

# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 063 569

CG 007 317

AUTHOR Raffel, Jeffery A.  
TITLE Responsiveness in Urban Schools: A Study of School System Adaptation to Parental Preferences in an Urban Environment.  
INSTITUTION Delaware Univ., Newark. Div. of Urban Affairs.  
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.  
BUREAU NO BR-0-A-050  
PUB DATE Jun 72  
GRANT OEG-1-70-0013 (509)  
NOTE 346p.  
  
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$13.16  
DESCRIPTORS Family Influence; Family School Relationship; Parental Grievances; \*Parent Attitudes; Parent Conferences; \*Parent Influence; \*Parent Participation; Parent Reaction; \*Parent School Relationship; \*Parent Teacher Cooperation; Urban Schools

## ABSTRACT

The relationship between parental preferences and school functioning in 10 elementary schools in the Boston Public School System was analyzed. The educational preferences of 400 parents were determined through survey research methods. School functioning at the 10 schools was determined by classroom observation, interviews, and written questionnaires. While a moderate relationship between parental preferences and school functioning was found across the 10 schools in educational methods, none was found in educational content. Analysis of the process of responsiveness and parental attempts to alter school functioning indicated that responsiveness of school functioning to parental preferences is greatly limited within the school system. Non-responsiveness was found to be a function of the inability of parents to organize for collective action, the inability of principals to influence teachers, the power of senior teachers to select their school, the lack of perceptual accuracy of teachers about parents and their educational preferences, and the lack of legitimacy many parents, teachers, and principals hold for parental influence over teacher behavior.  
(Author)



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PA 24

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Final Report  
Project Number O-A-050  
Grant Number OEG-1-70-0013(509)

Jeffrey A. Raffel  
RESPONSIVENESS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

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Final Report

Project Number O-A-050  
Grant Number OEG-1-70-0013(509)

RESPONSIVENESS IN URBAN SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF SCHOOL  
SYSTEM ADAPTATION TO PARENTAL PREFERENCES IN AN  
URBAN ENVIRONMENT

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June, 1972

The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a grant with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgment in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **RESPONSIVENESS IN URBAN SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF SCHOOL SYSTEM ADAPTATION TO PARENTAL PREFERENCES IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

by

**JEFFREY A. RAFFEL**

Submitted to the Department of Political Science  
on July 5, 1972 in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The relationship between parental preferences and school functioning in ten elementary schools in the Boston Public School System was analyzed. The educational preferences of 400 parents were determined through survey research methods. School functioning at the ten schools was determined by classroom observation, interviews, and written questionnaires.

While a moderate relation between parental preferences and school functioning was found across the ten schools in educational methods, no relation was found in educational content. Analysis of the process of responsiveness and parental attempts to alter school functioning indicated that responsiveness of school functioning to parental preferences is greatly limited within the school system.

Non-responsiveness was found to be a function of the inability of parents to organize for collective action, the power of principals to blunt parental action, the inability of principals to influence teachers, the power of senior teachers to select their school, the lack of perceptual accuracy of teachers about parents and their educational preferences, and the lack of legitimacy many parents, teachers, and principals hold for parental influence over teacher behavior.



Analysis of the effects of non-responsiveness indicated that a widespread feeling of cynicism and lack of efficacy exist among Boston parents, especially Blacks.

Thesis Supervisor: Alan A. Altshuler  
Title: Professor of Political Science

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Joseph M. Cronin provided me with intellectual stimulation, funds, knowledge, research support, access, and encouragement throughout my work. I owe my greatest thanks to him. Leonard Fein offered the original inspiration for this research and scores of ideas in the initial stage of this research. David Cohen, Michael Lipsky, and Alan Altshuler presented me with challenging ideas throughout my research. Cohen and Lipsky served on my Dissertation Committee, and Fein and Altshuler served as Dissertation Chairmen. I owe each of these men much.

William Greenbaum, Brooklyn Derr, and Patricia McArdle worked with me at different stages of this research. As fellow students, they were not only helpful intellectually but willing and able to help me accomplish some of the nuts and bolts of data collection. Charles Glenn, Sue Sandusky, and Helen Rhodes all helped me collect and interpret data at key points in my observation of the Boston Public Schools. Members of the Danforth Boston Study Team, Donald Levine, Steven London, and Lawrence Iannaconne, also provided valuable information and insights at various stages of my research. I owe all these individuals a debt of thanks.

I am unable to personally thank all those who responded to the numerous surveys employed in the study. The principals and teachers of the Boston Public Schools cooperated to the fullest with this effort. Over 450 parents talked to the TransCentury interviewers or myself for about an hour despite moments of boredom, emotional upset, crying babies, and other impediments. I thank them all.

Several funding sources made this work possible. The Office of Education, Bureau of Research, Small Grant Regional Research Program funded a substantial part of the parent survey. The Danforth Foundation Boston School Board Study and the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Education, Boston School System Action Study indirectly provided a variety of support for this project. I owe a debt of gratitude to each of these sources.

In any research, especially research done over several years, personal support is often as significant as research support. I have been very fortunate in this respect. Daniel Rich served as a colleague, friend, advisor, and recreational partner during this period. He has been a great help. My wife, Joanne, has inspired me to finish this project as quickly as possible. While I have not completed what I began in the time either one of us wanted, she has been tolerant of my long hours and the associated discomforts. I could not have completed this without her help and support. But most importantly, she has provided me with two additional, tremendous helpers, Allison, now two, and Lori, approximately one year old.



They have made my work more enjoyable, and I hope that what I have done in these pages will some day make their efforts more rewarding.

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## CHAPTER 1

### MEASURING GOVERNMENTAL PERFORMANCE

#### Political Science and the Study of Political Process

The larger conflicts in American society have been mirrored in the conflicts within the discipline of political science in the past decade. A crucial question asked by "new wave" political scientists has been, what role does political science have to play, if any, in solving or resolving societal conflicts.<sup>1</sup> Some argue that political scientists have been addressing the wrong questions. Specifically, the criticism is that political scientists have focused on the process of politics to the neglect of analyzing the consequences of the policy process.<sup>2</sup>

In 1936, Harold Lasswell asked the seminal question, "who gets what, when, and how," but although several political scientists have dealt with who gets what, most empirical work has focused on the who and the how parts of the question.<sup>3</sup> The most cogent illustration of the process thrust of empirical work in the last two decades centers on the numerous analyses of community power. The debate over the existence of a power elite, pluralism, and the implications of either for the operation of American democracy has taken center stage in the journals of American political science.<sup>4</sup> What was once a debate between political scientists and sociologists over the question of who

governs has become a major issue among political scientists. Robert Dahl's discussion of the role of pluralism in New Haven specifically and American society generally has not been accepted as an answer to Floyd Hunter's power elite by many political scientists.<sup>5</sup>

Kenneth Dolbreare notes that "empirically-oriented political scientists have concentrated almost exclusively upon aspects of the political processes through which policies are made. Voting behavior, political parties, interest-group activities, decision-making in institutions, etc., have all been prominent fields of concentration for those who specialize in American politics. Analysis . . . ends when a statute is passed, a decision rendered, or a regulation issued . . . Relatively little attention has been paid to the content of the policies produced through these processes or to the effects which they have on the people and problems which are their objects."<sup>6</sup> Dolbreare notes two exceptions to this generalization, policy characteristics analysis in states and cities, and policy problem implementation studies.<sup>7</sup>

David and Bellush not only criticize the theoretical underpinnings and analysis of data of the "pluralist" school of political science but also the school's major conclusion that American cities are open and responsive to minority groups.<sup>8</sup> In large part they dispute the conclusion because the analysis ignores (1) non-overt demands (e.g., needs and preferences) as inputs to the political process, (2) the effect of decisions on groups not participating in



the decision process, and (3) the evaluations of the consumers of governmental policies.

Backrach and Baratz ask, "Can the researcher overlook the chance that some person or association could limit decision-making to relatively noncontroversial matters, by influencing community values and political procedures and rituals . . . ?" Their answer is clearly that by limiting political analysis to overt decisions in the governmental sphere, Dahl and other pluralists have missed the role that elites play in mobilizing bias, i.e., in defining the nature and stakes of the public political game.

The most significant argument of Backrach and Baratz for this discussion is that their critique of the elite and pluralist approaches leads them to begin their political analysis with the study of who get what rather than the process of who gets what. They state, "we ask neither 'who runs things here?' nor 'does anyone run things here?' but rather, 'Is the distribution of benefits and privileges highly unequal and, if so, why?'"<sup>10</sup> The role of public decisions and even politics itself is to be shown rather than assumed.

#### Political Science and the Study of Policy Consequences

A shift in the definition of democracy--from a definition based on the nature of the political process to one based in part upon the results of the process--may be occurring in conjunction with a greater concern for evaluating governmental performance along many

other dimensions. Dolbreare argues that political scientists should be using a variety of criteria, including notions of democracy and the viewpoints of consumers.<sup>11</sup>

Dolbreare notes that the new approach is concerned with the allocation of burdens and benefits. Dahl defines democracy in terms of participation of citizens but Dolbreare conceives of democracy as, "not just civil rights and participation," but also "the consistency of results with the desires of masses of people." Thus, Dolbreare argues that we should "begin to view politics through the eyes of the consumer, to consider the substance and consequences of policy for people and problems within the society." Thus democracy requires more than the consent of the majority of the governed, but also their positive evaluation of the effect of government on their lives.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Daniel Moynihan begins his discussion of the problems of Negro family life with the role of results or output, in this case equality of results, in defining democracy.

"Liberty and Equality are the twin ideals of American democracy . . . By and large, liberty has been the ideal with the higher social prestige in America. It has been the middle class aspiration, par excellence . . . Equality, on the other hand, has enjoyed tolerance more than acceptance . . . The idea of equality does not ordain that all persons end up, as well as start out equal . . . (but) it is increasingly demanded that the distribution of success and failure within one group be roughly comparable to that within other groups. It is not enough that all individuals start out on even terms, if the members of one group almost invariably end up to the fore, and those of another to the rear. This is what ethnic politics are all about in America . . ."<sup>13</sup>

The question of the degree to which governmental bureaucracies respond to the wishes of those they should serve has also been related to discussion of individual and societal problems. To cite but two examples, Robert Lyke has argued, "The feeling that the urban school board is unresponsive has caused a crisis of legitimacy in many Northern cities."<sup>14</sup> In The Alienated Voter, Murray Levin argues, "the politically-alienated believe that their vote makes no difference. This belief arises from the feeling that political decisions are made by a group of political insiders who are not responsive to the average citizen."<sup>15</sup> Thus the question of governmental responsiveness is significant in terms of the effects of non-responsiveness on feelings of political legitimacy and alienation.<sup>16</sup>

A theory or conceptual framework is required (a) to define the relation between what citizens prefer their government to do and government functioning (b) to delineate and analyze the importance of factors inhibiting and fostering the relation, and (c) to generate empirical work relating to the concept, e.g., the consequences for individuals and the governmental system under different magnitudes of the relation between citizen preferences and government functioning.

#### Theoretical Approaches and Responsiveness

Although several political science theories explicitly consider the issues of public preferences and policy consequences, David Easton's framework, and empirical work based upon the framework,<sup>17</sup> most successfully incorporate these concepts.

### Rational Man Theory

In An Economic Theory of Democracy, Anthony Downs describes the voter as trying to maximize support. Within this context, voters compare utility streams from present and alternative governments.<sup>18</sup> Thus the evaluation of governmental outputs by citizens is of crucial concern. But Downs views the conditions of uncertainty, diversity of positions and intensity, and information costs as modifying any conclusions about governmental responsiveness to citizens. His effort is valuable in specifying variables which affect responsiveness but the questionable nature of his assumptions limits the utility of his theory as a general framework with which to view citizen evaluation and governmental performance.

Several authors ask if governments really wish to maximize support or if voters act rationally.<sup>19</sup> The model's assumptions are also limited because of the assumptions about the formal political structure, i.e., partisanship and elections. That is, many governmental bodies are elected in nonpartisan elections or are appointed, e.g., school boards.

However, Downs' hypotheses, derived from his theory, may not be limited in scope to the competitive political party situations he is describing. Several of his propositions suggest that government responds to the opinions of the majority but not the minority, although this is dependent upon the saliency of the issue to both groups.<sup>20</sup> (The focus is more on the behavior of the voter than the government.) On the other hand, he clearly specifies the hypothesis

that "producers" not "consumers" tend to be favored by governmental actions.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Downs hypothesizes that the majority will win the day on those issues salient to it, and "producers," in part because of the saliency of a limited number of issues to them, will also fare well.

### Functional Theory

Functional theories are descriptive rather than predictive in purpose. The work of the Social Science Research Council, especially Almond and Verba's The Civic Culture, illustrates the limitations of dealing with responsiveness in the functional theory framework.<sup>22</sup> Almond and Verba set up a matrix of the citizen's relation to the government and include the citizen's evaluation of the system as a general object, its inputs, his self, and the government's outputs. Their basic goal was to determine the operating concepts of democracy and democratic governments, e.g., the norms and attitudes of citizens. Thus, the evaluation of output by citizens is considered one aspect of interest to those studying democracies. Unfortunately, few of their questions and little of their analysis relate to this area and when they do, they rely too much on perceptual explanations rather than explanations based on actual governmental performance.

Looking at "output affect," Almond and Verba examine the expectations of equal treatment by samples of citizens in five countries with respect to government officials (taxation and housing) and

police (traffic violations, misdemeanors). Unfortunately, they treat answers outside the context of how governmental officials and police do treat people in the five countries. For example, they state, "Why Americans should, on the one hand, expect equality of treatment in such overwhelming proportions and then drop to only around 50 percent for expectations of considerate treatment is an intriguing question. We would like to suggest . . . that Americans have not fully assimilated the role of subject in relation to administrative authorities as have the Germans and the British."<sup>23</sup> The more obvious explanation is that the answer lies in the American police and police bureaucracies who do not give equal treatment to citizens as readily as British and German police.

Almond and Verba deal with responsiveness again in their concluding theoretical chapter. They examine three "balanced disparities," consensus vs. cleavage, affectivity vs. affective neutrality, and governmental power vs. responsiveness. They follow Eckstein in claiming that a balance of each pair is required for democracy to function. They envision a democracy working where elites rule but are periodically checked by passive citizens and cycles of involvement and passivity. But, as they state, if a mechanism such as the one we postulate is to work, . . . the decision-maker must believe in the democratic myth--that ordinary citizens ought to participate in politics and that they are in fact influential.<sup>24</sup> They see much of this responsiveness as occurring by the law of anticipated reactions.



"A good deal of citizen influence over governmental elites may entail no activity or even conscious intent of citizens . . . they act responsively . . . in order to keep (citizens) from becoming active."<sup>25</sup>

Almond and Verba omit a discussion of professional bureaucrats who do not believe in the democratic myth but in professional criteria, ignore the ability of governmental officials to maintain citizen passivity by stalling, fabricating, and other non-responsive means, and ignore the treatment of minority groups in a discussion of responsiveness to a majority.

### Feedback Theory

Feedback theories assume that governments respond to their citizens and, therefore, devote more attention to the process of responsiveness. David Easton's work is the most complete and detailed exposition of a political feedback theory. In A Systems Analysis of Political Life, Easton centers his discussion around the question, "How can a political system persist?" and answers the question by stating that they must be able to respond to stress. The concept of responsiveness is central to Easton's theory. Easton views political systems in a system analysis framework where inputs enter the system, are processed into outputs, and the outputs in turn, affect inputs. He distinguishes among a variety of inputs including demands, expectations, public opinion, motivations, ideology, interests, preferences, and wants. He establishes that outputs in themselves are not sufficient to maintain support for diffuse support, legitimacy, and a

belief in common interest are all required. Thus Easton goes beyond Almond and Verba by including both perceptions of actual policy and its relation to the individual and larger orientations toward government and the political system. His theory is not deductive. Easton hypothesizes the elements that will affect the degree of responsiveness of a political system:

- (1) Sanctions on the government that politically relevant people have available (but Easton notes the uncertainty in the use of power and the perception of the powerful);
- (2) Social and political distance of authorities as this relates to their sympathy, sensitivity, intuition, and ability to comprehend;
- (3) External resources available to the authorities or government like goods, services, money;
- (4) Internal resources--open to the government like political structures, organizations, rules of behavior, talent, and organizational capabilities.<sup>26</sup>

Several criticisms of Easton's framework should be noted. First, the level of generality limits the applicability of the framework to a specific situation. Second, the framework assumes that governments are responsive. Third, the framework is not a theory; it suggests variables but the discussion of the relations among variables is limited.

Systems analysis has provided a framework for systematic, comparative input-output analysis, which has generated empirical research applicable to the issues surrounding responsiveness. In addition, the framework offered by Easton is valuable for placing the issue of responsiveness in a useful perspective.

### Systematic Input-Output Theory

Several limitations of the input-output analyses done to date are evident; most are characterized by the Lineberry and Fowler approach.<sup>27</sup> First, the studies analyze policy in relation to social-economic characteristics rather than individually based preferences, needs, or demands. Thus, for example, Lineberry and Fowler define responsiveness in terms of the relation between policy and measures of social-economic heterogeneity, but they do not examine the specific needs of Black groups in different kinds of cities. Second, the policies studied have generally been limited to individually "neutral" variables like innovations or expenditure levels. Several authors have criticized the focus on expenditure levels as theoretically limited because it fails to relate to individual benefits and costs or evaluations. It has also been found that the importance of factors relating to expenditure levels differ from those relating to expenditure tax distributions.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, input-output studies focus on decisions not their implementation. The question of what individuals receive or what they want to receive from the system is left unanswered.

Perhaps the best example of the problem with the input-output approach is related to a recurring conclusion. As Hawkins notes, although formal political structural variables appear to have a minor if not insignificant impact on policies, no clear-cut theory of the relation between significant environmental variables and policy has been confirmed. For example, Hawkins questions what role the perceptions of public officials play if environment is related to policy and suggests further research is critically needed in this area.<sup>29</sup>

In part the major limitation of these studies is a failure to operationalize variables for systematic analysis. For example, after terming the input-output studies as "the most marked innovation in the study of state and local politics" in their review of recent literature in these areas and citing the work of Dawson and Robinson, Dye, Hofferbert, Sharkansky, Kessel, Wolfinger and Field and others, Jacob and Lipsky call for more work in this area to better operationalize political system variables and measures of policy.<sup>30</sup> They would like to develop new measures of political inputs (e.g., the organization of the executive branch of government, the strength of interest groups, federal linkages) and measures of policy outputs (e.g., inequality of effects, program impact). The lack of association between political system characteristics and public policy when social and economic variables are controlled brings into question both the nature of the analysts' indicators and the importance of differences among political systems in affecting policy. Case studies are needed to generate new measures and new hypotheses.<sup>31</sup>

### Representation Theory

Prewitt and Eulau have merged representation theory with the newer input-output approach to yield several relevant conclusions.<sup>32</sup> Following Pitkin's formulation, Eulau and Prewitt define representation in terms of representative bodies responding to various publics. In their study of city councils in the San Francisco Bay Area, they divided councils into three groups according to whether they responded to (1) permanent, attentive interests (i.e., interest groups), (2) ad hoc pressures and petitions, or (3) to internal rather than external pressures. The later group included slightly less than a majority of councils.<sup>33</sup>

Eulau and Prewitt tested hypotheses relating social heterogeneity, forced turnover in elections, public support for the council, and sponsored recruitment to the council to responsiveness.<sup>34</sup> At this point their approach remains innovative but relatively undeveloped and untested. To cite but one limitation, it is questionable whether one can apply the theory to governmental agencies removed from electoral politics and city council domination (e.g., school systems).

The previous discussion has thus indicated several ways of relating governmental outputs to citizens. The process approach defines responsiveness in terms of decisions which are made in reaction to explicit demands. The rational voter approach delineates governmental responsiveness to expected utility streams. Functional theory views output affect as a characteristic of citizens not governments.

The systems analysis approach views responsiveness to demands as crucial, although the processing of predemands (e.g., needs, wants) are analyzed as significant. The input-output approach, as exemplified by Lineberry and Fowler, concentrates on macro relationships. Finally, the representation approach views responsiveness as a characteristic of governing bodies and their publics.

In summary, one could conceptualize responsiveness as the relation between the demographic characteristics, predemands (e.g., preferences, needs), or demands of individuals or collections of individuals with the attitudes or roles, decisions or policies, and decisions or policy consequences of governments. The criticisms of political science noted earlier lead me to focus on the relation between predemands, specifically preferences, and policy consequences.

#### Research Focus: Political Science

The primary purpose of this research is to analyze the relation between predemands, in this case the preferences of citizens, and actual governmental functioning, i.e., to empirically measure and analyze responsiveness. This objective is accomplished within the general framework of Easton's systems analysis. For example, the process of responsiveness described in Chapter 9 is based upon a model of preferences affecting (or not affecting) decision-makers and their responses tailored (or not tailored) to these preferences.



For the purposes of this study, responsiveness is defined as purposeful governmental actions taken to meet the preferences of some constituency with the result that the constituency's preferences are met. Congruence refers to a state where preferences are being met, but no purposeful governmental action with this goal is indicated. Thus congruence could exist without responsiveness, but responsiveness requires congruence.

The factors fostering and limiting responsiveness can be placed within several categories relating to Easton's model. First, are those factors affecting the ability of decision-makers to perceive public preferences or demands. These include David and Bellush's informal limitations on potential demanders, limitations imposed by formal structure, and characteristics and attitudes of decision-makers which affect their ability to perceive preferences and demands. Second, factors exist which affect the decision-maker's view of the necessity of following preferences or the legitimacy of following them. This would include formal political structural factors like turnover in elections and the professional beliefs of decision-makers. Finally, the decision-maker's responsiveness may be affected by his view of his ability to do what is desired. This would include the resources at his disposal. Chapter 9 explores these factors within the context studied in this research.

Several tasks are necessary to examine the concept of responsiveness:

- (1) Determine the relation of social-economic characteristics to measured preferences of individuals (See Chapters 3 and 4).
- (2) Determine the congruence between the preferences of individuals and the functioning of government which concerns them (See Chapters 5, 6, and parts of 7 and 8).
- (3) Determine the extent to which overt demands are met by government on an individual and organizational level (See Chapters 7 and 8).
- (4) Determine the extent to which congruence reflects responsiveness, i.e., the nonspuriousness of congruence and the process of responsiveness (See Chapter 9 and parts of Chapters 7 and 8).
- (5) Determine the factors which limit and foster responsiveness (See Chapter 10 and parts of Chapters 7 and 8).
- (6) Determine the effects of degrees of responsiveness on individuals (See Chapter 11).
- (7) Determine the implications of the previous results for evaluation of alternative governmental forms (See Chapter 12).

Research Focus: Education

Education is currently an area of political life that illustrates many of the points summarized above.

Educational outputs have become the focus of much research in the 1960's.<sup>35</sup> The Coleman Report, the National Assessment of Public Schools, and recent arguments over performance contracting bring attention to the need to define desired and measured effects of schooling.<sup>36</sup> Recent studies have questioned the educational literature that examines change and innovations rather than its implementation.<sup>37</sup> Borton, for example, has been under fire from the State Board of Education for designing an open enrollment policy that allowed whites to remove themselves from integrated schools to whiter sanctuaries.

Consumer preference has been central to the political battles in urban education. Community control, tuition vouchers, and decentralization have all been offered as a means of making rigid school systems more diverse and responsive to client needs and preferences. The diversity of clients has attracted increased interest in education as educators argue not only social classes, but also racial and ethnic groups differ in their ability and educational aspirations (See Chapter 2).

The authoritarianism of schools has been questioned by educational critics like Paul Goodman and Edgar Friedenberg.<sup>38</sup> They ask whether children deserve the rights of adults and question whether the state has gone too far in requiring education until 16 years. Furthermore, more young people are spending more years in schools.

Although several observers of public education have noted the conflict between responsiveness and professionalism, few have empirically examined it. Robert Salisbury, addressing the question of how much autonomy school systems should have from a city's political system, notes that while some argue that insulation from politics allows professional educators to be free to carry out the best educational programs without being constrained by demands of non-professionals, it is also true that "insulation may make schools irresponsible in meeting demands of groups whose interests cannot be served by professional values."<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the myth of a unitary community has allowed schools to operate solely on the basis of middle class values.

Similarly, Leonard Fein argues that the conflict between professional judgments and community values is an old one and points out the conflict between liberal desires for professionalism and equalitarianism and corresponding desires to meet minority needs and demands.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Eliot noted the first conflict, over a decade ago, and discussed it in the areas of curriculum, facilities, district organization, personnel, and financing.<sup>41</sup> Roscoe Martin, examining democracy in suburban public schools, stated his finding succinctly:<sup>42</sup>

The myth that the public schools are uniformly more democratic, in terms of citizen participation and public accountability than the cities, is years overdue a critical evaluation.

His thesis is that public school teachers and administrators form an educational bureaucracy and as such, among other things, are defensive

about public criticism, assume as professionals they are right, and are homogeneous as practitioners.

Lyke's study of two medium sized East Coast cities focuses on the responsiveness of the school boards.<sup>43</sup> Asking why board members did not respond to requests of community organizations and what factors facilitate and retard responsiveness, Lyke concluded that no centralized board will be responsive. The lack of responsiveness was not due to a lack of funds or resources, board composition, or the nature of the constituents. Lyke concluded that there is a problem of political representation for there is no formal means of linking the board to citizens and the boards lacked internal diversity. Unfortunately, Lyke limits his analysis to school board decisions and community demands rather than examining the actual operation of schools and administration of policy and the desires of inactive citizens vis-à-vis the schools.

Gittell and Hollander's "Comparative Study of Institutional Response" in six large urban school systems is one of the more analytical and political centered studies of public education and in many ways its handling of responsiveness in education is typical of other work in the field.<sup>44</sup> The major concern was how and if school systems respond to needs of new client groups. The authors are interested in policy and outputs in terms of innovations, rather than inputs like student-teacher ratios, to meet these needs. Like many studies in education, they assume that adaptability as measured by

"innovation" is highly valued and is a proper goal of the system.

"Whether these programs provide meaningful solutions is of less significance to this study than the fact that some attempt was made to face up to the problem." Diffusion of innovation is valued without a concern for appropriateness.

They did examine three factors which could aid innovation:

- (1) Administrative organization of the school district--  
    authority based on expertise, not hierarchy;
- (2) Extent of participation in school policy-making;
- (3) Financial resources.

Each raises difficulties when applied to responsiveness to public preferences. Would educational expertise include agreement on educational goals and methods and parent decision role with urban parents? Would participation lead to responsiveness or follow from its absence? Would financial resources be important where issues are qualitative and not quantitative? They found that only public participation was related to their output measure. They do not discuss the problem of causality or conflicting demands inherent in participation in heterogeneous school districts.

Thus, although the issue of responsiveness is crucial in the field of public education, little work has been done to answer key questions analogous to those listed above. The purpose of this work is to examine the questions revolving around the concept of responsiveness within the context of a single public school system. An



alternative approach would be to analyze the determinants of school functioning with parental demands or preferences as one among many independent variables. However, in this work I focus on responsiveness at individual schools within the context of the school system to emphasize one criterion on which to evaluate governmental performance.

## CHAPTER 1 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For example, see Phillip Green and Sanford Levinson, ed., Power and Community: Dissenting Essays in Political Science (New York: Vintage Books, 1970). This book is a collection of essays by several social scientists who are trying to create a "new political science." In the preface (p. vii) Green and Levinson state, "A new political science must be able to focus its vision on important political issues and events, and it must be willing to confront rather than ignore the political ills of our own kind of social order."

See also David Easton's Presidential Address to the American Political Science Association, September, 1969, as published in the American Political Science Review, "The New Revolution in Political Science," LXIII, No. 4 (1969). Easton notes that from 1958 to 1968 the Review published only 3 articles on the urban crises, 4 on racial conflicts, 1 on poverty, 2 on civil disobedience, and 2 on violence in the United States. He concludes that "political science failed to anticipate the crises that are upon us."

<sup>2</sup>See Kenneth M. Dolbreare, "Public Policy Analysis and the Coming Struggle for the Soul of the Postbehavioral Revolution," in Power and Community: Dissenting Essays in Political Science, edited by Phillip Green and Sanford Levinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 85-111.

<sup>3</sup>Lasswell stated, for example, that "political analysis is not only interested in the methods by which the influential are protected or superseded. It is also concerned with the characteristics of those who obtain such values . . ." Harold Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How (Cleveland, Meridian Books, 1958), p. 97.

Martin Levin asks what difference it makes who governs in his unpublished paper given to the American Political Science Association in September, 1969, "An Empirical Evaluation of Urban Political Systems: The Criminal Courts."

<sup>4</sup>Raymond E. Wolfinger, "Nondecisions and the Study of Local Politics," and Frederick W. Frey, "Comment: On Issues and Nonissues in the Study of Power," both in American Political Science Review, LXV, No. 4 (1971), pp. 1063-1080.

<sup>5</sup>See Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953) and Robert Dahl, Who Governs (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

Nelson Polsby, Community Power and Political Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) summarizes and critiques much of the community power research. See also Richard M. Merelman, "On the Neo-elitist Critique of Community Power," American Political Science Review, LXII, No. 2 (1968), pp. 451-460 and Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>6</sup>Dolbreare, op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>8</sup>Steven M. David and Jewell Bellush, "Introduction: Pluralism, Race, and the Urban Political System," in Race and Politics in New York City: Five Studies in Policy-Making, edited by Jewell Bellush and Steven M. David (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 3-24.

<sup>9</sup>Bachrach and Baratz, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>11</sup>See Dolbreare, op. cit. It should also be noted that Charles E. Gilbert, "noted a major difficulty in evaluating bureaucratic performance over a decade ago by attempting to define twelve terms relating to administrative responsibility." Recently, James Q. Wilson argued that our expectations for the federal bureaucracy in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, equity, and fiscal integrity are in conflict. See Wilson's "The Bureaucracy Problem," The Public Interest, XVI, No. 6 (1967), pp. 3-9. The purpose of this research is to focus on one measure of governmental performance as a first step in comparing the theoretical and practical conflicts among a variety of criteria.

<sup>12</sup>Dahl, op. cit., and Dolbreare, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>13</sup>Office of Policy Planning and Research, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1965), pp. 48-49.

<sup>14</sup>Robert F. Lyke, "Representation and Urban School Boards," in Community Control of Schools, edited by Henry M. Levin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), pp. 138-168.

<sup>15</sup>Murray B. Levin, The Alienated Voter: Politics in Boston (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966).

<sup>16</sup>See Chapter 11.

<sup>17</sup>David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965).

<sup>18</sup>Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

<sup>19</sup>See Norman R. Luttbeg, ed., Public Opinion and Public Policy: Models of Political Linkage (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1968) for a good collection and discussion of articles relating to the question of voter rationality.

<sup>20</sup>Downs, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes, Democracy in Five Nations (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-78.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Easton, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup>See Brett W. Hawkins, Politics and Urban Policies (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971) for a summary of this literature and Robert Lineberry and Edward Fowler, "Reformism and Public Policies in American Cities," American Political Science Review, LXI, No. 3 (1967), pp. 701-716.

<sup>28</sup>James W. Clarke, "Environment, Process and Policy: A Reconsideration," American Political Science Review, LXIII, No. 4 (1969), pp. 1172-1182.

<sup>29</sup>Hawkins, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup>Herbert Jacob and Michael Lipsky, "Outputs, Structures, and Power: An Assessment of Changes in the Study of State and Local Politics," in Political Science Advance of the Discipline, edited by Marian D. Irish (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968).

<sup>31</sup>For a more complete development of my thoughts on this topic, see my essay review, "On The Neighborhood-based Politics of Education, Harvard Educational Review, XLII, No. 1 (1972), pp. 126-139.

<sup>32</sup>Kenneth Prewitt and Heinz Eulau, "Political Matrix and Political Representation: Prolegomenon to a New Departure From an Old Problem," American Political Science Review, LXIII, No. 2 (1969), pp. 427-441.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>James S. Coleman and others, Equality of Educational Opportunity, Washington, D.C.: Supt. of Documents, 1966 and reactions to Coleman, many of which discuss the appropriateness of various output measures, in Equal Educational Opportunity, Harvard Educational Review Reprint Series, 1969. Edward Whynne, "School Output Measures as Tools for Change," Education and Urban Society, II, November 1969.

<sup>36</sup>Similarly, many works have been devoted primarily to educational power. See Alan Rosenthal, Pedagogues and Power: Teacher Groups in School Politics (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1969), Robert S. Cahill and Stephen P. Hencky, eds., The Politics of Education in the Local Community (Danville: Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1964), Ralph B. Kimbrough, Political Power and Educational Decision-Making (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1964), and Donald J. McCarty and Charles E. Ramsey, "Community Power, School Board Structure, and the Role of Chief School Administrator," Educational Administrative Quarterly, IV, No. 2 (1968), pp. 19-33.

<sup>37</sup>David Rogers 110 Livingston Street: Politics and Bureaucracy in the New York City School System (New York: Random House, 1968).

<sup>38</sup>Edgar Z. Friedenberg, Coming of Age in America, Growth and Acquiescence (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), Paul Goodman, Growing Up Absurd (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).

<sup>39</sup>Robert H. Salisbury, "Schools and Politics in the Big City," Harvard Educational Review, XXXVII (Summer, 1967), pp. 408-424.

<sup>40</sup>Leonard J. Fein, "Community Schools and Social Theory: The Limits of Universalism," in Community Control of Schools, edited by Henry Levin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), pp. 76-99

<sup>41</sup>Thomas H. Eliot, "Toward an Understanding of Public School Policies," American Political Science Review, LIII, 1959, pp. 1032-1051.

<sup>42</sup>Roscoe C. Martin, Government and the Suburban School  
(Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962).

<sup>43</sup>Lyke, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup>Marilyn Gittell and T. Edward Hollander, Six Urban School  
Districts: A Comparative Study of Institutional Response (New  
York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968).



## CHAPTER 2

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Peter Schrag's 1967 study of the Boston Public Schools begins with a list of questions similar to the theoretical questions raised in the previous chapter.

- (1) "What does the community really expect of the schools . . . (what do) civil rights groups (and). . . lower middle class whites (expect)? What is the relation between education downtown and education in the periphery (of Boston)?
- (2) What are the schools (like) . . . are they concerned with ritual, routine, and order, or are they generally committed to the development of intellectual skills, to nurturing curiosity, and toward producing genuinely independent human beings?
- (3) What is the relationship between the political and social structure of the community and the educational program of the system. . .?"<sup>1</sup>

Schrag, who two years earlier had reported on a variety of school systems (e.g., Chicago, Newton, and Oakland) across the country, stated that "the questions one asks in Boston are the same questions one can ask in Chicago or New York or San Francisco. . . Boston is probably no more or less typical of the situation of urban education than any other metropolis."<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to address the questions raised by Schrag within a systematic, theoretical, and analytical framework.

The general research strategy was to determine how and why schools function with respect to parental preferences within a given school system by selecting a sample of schools within the school system. The schools were not to be representative of schools in the system, although an attempt was made to make the schools representative of the schools within the category of schools with similar types of children in attendance. Rather, the school selection process was to be designed to select schools which placed various demands upon the school system.

The selection of Boston as the study site was based entirely on practical considerations. A study of parental preferences and school functioning requires funds, school administration approval, and manpower. I had access to each only in Boston. The Boston Public School System is not atypical of many school systems, and the measurement and process of responsiveness could presumably be studied in Boston as well as in a variety of other cities.<sup>3</sup>

Below, a description of my gaining access to the Boston School System is described to indicate the variety of other data simultaneously being collected which helped in describing the factors relating to responsiveness, to describe the Boston School System, and to indicate that my entry was fortuitous rather than part of a major reform of the Boston Public School System. The methodology for selecting schools and measuring parental preferences and school functioning is also described.

### Gaining Access to the Boston Public Schools

My original entry into the realm of the neighborhood school in the Boston Public School System was arranged with the aid of an M.I.T. professor. He recommended that I speak to his acquaintance, a Boston elementary school principal. Both the professor and the principal were members of an ethnic group very poorly represented among Boston's administrators. Through this personal link, I arranged an appointment with the principal. About one-half of the interview consisted of the principal's statements about the uselessness of research, his lack of time for such annoyances, and the exploitation of the Boston schools by universities. The question that the principal asked was not what could he do for research, but what could research do for him and his school.

This experience was but a microcosm of the accessibility problem of the larger research projects which ultimately sponsored my research.<sup>4</sup>

In early 1967 the Danforth Foundation of St. Louis issued a press release announcing a three-year study of educational decision-making in Boston, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The Harvard Crimson soon after printed a follow-up story, complete with an interview with Boston study director, Joseph Cronin (then Assistant Professor of Educational Administration, Harvard University Graduate School of Education), about the focus on the information processes and decision-making of the Boston School Committee.<sup>5</sup> The Boston Herald Traveler, known for its desire and ability to uncover headline stories, rewrote and printed the Crimson article. Preliminary negotiations with the Boston School Superintendent collapsed as School Committeeman

Josepa Lee expressed dismay at the thought of researchers looking over his shoulder and reading his personal mail.

The hostility to research and universities was neither limited to Mr. Lee nor to a few of Boston's administrators. Just one year earlier, journalist Peter Schrag had published an "exposé" of the Boston School System after Boston personnel had given him a most hospitable tour of the system.<sup>6</sup> The system was still reeling from attacks initiating an era of Negro confrontation.<sup>7</sup> The Superintendent himself had initiated a public relations department to offset the adverse publicity of the early 1960's. Research was not popular in Boston; the protectionist behavior was increased.<sup>8</sup>

Boston school officials had many reasons for disliking universities and their personnel. School administrators felt that university personnel had given little to the solution of Boston's educational problems while using the system to produce Ph.D. theses and papers. Feedback was often promised and rarely provided. University researchers were felt to be both excessively critical yet naive about urban problems.

Despite university-school system antagonisms, prior to the premature press release, Cronin had been involved in preliminary discussions with school department officials seeking cooperation in conducting the study. His efforts had almost succeeded. As Cronin himself wrote in a working paper describing entry into the system, "the Superintendent knew Cronin's family (had played football with an uncle) and had given Cronin access as an observer of the budgetary process in 1964 and 1965

without any harm accruing to the system".<sup>9</sup> Personal ties with the Superintendent were considered most important in gaining entry for the research.

