The Effects of Prior Success or Failure and Subsequent Deviant Verbal Behavior on Group Puzzle Completion

James L. Bowditch

Western Michigan University

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THE EFFECTS OF PRIOR SUCCESS OR FAILURE AND SUBSEQUENT DEVIANT VERBAL BEHAVIOR ON GROUP PUZZLE COMPLETION

by

James L. Bowditch

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, Michigan July 1965
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The investigator wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Dr. John G. Jochem for his competent guidance as the major advisor, to Dr. E. Jack Asher Jr. and Dr. Stanley Kuffel for their valuable assistance as thesis committee members, and to Dr. David O. Lyon and Dr. John E. Nangle for their helpful criticism.

James L. Bowditch
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The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of experimentally controlled working conditions upon task performance and attitudes of small work groups. In one condition, initial group experience in the form of success or failure is manipulated in order to study its effects upon subsequent group task performance and attitude. In another condition, the effects of disruption on group performance and attitude is investigated using stooges as the disrupters.

For purposes of this study, two methods are employed by which a group's initial task performance may be manipulated so as to affect their performance on a subsequent task. The first method predetermines the group's performance "success" or "failure" by experimentally manipulating the task to make it either possible or impossible to complete. The group is thus able to assess its performance for itself. In the second method, that employed by Deutsch (1959), the group is told by the experimenter that they have either succeeded or failed the task. Deutsch (1959) found that in groups treated in this way, the "failure" groups tend to perceive themselves as less capable than the "success" groups. How this latter sort of induced "success" or "failure" affected task performance in his
experiment cannot be precisely determined from his results.

In the area of stooge influence, Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) found that when a stooge made programmed non-work oriented remarks in the group, there were two effects. First, these groups with the stooge felt there was less likelihood of meeting the predecided group standard in the task performance than did the groups containing no stooge. Second, the members of the groups with the stooge felt that other members of the group would not try as hard to meet the standard in task performance as the members of the groups without the stooge felt their members would try.

In the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) study as in the Deutsch (1959) study, attitude received most of the emphasis. From inspection of the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) data, it was clear that there was no performance difference between the groups with and without a stooge.

The task in the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) study was to have individuals throw darts at a board in a serial fashion. Each subject threw five times before the following subject threw. This continued for nine cycles. Since subjects took part in the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) task in serial fashion, it was perhaps less of a group task than one in which all members work together, simultaneously. Even less of a group task was found in the Schachter, Ellertson, McBride and Gregory (1951) study in which the subjects in the groups were all isolated from each other.
They were supposedly able, but actually unable to communicate with one another. Again, calling this a group study seems to be an overextension of the definition of what constitutes a group study.

At this point several questions become relevant. First, is group failure expressed by the experimenter to the group the same as group failure as seen by the group as it progresses through a task? Is this failure effect acting just on morale, or would it appear in performance results as well? Similarly, would a stooge making non-work oriented remarks to a group engaged in a serial individual task have the same or differing effects in a true group task where all persons work simultaneously, in each other's presence? Perhaps in the latter case there would be more than just an effect on morale. Finally, the question arises: Would the group failure factor, and the non-work oriented stooge factor operate equipotentially?

The Rosenthal and Cofer (1948), and Deutsch (1959) studies deemphasized the performance data. They seemed to assume that the "failure" and "stooge" factors only affected the group attitude. With certain changes in design, perhaps one or the other, or both of these factors which formerly influenced only attitude, would influence performance as well.

It was felt that in a true group task, with all persons working in each other's presence, simultaneously, and everyone observing the failure or success which his group encounters,
the "failure" and "stooge" factors would be equipotent, and would affect the performance.

These two variables provide the following hypotheses: (1) The groups able to complete the first puzzle and which work with the stooge who makes positive, work oriented remarks will put more of the second puzzle together than any other groups. (2) The groups unable to complete the first puzzle and which work with the stooge who makes the negative, indifferent remarks will put less pieces together in the second puzzle than any other groups.

In addition, attitude differences related to the success-failure dichotomy and the positive-negative stooge dichotomy will be examined.
METHOD

The subjects used for this experiment were 120 male volunteers from introductory psychology classes at Western Michigan University. They were told that this was a study to see how well groups of four persons could put puzzles together.

