arose. This plan seemingly indicate an avoidance behaviour which has been documented as part of the syndrome of LH.

Negative Feelings

Unlike John, Evonne seemed to be very frank in her reports on her affective life as a Lh learner. Certain statements in her report highlighted affective behaviours such as discouragement, embarrassment, shame, sadness and fright - all which are characteristically exhibited by Lh learners. The following interview dialogue is illustrative:

Inter: *"When you still get low marks after studying very hard, how do you usually feel about it?"*

Evonne: *"Sad and discouraged. Sometimes I feel I am going to get a high mark but only get ten or twelve."*

Inter: *"And when you are given another test like the first one, how do you usually feel?"*

Evonne: *"Well if I am getting high marks, I feel good because I know I can do it. But if I am getting something like way down below ten, I feel sad because I tried hard the other time. It puts me off."*

Inter: *"Hmm. Anybody would feel that way. What about when you are able to answer the teacher's question, how do you usually feel about it?"*

Evonne: *"I feel happy with myself and proud."*

The message conveyed by this last statement by Evonne is that the situation was not always bleak. Her experience of happiness and pride in academic situations where she could cope suggests that Evonne's LH was not spread across every learning situation but was manifested only in some.

When a comparison was made of Evonne's and John's behaviours in certain learning situations that prompt their LH, differences were observed. For example, if after studying hard in preparation for a test, they still performed poorly. John felt angry while Evonne felt sad and discouraged. This observed differences among other things, suggests the need to take into consideration individual differences when therapy is being contemplated.

B. Situational Effects: Settings and Events

Differences as well as similarities were also apparent in the sorts of settings and events that evoked LH behaviours, thoughts and feelings in Evonne and John. Evonne's self-report, like John's, indicated that she only experienced LH when she was confronted with certain events in particular school learning settings. Such events and settings include:

- (i) When she contemplated doing reading homework;
- (ii) When she was asked to read in class;
- (iii) When she was aware of an impending reading class or test; and
- (iv) When they were about to start reading a new book.

When commenting on her feelings about reading homework, Evonne said, *"It is boring when you sit and just look at the book and you don't know the word."* This implies that Evonne's LH was

sometimes triggered in situations where she found her reading homework or assignment boring and difficult. Such experience would usually instigate a sense of frustration which she sometimes acted out on her younger brother whom she also blamed for interruptions. As she reported:

"If I am given homework to do it at home and my brother comes in and annoys me, I cannot do it and we have a fight."

Specific classroom situations also instigated Evonne's LH. A typical example is a situation where she was asked to read in class. Like John, she was constantly afraid of such incidents.

Another classroom situation that usually aroused similar thoughts and emotions was when she was aware of an impending reading class or test. The following brief dialogue is illustrative:

Inter: *"Now Evonne, I want you to just think about yourself in your class now and tell me, what sort of thoughts do you usually have when your teacher tells you that you are going to have a reading test?"*

Evonne: *"Ah! I say well, here goes another test with all the tens and twenties and nothing better."*

Inter: *"Can you tell me why you usually say that?"*

Evonne: *"It might be hard and I can't get it done."*

Inter: *"Hmm. So do you sometimes think that you might not be able to do your test even before you try it?"*

Evonne: *"Yah. Because I cannot know it."*

Evonne's prophecy about the nature of her performance was often fulfilled.

When she anticipated an impending reading lesson, Evonne often wished the current lesson would continue.

"Sometimes I am annoyed and say that it should be P.E. or Social Studies."

Inter: *"Why do you usually think it should be P.E. or Social Studies?"*

Evonne: *"Because I can know it. I like P.E."*

Inter: *"I hm. Do you usually have any other thoughts?"*

Evonne: *"Sometimes I think I should be a dog."*

Inter: *"That is interesting. Why would you want to be a dog?"*

Evonne: *"Wouldn't have to come to school. I like being spoilt."*

These thoughts and desires depict avoidance behaviour that has already been highlighted as one of the LH syndrome.

Evonne also reported her experience of helplessness when her class was about to start *"reading something new."* Her usual first reaction was to mentally reject the idea as she reported: *"I will think we should keep on with one we were reading so that I see if I can understand it."* She also reported that she might feel *"scared because that might probably be more hard."*

Her reported experiences in each of these learning situations signified some cognitive, and emotional difficulties that are traits of LH. However on one occasion, after reporting feelings of fear and frustration when she was confronted with something new to learn, Evonne added that she only reacted negatively if it was with reading or spelling - the subjects that she did not like. According to her, she never experienced those feelings *"if it is something"* she liked. This statement clarifies the fact that Evonne, like the other cases, only experienced LH when she was confronted with situations that required her to read or engage in some reading related activities.

C. Attribution Data: The Case of Evonne

While reporting on her behaviour as a Lh learner, Evonne was on occasions asked to provide causal explanations for her reading difficulties.

Attribution Source	Attributions
First Interview	Task difficulty. Disruption by peers. Dislike for reading. Not listening during lesson. Lack of ability. Genetically determined deficit.
Attribution Questionnaire	Lack of ability. Genetically determined deficit. Dislike for reading. Task difficulty. Disruption by other pupils.
Case Study	Task difficulty. Lack of ability. Change of teacher. Insufficient special help. Attitude to school and schooling (dislike for and lack of interest in reading) Teacher/Peer interruptions. Not listening to the teacher. Genetically determined deficit. 'Luck'

Fig 32 Evonne's Attributions for her Reading Difficulties.

While some of these attributions were similar to those made by John and the other children, others were quite unique.

Subject Difficulty

"The words are hard and I can't know it."

As with John, subject difficulty was one of the explanations that Evonne gave for her reading difficulties. This particular attribution occurred in each of the three occasions where Evonne's attributions for her reading difficulties was assessed. However, according to Evonne, the desire to read well and to be like her friends was there despite the fact that she often failed when it came to the actual reading 'performance'. While giving some examples of words that she found difficult to 'read'(sic), Evonne said:

"Like 'perhaps' I cannot read it."

Inter: *"Like?"*

Evonne: *"Perhaps, perhaps, I can't read it."*

Inter: *"But you are calling it. You want to say that again?"*

It was very striking to observe that as soon as Evonne was asked to repeat the word 'perhaps' consciously, she just could not 'call' it anymore! This behaviour verified the fact that even an unrealistic perception of a task as difficult can inhibit actual performance.

While conclusive remarks cannot be made based on this one case, the finding suggests that LH might be a product of an individual's perception of self and situations and not necessarily a reality though the consequences are always real. This is another factor which might warrant consideration when any LH remedial programme is being contemplated.

Self-Perception of Reading Ability

Evonne's low self-perception with regard to her reading ability surfaced when she was asked to rank herself with her peers on reading ability. The response was:

"Some kids in the class are very good. They are better than me."

Inter: *"So what would you say is your reading position in class compared with them?"*

Evonne: *"Down below."*

Inter: *"What do you mean?"*

Evonne: *"I am down, down the bottom. (pause). Sometimes I might be half-way."*

Evonne's reason for placing herself among the 'bottom' ones was that:

"There are still so many things that I can't read. Like sometimes the teacher reads through a page in the class and I try to read with her, but after that I won't be able to read it."

Referring to her perceived innate ability, like John, Evonne complained about her poor memory. Even when she tried to listen to the teacher, she would *"forget everything she said"* soon after the lesson.

Genetically Determined Deficit

Of the six children who participated in the case study work, Evonne was the only one who perceived her learning difficulties as genetically determined - acquired from her father. In fact, the researcher is aware of only one other LH related study where such attribution has been reported (Johnston, 1985). One of the subjects in this study, accounting for his sons' similar learning difficulties observed that *"The boys (Jack's sons) started to have trouble, I blamed myself for their problem which figuring that it was hereditary.... you know dunce-o-me"* (p. 170). In support of this, she asserted that her younger brother was in a similar situation: *"My brother too is not a good reader."* Although Evonne acknowledged her inability to control this factor, she believed that with time and some special help, her reading performance could improve a little, just as was the case with her father. Here it was noted that Evonne's anticipation of the possibility of an improvement was incompatible

with her categorization of her 'lack of ability' attribution as stable and uncontrollable. However, there was no data to confirm the accuracy of Evonne's judgement about her father's reading ability.

Insufficient Special Help

As noted above, Evonne believed that with some special help she could do better. This opinion surfaced as she gave a brief history of her school learning experiences with particular reference to reading.

"I had a lady that used to help me and when I started getting fifty, sixty, she said I was alright and should not be going to her any more, and I started getting low again."

This account was, however, at odds with her teacher's who reported that Evonne:

"Has had remedial reading for years with very little progress."

On another occasion, after complaining that she was not having sufficient help, Evonne later contradicted herself by saying that her teacher was helping her by giving her "some books that were a bit easier." When her attention was directed to the discrepancy in her reports, she reconciled them by explaining that it was her previous teacher who used to give her a lot of help. The current one was helping her "just a little bit. Not as much as the other teacher used to do."

Even though the attribution of failure to external factors such as lack of help might reduce guilt and shame, it, on the other hand, implies lack of personal ability which might have negative affective consequences. A similar externally oriented attribution was also observed when Evonne further blamed her learning difficulties on the behaviours of her peers in class and the teacher.