For the first eighteen months of the Danforth Study, the School Committee and the School System were observed at the boundaries. Brooklyn Derr examined university relations; others still attended public School Committee meetings; I analyzed mass media-school department relations; Steve London interviewed local businessmen; and so on. The staff and inquiry were most limited.<sup>10</sup> Although three of the 1968 members of the School Committee were newly elected in January, 1969, John Kerrigan, the newly elected Chairman of the School Committee, requested a practical study of the Boston School System. It is unclear what overcame the protective nature of the system. Perhaps the frustration which the younger School Committee members felt concerning their own access to information and ability to control the school administration was paramount. Perhaps Kerrigan pictured wide publicity for his later campaign for the office of Boston's District Attorney. (He apparently suggested to Cronin that he wanted it viewed as "the Chairman's Study.") Perhaps Kerrigan thought that the study would lessen the pressure of liberal critics on the Committee. In any event, a joint agreement was reached among Cronin, Richard Hailer of the Behavioral Sciences Center (now McBer and Associates), the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Education, the Danforth School Board Study, and the Boston School Committee. Hailer, even more so than Cronin, had strong personal, family, and ethnic ties to the top school administrative staff. The Boston School

Committee allocated \$12,000; the M.A.C.E., \$45,000; and the Danforth Foundation, \$36,000 to this effort.

The research staff for the Boston School Department Study was comprised of members of the Boston Danforth Study team, doctoral students in a field study in educational administration Field Study course at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a support staff from the Behavioral Sciences Center. The Massachusetts Advisory Council on Education and a variety of ad hoc consultants also played a formative role in the study.

The problem areas were defined, and one of ten points specifically covered this research under the rubric of school-community relations.

The study was undertaken in an aura of cooperation rather than confrontation. Virtually all school administrators helped in every way they were asked. Past experience with the school system made it clear to Cronin, et al., that cooperation could be enhanced by the use of several techniques. First, continuous meetings every few months were held by the use of several Committeemen and high level school officials, the Board of Superintendents. Second, the study staff members were given instructions on ways to cope with the hierarchical structure and protocol of the system. Each major step of the research was explained to the appropriate superintendent, and the superintendent was encouraged to communicate the appropriate information to his subordinates by letter or personal communication. The major problems occurred where this



procedure was breached. Finally, efforts were made to coordinate data collection through key researchers, e.g., the researchers best known to Area Superintendents would make all appointments with these administrators.

The Boston School Department Study Team thus had the support (financial and otherwise) and the auspices of both the School Committee and School Department. Although it was centered at Harvard, the Directors were Cronin and Hailer. The third year of the research was action-oriented with system change as the focus of the study. The research staff had a large cumulative experience in education and included one current and one former Boston teacher. By the study's data collection conclusion, the Superintendent had let it be known that he strongly backed the effort.

Thus, this research effort was not advertised as a Ph.D. thesis or an Office of Education evaluation, but rather as a part of a change effort where multiple sponsors, principals, teachers, parents, and higher administrators all had a stake in the results of the study. The instrumentality of this specific research was emphasized in both personal interviews and introductions to the various questionnaires. Distortion would thus be "rational" only if the respondent thought he could influence the change process in his preferred direction.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the history of the Boston School Department Study. First, varying amounts of tension and antagonism between the university researchers and school administration

existed throughout. The liberal ideology of the researchers was in conflict with the protective and practical nature of the school administration. Second, the gap was bridged through the exploitation of personal, family, and ethnic ties. The Study Directors were Bostonians, Irish, and most understanding of school department officials. Third, the agreement between researchers and school officials may well have been a result of liberal pressures on a conservative school committee. Fourth, and perhaps most significantly, the study did not indicate a large commitment on the part of the Boston School Committee or School Department to make radical changes in the schools.<sup>11</sup> No incumbent School Committeeman had been defeated at the polls because of ideology; no new visible pressures existed.<sup>12</sup>

A brief history of the gaining of access to the school system has been outlined. The specific thesis topic meshed with Cronin's research and the desire to establish the diversity within Boston (the action report was ultimately of the study team entitled, Organizing an Urban School System for Diversity), to establish more systematic information about the attitudes and values of Boston parents, and to describe the operation of Boston's schools in more elaborate detail. Funding for the parent survey was secured from the Boston School Department Study and from the Office of Education's Small Grant Research Program.

#### Selection of the Schools

A major problem in constructing the methodology for this study is the tension between (1) describing the attitudes of parents and the functioning of the school adequately (validity); and (2) examining

a large enough range of types of parents to draw conclusions about the Boston schools (reliability). Given a limited amount of time and funds, only a limited number of parents could be interviewed and schools visited. The major limiting factor was the budget for interviewing parents; 400 parent interviews could be completed. Thus, a major question was how the 400 parent interviews should be allocated.

The Boston Public School District includes three levels of schools: elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools. This study includes only elementary schools for several reasons:

- (1) Student influence over the functioning of the schools is minimized so the effect of parents is more easily isolated.
- (2) Parent concern is maximized because of the "susceptibility" of younger children.
- (3) Homogeneity of parental background at each school is greater due to the Boston System of small, neighborhood elementary schools (with few exceptions) and city- or area-wide large secondary schools.
- (4) Dropouts are of less significance due to minimum age laws.

Unfortunately, the studying of elementary schools precluded the use of student descriptions of the schools and more easily constructed content (e.g., academic vs. vocational curriculum) variables.

The original study design specified the selection of schools where five racial and ethnic groups were concentrated. Irish, Italian, and Negro schools predominate within Boston. Recent census data indicate that as much as 75 percent of Boston's population may fall into one of these three groups. More significantly, the place of these groups in the social and political structure of Boston differs significantly.

Many urban sociologists see the city as the entrance point for immigrants to America. The city serves to teach American culture to immigrants and provide them with their first opportunity to fully participate in American society. Viewed in this light, the Irish entered Boston in the 1800's and now control many of its institutions; the Italians came more recently and are in the process of receiving positions of power within Boston (and Massachusetts); and Negroes from the South are the next group, yet to be assimilated and yet to gain positions of influence. To cite the most conspicuous example of this process, when the research began there were only two Negro principals, less than a dozen Italian principals, and virtually all the remaining school principals in the Boston Public Schools were Irish.

Both the Italian and Negro parents have been in the minority; but while Negroes have at times adapted a confrontation strategy vis-à-vis the School Committee, Italian parents have not. The immediate question is whether Italians have received more of what they seek from the school system than have Negroes. A recent survey indicates at least that Italians are more satisfied than Negroes about their schools.<sup>13</sup>

Chinese were included for several reasons. First, they were another racial minority. Like the Blacks, they are huddled in a poor ghetto (Boston's own Chinatown). Their history in Boston has been a long one. Their educational values, and achievements, however, were thought to be far different from Blacks.

In the original study design schools serving Jewish children were included because of the traditional Jewish high desire for educational achievement and the fact that Jews are a small minority within Boston. Jews would thus likely be comparable to ambitious, hard-working, and educationally-oriented Chinese but with the requisite skills to participate in the political and educational process.

To insure a range of parental preferences, and to allow for a separation of the effects of social class from ethnicity, the school sampling procedure was designed so that a working class and middle class school would be selected within each ethnic group where one existed. Thus ten schools were to be selected:

<u>Social Class</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Italians</u>	<u>Jewish</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Black</u>
Working Class	1	1	1	1	1
Middle Class	1	1	1	1	1
Total Schools = 10					

It was also stipulated that a school would be classified according to the background of at least two-thirds of its student body. If a category still lacked a school at this level, the level would be

lessened to try to include the group. Thus, most integrated schools would not be included within the sampling frame. It was felt that the extreme case should be examined first--schools where parents were likely to have similar preferences rather than schools where preferences were more likely to be mixed. Similarly, schools which had special characteristics that would make both the preferences of parents and the response of the system atypical were eliminated. The major category here was rapidly changing neighborhoods. Other schools eliminated were new schools (less than two years old) and schools for special students (e.g., school for the deaf).

The Massachusetts State Racial Imbalance Law of 1965 requires Boston to report the number of Negro, Chinese, Caucasian, and Spanish surnamed children in all its schools each year. These figures were used to determine the percentage of Negro and Chinese students at each elementary school. Unfortunately, no such statistics existed on the percentage of Jewish, Irish, or Italian children. It was most difficult to determine these percentages.

Unfortunately, census tract data was of little help. The 1960 census was already ten years old. The areas where the least was known about the ethnicity of the children (e.g., Brighton and Hyde Park) were the areas where the most migration since 1960 had taken place. In addition, census tracts are far from coterminous with school district boundaries. A given tract may include up to several elementary schools. Census data does not indicate the ethnicity of the children, only the



foreign parentage, if such exists. Again, in the areas where the least was known about the population, the number of third- and fourth-generation people was greatest. Finally, the census does not report religious data. Areas with Jews can be identified from locating those born in Russia. The process, at best, is of questionable validity; but even worse, Jewish parents of children in elementary school are unlikely to have parents (as opposed to grandparents) born in the U.S.S.R.

The preferred method of gathering data on ethnicity depended upon "experts" describing the ethnic and social backgrounds of children in the Boston Public Schools. Few accurate experts were found. The greatest effort was made to locate Jewish school children. The following methods were attempted:

- (1) Analysis of a questionnaire sent to a sample of Boston schools prior to the decision to locate ethnic and economic information about parents.  
(Principals responded to the open-ended questions with descriptions like "well off," "American," etc.)
- (2) Interviewing study directors of surveys completed in Boston. (Directors could only specify general areas like Mattapan and could not specify where Jewish elementary school children were to be found.)
- (3) Interviewing knowledgeable about Boston like the Boston School Department Study Staff. (Knowledgeables agreed where Jews had been residing but felt most Jews with school children had left Boston.)

(4) Telephone calls to local poverty program neighborhood centers, decentralized city halls, and poverty agencies. (Respondents suggested I speak to other persons; few knew any specific information themselves.)

(5) Telephone calls to active temples in Boston.

(Rabbis and Hebrew School officials did name a few specific schools, but Boston administrators indicated that few Jewish children still attended these schools.)

(6) Boston Public School Area Superintendents. (These administrators were asked specifically, for example, what schools within their area had the most middle class Jewish children.)

In several cases some agreement was achieved as to where a specific group attended school. Where agreement was not reached, the estimates of Boston Superintendents were most often used.

The table below summarizes the number of schools falling into the ten cells:

<u>Social Class</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Jewish*</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Chinese</u>
Working Class	15	6	2	25	1
Middle Class	5	5	3	2	0
	Other = 91		Total N = 155		

\*A school was classified as serving Jews if more than 30 percent of its student body were Jewish. Similarly, a school was classified as serving Middle Class Blacks if more than 25 percent of its student body fell into this category.

From each cell where more than one school existed, a school was drawn randomly. In the small categories the school with the highest percentage or most certain number of the minority group were selected. Time (and access problems) did not permit "fishing" expeditions.

Several groups were never located. Middle class Chinese are scarce in Boston; no school has a large number of this group. As far as I could ascertain, no Boston school serves very many (over 10 percent) Jewish children. Although some schools were reported to have been almost entirely Jewish and now over 25 percent Jewish, only three Jewish respondents were interviewed at the two "Jewish" schools.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, one "Jewish middle class school" was in reality an Italian school. It is possible that another school in its district served more Jewish children, but there was insufficient time and money to investigate this possibility. The working class Jewish school was located in a neighborhood now dominated by a massive housing project. Few Jews still attend the school.

An effort to locate large numbers of middle class Black parents also failed. At the most likely school, covering a district where Black leaders have recently remodeled townhouses and encouraged widescale redevelopment, only 2 wives in the sample of 40 parents reported that their husbands had any college education. The alternatives that Boston Negroes now have to public education in Roxbury are numerous and most utilized by the middle class.<sup>15</sup>

Three major pieces of data were required for this study: the preferences of parents at each school, a description of the functioning of each school, and data concerning the causes of congruence between parental preference and school functioning.

### Measuring Parental Preferences

The procedure for determining Parental Preferences was the use of survey research to interview a random sample of 40 mothers of the children in each of the ten schools. The questions were primarily closed-ended, but supplementary interviews were also completed. Note that in some cases fathers or other relatives were interviewed and the number of completed interviews per school ranged from 38 to 42.

There are several advantages to using Survey Research Procedures:

- (1) Survey research is systematic; others can now reanalyze and compare the results. Gans' study of Boston's West End, for example, is not open to such evaluation; the people have left and only Gans' interpretation of an unknown number of interviews remain.<sup>16</sup>
- (2) The data can be manipulated statistically in order to locate new dimensions of preferences and to test hypothesized dimensions. For example, a factor analysis of data indicated that a hypothesized curriculum dimension, traditionalism, did not include the attitudes predicted.

- (3) The results can be described statistically. For example, Gans reports that the working class Italians in the West End were more object than person-oriented; but the reader is given no measure of the number of Italians meeting this description.<sup>17</sup> A measure of the homogeneity of the preferences of parents at a given school was required for this study.
- (4) Survey research, especially the use of personal interviews with closed-ended questions, permits the interviewing of less articulate populations. Much of the previous work in the area of educational attitudes has relied on written questionnaires. A large proportion of functionally illiterate parents are located in urban areas, thus most of the studies have focused on lower middle class to upper class suburbs.
- (5) Personal interviews permit a matching of the race of the respondent and interviewer. This increases validity over the written questionnaire or over personal interviews by researchers of non-matching race.
- (6) Although survey research is expensive, the fact that elementary schools have relatively small populations (i.e., number of parents whose children attend the school) means that only a small

random sample is required to adequately describe the total population of the school. For example, one variable, independence value, could be defined within about a 10 percent range at the 95 percent confidence level.

Unfortunately, there are several disadvantages to the Survey Research procedures:

- (1) Survey research fosters a tendency to weigh all responses equally, but some parents may have more "important" preferences. For example, those parents active in the parent organization may well make their opinions better known. The degree to which the preferences of some parents are followed more than the preferences of other parents is incorporated into the analysis below.
- (2) Survey research, especially closed-ended questions, force respondents into the researcher's categorizations. Respondents may have different ways of viewing the subject. This problem cannot be avoided; systematic interviewing by its nature places structure on the interview. To lessen the effects of this, categorizations and questions which had been developed and factor analyzed after extensive field interviewing were employed, the use of Downey's questions on the



goals of education fall into this set of questions (See Chapter 3). In addition, open-ended qualitative interviews supplemented the survey research.

- (3) Limiting the interviewing to mothers reduces the meaning of the results. A limitation on funds and the consequent limitation on the funds and the consequent limitation on the number of interviews forced a decision as to which parent should be interviewed. The expense of locating the father, the fact that mothers are generally more responsible for child-raising in elementary school than fathers, and the number of families lacking a father led to the decision to interview mothers of elementary children. Questions concerning the mother's view of her husband's educational views were tried throughout the pretests. Few differences of opinion were noted in this manner.

#### Selecting the Parents Sample

At each of the ten elementary schools arrangements were made with the principal to select a sample of children (and thus parents) from the classcards. The classcards include the name, address, telephone number, and grade of each child in a given school. Two procedures for selecting the sample were used. In about half the schools, systematic sampling was done on the total number of classcards to yield approximately 80-100 names. Because classcards are given to each

child, this did result in a slight oversampling of families with more than one child in a given school. In the remaining schools, the teachers were asked to systematically select every n number of children and copy the appropriate information from the class or emergency card.

The lists were then used again for sampling the original 40 families. When a potential respondent had moved, did not live at the address and could not be located, or was not at home for the initial visit and two call backs, another name was randomly selected from the sampling list. Forty families per school were to be interviewed. Unfortunately, time limitations and administrative difficulties prevented exactly 40 interviews from being completed at each school.

The survey interviewing was completed by Transcentury Corporation of Washington, D.C., a survey research firm specializing in urban and working class interviewing.

The white interviewers were all college students; the Black interviewers had working class backgrounds; the Chinese interviewers were college educated. Less than ten interviews were conducted by racially mismatched interviewers. The names and addresses of the parents were used as a basis for assigning interviewers by race.

Table 2-1 reports the percentage of non-responses, not at homes, and residual uncompleted interviews. Using 397 as the number of completed interviews (the actual figure was 415 but 18 interviews were lost), the total number of attempted interviews was  $397 + 95$  or 492.

TABLE 2-1  
Parent Survey-Type of Noncompletion by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Refusals</u>	<u>Number of Noncompletions</u>			<u>Total</u>
		<u>Moved</u>	<u>3 Tries</u>	<u>Other</u>	
Jones	3	3	3	0	9
Leary	9	2	3	0	15
Wong	3	2	5	0	10
Marino	4	0	9	1	14
Murphy	2	2	0	1	5
Ming	4	0	0	0	4
Kelley	6	4	2	0	12
Brown	1	1	1	1	4
Carlino	4	1	2	1	8
Davis	7	1	3	3	14
Total	43	16	28	7	95

A total of 43 people refused to be interviewed, 28 were not at home for any of the three interview attempts, 16 had moved, and 8 were unavailable for assorted reasons. There appear to be no systematic differences among schools in the non-response rate.

The Leary, Murphy, and Carlino Schools all primarily serve middle class children. The average number of refusals for these schools is 5 interviews, for the remaining schools, it is 4. These schools were less likely to have potential respondents be not at home. The total reasons for non-response show no difference. The schools serving Black children (Jones and Brown) were not much different from the other eight schools; but the more Italian schools (Carlino, Marino, and Leary) do show a higher non-response rate. The non-response average is 12 interviews per school; the other schools average about 9.

#### Measuring School Functioning

School functioning was ascertained in several ways. First, an hour to hour-and-one-half interview was held with the principal to explain the research, request cooperation, and ask open-ended questions concerning his role as principal, special characteristics of the school and its staff, and relations with parents. Second, all teachers at each school were orally interviewed for five minutes to one-half hour by members of the Boston School Study Staff. The questions focused on changes desired in the school and school system, and relations with parents. Third, at each school where the principal's permission was received, a small sample of teachers were observed in their classrooms for twenty minutes to an hour. In three schools it was not possible to observe

teachers who had not volunteered to be observed. Fourth, questionnaires were given to each teacher and principal at the schools to be returned individually by mail to the Boston School Department Study Staff. The questionnaire took approximately one hour to complete. The length of the questionnaire and the time of year it was administered (up to less than a week before the school year's end) limited the response rate. Forty-five percent were returned, about average for mail surveys of this nature.

Great care was taken to receive the approval and support of the principals of the selected schools. First, the Board of Superintendents, the Director of Elementary Supervision, and the respective Area Superintendents were informed of this phase of the overall Boston study. Permission was secured to select a sample of parents and to visit the schools.

Several minor problems did develop. As Derr suggests, school administrators are most protective of their "core technology," i.e., classroom teaching.<sup>16</sup> Three principals refused to grant permission for our staff to observe teachers in the classroom. In actuality, however, the large majority of teachers encouraged our staff to observe their classrooms after or while they answered our open-ended questions. It was also apparent that the way permission was requested was most significant. I visited each principal initially to secure permission and to explain the study's purpose. Problems about observing teachers always were expressed in terms of, "but you didn't mention that originally!"

The most significant point about this protectionist expression is its relation to innovative support in the classroom (See Chapter 5). Principals who tolerated innovation were more protective of their teachers. Similarly, the most cooperative principals in general were the most conservative educationally. It took me several days to realize that our staff was considered not as "Harvard researchers" but as "the Superintendent's team." The Superintendent had formally called for cooperation via the administrative directive. Given the conservative nature of the upper hierarchy of the school system, those harboring innovators probably perceived a greater threat.

#### Describing the Schools

The parental survey data indicates that the final sample of ten elementary schools does not correspond to the ten proposed in the original design (See Tables 2-2 and 2-3). Six schools served working class parents. The Brown School is the school where parents are poorest; almost one-third of the parent respondents report annual incomes under \$4,000. Forty percent of the parents at the Marino School report family incomes of over \$10,000; but the educational level of the parents is only slightly above those at the other working class schools, the Jones, Kelley, Ming, and Wong Schools.

The major differences among the working class schools are tied to ethnic and racial differences. The Brown and Jones Schools serve an almost entirely Black clientele; the Kelley serves the Irish; Marino, the Italians; Ming, the Chinese; and Wong, a mixture of all groups. The



TABLE 2-2

## Demographic Description of the Parents by School (1)

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage Having Demographic Characteristic</u>			
	<u>College Education (At Least One Parent)</u>	<u>Annual Family Income Over \$10,000</u>	<u>Professional or Managerial Occupation</u>	<u>Head of Household Works Own Home</u>
Brown	3%	27%	8.3%	60.0% 7.5%
Jones	3	0	7.1	62.5 7.5
Kelley	7	15	12.5	80.0 24.4
Marino	0	29	7.7	77.5 35.0
Ming	8	7	7.7	97.5 10.0
Wong	8	10	7.7	80.0 2.5
Davis	23	27	34.3	79.5 10.3
Carlino	16	43	27.8	86.8 68.4
Leary	26	70	37.8	92.3 94.9
Murphy	58	83	74.3	95.0 90.0

TABLE 2-3

## Demographic Description of Parents by School (2)

<u>School</u>	<u>Negro</u>	<u>Irish*</u>	<u>Italian*</u>	<u>Chinese*</u>	<u>Other*</u>	<u>Percentage Having Demographic Characteristic</u>			<u>Under 40 Years Old</u>	<u>Married</u>
						<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Foreign Born</u>			
Brown	93%	0%	0%	0%	7%	15.0%	2.5%	77.5%	47.5%	
Jones	97	0	0	0	3	15.0	2.5	87.5	50.0	
Kelley	0	73	2	0	25	92.7	2.4	68.3	78.0	
Marino	0	13	75	0	13	92.5	2.5	67.5	82.5	
Ming	0	3	0	98	0	10.0	95.0	62.5	97.5	
Wong	38	3	3	45	13	15.0	45.0	60.0	65.0	
Davis	8	28	13	5	47	59.0	33.3	69.2	74.4	
Carlino	0	24	37	0	40	81.6	0.0	63.1	89.5	
Leary	0	41	18	3	38	71.8	12.8	53.9	97.4	
Murphy	0	60	8	0	33	82.5	5.0	47.5	97.5	

\*Ethnicity was established by the respondent's self-identification or grandparent's country of birth.

schools serving Blacks have younger parents, less likely to be married or working. The two schools serving Chinese (Ming and Wong) serve more parents who work and are foreign born (i.e., born in China).

In short, the Brown and Jones Schools serve children of young Blacks including many mothers without spouses and on welfare; the Kelley School serves Irish families in public housing and holding jobs on Boston's waterfront; the Marino School serves semi-skilled Italians with relatively high incomes but limited educations; and the Ming and Wong Schools serve the offspring of Chinese immigrants, the parents working as waiters and cooks and seamstresses.

About three-quarters of the respondents from the Davis School are like the working class school parents. The Davis School serves Blacks, whites, and Chinese children, although it serves whites predominantly. Unlike the schools serving the working class, the Davis School serves a substantial number of children of college educated professional parents. About one-quarter to one-third of the parent respondents fall into this category.

Three schools are primarily serving middle class parents. Each of the schools serves a wide variety of white parents. The Carlino School respondents were primarily Italian and Irish; two-thirds are homeowners, most born in the Boston area. Respondents are primarily high school graduates earning around \$10,000 annually. Many are policemen, firemen, and government service workers.

The Leary School parents are further up the social and economic ladder. For example, twice as many families at the Leary School are earning over \$10,000 than at the Carlino School. While about two-thirds of the Carlino families own their own home, 95 percent of the Leary parents are homeowners. The Leary parents include more Irish than Italian respondents. The parents at both schools are older than the working class parents.

Finally, the Murphy School serves upper middle class parents. Almost all earn over \$10,000 annually, over half have college educations. The Murphy School serves primarily Irish parents, but many other white groups are represented.

## CHAPTER 2 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Peter Schrag, Village School Downtown: Boston Schools, Boston Politics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., and Peter Schrag, Voices in the Classroom: Public Schools and Public Attitudes (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).

<sup>3</sup>While the Boston Public Schools may not be typical of urban school systems in general, they do appear to have much in common with large, non-Southern, population loosing cities like Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Milwaukee.

Statistically, the Boston Public Schools had 94,766 pupils in the fall of 1968, ranking near the bottom of the 15 largest cities in school system size. Boston is approximately the size of Milwaukee, New Orleans, San Francisco, and St. Louis. Its average per pupil expenditures is about average for these 15 cities.

Of the 43 cities with a core population of over 300,000 in 1968 statistics, Boston was one of 10 to be losing both population and public school enrollment. This list included Detroit, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh. The number of Negro pupils was about equal to the average for Northern cities. Like the majority of the 43 cities Boston's school board is elected and represented at large districts. Boston has only five members on its School Committee; they serve only two-year terms.

Financially, the Boston School System faces the same problems as other big city systems and to some extent more serious. Its property value has increased 12th among the 13 most populous cities from 1930 to 1960. It ranks 25th among the 37 largest cities SMSA's in per pupil expenditures. The Massachusetts state aid to education penalizes Boston in comparison to many wealthy suburbs as in many states.

In short, Boston has many of the same characteristics of Northern large city school systems. Its financial difficulties are great, perhaps more severe than most. Its percentage of Negro pupils is average, with perhaps more severe racial antagonisms. Its School Committee structure is similar to most, but somewhat smaller and with shorter terms for members than most.

See the Health, Education, and Welfare Urban Education Task Force, Urban School Crisis: The Problems and Solutions (Washington, D.C.: Washington Monitoring Service, January 5, 1970), for comparison data.

<sup>4</sup>Brooklyn C. Derr has described the antipathy between Boston Public School Administrators and university researchers in his dissertation. See Brooklyn C. Derr, "Communication and Integration in a Large City School System" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1971).

<sup>5</sup>For a more complete description of the problem of access to the Boston schools, see Joseph M. Cronin, "Methodology and Entry" (unpublished working paper, Danforth Study, Harvard University, 1969).

<sup>6</sup>Schrag, Village School Downtown, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>Robert L. Crain, The Politics of School Desegregation (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968).

<sup>8</sup>Jeffrey A. Raffel, "A Public School System Responds to Public Criticism" (unpublished working paper, Danforth Study, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1969).

<sup>9</sup>Cronin, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph M. Cronin and others, unpublished Danforth Study manuscript. (Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1971) for a description of the politics of the Boston School Committee.

<sup>11</sup>Philadelphia had undergone such a transformation in 1965. Attempts at widespread changes within the public school system were attempted. By 1970, at least one sympathetic observer concluded that even with the commitment to change of higher officials, the "revolution" had failed. See Harry S. Resnick, Turning On the System: War in the Philadelphia Public Schools (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

<sup>12</sup>See Lawrence Iannacone and Frank W. Lutz, Politics, Power, and Policy: The Governing of Local School Districts (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970) for a study of the significance of the ouster of incumbent school boards in educational politics and policy.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Riley and David Cohen, "Contour of Opinion," unpublished working paper, Center for Educational Policy (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1970).

<sup>14</sup>The teacher-administrator survey indicates that administrators constantly overestimated the number of Jewish children in their schools. For example, at one school the principal estimated that 20 percent of the children were Jewish; no teacher estimated the percentage as over 5 percent. At least one principal was incapable of making any reasonable estimate concerning parents; he



thought half the children were Jewish, the assistant principal estimated this figure was 10 percent. The myth of a unitary community, i.e., that all children are alike and should be treated alike, has yet to die in many areas of Boston.

<sup>15</sup>See Cronin and others, op. cit. on alternatives to the Boston Public Schools

<sup>16</sup>Herbert J. Gans, The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans (New York: Free Press, 1962).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Derr, op. cit.

### CHAPTER 3

#### PRIOR RESEARCH: FACTORS RELATED TO PARENTAL PREFERENCES IN EDUCATION

"The Boston Irishman. . . . has never regarded public education as an important device for social or economic advancement--his sights have generally been limited to small goals anyway--and he therefore can't understand what everyone finds so bad or crucial about the schools. The schools provide discipline and order and jobs, they are less crowded than the parochial schools, and they are clean. Why is everyone complaining?"<sup>1</sup>

Journalist Peter Schrag attempts to characterize the Boston Irish with a few broad-brushed strokes, but a systematic study of school system responsiveness across several ethnic and social class groups in Boston required a more complete and rigorous delineation of parental preferences. The purpose of this chapter is to:

- (1) Describe the parental preference areas (content, methods, and parent role).
- (2) Describe the conclusions of qualitative and quantitative studies in these parental preference areas, especially with reference to dimensions of preferences and differences among social class and ethnic groups on these dimensions.
- (3) Describe the variables used within the parental preferences questionnaire to measure these dimensions.

### Specifying Areas of Parental Preferences

To limit the number of areas of parental preferences measurement, several criteria for inclusion were established:

- (1) Concern to public
- (2) Concern to educators
- (3) Concern to Boston parents
- (4) Concern to Boston educators

A sample of preference areas was required which would be representative of significant issues to educators and parents in Boston and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

The three preference areas selected are of major interest:

- (1) Educational content
- (2) Educational methods
- (3) Parent role in educational decision-making

Curriculum and the nature of the content of education has been a continual subject of public discussion. Several topics have been of recent concern, e.g., sex education, Black history, and science curriculum. The most controversial item in the methods area is physical or corporal punishment in the schools. Boston has recently changed its policy in the wake of court decisions and Congressional hearings. Community involvement and parent involvement in schools has been an issue of major concern in urban areas throughout the late 1960's and throughout suburbs in the 1950's. Parent roles raise issues not only of "interference" but also of the role of non-professionals in schools.

Educators have had frequent debates over the goals and purposes of education. Issues have included the role of political topics in the

schools, the place for science education, etc. The selection of the proper teaching methods is of continuous concern to educators. Today, the issue is computer-assisted learning; in the 1950's, the new math was the subject of the battle. Perhaps nothing is of greater concern to educators than limiting "interference" from non-professionals. The New York City decentralization crisis of 1968-1969 was engineered as much by the teacher's union as the Black parents.

Perhaps the best method of evaluating the degree to which these three preference areas concern parents is to analyze questions in the parent survey formulated to measure the educational concerns of parents.

Parents were asked to select the three most and three least important things in making a good elementary school from a list of ten items. Two items dealt with content ((1) curriculum and subjects taught and (2) the character traits emphasized in the school), two with methods (methods used to teach children and methods used to discipline children), and one with parent role (relation between the school staff and parents).

Table 3-1 summarizes the responses of the 397 respondents. The major concerns of parents centered on the classroom, i.e., the number of pupils, teaching methods, and the quality of teachers. The three areas of parental preferences selected for study appear to be as important to Boston parents as physical characteristics of the schools and somewhat less important than class size.

Table 3-2 indicates that 30 percent of the likes and 31 percent of the dislikes on the open-ended questions concerning the things parents

TABLE 3-1

Parental Views on the Importance of Elements  
Of Good Elementary Schools

<u>Element</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents Selecting Element as Important</u>
Class size	52%
Teaching methods	41
Formal educational content (curriculum)	37
Teachers and principal quality	37
Teaching materials	32
Parent-school relations	26
Building and facilities quality	24
Discipline methods	20
Types of children	10
Informal educational content	6

TABLE 3-2

## Parental Likes and Dislikes of Their Child's School

<u>Element</u>	<u>Percentage of Likes Indicated</u>	<u>Percentage of Dislikes Indicated</u>
Teacher quality	33%	9%
Formal educational content (curriculum)	11	8
School location	10	0
Other	10	14
Building and facilities quality	8	27
Parent-school relations	7	5
Teaching methods	5	3
School atmosphere	4	5
Discipline in school	3	10
Class size	3	5
School or school system policy	3	13



like and dislike about the elementary school attended by their children explicitly fall into one of these preference areas. On the other hand, about one-third of the likes and almost half of the dislikes do not fall into these categories. Thus the three areas are of some concern to parents, but do not include all concerns. Physical facilities and class size, for example, also appear to concern parents.<sup>3</sup>

Charges that Boston's curriculum is outmoded are often heard from young Boston teachers. A curriculum department was only recently established in Boston. Educational content remains an area of concern. The Boston Teacher's Union is guaranteed the use of corporal punishment in its contract with the School Department. The role of parents as aides in the schools has upset a good many Boston teachers. Many claim that parents left to watch children at lunch hour leave the children in quite an excited state. In short, interviews with Boston teachers have indicated issues of educational content, methods, and parent role are on the minds of Boston teachers.

#### General Orientation Toward Schools and Education

Before examining past research in the three areas, content, methods, and parent roles, it is necessary to summarize past research on the general orientations of class and ethnic groups toward schools and education.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the educational aspirations and support given to children to support the fulfillment of these aspirations will be examined.

It should be noted that it is not the purpose of this chapter and the next to delineate the causes or factors determining parental preferences or attitudes. Variables like age, residence, family size and order, personality characteristics, etc., may well be related to parental preferences. The variables most consistently related, however, are social class and ethnicity; and the variables which differ most across Boston's parents are based upon social class and ethnic differences. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ability and way that school systems deal with the latter type of diversity, not to determine the causes of diversity. It is the political meaning of the relation between social class and ethnicity and preferences which is of interest.

Research has indicated that middle class parents have greater educational aspirations for their children than working class parents. Gans, for example, describes political conflict vis-à-vis the Levittown school system between "upper middle class people, eager to get their children into school, the sooner to qualify for college competition" and the lower middle class people, "concerned only that the children would get good white collar jobs once they finished their schooling."<sup>5</sup> Statistical evidence is more complete for the aspirations of children. Antonovsky, for example, found that while 59 percent of the white high school students in his sample mentioned some college in response to post high school desires; 83 percent of the middle class teenagers explicitly mentioned college.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, even this simple finding must be examined more closely. Antonovsky, for example, found that there was only a small social class difference in aspirations among Negro students, with 61 percent of the working class and 66 percent of the middle class students desiring a college education.<sup>7</sup> Handel and Rainwater even suggest that as far as aspirations for attending college this may be "one of the life areas in which working class expression of attitude appears increasingly to approximate those of the middle class. . . it is now commonplace for working class parents to express their educational aspirations for their children in such terms as "I want them to go to college. . ."<sup>8</sup> There is also a question as to whether "social class" or each or any of its usual components, income, education, and occupation are tied to college aspirations. Rehlberg and Westley, for example, found that both father's occupation and father's education had independent effects on college aspirations.<sup>9</sup> In short, although many studies indicate a greater aspiration for college among the middle than working class, the relation may not hold within certain subgroups (e.g., Negroes), may be smaller than has been indicated in the past, and may not have as simple a relation as indicated.

Although the measurement and description of educational aspirations of various ethnic groups has been closely linked to studies of the need for achievement, there are a few significant exceptions. Coleman and his associates asked the students how far their parents wanted them to go in school.<sup>10</sup> They found the percentage of mothers aspiring to post high school training, according to the children, were similar across

whites (33 percent), Negroes (30 percent), Mexicans (30 percent), Puerto Ricans (32 percent), Indians (33 percent), and Orientals (29 percent). The Antonovsky study indicates that while Negroes' aspirations equaled whites in the working class, they were over 15 percent below whites in the middle class.<sup>11</sup>

The N Achievement studies, while fairly consistent in characterizing ethnic groups, provide little information concerning racial groups. Strodbeck found that while Jews and white Protestants' parents require early independence of their children (a high correlate of the need for achievement), Catholics, especially Italian rather than Irish, are less demanding.<sup>12</sup> Lenski reports that independence training is expected at an earlier age by white Protestant than Catholic mothers. Negro mothers fell in between.<sup>13</sup> The first national study to measure N Achievement through the Thematic Apperception Test, however, did not confirm the religious differences in N Achievement.<sup>14</sup> McClelland suggests that as assimilation of ethnic groups continues, the ethnic differences in the need for achievement are reduced.<sup>15</sup>

In short, while positive relation between social class and aspirations has been confirmed, the studies focusing on race and aspirations do not indicate a relation. Protestants and Jews probably have higher aspirations than Catholics, and the Negroes probably fall in the middle. These differences may be disappearing, however. The movement of many Irish out of the working class is an accelerating phenomenon and not adequately dealt with in much of the literature.

To measure the educational aspirations of parents, parents were asked how far they wanted their child (the oldest child, where more than one attended the selected elementary school) to go in school.<sup>16</sup>

#### Educational Content: Values

Many ways of conceptualizing educational content exist. One might examine the formal curriculum of a school system, the actual content of lessons or lesson plans, the content of books used in the schools, the nature of topics discussed in classes, the values teachers stress in class, and so on. The questions concerning parental preferences in the content of education area include three subareas:

- (1) Values emphasized at the school
- (2) Goals of the school and school personnel
- (3) Topics or subjects covered by teachers

Limited research has been completed in each subarea, some relating sociological variables to the preferences of parents.

Although much work has related social class membership to a wide array of values, no one has empirically described what values parents want the schools to impart in their children.<sup>18</sup> Below, the discussion focuses on the research indicating the values parents hold or want their children to hold.

The most consistent finding has been that while working class parents stress obedience and external controls on their children's behavior, the middle class stresses self-expression, self-direction, and internal directions for behavior.<sup>19</sup> Duvall found that working class and

lower middle class parents wanted children to be neat and clean, to obey, to respect adults, and to please adults.<sup>20</sup> Middle class parents stressed love and confiding in parents, sharing and cooperation, to be healthy and well. Pearlin and Kohn found the same differences between social classes in Italy as well as the United States.<sup>21</sup> Other researchers have noted the same general relation.<sup>22</sup> In brief, the working class is concerned with control and obedience and the middle classes with expression and self-direction.

The single dimension envisioned by Kohn in his review of the literature may be more complex than he envisioned. Are working class parents more concerned with proper behavior than middle class parents, or is it the nature of the behavior desired which differentiates the classes? Are middle class parents concerned more with the affect or feelings of their children than working class parents? Are middle class parents more interested than working class parents in the motivation which leads to proper behavior, or in the behavior itself? Several issues exist, the amount of concern for the proper behavior, the definition of proper behavior, the motivation for proper behavior, the concern for the feelings of children, the nature of the feelings, concern for the expression of feelings, etc. The research to answer such questions does not yet exist. For example, we examine the existence of an affect non-affect dimension below.

Does an affective vs. non-affective dimension exist? Middle class members are thought to have "emergent" rather than "traditional" values by Splindler.<sup>23</sup> Emergent values include sociability,



sensitivity, relativistic moral attitude, present time orientation, and harmony of group as an end. Traditional values include thrift, self-denial, delay of gratification, hard work, individual success.

Splindler sees these as representing the Puritan ethic vs. an industrializing society. Banfield implicitly rejects this relation in his classification of social classes, for Banfield states that it is the lower classes which are defined by their desire for instant gratification.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Seager and Slagle found that the working classes were most likely to be concerned about getting along with others.<sup>25</sup> In short, an affective/non-affective dimension may exist; its relation to the social classes is yet determined.