The stooges for the experiment were obtained from volunteers used in the pretest of the study. Each individual stooge was employed equally for the work oriented and the non-work oriented conditions in so far as scheduling would permit. In training the stooge for his job, it was made clear that he should pace his work on the second puzzle so that he was putting as much of the puzzle together as appeared to him to be the average of the three other persons in the group. He was cautioned not to speed up or slow down according to the remarks he made. In addition, he was told to change puzzle positions for each group so that he would not be overly familiar with any one part of the puzzle.

During the second puzzle only, the stooge made about nineteen remarks of an exclusively positive, work oriented nature, or an exclusively negative, non-work oriented nature. These nineteen remarks were memorized from a list provided by the experimenter (see appendix A). They could be made in any order the stooge deemed necessary. Remarks could be repeated if a given phrase were appropriate more than once during the session.
In the room where the experiment took place there were four chairs, a two and one half by four foot table, and a color coded electric clock. Marked on the table were four positions A, B, C, and D. The clock was color coded into five minute intervals for use during the second puzzle. This was done so that the stooge could associate a color with a number of remarks, and also help the stooge remember the number of remarks made in the time interval. The stooge made two remarks during the first five minute interval, five remarks during the second interval, four remarks during the third interval, three remarks during the fourth and fifth intervals, and two in the sixth interval.

The first puzzle was divided into four approximately equal portions such that each subject received a corner. Six pieces in every subject's corner were given to other members of the group so that each subject had two pieces of everyone else's portion. This was done so that a certain amount of interpersonal interaction would occur as a result of this trading. The first puzzle contained 154 pieces.

The second puzzle was made up of 252 pieces. As in the first puzzle, to insure interaction while working, six pieces of every subject's corner were given to the other members of the group so that each subject had two pieces of everyone else's portion. The second puzzle was divided into quarters as was the first puzzle.
There were two methods of creating failure groups and differentiating them from success groups. One way this was accomplished was by obtaining pieces from an identical puzzle cut on a different cutting from the original puzzle and substituting these pieces into the original puzzle. About 15% of the pieces were displaced and substituted pieces were incorporated. The second way of creating failure groups was to include any groups that did not complete the untampered version of the first puzzle within the forty minutes. By definition, the success groups were those which completed the untampered version of the first puzzle within the forty minute time limit. The time limit for the first puzzle was set by means of a pilot study which attempted to determine the maximum time needed to finish the complete puzzle. Also, by pretesting it was determined which pieces of the "failure" puzzle should be substituted so that subjects would believe that the puzzles were complete.

Since the second puzzle was a performance measure, it was felt that no group should be able to complete it, as relative performance was desired. This puzzle was the same for everyone. After thirty minutes work on the second puzzle, the groups were stopped, and the number of pieces in the puzzle which were correctly placed were counted as the group performance measure.

Following counting, a questionnaire was administered which attempted to ascertain whether there were feelings of
failure, the state of morale, and whether the stooge was observed to be either performing better or worse than the group as a whole. This questionnaire consisted of fifteen questions, each question being answerable on a continuum from low to high (see appendix B). For scoring purposes this continuum was divided into eight numbered parts. For the last four questions dealing with performance ratings, each subject was to rate everyone but himself. A mean score was obtained for the rating of others and a difference between how subjects rated the stooge, and how the subjects rated the other persons was obtained.

In the sequence of events, the first factor studied was the success-failure dichotomy. Upon arriving at the predesignated meeting place, three subjects and a stooge were ushered into the room and seated. The experimenter gave the picture of the scene and a partially dismantled puzzle to the subjects and stooge. They were told:

Separate this puzzle such that position A gets the pieces marked with the numeral one on the back, position B gets the "twos", position C gets the "threes" and position D gets the "fours". When you have finished this, turn the pieces face up. I will start you in five minutes.

After the subjects and the stooge finished separating the first puzzle into four piles face up, the experimenter said:

This is a group dynamics experiment to see how well groups of four people put puzzles together. The puzzles are divided into four equal parts so that each of you has a corner. A small part of each person's corner has been given to the other members of the group.
so that a certain amount of trading will be necessary. As you go along, make sure that all of the pieces of the puzzle are on the table. Since the puzzles are complete, any pieces that have fallen off the table may throw off the results. Work together in this task. You will have forty minutes to put the first puzzle together. Please set the clock to ten minutes before an hour.

During this time the experimenter made frequent checks to see how the groups were progressing. If he was asked whether the puzzles were complete, he would say that they were.

If the group had completed the puzzle in the forty minutes allowed, the experimenter would say:

You have done very well as a group. Since most groups do not come close to finishing the task in the time allowed, your performance is excellent.