Peer/Teacher Disruption

This was another factor which Evonne felt contributed to her learning difficulties. Evonne referred to occasions on which her attempt to read out loud was disrupted either by her peers or her teacher. For example, she observed that:

"Sometimes I try to call the words but the teacher will come and say 'Hurry up and read this thing', and I will forget."

"It is not my fault," she added. With this last comment, Evonne was describing herself as a 'pawn' rather than an 'origin' (DeCharms, 1968). By attributing her learning difficulties to factors beyond her control, she was defining herself as Lh. Furthermore her vulnerability to disturbances by her peers and her negative reaction to the teacher's request for her to do her reading fits Covington and Beery's (1976) description of failure prone students and also raises questions about her usual state of mind during a reading lesson.

Attitude to Reading

Data on Evonne's attitude to reading revealed two things:

- (i) Her lack of interest in reading ("*I am not interested.*") and
- (ii) Her dislike for reading, ("*I just hate reading because I don't like it*").

Although Evonne could not clearly explain how her lack of interest in and dislike for reading was affecting her learning ability, the relationship was clarified when she commented on the extent to which she persisted when working on reading tasks. Like John, she viewed task persistence as a waste of time:

"I can spend about two minutes because if I stay too long, then I can spend all the time without being able to get it done."

This reported very limited time and effort investment on her reading tasks clearly reflect a lack of confidence in personal ability and a low expectancy for success even after trying for a reasonable length of time.

Evonne's dislike for and lack of interest in reading was confirmed by her teacher who on the LH Traits Checklist described her as a child who *"shows little interest in books", "lacks confidence" in herself, and "expresses openly a dislike of learning."*

Attitude to School and Schooling

Evonne's repeated poor performance in reading and pessimism about her academic future, was associated with some negativeness about aspects of school life in general. Thus, like John, she had her own grievances about teachers. One of her complaints was that some teachers were too *"forcy."* When she was asked to explain what she meant, Evonne said:

"I like to do things in school but if it is something like traffic warden when I have to be there when others go home, I don't like it. I would rather do it in good time."

Inter: *"Do you normally tell your teacher that you don't like it?"*

Evonne: *"She will say `My word. It's your turn to do it."*

Evonne also expressed her dislike for teachers who *"talk and talk. They will tell you `do this' and you are doing it. She will give you another one"*(sic). Negative attitudes were also revealed in the following exchange:

Inter: *"Are there some days that you usually feel like staying away from school even when you are alright?"*

Evonne: *"Sometimes when I know I am going to have a full day of work. I feel I should be home, back in bed."*

Evonne did not explicitly state an overall dislike for school, but her dissatisfactions, and desire to leave school as soon as possible, suggested this, *"Because I can't read and reading is mainly what you need to be able to do well in school."*

Evonne's desire to quit school and schooling because of her experiences, when compared with John's intention to persist in school despite his experiences, provides further evidence of the fact that individuals can react differently to similar LH experiences.

In a few cases, attribution inferences were drawn by the researcher from the children's self-report. Such was the case when Evonne reported on her actual performance on reading tests. Another instance was when Evonne made success attribution to luck.

Perception of Actual Performance

As previously defined, actual performance in this study refers to the actual grades as reported by the children and their degree of satisfaction with those grades. Evonne, like the other children interviewed, reported repeated experiences of poor grades in spite of hard work: *"When we get test I can go down below. Like sometimes I get 10."* As would be expected, this reinforced her LH. Although once in a while Evonne would get good grades, these were too infrequent and non-contingent on her performance, to encourage success expectancy.

Luck Attribution

Of the six children who were involved in the case study, Evonne was the only child who attributed the nature of her 'performance' to luck. According to Evonne, in spite of her efforts, her reading grades *"keep going up and down. Sometimes I feel I am going to get 2' and I get 10, 15."*

Inter: *"Hm. But you said sometimes you get high marks too!"*

Evonne: *"Ye-es. If I'm lucky!"*

Inter: *"Oh. Does it depend on luck?"*

Evonne: *"Yep"*

Inter: *"I see. And are you always lucky then?"*

Evonne: *"Not always but sometimes."*

As the following data indicate, Evonne did not directly ascribe her poor reading ability to lack of luck. However, she did attribute her occasional good performance to luck. It was thus inferred that she perceived lack of luck as one of the factors that were responsible for her poor performances on reading. The attribution of her successful performance to luck would help account for her occasional uncertainty about future performance.

D. Perception of the Onset of LH

The exploration of Evonne's academic life history provided information concerning the origin of her LH.

According to Evonne, although boring, reading at primary school was *"okay"*. She perceived her boredom to have stemmed from her having to *"read a simple book over and over"* before she could understand.

In Standards One and Two, Evonne *"wanted to be like"* her friends, so she became more interested in reading and started performing better. The story, however, changed in Standard Three. Reading became *"harder and boring"* for her. With the teacher's help, there was an improvement in Standard Four before she moved to the intermediate school where the researcher first met with her. During her first year in the new school, Evonne reported repeated low reading scores despite her efforts. In Form Two, she reported an improved performance again.

A chronological review of Evonne's report again pointed to the fact that LH can wax and wane. Considering her different experiences in each of the school classes, as with John, it was difficult to pinpoint exactly when Evonne's LH started. Although one might tend to think that Evonne actually acknowledged her helplessness in Standard Three when she began to internalize attributions for her poor reading ability, and attribute occasional good performances to external assistance, her exhibition of traits of LH other than the attribution style at that particular time, would need to be investigated before the assumption can be ascertained.

However, if anything, the present data again illustrate the fact that LH is not an impromptu response to a single failure experience. It has a development time frame.

Time Frame for the Development of LH

Although Evonne perceived her reading difficulties as inborn, she neither gave up trying from the beginning, nor ascribed her performances to fate. Her only initial complaint was that she found reading boring - a learning problem that might not be given any serious attention.

Probably because of her determination to make it ("*I myself, I really wanted to read*") and to win her peers' approval, Evonne was able to cope with her reading at Primary School until Standard Three, where she found reading not only "*boring*" but "*hard*." At that stage, the problem was not only motivational but also cognitive. She reported an improved reading performance in Standard Four due to help from her teacher. However, the problem became more serious in Form One, when Evonne went to a new school where according to her, she had not yet made friends who could help, and was given no special attention by the teacher. The result was repeated poor performances with an accompanying deterioration in her academic self-concept.

This particular report by Evonne apparently portrays LH as a learning problem which stems from 'common' learning problems such as

boredom and a lack of interest. These get constantly reinforced by repeated poor performance and over time, yield other traits that define LH. So while LH might result from the attribution of learning difficulties to stable and uncontrollable factors, the mechanism involved appears to be very complex and lengthy. It would therefore be an error to perceive LH in a natural school learning settings as a problem that occurs after a brief period of exposure to an uncontrollable situation.

The Stable or Fluctuating Nature of Learned Helplessness

Fig.33 is a sketch of Evonne's report on her experiences with reading in the different classes in school. The Figure suggests some fluctuations in her learning difficulties.

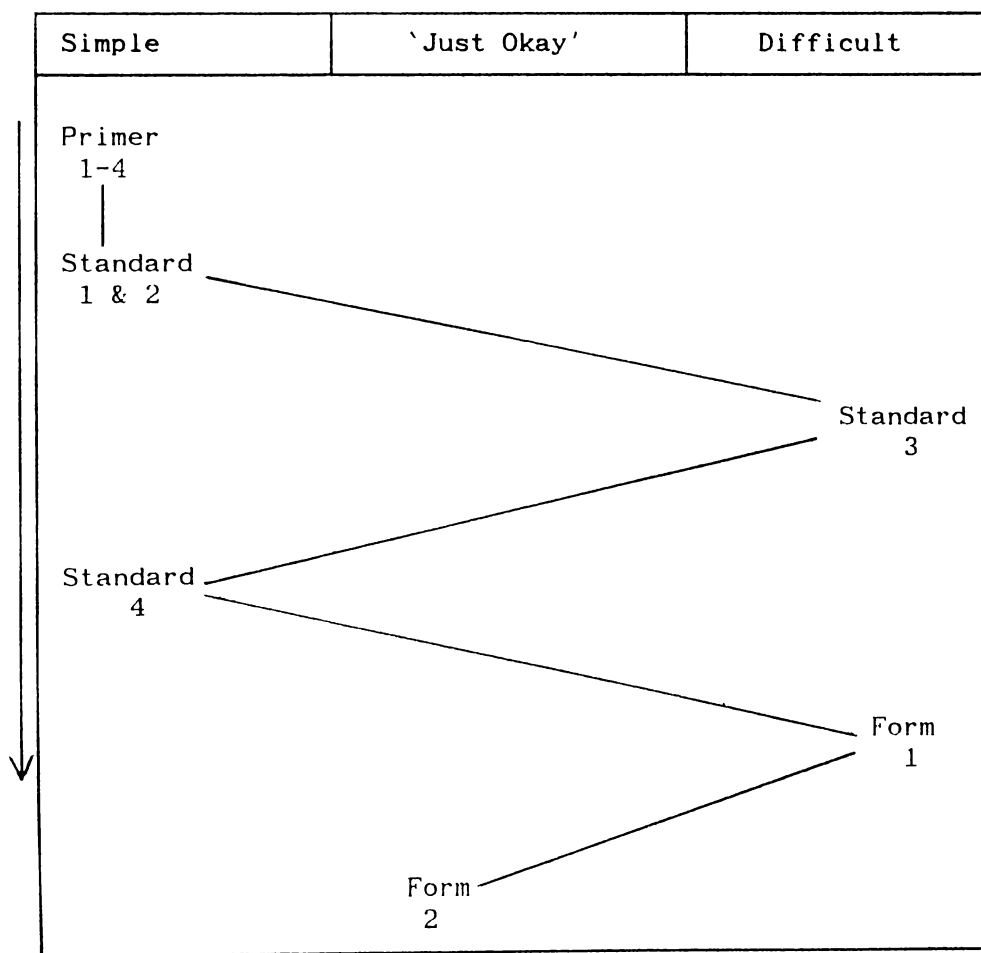


Fig.33 : Evonne's Experiences with Reading at Various School Classes.