Studies which have examined the relation between values and ethnicity have indicated that Catholic groups tend to be more like the working class, even controlling for social class, and Jews and Protestants hold more middle class values. Social class rather than ethnicity, however, accounts for most of the variation in values.

Broom and Glenn, for example, in examining public opinion studies from 1950 to 1961, found that education accounted for three times the amount of dissimilarity (on their index) than race authoritarianism.<sup>26</sup> In looking at a wide range of social and political variables, they concluded that the U.S. is divided more on regional and education lines than racial lines. Lenski found that the major difference in values among various subgroups in the Detroit sample was the percentage of respondents who ranked intellectual autonomy above obedience as a value.<sup>27</sup> While the percentage ranking autonomy above



obedience was twice as high in the white Protestant (90 to 48 percent) and white Catholic (70 to 38 percent) upper middle class as compared to the lower working groups, the percentage differences attributable to ethnic variation within each of the four social classes did not exceed 25 percent.

Lenski's data also indicates that Jews rate highest in valuing autonomy within the two social classes and white Protestants are highest in three of four. Catholics are lowest in three of the four groups. Negroes, while falling below white Protestants, are above white Catholics two of three times. Similarly, Lehman found Catholic students as more dogmatic than Jewish and Protestant students.<sup>28</sup>

From the previous studies of values a list of 11 values was compiled. The criteria for inclusion was theoretical, i.e., did the items fall within the dimensions outlined above, and empirical, i.e., had many people selected them on previous surveys.

#### Educational Content, Goals

Given the research on values, we would expect parents to hold educational goals consistent with their values. For example, working class people who view obedience as a primary value should be more likely to view behavior training as a crucial educational goal. Similarly, the middle class parent would be more concerned with expressive goals than with behavior training. The affective dimension would also differentiate respondents; working class people favoring the direct

imparting of information and practical skills, white middle class people favoring affective goals like understanding and cultural expression.

Both qualitative and quantitative research support these propositions. The most graphic description of Italian working class educational goals comes from Gans' study of Boston's West End residents.<sup>29</sup> "From the parents' perspective, then, education is useful only for behavior training and for obtaining a job." Gans describes West End attitudes as person-oriented and object-oriented. The person-oriented goals are to teach children rules of behavior appropriate to the adult peer group society and to teach discipline while object-centered goals are to teach aspirations and skills for work, play, family life, and community participation. According to Gans, the West Enders generally emphasized the former.

The primary source of information available about the relation of social class to educational goals and also about different ethnic educational goals comes from Downey's landmark study of the Tasks of Public Education.<sup>30</sup>

Downey's 1960 report begins with a description of past expositions of educational goals, including the goals of everyone from individuals like Horace Mann through the National Educational Association, United States Office of Education, American Federation of Teachers, and other well-known organizations. Reviewing this literature Downey divided educational goals into four major elements:

- (1) Intellectual development (e.g., basic fundamentals, ability to think independently and creatively)
- (2) Social development (e.g., citizenship, cultural heritage, cooperation)
- (3) Personal development (e.g., physical and mental health, effective work habits)
- (4) Productive development (e.g., occupational information and training)

These elements were broken down into further categories to identify 16 basic elements, e.g., man to state relations under social elements.

Respondents were asked which elements were most important for a hypothetical school to retain and which could be eliminated given a fund cutback. A forced-choice Q sort technique was used. Respondents were selected randomly in 15 communities. Respondents were not limited or chosen on the basis of whether they had children in school. The communities were located through academic experts and represented the combination of a regional (East, South, Midwest, West, Canada) and community type (residential suburb, industrial city, rural farm center) dimension.

Included among Downey's findings:

- (1) Intellectual skills, i.e., the three "R's", were generally agreed to be the primary task of elementary schools.<sup>31</sup>
- (2) The entire group of intellectual goals were chosen most, productive goals least.

- (3) Ranked highest were intellectual skills, desire for knowledge, man to fellow man social development, and creativity.
  - (4) Regional differences were found; the East, for example, scored higher on morals, goals, and world citizenship and lower on social and physical goals.
  - (5) Few differences among types of communities existed; suburbanites stressed the aesthetic, industrial residents patriotism, and rural residents patriotism, physical development, and consumer knowledge.
  - (6) "Contrary to the researchers' original hypotheses, respondents' income levels did not appear to associate with their perceptions of the school's task . . . Occupation, however, . . . (was) a rather strong and consistent predictor of educational viewpoint."
- Downey found desire for knowledge, aesthetics, knowledge, intellectual skills, creativity, favored more by "high" occupational groups and patriotism, physical, ethical, consumer, home and family, and vocational educational goals selected more by less skilled occupational groups.
- (7) Older respondents felt physical education, moral training, and vocational guidance were more important than did younger respondents. Younger respondents were more concerned with the desire to learn and world citizenship.
  - (8) No sex differences were significant.

- (9) Protestants stressed desire for knowledge and physical development while Catholics stressed job training.
- (10) Negroes stressed physical development and whites creativity and a desire for knowledge. There is no indication that Downey controlled for occupation in these comparisons.
- (11) An extensive factor analysis of the responses indicated three factors:
- (a) Intellectual vs. productive
  - (b) Intellectual-productive vs. social-personal
  - (c) Social vs. personal

Factor (a) accounted for 40 percent of the variance; Factor (b), 17 percent; and Factor (c) and three smaller factors accounted for the remainder.

For the purpose of this research, Downey's forced choice questions were converted into a survey research format. Parents were given a list of seven goals of education. For the sake of brevity and ease of administration, the goals of getting along with others, loyalty, knowledge of people from other lands, physical and cultural development, were eliminated from Downey's list. Good citizenship and good morals were combined as were three practical goals--budgeting, family, and high school preparation.

The open-ended question in the parent questionnaire did indicate that about 8 percent of the parents viewed teaching children to get along with others should be an elementary school goal and 3 percent stated cultural goals. This was the only significant omission indicated.

#### Educational Content: Subjects or Curriculum

Few studies have examined parental preferences for specific curriculums or subjects. The studies that have investigated these have primarily been public opinion polls rather than systematic survey research. Again, the only generalizations possible follow from the research on values.

The few studies which included an examination of attitudes toward subjects are of limited utility to this study. Hills did find that the working class respondents (parents of high school students) were more favorable to a vocational curriculum than middle class parents, but the generalizations beyond that are limited.<sup>32</sup> One study does stand out in its scope and specificity in examining attitudes toward various subjects, Carter's Voters and Their Schools.<sup>33</sup> Carter was more concerned with adult citizen evaluations of schools than determining the ideal of parents, so its results are of limited value to this research. Carter did find that young men of less than high school education were most critical of the school's lack of attention to topics like driver education, industrial arts, health, and home economics. Similarly, young men of greater than high school education believed social studies,

sciences, and creative topics should receive more attention; older men with high education wanted more emphasis on mathematics and language basics; young women with high school education wanted more attention paid to guidance and foreign languages.

The limited work in the subject or topic subarea necessitated the construction of a question to measure parental preferences. The question was theoretically constructed. Parents were asked the amount of attention they wanted given to "traditional" topics with fairly clear value orientations (good grooming, loyalty, proper public behavior, and problems with communism), traditional topics lacking explicit ideological direction (effects of drugs, preparation for jobs, religions in America), "modern" topics (city problems, Vietnam War, pollution, creative writing, race relations), cultural (music appreciation), and controversial topics (sex education and Negro history). In addition, to offset Negro history, and in recognition of the pervasive Irish influence on the schools, Irish history was added to the list.

#### Educational Methods: Discipline

Little work has been done concerning parental views concerning which methods, teaching style, disciplinary actions, or pupil relationships should be adopted in schools. The work in this area has concentrated on the views of teachers and professional educators concerning the proper role behaviors of teachers. Probably the belief that methods should be of concern only to professional educators has greatly restricted survey research of parents in this area.



Although, as the Boston survey shows, discipline methods are of paramount concern to many parents, Lenski's study of Detroit is the only major attitudinal survey published which included questions concerning discipline.<sup>34</sup> Lenski found that while a majority in the middle class and working classes were against advocating physical punishment for a ten year old child, twice as many working class respondents advocated physical punishment. Lenski also found that white Protestants were much less likely to favor corporal punishment than their Catholic and Negro counterparts within the social class groups.

A long list of possible ways to treat the "problem" pupil was developed through a literature search and discussions with Boston teachers. Parents were asked which methods they favored and opposed.

#### Educational Methods: Teaching Style

Two types of research have been concerned with teacher classroom behavior. I have called the first strain "teaching methods" to describe the general methods that teachers use in the classroom, e.g., lectures and filmstrips. The second dimension involves the way a teacher relates to his or her pupils. This I have termed "teaching concerns."

While the empirical work in the subarea of teaching concerns is weighty, the relevant work in teaching methods is limited to various typologies of types of methods. Thus Gage lists classroom discourse (informal lectures with discussion and recitation), lectures, discussion, and discovery (the teacher withholds concepts for the children to learn

themselves) as methods.<sup>35</sup> Wallen and Travers add laboratory, problem-solving, activities, and projects to the basic list.<sup>36</sup> Basically, the typologies are aimed at a single differentiation, to what extent do teachers use non-traditional methods, where traditional methods are defined as lecture, recitation, use of textbooks, and in short, direction by the teacher and response by the pupils.

One would expect working class respondents to prefer the more directive and thus traditional approaches given their more authoritarian values. Only one study to date directly addresses this hypothesis, however.

Sieber and Wilder proposed two significant dimensions of the teaching role, (1) the extent to which subject matter is emphasized and (2) the extent to which adult authority is exercised.<sup>37</sup> Sieber and Wilder thus combine the two dimensions to create four teaching styles;

<u>Relations Between Child and Teacher</u>	<u>Subject Matter Emphasis</u>	
	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
Adult centered (authoritarian)	Content oriented	Control oriented
Child centered (Permissive)	Discovery oriented	Sympathy oriented

Each orientation was described as follows:

- (1) Control--"most concerned with maintaining discipline, seeing that students work hard, teaching them to follow directions."

- (2) Content--"feels that it is most important for students to know their subject matter well, and that he (she) cover the material thoroughly and test their progress regularly."
- (3) Discovery--"stresses making the class interesting and encourages students to be creative and figure things out for themselves."
- (4) Sympathy--"thinks it's most important that a teacher be friendly and well liked by students and able to understand and to handle their problems."

The subject matter emphasis dimension raises the issues cited under the content area above. In authoritarian classrooms Sieber and Wilder view a stress on behavior as the alternative to subject matter emphasis while in child-centered classrooms they view understanding and emphasis on affect as the alternative to subject matter emphasis. We would thus expect the working class respondents to be control and content oriented and the middle class respondents to be discovery and sympathy oriented given the differences in class authoritarianism. We would not be able to predict whether the working class respondents would be primarily content or control oriented but would predict the middle class respondents to be primarily sympathy oriented given hypotheses about subject matter emphasis.

Sieber and Wilder selected a city school system with a white, Negro, and integrated working class elementary school and a middle class white school and a rural school, two small town schools, and four suburban schools. The total sample included 495 working class and 372 middle class parents of first and fifth graders, and 114 and 129 parents of tenth graders respectively.

Viewing the Sieber and Wilder elementary school results first on the authoritarian vs. permissive dimension, where Content and Control are authoritarian and Discovery and Sympathy are permissive, there was little difference between middle class and working class respondents (52 vs. 56 percent).<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that among parents of tenth graders, working class parents were more likely to favor authoritarian methods (67 to 48 percent).

Looking at the larger typology, Control and Sympathy goals were more emphasized by the working class respondents; Content and Discovery goals by the middle class respondents. Thus their results indicate that the working class not middle class is less concerned with subject matter and that the differences between working class and middle class favorability to more authoritarian teachers may not be very large.

The only results on ethnic differences revealed that Negro respondents were somewhat more child-centered than their white working class counterparts.

### Educational Methods: Teacher Concerns

Parental preferences for the relationship of teachers to children and the styles teachers use in the classroom have not been systematically explored to date. Many studies have questioned teachers about their own perceptions of possible concerns; the most extensive and methodologically precise study of teacher concerns is summarized below.

Wehling and Charters examined the "long tradition of research on teacher attitudes, motivations, behavioral styles, and role perceptions" to map the belief systems of teachers.<sup>39</sup> Their major concern was to develop and identify dimensions of teacher orientation to the classroom situation rather than concentrate on a single a priori dimension of teacher orientation. They administered their forms eight times over three years. They report one factor analysis of 118 items to establish eight dimensions of teacher beliefs.

The first two dimensions, subject-matter emphasis and personal adjustment ideology, are organized with respect to educational goals. The first dimension concerns student mastering of the course content and the second concerns the social and emotional development of students. The remaining six dimensions concern instrumental beliefs about the process of education. These include:

- (1) Student autonomy vs. teacher control
- (2) Emotional disengagement (aloofness from students)
- (3) Consideration of student viewpoint
- (4) Classroom order

(5) Challenging students

(6) Integrative learning--to teach how subject  
links to others and to real world

Wheling and Charters emphasize the high degree of instability in the factor structure and thus the eight dimensions represent the most stable factors. The lack of single dimensions for even the two goal factors is seen as evidence that "educational goals simply are not conceived as mutually exclusive matters."

These dimensions and the items with high factor loadings presented were used to develop a question to ask parents about the type of teachers they prefer.<sup>40</sup>

#### Parent Role: Communications

The third dimension of parental preferences investigated is parent role in the schools. Past researchers have investigated two major components of parent-school relations, communications and power relations. For the purpose of this thesis, communications is defined as the exchange of information and power as the exercise or potential exercise of influence.

Previous studies have indicated that middle class parents are more likely to communicate with school personnel directly, to talk about school affairs generally, and to take an active part in school activities than working class parents.

Milbrath, in his summary of research in political participation, argues that people who are in high social classes and who have more education, income, and occupational status, are more likely to participate in politics.<sup>41</sup> Such people are also more likely to participate in school activities. Carter, for example, found that school participation was directly related to occupational status; those in the less skilled categories had the lowest rate of participation.<sup>42</sup> Carter's sample was not limited to parents. Although it is impossible to make specific comparisons of low educated to high educated parents, it appears Carter found that young women with low educations, although active in school affairs because of their role as parents, did not communicate frequently about school matters. Their activity was social not substantive. The most active group were those under fifty years, with children in school, and with more than a high school education.

Herriott and St. John found that parents whose children attended working class schools were less likely to attend school events, less likely to come to school to discuss their children's problems on their own initiative, and less likely to be interested in school affairs.<sup>43</sup> For example, 87 percent of the parents whose children attended schools serving pupils with high social-economic backgrounds were reported by principals to have attended school at least once during the school year; principals reported that only 49 percent of working class school parents visited school as often.

Finally, Gallup's 1969 national sample of Americans, queried about their attendance at any event at the local school during the last



year, showed similar relations.<sup>44</sup> Four times as many people with college degrees visited a school than those with only some elementary school education (57 and 14 percent respectively). The relationship was even greater between both income and school visits and occupation and school visits.

Two studies indicate that not only do working class parents participate less in school affairs, but they also prefer a different type of participation. Working class parents are less likely than middle class parents to prefer personal communications with school personnel. Riley and Cohen's study of Boston parents, for example, indicated that middle class parents prefer personal contact with teachers and principals; and working class were more likely to want institutional (i.e., community political boards) mechanisms for increased parent involvement in schools.<sup>45</sup> Riley and Cohen attribute this difference to non-dominant political groups seeking new ways to influence schools. Jennings, for example, did find that members of groups in the minority in schools (e.g., Protestants in Catholic schools) are less likely to seek redress for grievances.<sup>46</sup> Whether the desire for political rather than professional communications is based upon minority status or class preferences is yet determined.

Young found that parents in lower income suburban communities preferred less two-way communications with their schools than upper income parents.<sup>47</sup> While low income parents were favorable to local newspaper stories, parent-teacher association speeches by principals,

and monthly school bulletins, middle class parents preferred parent study groups and regular parent-teacher association conferences.

Little research has been done on the relationship between ethnicity and school participation. Milbrath concludes that those at the periphery of social systems are less likely to participate in them.<sup>48</sup> Thus, by extension, in most communities Negroes would be the least active group. The Gallup poll indicated a very small tendency for Negroes to visit the local school less than whites do (33 to 37 percent).<sup>49</sup> Herriott and St. John claim it was impossible to separate race from social class but did find that Negroes participate less.<sup>50</sup>

#### Parent Role: Power

Studies of Black attitudes about community control of schools, while not always indicating majority support for Black control of schools, have consistently found that Blacks seek greater power in schools than whites. Altshuler, for example, cites a 1968 Harris Poll in New York City showing that Blacks are about twice as likely as whites to say that their community has too little influence.<sup>51</sup> Riley and Cohen report that a 1969 survey of Boston adults revealed Negroes more in favor of parental involvement in schools than whites.<sup>52</sup> Riley and Cohen also found that politically dominant ethnic groups (Irish and Italians) sought less involvement than less dominant groups (Jews, Negroes, white Protestants). For example, while about 40 percent of the Negro and white Protestant respondents favored a role in determining the school curriculum, under 30 percent of the Irish and Italian respondents agreed.

Working class respondents sought more involvement than middle class respondents within three of the four white ethnic groups limited to suburban school systems. Young's study contradicts these results.<sup>53</sup> Young found that working class parents think that the principal should encourage parent participation in four of five areas, changing report cards, arranging parent study groups, changing curriculum, and volunteering as classroom or lunchroom aides. Working class parents were more favorable than middle class parents to teachers and the principal directing the parent-teacher association program.

To measure parental preferences in the parent power subarea, a list of possible roles parents could play in schools was developed. Beginning with a general question about an increase in parent say in school decisions, the list also includes questions about parents' (1) working in schools, (2) taking part in decisions about personnel, the school budget, curriculum, and (3) helping their children with schoolwork at home.

### Summary

Past literature on parental preferences in education thus indicates the following descriptions of the groups to be studied at the ten schools.

Working class parents are less concerned about college education for their children than middle class parents. Working class parents thus want a more finite or instrumental education from public schools. Their goals include teaching children (1) practical skills like consumer, home

and family, and vocational information which can be used at high school graduation and (2) ways to behave as a citizen and peer group member. Thus, working class parents would like their children to learn obedience and respect for authority in school.

Little is known about the teaching methods preferred by working class parents. Given their more authoritarian values and relatively low concern for self-expression of their children, we expect them to favor more traditional and directive methods. On the other hand, being less concerned with the long term benefit of public education, working class parents are less concerned about teachers stressing content or subject matter. An understanding teacher who demands proper behavior would be most attractive to these parents. The little that is known about working class attitudes toward discipline suggests that corporal punishment would be more favored by working than middle class parents.

Working class parents prefer to keep their distance from the school in comparison to middle class parents. Many feel uncomfortable receiving information about the schools directly from school personnel. Working class parents, less attuned to the various mass media and interpersonal activities, are less likely to keep up with school news. Given the greater acceptance of the working class for authority and low level of communications about schools and education, working class parents are generally less concerned than middle class parents about their decision-making role in the schools.

Middle class parents see public schools as an initial step in a longer educational process. They are not concerned about practical or behavioral goals; they stress knowledge and the content of education but add to these aesthetic, cultural, and creative goals. Middle class parents are concerned with motivation, be it the desire for knowledge of their children or the reasons behind misbehavior. They are concerned with the child's self-expression and internal control mechanisms rather than the appearance of good behavior. Their child-centeredness extends to teaching methods. Their perfect teacher would be likely to use child-centered activities and methods in the classroom, but the imparting of knowledge would not be neglected.

Middle class parents want to be personally informed about their schools by school personnel. They are relatively active and informed. They expect a role in school decision-making.

Catholic parents are generally more like the working class parents than white Protestant parents of equal social status. This is even more true the more "ethnic" the parents are, i.e., the more they are tied to the old country. In short, their educational aspirations are more limited, their preferred goals more instrumental, their preferred methods more authoritarian and directive, their desire for power less. If there is any difference between Irish and Italians, the Italians would be likely to be more like the working class.

The relationship between race and educational views has not been studied in any depth. Negroes often fall between Catholics and

white Protestants on various dimensions, but empirical evidence is most limited. Furthermore, most studies have been completed before the Black power movement; its effect is yet determined.

### CHAPTER 3 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Peter Schrag, Village School Downtown: Boston Schools, Boston Politics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Bert F. Green, "Altitude Measurement" in Handbook of Social Psychology, Volume I, edited by Gardner Lindzey (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 335-369.

<sup>3</sup>A 1969 national Gallup Poll concerning educational attitudes found that the three "biggest problems with which the public schools must deal" were seen to be discipline (26 percent), facilities (22 percent), and teachers (17 percent). See George Gallup, How the Nation Views the Public Schools: A Study of the Public Schools of the United States (Princeton, N.J.: Gallup International, January 2, 1970).

<sup>4</sup>For the purpose of this thesis, social class is used interchangeably to refer to measures of economic or financial, occupational or educational standing. No questions calling for self-identification of social class were included in the survey. Ethnicity is used to refer to cultural differences based on race or foreign origins.

The literature on Chinese-American attitudes toward education is sparse and offers little quantitative analysis of attitudes. Those who have written about America's Chinese population agree on the high educational expectations Chinese parents hold for their children and the traditionalism of Chinese parents which is reflected in parental concern for obedience, respect, and courtesy in their children. On the other hand, researchers also report differences among young and old Chinese and those with rural and urban origins. I made the decision not to discuss the limited literature on Chinese-American educational attitudes, but rather to concentrate on the more complete descriptions of other ethnic and class groups. For example, see the following for some information about Chinese educational attitudes: The Chinese in Boston, 1970, Action for Boston Community Development Planning and Evaluation Department (Boston, Massachusetts: November, 1970), Margert Wolf, "Child Training in the Chinese Family" in Family and Kinship in Chinese Society, edited by Maurice Freedman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 37-62, and Olga Lang, Chinese Family and Society (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946).



<sup>5</sup>See Richard A. Rehberg, and David Westby, "Parental Encouragement, Occupation, Education, and Family Size: Artifactual or Independent Determinants of Adolescent Educational Expectations," Social Forces, LIV, No. 3 (1967), pp. 362-373;

Joseph A. Kahl, "Educational and Occupational Aspirations of 'Common Man' Boys," Harvard Educational Review, XXIII (Summer, 1953), pp. 186-203;

Aaron Antonovsky, "Aspirations, Class, and Racial-Ethnic Membership" Journal of Negro Education, XXXVI (1967), pp. 385-393;

Andrew M. Greeley, "A Note on Political and Social Differences Among Ethnic College Graduates," Sociology of Education, Vol. XLII, No. 1 (1969), pp. 98-103;

James S. Coleman and others, Equal Educational Opportunity (Washington, D.C.: Supt. of Documents, 1966) for a discussion of student aspirations for college;

<sup>6</sup>See Herbert J. Gans, The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans (New York: Free Press, 1962);

Herbert Gans, The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community (New York: Vintage Books, 1970);

Bernard C. Rosen, "Race, Ethnicity, and the Achievement Syndrome," American Sociological Review, XXIV (February, 1959), pp. 47-61;

Joseph Veroff, Sheila Feld, and Gerald Gurin, "Achievement Motivation and Religious Background," American Sociological Review, XXVII, No. 2 (1962), pp. 205-217;

Fred L. Strodbeck, "Family Interaction, Values, and Achievement" in Talent and Society, edited by David McClelland, et. al., (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand Co., 1958), pp. 135-195;

Gerald Handel and Lee Rainwater, "Persistence and Change in Working Class Life Style," Sociology and Social Research, XLVII, No. 3 (1964), pp. 281-288.

Richard A. Cloward and James A. Jones, "Social Class: Educational Attitudes and Participation," in Education in Depressed Areas, edited by A. Harry Passow (New York: Teachers College Press, 1963).

Herbert Hyman, "The Value Systems of Different Classes," in Class, Status, Power, Second Edition, Bendix, Reinhard and Lipset,

Seymour (eds.), (New York: Free Press, 1966); for a discussion of parental aspirations for their children's education.

<sup>7</sup>Antonovsky, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup>See Handel and Rainwater, op. cit. They do make the point that the meaning of a college education is seen instrumentally and vocationally for sons by working class parents.

<sup>9</sup>Reiberg and Westby, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Coleman and others, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Antonovsky, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Strodbeck, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup>Lenski, Gerhard, The Religious Factor (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1963).

<sup>14</sup>Gurin, et. al., op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>McClelland, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Additional questions concerning the amount of education a boy and girl need to get along in the world were also asked and were highly related to the general measure.

<sup>17</sup>For convenience, the three main categories of preferences are termed "areas," and the categories within each area, e.g., values, goals, and topics for content, are called "subareas."

<sup>18</sup>In fact, there is little discussion of the general role of schools as socialization agents. See Robert Dreeban, On What is Learned in School (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1968), and Talcott Parson, "The School Class as a Social System: Some of its Functions in American Society," Harvard Educational Review, XXIX, No. 4, pp. 297-318.

<sup>19</sup>See Melvin Kohn, "Social Class and Parent Child Relationships: An interpretation," American Journal of Sociology, LXVII, No. 62 (1963), pp. 471-480, Leonard Pearlman and Melvin L. Kohn, "Social Class, Occupation, and Parental Values: A Cross National Study," American Sociological Review, XXXI, No. 4 (1966), pp. 466-479, Evelyn Mills Duvall, "Conceptions of Parenthood," American Journal of Sociology, LII, No. 3 (1946), November 3, pp. 193-203, and Lenski, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Duvall, op. cit.

- <sup>21</sup>Pearlin and Kohn, op. cit.
- <sup>22</sup>Kohn, op. cit.
- <sup>23</sup>See George Splindler, "The Transmission of American Culture," Harvard Educational Review, XXV (Summer, 1955), pp. 145-156.
- <sup>24</sup>Edward Banfield, The Unheavenly City (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968).
- <sup>25</sup>See Robert C. Seager and Allen T. Slagle, "Sub-Publics View the Task of Public Education," Administrator's Notebook, VII (December, 1959).
- <sup>26</sup>Leonard Broom and Norval D. Glenn, "Negro-White Differences in Reported Attitudes and Behavior," Sociology and Social Research, L, No. 2 (1966), pp. 187-200.
- <sup>27</sup>Lenski, op. cit.
- <sup>28</sup>Irwin J. Lehmann, "Some Socio-Cultural Differences in Attitudes and Values," Journal of Educational Sociology, XXXVI, No. 1 (1962), pp. 1-9.
- <sup>29</sup>Gans, Urban Villagers, op. cit.
- <sup>30</sup>Lawrence W. Downey, The Task of Public Education (Chicago: Midwest Administrative Center, University of Chicago, 1960).
- <sup>31</sup>In general Downey found little difference between elementary and high school goals. Only elementary school goals conclusions are reported here.
- <sup>32</sup>Jean R. Hills, "Social Classes and Educational Views," Administrators Notebook, X, No. 2 (1961).
- <sup>33</sup>Richard F. Carter, Voters and Their Schools, Technical Report, School of Education, Stanford University, June 30, 1960.
- <sup>34</sup>See Lenski, op. cit. and Imogene H. Cahill, "Child-Rearing Practices in Lower Socioeconomic Ethnic Groups" in The Urban R's, edited by Robert Dentler, et. al., pp. 268-287.
- <sup>35</sup>See Nathaniel L. Gage (ed.), Handbook of Research on Teaching (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1963), pp. 715-813.
- <sup>36</sup>Norman E. Waller and Robert M. W. Travers, "Analysis and Investigation of Teaching Methods," Handbook of Research on Teaching, op. cit., pp. 448-505.

<sup>37</sup>Sam D. Sieber and David E. Wilder, "Teaching Styles: Parental Preferences and Professional Role Definitions," Sociology of Education, XV, No. 4 (1967), pp. 302-315.

<sup>38</sup>The appropriate Sieber and Wilder table is reproduced below:

Relation Between Teacher and Child	<u>Emphasis on Subject Matter</u>	
	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
<u>Adult-Centered</u> (Authoritarian)	"Content" (32% of working class; 39% of middle class)	"Control" (30% of working class; 17% of middle class)
<u>Child-Centered</u> (Permissive)	"Discovery" (23% of working class; 38% of middle class)	"Sympathy" (15% of working class; 6% of middle class)

<sup>39</sup>Leslie J. Wehling and W. W. Charters, Jr., "Dimensions of Teacher Beliefs About the Teaching Process," American Educational Research Journal, VI, No. 1 (1969), pp. 169-189.

<sup>40</sup>Several other typologies have been developed through less intensive analysis. Sorensen, Husak, and Yu outlined five role orientations disciplinarians, counselors, motivators, referrers, and advisors. Coughlan analyzed scales developed by Valenti to produce five factors, administrative focus, work emphasis, authority source, primary concern (intellectual vs. social), and source of support (self vs. colleagues), and Getzels and Thelen propose nomothetic, transactional, and ideographic teachers. See Jasper J. Valenti, "Development and Evaluation of a Leadership Attitude Scale Around the Social Toole of the Teacher," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1950, and Robert J. Coughlan, "The Factorial Structure of Teacher Work Values," American Educational Research Journal, VI, No. 2 (1969), pp. 169-189.

<sup>41</sup>Milbrath, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup>Carter, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup>Robert E. Herriott and Nancy Hoyt St. John, Social Class and the Urban School (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966).

<sup>44</sup>Gallup, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup>Robert Riley and David Cohen, "Contour of Opinion," unpublished working paper, Center for Educational Policy, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1970.

<sup>46</sup>M. Kent Jennings, "Parental Grievances and School Politics," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXXII, No. 3 (1968), pp. 363-378.

<sup>47</sup>Anne Vnook Young, "A study of Role Expectations in School-Community Relations for the Elementary School Principalship in Communities Widely Different Income Levels," unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1965.

<sup>48</sup>Milbrath, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup>Gallup, op. cit.

<sup>50</sup>Herriott and St. John, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup>Alan A. Altshuler, Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities (New York: Pegasus, 1970).

<sup>52</sup>Riley and Cohen, op. cit.

<sup>53</sup>Young, op. cit.

## CHAPTER 4

### PATTERNS OF PARENTAL PREFERENCES IN BOSTON

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to describe the educational preferences of the Boston parent respondents, and second, to determine the ethnic and social class backgrounds of parents who hold various educational preferences.

#### Background: Educational Aspirations and Home Support for Education

Later sections of this chapter examine the kind of education parents prefer for their children's schools, i.e., the kind of educational content and methods they want emphasized. The ultimate output parents want from their schools also may be crucial in understanding the relation between parental preferences and school functioning. The sample of parents was asked, "How far do you want your child (or oldest elementary school child) to go in school?"

Table 4-1 indicates that a majority of parents seek a college education for their children. Approximately three-quarters of the parents want their children to go to college. In fact, examining aspirations in the subgroups constructed by dividing the respondents by family ethnicity and education, we find that a majority of parents lack college aspirations in only two of the twelve subgroups which contain more than 10 respondents. Only the Irish and Italian parents with

TABLE 4-1

Percentage of Parents with College Aspirations for Children  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	63% (43)	82% (49)	[100% (2)] <sup>b</sup>
Irish	31% (13)	68% (57)	93% (27)
Italian	36% (11)	66% (44)	[100% (5)]
Chinese	80% (25)	90% (30)	[ 50% (4)]
Other <sup>a</sup>	54% (13)	70% (51)	86% (21)
Total	60% (105)	74% (231)	86% (59)

<sup>a</sup>"Other" respondents include those of Russian (3), Eastern European (10), Armenian, Greek, and Lebanese (18), Canadian (16), Scandanavian (7), English, Scotch, or Welsh (20), and German, Dutch, and Belgian (10) background.

<sup>b</sup>The brackets indicate 5 or less respondents in the category.



less than a high school education lack college aspirations.<sup>1</sup> Catholic parents with a high school education also have lower aspirations than Chinese and Negro parents with equal educations.

Both education and ethnicity appear to be independently related to educational aspirations. For example, the percentage of Irish aspiring to college educations triples as one moves from the under high school to college educated category. Similarly, more than twice as many Chinese as Italians or Irish lacking a high school education aspire to college educations for their children.

These results confirm past research to the extent that the educational aspirations of working class Catholic parents are more limited. The great aspirations of the two racial minorities, Chinese and Negroes, are also evident.

To what degree do these parents with high aspirations for their children support their children educationally at home? One indicator of support was formulated from asking parents how often they asked their children questions about schoolwork and how often they read to their child before the child began school (Table 4-2). Chinese and Negro parents have the highest aspirations but report the lowest educational support of their children on these measures. Support also is positively related to education among all ethnic groups but the Italians. Both the ethnic and educational differences are great. While over three-quarters of the college educated parents report much support, only about one-third of those with the least education report

TABLE 4-2

Percentage of Parents Indicating Much Home Support for Schoolwork  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	23% (43)	47% (49)	[100% (2)]
Irish	39% (13)	60% (57)	82% (27)
Italian	40% (10)	46% (44)	[ 40% (5)]
Chinese	0% (25)	3% (30)	[ 25% (4)]
Other	31% (13)	69% (51)	76% (21)
Total	22% (104)	47% (231)	73% (59)

an equal amount of support. Chinese parents, especially, offer little support to their children. Probably as a result of language and cultural barriers, only two Chinese parents report much support.

Do the same parents who have high aspirations for their children fail to support these aspirations at home? Table 4-3 indicates that high aims with low support is most frequent in families with little education and in Chinese families. For example, 77 percent of Chinese with high aims and high school education offer little support at home to their children as measured in the parent survey.

#### Educational Content: Values

Table 4-4 summarizes the percentage of the total Boston parent sample selecting each of the eleven alternative values. Parents were asked to select four values from this list. Interpretations of the magnitude of the selection of each value is difficult; an order effect appears to have occurred. There is a tendency for respondents to have selected values at the ends of the list and especially to have selected the first three values. The first three values vary widely in popularity, so it does appear that the requirement to select four from the eleven values affected the popularity of certain items but not the direction of response.

Respondents selecting two or more of the three values emphasizing self-direction, "to think for himself," "to be creative," and "to be curious" are considered to be high in independence value. Those selecting "to obey those in authority" or "to be loyal" are considered

TABLE 4-3

Percentage of Parents with High Educational Aspirations  
 Indicating Low Home Support for Schoolwork  
 By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	21% (27)	3% (40)	[0% (2)]
Irish	[25% (4)]	13% (39)	4% (25)
Italian	[ 0% (3)]	11% (29)	[0% (5)]
Chinese	55% (20)	77% (27)	[0% (2)]
Other	25% (8)	0% (36)	8% (17)
Total	31% (62)	19% (171)	5% (51)

TABLE 4-4

Percentage of Parents Selecting Alternative Values  
To be Emphasized in School

<u>Values</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
To obey those in authority	68%
To think for himself	60
To work hard	52
To behave as most people think correct	12
To be neat and clean	24
To be happy	24
To have self-control	24
To be curious about things	28
To be considerate of others	40
To be loyal and patriotic	16
To be creative	28

to be high on social control value. Independence value and social control value are negatively related ( $\text{Gamma} = -.48$ ) and appear to form a dimension of educational preferences.<sup>2</sup>

A third variable, Norm Control Value, was constructed from "to behave as most people think correct" and "to have self-control." The control over behavior is more individual-centered rather than society-centered. Those who seek social control are not more likely to seek norm control, however ( $\text{Gamma} = -.18$ ).

Table 4-5 confirms past research on social class and values. There is a strong relation between education and independence value among parents from all of the major ethnic groups represented in the sample. Among Irish, for example, the percentage of respondents selecting two independence values increases from 23 percent to 63 percent as education increases. Across ethnic groups, the percentage increases from 11 to 64 percent with family education.

Ethnic differences are also apparent. While the Italian respondents confirm the conclusions of previous work concerning the greater concern for behavior control among Catholics, the Irish responses deny these conclusions. The Irish rank first or second in independence value in each educational category. The Chinese parents, reflecting traditional values, rank independence values lowest.

#### Educational Content: Goals

Boston parents generally agree that teaching children the basics or fundamentals (i.e., the three 'R's') should be the major

TABLE 4-5

Percentage of Parents Selecting Independence Values  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	14% (43)	39% (49)	[ 0% (2)]
Irish	23% (13)	40% (57)	63% (27)
Italian	9% (11)	27% (44)	[40% (5)]
Chinese	4% (25)	13% (30)	[50% (4)]
Other	8% (13)	46% (51)	81% (21)
Total	11% (105)	36% (231)	64% (59)



task of their elementary schools (Table 4-6). They also agree that practical skills should not be given major emphasis in elementary school.<sup>3</sup> There is much support for two kinds of socialization, teaching children a desire to learn and how to behave properly. About half of the respondents choose each of these goals.

Given the discussion in Chapter 2, we would expect working class parents, concerned for the immediate instrumentality of public education, to be more likely than middle class parents to have practical, basic skills, and behavior goals. Middle class parents, concerned about motivation, the child's self, and the process of learning, should score high on desire for learning, information, and independent thinking goals. A factor analysis of the responses to the goals questions indicated the existence of two factors (Table 4-7). The first factor includes the goals of teaching a desire for learning, information, self-understanding, and independent thinking with high factor loadings. The factor can be conceptualized in many ways, including an affective, modern, or individual-centered orientation. The second factor includes teaching proper behavior, practical skills, and basics goals. This factor can be conceptualized as a directive, traditional, or society-centered dimension. The first factor thus corresponds to hypothesized middle class goals; the second to working class goals. Indeed, analysis of the respondents high on each of the factors confirms this hypothesis.

Desire for learning goal, the variable with the highest factor loading on the affective dimension, is positively related to education.

TABLE 4-6  
Percentage of Parents  
Selecting Alternative Educational Goals

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Percentage Selecting Goal as Important*</u>
Basic tools	70%
Desire for learning	50
Proper behavior	49
Critical thinking	30
Information	30
Individual understanding	28
Practical skills	10

\*Respondents either mentioned the goal on the open-ended question or choose the goal as one of the two most important educational goals from among the alternatives presented to them.

TABLE 4-7

## Factor Analysis of Educational Goal Preferences

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>
Desire for learning	.679*	.217
Individual understanding	.619	.149
Information	.625	.070
Independent thinking	.618	.063
Proper behavior	.071	.737
Practical skills	.086	.709
Basics	.382	.544

\*Factor loading.

While approximately 40 percent of those respondents with less than a high school education selected desire to learn as a goal, about two-thirds of the college educated parents selected it (Table 4-8). The relation holds within each ethnic group.