If the group had not completed the puzzle in the forty minutes, the experimenter would say:

You have done rather poorly as a group. Since most groups finish the task in the time allowed, your performance is surprisingly bad.

After the group had either failed or succeeded at the first puzzle, it was removed and the second picture and puzzle was brought to the group.

At this point the experimentation began on the second factor, the work oriented and non-work oriented stooge dichotomy. During this time the stooge commenced making his programmed remarks. The experimenter began by saying:

Here is a second puzzle. You will break it into sections as on the first puzzle. A will get the "ones", B the "twos", C the "threes", and D the "fours". I
will be in to start you in five minutes.

After five minutes were spent dismantling the second puzzle, the experimenter went back to the group and said:

Your next task will be to spend thirty minutes working on this second puzzle. The directions and layout are the same as for the first puzzle, you will trade some pieces, and work as a group. Please set the clock so that it begins a new hour.

After time was up for the second puzzle, the pieces correctly placed were counted. Then the experimenter told the group:

Please fill out this questionnaire. Read the directions carefully and then you may start. When you have finished, put your name on the questionnaire, and put your position letter in the appropriate blank. Please fill in your name and address on the sheet given you. You will receive an abbreviated report of the experimental results. Thank you very much for your participation. Please do not mention this study to anyone until I have been to your class to explain the study, or until you have received the results.

Since the experiment was a two by two design, there were four conditions with approximately equal numbers of groups. There were ten groups in the initial success, work oriented stooge condition, nine in the initial success, non-work oriented stooge condition, eleven in the initial failure, work oriented stooge condition, and ten in the initial failure, non-work oriented stooge condition.
RESULTS

The results showed that there were success-failure effects on performance and attitude, and a stooge effect on attitude only. For the performance measure, the number of pieces of the puzzle correctly placed by each group in the 30 minute time limit was counted, and an analysis of variance between groups was run. The means are summarized in Table 1 and the analysis of variance is summarized in Table 2.

Neither of the hypotheses are supported as stated. They are:

(1) The groups able to complete the first puzzle and which work with the stooge who makes positive, work oriented remarks will put more of the second puzzle together than any other groups.

(2) The groups unable to complete the first puzzle and which work with the stooge makes the negative, indifferent remarks will put less pieces together in the second puzzle than any other groups. As there was no stooge effect on performance, the underlying assumption to the hypotheses is in error. However, the success-failure effect on performance was significant at the 5% level. The success groups put significantly more pieces of the second puzzle together than the failure groups.

The questionnaire results suggest that both the initial success-failure dichotomy and the work oriented, non-work
### Table 1

Comparison of Four Conditions of Mean Amounts of Second Puzzle Completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Work oriented stooge</th>
<th>Non-work oriented stooge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial success</td>
<td>158.0</td>
<td>151.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial failure</td>
<td>123.8</td>
<td>140.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2

Analysis of Variance Between Initial Success and Failure Conditions, and Work Oriented and Non-Work Oriented Stooge Conditions, and the Interaction Between these Sets of Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot;</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Success-Failure</td>
<td>5119</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5119</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stooge</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>1337</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1337</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>43627</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1211</td>
<td></td>
<td>(NS not significant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
oriented stooge dichotomy affected attitude. This is shown in Table 3. The responses to the question, "How was group morale after the second task?" indicated that although the stooge did not affect performance, he did affect the attitude of the groups. Morale was significantly higher in the work oriented stooge groups than in the non-work oriented stooge groups. This difference was significant at better than the 1% level. In addition, morale was higher in the success groups than the failure groups; however, this was only significant at slightly better than the 5% level of confidence.

Another indication that the group felt affected by the stooge were the results of the question, "How was group cooperation on the second task?" Again, persons in the groups with the non-work oriented stooge felt there was significantly less cooperation than did the persons in groups with the work oriented stooge. This difference was significant at better than the 1% level. A very similar finding was observed for the question, "How was team performance on the second task?" Again, persons in groups with the non-work oriented stooge felt that their performance was poorer than those persons in groups with the work oriented stooge. This difference was significant at better than the 1% level.