With the attributions that Evonne made for her reading experiences in each of these classes, one might be left to conclude that LH fluctuates with situational influences. This position has been discussed extensively in the previous chapter and, as previously pointed out, further studies are required to assess the viability of this hypothesis before such definite conclusions can be made.

Summary and Comments for the Two Cases

In examining the similarities and differences of John's and Evonne's LH, the following features were noted.

Similarities

With reference to the syndrome of LH, both children exhibited traits which are components of LH. For example, they showed low expectancies for their future performance in the school subject in which they were having learning difficulties. They also evidenced a tendency to withdraw from situations which called for the learning of this school subject or to try to avoid certain learning activities. It was noted that this particular aspect of the LH syndrome was generalized by the children to their anticipated jobs. Both had anticipated the need to find a way of avoiding having to use the ^{subject} they were deficient in.

Similarity was also apparent in the feelings they reported. Both characteristically experienced negative feelings such as shame, anger, and frustration in any situation which prompted their LH.

Retrospective reports by John and Evonne indicated that their LH was situation specific. That is, the syndrome only manifested in situations in which 'they had in mind', or were actually involved in, learning activities associated with the school subject they were having difficulties with.

Although in some cases the two children differed in their perception of factors which accounted for their LH, they categorized these attributions predominantly as stable and uncontrollable. Thus, their classification of their attribution fits the Reformulated Theory (Abramson et al. 1978) description of attribution groupings which are typical of Lh learners.

The children's self-reports also suggested that their LH developed over an extended period of time and had fluctuated over time and across learning situations.

Differences

Their similarity notwithstanding, data also revealed certain differences in Evonne and John's experience and behaviour. For example, it was apparent that they could experience completely different feelings when in similar LH-evoking situations. Thus, in a situation where they failed to perform well in a test despite effort, John reported feeling angry, while Evonne was usually sad and discouraged.

A comparison of their feelings also suggested that Evonne experienced 'stronger' negative feelings, which in the researcher's opinion were more likely to be 'pain inflicting' to self.

While some of the attributions for their learning difficulties were similar, others were quite different and unique. For example, it was only Evonne who perceived her learning difficulties as a genetically determined deficit. While John perceived his teacher's teaching style as a contributing factor to his learning difficulties, Evonne made no such attribution.

Another significant difference observed in the two children concerned their plans for their future education. As a means of getting out of the situation which brings her in contact with her 'problem' school subject, Evonne's plan was to call it quits with schooling as soon as was possible - an obvious instance of avoidance

behaviour. John, on the other hand, wanted to persist with his schooling.

On the whole, the present Chapter has accentuated the fact that though Lh children are similar in several features, they are still unique in certain respects and this should be considered when dealing with each child.

Summary and Conclusion: The Case Study Phase

The data gathered during the case study phase confirmed the value of an in-depth investigation of LH that took account of the phenomenology of individual learners. Whilst the similarities evident across the six cases helped confirm their LH status, important differences were also identified. The main findings concerning both the shared and dissimilar features are now reviewed.

The data for each case revealed a pattern of traits consistent with those identified in previous studies as typical of Lh learners. These included low performance expectancy, avoidance behaviour, negative feelings and attributions for their performance to factors that they generally perceived as stable and uncontrollable.

It was observed also that the children offered a wide range of attributions, some of which had not been documented previously in the research literature. The attribution data when gathered and interpreted from the learner's perspective, provides important insights into the origins and reasons for patterns of behaviours that may, in the first instance, be seen as maladaptive. Such behaviours may well represent an understandable response to the children's circumstances and self-perceptions.

The data indicated that the children could report retrospectively on their own changing fortunes as learners over an extended period of time, and identify what they believed contributed to those changes. This data also reinforced the need for care when reviewing children's self-reports. As indicated, such reports are not always consistent,

and may not coincide with observations of the children's behaviour and associated inferences about their internal states. Thus, some self-reports (e.g. John's emotional response to learning difficulties) which may seem to disconfirm LH status may in fact, be a product of the child's attempt to 'defend' his or her self-concept. Inconsistencies may also be the product of the limitations of memory. Access to such data may help to ensure that teachers themselves do not adopt a 'helpless' stance when considering whether they can work efficiently with such children.

Some data, however, also raised questions concerning the children's LH status. Thus, while the children made statements indicating that they believed improved future performance was unlikely, other statements suggested that they were experiencing uncertainty, rather than complete pessimism, about their future performance. This, in turn, raised issues regarding the criteria for assessing LH. In particular, it seems reasonable to allow for the possibility that some learners may indeed feel helpless because they perceive the factors determining their performance to be stable and uncontrollable in the short term. However, when they adopt a longer term view, they may feel that they need to allow for the possibility of change in some of those factors. Thus, for example, a learner may perceive lack of help from the present teacher as a stable and uncontrollable obstacle to his or her learning. From a child's point of view, a factor that endures consistently for a year may understandably be categorized as stable. It doesn't change over time. When prompted to consider their circumstances on a longer time-scale, however, they may then see the factor (teacher help) as unstable. This points to the need to consider whether the children are consistently using the same criteria when they assess the stability of factors and consider their likely future performance. The researcher, therefore, may need to stipulate the time scale or check out the time scale being used by the subjects.

The chronicity (recurrence) of LH (Abramson et al, 1978) is also supported by data in the present study. LH may wax and wane as classroom conditions and experiences that children attribute their performance do in fact, change. Thus, it is hypothesized that the

fluctuations of LH are determined by changing environmental factors, despite the child's perception of those factors as relatively stable.

In contrast to findings from laboratory studies (e.g. Klein, *et al* . 1976; Tennen & Eller, 1977) where the Lh state is portrayed as an impromptu response to a single experience with lack of control over a situation, data in the present study portrays LH as a phenomenon with a development time frame. In fact, one would be tempted to hypothesize that LH stems from what might be perceived as common school learning problems which are reinforced over time until the syndrome becomes mature and manifest.

Differences among the six cases were apparent for all aspects of the LH syndrome.

Expectancies: There was variability in views about the likelihood of change in longer-term future performance. While some of the children envisaged little or no likelihood of improved performance, others were uncertain. This finding highlights the need for teachers to pay closer attention to the children's views to assist them in knowing how pessimistic a child is about such views.

Avoidance (Coping) Behaviour: The children also varied in the avoidance behaviours they adopted to cope with their difficulties. While some occasionally absented themselves from school to avoid the learning of mathematics or reading, others attended the lessons but occupied themselves with things unrelated to what was being taught or tried to avoid involvement in particular activities. At times, such actions seemed to represent ego-defense behaviours. This suggests that dissimilar behaviours can share the same origin and the need therefore, for teacher sensitivity to possible differences in response to LH.

Emotions: The emotions experienced by the children in the context of their learning difficulties were not uniform. For example, of the two children, only Evonne reported feeling depressed. Different emotions may be associated with different coping strategies.

Variation in attributions was observed in the children's perceptions of factors that they believed were responsible for their learning difficulties. This information has particular significance when the objectives and strategies for intervention programmes are being planned. However, it is important to recognize that some of the attributions volunteered may not be genuine, but are rather an ego defence stance.

As the data presented above demonstrate, the case study procedure allowed the researcher to provide a more complete and comprehensive portrayal of the cognitive and emotional life of Lh school learners.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

Prompted initially by the need to investigate factors that might account for the excessive number of students who were dropping out of Nigerian schools, this study has focussed on LH - a phenomenon that seems to offer a plausible explanation for some instances of school failure (Dweck, & Goetz, 1978; Dweck, Davidson, Nelson & Enna, 1978; Diener & Dweck, 1978). When a review of existing literature on this construct was made, it became apparent that there was a need for further research in this area if strategies that could be used to tackle the problem of LH were to be devised.

One aspect that clearly required attention was the identification of Lh learners. The literature review revealed that there were several procedures that had been used by researchers to identify such learners, and that each procedure seemed to have limitations as well as strengths. Also, previous identification attempts have generally been conducted with 'borrowed' instruments (instruments that were originally developed to measure other constructs). A case existed, therefore, for further development and trial of procedures that could be used by teachers as well as researchers, for identification purposes.