No consistent ethnic relations are evident. While Italian parents do have educational goals similar to the working class parents within the group with the lowest education, the more educated Italians and Irish do not confirm the hypothesized similarity between working class and Catholic educational preferences. Of course, there are few white Protestants to which to compare Catholic respondents. The Chinese respondents are less in favor of teaching desire for learning than parents with other backgrounds.

Former college attendees are less likely to see behavior training as a preferred elementary school goal than are those with less education (Table 4-9). There is little difference between those with and without a high school diploma. Among respondents in the two lowest educational categories, Negroes and Italians are the most concerned with behavior goals. But again, the Irish respondents are not as similar to working class parents in general as was hypothesized. Chinese parents are a little below the average in concern for behavior goals.

#### Educational Content: Topics, Subjects, Curriculum

It should be noted that as far as the respondents were concerned, the list of topics was by far the most stimulating question.

TABLE 4-8

Percentage of Parents Selecting the Goal of Teaching  
A Desire for Learning by Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	48% (42)	53% (49)	[ 0% (2) ]
Irish	39% (13)	61% (57)	63% (27)
Italian	18% (11)	52% (44)	[60% (5) ]
Chinese	38% (16)	44% (25)	[50% (4) ]
Other	46% (13)	55% (51)	80% (20)
Total	41% (95)	54% (226)	66% (58)

TABLE 4-9

Percentage of Parents Selecting the Goal of Teaching Proper Behavior  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	71% (42)	59% (49)	[ 0% (2) ]
Irish	39% (13)	44% (57)	33% (27)
Italian	73% (11)	61% (44)	[80% (5) ]
Chinese	44% (16)	48% (25)	[50% (4) ]
Other	39% (13)	51% (51)	30% (20)
Total	58% (95)	53% (226)	36% (58)

**For example, in the pretest Italian working class parents:**

- (1) Added categories to "very much" to express great approval for drug education.**
- (2) Made generous aside comments (explicitly and implicitly) expressing disapproval of Negro history and Negroes.**
- (3) Were inspired to make their statements of educational philosophy like "school isn't the place for that, school should be for . . ."**

**An examination of the frequency of responses to the topic questions (Table 4-10) indicates the:**

- (1) Importance to parents of drug education as a topic in elementary school.**
- (2) Relatively high importance given to behavior training topics.**
- (3) Relatively low importance desired for cultural items.**
- (4) Moderate support for "modern" subjects.**
- (5) Reluctance to have sex education taught in elementary schools.**

**The factor analysis of topics revealed a dimension not hypothesized originally (Table 4-11). "Modern" topics did not form a dimension; parents ignored any implication of ideological direction as to the topic and instead tended to give similar emphasis to "relevant"**



TABLE 4-10

Percentage of Parents Wanting Great Amounts  
Of Attention Paid to Selected Topics

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Percentage Preferring Great Attention*</u>
Effects of drugs	71%
Proper behavior	44
Race relations	33
Job preparation	33
Good grooming	28
Pollution	28
Negro history	26
Creative writing	22
Problems of Communism	20
City problems	20
Vietnam War	19
Religion	18
Sex education	15
Music appreciation	13
Irish history	6

\*Note that 21 percent thought no attention should be paid to Irish history, and 18 percent thought no attention should be paid to sex education, and 14 percent thought no attention should be given to the problems of Communism and the Vietnam War.

TABLE 4-11

Factor Analysis of Topic Responses:  
Topics with the Highest Factor Loading on Each of the Five Factors

<u>Factor 1</u>		<u>Factor 2</u>	
City problems	.701	Creative writing	-.791
Vietnam War	.668	Music appreciation	-.785
Problems of Communism	.655		
Pollution	.653		
Effects of drugs	.625		
<u>Factor 3</u>		<u>Factor 4</u>	
Good grooming	-.844	Negro history	-.775
Proper public behavior	-.688	Race relations	-.726
		Sex education	-.592
<u>Factor 5</u>			
	Irish history	.690	
	Religions	.656	
	Loyalty	.648	

topics. Thus city problems, Vietnam War, problems of communism, pollution, and drugs all scored highly on the relevancy dimension.

On the other hand two dimensions of "traditionalism" exist. The first factor deals with the training of proper behavior (good grooming and proper public behavior score highest) and the second factor includes traditional moral and societal issues (loyalty and religion).

Cultural and racial dimensions also exist, the latter also tied to sex education.

Table 4-12 summarized the parental preferences on the topics by ranking the topics within the three educational categories. Ranks have been used instead of absolute percentages because there is a tendency for more educated respondents to avoid stating that they prefer to give topics "great" attention.<sup>4</sup> It cannot be determined whether this is a response set or does indicate the absolute judgment of respondents. The ranking procedure controls for the educated respondents' tendency to want to give all of these topics less attention.

Several topics are relatively more popular among less educated respondents. Cultural topics (music appreciation and creativity) rank near the bottom of the topic attention list of those without a high school education, while those with a college education rank both cultural topics in the top half of their list. Pollution is ranked low by those respondents with little education, but other "relevant" topics

TABLE 4-12

## Rankings of Topics by Parent Education

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
<u>Relevant</u>			
City problems	9*	12	10.5
Vietnam War	12.5	9	14
Problems of Communism	20	10.5	9
Pollution	11	6	5
Effects of drugs	1	1	1
Job preparation	6	4.5	6.5
<u>Cultural</u>			
Creative writing	12.5	10.5	2
Music appreciation	15	15	8
<u>Personal Behavior</u>			
Good grooming	4	7	12.5
Proper public behavior	2	2	4
<u>Racial</u>			
Negro history	5	8	10.5
Race relations	3	4.5	6.5
Sex education	14	14	15
<u>Conservative Societal</u>			
Irish history	16	16	16
Loyalty	7	3	3
Religions	8	13	12.5

\*Rank of topic in terms of the desire to give it "great" attention by those of similar education.

(e.g., Vietnam War and city problems) are ranked similarly among respondents with little and much education.

Those with low education are more favorable to traditional behavior training topics. Both good grooming and proper public behavior are ranked higher by those without a college education than those with a college education. More attention to race relations and Negro history is desired among the less educated, but this is a result of race not education. No consistent educational differences on topics highly loaded on the traditional societal factor (loyalty, religions, Irish history) were found.

Table 4-13 indicates that racial differences in opinions about the list of topics are substantial. Negroes rank Negro history and race relations especially high; Chinese respondents rank them very low. Negroes are more favorable to cultural topics (music, religion, Irish history) than the other groups. Except for the Catholic support for conservative societal topics, and Irish support for relevant topics, no other large ethnic or racial differences exist.

#### Educational Content: Summary

The previous sections have led to the following conclusions concerning parental preferences and educational content:

- (1) Working class respondents value independence less than middle class respondents, but there is a tendency for most respondents to value behavior training more than independence values.

**TABLE 4-13**  
**Ranking of Topics by Parent Ethnicity**

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Negro</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Chinese</u>
<u>Relevant</u>				
City problems	10*	8	9	11
Vietnam War	11	9	10	9
Problems of Communism	14	6	6	8
Pollution	7	6	9	6
Effects of drugs	1	1	2	1
Job preparation	4	7	6	5
<u>Cultural</u>				
Creative writing	10	12	10	11
Music appreciation	11	13	15	14
<u>Personal Behavior</u>				
Good grooming	6	6	6	3
Proper public behavior	4	3	2	3
<u>Racial</u>				
Negro history	2	13	8	14
Race relations	3	7	7	8
Sex education	10	14	13	10
<u>Conservative Societal</u>				
Irish history	16	15	15	13
Loyalty	14	2	2	3
Religions	10	9	9	12

\*Rank of topic in terms of the desire to give it "great" attention by those of similar education.

- (2) Italians and Chinese value independence relatively little; Irish value independence highly.
- (3) Working class respondents have practical, behavior, basic skill goals; middle class respondents want desire for learning, and independent thinking as educational goals.
- (4) Irish respondents are the least traditional in their preference for various educational goals; Negroes, Italians, and Chinese are generally more traditional.
- (5) Working class respondents are not in favor of giving much attention to cultural topics including creative writing, but are in favor of giving much attention to personal behavior topics. Middle class respondents may be somewhat more concerned with relevant topics.
- (6) While Negroes rank racial topics high, Chinese respondents rank them low. Catholic respondents do seem more traditional on societal topics and the Irish would like the schools to deal with relevant topics.

At least one distinction held in each of the three content subareas; working class respondents in each case were more concerned with teaching proper behavior to their children than were middle class



respondents. A factor analysis of all content responses did reveal that proper behavior is the only factor (Factor 2) common to all three content subareas (Table 4-14).

Factor 1 is the previously discussed relevancy factor, found in the analysis of the topic list; Factor 3, a curious combination of cultural and conservative societal topics; and Factor 5 is simply a practical goal factor. Factors 4 and 6 are only suggestive. Factor 4 indicates that concern for the individual's motivation to behave properly may be a different factor than concern for the appearance of proper behavior. Similarly, Factor 6 suggests that there may be an affective vs. cognitive dimension of parental preferences. These conclusions must remain speculative for now.

#### Education Methods: Teaching Styles

Table 4-15 reports the percentage of parents selecting each of the five basic teaching styles. It is evident that few parents select the more traditional modes of teachings, lecture and recitation. While 10 percent chose lecture as the preferred style and an additional 10 percent chose the recitation style, a total of 34 percent chose either activity or learning by doing as preferred styles. Similarly, 65 percent of the parents placed the lecture on recitation method as the least preferred method.

Respondents who ranked either lecture or recitation teaching styles as their first or second choice and ranked neither last

TABLE 4-14

## Factor Analysis of Content Preferences

<u>Factor 1</u>		<u>Factor 2</u>	
Vietnam War	.744*	Independence value	-.665
Problems of Communism	.701	Good grooming	.572
Effects of drugs	.657	Proper public behavior	.563
Sex education	.598	Proper behavior goal	.568
City problems	.574	Societal control value	.530
Job preparation	.524		
<u>Factor 3</u>		<u>Factor 4</u>	
Music appreciation	.732	Independent thinking goal	.691
Creative writing	.728	Norm control value	.534
Religion	.673		
Irish history	.550		
<u>Factor 5</u>		<u>Factor 6</u>	
Practical skills goal	.650	Basics goal	.666
		Individual understanding goal	-.628

\*Factor loading on factor specified above.

**TABLE 4-15**  
**Percentage of Parents**  
**Selecting Alternative Teaching Styles**

<u>Teaching Style</u>	<u>Preferred Frequency of Use</u>			
	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third/Fourth</u>	<u>Fifth</u>
Lecture	10%	7%	39%	44%
Recitation	10	14	55	21
Activity	14	21	55	21
Learn by doing	20	29	46	5
Discussion	42	23	31	4

were considered high on a measure of preference for traditional teaching methods.

Preference for traditional teaching is highly related to family education (Table 4-16). While approximately 30 percent of those with less than a high school education were favorable to traditional teaching methods, only about 5 percent of the college educated respondents were favorable.

The ethnic differences within educational groupings are small. Negroes tend to be more traditional in the less than high school and high school educated group; the Irish are the least traditional. The largest ethnic differences are in the lowest educated group, suggesting that a more differentiated categorization of education might reduce ethnic differences still further.

Preferring a traditional teaching style is most analogous to wanting an adult-centered teacher in Sieber and Wilder's typology.<sup>6</sup> Although Sieber and Wilder found only a slight difference between working and middle class parents of elementary school children on the adult vs. child-centered dimension, working class parents in the Boston sample differ appreciably from middle class parents. Over three times the percentage of parents with low educations as compared to those with the most education prefer traditional teaching. In addition, unlike the findings of Sieber and Wilder, Negro parents in the Boston sample are less child-centered than white parents.

TABLE 4-16

Percentage of Parents Preferring Traditional Teaching  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	37% (43)	20% (49)	[ 0% (2)]
Irish	22% (13)	16% (57)	4% (27)
Italian	27% (11)	18% (44)	[40% (5)]
Chinese	28% (25)	13% (30)	[25% (4)]
Other	31% (13)	18% (51)	5% (21)
Total	32% (105)	17% (231)	9% (59)

### **Educational Methods Teaching Concerns**

The summary of parental preferences of teaching concerns does not indicate a strong tendency for parental views of good teachers to match parental views of the proper educational goals. While a majority of parents ranked learning the fundamentals as the first goal of elementary school education, few want teachers to be most concerned with knowledge, the teaching concern closest to teaching the basics (Table 4-17). There is large sentiment for teachers being concerned with student feeling and choice.

To simplify the analysis of teaching concerns, a factor analysis of the eight concerns was undertaken. Table 4-18 indicates the presence of three factors. The first factor is similar to the dimension located throughout the analysis of educational content. The concerns with the highest factor loadings are: distance from students, concern for knowledge, and concern for order. This factor implies control and direction from the teacher to the students.

The third factor is an affective factor and relates to aiding the student instead of directing and controlling the student. Concern for the feelings of students and for helping students have the highest factor loadings.

It is the second factor which is the most difficult to interpret. To some extent this factor measures student-centeredness. Concern for challenging students and being relevant have the highest loadings on the factor. The factor description fits into a theoretical

**TABLE 4-17**  
**Percentage of Parents**  
**Selecting Alternative Teacher Concerns as Important**

<u>Concerns</u>	<u>Percentage Selecting Concern As One of Three Most Important</u>
Feelings, emotions, and differences among students	43%
Helping and praising students	35
Maintaining a sense of order and discipline within the classroom	24
Challenging students	21
Teaching a store of knowledge	20
Making lessons relevant	17
Maintaining a proper professional distance from students	5



TABLE 4-18

## Factor Analysis of Teaching Concerns

<u>Factor 1</u>		<u>Factor 2</u>	
Distance	.769*	Challenge	.813
Knowledge	.755	Relevance	.640
Order	.527	Order	.439
Feeling	.276	Help	.309
Choice	.234	Choice	.244
Challenge	.096	Knowledge	.150
Relevance	.070	Distance	-.029
Help	-.042	Feeling	-.094

Factor 3

Feeling	-.786
Help	-.714
Choice	-.434
Relevance	-.275
Order	-.193
Distance	-.132
Knowledge	-.104
Challenge	-.007

\*Factor loading on specified factor.

framework of three factors differing primarily by the nature and degree of control over the student:

(A) Factor 1; concern for controlling the student

(Adult directed)

(B) Factor 3; concern for helping the student, begin-

ning with the student's concerns and adding adult

help (Adult aided);

(C) Factor 2; concern for student preferences and

desires (Student centered).

Factor 2, however, is also strongly related to a concern for order.

Thus this simple explanation of the concerns question appears as only suggestive.

Only a concern for challenging students, of the three variables most highly loaded on the three concern factors, is related to family education (Table 4-19). While 38 percent of those with college educations wanted teachers concerned about challenging students, less than 20 percent of those with less education agreed. Tables 4-20 and 4-21 indicate only slight curvilinear relations between a concern for student feelings and concern for knowledge and education.

Ethnic differences are great, however. Chinese respondents are the least concerned about student feelings; Negroes rank high in this concern. Irish parents show relatively little preference for teachers being concerned with imparting knowledge; Chinese and Irish parents are the most concerned with challenging students.

TABLE 4-19

Percentage of Parents Selecting a Concern for Challenging Students  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	14% (42)	14% (49)	[ 0% (2)]
Irish	23% (13)	26% (57)	37% (27)
Italian	18% (11)	16% (43)	[40% (5)]
Chinese	32% (19)	15% (26)	[ 0% (4)]
Other	15% (13)	14% (50)	50% (20)
Total	19% (98)	18% (225)	38% (58)

TABLE 4-20

Percentage of Parents Selecting a Concern for Knowledge  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	17% (42)	20% (49)	[50% (2)]
Irish	15% (13)	18% (57)	7% (27)
Italian	0% (11)	30% (43)	[40% (5)]
Chinese	32% (19)	19% (26)	[25% (4)]
Other	39% (13)	24% (50)	25% (20)
Total	20% (98)	22% (225)	19% (58)

TABLE 4-21

Percentage of Parents Selecting a Concern for Students' Feelings  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	45% (42)	55% (49)	[100% (2)]
Irish	31% (13)	60% (57)	48% (27)
Italian	27% (11)	54% (43)	[ 0% (5)]
Chinese	11% (19)	27% (26)	[ 50% (4)]
Other	39% (13)	44% (50)	35% (20)
Total	34% (98)	50% (225)	41% (58)

### Educational Methods: Discipline

Table 4-22 indicates that over two-thirds of the parents interviewed oppose physical punishment (the use of a rattan or stick) in elementary schools, about 7 percent favor it. Suspension and shaming the child in class (i.e., yelling at a child and putting a child in a special place) are each opposed by about one-third of the respondents. The most preferred punishments are helping the child through pupil adjustment counselors and contacting parents about behavior problems.

Thus, on the whole, parents are against the school's punishing the child and would prefer to involve the parents in the disciplining process.

A factor analysis of responses to the punishment methods indicated that the questions were virtually all independent.

Physical punishment, while favored by few and opposed by many, is supported most by those with little education. Only three of the college educated wanted physical discipline, about 10 percent of those lacking a high school education favored it (Table 4-23). The Chinese and Italian respondents were slightly less favorable to physical punishment.

Preference for the remaining discipline methods do not vary greatly by education. College educated parents are slightly more favorable to disciplining through schoolwork and less favorable to involving parents in punishment. Chinese parents are less favorable

TABLE 4-22

Percentage of Parents Favoring and Opposing  
Alternative Discipline and Punishment Procedures

	<u>Percentage Favoring</u>	<u>Percentage Opposing</u>
Physical punishment	7%	64%
Shame (yelling, putting child in special place)	5	39
Suspension	2	34
School work (after school, deprivation)	33	16
Parent involvement or threatening parent involvement	63	7
Help (pupil adjustment counselor and private talk)	76	2



TABLE 4-23

Percentage of Parents Favoring Physical Punishment  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	14% (43)	8% (49)	[50% (2)]
Irish	15% (13)	7% (57)	4% (27)
Italian	9% (11)	7% (44)	[ 0% (5)]
Chinese	4% (25)	0% (30)	[25% (4)]
Other	0% (13)	10% (51)	0% (21)
Total	10% (105)	7% (231)	5% (59)

to involving parents and school authorities in disciplining; they tend to favor punishment meted out in the classroom, e.g., shame. Italians on the other hand are relatively more favorable to punishment through added schoolwork and less favorable to shame punishment. The relations are all small, inconsistent, and have not been shown in tables here.

#### Educational Methods: Summary

A factor analysis of all the methods questions suggested no new factors. In fact, no factors appeared across question types, i.e., there was no overall traditional or modern dimension. Responses to methods questions have revealed the following relations:

- (1) Working class respondents are more in favor of traditional teaching methods than are middle class respondents.
- (2) Negro parents favor more traditional teaching methods than do Irish parents with equal education.
- (3) The highly educated, while relatively more concerned about teachers challenging their students, do not differ in other teaching concern preferences from those respondents with the least education.
- (4) Chinese respondents are relatively unconcerned for student feelings and Irish for imparting

knowledge, but these groups are the most concerned with challenging students.

(5) Few educational differences in parental attitudes toward discipline methods exist. These parents with little education are the most favorable to physical punishment, but few parents support physical punishment.

(6) Chinese parents are relatively more in favor of classroom disciplining, i.e., share; Italians favor another form of classroom disciplining, added homework.

#### Parent Role: Power

Which Boston parents want more power over the schools? More than half favor parental involvement which is supportive of the schools.

A majority of parents favor parents helping children with schoolwork (84 percent) and serving as paid (63 percent) or unpaid (73 percent) aides in the school (Table 4-24). A substantial minority favor parents playing a role in determining the school curriculum (40 percent), teaching methods (33 percent), and budget decisions (41 percent). These decisions areas shape the operations of the school and imply some parental control rather than blind support of school personnel. Note that two-thirds of the parents favor a parental decision-making role in the area of discipline methods. Many Boston parents would see their role as one supporting the teacher or

TABLE 4-24

Percentage of Parents Favoring Selected Parent Roles  
In the Schools

<u>Parent Roles</u>	<u>Percentage Favoring</u>
Helping children to learn at home	84%*
Serving as nonpaid volunteer aides	73
Helping to decide what discipline methods should be used	67
Serving as paid teacher aides	63
Helping to decide how the school spends its money	41
Helping to decide what should be taught	40
Helping to decide what teaching methods should be used	33
Helping to decide what principal gets hired or fired	25
Helping to decide what teachers get hired or fired	24

\*Remaining percentage of respondents said "don't know," "were opposed," or "were uncertain."

the school's action while others--at the time of this survey--object to the use of corporal punishment, the "stick" or rattan. This area is shown to have great salience to Boston parents.

Only one in four parents surveyed want parents to play a role in selecting and replacing teachers and principals. Thus while a majority of parents were in favor of supportive parental roles, and a near majority favored some operational control of the school, only a minority favor controlling the choice of staff members for the school.<sup>7</sup>

The degree to which parents favored decision-making control was measured by determining the number of decision areas in which respondents supported a parental role. The five areas included personnel (teachers or principals), curriculum, methods, and budget review. While the average Boston parent respondent thought that parents should have a role in an average of over three areas, this average differed greatly by ethnic group (Table 4-25). While Chinese respondents sought a role in fewer than two decision areas, Italian and Irish respondents in three, Black respondents believed that parents should play a role in at least four of the five areas. Within the ethnic groups, only the more educated Italians sought a greater role than their less educated group members.

Table 4-26 reports the average percentage of parents supporting a role in choosing and dismissing teachers or principals in their school. Black parents were three times as likely to support such a parent role as were Irish respondents. The lack of support

TABLE 4-25

**Average Number of Decision Areas Where Parent Role is Preferred  
By Ethnicity and Education**

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	4.0 (43)*	4.2 (46)	[4.2 (5)]
Irish	3.0 (13)	3.0 (49)	2.8 (35)
Italian	2.7 (12)	3.1 (42)	3.4 (7)
Chinese	1.4 (25)	1.9 (27)	2.6 (7)
Other	2.8 (13)	3.4 (39)	3.0 (33)
Total	3.0 (106)	3.3 (203)	3.0 (87)

\*The areas included a parent role in personnel (teachers or principal) selection and dismissal, budget review, curriculum, teaching or discipline methods.

**TABLE 4-26**

**Percentage of Parents Preferring a Parent Role  
In Selecting Teachers and/or Principals  
By Ethnicity and Education**

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	56% (43)	61% (49)	[ 0% (2)]
Irish	15% (13)	16% (57)	33% (27)
Italian	46% (11)	30% (44)	[40% (5)]
Chinese	4% (25)	7% (30)	[25% (4)]
Other	15% (13)	31% (51)	19% (21)
Total	32% (105)	30% (231)	27% (59)



among Chinese for a role in personnel decision-making can be juxtaposed to relatively strong Italian sentiment for control. More than twice as many Irish college graduates compared with those with less education favor parent personnel control.

#### Parent Role: Communications

When asked what should be the way most parents find out about what's happening in their child's elementary school, the vast majority of parents (72.8 percent) prefer communications with school personnel (Table 4-27). A minority prefer communications from children (15 percent), parents (4 percent), or the mass media (4 percent) as their source of information.

Those with the least education are more favorable to finding out about their schools through their children or the mass media; those with more education prefer to receive news from other parents or, primarily, from school personnel.

Chinese respondents do not prefer to communicate about the school with school personnel; they prefer to communicate through their children (Table 4-28). The Italian respondents are the most favorable group toward dealing with school personnel, Chinese and Negroes are the least favorable. Note that only among Negroes do the preferences to communicate through school personnel decrease as education of parents increases from less than a high school to a high school education.

**TABLE 4-27**

**Percentage of Parents Selecting Alternative Means  
Of Communicating with School by Education**

<u>Communications Preference</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Under High School Graduate (105)</u>	<u>High School Graduate (231)</u>	<u>College Graduate or More (59)</u>	
School Personnel	63%	76%	30%	73%
Children	19%	13%	12%	14%
Other Parents	3%	4%	7%	4%
Mass Media	8%	3%	2%	4%
Don't know	8%	4%	0%	5%

TABLE 4-28

Percentage of Parents Preferring to Receive Communications  
From School Personnel by Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	77% (43)	69% (49)	[50% (2)]
Irish	69% (13)	84% (57)	85% (27)
Italian	82% (11)	91% (44)	[40% (5)]
Chinese*	20% (25)	23% (30)	[75% (4)]
Other	77% (13)	90% (51)	86% (21)
Total	63% (105)	76% (231)	80% (59)

\*Thirty-two of 59 Chinese respondents selected their children as their preferred communications media, 15 selected school personnel, and 9 said they did not know which to choose.

### **Parent Role: Summary**

**Analysis of the parent survey has indicated:**

- (1) Level of education is not related to preferences for parental power in school affairs, but ethnicity is highly related. Negro parents want control over personnel and content and seek roles as aides. Irish and Italian parents seek control over content and seek roles as aides, but Chinese parents only seek supportive roles.**
- (2) Education is positively related to parental preferences for communicating with school personnel rather than with children, other parents, or the mass media to receive information about the local school.**
- (3) While Italians especially prefer dealing with school personnel, Chinese parents prefer communicating through their children.**

## CHAPTER 4 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this chapter, the variable "highest education in family" is related to several dependent variables. This variable measures the family's education, i.e., the highest education received by the father or mother. Two measures of social class, occupation, and the respondent's education failed to show as large a relation with parental preferences. For example, Table A presents the relations between these measures and educational aspirations:

TABLE A

Gamma Between Independent Variables and  
Educational Aspirations within Ethnic Groups

Ethnicity

<u>Independent</u> <u>Variable</u>	<u>Blacks</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Catholics</u>	<u>Protestant</u>	<u>Other</u>
Highest education in family	.447	.668	.579	.002	.689	.683	.360
SES- Measure 1	.061	.609	.304	-.152	.185	.662	.283
SES- Measure 2	.064	.631	.040	.358	.520	.677	.469

It should be noted that in 1969, 52 percent of the graduates of Boston Public High Schools were reported as planning to attend either two- or four-year colleges.

<sup>2</sup>A factor analysis of the responses to the values question located six factors with the following items and factor loadings:

- (1) Think (.677) and curious (.594) vs. neat (-.706)
- (2) Happy (.798) vs. work hard (-.528)
- (3) Self control (+.872)

(4) Creativity (+.819)

(5) Consideration (-.523) vs. loyalty (.908)

(6) Proper public behavior (-.973)

Rather than over interpret such empirical patterns based on a question where an order effect is indicated, the theoretical variables of independence value was constructed. Note that the factor loadings for those values comprising this variable are always of opposite sign of behavior control values when more than one value has factor loading greater than  $\pm .500$ .

<sup>3</sup>Few people thought basics or desire goals unimportant (4 and 5 percent respectively) but 43 percent thought practical goals were unimportant.

<sup>4</sup>The gamma between highest education in family and the number of topics chosen to be given great attention is .29.

<sup>5</sup>It should be noted that parents who seek an educational content which emphasizes independence values are also likely to be opposed to traditional teaching methods. The relation, however, is far from perfect. For example, the table below indicated that 110 respondents were low in independence values and preferred one traditional teaching method while 91 respondents rejected one traditional teaching method and were high in independence values. Thus 196 respondents, about half the sample, did not hold "consistently innovative" views.

#### Traditional Teaching Methods

<u>Independence Value</u>	<u>At Least One High</u>	<u>Neither High</u>	<u>One Low</u>
<u>Low</u> (264)	42% (110)	20% (53)	38% (101)
<u>High</u> (133)	26% (34)	6% (8)	68% (91)

<sup>6</sup>Sam P. Sieber and David E. Wilder, "Teaching Styles: Parental Preferences and Professional Role Definitions," Sociology of Education, Vol. 40, No. 4 (1967), pp. 304-315.

<sup>7</sup>Analysis of pairs of individual items does indicate that generally those parents favoring personnel control also favor operational control and support, and those parents favoring operational control also favor supportive roles.

## CHAPTER 5

### EDUCATIONAL CONTENT: PARENTAL PREFERENCES AND SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 examine the relation between parental preferences and school functioning in the areas of educational content, methods, and parent role. Chapter 9 discusses the degree to which the relations are spurious, i.e., the extent to which a process of responsiveness to parents explains the relation between parental preferences and school functioning within the Boston School System. Finally, Chapter 10 examines alternative causes of school functioning.

Chapter 4 identified one factor common to the three educational content subareas. In the values subarea, an independence-social control dimension was indicated; in the topics subarea, the factors of personal and societal behavior concern were identified; and in the goals subarea, a traditional factor, where teaching proper behavior had the highest factor loading, was identified. A factor analysis of all educational content responses indicated that all these dimensions or factors were measuring one summary factor, teaching children proper behavior. While the behavior training items all had high positive factor loadings on the proper behavior factor, the independence value variable had a high negative loading. Our discussion of the functioning of these 10 elementary schools in the area



of educational content focuses on this independence value-behavior training factor.

First, the distribution of parent preferences in educational content at each of the 10 schools must be described.

#### Distribution of Parental Preferences in Educational Content by School

There are many ways to place parents on the independence value-behavior training dimension. One alternative is to describe parents by their factor score. I have decided against this alternative in order to establish a more meaningful empirical and theoretical interpretation of the magnitude of the responses. For example, if we can establish that half of the parent respondents at a school select a response indicating a preference for independence values, this would have more meaning than if we establish that half rank arbitrarily "high" on this majority opinion factor. Educators cannot deal directly with factor scores. An alternative way to describe parents is to construct a weighted index of responses to questions in the three subareas. I rejected this alternative and instead use a simpler scheme; each school is described in terms of the percentage of parent respondents selecting at least two responses indicating a preference for independence rather than behavior training educational content. Thus Table 5-1 reports the percentage of parents at each school selecting at least two independence values from the value list, the percentage who did not select the goal of teaching proper public behavior from the list of educational goals or in

TABLE 5-1

## Parental Preferences of Educational Content by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Value Independence<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>Reject Behavior Training Goal<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>Want Little Attention Given To Traditional Topics<sup>c</sup></u>	<u>Prefer Independence On Two or More Questions (Rank)</u>
Murphy	63%	62%	63%	73% (1)
Davis	49	49	36	54 (2)
Leary	59	59	35	37 (5)
Carlino	55	55	34	40 (3)
Kelley	44	44	32	39 (4)
Wong	43	50	33	25 (9)
Marino	48	47	21	33 (7.5)
Jones	43	42	16	36 (6)
Brown	38	37	31	33 (7.5)
Ming	45	60	25	15 (10)

<sup>a</sup>Respondent chose two or more independence values.

<sup>b</sup>Respondent did not select behavior training as a preferred educational goal.

<sup>c</sup>Respondent wants only none, little, or some attention given to good grooming and proper public behavior.

an open-ended question, and the percentage of parents who prefer to give an average of little, some, or no attention to the behavior topics of good grooming and proper public behavior. The percentage of those parents selecting two independence preferences is then used to describe each of the 10 schools.

Preference for independence content is related to the educational level of the parents at the 10 schools. A majority of parents at the Davis School (54 percent) and over two-thirds of the Murphy School parents (73 percent) did not prefer a behavior training educational content. The Murphy School serves a primarily middle class clientele; the Davis School serves many children with middle class backgrounds. Note that a majority of parents at all other schools prefer a behavior training content.

Support for behavior training is greatest in the schools serving Blacks and Chinese (Wong, Brown, Jones, Ming). Only parents at the Marino School are as strongly in favor of behavior training. The Marino School serves working class Italians. The relation between education and preference for independence content does not hold at the Leary, Carlino, and Kelley Schools. The Leary School serves middle class parents but ranks below the Carlino and Kelley Schools in parental preference for independence content. The percentage differences, however, are small. At five schools 33 to 40 percent of the parents rejected behavior training. To determine if these small percentage differences are related to parental

preferences and to clarify the meaning of low and high scores on the overall educational content variable at each school, parental responses to the question, "In your opinion, what are some of the important things children should learn in elementary school?", are discussed below.

Virtually all parents at the Brown School responding to the open-ended question concerning what children should learn at school mentioned the three "R's" (83 percent). For example, parents said children should learn "the basic subjects and how to speak correctly," "to have the fundamentals in education and learn to read before going to junior high school," "the three 'R's'," and so on. The open-ended questions revealed only moderate support for children learning behavior values in the elementary school, although the closed-ended goals question elicited much more support for this task. Black parents appeared to view behavior training as instrumental to learning the three "R's" but did not view behavior training as the goal of elementary school education. Their comments indicate that they may believe that behavior training goals should be subordinate to more academic goals. One parent said children should learn "a certain amount of discipline and the basics; children should be given a reason for taking subjects." Others wanted their children to learn "basics and some discipline," "all the required subjects and children should be treated as human beings," "to give respect and should get respect, should be taught to discipline themselves to concentrate."

Thus while Brown School parents are only moderately in support of behavior training goals, they are not independence-oriented. Few parents expressed any concern for creativity, individuality, or self-expression in the open-ended questions.

Parents at the Jones School are similar to the Brown School parents. Learning "the fundamentals" was mentioned by 95 percent of the parents in the open-ended content question. A few parents wanted children to learn "discipline" but most only mentioned "getting along with other children" as the only non-academic goal. One parent clearly stated that "discipline should be learned at home." More parents at the Jones School than the Brown School apparently felt children should learn social skills as a substitute for discipline. Social skills, however, were viewed as instrumental to achieving academic success (i.e., the less children fight, the more they can learn the three "R's").

The Italian working class parents at the Marino School, like the Black parents at the Brown and Jones Schools, do not show a great concern for discipline in the open-ended content questions. They do appear to be more concerned about current events, relevancy, and subjects beyond the three "R's" than Black parents. For example, parents expressed a desire for their children to learn "new math, reading, science and art," "math, history, geography, science, art," "racial problems, science, and Vietnam," "reading and science," "things going on today in the present, real world, not abstracts of

the past," "good speech, grammar, foreign language, different interesting aspects of life, not just three 'R's'." Some parents did want proper behavior values to be learned in school. For example, one parent thought children should learn "how to behave, if they don't this reflects on their parents, they should learn to dress properly, have good manners, and be courteous to the teacher." On the other hand, a few parents stated more middle class concerns. "Children should have a chance to express what their individual interests are...." About one-quarter of the Marino School parents expressed a concern for children learning proper behavior in the open-ended question.

Parents of children at the Kelley School are strongly in favor of children learning proper behavior in elementary school. Among the subjects parents want their children to learn are "respect for teachers and getting along with others, they should learn to appreciate that teachers are there to teach them and they shouldn't goof around," "discipline and respect before anything else; the teacher should have the right to hit children, and they should learn English, language, and math," "reading, arithmetic, spelling, how to be good, sitting down and obeying the teacher," "reading, writing, arithmetic, respect for other people and property, how to behave," "respect for law," "learn to do as they are told." In fact, 48 percent of the parents, the most of any school, mentioned behavior training as a response to the open-ended educational goal question.

Many Chinese parents expressed no opinion about what children should learn at the Ming School. One interviewer described one Ming School parent who was typical of Chinese respondents. "She couldn't care less about what is going on in school. She admits the only things she knows about are working and cooking." Thus 58 percent of the Ming School parents did not answer the open-ended question about what they wanted their children to learn in school. Many Chinese parents responded to the open-ended question by saying "the teacher should decide," or "it should be up to the school authorities." Some said this was because school authorities knew more than ignorant parents; others said authorities should be trusted. They did not express additional views about the content of education.

Two values, obedience and hard work, were most emphasized by those Ming School parents who did answer the open-ended question. Thus one respondent, who has lived in the United States for over a decade and speaks no English, thought that children should learn "to be obedient, and to be hard-working." Another parent, while stating that the content of education should be up to the school, noted that "the children should have more homework." Several parents described a "good teacher" as one who "teaches children to obey parents and to study and work hard." Another respondent said, "I can only think of good conduct," when asked about her preferences in educational content.



About one-third of the Ming School parents specifically stated that children should learn English, language, or basics.

There is no support among Chinese parents for independence values (e.g., only 20 percent selected "to think for himself" as a preferred value), independence goals, or subjects like creativity. On the other hand, expressed concern for behavior training is also limited.

The Wong School serves a mixture of Black and Chinese parents, and parental preferences generally combined Chinese lack of opinion and concern for obedience with the Black instrumental concern for behavior training. Only one-quarter of the parents were low in behavior training.

Many parents at the Carlino School want their children to learn proper behavior in school. One parent stated that she wanted children "to behave, be well-mannered, to pay attention to teachers, to sit still, and not to answer back to teachers." Other parents included "respect for authority, taking care of other people's property, to take orders, to get along with each other, respect for teachers, and proper dress and cleanliness" on their list of important things to learn in this elementary school. Only a handful of parents suggested children should learn independence values (e.g., "to say what they feel").

Many Leary School parents are also concerned that their children learn how to behave in school. One parent stated that the most

important thing children should learn is "discipline, the rest is up to the teachers as far as curriculum is concerned." A second parent thought children should learn "good grooming, respect for other people's property," and some academic subjects at the Leary School. Many parents specifically set limits on behavior training, however. "Children should learn reading, to spell correctly, modern math, the fundamentals, and discipline, but the school should not be the principal disciplinarian." Another parent thought children should learn "the fundamentals, American history. There is a need to educate without worrying about teaching personal qualities." A few parents at the Leary School want the school to teach independence values like "to think for themselves" and "how to enjoy school and learning." Parents who expressed these views in response to open-ended questions were in the minority.

Parents who have more education are more likely to question an emphasis on behavior training in their schools and offer alternative conceptions of educational content. While some parents at the Davis School want children to "learn cooperation, how to conform, to stay quiet in class and respect their teachers, how to conduct themselves," other parents specifically excluded citizenship training from their preferred curriculum. One parent, after noting that "the way to tell jails from schools is that jails have playgrounds," stated that the "children should learn mathematics, English, and social studies in school but not citizenship, for if they don't learn it here (at home), the school shouldn't be responsible for

it." Others define "citizenship" differently. One parent thought children should learn "better citizenship, humanitarianism, ecology."

The parents at the Murphy School are least concerned about their children learning proper behavior in the school. Many parents agree with a mother who thought children should learn "the basics, getting along with others, enrichment subjects like art and science, but not behavior. The home provides behavior and the public schools should not."

In summary, the open-ended comments indicate that few parents want independence goals to be learned in school; a majority prefer an educational content stressing behavior training. On the other hand, parents at several schools explicitly set limits on the extent and significance or educational implications of behavior training. Parents at the Brown and Jones Schools view behavior training as instrumental to learning the three "R's", while fewer parents at the Leary and Kelley Schools see behavior training as a preferred goal. They are more likely to view behavior training as an end in itself. More parents at the Murphy and Davis Schools are concerned that behavior training will replace academic goals in their schools.