Finally, the perceived performance difference between the stooge and the remainder of the group was significantly
Table 3

Mean Questionnaire Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Work oriented stooge</th>
<th>Non-work oriented stooge</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How successfully do you feel your group completed the first task?</td>
<td>Success 7.77</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 4.73</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How successfully do you feel your group completed the second task?</td>
<td>Success 5.87</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 5.03</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was group morale after the first task?</td>
<td>Success 7.70</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 5.76</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was group morale after the second task?</td>
<td>Success 6.10</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 5.61</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was group cooperation on the first task?</td>
<td>Success 7.33</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 6.12</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was group cooperation on the second task?</td>
<td>Success 6.97</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 6.52</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was team performance on the first task?</td>
<td>Success 7.47</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 5.12</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was team performance on the second task?</td>
<td>Success 6.77</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure 5.55</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived performance difference between the stooge and the remainder of the group</td>
<td>Success .60</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>** ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failure .30</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Success-failure significance at the 5% level
** Stooge effect significance at the 5% level
*** Interaction effect significance at the 5% level
different at better than the 1% level for the stooge factor. On this question the work oriented stooge was thought to have performed better than the non-work oriented stooge. A significant interaction at the 5% level occurred on this question also.

As the stooge was not programmed for the first task, an unexpected finding was that on the question, "How was group morale after the first task?", the work oriented groups had higher morale than did the non-work oriented groups. This difference was significant at better than the 5% level. In addition to this, there was an expected large difference at better than the 1% level between the success and failure groups, the success groups having the higher morale. Other first task questions which indicated that success groups felt they were better performers than the failure groups felt dealt with success, cooperation, and team performance. All of these questions were significant at better than the 1% level in the expected direction.
DISCUSSION

Since there was a performance difference between the success and failure groups, this suggests that the Deutsch (1959) method of inducing success and failure by a post experimental induction was not equivalent to the present method. However, the present results seem to imply that the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) findings concerning the effect of a negative stooge on performance were the same as the present findings in spite of the difference in the group task. The present findings confirm the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) results that a negative stooge affects attitude, but not performance.

It is interesting to note that the mean differences for the success-failure factor on the questions dealing with the first task are greater than the mean differences for the stooge factor on the second task question. This again suggests that the success-failure effect was the dominant effect of the experiment. In addition, on the questions dealing with performance, or group completion on the second task, the success-failure effect seemed to be dominant. This appears to be a carry over effect from the first task, as the experimenter made no comments about how well groups performed on the second task.
The results of the question on morale after the first task are a little difficult to explain. The large differences at better than the 1% level between the success groups and the failure groups was expected, with the success groups having the higher morale. However, the mean difference significant at the 5% level between the work oriented and the non-work oriented stooge groups is attributed to the fact that the questionnaire was administered after the last task, and that the morale after the second task may have influenced how people answered the question of morale after the first task. The stooges were not observed to give any indication as to whether they were work oriented, or non-work oriented in the first task. In any event, the mean difference was considerably smaller than the mean difference between the work oriented and non-work oriented stooge groups in the same question dealing with the second task.

Another problem which is mentioned in passing is whether all indicated differences on the questionnaire represent actual differences of the same magnitude. While these questionnaire differences were statistically significant, the question is raised whether these differences are apparent or real. There is the possibility that the eight part linear continuum may have been considered differently by each individual using the scale.

Since there were similar scores between questions on
cooperation and performance, and between questions on morale and group success, there is the possibility of high intercorrelation between these items. For that matter, all of the results on the questionnaire were somewhat similar, so there remains the possibility of high intercorrelation between these items. For that matter, all of the results on the questionnaire were somewhat similar, so there remains the possibility that all of the questions were highly intercorrelated and were measuring the same thing.

As a result of this study, the following conclusions may be made. First, it is apparent that the success groups' performance was significantly better than the failure groups' performance. There appeared to be an attitude difference between the success and failure groups as the success groups felt better about their performance than the failure group felt about their performance. Secondly, there was no apparent performance difference between the work oriented and non-work oriented stooge groups. Yet on the second task questions, there seemed to be a difference in attitude, as the work oriented stooge groups felt better about their performance than the non-work oriented stooge felt about their performance.

It might be interesting for future research to have several conditions of varying degrees of negative remarks for the non-work oriented stooge. There is a possibility that with the use
of a very strong negative language, a performance effect might occur. However, a stooge effect seems unlikely on several ground:

First, the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) data showed no stooge effect on performance. Second, the Deutsch (1959) data showed no effect on performance from the post induction of failure and success. It is possible that in this latter case the experimenter's post induction was equivalent to the stooge effect in the present study and the Rosenthal and Cofer (1948) experiment.