Consideration of this issue meant that previous research findings on the traits and correlates of LH had to be thoroughly reviewed. In doing so, the researcher became aware that the majority of studies had a quantitative orientation and that there have been very few attempts to explore in depth the cognitive and emotional life of individuals experiencing LH. Based on the view that an holistic, qualitative

account of similar and unique features of the inner life of such learners would assist teachers both to account for their behaviour and to plan appropriate teaching strategies, it was decided that case studies of such learners should be undertaken. These case studies, which involved six Lh children, focussed on their expectancies, attributions and feelings. Also investigated were some of the overt behaviours that LH gave rise to in these children.

A combined quantitative-qualitative research strategy was used to pursue these research objectives.

In this final chapter, the strengths and limitations of the study are highlighted first. This is followed by summaries of the major findings and their implications for researchers and teachers. Finally, recommendations for the objectives and methodology of future studies on LH are made.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

There are both strengths and potential limitations within the design and methodology adopted for the present study that need to be considered when the significance and generality of findings is assessed.

In the first phase of the study, four strategies for identifying Lh learners were trialled. These include identification by classroom teachers using a LH description instrument, identification with a LH Traits Check-list, administration of an attribution questionnaire and an interview conducted by the researcher. It cannot be assumed, however, that these strategies are representative of the full range that might be developed for use by researchers or teachers. Therefore, the conclusions reached about identification procedures only apply to those trialled in this study.

For the second phase, a case study approach was adopted. Most of the associated data represented the children's self-reports gathered during a series of interviews.

As the children were asked to disclose aspects of their inner life that were likely at times to be painful, it was necessary to approach the data gathering in a careful and sensitive manner. Thus, care was taken to build rapport with each child in the early stages of the study. To do so, the confidentiality of the children's reports was emphasized to them, and the interviews were conducted in conversational style. In situations where a child appeared uncomfortable talking about particular topics (e.g. home-related attributions) these were not pursued despite their possible significance. The latter can be seen as both a strength and a limitation of the study: a strength in that the respect for the feelings of the children strengthened friendship and encouraged frank discussions, and a limitation in that it meant forgoing some information that may have been relevant. Other strategies employed to help ensure sound interview data include: the clarification of unclear statements by the children themselves, further exploration of promising lines of discussion, paying attention to the children's non-verbal expressions during the interviews, and probing responses when necessary to ensure a good coverage of data.

Despite these efforts, there still remain potential limitations that must be acknowledged. Considering the age range (11-14 yrs) of the children who participated in the study, it is possible that they sometimes lacked the language to describe their own experiences. Cavanaugh and Permuter (1982) have attested to this and as Nisbett and Wilson (1977) note, some children may not have had the cognitive capacities to readily reflect on themselves as learners - to think about their own thoughts and their thinking.

Where the children were asked to recall past experiences and their responses to them, limitations of memory or ego defense strategies may mean that some of their recollections were incomplete or distorted. The 'stimulated recall' procedure was employed in part as an attempt to overcome some of the memory-related problems that may be associated with the interview strategy and this procedure also allowed for the triangulation of data. However, as with all self-report procedures, it cannot be assumed that the pupils were comfortable revealing all of their thoughts or feelings when the stimulated recall procedure was used.

Data obtained with the two procedures - interviews and stimulated recall - were in fact similar and this consistency does provide validation for the data from these sources.

Regarding the scope of the study, it was concerned with only one of the many psychological factors that contribute to school learning difficulties. As a result, it cannot answer all questions on school learning problems.

Main Findings and Their Implications.

In this section, the major study findings are presented. Possible implications of these findings are discussed, and then, a concluding evaluation of the merits of the methodology adopted for the study is presented.

Identification Phase: The findings from this phase confirmed that each of the identification strategies trialled, had its own strengths and limitations. It is concluded, therefore, that accurate identification of the Lh learner requires the use of a mix of strategies and consideration of the student's pattern of behaviours, thoughts and feelings over time. The likelihood that one assessment procedure, used on a single occasion or involving a single observation, can ensure accurate identification seems remote. This is consistent with Winograd and Niquette's (1988) suggestion for a practical assessment of LH. Concluding their exhaustive discourse on problems encountered by researchers investigating the phenomenon and the limitations of particular instruments, Winograd and Niquette (1988) warned against the *"simplistic interpretations (of behaviours) based on any individual assessment instrument"* (p.48). The authors further added that *"searching for the instrument to assess learned helplessness is likely to prove less useful and valid than systematic observations of and discussions with the child across a variety of reading tasks, texts, and contexts"* (Winograd & Niquette, 1988, p.48).

A summary of the conclusions reached about the merits of each strategy trialled in the study follows.

(1) **The LH Description:** This procedure acknowledges that teachers are in a favoured position when it comes to having opportunities to gather both observational and self-report data over time. They are likely to have observed recurrent patterns of behaviour that can follow from LH and gained insights into the inner life of individual children.

If the description provided of the LH syndrome is accepted as being clear and accurate, the accuracy of the teacher's identification will depend largely on how well they have come to know individual children. Thus, researchers using this strategy need to take into account how perceptive particular teachers are and the extent of their concern to understand the point of view of individual children. They have to acknowledge, also, that the children themselves may be unwilling to disclose their thoughts and feelings, even to a sensitive teacher.

As the teachers did not volunteer any concerns about the clarity or meaning of the description, it was assumed that they had no difficulties in understanding and using it.

(2) **The LH Traits Check-list:** Previous studies have identified certain traits which are commonly associated with LH. The LH Traits Checklist comprised twenty-four of these traits, some of which referred to surface behaviours and others to internal states. In considering the value of the check-list data, certain factors must be taken into account.

One of these is the fact that although LH represents a set of cognitions, motives and feelings that influences surface behaviours, findings from the present study, as well as previous studies, indicate that there is no fixed set of behaviours to go with those internal states. As the pattern of behaviour exhibited by children experiencing LH can show considerable variability, the exhibition of many of these behaviours by a child can only prompt the hypothesis that he or she is

Lh. In other words, the labelling of children as being Lh cannot be based on just the manifestation of these behaviours. Many of these behaviours can be evidence of other internal states. For example, a child who looks away from his/her paper frequently while working on assignment might in fact be thinking about the set task rather than some unrelated matter. The behaviour is not, therefore, necessarily off-task as might be inferred by an observer. In order to confirm the LH status of any child, information about the child's cognitive and emotional life needs to be taken into account as well. Some teachers may have obtained such information from the child and they would then be in a position to accurately comment on whether or not the child experienced certain thoughts and feelings. Other teachers may not be able to do this. This finding re-affirms the need for the triangulation of instruments for identification purposes.

The research findings also suggest that certain clusters of behaviour are more predictive of LH. For example, two traits: "*Rarely initiates learning activities*" and "*Often fails to remember task directions*" were marked more frequently than the other traits. On the other hand, traits such as "*Frequently absent from school*", and the item which described a state of depression ("*Frequently depressed*"), were infrequently marked by teachers. Thus, the study has indicated that certain traits such as 'depression' that the literature suggested were strongly linked with LH may not be inevitable correlates of LH. Further research is called for then to establish the discriminative power of such items. While the discriminative power of the Attribution Questionnaire was assessed by contrasting the results for mastery-oriented children with those tentatively defined as Lh, no comparable procedure was employed for the LH Traits Checklist. It is recommended that such an assessment be made in a future study.

The open response section of the checklist proved to be of value. The traits that the teachers noted generally matched those listed and therefore provided further validation.

Having two teachers complete the checklist for each child pointed up the benefits of gathering data from more than one perspective and

over time. A different pattern of response may be explained in several ways. For example, it may indicate inaccuracy in one source, change in the subject, or simply a need for caution.

Again, no teacher reported difficulty understanding the directions for the task or the content of the instrument.

(3) Attribution Survey: Previous research findings show that attribution dispositions are a particularly important defining feature of LH. This was checked out using an interview and an Attribution Questionnaire, both of which recognized that the phenomenology of the learner rather than the researcher was of concern. Thus, the strength of these two strategies included the opportunity they provided for children to offer their own attributions rather than to select from a prepared list. The Attribution Questionnaire also allowed the children to categorize their attributions on the locus, stability and control dimensions.

Significant among the findings was the wide range of attributions offered, some of which had not been reported in previous studies of children's attributions. Examples of such attributions are: school absence, relationship with the teacher, insufficient help from others, short memory, and classroom seating position. Notably, only one child made a success attribution to luck. The finding confirmed that Weiner's original causal scheme is far from inclusive and that causal attributions are context specific. That is, the type of attribution an individual makes depends on the context (Weiner, 1979; Frieze & Snyder, 1980).

The data also revealed variability in the children's attributions for their poor performance. This again confirms that though Lh learners share certain characteristics, they remain unique in certain behaviours.