#### Distribution of School Functioning in Educational Content: A Comparison of Two Measures of Independence Content

As described in Chapter 2, several methods of collecting data concerning school functioning were used. The methods differed in their utility for accurately describing school functioning. Schools

are described on the dimension of independence value-behavior training in educational content by teacher responses to the written teacher questionnaire and oral interviews. Observation of teachers provided much data concerning teaching methods but little data on the values stressed. The observation period was too brief for accurate observations.

Three questions in the teacher questionnaire analogous to the three questions in the parent survey provide data concerning independence vs. behavior training educational content. Teachers were asked to select four values that should be most emphasized in their school from a list of eleven values. Three values are indicators of independence value, "to think for himself," "to be curious," and "to be creative." Four values indicate a concern for training children in proper behavior, "to obey those in authority," "to behave as most people think correct," "to have self-control," and "to be loyal." The average percentage of teachers selecting the independence response for each of these seven values was determined for each school and the schools ranked by the percentage of teachers thinking they should emphasize independence values (Table 5-2).

Teachers were asked to rank each item on the list of educational goals. Table 5-3 reports the percentage of teachers at each school who did not select "teaching proper behavior" as one of the three most important goals to be emphasized at their school.

TABLE 5-2

## Teacher Independence and Behavior Training Value Selection by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Select</u>			<u>Did Not Select</u>		<u>Average</u>	<u>(Rank)</u>
	<u>Think for Himself</u>	<u>Be Curious</u>	<u>Be Creative</u>	<u>Obey Those in Authority</u>	<u>Be Loyal and Patriotic</u>		
Kelley	83%	67%	33%	67%	100%	70%	(1)
Carlino	88	78	22	78	78	69	(2)
Wong	80	80	60	80	40	62	(3)
Brown	86	43	43	71	86	66	(4)
Murphy	80	60	40	80	60	64	(5)
Marino	57	71	0	86	86	60	(6.5)
Ming	100	33	0	67	100	60	(6.5)
Jones	50	50	42	67	83	58	(8)
Davis	40	60	40	60	60	52	(9)
Leary	86	14	43	43	71	51	(10)

TABLE 5-3

## Teacher Behavior Training Goal Selection by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage Not Ranking Behavior Training as One of Three Most Important Goals (Rank)</u>	
Kelley	50%	(8.5)
Carlino	64	(7)
Wong	100	(2)
Brown	71	(4)
Murphy	67	(5.5)
Marino	100	(2)
Ming	100	(2)
Jones	50	(8.5)
Davis	67	(5.5)
Leary	33	(10)

Finally, teachers were asked how much time they devoted to a list of subjects. The list included the behavior training subjects of good grooming and proper public behavior. The schools were described by the percentage of teachers who reported discussing the behavior training topics less than weekly. The average percentage was then used to derive a school rank on teaching independence rather than behavior training topics (Table 5-4).

Table 5-5 reports the three educational content questionnaire averages and ranks. Note that the inconsistency is large at about half of the schools. The last column combines the three indicators by averaging the percentages and determining the ranks of the schools.

All teachers in nine of the ten schools were interviewed personally concerning what they wanted to change about the school or school system. A number of these teachers were also questioned about the primary things children should learn in school. At the tenth school (Kelley School) only a few interviews could be completed. Table 5-6 ranks and reports the percentage of teachers at each school who expressed independence as a value to teach children.

All the schools except one rank fairly close on both measures. While half the schools have ranks on the questionnaires which are no more than two places above or below their interview ranks, the Ming School ranks first on the questionnaire and is tied for last on the interview rankings. The explanation is simple; only two of seven

TABLE 5-4

## Teacher Behavior Training Subject Attention by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Low on Good Grooming</u>	<u>Low on Proper Public Behavior</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>(Rank)</u>
Kelley	50%	33%	42%	(8)
Carlino	64%	27%	46%	(7)
Wong	80%	40%	60%	(3)
Brown	86%	43%	65%	(2)
Murphy	40%	40%	40%	(9)
Marino	43%	57%	50%	(5.5)
Ming	100%	100%	100%	(1)
Jones	64%	37%	51%	(4)
Davis	0%	0%	0%	(10)
Leary	57%	43%	50%	(5.5)



TABLE 5-5

Summary of Teacher on Independence Training Content Selection  
On Written Questionnaire

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage High on Independence Training</u>						<u>Content Average</u>	
	<u>Values</u>		<u>Goals</u>		<u>Subjects</u>			
Kelley	70%	(1)*	50%	(8.5)	42%	(8)	54%	(7)
Carlino	60%	(2)	64%	(7)	46%	(7)	60%	(5)
Wong	68%	(3)	100%	(2)	60%	(3)	76%	(2)
Brown	66%	(4)	71%	(4)	65%	(2)	67%	(4)
Murphy	64%	(5)	67%	(5.5)	40%	(9)	57%	(6)
Marino	60%	(6.5)	100%	(2)	50%	(5.5)	70%	(3)
Ming	60%	(6.5)	100%	(2)	100%	(1)	87%	(1)
Jones	58%	(8)	50%	(8.5)	51%	(4)	53%	(8)
Davis	52%	(9)	67%	(5.5)	0%	(10)	40%	(10)
Leary	51%	(10)	33%	(10)	50%	(5.5)	45%	(9)

\*Rank on measure given in parentheses.

TABLE 5-6

Comparison of Teacher Independence Training Content Selection  
On Written and Oral Measures

<u>School</u>	<u>Questionnaire</u>	<u>Interview</u>	<u>Average of Measures</u>	<u>Corrected Average</u>
Ming	87% (1)	0% (9.5)	44% (4)	29% (7)
Wong	76% (2)	25% (3)	51% (1.5)	51% (2)
Marino	70% (3)	31% (1.5)	51% (1.5)	51% (1)
Carlino	60% (5)	31% (1.5)	46% (3)	46% (3)
Brown	67% (4)	7% (7)	37% (5.5)	37% (4)
Murphy	57% (6)	16% (5)	37% (5.5)	37% (5)
Kelley	54% (7)	0% (9.5)	27% (8.5)	27% (8)
Jones	53% (8)	19% (4)	36% (7)	36% (6)
Davis	40% (10)	14% (6)	27% (8.5)	27% (9)
Leary	45% (9)	6% (8)	26% (10)	26% (10)

teachers at the Ming School expressed any non-traditional attitudes in the field visit interviews, but these two teachers returned their written questionnaires. Since only one other Ming School teacher responded, Ming School questionnaires respondents are not representative of the Ming School teachers. Thus while the measures correlation coefficient is .34 with the Ming School listed, changing the Ming School rank increases the correlation coefficient to .72.

The measures of school functioning in the educational content area indicate that the Wong, Carlino, and Marino Schools emphasize independence training, while more teachers at the Leary, Kelley, and Davis Schools stress behavior training content. My observations and interviews indicate that a large majority of the teachers at the Ming School stress a strong behavior training educational content. The Brown, Murphy, and Jones Schools fall in the middle of the dimension. To derive an overall measure of school functioning in educational content, the average percentage of teachers valuing independence content using the written and oral measures was used to rank schools at all but the Ming School. At the Ming School, I have estimated that two of the seven teachers, or 29 percent, value independence highly.

The teachers' comments, however, describe school functioning better than raw percentages.

#### Distribution of School Functioning in Educational Content: Teacher Comments

The Carlino School is typical of the schools where independence is valued. As in many of the schools, the faculty is divided

between those favoring self-expression and those concerned for training children in proper behavior. But the self-expressors have clearly won in the Marino School. Teachers were asked what children should learn in elementary school. One replied "thinking is number one" while she was letting her students administer their own exams. A second teacher believes children must learn to "investigate, to work independently, to develop self-reliance, for children are babied too much and given too much direction in our society today." Even more teachers at the Carlino School wanted to stress independence and creativity more than the structure of the school and the system would now tolerate. "The principal is too much of a law-and-order man; we cannot move the desks to allow for different kinds of independent activities....Under the current system children cannot express themselves enough; they should be able to say what they want."

A few older and sterner teachers remain and lament the atmosphere of the school.

"These children need more discipline. There is too much freedom in their homes. After all, children like rules and regulations. Here there is a tendency for too much *laisse faire*." A second teacher thought children should learn "discipline, moral principles, and obedience." These teachers were clearly out of step with the majority of the Carlino School's teachers.

The teachers at the Wong School were less vocal about their preferences for independence rather than behavior training values.

One teacher noted that "things that children do on their own stick to them; these children need a freer situation. Noise isn't always the worst thing." And while another teacher noted that she "insisted on independence," a few teachers agreed with the teacher who thought children must learn "respectfulness and obedience."

In the Marino School the principal discourages this, and the teachers' comments reflect their dismay. "The philosophy of education is too rigid here," complains one teacher. "We need more grouping for example. Kids do exercises in a military manner during recess." Another teacher agrees. "They have an old fashioned idea of discipline and everyone is afraid of noise. I'm stricter than I would be otherwise. Both teachers and children are not given the respect due them." Another said, "I have much faith in children. Some schools have tight discipline--it's not healthy for children. The Administration demands tight discipline." The only dissenting voice at this school was a teacher who wanted to mix the two values. "We have to make children behave without being too rigid; we want control and flexibility."

Teachers were concerned with discipline and instilling proper behavior at the Davis and Leary Schools. Almost all teachers began their comments with a discussion of discipline, most emphasized why it was not a problem at this school. For example, one teacher was asked what she would like to change about the school. "Well, there really are no discipline problems here. We can handle discipline

problems ourselves. We don't need the principal's help on that." What should children learn in the Leary School? Several said, "not just the basics or three 'R's', but also social behavior, learning to get along with others, learning to be responsible, proper work habits, sharing and fair play, how to adjust." As one Leary School teacher put it for the majority, "I need structure. I like the Dewey ideas in a structured environment. Team teaching, for example, is too expensive."

The Davis School teachers, like the Leary School teachers, had seen alternative schools and classrooms and had rejected them. "I observed in the Newton schools, but I didn't like them. There was too much permissiveness and freedom." A second teacher stated that while "children don't get enough time to use their own originality, you still need more discipline. The system cannot fix all the broken windows. The Newton schools have too much freedom."

The Ming School, although ranking high in independence values on the written questionnaire, was much more like the Davis and Leary Schools in actual operation. Only three out of seven teachers returned the questionnaires, and the three included the only two non-traditional teachers in the school. The open-ended responses and observations of classrooms indicated little value on independence at the school. To most of the teachers at the Ming School the key value of life was respect, but, to their pleasure, the children at the Ming School had this value already. This might also account for

the written vs. oral discrepancy. One teacher, for example, thought children should learn "respectfulness and obedience," and a second felt that children should learn that the "teacher is right."

The Murphy School ranks in the middle on the written questionnaire and oral measurements on the independence training dimension. Observations indicated that the school operated even more traditionally. The primary explanation for this discrepancy is that the teachers valuing independence are "under the gun;" they are now leaving the school. One teacher states, "I don't like the principal that much. I'm leaving this school at the end of the year because of trouble communicating with her. She wants children to have military discipline and stand at their chairs at attention. It would be better if the principal left me alone." A second teacher agreed. "The assistant principal makes children walk in circles in the yard. I'm leaving here after 19 years in the building. The principal is a former Marine officer and acts it." One teacher commented that "you can do few things to punish children like giving them extra work or standing them in a corner because the principal is on the parents' side." This teacher, too, is leaving. The teachers that remain are fairly traditional.

Perhaps the atmosphere at the Jones and Kelley Schools is hard to establish because of the size of the schools; diversity is unavoidable. At the Jones School the open-ended responses showed more favorability to independence training than the written questionnaires. Observations at the school indicate that the majority of

teachers at the school do not stress independence over behavior training, but that several young and non-traditional teachers are trying to alter this pattern. At least two are giving up. A clique of traditional teachers, older and stoutly against the moderate independence nurtured by the Individual Progress Program (IPP), agreed that the "situation of moving children from one classroom to another leads to disorder. We are unhappy with the less strict administration of this new principal."<sup>1</sup> Another teacher comments, "IPP is no good here; maybe it would work in West Roxbury (the middle class suburban part of Bostox), it's too confusing for these children, they need stability." Several younger teachers, including two of the three assistant principals, agree. Said one, "We must tighten up our disciplinary measures here, use corporal punishment, should teach religion, and read the Bible." Said another, "You must understand that these kids are defiant. There is a lack of control. The principal won't let teachers touch the kids. 'Reasonable force' is not enough."

Not all the teachers see it this way. They want a "creative atmosphere" but find it virtually impossible to achieve at this school. "You cannot quiet these children all of a sudden; they are too involved. You cannot stick to a very regular schedule. The curriculum isn't geared to these children." Another said, "The atmosphere isn't conducive to creativity; teachers aren't even given time to develop their ideas." Another teacher lamented, "Can't you have more freedom in this type of school; don't we have to use new ways?" As one younger teacher put it, "This school is split in half, old vs.



the new. The children should learn self-understanding and self-expression." Evidence indicates that this teacher does not have half his colleagues with him and that the atmosphere of the school has not yet changed to the new.

The Kelley School has some younger and more innovative teachers, but behavior training remains a key goal of the school. Although interviewing was limited at this school, almost all the teachers interviewed agreed with the answer that children should learn "self-control and respect."

The Brown School does not fall near either extreme of the educational content continuum. There is a concern for discipline, but the concern is to prevent a few students from disrupting the entire school. The aim is more removal of the disruption than the socialization of all children. On the other hand, teachers did not emphasize independence training as a goal of the school. For every teacher who stated "we need a stricter discipline code," another teacher thought that children at the Brown School should be taught to "read and write, to enjoy knowledge for its own sake, and to think for themselves."

#### Comparison of Parental Preferences to School Functioning in Educational Content

Table 5-7 repeats the summary data reported earlier concerning parental preferences and school functioning in educational content by school. There is a negative correlation of  $-.13$  (Spearman

TABLE 5-7

Parental Preferences and School Functioning  
In Educational Content

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents Preferring Independence Content</u>	<u>Estimated Average of Teachers Preferring Independence Content</u>
Murphy	73% (1)	37% (5)
Davis	54 (2)	27 (9)
Leary	37 (5)	26 (10)
Carlino	40 (3)	46 (3)
Kelley	39 (4)	27 (8)
Wong	25 (9)	51 (2)
Marino	33 (7.5)	51 (1)
Jones	36 (6)	36 (6)
Brown	33 (7.5)	37 (4)
Ming	15 (10)	29 (7)

$r = -.13$

Rank Coefficient) between the two dimensions. This relation is not statistically significant. With ten cases or units of analysis, the  $r$  would have to be over .65 to indicate statistical significance.<sup>2</sup> The major issue here is not one of sampling error, but rather the validity of measures. More qualitative comparisons confirm a negative relation between parental preferences and school functioning in educational content. A few examples are presented below.

At the Murphy and Davis Schools a majority of parents did not express preference for behavior training educational content. Some parents specifically stated that behavior training was the job of the home. Yet the Davis School has the second lowest percentage of teachers favoring an educational content stressing independence values. The Murphy teachers stand at the mode but, if anything, the character of the school is even more traditional. Statistically, there is high incongruence at the Davis and moderate incongruence at the Murphy School (Table 5-8).

The percentage of parents favoring a curriculum stressing behavior training was similar at the Leary, Carlino, Kelley, and Jones Schools. The functioning of these schools differed widely, however. While the Carlino School was one of the three schools where independence values were given the most emphasis, the Kelley and Leary Schools fell at the opposite end of the spectrum. The Jones School was in the middle. Parental preferences in educational content are not related to school functioning within this group of

TABLE 5-8

**Congruency Between Parental Preferences  
And School Functioning in Educational Content by School**

<u>School</u>	<u>Difference in Ranks*</u>	<u>Degree of Congruence</u>
Carlino	0	Congruence
Jones	0	Congruence
Ming	3	Congruence
Brown	3.5	Moderate Congruence
Murphy	4	Moderate Congruence
Kelley	4	Moderate Congruence
Leary	5	Incongruence
Marino	6.5	Incongruence
Wong	7	High Incongruence
Davis	7	High Incongruence

\*The difference in ranks refers to the comparison of the schools' rank in parental preference for independence content and the rank of the school in school functioning on this dimension.

schools. There is high incongruence at the Leary School, moderate incongruence at the Kelley School, and high congruence at the Carlino and Jones Schools.

At the Brown and Marino Schools the identical percentage of parents (33 percent) favor a content that does not include behavior training. Yet the Marino School has teachers who emphasize behavior training least, while the Brown School teachers rank fourth in behavior training emphasis. The former situation is highly incongruent, the latter is moderately incongruent.

The Wong and Ming Schools both serve a large number of Chinese children and parents. But while the Ming School is very traditional, as at least the verbal Chinese parents prefer, the Wong School teachers are second to last in emphasizing behavior training. The former situation is congruent; the latter is moderately incongruent.

Thus at only three schools, the Carlino, Jones, and Ming Schools, congruence appears to exist. At the Leary, Marino, Wong, and Davis Schools it does not. At least in the area of educational content, this sample of Boston Schools and Boston Public School parents indicate that the schools are not functioning as the parents prefer.<sup>3</sup>

## CHAPTER 5 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Individual Progress Program (IPP) was originally described by the following article in the Boston Public Schools Review, VII, No. 7 (1967), p. 1. The Review is an official publication of the Boston School Committee issued by the Office of the Superintendent of Schools:

Ten Boston Public Schools now participate in a pilot program known as Individual Progress. The former grade structure will give way to various levels in Reading and Language Arts. Reading is the basis of all elementary school instruction. Emphasis will be placed on the individual learner.

Pupils will be assigned to levels according to their achievement on standardized tests, teacher's evaluation, social maturity, emotional maturity, as well as their physical development rather than the chronological age.

In the Individual Progress Program, children may be assigned to classes with pupils who are younger and some who are older. No ceiling will be placed on the child's achievement. A child may progress as rapidly or as slowly as his particular abilities allow. Each child will be able to achieve success at an individual level.

The Individual Progress Plan is an attempt to individualize instruction--to make the curriculum fit the child....

<sup>2</sup>See Hubert M. Blalock, Social Statistics (New York: McGraw Hill, 1960), pp. 318-319. The standard error for ten units would be  $1/\sqrt{N-1}$  or .33.

<sup>3</sup>Although the proposal for this study proposed an analysis of responsiveness where parents at a school deemed an area as relatively important, analysis of the parent surveys indicated that parents rank those areas of perceived problems in their school as areas of relative educational importance. For example, parents at the schools with the poorest physical plant tend to rate the condition of the physical plant as an area of great educational concern. Thus it

appears that no measure of importance independent of school functioning and facilities exists.

A second issue of proposed interest also could not be analyzed: the degree of responsiveness to active rather than inactive parents. Parents who have communicated with the teacher or principal during the school year are more likely to prefer independence training content and modern methods than those who have not communicated. For example, 53 percent of the more active parents (N=226) rank a traditional method last, while 38 percent of the less active parents (N=116) rank a traditional method last. However, the difference varies little by school and could not serve as a basis to differentiate responsiveness, i.e., to examine whether schools respond to active rather than inactive parents at schools.

## CHAPTER 6

### EDUCATIONAL METHODS: PARENTAL PREFERENCES AND SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

Chapter 4 did not isolate any single factor which accounted for a large percentage of the variation across the teaching methods, style, and discipline subareas falling under the educational methods heading. The teaching methods subarea did account for a large percentage of the variance in the summary methods factor analysis. In addition, this variable was most related to parental education and thus serves to differentiate parental preferences concerning educational methods. It is also less difficult to observe and measure the various uses of teaching methods in a given school. I focus on the teaching style subarea below.

A dichotomy between "modern" and "traditional" methods is used in this chapter. For the purpose of description and analysis "modern" methods refer to methods which are more pupil-centered, less structured, less tied to lecture and recitations, less teacher-directed, and less physically tied to rows and bolted chairs than "traditional" methods. "Traditional" methods are limited to lectures and recitations.



### Distribution of Parental Preferences in Educational Methods by School

Boston parents generally agree that traditional methods should not be used very frequently in their elementary schools. Table 6-1 indicates that about two-thirds of the respondents in the overall parent sample prefer that teachers do not lecture or use recitations in their classrooms. However, while over 80 percent of parents at two schools, the Murphy and Carlino Schools, prefer more modern methods, a majority of the respondents at the Jones and Wong Schools do not.

Chapter 4 indicated that parents who preferred new methods in the classroom were not necessarily opposed to well-defined teacher-student authority relations in the classroom. The responses to the open-ended question designed to describe parental attitudes about teachers primarily reflected parental concerns about the personal characteristics of the teacher rather than how they taught in the classroom or the nature of their teaching ability or techniques. Below these open-ended responses are discussed with closed-ended preferences for modern and traditional teaching methods.

Murphy School parents were opposed to the use of lecture and recitation methods in their school. Eighty-five percent preferred that teachers use one of the two traditional methods least frequently. In the open-ended question asking parents to describe a "good teacher," the Murphy School parents stressed fairness, concern for the children's view of the classroom situation, and basic

TABLE 6-1  
 Parental Preferences  
 For Nontraditional Teaching Methods by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage Preferring Nontraditional Methods (Rank)</u>
Murphy	86% (1)
Carlino	82 (2)
Kelley	79 (3)
Leary	77 (4)
Brown	65 (5)
Davis	59 (6)
Marino	56 (7)
Ming	53 (8)
Jones	48 (9.5)
Wong	48 (9.5)

understanding of children. One parent thought a good teacher should "be able to earn the respect of the students by words and actions and should not inspire fear." A second parent thought that a good teacher is "enthusiastic, interested in children, makes class interesting to children, and communicates well what she is teaching." Another parent was concerned that teachers "be interested in children as individuals and have a good knowledge of teaching methods." Only a few parents wanted teachers who are "stern" and "demand respect."

The parents at the Carlino School are like the Murphy School parents in their preference for teachers who use child-centered methods. Carlino parents seek teachers who are "able to communicate and are aware of public events but who don't impose own opinions, can control without fear," "patient and can get children to respond, has good communication with kids," "interesting to kids," and "can create interest and made child want to learn, have a gentle hand and be aware of child's needs." These parents evaluate teachers through their children's eyes.

While many parents at the Kelley and Leary Schools want a strict teacher, they don't want a teacher to use traditional methods instead of more child-centered techniques. Kelley parents stated that a good teacher is one who is "tough, lets child know who is boss," "shouldn't let the classroom run her," "forceful," and "strict but fair with kids." Control and direction are most significant to Kelley School parents. However, 78 percent wanted a traditional method used least.

Many parents at the Leary School are much like the Kelley School parents. "Teachers should be permissive to a point, but should demand obedience," "should be able to control and discipline children," and "should be strict, fair, patient, and understanding." On the other hand, many parents feel teachers should "allow children to develop as individuals, know and understand each child's emotions and problems, develop curiosity in children and make them creative, don't emphasize conduct, and have fun with children." Thus parents at the Kelley and Leary Schools are generally agreed that traditional methods should not be used; but their support for modern, child-centered methods rests on more tenuous grounds. Many parents are greatly concerned about control in the classroom and thus seek methods neither traditional nor modern.

Black parents tend to be suspicious of the motives of teachers and their relations with their children. This suspicion is expressed in a variety of ways on the open-ended question concerning their description of a good teacher. One parent thought "teachers should have a proper general appearance and self-control." Others wanted teachers who are "intelligent, sympathetic, and dedicated," "take enough time with the kids, discipline the kids and listen to them while in class," "have self-control, respect students, be patient," "be interested in the children and have self-control and stimulate the children's interest." One parent summarized the majority of Black parents' views, at the Jones and Brown Schools aptly, by stating a preference for teachers who "can acquire the

respect of the students, hold the attention of children, one that can get the children to understand."

Despite some concern for teachers maintaining the interests of children, Black parents are moderately supportive of traditional teaching methods. While two-thirds of the parents at the Brown School are against teachers using traditional methods, only a minority at the Jones School agree.

The Davis School parents are also divided. While some parents prefer teachers who are "up to date, young, and full of bright ideas (who) give children a sense of initiative," others prefer teachers who are "properly mannered, neatly dressed and can discipline children." Overall, only 59 percent were opposed to one traditional method.

Many Marino School parents stress the teacher's role as exemplar in the classroom. The good teacher "sets a good example by her own neatness, has respect of the child and is able to handle the child," and is "just herself, has a pleasant but firm look about her, her dress is important and her appearance, how she combs her hair is important to a child." A teacher should have certain abilities like "able to get along with children," "patience," "know psychology and be well-educated, have diverse talents, be pleasant and interesting, competent in subject." A slight majority of parents at the Marino School, however, object to traditional methods.

One Ming School parent refused to express her opinion of the kind of teacher she considered good for the school. "The teaching method is up to the teacher. I have no right to say anything about it." Many of the Chinese respondents agree. Those who did answer the methods closed-ended question tended to favor traditional methods. Wong School parents, again, reflect the views of Black and Chinese parents at other schools.

In short, only the Carlinio and Murphy School parents are strongly in support of modern methods. Parents at several schools are ambivalent about teaching methods; they want child-centered methods to interest their children but also want teachers to maintain strict classroom control. They do reject teacher reliance on the lecture and recitations methods. Chinese respondents believe that the authorities should control teaching methods and thus voice few opinions concerning them.

Distribution of School Functioning in Educational Methods; A Comparison of Three Measures of Non-traditional Teaching Methods

School functioning in the area of educational methods was determined by three methods. First, in response to the written questionnaire teachers reported the percentage of time they used traditional and non-traditional teaching methods. Second, the open-ended question responses were coded to indicate teacher desires at each school to have the school or system support their efforts to use modern teaching methods. Finally, observers' comments were coded in terms of teacher use of modern methods.

Table 6-2 indicates that the three measures are highly correlated. Schools whose teachers were observed to use modern teaching methods and who want greater support in their use of modern methods report using modern methods relatively more in their classrooms.

Each school was ranked on school functioning in the methods area by averaging ranks across the three measures.

Distribution of School Functioning in Educational Methods;  
Teacher Comments

What teacher behavior and comments do these ranks represent?

Traditional methods were encouraged at the Marino School and discouraged by the leadership of the Carlino School. The Carlino School teachers seek greater materials and support from the school system to allow them to get away from the traditional self-enclosed classroom and standardized textbooks. One teacher stated that she required "tons and tons more library books instead of basic texts. We don't need series textbooks but rather we need less structure, like in Newton." A second teacher wanted to visit Boston's model school, the Trotter School, in order to keep up with "what's going on." "We have to change our programs better." Another teacher cited Philadelphia's Parkway Program, where contact with the community and its institutions serve as the basis for the school and its curriculum, as an appropriate model for the Jarlino School. This is not to say that the Carlino School is a collection of informal or open classrooms.

TABLE 6-2

Comparison of the Use of Nontraditional Teaching Methods  
On Written, Oral, and Observational Measures

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Time Teachers Report Using Nontraditional Methods (Written Questionnaire)</u>	<u>Percentage of Teachers Indi- cation Desire for Modern Methods Aid (Oral Interview)</u>	<u>Percentage of Teachers Ob- served Reported as Using Modern Methods</u>	<u>Overall Rank*</u>
Carlino	81% (1)	56% (1)	75% (1.5)	1
Marino	78% (2)	54% (2)	75% (1.5)	2
Wong	76% (3)	25% (7)	50% (5)	5
Kelley	75% (4)	33% (3.5)	NA	3
Murphy	74% (5)	33% (3.5)	67% (3)	4
Leary	73% (6)	6% (10)	50% (5)	8
Jones	72% (7)	14% (8)	50% (5)	7
Brown	66% (8)	7% (9)	0% (9)	10
Ming	53% (9)	29% (5)	25% (8)	9
Davis	NA	28% (6)	33% (7)	6

\*The overall school ranking was determined from the average ranking on the three measures. The rank correlations between each pair of measures are:

$r$  (Questionnaire, Interview) = .62  
 $r$  (Questionnaire, Observer) = .90  
 $r$  (Interview, Observer) = .70



As one teacher said, "We have self-contained classrooms here, but we cooperate. We switch on subjects. We prefer team-teaching but we need a new curriculum and audio visual material to implement this." Teachers are experimenting at the Carline School, but the school is well within the bounds of the vast majority of American elementary schools.

The teachers at the Marino School are trying new methods, but they are doing so against the wishes of their principal. Because the principal's office is in another school, teachers can try modern methods without constant fear of reprimand. One teacher summarized the situation as follows. "The philosophy of education here is too rigid. The principal is against our dividing into math groups. We need more grouping across grades. We need more encouragement for innovation....We need more people from outside the system." The modern methods that are used must take place within the confines of the individual classrooms and Boston's standardized roles, regulations, and curriculum. One teacher describes the limitations to attempting to beat the forces of traditionalism. "We have to set up a daily schedule of subjects and send a copy to Beacon Street at the beginning of the year. I would like to use books outside of the officially approved booklists." Not all principals devote time to enforcing these regulations. More than one Marino teacher said, "Here, everyone is afraid of noise. Teachers and children are not given the respect due them. There aren't enough rebels in this school." Said another, "Some schools have tight discipline but this

is not healthy for children. But our supervisors and administrators demand a disciplined classroom." Thus the majority of the Marino teachers are afraid of noise because it will expose their efforts to break down the barriers between pupil and teacher and classroom and community. Within these limitations teachers do reject the lecture and recitation methods.

The interviews with teachers (Table 6-2) and informal observations revealed a large difference between the rejection of traditional methods at the Carlino and Marino Schools and the next subset of less traditional schools. The Kelley, Murphy, Wong, Davis, Jones, and Leary Schools do not function as totally traditional schools, but the nature of modern methods differ greatly by school. IPP frees many Kelley School teachers from lecture and recitation methods despite a very active traditionalist principal. While one upper primary grade teacher, for example, described his style in traditional terms, he lamented the tight control that the principal could exercise over his style. He sought extension of IPP to the upper primary grades. The lower primary grade teachers had more encouragement to depart from their initial lesson plan for the year.

The Murphy School teachers were more sanguine about their methods. While two teachers complained that too much military discipline was required of the children by the school's leadership, one teacher expressed the mood of many of the school's teachers when asked whether she would like to try new methods. "No, and besides,

the classroom is too small." On the other hand, some teachers were using small group instruction in their classrooms. The Murphy School teachers were departing somewhat from traditional methods, but had little desire to change much.

The Davis School teachers are divided in opinions concerning the use of modern methods. About one-third of them would like movable furniture to allow the use of more modern teaching methods. The desks are now bolted to the floor. The majority of teachers believe that "there's too much permissiveness and freedom in Newton," "this is a good system and not like Newton or Brookline," and "I'm glad there's no movable furniture; there are too many accidents." There is no active discouragement of modern methods; few teachers want to depart from lectures and recitations methods and physical characteristics limit opportunities for those who want to change. Teachers consider this school an "ivory tower" and are highly satisfied with their situation. As the principal stated, "Our objective is to provide relaxed atmosphere for teachers and children."

The Ming and Brown Schools, the two most traditional schools in the educational methods area of school functioning, are best understood in the context of their counterparts. Both the Ming and Wong Schools serve Chinese children. The percentage of Chinese children is greater at the Ming School. I observed several classrooms at the Ming School, but one clearly served as the model for the entire school. "Say good morning to Mr. Raffel." The class stood in unison

and said, "Good morning, Mr. Raffel." "Let's do our exercises. Stand up." They stood in unison. "Turn right." They turned. "Hands up." They were up. "Hands out." Out they were. "Sing." And the grand finale was a song chanted in unison. The entire situation reminded me of films from Mainland China. Only one teacher at the school was not highly directive. There was little noise in any classroom. I later heard that one teacher a few years ago had decided that Chinese names were too hard to pronounce. She called each child by number. One graduate of the school, Number 27, told me the story.

On the other hand, the Wong School, according to at least one of its teachers, is "one of the best and most innovative schools in Boston." Although some of the Wong School's teachers view a "good teacher's room" as a "desperate need," others are experimenting with Leicester classrooms and seek "more materials, a freer situation, and less emphasis on noise control." The atmosphere and classrooms are relatively free, although much depends on the individual teachers. As one teacher stated, "The Principal has confidence in the teachers and lets them make their own program."

The Brown and Jones Schools both serve only Black children; but while few Brown School teachers depart from the lecture and recitation methods, many Jones School teachers are trying more modern methods of teaching. While the major issue in the Wong and Ming Schools might involve lessening the respect for authority of the young Chinese children, teachers at the schools serving Black children are in a constant struggle to maintain some sense of authority

and control. The Brown School gives the appearance of having solved the authority crisis; the Jones School has not. While teachers in the Brown School stand at their desks lecturing and directing, the Jones School teachers are often scurrying around the hallways searching for lost charges. Perhaps because of this lack of control or maybe a cause of it, more teachers at the Jones than Brown School utilize modern methods. Few teachers in the Brown School suggested changes in the school or school system. One small group did favor the elimination of IPP. There were several Jones School teachers who desired "a non-graded approach to teaching," "greater cultural involvement with community institutions," and "more field trips." However, at both schools a concern for discipline is paramount and little deviation from traditional methods occurs.

Finally, the Leary School is another "ivory tower" school where teachers are respected, generally allowed to teach as they see fit, and has a high use of fairly traditional methods. As one teacher put it, "The system is well structured and I need structure." This teacher, as the majority of the Leary teachers, prefers the structure of lecture and recitation methods to the freedom of great activity and experimentation in the classroom.

#### Comparison of Parental Preferences to School Functioning In Educational Methods

Table 6-3 indicates that there is a positive relation between parental preferences and school functioning in the area of educational methods. A minority of the ten schools lack congruence between

TABLE 6-3  
Parent Preferences and School Functioning  
In Teaching Methods

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents Preferring Teachers Do Not Use Traditional Methods</u>	<u>Rank on School Functioning According to Modern Methods</u>
Murphy	86% (1)	(4)
Carlino	81 (2)	(1)
Kelley	79 (3)	(3)
Leary	77 (4)	(8)
Brown	65 (5)	(10)
Davis	59 (6)	(6)
Marino	56 (7)	(2)
Ming	53 (8)	(9)
Jones	48 (9.5)	(7)
Wong	48 (9.5)	(5)

$r = .42$

parental preferences and school functioning in the area of teaching methods (Table 6-4). The Brown and Marino Schools are incongruent. While the Leary and Brown School teachers use traditional methods more than parents prefer, teachers at the Marino and Wong Schools use more innovative methods than parents prefer.

Thus analysis of parent preferences and school functioning in the area of educational methods does indicate a modest relation between the two variables.

There are several possible explanations for the greater congruence between parental preferences and educational methods than between parental preferences and educational content. Among possible explanations are:

- (1) School functioning in methods may be more visible than in content and thus parental control may be greater or measurement of school functioning may be more valid.
- (2) Parents may be better able to express their views about the use of methods than educational content or may be more concerned with methods than content.
- (3) Teachers may be more able or willing to follow parental preferences in methods than content.

At this point the evidence for each explanation is uncertain.

TABLE 6-4

Congruency Between Parental Preferences  
And School Functioning  
In Educational Methods by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Difference in Ranks</u>	<u>Degree of Congruence</u>
Kelley	0	Congruence
Davis	0	Congruence
Carlino	1	Congruence
Ming	1	Congruence
Jones	2.5	Congruence
Murphy	3	Congruence
Leary	4	Moderate Congruence
Wong	4.5	Moderate Congruence
Brown	5	Incongruence
Marino	5	Incongruence



## CHAPTER 6 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The relation between the rank of schools on parental preferences in the content and methods areas is .59.

## CHAPTER 7

### PARENT ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE: PARENTAL PREFERENCES AND SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

#### Distribution of Parental Preferences in Parent Organizational Role by School

Parent role preferences were divided into four categories: (1) personnel control (preference for control over content and personnel and for school support); (2) content control (preference for control over content and support for the school); (3) school support, and (4) no role or don't know (see Chapter 4). Table 7-1 reports the percentage of parents at each school falling into the four categories, and the average number of decision areas in which parents at the school wanted a direct parent role (principal or teacher selection, curriculum, teacher methods, discipline methods, budget decisions).

A majority of parents at the schools serving Black children, the Jones and Brown Schools, want control over personnel. Those that do also want control over content and methods. Only ten percent of the parents at one of the two schools only seek to support or aid the school. On the average, parents at these schools want a role in four of the five decision areas.

Parents at the Ming School primarily desire to support their school. Only one-third of the parents seek control over educational

TABLE 7-1

## Parental Preferences for Parent Role by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Personnel Control Rank</u>		<u>Content Control</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>No Role or DK</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents Preferring Alternative Parent Role</u>	
						<u>Average Number of Decisions Where Parent Role Preferred (Rank)</u>	
Brown	70%	(1)	30%	0%	0%	3.8	(1.5)
Jones	55%	(2)	35%	10%	0%	3.8	(1.5)
Davis	39%	(3)	46%	15%	0%	2.5	(3)
Marino	30%	(4)	60%	10%	0%	2.2	(4)
Murphy	25%	(5)	60%	15%	0%	1.8	(6)
Leary	23%	(6)	59%	18%	0%	1.8	(7)
Wong	20%	(7)	45%	18%	17%	1.5	(9)
Carlino	18%	(8)	66%	13%	3%	2.1	(5)
Kelley	17%	(9)	66%	17%	0%	1.6	(8)
Ming	5%	(10)	33%	53%	9%	0.6	(10)
Average	30%		50%	17%	3%	2.1	

content or methods. A majority (53 percent) favored only supportive parent roles.

About two-thirds of the parents at the Carlino and Kelley Schools favor control over content. The remainder of parents at these schools are divided over a greater or lesser parental role. While the Italian middle class clientele of the Carlino School favors parent control over content and methods, more of the Italian working class parents at the Marino School favor control over personnel. The middle class Murphy School parents are more like their Irish working class counterparts in primarily favoring content and methods rather than personnel control. At the Leary School, where parents are a mixture of middle class Italian and Irish, the parents support content control as they do in the other middle class schools.

Parents at the Davis School did not agree on any one of the alternatives. A plurality (46 percent) prefer content control, but a significant number (39 percent) seek to control personnel. On the other hand, the Wong School parents lean to less control and a more ambiguous stand for support of the schools.

The schools are ranked according to the average number of decision areas in which the parents at the school want to play a role. This ranks schools, except for the Carlino School, as the ranking of schools by personnel control. Few Carlino School parents want control over personnel, but many do want control over content and methods.