A second experiment might be attempted to see whether induced or perceived failure is more influential to the groups' performance and attitude. A two by two study having observed failure or success as one factor, and induced failure or success as the other factor might be feasible.
SUMMARY

In this study, 120 undergraduate male volunteers from Western Michigan University were used. There was a stooge for each group of four persons. There were ten success, work oriented groups, nine success, non-work oriented groups, eleven failure, work oriented groups, and ten failure, non-work oriented groups.

The first puzzle was either completable (success groups), or uncompletable (failure groups). The stooge made either nineteen work oriented or non-work oriented remarks during the half hour in which the second puzzle was being worked. The amount of the second puzzle completed was the performance measure. After the second puzzle was counted, the attitude assessment questionnaire was administered.

This study was based on the assumptions that an initial success or failure factor was equipotent with a work oriented or non-work oriented stooge factor. The hypotheses growing out of these assumptions were that: (1) The groups able to complete the first puzzle and which work with the stooge who makes the positive, work oriented remarks will put more of the second puzzle together than any other groups. (2) The groups unable to complete the first puzzle and which work with the stooge who makes the negative, indifferent remarks will put less pieces
together in the second puzzle than any other groups. These hypotheses were not substantiated as stated. Instead, a significantly better performance was noted for all the initial success groups than for the initial failure groups. The stooge only affected group feeling and morale, and did not appear to affect performance significantly.

These findings imply that the initial success-failure factor was more influential than the stooge factor, not equipotent as was assumed from prior research. This is borne out both in the performance data, and the questionnaire data. The latter mean differences were considerably greater for the success-failure factor on the questions concerned with the first task than for the stooge factor on the second task questions. This suggests that the factors were not of equal influence on the groups.

Future research having the stooge use stronger language might be interesting in order to compare the effect on performance. In addition, it might be interesting to just have an observed success-failure condition, but tell some of the success groups they failed, and some of the failure groups they succeeded, and see whether observed, or induced failure is more potent.
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APPENDIX A

Remarks Made by the Stooge
Negative Statements Made by the Stooge

1. I'll bet we'll be the worst group.
2. We sure are going slowly.
3. We won't do as well as that guy expects.
4. This is a waste.
5. This is a boring job.
6. Nothing we try seems to fit together.
7. This is Mickey Mouse.
8. We can't fit anything together on the first try.
9. We can't hope to finish in half an hour.
10. We aren't working well together.
11. We spend too much time doing nothing.
12. We can't work fast enough.
13. We aren't getting anything done.
14. We just aren't motivated to put this thing together.
15. Man, is this a drag.
16. We're so disorganized.
17. We sure were suckers to sign up for this one.
18. We sure are unlucky to have a small puzzle.
19. These pieces are too small.

Positive Statements Made by the Stooge

1. I'll bet we'll be the best group.
2. We sure are going fast.
3. We'll do better than that guy expected.
4. This is really worth while.
5. This is getting interesting.
6. A lot we try seems to fit together.
7. You know, this is kind of a challenge.
8. We're getting a lot right on the first try.
9. We may actually finish in half an hour.
10. We are really working well together.
11. We're moving very quickly.
12. We are working really fast.
13. You know, we are getting quite a bit done.
14. We really seem to be motivated to put this together.
15. This is sort of cool.
16. We're really well organized.
17. I'm glad we signed up for this one.
18. We sure are lucky to have a small puzzle.
19. These pieces are just about the right size.
APPENDIX B

Puzzle Completion Questionnaire
Puzzle Completion Questionnaire

Name__________________________
Date & Time_____________________
Position_______________________

Please put a cross on the line in the place which would make the statement correspond most nearly with your belief. Do not spend a large amount of time on any one item. Your first impression is the one which is desired.

1. How successfully do you feel your group completed the first task?
   low ______________________ high

2. How successfully do you feel your group completed the second task?
   low ______________________ high

3. How was group morale after the first task?
   low ______________________ high

4. How was group morale after the second task?
   low ______________________ high

5. How was group cooperation on the first task?
   low ______________________ high

6. How was group cooperation on the second task?
   low ______________________ high

7. How was team performance on the first task?
   low ______________________ high
8. How was team performance on the second task?

low_________________________ high

9. How was group solidarity after the first task?

low_________________________ high

10. How was group solidarity after the second task?

low_________________________ high

11. How meaningful were the group tasks?

low_________________________ high

Please circle the item number which corresponds with your position. (Do not evaluate your own performance.)

12. How was position A's performance?

low_________________________ high

13. How was position B's performance?

low_________________________ high

14. How was position C's performance?

low_________________________ high

15. How was position D's performance?

low_________________________ high