Limitations of the attribution questionnaire include its focus on only the cognitive facet of LH, and the fact that it does not provide information on possible change/fluctuations in attributions over time or indicate how long the given attribution tendencies have been

established. Secondly, it appeared that the children at times had difficulties in clearly expressing their thoughts in written form. This has two possible implications. Either the data gathered was not as rich as would have been otherwise or their written responses did not accurately portray their thoughts. Also, with the questionnaire it was impossible to explore some of the children's responses which required clarification or elaboration. The interview strategy allowed this limitation to be addressed

When the children gave attributions in the interview, they were not asked to categorize them on the locus, stability, and control dimensions. Although this was subsequently done on the Attribution Questionnaire, some of the interview attributions that were not repeated in the questionnaire were lost. In a future study, this might be avoided by incorporating attribution categorization questions in an interview. With such a procedure, it might also be possible to avoid the 'test-like' situation usually created when a questionnaire is administered.

In the course of the interview, the children also indicated their perceptions of their own performance and had the opportunity to comment on their response to the school subject(s) they were having difficulty with. Thus, it was possible to explore additional facets of LH in a more open-ended and informal manner.

While identification of the case study sample took into consideration the first interview data only, the data gathered in the succeeding case study interviews reinforced the benefits of this strategy for identification purposes. These interviews allowed the researcher to discourse more fully and carefully on the children's views and feelings.

While this interview data generally helped confirm the LH status of the sample, some data did raise important questions about the status and the nature of LH. Inconsistencies in case study data concerning the children's expectancies for their future performance suggested that while some learners may see themselves as helpless in the medium term, they may be uncertain about their prospects on a

longer term basis. The finding points to the need for a careful exploration of learners' expectancies within different time frames as well as reasons for any variability in expectancies.

Considering the strengths and limitations of each of the identification strategies, it was considered unwise to base any definitive identification of subjects on any one of them. It was decided that only subjects who (a) exhibited 50 percent or more of the traits in the LH Traits Checklist, (b) volunteered attributions that previous research findings suggest are characteristic of Lh learners, and (c) categorized 50 percent or more of their failure attributions as both stable and uncontrollable would be considered for the final case study selection. Along with these criteria were the school subject area, language proficiency, and a child's ability and willingness to disclose information concerning him/herself. Given the need for further research on Lh school learners, it was felt that these criteria, if somewhat arbitrary, were quite stringent. At the same time, while it is reasonable to argue that Lh learners will exhibit a significant number of a set of traits, evidence of more traits will not inevitably indicate a LH status. Again, this indicates the need to take a holistic perspective on the life of school learners before making judgements concerning their LH status.

The Case Studies: The data gathered in the case studies allowed a relatively detailed and holistic portrait of Lh school learners to be presented. For those unfamiliar with the phenomenon, such case studies may be more illuminative than a comprehensive review of findings from the numerous studies that have focussed on quite specific aspects of LH. That understanding may assist them to 'recognize' such children and account for patterns of behaviour that may have previously seemed inexplicable or that they attributed to factors other than LH (e.g. laziness, lack of interest). The case studies may also prompt teachers to avoid premature categorization of children as school failures as they come to recognize that surface behaviours can 'mean' different things, and that they have a responsibility to 'get to know' the inner life,

as well and the behaviour, of the students they teach. Knowledge of this inner life is essential when teachers try to assess whether students are performing optimally - whether their LH is an understandable response to their learning experiences.

The central finding of this second phase of the study was that important differences as well as similarities characterize the lives of Lh learners. The similarities highlighted confirm previous findings concerning the cognitive, motivational and emotional deficits that together, define LH. Another similarity concerned the development of their LH. The reports of each child evidenced the fact that LH in school learners is not a product of an isolated, or a limited, number of failure experiences. It follows a repeated inability to control a performance outcome over a considerable period of time. Thus, it was concluded that the phenomenon has a developmental time frame.

None of the children provided a single factor explanation for his/her LH. Their reports signified that a mix of factors precipitate the feeling of helplessness. It was also observed that while all the six children attributed their learning difficulties to a lack of ability and task difficulty, some of their attributions were unique. For example, only John attributed his learning difficulty to poor teaching, Ronny to lack of friends, while to Evonne it was genetic in origin. Concerning their behaviours, there was a general indication of avoidance behaviours which they adopted to help them to cope with their problem. This also assumed a variety of forms, however, including school absenteeism, refusal to do home-work or to listen to the teacher in mathematics or reading class.

Evident in the children's reports on their experiences over time in the learning of mathematics/reading was change. All of the children reported having experienced success, as well as failure, in mathematics/reading situations. This implied that for these children, their LH was neither generalized across all situations which required the learning or use of mathematics/reading nor had it always been a feature of their school experiences.

The data for each of the children concerning the likelihood of improved performance also varied. While some seemed completely pessimistic about improved future performance, others expressed uncertainty particularly when they took a longer term view of the factors to which they attributed their problem. Thus, Evonne, for example, who cited an inherited lack of ability might be expected to be more pessimistic in the long term compared with John who perceived the teacher's instructional style and a lack of help as contributing to his learning difficulties.

Unlike in other learning contexts, the children reported experiencing emotions such as fear, worry, sadness, anger and discouragement when in learning situations that prompted their LH. However, a comparison of data for each of the cases revealed variation in these feelings. For example, while Evonne reported shame and low self-worth, Ian's reaction was annoyance. The implication, therefore, is that a clear-cut association of certain experiences, with particular emotional reactions can be either restricting or misleading. Weiner (1985) notes that the type of emotion exhibited by an individual is contingent on the attribution and in turn can result in different actions.

By getting the children to make attributions for specific types and instances of the learning difficulties they had, it was possible to more fully understand the situation as perceived by each child. This implies that if teachers adopt such a strategy, then they will be able to devise intervention strategies tailored to the specific needs of the individual child. For example, in a situation where a teacher concludes that the learner's attributions are unrealistic, an intervention programme should be aimed in part at helping the child to review and reflect on their own attributions - to consider whether they are reasonable. This recommendation also holds for teachers. That is, they should compare their attributions for a child's learning difficulties with those of the child. Where the child's attributions appear reasonable, they may highlight factors, not previously considered, which are open to change on the part of the child, the teacher or other concerned people.

In addition to identifying these attributions, it might be a worthwhile exercise to examine the meanings that children attach to the concepts of ability, intelligence, and effort Bird (1986) recognizing the problems that the misconceptions of these factors can create for "so many students who feel that they may not have 'enough' of what it takes" (p. 12), has called for a broader look at them. According to Bird, "We can ask students what they think of the concepts." This situation she believes will not only lead to a more realistic evaluation of students but also will discourage "our snap judgement of people in everyday life."

The children's reports on the origins of their LH and their experiences as Lh learners showed their LH to have developed in part from, and as having been reinforced by, factors such as boredom, peer behaviour, classroom seating position, and lack of interest. All of these factors might be regarded as 'common' school learning conditions which are potentially controllable. Secondly, they portrayed LH as context specific. These two findings have significant implications for school teachers as well as guidance counsellors. One is that any situation, experience or condition that children claim hinder their learning should be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. Early intervention would mean 'nipping' the problem of LH when 'in the bud'. The problem, however, as revealed in this study is that Lh learners rarely communicate their needs or seek help from others. There seems to exist a communication gap between these children and their teachers in particular. Perhaps this occurs because children may be trying to conceal their inadequacies. Teachers themselves may attribute the children's learning difficulties to stable and uncontrollable factors and assume a helpless outlook also. When this occurs, they make few efforts to talk with such children about their learning. As previously suggested, an understanding of the LH phenomenon together with a knowledge of possible intervention strategies, may lead teachers to make more effort to communicate with them. There may, however, be occasions when a school counsellor would best assume the responsibility of examining the attribution disposition of Lh children and communicating them, along with suggested interventions, to the class teacher. This model has been proposed by Soong (1988).

That the children reported instances of good performance in certain learning situations implies that they did not experience helplessness at all times even in the learning of the mathematics/reading. Explaining their attributions for their occasional success in the subject of concern, or their continuous success in other subjects, may reveal factors that are lacking in learning situations where they exhibit LH. The implication is that the introduction of conditions which suppress LH in some learning situations into those that usually prompt the syndrome might be an effective intervention strategy.

An unanticipated, yet significant, finding in the study had to do with the children's definitions of school success. Four out of the six cases associated success in school with performance in the particular school subject they were encountering difficulties with. To these children, being successful in school meant performing well in the 'problem school subject'. While this unrealistic generalization might explain why Lh learners are potential school dropouts, it also has certain implications for teachers and educational policy makers. When contemplating intervention programmes for children with learning difficulties, it is important to assess whether they are in fact performing optimally. If a child's attribution of poor performance to ability for instance is realistic, then there may not be much that can be done in terms of remediation. On the other hand, when teachers believe that learners experiencing helplessness are able to perform better, then there is need to carefully examine possible causal factors as perceived by the child as well as others, and make changes where possible.