The parents at the Brown and Jones Schools definitely prefer personnel control; those at the Ming School support; those at the Carlino and Kelley Schools, content and methods control; those at the Davis School lean toward personnel control; Wong School parents lean to support; and Marino, Murphy, and Leary School parents lean toward content and methods control.

#### Distribution of School Functioning in Parent Organizational Role

A simple percentage of teacher responses is not adequate to describe school functioning in the area of parent organizational role. The major data source for the determination of school functioning comes from interviews with principals and parent leaders at each of the ten schools concerning the existence of parent participation and influence in determination of the assignment or retention of personnel, the nature of the content and methods, and supportive services at the school. Teacher and principal attitudes toward possible parent organizational roles were determined through the written questionnaires.

While Chapter 7 discusses organizational participation and influence, Chapter 8 discusses individual participation and influence.

#### Ming School

There is no formal organizational activity at the Ming School. The presidency of the Home and School Association at the school is filled by the principal. He says that "the Home and School Association is not really operating here. We do try to work with other

community organizations.<sup>1</sup> We send home notes to the parents but few ever come in." Formally, then, his name is listed as the Home and Schools President. No parent interviewed reported attending a Home and School meeting during the year (Table 7-2).

#### Wong School

No formal organization of parents exists at the Wong School. Only eight percent of the parents report visiting the school for a Home and School meeting during the past year; and this was an open house event, i.e., no formal business was conducted (Table 7-3). The principal, the President of the Home and School Association, has tried to encourage parents to join the association, but few parents come to meetings. The principal states that it is most productive to work with individual parents.

#### Kelley School

The principal at the Kelley School succinctly described parent role at his school. "My parents don't initiate any requests or ideas. They are satisfied with the job we are doing. They are sympathetic and cooperate with our requests." The flow of influence is from the principal and his staff to parents. The principal prefers parents to let educators run the school. "Educators are specialists. Engineers deal with engineering problems, scientists with science, educators should be in charge of education."

The Kelley Home and School Association is "rather typical of most Boston" parent organizations. One parent on the organization's

TABLE 7-2

Percentage of Parents Attending Number of Home and School Meetings  
By School

<u>School</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Number of Meetings</u>		<u>Three or More</u>
		<u>One</u>	<u>Two</u>	
Brown	72%	23%	5%	0%
Jones	77%	18%	3%	3%
Davis	46%	26%	15%	15%
Marino	73%	18%	5%	5%
Murphy	41%	33%	10%	15%
Leary	26%	15%	10%	49%
Wong	93%	5%	0%	5%
Carlino	76%	18%	3%	5%
Kelley	42%	34%	5%	20%
Ming	100%	0%	0%	0%
Average	64%	19%	6%	12%

TABLE 7-3

Percentage of Parents Attending Specified Types  
Of Home and School Meetings by School

<u>School</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Type of Meeting</u>	
		<u>Open School Only</u>	<u>Speaker, Panel, Election, or Business</u>
Brown	72%	18%	10%
Jones	79%	8%	13%
Davis	46%	23%	31%
Marino	73%	18%	9%
Murphy	41%	13%	46%
Leary	26%	15%	59%
Wong	93%	5%	2%
Carlino	76%	11%	13%
Kelley	42%	46%	12%
Ming	100%	0%	0%
Average	65%	16%	19%



board described planning the year's activities as follows. "The planning occurs at the fall board meeting. The principal comes, and he suggests things to do." (Interviewer: Do parents make suggestions?) "Yes, the president of the association had an idea to show Sesame Street on the televisions we bought for the school. He (the principal) listens to ideas like that and tells us why we can't do them." The meetings finally consisted of a panel night with speakers on child health problems, two cake sales, and an open school night. Money is collected through dues, cake sales, raffles, and the like. Teachers on the board suggested televisions be bought for the school and the board carried out the request.

The president of the association estimates that about 60 percent of the parents pay the one-dollar dues to join the association. While some programs may draw 50 people, about 25 parents form the core of the organization. Great care is taken to hold meetings at the convenience of teachers. Meetings are held in the daytime because it is too hard for teachers to stay and parents to come at night. One meeting had to be canceled because teachers "had to complete some administrative forms." As one officer, a parent, put it, "Teachers pay dues, too, and should get what they want."

Neither the principal nor the officers of the Home and School Association could cite an instance where parents had affected the content, methods, or selection or retention of personnel at the Kelley School. The organization had supported the school program only through supplementary programs, nothing internal to regular school hours.

### Marino School

The President of the Marino Home and School Association described her selection. "I came late to the meeting. As I walked in people laughed and clapped. I was told that I had just been elected President." The President suspected that the principal had chosen her. Why was she chosen? "I was a good errand boy. I had helped at the cake sales before. The principal knew me well. She knew she could count on me to get things done." She sees the role of the association as an organization which can get things for the school that the School Committee cannot. In short, parents support the school.

Some parents at the Marino School felt that parent support was too limited. A large sum of money had accumulated over the years. Parents wanted to spend the money on audio-visual aids (e.g., tape recorders), but the principal refused to approve the expenditure. Similarly, a plan to have parents help at recess time was altered by the principal to the dismay of parents. One parent felt that the principal was more concerned with exerting his authority than serving the children or parents.

The programs of the association were all supportive. Food sales, raffles, and other money-raising ventures were held throughout the year. There was no question that parents were welcome to help the school, but the direction of the support was from the principal.

The principal was proud of his ability to work with the Home and School Association and the work it had accomplished. The Association had purchased patriotic display items. The principal said, "Parents are nice; they've been kind to me." Neither the principal nor the parents could recall any time where parent concern altered the content or methods of education at the Marino School. When asked how parents might help more in the future, the principal suggested sending "school-oriented, well-adjusted children" and "tell me what they want."

#### Leary School

The Leary School Home and School Association's activities have been limited to supportive actions, but the drive for the action comes from the parents rather than the professionals. The Leary School principal describes the parents as "advantaged, very interested and responsive, conservative." She notes that "you have to proceed with caution. If parents want a certain kind of school, they should get it within reason." She goes to community meetings to find out parental attitudes. She feels that she has "no control over the Home and School Association." The parents at the Leary School often take the initiative, but they are friendly toward the school.

Parents have accomplished several things through the Home and School Association. They have tried to get the street in front of the school repaired. They got school windows repaired by talking to a School Committeeman during an election campaign. The executive

board spent the association's funds on a tape recorder, television, and other audio-visual material. The subject of an assembly was altered upon the request of ethnic minorities within the association.

Some parents were concerned about the ability of one teacher, but they did not succeed in having her transferred. Content and methods have been discussed, but no changes have been suggested.

The president of the association links the role of support with that of advocate for the association. She describes the purpose of the association as being a "hammerhead" getting the needs of the school met. The school comes to us and asks us to lead the battle where enough support exists."

#### Jones School

The Home and School Association at the Jones School lay dormant for several years. Recently the new principal worked with a few parents to attempt to rejuvenate the parents' group. But, as the new president of the association says, "To get these parents to do anything, you have to put dynamite under them. Parents are not responsive. They lack feeling for the children at school. They're only interested in protests over reprimands."

The meetings draw a core of 10 to 15 parents, but it is not unusual to have only two or three attend a given meeting. The meetings themselves are more informative than policy-oriented. As one parent leader put it, "We're not an aggressive group." The parents

have suggested that the school begin a library, but this has not left the discussion stage. Black militancy is not an apt description of the parents or the parent-teachers organization at the Jones School.

### Brown School

The parents at the Brown School have been active in the school, but the activity has been primarily generated and directed by professionals outside of the school staff or the parents. The Home and School Association plays a small role at the Brown School. Some money is raised, but the principal and teachers dominate the officers and board. At one meeting the major topic of conversation was how to beautify a local eyesore.

A Teachers' and Mothers' Council, however, with an informal relation to the school, has been more active in the Brown School. A local poverty agency developed the concept of a new organization about three years ago. The principal at that time agreed to the establishment of a Teachers' and Mothers' Council as an advisory group. The group is composed of equal numbers of parents, teachers, and administrators. Its major objective is to get parents more involved in the school.

To date, the Teachers' and Mothers' Council has played more of an informational and educational role than an advisory or policy-making role. In fact, many of the groups' activities have not reached parents but have attracted professional educators and service agency staff from the area. Workshops on the disadvantaged child, for

example, drew many more agency representatives and teachers than the ten Brown School parents.

The professional representative from the poverty agency, with time and expertise as tools, plays a large role in informally directing the activities of the council. Thus the agency representative and the parent who is the president of the council set its agenda.

The people involved in the council have tried to influence school functioning at the Brown School, but, to date, they believe they have had little influence. To some extent, the council leaders are just learning how to influence the Boston School System to benefit the school. Problems like inadequate classroom facilities and additional social work staff and agency cooperation are discussed with the principal. To date, no resolution of such problems have occurred; the principal usually informs the parents of the difficulties the school system would have in remedying the situation. A dialogue does exist. Leaders of the council do not think that teachers have changed their methods as a result of the workshops or participation on the council. They do see this as a major objective of the council's activities.

The council leaders do not feel that they have to tread softly because of the contentment of most parents. Parents don't oppose innovations, but many lack an aggressive commitment to change.

### Carlino School

While the Home and School Association which includes the Carlino School and two other elementary schools has been very active in improving physical facilities at the two other schools, parents have not been active or played a role at the Carlino School. For example, the only member of the Home and School Association board from the Carlino School was appointed by the principal, did not attend the meeting at which she was appointed, has not attended any board meetings, and believes that there's no need for an active parents' group because "this is a nice area, facilities are good, there's no racial bit here, and as a mother, I respect educators and wouldn't presume to criticize." The overall Home and School Association has attracted many people while battling for physical improvements at the other schools, but Carlino School parents have not been involved.

### Murphy School

Parents at the Murphy School have been active and have had an effect on the physical plant and functioning of the school. The activity has been exerted through an informal Parents' Club rather than the formal Home and School Association. The association, because it included two other schools where parents were of a much lower economic level, has not served as a conduit of Murphy School parent activity for many years. The previous principal tried to thwart all parent activity through the club by calling the parents "snobs" for not appreciating that they were from the "right" side of the tracks and thus should be satisfied with all they had. Even at that time



parents exerted influence outside of school channels. Major classroom repairs were done to the school after parents went to the chief structural engineer with their complaints. It was not until Miss Sullivan became principal, three years ago, that direct parental influence at the school was established.

Miss Sullivan is known as a "good politician." She is rumored to have close family ties to a School Committee member. As one parent leader stated, "She's a great politician. This is a highly political area and she knows what she is doing. I guess I shouldn't say that. She has a tremendous workload, but she doesn't send parents away angry. In fact, she has accomplished many of the tasks parents requested." Among the principal's accomplishments were the purchase of physical apparatus for the playground, establishment of a library which parents help to operate, and the transferral of three teachers to whom parents objected from the school. No changes in the program, methods, or atmosphere of the school have been accomplished, although parents have requested this.

#### Davis School

Parents at the Davis School have tried to change the functioning of the school through the Home and School Association and have failed. In fact, they have not even been successful in directing the supportive activities of the association. Several parents noted that the Home and School Association is referred to as "the principal's association." Several mentioned the reluctance of teachers to speak



freely and take an active part in the organization. Parents, too, feel afraid to voice their opinions.

The principal has blocked parental attempts to direct the allocation of association funds, has avoided scheduling workshops in areas that might prove embarrassing to teachers at the school (e.g., modern methods), and has not helped parents trying to work with city agencies in attempts to provide better athletic and playground facilities for local school children. While parents wanted their funds to be spent on audio-visual equipment, the principal insisted on a refrigerator for the teachers' lunchroom. There is great hostility among parents toward the school and its administration.

#### Congruence Between Parental Preferences and School Functioning in Parental Organizational Role

Table 7-4 summarizes the degree of parent organization, parent direction of the organization, the role of the organization, and the area of influence at each school. A true direct organizational parent advisory role has taken place only at the Murphy and Leary Schools. A majority of parents at these schools did seek control over content and methods and, to some extent, they have had some input in some decisions. However, parents at the Murphy School have also played a role in personnel selection although only one-quarter of the parents preferred this much parent control.

The parent organizations at the Ming and Wong Schools have not played the supportive role that parents preferred. The organizations

TABLE 7-4

Summary of Parent Organization Existence, Parent Direction,  
Purpose, and Influence by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Degree of Organiza- tion</u>	<u>Parental Direction</u>	<u>Actual Function of Organ- ization</u>	<u>Influence Areas</u>	<u>Organizational Influence Rank</u>
Brown	Low-Mod- erate	Moderate	Support	Information	3
Jones	Low	Low-Mod- erate	Support	None	8
Davis	Moderate	Moderate- High	Support	None	6
Marino	Moderate- High	Low	Support	None	5
Murphy	High	High	Advice	Personnel, Methods Facilities	1
Leary	High	High	Advice, Support	Facilities	2
Wong	None	None	None	None	9
Carlino	Low	Low	Support	None	7
Kelley	High	Low	Support	Information	4
Ming	None	None	None	None	9

at the schools serving Black parents at best have played a supportive or informational role. They have not influenced the selection of personnel or educational content or methods. Furthermore, at the remainder of the schools parent organizations have not had a direct role in content or methods decisions.

Thus actual parent role is not as extensive as preferred parent role at all but the Murphy and Leary Schools. Schools were ranked according to the degree of organizational role in the school (Table 7-5). There is a modest association ( $r = .24$ ) between the ranks of schools in terms of parental parent role preferences and actual parent role through parent organizations.

Several conclusions concerning parent organization role appear evident. Participation and influence in internal school affairs have been limited at almost all of the schools sampled. Although recently schools serving middle class parents have been more responsive to parental requests, instances of principals rejecting parent demands out of hand are widespread. Many parent-school battles center on control of the parent organization, not educational content, methods, or personnel. The factors inhibiting response to parental demands are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

TABLE 7-5

Congruency Between Parental Preferences and School Functioning  
In Parent Organizational Role by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Parent Preferred Decision Role Rank</u>	<u>Organizational Parent Role Rank</u>	<u>Difference In Ranks</u>	<u>Congruence</u>
Brown	1.5	3	1.5	Congruence
Jones	1.5	8	6.5	Incongruence
Davis	3	6	3	Congruence
Marino	4	5	1	Congruence
Murphy	6	1	5	Incongruence
Leary	7	2	5	Incongruence
Wong	9	9	0	Congruence
Carlino	5	7	2	Congruence
Kelley	8	4	4	Moderate Incongruence
Ming	10	9	1	Congruence

$$r = .24$$

## CHAPTER 7 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>A local community group has played a role in planning a proposed new school. To date, the planning effort has had no effect on the current Ming School.

## CHAPTER 8

### PARENT INDIVIDUAL ROLE: PARENTAL PREFERENCES AND SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

Parents may play a role in shaping school functioning as individuals communicating with local school personnel. This chapter attempts to measure the degree to which parents affect school functioning in this manner. The methodological limitations are great and are discussed throughout the chapter.

Several prerequisites for parents to individually influence school functioning exist: contact or communication with school personnel, discussion of subjects germane to school function, parental preferences expressed on the subjects, and acceptance of school personnel of the parental attempt to influence. Parental role and the differences that personal influence plays among the schools is discussed.

#### Parent-School Communications

The majority of Boston elementary school parents in the sample have personally communicated with their child's teacher during the school year (Table 8-1). Results from the parent survey and oral and written teacher interviews indicate that at the working class schools (Kelley, Brown, Jones, Marino, Wong) about two-thirds of the parents

TABLE 8-1

Comparison of the Percentage of Parents Meeting with Teachers  
At Least Once on Three Measures

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents Meeting at Least Once</u>		
	<u>Parent Survey (Rank)</u>	<u>Oral Teacher Interview (Rank)</u>	<u>Written Teacher Questionnaire (Rank)</u>
Brown	72% (6)	67% (8)	85% (6.5)
Jones	49% (9)	70% (5.5)	78% (9)
Davis	67% (7)	92% (3)	100% (2.5)
Marino	90% (2)	57% (9)	79% (8)
Murphy	97% (1)	97% (1)	100% (2.5)
Leary	85% (3)	95% (2)	100% (2.5)
Wong	57% (8)	70% (5.5)	85% (6.5)
rlino	79% (4)	80% (4)	95% (5)
Kelley	73% (5)	68% (7)	100% (2.5)
Ming	7% (10)	13% (10)	8% (10)
Average	68%	71%	83%

$r$  (Parent Survey, Oral Teacher Interviews) = .41

$r$  (Parent Survey, Written Teacher Questionnaire) = .64

$r$  (Oral Teacher Interview, Written Teacher Questionnaire) = .51

have met with the teacher during the school year. While few parents at the Ming have met the teacher, almost all parents at the schools serving more middle class children (Leary, Davis, Murphy, Carlino) have had contacts with teachers. Generally, those parents who reported that they met the teacher once, reported several meetings. In the overall sample, 32 percent of the parents stated they had not met the teacher; 6 percent met the teacher once; and 62 percent met with the teacher more than once.

About one-fifth of the parents in the sample had a conference with the principal during the school year (Table 8-2). The number of parents meeting the principal is a function of the principal's physical presence at the school more than parent educational or social background. The principal's office is located within the Kelley, Jones, Brown, Carlino, Murphy, and Wong Schools; the principals at the Wong, Murphy, and Carlino Schools have offices at other elementary schools. Table 8-2 also indicates that almost all parents who have personally communicated with the principal have also communicated with the teacher during the school year.

The significance of personal contact between parents and school personnel in determining the role of parents at a given school depends on the nature of the discussion. Teachers, principals, and leaders of parents' groups at all schools emphasized the individual concerns of parents and the lack of discussion beyond the major subject at hand, the child's work and behavior at school.



TABLE 8-2

**Percentage of Parents Meeting with Teachers and Principals  
At Least Once by School**

<u>School</u>	<u>Met with Teacher</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents</u>	
		<u>Met with Principal</u>	<u>Met with Teacher/Principal</u>
Brown	72%*	28%	83%
Jones	49%	20%	59%
Davis	67%	18%	72%
Marino	90%	13%	90%
Murphy	97%	32%	97%
Leary	85%	33%	87%
Wong	57%	13%	57%
Carlino	79%	13%	79%
Kelley	73%	22%	73%
Ming	7%	0%	7%
Average	68%	19%	71%

\*Derived from parent survey.

Parents were given a list of possible topics of their conferences with teachers and principals. The major topics which parents reported discussing were their child's schoolwork and their child's behavior. Over 60 percent of the respondents indicated discussing schoolwork and 38 percent behavior of their child with the teacher. In comparison, only 19 parents (7 percent) reported discussing subject matter or curriculum; 25 (6 percent), teaching methods; 15 (4 percent), discipline methods; 11 (3 percent), parent-school relations; and 5 (1 percent), school or system policy with the teachers. Overall, 17 percent of the parent sample reported discussing a policy issue with teachers once during the school year (Table 8-3). Only 20 mentions of discussions about these topics with the principal were recorded.

While parents may have telescoped their descriptions of teacher conferences into specific discussions of their child's schoolwork or behavior, teachers reported much larger numbers of parents raising more general issues (Table 8-4). Thus while only 6 percent of the parents in the parent survey reported discussing teaching methods, teachers reported that 16 percent of the parents had discussed teaching methods with them. Of course, the parent survey sample did not include the identical parents who teachers described in their written survey, but it is likely that differences in perception rather than sampling accounts for the differences in conference subject descriptions.

TABLE 8-3

## Parent Reports of Policy Discussion with Teachers

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents Reporting Event</u>					<u>Total Policy Discussed and Influence Attempt (Rank)</u>
	<u>No Talk</u>	<u>Talk Held Policy Not Discussed</u>	<u>Policy Discussed</u>	<u>Influence Attempt Failed</u>	<u>Influence Attempt Succeeded</u>	
Brown	28%	58%	3%	3%	10%	16% (5.5)
Jones	51	36	3	3	8	14 (7)
Davis	33	46	8	3	10	21 (4)
Marino	10	83	0	8	0	8 (8)
Murphy	3	95	3	0	0	3 (9)
Leary	15	51	26	0	8	34 (1)
Wong	43	43	8	3	5	16 (5.5)
Carlino	21	50	18	3	8	29 (2)
Kelley	27	49	10	5	10	25 (3)
Ming	93	8	0	0	0	0 (10)
Average	32%	52%	8%	3%	6%	17%

TABLE 8-4  
Teacher Reports of Policy Discussion with Parents

School	Percentage of Parents Discussing Policies						
	Curriculum	Specific Point	Teaching Method	Discipline Method	Policy		Policy Discussion Rank (Without Other)
						Other	
Brown	4%	19%	8%	23%	4%	16%	8
Jones	11	22	13	35	7	11	7
Davis	56	56	44	62	69	19	1
Marino	4	11	4	7	7	11	9
Murphy	45	35	20	20	20	15	4
Leary	32	55	9	18	23	14	5
Wong	15	45	10	20	45	10	6
Carlino	28	50	22	25	16	16	3
Kelley	29	37	25	25	38	0	2
Ming	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Teacher Estimate	22%	33%	16%	24%	23%		
Parent Estimate	5%	2%	4%	3%	1%		

A general relation holds using either parent or teacher reports of the frequency of discussion of policy issues in teacher conferences (Table 8-5). (The two are highly related,  $r = .62$ .) Parents from Boston's traditional minority groups, Black, Chinese, and Italian, are less likely to raise policy issues than Irish or Yankee parents. Discussion of policy appears lowest at the Jones, Marino, Wong, and Ming Schools. Individual correlations confirm this relation. Thus minority groups not only participate in school affairs less than majority groups, but the kind of participation appears less substantive in nature. The nature of the subjects parents discuss with teachers leaves open the question of whether they attempt and are successful at influencing the functioning of teachers.

#### Parent Influence

Both parents and teachers were asked to describe parent-teacher conferences in terms of parental attempts to influence through suggestion, praise, or criticism. Additionally, teachers were asked if any parents had given advice or made demands. While above it was indicated that teachers see discussions in more general terms, more parents believed they had suggested, praised, and criticized teachers than teachers reported across the ten schools (Table 8-6). For example, teachers reported that 24 percent of the parents praised them while 39 percent of the parents reported praise.

The validity of the reports of parent influence attempts is (most) questionable at the Brown, Marino, Jones, and Leary Schools.

TABLE 8-5  
Comparison of Policy Discussions  
By Parent and Teacher Reports

<u>Percentage of Parents Discussing Policy Issue with Teachers</u>		
<u>School</u>	<u>Parent Reports</u>	<u>Teachers Reports</u>
Brown	16% (5.5)	(8)
Jones	14 (7)	(7)
Davis	21 (4)	(1)
Marino	8 (8)	(9)
Murphy	3 (9)	(4)
Leary	34 (1)	(5)
Wong	16 (5.5)	(6)
Carlino	29 (2)	(3)
Kelley	25 (3)	(2)
Ming	0 (10)	(10)

$r = .62$

TABLE 8-6  
Comparison of Parental Influence Attempts by Teacher and Parent Reports

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Parents Making Suggestions</u>		<u>Percentage of Parents Giving Praise</u>		<u>Percentage of Parents Giving Criticism</u>	
	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
Brown	70% (1)	31% (4.5)	28% (7)	15% (7.5)	30% (1)	15% (2)
Jones	55% (2)	13% (8)	23% (8)	15% (7.5)	18% (2)	7% (6)
Davis	44% (3)	47% (1)	51% (3)	53% (1)	10% (5.5)	13% (4)
Marino	40% (4)	18% (7)	60% (2)	11% (9)	13% (3.5)	4% (9)
Murphy	28% (6)	45% (3)	50% (4)	50% (3)	8% (7)	10% (5)
Leary	23% (8)	7% (9.5)	68% (1)	36% (2)	3% (8.5)	5% (7.5)
Wong	25% (7)	25% (6)	18% (9)	25% (5)	10% (5.5)	20% (1)
Carlino	18% (9)	31% (4.5)	47% (5)	25% (5)	3% (8.5)	14% (3)
Kelley	33% (5)	46% (2)	43% (6)	25% (5)	13% (3.5)	5% (7.5)
Ming	3% (10)	7% (9.5)	3% (10)	0% (10)	0% (10)	0% (10)
Average	38%	27%	39%	24%	11%	9%

At the Brown, Marino, and Jones Schools teachers underestimate parent suggestions by 20 percent or more, at the Marino and Leary Schools, praise is underestimated by over 30 percent, and at the Brown School criticism is underestimated by 15 percent. Note, discrepancies between parent and teacher reports are highest at schools serving minority and working class groups. Teachers also report demands by parents at the Wong (10 percent), Marino (4 percent), Carline (3 percent), and Jones Schools (2 percent).

There was no "objective" way to determine the content and nature of parent-teacher conferences. The data indicates discrepancies in parent and teacher reports that are regularized. A later chapter will discuss misperceptions of teachers and the process of responsiveness. For now, only the question of whether minority group parents, even when they do participate in the schools have an equal chance of influencing teachers, can be raised.

Both teachers and parents were asked if the teacher had followed the parent's suggestion. At two schools, over three times as many parents say "yes" as teachers report parents suggestions being met (Table 8-7). At the schools serving Black children, the Brown and Jones Schools, teachers reported following the suggestions of 12 and 15 percent of the parents respectively, while 63 and 48 percent of the parents reported influencing teachers.

Teachers at the middle class schools tend to report being more influenced by parents than teachers at working class schools.



TABLE 8-7

## Comparison of Parental Influence by Parent and Teacher Reports

<u>School</u>	<u>Parent Claims Teacher Followed Suggestions</u>	<u>Teacher Claims to Have Followed Parent Suggestion</u>	<u>Percentage Difference</u>
Brown	63% (1)	12% (8)	51%
Jones	48% (2)	15% (6)	33%
Davis	44% (3)	53% (1)	9%
Marino	28% (4)	14% (7)	14%
Murphy	20% (6.5)	40% (2)	20%
Leary	18% (8)	9% (9)	9%
Wong	20% (6.5)	35% (3)	15%
Carlino	16% (9)	20% (4)	4%
Kelley	25% (5)	16% (5)	9%
Ming	0% (10)	0% (10)	0%
Average	28%	21%	

 $r = .13$

The teachers at the Davis and Murphy Schools, for example, report the most influence. The middle class parents, however, are less likely to report that they made a suggestion which the teacher ultimately followed. Only the parents at the Wong and Leary Schools do not follow this pattern.

Returning to Table 8-3 and relying on parent responses, we see that at no school did over 10 percent of the parents report discussing a policy issue with a teacher, trying to influence a teacher, and succeeding. While it is true that parents report two-thirds of their influence attempts succeeding, the overall magnitude of attempts at influence is low. Of course, the significance of a specific conference talk cannot be determined by analyzing this data.

Referring to Tables 8-1 and 8-3, the reports of parental influence and parent role preference across the ten schools are not related ( $r = .14$ ), but parent reports are almost perfectly related to parental role preferences ( $r = .88$ ). It is impossible to determine whether we uncovered responsiveness to parents through personal influence or parental misperception based upon forces for psychological balance.

Analysis of the data does indicate that parents at schools serving middle class children communicate more with school personnel and discuss issues more when they do communicate. Parents are concerned with specific issues which relate to their child, although

TABLE 1-3

Congruency Between Parental Preferences and School Functioning  
In Parent Individual Role by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Individual Contact</u>	<u>Parental Influence Attempts</u>	<u>Policy Discussion</u>	<u>Influence</u>	<u>Congruence</u>
Brown	Moderate	High	Low	?	?
Jones	Moderate	High	Moderate- Low	?	?
Davis	High	Moderate	High	High	Incongruence
Marino	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate Incongruence
Murphy	High	Moderate- High	Moderate- Low	Moderate- High	Moderate Incongruence
Leary	High	Low	Moderate- High	Low	Congruence
Wong	Moderate	Low-Mod- erate	Low	Moderate- High	?
Carlino	High	Low-Mod- erate	High	Moderate	Moderate Incongruence
Kelley	Moderate	Moderate- High	High	Moderate	Moderate Incongruence
Ming	None	None	None	None	Congruence

teachers may view discussions of these issues more broadly than do parents. The individual influence Black parents report may reflect their preferences rather than their success.

## CHAPTER 9

### PROCESS OF RESPONSIVENESS

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 indicated the absence of a large positive relation between parental preferences and school functioning in educational content, methods, and individual and organizational parent role across the sample of ten Boston elementary schools. One must conclude that the lack of a relation indicates that responsiveness does not exist across the ten schools nor, depending on the representativeness of the sample and validity of our measures, uniformly within the Boston School System.

At some schools, however, there was congruence between parental preferences and school functioning. Was this congruence a result of a process of response to parental preferences? The lack of a relationship across the ten schools suggests that the congruence between parental preferences and school functioning may well be spurious. Below, the requisites of the process of responsiveness are analyzed (See Chapter 1) to determine if responsiveness is occurring at schools with congruence. The analysis also suggests some factors which may inhibit or encourage responsiveness in the public school system.

Unfortunately, the analysis cannot always be limited to absolute values at a single school, the relative standing of schools often is the only data available or interpretable. We would expect if a process of responsiveness exists that congruent schools score higher on the requisites of responsiveness than noncongruent schools.

### Model of Responsiveness

As discussed in Chapter 1, three elements are necessary for the process of responsiveness to exist: (1) School officials must accurately perceive parental preferences; (2) School officials must see these preferences as legitimate and worthy of action; and (3) School officials must believe they can act and thus do subsequently act.

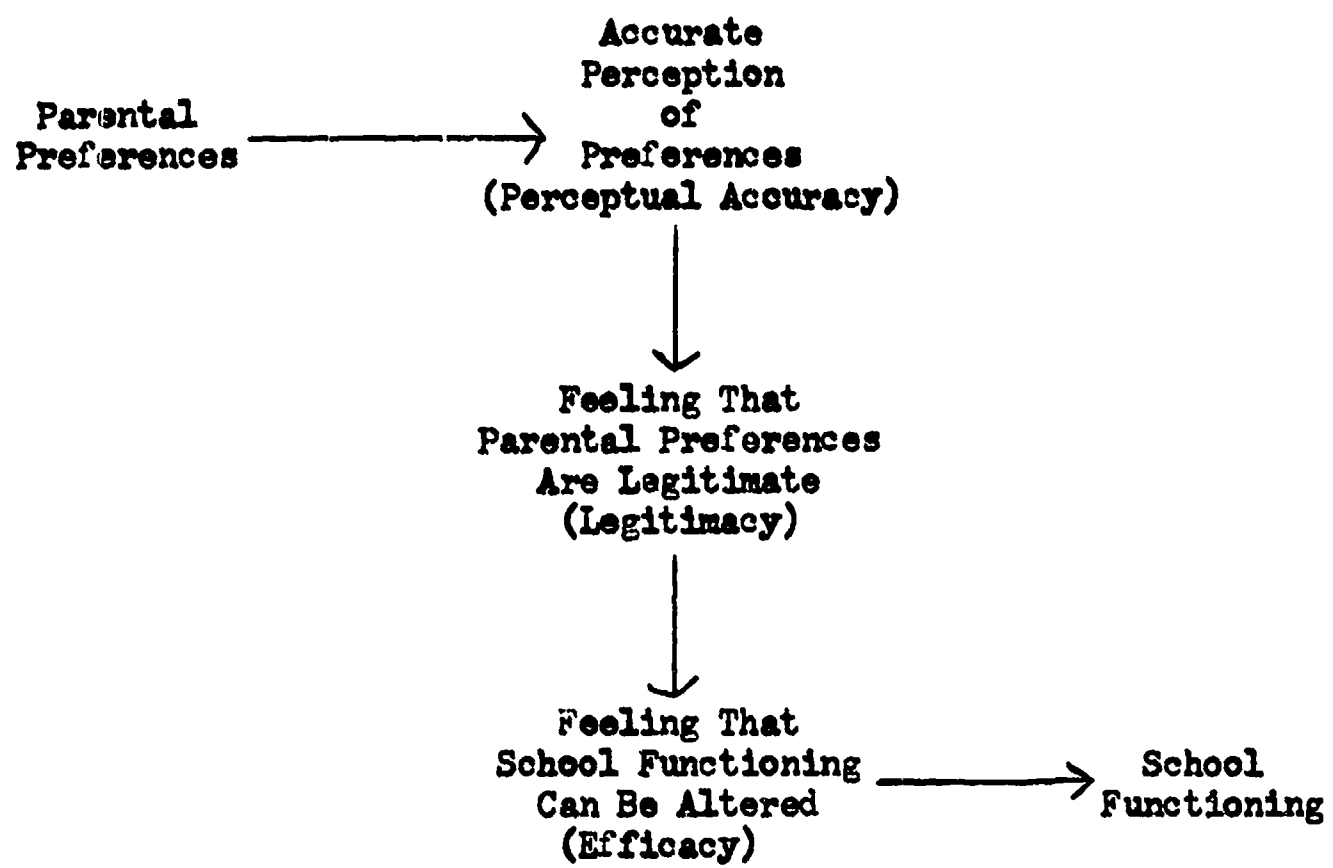
I term these three requirements perceptual accuracy, parent legitimacy, and teacher efficacy (Figure 1).

### Perceptual Accuracy

Perceptual accuracy was measured in two areas, content and methods, and in several more general background and opinion areas. Although much of the information collected is useful for a quantitative estimate of perceptual accuracy, this is not entirely possible in the area of educational methods.

Ideally, one would like the perceptions of teachers and principals of the distribution of parental preferences of the parents at their school in the areas of content, methods, and parent role.

FIGURE 1



Because of the limitations in data collection, teachers and principals reported their perceptions of the central tendency or average parent responses, not the entire distributions. Furthermore, these judgments were made in the areas of content and methods only. Judgments can only be made about parental educational aspirations, evaluations of the school, and several economic characteristics. On some questions the analysis is further limited by the lack of identical instructions for questions which parents answered and on which school personnel predicted parental responses.

While parents were asked which two educational goals were most important and two were least important, teachers were asked to rank the seven goals in the order they thought parents at their school would do. Thus we have to construct a ranking for parents by assuming selection of a goal as important as equivalent to a rank of 1.5, unimportant as 6.5, and unselected as 4.0. Table 9-1 compares the constructed parent rank to the perceived teacher rank for the goal of teaching children proper behavior.

While there is no overall misperception of parent behavior training goal by teachers across the ten schools, teachers at some schools are more accurate than others. The teachers at the Ming, Kelley, and Murphy Schools are more than three standard deviations incorrect in their estimates. The Wong and Davis teachers are somewhat more accurate. Overall, there is a negative relation (-.30) between the rank of parents on behavior training goals and the rank



TABLE 9-1

Behavior Training Goal:  
Parental Preferences and Teacher Perceptions by School

<u>Average Rank of Behavior Training Goal</u>				
<u>School</u>	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Teachers Perception</u>	<u>Difference*</u>
Kelley	2.8	(1)	4.5 (9)	5
Marino	2.9	(2)	3.7 (6)	2
Davis	3.0	(3.5)	2.0 (2)	3
Carlino	3.0	(3.5)	2.9 (4)	0
Jones	3.1	(5)	3.9 (7)	2
Brown	3.6	(7)	4.3 (8)	2
Murphy	3.6	(7)	5.2 (10)	4
Leary	3.6	(7)	3.4 (5)	1
Wong	3.7	(9)	2.8 (3)	3
Ming	3.8	(10)	1.5 (1)	6
Median	3.3		3.4	

\*Measured in Standard Deviations (SD = .4).

$r = -.30$

teachers predicted. Analysis also indicated no relation between the percentage of parents high in independence value at a school and teachers' estimates of which values parents would select ( $r = -.01$ ).

While teachers were asked what percentage of time they thought parents wanted them to spend on each of the five teaching methods, parents were asked which methods they preferred teachers to use. The absolute values of the teacher responses cannot be compared to the percentage of parents selecting a given method as best. The relative ranking of parents for traditional methods can be compared to the perceived ranks of teachers. Table 9-2 reports this comparison.

The two rankings are not related ( $r = .06$ ). While the ranks are within two at the Kelley, Leary, and Wong Schools, they are over four away at the Marino, Carlino, and Jones Schools. Teachers at the Ming School did not answer this question.

Several other comparisons shed more light on the accuracy of perceptions. Teachers were asked to estimate the percentage of parents who want their children to receive a college education. Table 9-3 compares the average answer given by teachers with the percentage of parents at each school in the sample who have college aspirations for their child (or eldest child) in the school. Several limitations must be recognized. Sampling error in the parent survey, response errors in the teacher survey, different interpretations of the question by parents and teachers, and responses limited primarily to women must be taken into account in interpreting this comparison.

TABLE 9-2

Teaching Methods:  
Parental Preferences and Teacher Perceptions by School

<u>Percentage Preferring Traditional Methods</u>				
<u>School</u>	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Teachers Perception</u>	<u>Difference*</u>
Kelley	21%	(8)	38% (7)	2
Marino	44	(4)	36 (9)	1
Davis	41	(5)	48 (2.5)	1
Carlino	18	(9)	42 (5)	2
Jones	52	(1.5)	33 (10)	2
Brown	35	(6)	48 (2.5)	1
Murphy	14	(10)	38 (7)	2
Leary	23	(7)	38 (7)	2
Wong	52	(1.5)	56 (1)	1
Ming	47	(3)	---	---

\*Measured in Standard Deviations.

$r = .06$

TABLE 9-3

College Aspirations:  
Parental Preferences and Teacher Perceptions by School

<u>Percentage of Parents with College Aspirations</u>			
<u>School</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers Perception</u>	<u>Difference*</u>
Kelley	55% (10)	26% (8)	3
Marino	58 (9)	32 (7)	3
Davis	82 (3)	43 (6)	4
Carlino	71 (6)	53 (3)	2
Jones	63 (8)	21 (10)	4
Brown	88 (1)	22 (9)	6
Murphy	85 (2)	90 (1)	1
Leary	69 (7)	48 (4.5)	2
Wong	75 (5)	48 (4.5)	3
Ming	80 (4)	75 (2)	1
Average	73%	46%	

\*Measured in Standard Deviations.

$r = .35$

Teachers underestimate the percentage of parents who want college aspirations for their children by an average of 27 percent across the ten schools. Seventy-three percent of parents want their children to go to college and graduate. The discrepancies between teacher perception and parent aspirations are given in terms of the number of standard deviations of difference. Misperception is greatest at the Jones (6 SD), Davis (4), Brown (4), Kelley (3), Marino (3), and Wong (3) Schools. Across all schools there is a small positive relation ( $r = .35$ ) between teacher perception and parental aspirations. Underestimates of aspirations occur at nine of the ten schools.

Teachers are relatively more accurate in predicting the percentage of parents who would know the name of the school's principal (Table 9-4). Again, teachers overestimated the percentage of parents with this knowledge by over 20 percent. In terms of standard deviations, however, only teachers at the Davis and Ming Schools were wrong by over one standard deviation.

Teachers are far more accurate in predicting what percentage of parents believe their children are getting a "good education" (Table 9-5). They overestimate a favorable rating by parents at their school by an average of only 7 percent. Only teachers at the Jones School are more than one standard deviation from the parental mean. The accuracy may be a function of a ceiling effect on teacher estimates.

TABLE 9-4

Knowledge of Principal's Name:  
Parental Knowledge and Teacher Perceptions by School

<u>Percentage of Parents Knowing Principal's Name</u>					
<u>School</u>	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Teachers Perception</u>		<u>Difference*</u>
Kelley	95%	(1)	89%	(5)	1
Marino	78	(5)	82	(6)	1
Davis	69	(6)	100	(1.5)	2
Carlino	82	(4)	95	(4)	1
Jones	55	(8)	68	(9)	1
Brown	63	(7)	74	(8)	1
Murphy	83	(3)	80	(7)	1
Leary	87	(2)	92	(3)	1
Wong	30	(9)	56	(10)	1
Ming	5	(10)	100	(1.5)	4
Average	65%		84%		

\*Measured in Standard Deviations. .

$r = .14$

TABLE 9-5

Evaluation of School:  
Parental Evaluation and Teacher Perceptions by School

<u>Percentage of Parents Evaluating School as Good</u>				
<u>School</u>	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Teachers Perception</u>	<u>Difference*</u>
Kelley	78%	(5)	89% (3)	1
Marino	73	(7.5)	82 (7)	1
Davis	80	(4)	88 (4)	1
Carlino	94	(1)	87 (5)	1
Jones	43	(9)	54 (9.5)	1
Brown	33	(10)	54 (9.5)	2
Murphy	88	(3)	83 (6)	1
Leary	90	(-)	92 (1)	1
Wong	73	(7.5)	80 (8)	1
Ming	75	(6)	90 (2)	1
Average	73%		80%	

\*Measured in Standard Deviations.

$r = .70$

Teacher accuracy is high again in the area of parental economic characteristics (Table 9-6). Teachers overestimate by 12 percent the percentage of parents who claim to have incomes under \$5,000 per year. Obviously, this may reflect parent exaggeration of income or distortion due to response loss (i.e., refusals and don't knows) on this question. Again, teachers at the Jones School were the least accurate. The Davis, Brown, and Marino teachers were moderately incorrect.

In summary, Table 9-7 indicates that the perceptual accuracy of teachers is most questionable at the Jones, Davis, Ming, and Marino Schools and most accurate at the Leary, Carlino, Wong, and Murphy Schools. Accuracy is greater at Irish schools and lower at Black schools. Accuracy at Chinese and Italian schools varies. Teachers tend to greatly underestimate parental educational aspirations, overestimate the knowledge parents have of the principal's name, but are accurate in assessing parental school evaluations and incomes. Teacher accuracy in method and content preferences appears to be lacking at most schools.

#### Parent Legitimacy

Teachers and principals were asked the following question concerning the legitimacy of parental influence:

"Many decisions affect school policy. Below are several areas where policy decisions must be made. For each area, please indicate the proper role you believe professional educators and parents should play by using the code following:



TABLE 9-6

Income: Reported Parental Income and Teacher Perceptions by School

Percentage of Parents Reporting Incomes Under \$5,000 Annually			
<u>School</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers Perception</u>	<u>Difference*</u>
Kelley	35% (4)	30% (7)	1
Marino	25 (6)	42 (6)	2
Davis	23 (7)	50 (3.5)	2
Carlino	8 (8)	17 (8)	1
Jones	45 (2)	63 (2)	2
Brown	33 (5)	72 (1)	3
Murphy	3 (9.5)	5 (10)	1
Leary	3 (9.5)	11 (9)	1
Wong	45 (2)	46 (5)	1
Ming	45 (2)	50 (3.5)	1
Average	27%	39%	

\*Measured in Standard Deviations.

r = .66

TABLE 9-7  
Summary: Parental Preferences and Teacher Perceptions

<u>School</u>	<u>Difference in Standard Deviations</u>						<u>Total (Rank)</u>
	<u>Goals*</u>	<u>Methods</u>	<u>College Aspirations</u>	<u>Knowledge of Principal's Name</u>	<u>Evaluation of School</u>	<u>Income</u>	
Jones	2	8.5	6	1	2	3	32.5 (1)
Davis	3	2.5	4	2	1	2	14.5 (2)
Ming	6	1	1	4	1	1	14.0 (3.5)
Martino	2	5	3	1	1	2	14.0 (3.5)
Brown	2	3.5	4	1	1	2	13.5 (5)
Kelley	5	1	3	1	1	1	12.0 (6)
Murphy	4	3	1	1	1	1	11.0 (7)
Wong	3	.5	3	1	1	1	9.5 (8)
Carlino	0	4	2	1	1	1	9.0 (9)
Leary	1	0	2	1	1	1	6.0 (10)

\*Difference measured in ranks and not standard deviations.

- (1) Professionals should make the decision without regard for the views of parents.
- (2) Professionals should make the decision keeping in mind the views of parents.
- (3) Professionals should make the decision with the active advice of parents.
- (4) Professionals and parents should make the decision jointly.
- (5) Parents should make the decision with active advice of professionals.
- (6) Parents should make the decision keeping in mind the views of professionals.
- (7) Parents should make the decision without regard for the views of professionals."

There is greater variation among teachers at a given school across the decision areas of possible parental influence than among schools within a given decision area. While the school at the median of legitimacy in parent relations is centered on professional decision-making with parental advice (3.0), teachers prefer a lessor parent role in the area of educational content (2.1 for curriculum and 2.7 for value determination). The greatest opposition to parental influence is in the area of discipline methods (1.7), the area where a majority of parents supported a direct decision role (See Chapter 4). Teachers are most open to a parent role in their relations with students (3.7) and parents (3.2). These statistics are reported in Table 9-8.

Teachers at the Ming School are the most reluctant to permit a parent role in school affairs. Leary School teachers are similarly inclined. Teachers at the Kelley, Marino, and Davis Schools are generally reluctant to accept a parent role approaching direct advice but do accept this role in certain areas. Teachers at the Wong, Carlino,

TABLE 9-8

## Teacher View of Legitimacy of Parent Decision Role by School

<u>Average Legitimacy in Area</u>				
<u>School</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Teaching Method</u>	<u>Parent Relations</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Wong	3.3 (1)	3.0 (3)	3.4 (1)	3.6 (1)
Brown	2.8 (3)	3.7 (1)	3.3 (2.5)	3.0 (2.5)
Carlino	2.9 (2)	2.9 (4.5)	3.3 (2.5)	3.0 (2.5)
Jones	2.2 (6.5)	2.8 (6)	2.8 (7)	2.7 (4)
Kelley	2.1 (9)	3.0 (3)	3.0 (4.5)	2.6 (6)
Marino	2.3 (4)	2.9 (4.5)	2.9 (6)	2.6 (6)
Davis	2.2 (6.5)	2.6 (9)	3.0 (4.5)	2.6 (6)
Leary	2.2 (6.5)	2.7 (8)	2.4 (8.5)	2.4 (8.5)
Murphy	2.2 (6.5)	3.0 (3)	2.4 (8.5)	2.4 (8.5)
Ming	1.7 (10)	2.0 (10)	2.0 (10)	2.0 (10)
Median	2.4	2.9	3.0	2.6

Jones, and Brown Schools are most inclined to accept a parental role in school affairs. This support holds across the three areas. Note that the most support for parent role occurs at three schools with substantial numbers of Black students.

### Teacher Efficacy

Across the ten schools teachers feel that they have the most latitude in the teaching methods they use in the classroom (Table 9-9). They feel most constrained in content in general and curriculum in particular. Overall, however, teachers felt that they had "much" latitude inside the classroom and in relations with parents.

The schools differed greatly in teachers' overall feelings of latitude. Teachers at the Ming, Kelley, Marino, and Carline Schools felt they had comparatively low latitude while Murphy and Wong teachers felt they had relatively great latitude.

### Summary

Thus while perceptual accuracy appears limited and willingness to involve parents in decisions centers around advice, teachers do feel great latitude in affecting content, methods, and relations with parents.

Are the three prerequisites for responsiveness met at schools where congruence between parental preferences and school functioning exists? Table 9-10 indicates that only the Wong School is in the upper half of schools on all three requisites. There was no congruence, however, at the Wong School. The schools were ranked on

TABLE 9-9  
Teacher Feeling of Efficacy by School

<u>Average Efficacy in Area</u>				
<u>School</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Teaching Method</u>	<u>Parent Relations</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Ming	3.8 (4.5)*	4.5 (5)	3.7 (7)	2.4 (10)
Kelley	2.8 (10)	3.7 (9)	3.3 (9.5)	3.1 (9)
Marino	3.2 (8)	3.6 (10)	3.3 (9.5)	3.4 (8)
Carlino	3.1 (9)	4.2 (7.5)	3.9 (6)	3.7 (7)
Jones	3.6 (6)	4.2 (7.5)	3.6 (8)	3.8 (6)
Leary	3.4 (7)	4.7 (2)	4.0 (3.5)	4.0 (5)
Brown	4.0 (3)	4.8 (1)	4.0 (3.5)	4.1 (3.5)
Davis	3.8 (4.5)	4.4 (6)	4.0 (3.5)	4.1 (3.5)
Murphy	4.6 (1)	4.6 (3.5)	4.0 (3.5)	4.4 (1.5)
Wong	4.3 (2)	4.6 (3.5)	4.4 (1)	4.4 (1.5)
Median	3.7	4.5	4.0	3.9

\*Responses ranged from complete (5) to none (1).

TABLE 9-10

## Summary of Responsiveness Process Variable by School

<u>School</u>	<u>Process Variable Rank</u>			<u>Summary Process Rank</u>
	<u>Perception</u>	<u>Legitimacy</u>	<u>Lattitude</u>	
Wong	3	1	1.5	1
Carlino	2	2.5	7	2
Brown	6	2.4	3.5	3
Murphy	4	8.5	1.5	4
Leary	1	3.5	5	5
Davis	9	6	3.5	6
Jones	10	4	6	7.5
Kelley	5	6	9	7.5
Marino	7.5	6	8	9
Ming	7.5	10	10	10

congruence and process (i.e., the average rank on each of the requisites). There is no relation between a school's congruence and the degree to which the three requisites have been fulfilled ( $r = .04$ ). When the requisites and congruence ranks are limited to content and methods, there is still no relation ( $r = .06$  and  $r = .12$ ) respectively. If a process of responsiveness exists, it does not exist at the ten schools in the sample.



## CHAPTER 10

### FACTORS WHICH LIMIT RESPONSIVENESS IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In Chapter 1, congruence was defined as a state where parental preferences are being met by school functioning and responsiveness, as a state where congruence results from purposeful governmental action to achieve a matching of parental preferences and school functioning. With these concepts in mind, previous chapters indicate that across the schools studied:

(1) Congruence is limited. Congruence between parental preferences and school functioning is absent within the sample of ten Boston elementary schools in the area of educational content and limited in the areas of teaching methods and parent role, although congruence does exist at some schools in some areas.

(2) Responsiveness is limited, if not nonexistent. Responsiveness, school functioning resulting from parental preferences, is not evident at schools where congruence exists. Congruence is not related to the requisite factors for responsiveness within the sample of ten schools. Parent role is not

related to congruence within the sample. Parents at several schools have experienced a complete refusal of their demands or requests.

- (3) Neither congruence nor responsiveness are directly related to ethnicity, race, or the social class of parents. At most, one can conclude that at one or two schools serving middle class parents, parents have recently had some influence over school functioning.

Several questions arise:

- (1) What determines school functioning if the preferences of parents do not?
- (2) What determines congruence and responsiveness or, correspondingly, why is parent influence so limited at many schools?
- (3) What effects does the lack of responsiveness and congruence have on parental views toward the Boston schools?

The first two questions are discussed in this chapter and the third in Chapter 10. This analysis is exploratory; hypotheses are tested as derived from the data generated by the analysis of congruence and responsiveness.

Determination of School Functioning: Elementary School Teachers  
in the Boston School System

Earlier in this study, school functioning was measured by examining the classroom behavior of teachers. To understand the factors that lead teachers to function in a given manner, it is most fruitful to begin the analysis of why schools function as they do with the elementary school teachers of the Boston School System. What are the backgrounds, attitudes, career goals of the teachers?

The most complete description of the teachers of the Boston Public School System has been reported in A Study of Promotional Policies and Procedures in the Boston Public Schools, issued by the Committee of Deans of Schools of Education of Greater Boston in April, 1970.<sup>1</sup> This study was commissioned by the Boston School Committee in January, 1968, to review the promotion procedures of the Boston Public Schools. A written questionnaire was sent to all teachers and administrators in the system--approximately 5,300, and 3,370, or 59 percent returned them. Teachers comprised 89 percent of the total number of respondents. No follow-up was undertaken to determine the characteristics of those who did not respond.

Analysis of the 2,616 completed teacher surveys indicated that 59 percent of the teachers are 35 years old or younger, 69 percent are female, 58 percent Catholic, 36 percent Irish (16 percent refused to answer this question), and 45 percent graduates of the Boston colleges of Boston State, Boston University, and Boston College.<sup>2</sup> Thus Boston teachers appear today to be younger and less

tied to Boston than some critics of the school system have charged. More significantly, the Dean's Study found age is highly related to attitudes about community control, promotion procedures, and many other areas. For example, while about 20 percent of teachers and administrators agree with the statement that "Members of a community should have a voice in selecting administrators of schools in their neighborhoods," over twice as many respondents who are under 35 agree (41 percent).

The elementary school classrooms in Boston remained relatively stable and traditional for decades until the 1960's. As the Cronin Report concluded, "Too many Boston classrooms operate as they did fifty or a hundred years ago. Teachers lecture, children recite, Tom and Jerry run, Spot plays, and so on . . ."<sup>3</sup> This equilibrium has been changing in the past decade, in large part as a result of the influx of young teachers replacing veteran teachers in many Boston schools. The average age of Boston teachers has declined greatly during this period. The Cronin Report profiled the Boston School System's teachers as follows:

#### The Teacher

Except for the children they teach, the teachers of the Boston School Department are the largest single energy source in the system. Teachers, especially those who are not too far removed from their own educations, are great sources of new ideas, activities, programs, and attitudes. We also found that it was the teachers, more than any other group in the system, which best adapted to and demanded change. A survey indicated that a large percentage of teachers seek widespread changes in the current structure of the Boston School System. Of the teachers interviewed, about thirty-six percent seek major changes in the system (e.g., decentralization of administration); forty-eight percent show no clear pattern for desired changes; and

sixteen percent seek conservative or reactionary changes (e.g., less IPP). A relatively small percentage of teachers suggests no changes for their school or for the system as a whole. Only a few teachers (but several assistant principals) agreed with the teacher who, when asked what he would change in the school system, responded: "I never thought about that. I wish you gave me some time to think about that before you asked it. Offhand, I'd say nothing." Teachers were more apt to make statements like the Roxbury teacher who said: "We need more black teachers and more specialists concerned with black problems like Elma Lewis School personnel; basically we need a more decentralized system."

Younger teachers and teachers whose experience has not been limited to Boston schools are the most innovative and most responsive to change.

Many Boston teachers are trying to respond to our new world. Teachers have advocated the increased use of television, paperbacks, and other media in the classroom. Many Boston pre-school and kindergarten children regularly watch "Sesame Street," the amazingly successful television series which has taught elementary learning concepts to thousands of American children. Many schools have already abandoned the traditional row-seating model of classrooms.

Thus many Boston teachers are presently trying to use modern teaching methods and stress independence values rather than behavior training within a school system that has historically, at least in the last few decades, been a haven for more traditional teachers. In general, a limited number of teachers, rather than the School Committee or administrators, have been the source of energy for attempted change in traditional educational methods and goals. Given the nature of teachers in the school system, what effect does the system and its administrators have on the teachers, especially differential effects across schools?

Although the elementary school district principal would appear to be the most likely source of system influence on the teacher,

they do not play a very important leadership role. The Cronin Report closely examines this issue:

### The Principal

. . . . . in Boston, as in other communities, the principal is an office-based administrator who channels directives from his superiors to his subordinates. Apparently with each passing year and each new contract, Boston's principals are forced further from leadership. The Principal's Handbook of the Boston Public Elementary Schools describes the principal's basic role as that of "the representative of the Superintendent of Schools . . . the executive directors". . . . .

The system has viewed principals as part of the hierarchical chain of command: the Superintendent is at the apex, followed by Associates, Assistants, Department Heads, principals and teachers. In this hierarchy, the basis of the principal's authority is the authority delegated to him by those above him. The nature of the existing hierarchy makes it difficult for information to flow up as well as down the line. Thus, the system places little value on program evaluation and feedback, basic components in an effective organization.

The Boston School Department has required its principals to be functionaries. Its demands on them have been uniform--to carry out system-wide policies and directives. The directives have also tended to be uniform and have not considered the special needs and diverse problems of particular areas. This uniformity also appears in many principals' backgrounds and personalities. Experienced teachers with the necessary tenure plus additional training become "Boston Principals," considered eligible for assignment to any Boston school rather than for assignments in particular neighborhoods or buildings according to their special backgrounds and talents.

In an intensive field survey, parents and teachers commented on their principals' roles. One inner city principal is described as "uninvolved . . . an administrator, not an initiator . . . staying pretty much in the background . . . giving no positive advice . . . passive." Another, a principal in an outlying white middle class area, is described by his teachers as "hung up on rules and regulations . . . basically an administrator who goes by the book . . . a law and order man . . . afraid of rocking the boat." Although a number of principals were considered open to new ideas, supportive of special programs, and skillful in dealing with the community, unfortunately, not enough of these are identified in the Boston schools.

In addition to prompting open-ended discussions with teachers, the responses to questionnaires which teachers from ten selected



elementary schools in different areas of Boston returned indicate they find in principals a relatively low level of educational leadership.

We did not rely solely on the teachers' comments to support observations that principals are desk-bound, specialists in paperwork. Boston's principals themselves recognize and lament this. Several principals complained of ever-increasing pressure to leave the classroom, to ignore parents and community, and to fill out and administer forms. One principal comments, "We used to run (a special community based program) but I had to do the legwork for it and I just don't have time anymore. There is a pyramiding of paperwork that stops me from doing other things. I've become fastened to this desk and I can't get out."

Several factors may account for the principals' increasing tendency to administer rather than to lead. Because each addition of a new central department--the system has the tendency to add new departments in response to crises--increases paperwork, the time available to principals for effective leadership decreases. Perhaps the increase of tension in school-community relations increases the attractiveness of officework. Features in the union contract and the decrease in age of Boston's teachers may diminish the principal's compatibility with his teachers and in some cases may reduce his capacity to lead. Whatever other specific reasons, the demand for increased paperwork is a serious problem. And today, when principals' leadership is crucial to schools and communities, the functionary role in which the principal finds himself is a more critical drawback than ever before.

### Requisites for Leadership

To be an effective leader the principal must have authority. This authority must come from two sources: from his personal qualities, and from his insistence that freedom and responsibility are built into the role. One principal recently bemoaned the loss of his formal authority. "No longer do teachers follow the principal's directives automatically," he complained. "The strike and professional day illustrate this loss in the prerogative of authority." When asked how a principal might reassert his authority, this principal replied that "one must be on solid ground." However, the power of the organization as a basis for authority can be replaced by a different and more realistic basis--expertise.

Expertise, an individual's knowledge and skills, is becoming the currency of authority in American society. If a principal is to lead in the Boston School Department, his power must be based firmly on his expertise, not on formally allocated power. Respect for authority is no longer bestowed; it must be earned.

To lead, the principal must gain for himself respect from teachers, parents, and children. Not all Boston's principals can do this. One parent in suburban Boston said "We don't respect the principal; he doesn't communicate with us or fight for what we want." Several teachers stated, "the principal should be someone we look up to, but we don't." Clearly an effort must be made to encourage principals to develop those qualities for which they will be respected. In one school the principal had these qualities; he was described as "open minded . . . democratic . . . helpful . . . cooperative . . . an educator." Several teachers described him as a person who never had to use his formal authority. People followed his lead because they wanted to.

It should be noted that school leadership is not characterized by the views or activities of the assistant principals. Few expressed any views in the open-ended interviews. Almost all were very guarded and appeared to be subservant to the principal. When asked what changes they would like to see in the school or school system, the answers of assistant principals included "more storage space," "none-the system works well," "none" and "nothing." When the assistant principal did exert influence it appeared to be in concert with the principal.

Given that many teachers want change and many principals are reluctant or unable to lead, how do the teachers and principals at the schools in the sample interact to produce school functioning? This question is best examined within the context of each of the ten schools.

#### Teachers-Principal Relations at Individual Schools

The Ming School is administered by a woman whose philosophy of raising her own children extends to her school charges. "I keep



my kids so busy so that they stay out of trouble. I find something for them to do when they are finished. This will keep them out of trouble. Most parents aren't disciplining their children today." The principal also related her distaste for students who were accusing policemen with brutality in a recent incident. When asked why she "knew" the policemen were right, "Wouldn't you believe policemen over students? He is an authority and I was taught to listen and respect authority." So are the children and teachers. There is no administrative support for modern methods or independence content.

#### Ming School

The traditionalism of the principal matches that of the teachers. The Ming School teachers are older and more conservative educationally than most Boston elementary school teachers. The teachers at the Ming apparently chose to teach there and are satisfied with their choice. The three teachers who completed the written questionnaire reported choosing the school or area to work. None met the current or past principal before receiving their assignment at the school; the principal played no role in their assignment. All three are satisfied or very satisfied with their position and principal. All want to remain in the school or area. The open-ended responses indicated some dissatisfaction with the building (it is about fifty years old) but comments were generally favorable. When asked how they would like to change the school or school system teachers replied, "Not at all, we really have a terrific setup; I've been here for eighteen years; that's hard to say, the building is so old . . . I

don't know too much about the rest of the school system." "Nothing, I like it as it is but they are going to build a new one (school)." Even one of the two teachers who indicated some desired changes said, "I can't really complain . . . this is an ideal situation--it's called a country club."

The teacher who called the Ming School a country club recognized several problems, including children entering the school with no knowledge of English, no bilingual classes, language help in first grade but none in kindergarten, "farfical" testing where some words are "totally irrelevant to any 20th century child," and parents who cannot communicate in English. I can only speculate on the factors which make the Ming School a country club. The administration, children and parents at the Ming School allow teachers to run traditional and relatively authoritarian classrooms with no interference. There is no pressure to abandon the past for the future (or present) beyond a teacher's self-motivation. Children, parents, and administrators are passive. This situation appeals most to traditional teachers.

#### Davis School

In many ways the situation at the Davis School is similar to the situation at the Ming School. The children are fairly passive, the school is in an area desired by many teachers because of its proximity to good residential housing, and the administrative leadership of the school is traditional. A majority of the Davis School teachers responding to the written questionnaire were not recruited by the

principal, requested this area of Boston, are satisfied with their positions, and plan to stay. Teachers feel that "this school is one of the best," explicitly better than Newton or Brookline schools, and only a few dissent. As one teacher put it, "It's very relaxed here, no one is on your back."

The leadership of the school is traditional. Both the principal and assistant principal at the Davis School see the school's goal as "building character through affection and trust." They are "not concerned with subjects but rather concerned with character traits like honesty, integrity, respect for one another and for adults and authority. We are concerned for local stores; we must stop our children from shoplifting." Their feeling is that "the three 'R's' will take care of themselves, why should kids have to worry so much about mathematics if they will be checkout people at the supermarket." The principal selected the values of "to obey those in authority," "to work hard," to have self-control," and "to be loyal and patriotic" from the list of values. The teachers at the school agree with their philosophy of building character with a concern for the happiness of children.

Teachers at the Davis School ranked high in latitude, i.e., they feel that they have control over school functioning. The traditionalism of the school administration and the lack of legitimacy of parent role gives teachers this latitude.

### Leary School

The attractiveness of the Leary School to teachers is high and many traditional teachers are found at the school. At the Leary School, the principal is not educationally conservative, quite the contrary, but he is afraid to be forceful in making teachers function more innovatively. He thinks the classroom is strictly their domain. For example, he was one of only two principals who would not allow the study staff to observe teachers. He discussed trying to change teachers as follows. "Unless a teacher is sold on a program I don't encourage them to change. I would like to move faster on some ideas like IPP . . . After all, how can you get innovative programs without teachers who fit? We had one girl who loved new things but she left."

Although some teachers may have been recruited to the school by a former principal, no teacher was recruited by this principal. His reluctance to go too far in classroom change may be a result of a lack of control over teacher assignment. The teachers will remain despite his feelings so why rock the boat? On the other hand, his view of his power may be more limited than accurate.

### Murphy School

An examination of the situation at the Murphy School sheds some light on the relationship between the power of the principal and responsiveness. As noted in Chapter 7, while the previous principal at the Murphy School dismissed the requests of parents, the current principal is known for his responsiveness to parents. Yet the

teachers are still less concerned for independence values and modern educational methods than are most parents. The changes brought by the principal do not extend to these areas. In part, this is due to his ideological resistance to independence training.

The Murphy School principal, a former Marine sergeant, talks little about proper behavior but supports others who desire this educational goal. His four preferred values are "to obey those in authority," "to work hard," "to be happy," and "to be loyal and patriotic." Yet academic concerns normally take second place to explicit character development. When others are asked about his educational philosophy, the reply usually is, "He really doesn't have one, but you know he is a former Marine."

The principal is surely not restrained from interfering in teacher selection, yet one must note that changes in personnel were made not because of parent educational questions or demands but because of charges of absenteeism and lack of ability to handle certain class situations. There was no indication of principal or assistant principal attempts to make the school less traditional in the areas studied here. Attempts to modernize have been concentrated in the areas of physical improvements and some curriculum changes. But to date this has satisfied most of the active parents and latently dissatisfied parents seeking a more modern school.

### Marino School

Two principals actively seek to encourage teachers in their schools to be more concerned with behavior control than they would be otherwise. At the Marino School, the principal feels that many of his efforts are in vain, for his home office is in another building. For example, he complains that "the teachers let children pull the window shades down and ruin the shades." Few of the teachers show proper concern for cleanliness. "When we get movable furniture the least we can do is keep it clean, so I have teachers buy a sponge and cloth to keep the desks neat." I remarked that the school was "bright"; and he smiled and said, "No, it's clean." Most of the teachers don't feel the same way about cleanliness or teaching in the traditional same way, but as the principal said, "Critical teachers are usually sloppy teachers."

Teachers were fairly blunt about the reasons for the principal's failure to limit their departure from traditional classroom procedures. Said one teacher, "If he was principal here, I might have less freedom." In other words, the principal has a limited number of ways of observing or finding out about teacher classroom activity and locating the principal's office at another school in the district limits his power at the non-home office school. The principal himself recognized this by being more critical of the Marino than his home school. He implied that while he had shaped the teachers at the home school, the Marino was out of reach.

The principal, however, is not trying to maintain a traditional school because of parental pressure or preference. He has very strong feelings about proper classroom functioning, but he has not allowed parents to play a role in even spending their Home and School Association funds.

### Kelley School

At the Kelley School, the principal tries to play a more active role in instilling proper values. Her lessons begin with every visitor to her office, for an American flag hangs outside the office to brush against the face of entering visitors. She is trying to get teachers to stress character development, including traits like good manners and social amenities like appropriate "thank you's." "If character training isn't in the formal program it won't get done at all," she says. How can one be sure teachers do build characters? "I can tell pretty well. I walk around during character training, between 8:45-8:55 a.m., and you can tell. Are teachers standing in front of their classes? Are they talking to the children?" This principal is proud of the bimonthly patriotic assemblies and the displays teachers have constructed on the bulletin boards to commemorate Patriot's Day. What values should be stressed in this school? The principal selected "to obey those in authority," "to work hard," "to be neat and clean," and "to have self-control." Yet this principal states that teachers just do not respect authority anymore and, therefore, feels her power is most limited.



Two principals allow their relatively young and innovative teachers to prosper with a minimum of interference.

#### Carline and Wong Schools

At the Carline School, the principal notes among the unique things at the school is the "IPP and the relaxed children who can yawn and have their own conversations." She cites a movie-making project as an example of the self-expression she tries to encourage. What would she like to add to the school? "A room for children to do their own thing and more time for me to improve curriculum is needed. These children are from good backgrounds and as such, you don't have to teach them good habits first." In a letter to parents, she notes that character foundation is the job of parents. The majority of her teachers agree, although a few would like their principal to be more active in encouraging creativity. According to them she too often places rules and regulations in the path of teachers' attempts to encourage creativity. But in relative terms, innovations are allowed to prosper at the Carline School.

At the Wong School, the principal never really mentioned values or the socialization of children. His questionnaire responses indicated that he placed teaching children proper behavior next to teaching the basics as a goal for the school. Yet, during the interview children walked in and out of his office freely. This principal tolerates what his teachers want and is not noted for being an



impediment to independence and creativity. He is not an active advocate for these either.

Teacher satisfaction at both schools is relatively low. This is especially interesting in view of the high praise many teachers had for the school in the open-ended questions. Said one teacher at the Wong School, "This is really a nice school--no problems . . . we have much freedom here . . . the principal has confidence in the teachers, he lets them plan their own programs." Three of the five teachers who responded in the written survey thought that the home life of their children was a problem in the Wong School. The reason for dissatisfaction at the Wong is caused by the overall situation, i.e., inner city school for disadvantaged children rather than by the administrative leadership.

Many teachers at the Carline School are dissatisfied because they agree with one teacher who said, "I am able to run my class pretty much without structure. She (the principal) lets me do this. But she's been more crotchety lately, more picky. She is one of the better principals in the city with a great interest in kids." Said another teacher, "She's hung up on rules and regulations." Thus, the Carline principal, although very supportive of change, does not go as far as many teachers would like.

#### Brown and Jones Schools

Schools serving Black children are not an attractive assignment for many teachers. A majority of teachers at six of the ten

schools who responded to the written survey indicated that they would like to remain at schools in the area. This was not true at the Brown or Jones Schools. A majority of the teachers at these schools were not satisfied with their positions. Many listed six or seven changes they would like in their school. One teacher, for example, wanted to "tear the school down, get more Black teachers, more specialists, smaller classes, Black principal, and no make-shift or temporary classrooms."

Among the reasons teachers do not like teaching in these schools is the difficulty in maintaining order in the school and classroom. Of the 22 teachers who indicated that discipline was a major problem in their school, 18 were in the Brown or Jones Schools. Teachers at these schools do not function innovatively in large part because of lack of discipline limits their ability to do so. In addition, there is little support to date for resolving the problems in breaking down discipline problems within a free classroom.

Teachers at the Brown School described the principal as "going by the book, not really a supervisor, more of an administrator or big brother, she walks around and is nice, been in the room once all year." One person described her as having "no real educational philosophy. She runs around protecting her status without taking a clear-cut stance on anything."

### Teacher-Principal Relations: Summary

Several hypotheses are suggested by the descriptions of teacher-principal interaction at the ten schools:

- (1) Teachers generally have wide latitude within the classroom, in large part because principals do not or cannot exert leadership.
- (2) While teachers latitude is great, many principals do have strongly held views concerning school functioning and are able to exert some degree of leadership within their schools.
- (3) School functioning, at least in the areas of educational content and methods, is likely to be most highly related to the kinds of teachers at a school and somewhat related to the educational attitudes of the principal.
- (4) Schools which are most attractive to teachers are most likely to have older and more traditional teachers and thus function accordingly given the operation of seniority in teacher school assignment procedures.

One measure of the attractiveness of schools to teachers is the percentage of teachers at each school who report being satisfied with their position (Table 10-1). Satisfaction is greatest at the Ming School and next highest at the schools serving white middle class students. Three of the four schools where satisfaction is lowest

TABLE 10-1

Comparison of Two Measures of School Attractiveness to Teachers

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Teachers</u>	
	<u>Want to Remain in Area (Rank)</u>	<u>Very Satisfied in Their Position (Rank)</u>
Ming	100% (1)	67% (3)
Leary	86 (2)	86 (2)
Davis	80 (3)	100 (1)
Kelley	67 (4)	50 (5)
Murphy	60 (5)	60 (5)
Carlino	55 (6)	36 (8)
Brown	43 (7)	43 (6.5)
Jones	41 (8)	33 (9)
Marino	29 (9)	43 (7)
Wong	20 (10)	20 (10)

 $r = .85$

serve Black children.<sup>4</sup> A second measure of the attractiveness of the school is the percentage of teachers who report that they would like to teach in the same area of Boston in the future (Table 10-1). This measure is correlated at the .85 level across the ten schools.

The case studies suggested that schools which are attractive to teachers will tend to draw older and more traditional teachers. No independent measure of school attractiveness can be constructed from this data. The attractiveness of the school to teachers now serving there can be related to measures of school functioning. As Table 10-2 indicates, the correlation between this measure of attractiveness and independence content is .72 and .28 with teaching methods.<sup>5</sup>

To what extent do the attitudes of principals relate to the measures of school functioning? Table 10-3 indicates a small positive relation between the ranking of principals according to their support of modern methods and independence content and school functioning in content ( $r = .33$ ) and methods ( $r = .18$ ). The relation is at best modest.

#### Factors Limiting Responsiveness

The findings of the first half of this chapter and of Chapter 9 can now be placed within the perspective of the model discussed in Chapter 1. Three areas will be discussed, factors affecting the (a) decision-maker's perceptions of parental preferences and demands, (b) his or her reaction to legitimacy and sanctions, and (c) his or her resources and power.

TABLE 10-2  
School Attractiveness and School Functioning  
In Educational Content and Methods

<u>School</u>	<u>Teacher Satisfaction</u>	<u>Rank</u> <u>Independence Content</u>	<u>Modern Methods</u>
Davis	1	9	6
Leary	2	10	8
Ming	3	7	9
Murphy	4	5	4
Kelley	5	8	3
Marino	6.5	1	2
Brown	6.5	4	10
Carlino	8	3	1
Jones	9	6	7
Wong	10	2	5

$r$  (Teacher Satisfaction and Independence Content) = .72

$r$  (Teacher Satisfaction and Modern Methods) = .28

TABLE 10-3

Principal Educational Attitude and School Functioning  
In Educational Content and Methods

<u>School</u>	<u>Rank</u>		
	<u>Principal Modern Independence</u>	<u>Independence Modern Content</u>	<u>Moder Methods</u>
Carlino	1	3	1
Jones	2	6	7
Leary	3	10	8
Wong	4	2	5
Brown	5	4	10
Marino	6	1	2
Murphy	7	5	4
Kelley	8	8	3
Davis	9	9	6
Ming	10	7	9

$r$  (Principal Modern-Independence Rank and Independence Content  
School Functioning) = .33

$r$  (Principal Modern-Independence Rank and Modern Methods  
School Functioning) = .18

### Perception and Demands: Activating Parents

There are many roadblocks to parental organizational influence upon Boston elementary schools. The first hurdle involves activating parents to work in concert for group, i.e., school, goals. Parent organizations were nonexistent at two schools (Ming and Wong Schools) and only recently resurrected at one (Jones School). At most schools few parents have ever participated in functions beyond open school nights. As one Black Home and School Association leader said, "You have to put dynamite under parents" to get them involved.

Parents do communicate with the school personnel and even may attend group activities when the subject is their individual child and his or her work or behavior. Almost all principals, teachers, and parent leaders agree that most parents will come to school in order to try to resolve their child's problems. A lack of problems may well mean a lack of communication. Parents at the Ming School are rarely called to the school because their children behave properly and do the work required of them. Several teachers said that although they have seen few parents, if any, in the course of the year, parents would come if asked. Less than 5 percent of the parents reported talking with the teacher at least once during the school year.

The parents' perceived physical safety of their children appears to be the prime activating force in Boston. In the Carline Elementary School District, for example, parents have twice rallied to insist on physical repairs of two different schools with heating



problems. Few parents, however, were active in the meetings and activities centered on the facilities at both schools. No Carlino School parent was involved.

The Boston School System appears to do little to remove language or cultural barriers to parent activity and communications. Parents at the Ming School are also limited in their role by the language barrier. The problems of long working hours, strange customs in a new country, and other problems familiar to other American immigrant groups also work against any parent-school communication. The school and school system have done little to bridge the gap between Chinese parents and Boston schools. One teacher did try to learn Chinese at night but after weeks of effort discovered that she was learning the wrong dialect. The school system has made no attempt to hire Chinese teachers.

#### Perceptions and Demands: Lack of Aggressive Parental Leadership

While a majority of the ten schools had formal parent organizations, only a minority had organizations which were led by parents who actively sought a role in influencing the school. At several schools parents allowed principals to dominate the Home and School Association. Several parents described their surprise at being selected to serve as Home and School officers, especially when they did not know of their nomination and did not attend the election meeting. Several principals had suggested lunch aides, parents who work for the school system, fill top leadership posts. The Marino

and Kelley School Home and School Associations are controlled by their respective principals. Their roles have been most limited. The money collected from organizational bake sales, for example, has been used to purchase amenities for the school staff (i.e., refrigerators) and school materials not provided by the school system. Parents are asked by the principal to help arrange panels and speakers for organizational meetings.

A large number of parent leaders and parents in general, especially among white working class and Chinese parents, are very accepting of the principal's authority in determining the nature of the parent-teacher organization. A parent leader at the Kelley School described the relation between the principal and parents favorably. "Parents make suggestions and (the principal) then tells us why we can't do it." Another parent stated that teachers should set organizational meeting times because "they pay dues, too." Many Chinese parents wanted to let "the authorities" make all school decisions.

The power of the principal to limit the role of parents in their school is maintained in large part by the failure of parents to challenge his or her power. There are several reasons for the failure of parental attempts to supersede the principal. First, parents are aware of possible repercussions upon their children. For example, crossing an assistant principal when your child may be assigned to her or his class in the near future was cited by one parent as a restraining influence. Second, many parents are not accustomed to challenging authority, especially when they feel they lack a

professional education or enough experience in office. Third, few parents even at the level of Home and School leadership know how to challenge the principal's power. The distinction between the School Committee, Area Superintendent, School System Administration Headquarters, Public Facilities Commission, and so on are often blurred. One Davis School parent described a futile attempt to locate Home and School bylaws to make such a challenge of the principal. Even the professional community worker at the Brown School, who has led a parent's advisory council to challenge the principal on some issues, admits that her knowledge of the school system is still most limited.