This finding also suggests a need for the assessment of aspects of education policies which may encourage inappropriate generalization of performance in a particular task to other achievement contexts. The policy in Nigeria and some other West African Countries where poor performance in English language and mathematics in the West African Schools Certificate Examination (WASCE) means a third grade pass (C-equivalent) in the whole examination, irrespective of performance in the other school subjects, is a typical example. The finding therefore explains why learners who have difficulties with these two school subjects usually feel defeated, helpless and frequently drop out of school.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

As noted previously, past studies of LH have mainly been carried out in laboratory-like conditions with experimentally conditioned samples and contrived tasks (eg. Klein et al., 1976; Tennen and Eller, 1977). On the occasions when LH studies have been conducted in naturalistic settings (eg. Dweck & Bush, 1976; McCrone, 1979; Luchow, Crowl & Kahn, 1985), the methodologies adopted have generally continued to be quantitative or made limited use of qualitative data. The researcher is aware of only one study - Johnston (1985) - where the researcher adopted a case study design and conducted interviews to, among other things, assess the attributions that his 'adult' sample made for their reading difficulties. It is only recently, in studies of LH in children experiencing school learning difficulties that a qualitative orientation has been a significant feature of the research. This study confirms the value of this orientation and the case study strategy in particular. In view of the effectiveness of the latter, its future use is recommended in situations where an in-depth and holistic understanding of the overt and covert behaviours of Lh learners is the objective.

Although the study conclusions were not based solely on the self-report data because of the previously listed limitations of the strategy, this data tended to be more detailed and revealing compared with data from other sources. Consequently, it is recommended that greater weighting be given to self-report procedures and data in future studies seeking access into the inner life of Lh learners.

In this study, a two week interval was allowed between one interview and the next. Later on in the interview series, it appeared that some of the children had lost some of their initial enthusiasm for participation in the interviews even though they were relatively brief. While the number and duration of interviews must be sufficient to cover aspects of the phenomenon that need to be investigated these need to be carefully scheduled so that participants do not begin to find the exercise stressful. At the same time, however, the researcher warns that subjects may find it difficult to recall previous reports or make links with a subsequent interview if too much time is left between interviews.

As pointed out previously, four contrastive data collection strategies were adopted for the present study in part because they each have their own strengths and limitations. In addition, this allowed for the triangulation of data and thus an opportunity to confirm its accuracy. For optimum results, the sequencing of the various data collection procedures was also an important consideration. The sequencing in the present study enabled the researcher to gather data starting with a focus on somewhat general and surface behaviours, and progressing steadily to more specific and covert features of LH. This approach allowed the researcher to follow up and refine data throughout the data gathering phase. In the context of case study interviews, it also helped the researcher establish and maintain rapport with the children. Again, future researchers using a similar approach should give consideration to the sequence. This does not imply that all the detailed planning of data gathering steps should occur before a study commences. Flexibility is called for so that succeeding data gathering steps can be shaped by the data gathered in previous ones and emergent research questions.

To date, the number of studies undertaken to explore the behaviours and cognitive and emotional life of Lh school learners is not great and, as would be expected, they have involved only a limited number of subjects. As a result, researchers have only just begun to uncover the range of behaviours, thoughts and feelings associated with LH in school learners. There is, therefore, need for further research targeted at providing answers to the questions and addressing issues that have been raised in the present one. Also, since it is the first time that a study of this nature has been conducted with such a group of learners, there is need for the replication of the present study.

Given the educational implications that follow from the findings of the present study, several more specific aspects of LH in school learners appear to merit further attention from researchers. First, the attribution data indicated that most of the factors to which the children ascribed their LH, were school related. This suggests that although schools are expected to be organized to meet the learners' needs, there may be certain factors resident in them that unwittingly foster school learning difficulties. Since the implementation of any

intervention programme requires an initial understanding of the background causes of LH, the researcher suggests that further research aimed at assessing Lh learners' perceptions of the influence of school policies, personnel, routines and culture on their learning be conducted. This would help to highlight the network of school factors that affect a child's learning capacity. Investigations of this nature have been attempted with reference to teachers' and pupils' attributions for school learning difficulties as well as problem behaviours in school (Guttman, 1982; Kornblau, 1982; Karnoil, 1987). There is need to conduct a similar investigation with samples of Lh learners and their teachers.

Although discussions about home factors were not pursued in the present study, the attribution data from the children also suggest a number of home-related factors (eg. time for homework, parents' help, availability of study facilities), that have important implications when intervention programmes are being planned. Despite their sensitive nature, it is suggested that a careful exploration of these factors be considered in future research. It is anticipated that such an effort would assist in a better assessment of the factors underlying the problem of LH and also in the development of intervention programmes that could involve parents of Lh learners.

The children's reports on their experience of LH over their years in school posed questions about the nature and life-span of LH that require further investigation. While the data in the present study provided evidence that the phenomenon may fluctuate across situations and over time, that data represented experiences that had occurred up to five years previously. As previously discussed, such retrospective reports, particularly by children, might not be accurate. There is need, then, for longitudinal studies in order to monitor actual shifts in and out of the LH state, to identify the situations in which these shifts occur, and to uncover the attributions learners themselves make for their fluctuating experiences.

Findings from this study also suggest that learners may vary in the extent to which they feel their LH is stable and this may well be related to the degree of stability that they associate with the

factors they believe account for their helplessness. Thus, children who categorize their attributions as stable, uncontrollable, and internal (eg. ability) may be more pessimistic about the possibility of improved performance than individuals who perceive the causes for their learning difficulties as stable, uncontrollable and external (eg. lack of help from the teacher) when viewed in a long term. This possibility needs to be investigated in future studies.

Concerning study samples, although an equal number of males and females were involved in the present study, no particular attention was given to gender differences (if any) in the nature of attributions they made, their categorization of such attributions, and their explanations for their cognitive and emotional behaviours. Because such information would assist in the development of intervention programmes, particularly for girls who have been found to more frequently experience helplessness in school learning situations (eg. Bar-Tal, 1979), it is recommended that future research give particular attention to possible gender differences in aspects of LH attribution, perceived attribution dimensions, and the existing difference in the intrinsic behaviours of male and female school learners experiencing LH. In addition, it is hoped that similar studies with a sample of older students might yield useful data. Finally, since this study was conceived from the researcher's concern about the learning difficulties that some students in Nigerian schools were encountering, but researched in New Zealand with a sample of a different cultural background, a replication of the study in Nigeria with Nigerian children is necessary before findings can be applied to that context.

Concluding Remarks

When reporting on his study of adults experiencing severe reading difficulties and whom he considered "helpless" or "passive", Johnston (1985) observed that

"Until we can integrate the depth of human feeling and thinking into our understanding of reading (learning) difficulties, we will have only a shadow of an explanation of the problem and ill-directed attempts at solutions" (p.175).

The outcomes of this study confirm the validity of Johnston's position and supports the case for further studies which explore in depth the hidden life of the Lh school learner.

This term has been coined to describe a particular set of ideas, motives and feelings that some people LEARN and which lead them to feel HELPLESS in particular situations. Thus, for example, a child who is learned helpless in respect to reading may experience the following ideas, motives and feelings:

IDEAS "I can't read very well because I'm dumb and the teacher is always unfair to me. She picks on me and doesn't really help me try to do better. I'm always going to be dumb when it comes to reading and I'm stuck with this teacher".

MOTIVES "I can't really expect to do any better in the future even if I try harder and my friends try to help me. Those things don't make any difference if you haven't got enough brains and the teacher doesn't really like you."

FEELINGS "When I look at those other kids who can read so easily, I feel ashamed and sad about myself. There just seems to be nothing I can do. I would like to be able to read better you know!"

Characteristically, then, the individual believes that certain STABLE and UNCONTROLLABLE factors account for his/her learning difficulties and that they cannot, therefore, expect to perform better in the future, regardless of their effort or others help. Such factors may be 'INTERNAL' to the learner (e.g. ability) or 'EXTERNAL' to them (e.g. bad luck, difficult work). The motivational consequence of the belief that one is helpless may include avoidance of certain tasks or the investment of little effort in them because of the expectancy of continued failure. Emotional consequences may include such feelings as shame, depression, and low self-worth.

Everyone probably experiences similar thoughts and feelings in respect to certain activities (e.g. putting on a dinner party, changing a tap washer, catching a cricket ball). Sometimes they represent a reasonable set of views to hold about oneself - at other times they may not. In the latter case, they lead people to give up on tasks that they are really quite capable of handling. This possibility also applies to learners in classrooms and is the reason for my interest in gathering information about children whose school learning problems may be attributed to this factor.

THE SURVEY

In the first stage of my study of such children, I need to identify a group of children who fall into this category. Ultimately this will require me to spend considerable time myself with the children, prompting them to tell me how they think and feel about themselves as learners. Initially, however, I would like to be able to draw on your insights about the children you have been teaching this year and to ask you to identify any children whom you believe may be learned helpless in respect to one or more areas of school learning. The approach that I would like you to take is as follows:

- (a) Keeping in mind the previous general description of learned helplessness, identify any children whom you believe may fall into this category. (I recognize that there may not be any in your class this year.)
- (b) Note the areas of learning in which learned helplessness is shown.
- (c) For each child so identified, go through the attached check list of possible traits of helpless learners, putting 'X' against each statement that is applicable.

APPENDIX B : LEARNED HELPLESSNESS CHECKLIST

A. Name of Pupil.....Sex | M | F | Age....yrs....mths

Teachers Name.....

B. Put X against each statement in the following checklist that is applicable to this pupil.

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Frequently absent from school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Shows little interest in books.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Rarely contributes to class discussions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Often 'off task'.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Frequently fails to complete assigned work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Rarely initiates his/her own learning activity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Readily discouraged when success is not immediate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Daydreams in class.
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Doesn't seem to respond to positive comments on performance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 Shows a consistent pattern of poor performance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	11 Complains often about class work and expectations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	12 Often fails to remember task directions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	13 Doesn't seem to be disturbed by failure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	14 Frequently attributes failure to factors outside of self.
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 Often complains about subject difficulty.
<input type="checkbox"/>	16 Doesn't seem to learn from previous successes and
<input type="checkbox"/>	17 Expresses openly a dislike for school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	18 Expresses openly a dislike of learning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	19 Shows anxiety about school work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 Often restless in class.
<input type="checkbox"/>	21 Frequently depressed.

- | | |
|--|---|
| | 22 Lacks confidence. |
| | 23 Dislikes being asked to publicly 'perform' in class. |
| | 24 Doesn't enjoy a comfortable relationship with the teacher. |

C. Write down any other traits of learned helplessness that you observe in this learner.

D. In your own judgement, would you say that this pupil has been performing academically up to his/her intellectual capacity?

Yes..... No.....

E. Other comments that you would like to make about this pupil?

NOTE: The teacher's name is needed here just for the purpose of future consultation with the researcher.

Any information given in this questionnaire will be regarded as confidential.

Thanking you for your assistance.

Eno M. Ukpog (Mrs)

APPENDIX C : ATTRIBUTION QUESTIONNAIRE

In this study I am interested in looking at the reasons people of your age give for occasions in which they have been successful and unsuccessful. In particular, I am interested in the reasons YOU give for YOUR performance in school subjects.

Because the questions are about events that have happened to you (as an individual), there can be no right or wrong answers. What I want you to do is try to tell me things as you remember them.

Are there any questions so far?

M or F
M or P
Age _____

Most successful subject:

- (1) I would like you to identify the subject in which you feel you have had the most success so far at school this year.

- (2) What does being successful mean to you? _____

- (3) In the left hand column (on the following page), I would like you to give me some reasons for why you feel you have had the most success in this subject.

- (4) Then for each reason you give me, I would like you to

- (a) decide whether the reason is something that you can change over time (like the weather), or something that cannot change (like the colour of your eyes).
- (b) decide whether the reason is something that you can control (like who your friends are), or something you cannot control (like how warm or cold it is today).
- (c) decide whether the reason is something that is inside you (like liking dire straits, or having good eyesight), or something that is outside you (like the team coach who doesn't like you, or your noisy classmates).

Mark your position on each scale by circling the number.

M or F
M or P
Age _____

Least successful subject:

- (1) I would like you to identify the subject in which you feel you have had the least success so far at school this year.

- (2) What does being unsuccessful mean to you? _____

- (3) In the left hand column (on the following page), I would like you to give me some reasons for why you feel you have had the least success in this subject.

- (4) Then for each reason you give me, I would like you to
- (a) decide whether the reason is something that you can change over time (like the weather), or something that cannot change (like the colour of your eyes).
 - (b) decide whether the reason is something that you can control (like who your friends are), or something you cannot control (like how warm or cold it is today).
 - (c) decide whether the reason is something that is inside you (like liking dire straits, or having good eyesight), or something that is outside you (like the team coach who doesn't like you, or your noisy classmates).

Mark your position on each scale by circling the number.

MY REASONS FOR () _____ _____	CAN CHANGE OVER TIME		DOESN'T CHANGE OVER TIME	I CAN CONTROL			I CAN'T CONTROL			IS INSIDE OF ME		IS OUTSIDE OF ME	
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
() _____ _____	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	

APPENDIX D : QUESTIONNAIRE RATING SCALE

APPENDIX E : INTERVIEW 1Introduction

My name is Mrs Ukpong. I come from Nigeria and I am studying at the University of Waikato.

I guess you are wondering why you have been asked to come and have a chat with me. Well, I will explain that to you.

In my study at the University, I am trying to learn about ideas and feelings that 'kids' of your age group have about school learning. What I mean by ideas and feelings is how kids see learning - Whether they like or dislike it and why. (Clarify the concepts of 'like' and 'dislike' using the furniture in the room , or by using every day life example such as : watching the T.V., doing the dishes, etc.)

Now I am interested in your ideas and feelings as a learner of different subjects in school. Of course you and the other pupils are the only ones who know about these things. I can't find out about your ideas and feelings by just watching you learning. The things that I would like to know about are tucked away inside your head. I can only find out if you tell me what goes on inside your head when you are in a learning situation. So what I am hoping is that you will be willing to be one of the people to help me with my project by telling me about these ideas and feelings that you have about learning.

Just to give you an idea of how we are going to work together, I would like us to meet at least once in every two weeks over the next few months. During this period we shall try to talk about :

- (1) How you feel you are getting on with learning.
- (2) Some of the things that you think explain why your learning is going the way it is.
- (3) Your plans for schooling in future.

All these things that we will talk about will be confidential. It will be kept just between you and me.

I know that you are likely to tell me quite a number of interesting things. But my problem is that I may not be able to remember them later on. To make sure I don't forget what you tell me, I would like to tape record our discussions. That will also help me to listen very well to what you say.

Now, I would like us to start talking about some of the things we will be discussing, e.g. The activities and school subjects that you like or dislike. Remember that it is not a test, and so there are no right or wrong answers. I just want you to tell me as honestly as possible the answer that you have in mind for each of my questions. Some questions might require some thinking first. If you feel you would like to do a bit of thinking before answering any particular question, just feel free to do so.

By the end of our discussions today, I would like you to tell me whether you would like to join the group of children who are going to work with me on this project.

Interview Questions.

First I would like us to talk about some things that you like and those that you dislike. A lot of people like and dislike different things. Now, can you tell me the things that you like very much ?

Ok. Now, what are the things that you dislike very much ?

I see. Here are cards on things that kids in New Zealand do. Right in front of us here we have the 'Like Scale'.

Dislike very much	Dislike a bit	Dislike a little	Like a little	Like	Like very much
----------------------	------------------	---------------------	------------------	------	-------------------

I want you to show me how much you like or dislike each of these activities by putting each against where it falls on the scale.

That's fine.

Now, can you tell me why you like(named activity) very much?

Can you tell me why you dislike(named activity) very much?

Talking about your school subjects now. I remember that when I was of your age group and in an intermediate school. I used to like some subjects more than others. Is it the same with you ? Do you like some subjects more than others?

What subjects are doing in school?

Ok. Here is a list of subjects that you are studying at Maeroa. Can you tell me how much or how little you like the different subjects by putting against the 'Like Scale' just as you did before.

Lets pick some subject out for a moment and talk about them. You told me that you like..... (Name of school subject) Can you tell me why you like it?

What sort of marks do you usually get in (name of the liked subject) which you say you like?

Can you think of reasons why you get (repeat reported grade) grades in (name of the school subject) ?

Now let us talk a little more about those subjects that you think you have not been getting high marks.

How do you think you will be getting on as a learner of (name of the problem school subject) in the middle of the year.

Talking about(name of the problem school subject). Do you think you can make better marks if you work harder on it ?

(If yes) Have been doing anything to improve how you do in this subject ?

(If yes) Then, now just tell me, as exactly as you can, all that you have been doing to try to do better in it.

Yes, these sound quite interesting ideas. For how long have you been trying these ?

Have you noticed any changes in how you do in this subject ever since you started to (mention the things that he/she said he/she has been doing in an attempt to improve performance).

(If yes) What are the changes that you have noticed ?

(If no) Why do you think your performance hasn't improved ? What obstacles do you think are still blocking you from performing better.

Do you think any one in your class is working well on (name of the problem school subject) ?

Can you think of the reason why X is working well ?

Any other reason ?

Can you think of any person in your class who is not working so well ?

Can you think of the reason why he/she is working not so well ?

Are there times that you do not understand what the teacher is teaching?

What do you usually do then?

Does your teacher sometimes ask you questions in ----- (name of the disliked school subject) class?

How do you usually feel about that?

What about if you cannot answer the question?

Let us just talk a little more about each of these factors that you think are blocking you from doing better in(name of the problem school subject)?

Can you explain why you think it is the cause of your low marks ?

I see. Thanks for your time. It has been nice talking with you. Would you like to continue with me in the study? That would mean our meeting for another discussion in two weeks time.

Okay. Thank you. Bye.

APPENDIX F : INTERVIEW 2Attitude to Schooling and Classroom BehaviourIntroduction

In our first meeting we talked particularly about the school subjects that you liked or disliked and how you are doing on those school subjects which you don't really like. You also explained to me why you don't usually get high marks in the school subject that you disliked most. Today I would like you to tell me what you think about schooling. I would also like to know how you usually behave in class when mathematics/reading is being taught.

Interview Questions

First of all I would like us to just pretend that today is a Sunday. Think about yourself enjoying the weekend. Then suddenly you remember that the next day is a Monday and you will have to go to school. How do you feel about the thought of going to school?

Any reason for feeling that way?

Are there some things that you like about being in school?

What are they?

Why do you like them (naming a few things, one at a time).

Are there things that you don't like about being in school?

What are they?

Can you tell me your reasons for disliking those things?

Are there some school days that you don't usually feel like going to school, even though nothing is wrong with you?

(If yes) What do you normally do when you have such feelings?

Just think of days that you had such a feeling and tell me what made you feel that way.

If it were just your own decision to make, would you continue schooling after this year? (If no) Can you tell me why you would not decide to?

Now I want you to think about yourself in some of those mathematics (reading) classes. If I were to watch you from outside (without your knowledge) during mathematics (reading) lesson, what sort of things do you think I would see you doing?

Something that I often notice in children has to do with how they react when they do not understand the teacher. I would like you to tell me what you normally do when you don't understand.

- something your teacher explains in class. Can you tell me why you do that?
- something you read in a book.
- some parts of your homework. Why?

Thank you. We will see you again after two weeks.

APPENDIX G : INTERVIEW 3Feelings about School Learning and School WorkIntroduction

Last time you told me what you thought about schooling and your classroom behaviour when mathematics (reading) was being taught. Today, we want to talk particularly about those things that you do, which cannot be seen by anybody unless you tell it. I want us to talk about your feeling about school learning and school work.

Interview Questions

Some children get very worried about a class test for example. However, others don't really worry about how they are doing in school. Now thinking about yourself. Are you personally concerned about how well you are doing in school?

Why?

Perhaps I will understand better if you tell me how you usually feel when the teacher asks you a question in mathematics (reading) class.

Are there times that you are able to answer the questions correctly?

How do you usually feel afterwards?

What about instances when you cannot answer the questions correctly? How do you usually feel?

Can you explain why you usually feel that way?

Are there other things that make you feel..... (repeat given feelings) in class?

How do you usually feel when you know that your next lesson is on mathematics (reading)?

What makes you feel that way?

What do you normally do when you are given a homework in mathematics (reading)?

Sometimes kids submit homework or an assignment which is either incomplete or well below their best work. Perhaps you sometimes find yourself doing that. Now, how do you usually feel when you hand in work that you know is not very good?

Can you tell me why you usually feel that way?

Thinking about yourself in mathematics (reading) class, what sort of thoughts do you normally have when the lesson is going on?

Do you have similar thoughts when(name of a favourite school subject) is being taught?

Talking a little more about mathematics (reading) when you fail a test or get very low marks at one time, how do you usually feel when you have to do a test on it another time?

Do you have reasons for feeling that way.

Thank you. You can go back to your class. We will see you again in two weeks.

APPENDIX H : INTERVIEW 4Origins of LH and ExpectanciesIntroduction

In our past meetings we talked about the school subject that you are having difficulties with. You told me your usual feelings and behaviours in situations that have to do with learning mathematics (reading).

Today I would like you to tell me about when your problem with mathematics (reading) started, how it actually started, and your experiences with the learning of mathematics (reading) in the various school classes which you have passed through.

Interview Questions

Now can you remember when you were first taught mathematics (reading). Thinking about that first time, can you tell me whether you had any difficulties with it?

(If yes) What do you think was the cause of the difficulties?

I guess you were taught a bit of mathematics (reading) in Primary One. How did you find it then?

Can you tell me why you found it (repeat the child's foregoing response).?

Now can you tell me how you found it in each of the other classes including your first year here in the intermediate school. (Guide the child to report chronologically, focussing on experiences in each class).

You might be getting to Secondary School next year. How do you like the idea?

How do you think you will be doing in mathematics (reading) in the new school?

Do you have reasons for thinking so?

Some children leave school straight after their high school, while others proceed to university, teacher's college, technical institute and other places for education. Now, if the choice was entirely yours when would you like to leave school?

Why would you like to leave at that time (age)?

Thank you. We will see you again in two weeks time.

APPENDIX I : INTERVIEW 5Home Related FactorsIntroduction

In our past discussions, we have been dwelling mainly on school. Today, I would like to know more about you. I would like you to tell me a little more about yourself. If I ask you about any thing that you would not really like to talk about, please say so, and we will go to something else.

Interview Questions

Sometimes children are given some school assignments to do at home (homework) and submit to the teacher later on. In your own case what do you normally do when you are given homework in mathematics (reading)?

Do you think you usually have enough time at home to do your mathematics (reading) homework?

Do you usually submit it in time to the teacher?

About how much time do you usually spend to do your homework at home everyday?

Do you usually have some study help from your parents at home? (If yes) Can you tell me some of the things that they are doing to help you?

Do your parents know that you are having difficulties with mathematics (reading)? (If yes) Are they doing anything to help? (If yes) What are they doing to help you?

At home do you have books that can assist you to study mathematics (reading)? Do you have other things that can assist you in your learning of mathematics (reading). (If yes) What are they? Do you think you really make use of them when you are studying?

Do you have an elder brother or sister?

(If yes) Do they give you some study help at home?

Has any of your elder brothers or sisters left school already?

At what age did he/she leave school?

At what age do you plan to leave school?

Have you ever thought about the type of job that you would like to do when you leave school?

Do you think you need to know mathematics and be able to read in order to do that kind of job?

(If yes) Why do you think so?

How then do you think you will cope with your job as you think you are not doing well in mathematics (reading)?

Thank you. We will stop here for today.

See you again in two weeks time. Bye.

APPENDIX J : INTERVIEW 6Self Concept of Academic Ability
and Behavioural ConsequencesIntroduction

In the previous meetings, we have talked about your likes and dislikes about schooling, the origin of your problem with mathematics (reading) and your learning experiences with the subject at different school stages. You have also told me about what you think of homework and how you think you will be doing as a learner of mathematics (reading) in future. In this last meeting I would like you to tell me a few more things yourself and life in the school.

Interview Questions

First of all I would like to know how you usually rate yourself in school ability compared with the other children in your class?

Some kids think that one gets very high grades if the teacher likes him or her. In your own case, what do you think?

Forgetting about the sort of marks that the teacher gives you in tests or assignments, what sort of marks do you think you are capable of making?

Now can you tell me the things that you think make one successful in school?

Do you think you have those things that you have just told me about?

Do you sometimes find yourself thinking that other kids in class are more clever than you are?

(If yes) At what times do you usually have such thoughts?

Now, let us talk about a mathematics (reading) test situation. When you are taking a test in mathematics (reading) do you sometimes fear that you are not going to get a high mark or a good grade?

What other thoughts or feelings do you usually have when you are taking the test?

Do you usually have such thoughts and feelings at other times?

(If yes) Like what other times do you usually have such thoughts?

What about when you are taking a test in ----- (name of liked school subject), do you usually have such thoughts and feelings? Can you tell me why?

Okay. Now thinking about yourself in college from next year, how well do you think you will perform in mathematics (reading) compared with the other children in class.

Can you tell me why you think so?

In your final year at college you are expected to take a School Certificate examination. How do you think you are going to perform?

Do you have reasons for thinking so?

Okay. now can you just say 'No' to any of the following statements if it does not apply to you and 'Yes' if it does.

1. Missing too many days of school
2. Day dreaming in class
3. Not spending enough time on homework
4. Not really interested in books
5. Not getting homework done in time
6. Afraid to speak in class discussions
7. Can't keep my mind on my studies

8. Forgetting lessons too soon
9. Failing tests very often
- 10 Text books too hard to read
- 11 Lessons too difficult to understand
- 12 Teacher not friendly
- 13 Not liking this school
- 14 Having a poor memory
- 15 Don't like to study
- 16 Not as good as my friends
- 17 Worrying about tests
- 18 Wanting to stop going to school
- 19 Not sure of better performance at college
- 20 Dislikes going to college

Okay. Thanks -- (name of interviewee). It has really been nice to have you in the study. We may not have any more interviews together. However if there is any other thing that I need your help for, I will let you know. Will you be happy to help me again if I need you?

Good - Thanks. Now do you have anything that you would like to ask me about the study or any of the things that we have been talking about?

Okay - you can go back to your class.

Thank you and bye-bye.



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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

9 April 1986

Dear

I am a Nigerian studying for a doctorate degree in the Education Department at the University of Waikato in Hamilton.

In Nigeria, I have had the privilege of teaching at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. During these periods, I have been very interested in learning about factors that can affect children's learning.

In the study that I am now undertaking, my aim is to gather information on how children see school learning. In particular, I will be trying to find out how they think and feel about their own learning. The project is being undertaken at Maeroa Intermediate School and has the approval of the Hamilton Education Board and the school Principal - Mr Strawbridge. The project is being supervised by Dr Neil Haigh, a senior lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Waikato.

After spending some time in classrooms, observing and talking with children, and with the help of the class teacher, I have selected as a possible participant in my study. His/her participation would involve having some interviews with me, each lasting for about 30 minutes. Appropriate arrangements will be made with the class teacher to ensure that will be interviewed during such periods that will not affect his/her class work.

However, I cannot involve your child in this study without your kind approval. Your co-operation in this regard would therefore be highly appreciated.

Hoping to hear from you as soon as possible through your child to the class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Eno M. Ukpong (Mrs)
Commonwealth Scholar

APPENDIX L : PARENTS' CONCENT FORM

Date

Dear Mrs Ukpong,

I approve of taking part in your study as outlined in your letter of 9 April, 1986.

Yours sincerely,

Sig. _____

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