The Home and School formal organization is somewhat of an impediment to making requests of the principal and challenging his or her authority; but at two schools parents have formed alternative organizations, leaving the Home and School Associations to wither away. At both schools, the Murphy and Brown Schools, parents had professional educations or had the help of professionals. I believe this is more to serve as support for untying the umbilical cord than because professional organization advice was required. The principal's power to pack board meetings and association boards with teachers who are obligated to him for performance evaluations and his or her very presence at the meetings makes it difficult for dissident parents to organize a spirited opposition.

### Perceptions and Demands: Principal Power

Where parents do join the parent-teachers organization, and where parent leaders do make demands upon the principal, the effectiveness of these demands depend in large part on the personality and ideology of the principal. The "old school" principal makes little bones about rejecting parent demands out of hand. The history of parental attempts to change the Murphy School illustrates this point. Before the current principal was appointed, requests to change the school were dismissed by the principal stating that things "on the other side of the tracks" deserved more attention. His inactivity was not altered by the education, income, ethnic, or resulting political power and resources of the Murphy parents. The situation has now changed with the new principal. Several teachers now complain about the political nature of the school in their open-ended comments. Said one teacher, "There is friction here among parents, teachers, and the principal." Another reported that "parents have a say here and they try to be influential. The principal is afraid of the mothers."

Chinese leaders, for example, report that specific attempts to influence the system have not succeeded. For example, one teacher, having difficulty recalling and pronouncing the children's Chinese names, solved her problem by calling all the children by numbers. Reportedly parents failed to have the teacher removed because both she and the principal were to return soon and the desire to avoid conflict was paramount. (Discussions of the Davis and Brown Schools in Chapter 7 further illustrate this point.)

Of course, the attitude of the principal may allow parent role without parents taking advantage of it. The Carline School does function as the parents prefer and, to some degree, this is because the principal wants it this way. She seeks innovative ideas from the system and knows many parents want them and even more parents want changes explained. When she had IPP introduced in one of her schools, she tried team teaching in another school "because the parents would want to know what they are getting." She purchased books relating to team teaching and explained its implications at a meeting for parents. Thus the principal is client-oriented but the parents have remained passive at the Carline School.

#### Parent Legitimacy: Classroom Interference

In general, Boston elementary school teachers view themselves as professionals, their classrooms as the place in which they practice their profession, and those around them as responsible for serving their needs and demands. Thus principals are chided for not protecting teachers from parental interference and for failing to supply teachers with books, materials, and expertise for educational purposes. As Chapter 9 indicated, the proper parental role is seen as more limited as the issue in question moves closer to classroom functioning, especially with respect to the teacher's right to discipline the class.

The result of this point of view is to make it difficult for parents to directly influence teacher behavior by individual and organizational communications or demands or to indirectly influence

teachers by communicating with principals. Teachers accept parental support; many refer to parents at their school in positive terms by calling them "responsive." Attempts to influence the functioning of the school, especially within classrooms, is seen as illegitimate. In fact, the distaste for interference is extended to the Boston School Committee. Many teachers explicitly noted that they disliked the School Committee because it failed to support their classroom efforts while it tried to interfere in their activities.

This point of view is also supported by many principals and parents. Not all principals would agree with the principal who wanted "engineering left to the engineers, science to scientists, and education to the educators"; but a majority appeared to be reluctant to challenge the power of teachers within the classroom in order to accomplish their own or parental objectives. Few parents challenged the right of the teachers to determine what is the best classroom behavior.

#### Teacher Efficacy: Vacuum of Influence

Many principals have abdicated their responsibility of authority over the teachers in their schools. As noted earlier in this chapter, they have lost their formal authority and have been unable or unwilling to substitute a new basis of authority. Many of the most hostile parents and teachers blamed principals for not battling for their school and its children, even where the issues involved the physical safety of children. Thus, especially in the classroom,

teachers feel great latitude in what they do in the classroom. Many teachers feel less latitude, however, than they might like, or at least less attention than they want. Complaints about formal supervision visits that end in formal ratings but no advice were frequent. Many teachers seek help and few knew where to get support for changing their classroom or relations with parents. In brief, many teachers feel the freedom from many constraints but lack the resources to have the freedom to do many new things.



## CHAPTER 10 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The report was produced by the Center for Field Research and Field Services, Boston College, Newton, Massachusetts.

<sup>2</sup>To the extent which one can compare the characteristics of teachers at the ten schools in this study with the teachers responding to the Deans' Survey, the two groups appear comparable.

Of the teachers responding to this survey, 58 percent were 35 years old or younger; 89 percent, female; 57 percent, Catholic; 43 percent, Irish; and 84 percent attended Boston State, Boston University, or Boston College at some point in their careers. (These percentages are based upon only those answering the question.) Thus, the major age, religious, and ethnic distribution of the two surveys are almost identical. The greater percentage of females in this study reflects the greater number of women teachers in elementary schools.

<sup>3</sup>See Joseph M. Cronin and Richard M. Hailer, Organizing a School System for Diversity: A Study of the Boston School Department (Boston: McBer and Associates, 1970), p. 49. As a staff member on the evaluation of the Boston schools, many of my earlier observations were incorporated into this report. In many parts of this and the next chapter I quote at length from the report, for editors, other staff members, and Directors Cronin and Hailer have added much to my original observations.

<sup>4</sup>See Howard S. Becker, "The Teacher in the Authority System of School," Journal of Educational Sociology, XXVII (1953), pp. 128-141, and "The Career of the Chicago Public School Teacher," American Journal of Sociology, LVII (1952), pp. 470-477. Becker documented the desire of teachers to work in middle rather than lower class schools and their differential perception of children from different social classes.

<sup>5</sup>If the schools' ranks are combined into a single modern or independence rank in school functioning, the rank correlation between the combined measure and the attractiveness of the school to teachers is .64.



## CHAPTER 11

### EFFECTS OF NON-RESPONSIVENESS

Previous chapters have discussed the failure of the Boston School System to respond to the preferences of parents whose children attend its elementary schools. This chapter addresses the possible effects of the lack of responsiveness on parental attitudes toward the school system.

It is difficult to specify the magnitude of the effects of non-responsiveness. This study has dealt with a limited number of schools. The variation in experience of parents with individual schools is thus restricted; and it is impossible to hold constant factors like the degree of racial integration, income level, and ethnic background across more than a few schools. Moreover, congruence and responsiveness in only three areas have been studied while areas like physical facilities and special programs have been neglected. The attitudes of many parents are a function of their experience with other levels of schools and perhaps other school systems (e.g., parochial, suburban). Furthermore, opinions may well be a function of historical and group experiences that cannot be specified in this analysis.

It is possible, however, to begin an analysis of the effect of non-responsiveness by discussing several issues:

- (1) The distribution of evaluations across the total sample of parents, especially with reference to their relation to responsiveness;
- (2) The distribution of evaluations by background factors like race and education;
- (3) The degree to which experiences at a school appear to modify relations between evaluation and background factors.

#### Parental Report Card on the Boston Public Schools

Generally, the parents interviewed expressed moderate satisfaction with the Boston Public School System. Although few termed the schools "poor" (9 percent), one in six called the system "very good" (17 percent). (Tables 11-1 and 11-2) About 40 percent of the sample rate the system as a "good" one. The parents of elementary school children in this sample were much less critical of the school system than were the sample of Boston respondents in the Boston Area Survey.<sup>1</sup> This comparison also indicates that respondents who have children attending Boston schools appear to be less critical of the schools than do those who do not have children attending these schools.

When they were asked to evaluate the elementary schools which their children attend, the replies of parents were almost twice as favorable as were evaluations of the total school system. Although 17 percent of the sample rate the school system as very good, 33 percent rate their child's particular school as very good. This may be a result of blaming school difficulties on the system. Since many

TABLE 11-1

Parental Evaluation of the Quality of Education  
In the Boston Public Schools

<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Very good	17%
Good	40
Fair	28
Poor	9
Don't know	7

TABLE 11-2

Parental Evaluation of the Quality of Education  
In Their Child's Elementary School

<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Very good	33%
Good	40
Fair	18
Poor	7
Don't know	3

parents spontaneously criticized the quality of Boston junior and senior high schools, even though the survey did not include specific questions about secondary schools, low evaluations of the school system may also be a reflection of low evaluations of secondary education.

Parents were asked if circumstances permitted, where would they send their child to school: the current public school, another public school, a private school, or parochial school. Although over half said they would not have their child change schools, over 30 percent said they would select a private or parochial school (Table 11-3). Again, although one cannot conclude their dissatisfaction is overwhelming, many parents would prefer alternatives to the current system.

#### Desire for Change

Although a majority of Boston public school parents interviewed rated the school system fair to good, many expressed a desire for some major alterations in the school system. When they were presented with three alternative structurings of the school district-- (1) the present district encompassing the city of Boston (clearly labeled as the present system); (2) a metropolitan district encompassing Boston and its suburbs; and (3) a restructuring of the system into a number of community districts--a majority of the respondents preferred a restructuring of the present system (Table 11-4). While 31 percent wanted to keep the present system, 32 percent preferred a metropolitan district and 22 percent preferred community districts.

TABLE 11-3

Parental Desire to Send Child to Alternative School  
If Circumstances Permit

<u>Choice of School</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Current public	53%
Another public	6
Private	19
Parochial	13
Don't know	9

TABLE 11-4  
 Parental Preferences  
 For Alternative School District Plans

<u>Alternative Districts</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Present Boston District	31%
Metropolitan District	32
Community District	22
Don't know	15

Like the School District, the Boston School Committee as it is presently organized appears unsatisfactory to a majority of the respondents (Table 11-5). The respondents are almost evenly split among four groups--those in favor of the present elected committee; those favoring an appointed board; those for an enlarged, community-based board; and those unwilling to make a choice.

One should not rely too greatly on the specific percentages supporting any alternative. The support for each alternative may well be substantially affected by any public campaign to alter the current system. For example, although many have advocated an appointed board, only one in four parents favors the idea. Clearly, however, a majority of this sample of Boston parents are open to changing the governing structure of the Boston Public School System.

Bostonians have been credited with a widespread cynicism toward their city government; the school system has not escaped this feeling of cynicism.<sup>2</sup> The respondents were asked to agree or to disagree with four statements; the first two derived from accepted scales of political cynicism, the latter two from scales of political efficacy.<sup>3</sup> As Table 11-6 indicates, from 50 to 60 percent of the respondents are cynical or with a low feeling of efficacy or control vis-à-vis the Boston schools. For example, over 50 percent of those sampled felt that one cannot usually "trust the Boston School Committee to do what is right." Apparently a majority of parents do not feel that the system works directly for them. When they were asked if they thought



TABLE 11-5  
 Parental Preferences  
 For Alternative Types of School Committees

<u>Alternative School Committees</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Present Five-Man Elected Committee	24%
Five-Man Appointed Committee	25
Enlarged Elected Committee with Community Representatives	27
Don't know	24

TABLE 11-6

## Parental Cynicism and Efficacy

<u>Efficacy Statements</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	
		<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Sometimes the Boston Public Schools seem so complicated that a person like me can't understand what is going on.	57%	36%	7%
Voting in the School Committee election is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the public schools are run.	53	38	9
<u>Cynicism Statements</u>			
Over the years the Boston Public School system has paid little attention to what people think when it decides what to do.	57	25	18
You can usually trust the Boston School System to do what is right.	37	51	12

parents should have greater say in running the schools, two-thirds said "yes" and fewer than a quarter said "no."

Many respondents wish to alter the system's structure and see a change in the personnel patterns. When they were asked who should be appointed to positions retiring administrators vacated, 41 percent of the respondents wanted to limit appointments to current Boston administrators (Table 11-7). Over 40 percent favored limiting new appointments to newcomers or to appointing administrators both from in and from outside the system.

#### Specific Likes and Dislikes

Parents were asked to state their likes or dislikes about their children's schools. Their responses had several similar tendencies. Table 11-8 summarizes the frequency of open-ended mentions of the topics when respondents were asked, "What do you like (and dislike) about the . . . school?" Of the 657 positive statements about the schools, approximately one-third referred to teachers.

Other items were mentioned much less often. Curriculum, including general assessment of the education which children are receiving, and the location of the school were the next most frequently mentioned. Complaints centered about the school facilities and school plant. Over one-quarter (27 percent) of the specific complaints concerned this area.

TABLE 11-7  
Parental Preferences  
For Who Receives Administrative Appointments

<u>Promotion Alternatives</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Promote only those within the system	41%
Appoint new people	21
Both	23
Don't know	15

TABLE 11-8  
Parental Likes and Dislikes  
About the Elementary School

	<u>Percentage of Likes</u>	<u>Percentage of Dislikes</u>
Teachers	33% <sup>a</sup>	9% <sup>b</sup>
Curriculum	11	8
Location of school	10	0
Facilities and plant	8	27
Parent relations	7	5
Teaching methods	5	3
School atmosphere	4	5
Class size	3	5
School discipline	3	10
System or school policy	3	13
Other	10	14
	N=657	N=457

<sup>a</sup>Percentage of the 657 specific items liked.

<sup>b</sup>Percentage of the 457 specific items disliked.

Complaints reflect the point made earlier: The school system itself is often a focus of complaints. This area ranks second to plant and facilities (another system characteristic) in its frequent mention. Parents view positively those closest to them--primarily teachers--but they view the system characteristics negatively. Although 33 percent of the positive remarks were about teachers, two of the three negative items, school facilities and school and system policy, are responsibilities beyond the control of local schools.

Two other points should be emphasized. First, few people complained (3 respondents) or praised (15 respondents) their school principals. Principals appeared as relatively neutral characteristics of the school. Second, fewer than half the people reported a specific complaint.

Thus a majority of those in the sample see difficulties with their ability to influence the system, the system's response to their preferences, and the system's ability to do the right thing without the input of people like themselves. Whatever the cause, there is a widespread cognition that the schools are unresponsive and thus don't do "what is right."

While the parents in the sample are relatively favorable toward teachers and their elementary schools, they are cynical and have lower evaluations of the overall system. Support for widespread changes in the school system is great. Examining the total sample,

however, masks large differences in evaluations among those of different racial backgrounds.

### Evaluations and Ethnicity

The belief that the school system and school are unresponsive is highly related to the ethnic background of the parent (Table 11-9). Few Negroes trust the school system, a near majority of Italians and a majority of Irish do, and almost all Chinese respondents indicate trust. Note that there is no relation between education and trust in the system.

As Tables 11-10, 11-11, and 11-12 indicate, the large relationship between race or ethnicity and attitudes toward the Boston School System extends to preferences for changing the structure of the system (by changing school district sizes, selection of the School Committee, or selection of administrative personnel from outside the present crop of administrators), a summary evaluation measure of the school system (indication of cynicism or lack of efficacy, evaluation of the overall system as "fair" or "poor," stated dislikes of the school), and indications of leaving the system or school (would use a tuition voucher in another school, plan to send their children to a private or parochial school, or may move soon because of the quality of the local schools). The only strong relation with education is that college educated families are more likely to be favorable to leaving the school system. While over one-half (54 percent) of the elementary and high school educated parents do not indicate any

TABLE 11-9

Parental Trust in the Boston Public School System  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	13% (39)	5% (44)	0% (10)
Irish	46% (13)	58% (55)	50% (22)
Italian	40% (10)	51% (41)	[ 25% (4)]
Chinese	93% (14)	81% (21)	[ 50% (4)]
Other	45% (11)	41% (49)	43% (21)
Total	38% (87)	44% (210)	44% (61)



TABLE 11-10

Percentage of Parents Not Considering Removing Children  
From the Boston Public Schools  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	40% (43)*	28% (46)	[40% (5)]
Irish	54% (13)	49% (49)	31% (35)
Italian	67% (12)	67% (42)	29% (7)
Chinese	72% (25)	74% (27)	71% (7)
Other	76% (13)	59% (39)	40% (33)
Total	57% (106)	53% (203)	38% (87)

\*Percentage who did not select any of three "exit" alternatives, alternative school under a tuition voucher plan, plans to send their children to a private or parochial school, and consideration of moving from Boston because of the quality of the schools.

TABLE 11-11

Percentage of Parents Not Favoring Any School District,  
School Committee, Administrative Personnel Selection Change  
By Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	9% (43)	40% (46)	[ 0% (5) ]
Irish	23% (13)	25% (49)	31% (35)
Italian	8% (12)	19% (42)	29% (7)
Chinese	84% (25)	48% (27)	43% (7)
Other	24% (13)	15% (39)	15% (33)
Total	30% (106)	20% (203)	24% (87)

TABLE 11-12

Percentage of Parents Giving the Boston Public Schools  
A Low Evaluation by Ethnicity and Education

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Highest Education in Family</u>		
	<u>Under High School Graduate</u>	<u>High School Graduate</u>	<u>College Graduate or More</u>
Negro	84% (43)	87% (46)	[100% (5)]
Irish	39% (13)	53% (49)	37% (35)
Italian	67% (12)	60% (42)	57% (7)
Chinese	16% (25)	37% (27)	43% (7)
Other	69% (13)	62% (39)	52% (33)
Total	59% (106)	62% (203)	51% (87)

intention of not sending their child to the Boston Public Schools, 38 percent of the college educated mentioned at least one exit alternative.

### Role of Individual School Experience in Evaluations of the School System

The previous section indicated that racial background is highly related to evaluations of the Boston schools. The immediate question is what are the causes of these racial differences in evaluation? What role do the differential experiences of the groups with American society or government in Boston or the Boston schools, differential cultural values or expectations, or alternate factors play in determining school system evaluation? A complete answer is beyond the scope of this study. It has been shown, however, that within the areas of parent role, educational content, and methods, all groups appear to have been treated poorly by the school system. It appears that the Chinese cultural acceptance of authority and the Black identity movement of the 1960's determines evaluations of the school system than do differences in experiences with individual Boston elementary schools.

The degree to which evaluation of members of the same racial or ethnic group are related to their different experiences with their individual elementary schools can be analyzed. For example, are Black parents who want educational traditionalism in their schools and get it or think they get it more satisfied than those who want innovation and get traditionalism in their school? Note, the ability to separate the factors of experience from ethnicity is limited by the range of

experience. For example, there were no innovative schools serving Blacks within this sample of schools.

Twenty-seven percent of the total sample of parents wanted greater emphasis on discipline or behavior training (Table 11-13). These parents said that the (1) behavior training goal, (2) values of obeying those in authority or behaving as most people think correct, (3) a concern for a sense of order in the classroom, or (4) discipline in general were underemphasized in their child's elementary school. Twenty percent of the sample thought that the (1) values of creativity, curiosity, or thinking independently or (2) the goal of critical thinking were underemphasized. While a majority of parents (61 percent) thought neither group of items were not given enough attention, 8 percent said at least one item in the category was underemphasized. Those parents who were only dissatisfied with a lack of emphasis on discipline (19 percent) and those only dissatisfied with a lack of emphasis on independence items (12 percent) are the subjects of the analysis of perceived incongruence.<sup>4</sup>

Above, it was reported that a preference for independence content is positively related to education and a preference for behavior training negatively related. Table 11-14 indicates that a feeling that independent content is underemphasized in one school is also positively related to education and a feeling that behavior training is underemphasized negatively related. Negroes appear to be the group most favorable to emphasizing discipline more. However, Negro respondents are also relatively likely to view independence items as underemphasized.

TABLE 11-13

Parental Belief that Independence and Discipline  
Are Underemphasized

<u>Discipline Underemphasized</u>	<u>Independence Underemphasized</u>	
	<u>None</u>	<u>Some</u>
None	61% (243)*	12% (48)
Some	19 (76)	8 (30)

\*Percentage of the total of 397 respondents, N in parenthesis.

TABLE 11-14

Parental Belief that Independence and Discipline are Underemphasized  
By Ethnicity and Education

Ethnicity	Highest Education in Family					
	Under High School Graduate		High School Graduate		College Graduate or More	
	Discipline Under-emphasized	Independence Under-emphasized	Discipline Under-emphasized	Independence Under-emphasized	Discipline Under-emphasized	Independence Under-emphasized
Negro	44% (43)	9% (43)	28% (46)	15% (46)	[20% (5)]	[20% (5)]
Irish	31% (13)	0% (13)	12% (49)	16% (49)	9% (35)	20% (35)
Italian	8% (12)	0% (12)	17% (42)	0% (42)	0% (7)	29% (7)
Chinese	4% (25)	8% (25)	11% (27)	0% (27)	29% (7)	0% (7)
Other	32% (13)	9% (13)	15% (39)	23% (39)	18% (33)	21% (33)
Total	27% (106)	7% (106)	17% (203)	12% (203)	14% (87)	20% (87)

When one adds the percentage of dissatisfaction in both the discipline and independence directions, one finds that Negroes and Other rank highest in perceived incongruence and Irish, Italians, and Chinese lowest. In short, perceived incongruence is related, albeit imperfectly, to ethnicity, as are low evaluations of the school system.

Table 11-15 does indicate that perceived incongruence is related to negative evaluations of the school and school system and desires to change the system. On six of the seven evaluation items, parents who perceive incongruence, vis-à-vis discipline or independence, are more likely to show dissatisfaction with the school or school system than those who view no incongruence or view conflicting types of incongruence. For example, while 33 percent of those in the latter category evaluate the school system as fair or poor, 42 percent of those wanting more discipline and 46 percent of those wanting more independence agree.

It appears possible that both perceived incongruence and low evaluations of the school system are a function of ethnicity. The question that arises is whether perceived incongruence has an independent effect on system evaluations beyond the role of ethnicity. It is difficult to separate the role of perceived incongruence from ethnicity. Variation on the perceived incongruence variables exists only for Negroes, Irish, and the Other respondents; few Chinese or Italian respondents noted incongruence (N=16).



TABLE 11-15  
Parental Perceived Incongruence  
by School and School System Evaluations

<u>Evaluation Items</u>	<u>Perceived Incongruence</u>		
	Discipline Under- emphasized <u>(76)</u>	Independence Under- emphasized <u>(48)</u>	Both or Neither Under- emphasized <u>(273)</u>
Evaluate school system as fair or poor	42%*	46%	33%
Evaluate school as fair or poor	33%	33%	21%
Overall evaluation measure	74%	79%	51%
Consider leaving school system	50%	69%	46%
Support major system change	87%	94%	70%
Parent decision count high	24%	31%	19%
Prefer personnel or content decision role	61%	73%	71%

\*Percentage of those described in column.

A limited independent effect of perceived incongruence upon system evaluation is evidence from examining Table 11-16. While Negroes who perceive no or contradictory incongruence evaluate the school system less favorably on only one of three evaluation measures, Irish and other parents who perceive discipline or independence incongruence are more likely than their more satisfied counterparts to be unfavorable toward the school system. While 55 percent of the Irish who do not perceive incongruence are considering leaving the school system, two-thirds of the parents who think independence is underemphasized and 54 percent of those who think discipline is underemphasized agree. Given the interrelationships among education, ethnicity, perceived incongruence, and school system evaluation and this small relation, the tentative conclusion must be that only ethnicity and to a limited extent, education, affect system evaluations.<sup>5</sup> The parents' experience at a given school appears to be, at most, a minor factor in the development of school system orientations.<sup>6</sup> It appears to play a role, however, at schools serving whites but not schools serving Blacks.

In short, the effect of school responsiveness on parental attitudes appears to be primarily a function of group treatment rather than individual experience. However, whites are more affected than Blacks by treatment at individual schools.

TABLE 11-16  
Parental Perceived Incongruence by System Evaluations and Ethnicity

Evaluation Item	<u>Ethnicity</u>				
	<u>Negroes</u>		<u>Irish</u>		
	Under- emphasized	Under- emphasized	Neither or Both Under- emphasized	Under- emphasized	Neither or Both Under- emphasized
Overall low system eval- uation	94%	100%	83%	38%	67% 42%
Consider leaving system	60	83	69	54	67 55
Favor major system change	94	92	96	85	100 65
<u>Other</u>					
	Discipline Underemphasized	Independence Underemphasized	<u>Neither or Both Underemphasized</u>		
Overall low system evaluation	56%	83%	55%		
Consider leaving system	56	61	39		
Favor major system change	83	94	80		

## CHAPTER 11 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Boston Area Study, conducted by MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies, is an annual survey of Boston and Metropolitan area citizens. See Robert Riley and David Cohen, "Contour of Opinion," unpublished working paper, Center for Educational Policy, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1970.

<sup>2</sup>See Murray B. Levin, The Alienated Voter: Politics in Boston (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966).

<sup>3</sup>See M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, "The Transmission of Political Values From Parent to Child," American Political Science Review, LXII, No. 1 (1968), pp. 169-184, and David Easton and Jack Dennis, "The Child's Acquisition of Regime Norms: Political Efficacy," American Political Science Review, 61 (March, 1967), pp. 25-38.

<sup>4</sup>Across all possible items where parents could indicate an underemphasis, only 15 percent of the parents indicated no item that they thought deserved more emphasis.

<sup>5</sup>To further confuse the situation, one has to also consider the relation between education and educational preferences and perceived incongruence. Among white respondents, there is a strong positive relation between educational preferences and perceived incongruence. For example, about one-quarter (26 percent) of those with "independence" preferences (N=89) sought greater emphasis on independence items and none on traditional items. Among those who had traditional preferences (N=72) a larger percentage (21 percent) wanted greater emphasis on discipline items than independence items (10 percent). Moreover, these percentages did not vary by whether the school was observed as functioning with an independence or discipline orientation. That is, parents with children in traditional or discipline schools who had modern or independence values were just as likely as parents with similar views whose children were in modern schools to seek a greater modern or independence emphasis. Given the evidence presented above, the argument that experiences at individual schools in the areas measured in this study do not affect parental school system evaluations is reinforced.

<sup>6</sup>Analysis of measured incongruence did not prove more enlightening. Parents were divided into the three categories, discipline underemphasis, independence underemphasis, and a residual category on the basis of the school functioning and parental educational preferences analyzed in previous chapters. Perceived incongruence was somewhat related ( $\text{Gamma}=.32$ ) to measured incongruence but it proved impossible to analyze the data sufficiently because of even lower N's in subgroups. Italians and Chinese respondents ranked highest in measured incongruence.

## CHAPTER 12

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The relationship between parental preferences and school functioning in ten elementary schools in the Boston Public School System has been analyzed. The educational preferences of 400 parents were determined through survey research methods. School functioning at the ten schools was determined by classroom observation, interviews, and written questionnaires.

While a moderate relation between parental preferences and school functioning was found across the ten schools in educational methods, no relation was found in educational content. Analysis of the process of responsiveness and parental attempts to alter school functioning indicated that responsiveness of school functioning to parental preferences is greatly limited within the school system.

Non-responsiveness was found to be a function of the inability of parents to organize for collective action, the power of principals to blunt parental action, the inability of principals to influence teachers, the power of senior teachers to select their school, the lack of perceptual accuracy of teachers about parents and their educational preferences, and the lack of legitimacy many parents, teachers, and principals hold for parental influence over teacher behavior.

Analysis of the effects of non-responsiveness indicated that a widespread feeling of cynicism and lack of efficacy exist among Boston parents, especially Blacks.

### Implications

It is most appropriate to place the results of this study in the context of the larger Danforth Foundation Study of the Boston School Committee.<sup>1</sup> While this study has focused on politics at the elementary school level in the Boston Public School System, the Boston Danforth Foundation Study concentrated on decision-making of the School Committee and top administrative structure. These efforts were parallel and interwoven at many junctures.

The primary conclusion of the Danforth work is much like the conclusion reached in this study: the Boston School Committee has not balanced the educational needs of children and parents in Boston with the professional and nonprofessional interests of the employees of the school system. Rather, School Committee members make decisions to augment their own careers through maintaining an employment rather than educational system. That is, they have made decisions on the basis of benefits to themselves and a wide range of Boston School System employees rather than on the basis of educational criteria. For example, the Danforth team found that the major response to criticism of the public schools in the early 1960's was the adding of a public relations office and professional annual reports, that racial conflicts that could have been avoided were exacerbated during the heat

of political campaigns, and that the major area of interest of School Committeemen has remained personnel and promotions rather than educational policy. The School Committee has not been responsive to the wishes of its constituency, just as schools have not functioned according to the preferences of parents.

This lack of responsiveness may have caused a crisis of legitimacy.<sup>3</sup> While the frequency of cynicism and a lack of efficacy is highest among Black respondents, the number of whites who feel that the school system does not serve their interests and is illegitimate is high. Note that 46 percent of Irish respondents disagreed with the statement that you can usually trust the Boston School Department to Do What is Right. Both the Cronin study and this study indicate that on at least one criterion (responsiveness to constituents) you cannot trust the School Department to do what is right. One white, middle class parent verbalized the anguish of many by asking, "Do I have to lie down in front of a bulldozer to get what I want for my children?"

At least some social scientists are questioning whether public school systems as presently constituted can respond to the wishes of their constituents or clients.<sup>4</sup>

Researchers at the Center for the Study of Public Policy, in a study funded by the United States Office of Economic Opportunity, argue that it takes an "enormous investment of time, energy, and money to mount an effective campaign to change local public schools.



Dissatisfied though they may be, few parents have the political skill or commitment to solve their problems this way. As a result, effective control over the character of the public schools is largely vested in legislators, school boards, and educators, not parents . . . At present only relatively affluent parents retain any effective control over the education of their children. Only they are free to move to 'good schools' . . . <sup>5</sup> The authors advocate a voucher system, whereby parents would be given a certificate from the government to enable them to send their child to the school in which he has enrolled, to give parents the individual power not to change schools but to select the school they prefer. The educational process, if not schools, would be changed presumably by the creation of new schools or financial pressures changing old ones. The authors seek not only to improve education but also to give parents more control over the kind of education their children receive. <sup>6</sup>

Thus a basic question arises: Can urban public school systems as presently organized respond to parental preferences? Will incremental change, widespread reforms, or total changes in the structure of public education lead to increased responsiveness? <sup>7</sup> Below four alternatives are evaluated with respect to responsiveness:

- (1) Present system
- (2) Administrative decentralization
- (3) Community control
- (4) Tuition vouchers <sup>8</sup>

### Present System

The evidence above indicates that the Boston Public School System has not been responsive to parental preferences. Can it be responsive without major reforms? I think not.

Previous chapters have, among other problems, indicated that parents lack the political power to influence principals and teachers, and school personnel do not accept parental control as legitimate. Only widespread changes in the distribution of power within school systems will alter these factors.

I have argued elsewhere that it is questionable whether school systems throughout the United States have been responsive to parents.<sup>9</sup> To me, this indicates that a goal of responsiveness implies a change in the current structure of school systems.

### Administrative Decentralization

The second alternative is also based on faith in the current educational system. Advocates of administrative (as distinguished from political) decentralization seek to bring the decision-making power of educational professionals closer to the school level so that they can more directly respond to preferences, needs, and demands at the local level.

Administrative centralization, however, does not appear to have been the major cause of the lack of responsiveness in the Boston Public Schools. This study found diversity among teachers, principals

and schools as functioning units. Teachers , if not principals, feel that they have a large amount of latitude to fulfill their functions. The teachers who complained of overcentralization cited a lack of support more frequently than too much central control. Many teachers complained that administrative supervisors did not lead and teaching supervisors offered no advice.

The advantages offered by administrative decentralization do not appear to have the capacity to increase responsiveness. Although the decentralization of a school system may make it clear who is the individual responsible for decisions, this will not lessen on deference to principals, principal rejection of parental demands, or teacher preferences in school assignment. Incentives to follow the preferences of parents will not be altered. This study indicates that teachers and principals, those closest to parents within the school system organization, are not accurate in their perceptions of parental aspirations. In fact, some parents defer more to these professionals closest to them, for the teachers and principals can affect their child's daily behavior while a central office administrator or School Committeeman cannot. Finally, diversity may result from administrative decentralization as decisions become made by more individuals. But diversity of school functioning already exists, and the key problem is that it is unrelated (rather than insufficient) to parental preferences. Administrative decentralization without alterations in

the role of parents vis-à-vis professional educators does not appear to be a solution to a lack of responsiveness.

### Community Control

Others are advocating community control as an answer.

Altshuler argues that most people today believe that "a decisive test of good administration is responsiveness to reasonable client desires."<sup>10</sup> He sees the central issues concerning community control as "social peace and political legitimacy, not abstract justice or efficiency."<sup>11</sup> In a personal note to his analysis of community control he supports the decentralization of cities because he sees it as a partial solution to this problem. But the analysis of the politics of Boston elementary schools raises several questions about the capacity of the community control to increase responsiveness and decrease a feeling of illegitimacy.

Among the questions raised are:

- (1) Can many urban parents overcome their fear of conflict with professionals and does community control only mean Black professional rather than white professional will control the schools?
- (2) Are feelings of illegitimacy based on actual experience with bureaucracy or on perceived group experiences which cannot be affected by actual experience, at least in the short run?

- (3) Will teachers and other professionals submit power to Black or white parents in areas like classroom methods and teacher assignment?
- (4) Will the individual concerns of parents ever be translated into group concern and professional response to these group concerns?
- (5) Does anything short of responsiveness to an individual solve the problem, given that any geographical sub-unit has minorities?
- (6) Who will teach parents how and when to participate in school affairs so that their preferences are realized?

I believe that the evidence presented here indicates that community control, on the criterion of responsiveness, is not necessarily a superior alternative. While presumably community control would provide a mechanism for parental influence, it would not necessarily alter the professional-parent relation.

#### Tuition Vouchers

Tuition voucher plans are difficult to evaluate because little direct evidence exists to evaluate them. However, several points should be noted. First, responsiveness will depend upon individual parent educational knowledge and use of knowledge. Under the current system, parents are not very involved or informed and responsiveness may only result if the change in individual power leads to a change in

parental educational activity. Second, voucher advocates may be disappointed in what responsiveness brings. While the evidence does suggest greater innovation in classroom methods may result, parents also place great emphasis on physical structure, physical safety, and teaching proper behavior. Money may be spent on better schools not better education. Third, it is questionable where teachers and principals to fill responsive schools will come from, for few are prepared for or apparently now accept parental influence.

### Conclusion

While responsiveness does not appear to exist within the Boston Public School System, other alternatives will not necessarily foster greater responsiveness or be superior alternatives on the basis of additional criteria. On the other hand, the present system is clearly not meeting the preferences of many parents and this affects their attitudes toward the system and perhaps education. It is my hope that alternative organizational arrangements will be tried on a wide scale basis to determine which alternatives can foster responsiveness to parents.

## CHAPTER 12 FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The volume is in process.

<sup>2</sup>Another work addresses the question of whether the Boston School System has been responsive to the educational needs of children. Its findings indicate that the system has again failed.

The Way We Go To School: The Exclusion of Children in Boston, A Report by the Task Force on Children Out of School, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), indicates not only that the needs of substantial portions of Boston children are not being met by the Boston Public Schools, but also that for a large number of children the system is not even trying. The Task Force estimates that 4,000-10,700 children who should be are not in school.

The report states that Boston has three programs for operating for non-English speaking (specifically Spanish) children. As of 1969-1970, the first, the English as a Second Language Program, is of a limited time and intensity (less than an hour per day per child), bilingual classes, which serve only 120 children, and bilingual translational classes, which began in 1969-1970 and serve 150 children.

<sup>3</sup>Robert A. Nisbet, "The Twilight of Authority," The Public Interest, 15 (Spring 1969), pp. 3-9, for example, suggests that our society is governed increasingly by the force of power rather than by the force of legitimate authority.

Charles V. Hamilton, "Race and Education: A Search for Legitimacy," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Fall, 1968), states that Blacks are questioning the legitimacy of the urban educational system. He sees four main issues:

- (1) Control--responsiveness to the wishes of the Black community.
- (2) Parent involvement and alliance with Black teachers--e.g., questioning by Blacks of educational content and methods.
- (3) Psychological impact--the effect of the transmission of a common secular culture on Black children who have needs for ethnic and cultural pride.
- (4) Curricula and instructional materials--e.g., the portrayal of Blacks in textbooks.



<sup>4</sup>This question, of course, can be raised about other bureaucracies and organizations today, including universities, hospitals, and police departments.

<sup>5</sup>The Center for the Study of Public Policy, Educational Vouchers: Financing Education by Grants to Parents, Preliminary Report, Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 1970.

<sup>6</sup>This study is actually related to a call for the measurement of a school's responsiveness made by the Center for the Study of Public Policy, Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>Two additional questions, not discussed in this chapter, are of almost equal importance. First, how would school system organizational changes affect governmental performance on alternative criteria? Second, if responsiveness was increased, how would school functioning be altered?

<sup>8</sup>See Kenneth B. Clark, "Alternative to Urban Public Schools," The Schoolhouse in the City, edited by Alvin Toffler (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), pp. 136-142 for a brief discussion of a greater variety of alternatives.

<sup>9</sup>Raffel, "On The Neighborhood-based Politics of Education," op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Alan A. Altshuler, Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities (New York: Pegasus, 1970), p. 16.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



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Jeffrey A. Raffel currently holds the positions of Political Scientist, Division of Urban Affairs, and Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, at the University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware.

Born in New York City in 1945, Raffel graduated from the University of Rochester in 1966 with an A.B. in Political Science. He began his graduate studies in M.I.T.'s Department of Political Science in 1966. Under M.I.T. Professor Fred C. Iklé, Raffel co-authored (with Robert Shishko) a volume, Systematic Analysis of University Libraries: An Application of Cost-Benefit Analysis to the M.I.T. Libraries (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969), and several reports on libraries, information systems, and cost-effective analysis. From 1968 to 1971, while a Consulting Associate at a Cambridge social science consulting firm, Barss, Reitzel, and Associates, Inc., Raffel directed an Office of Education funded project studying public library exemplary reading programs and was responsible for an analysis of the impact of the community action program on school systems in 100 cities. Raffel also participated in a Danforth Foundation Study of the Boston School Committee and an action study of the Boston Public School System, both conducted at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



While the former product remains in manuscript form, the latter resulted in a report entitled Organizing an Urban School System for Diversity. Raffel's Ph.D. dissertation is related to these studies, and each contains selections from his dissertation.

Raffel has been employed at the University of Delaware since August 1971. He has taught courses in Urban Politics and Urban Decision-Making at the undergraduate and graduate level. His research and service activities have included assistance to Wilmington mayor Harry Haskell in his work on the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations and the direction of a feasibility study of a work-oriented rehabilitation facility for the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Continuing his work in education and cost-effectiveness analysis, he published articles on "The Neighborhood-based Politics of Education" in the Harvard Educational Review (February, 1972) and "Centralization and Decentralization: A Location Analysis Approach for Librarians" in Special Libraries (March, 1972).

In 1966, Raffel married Joanne Ruth Traum, a college classmate at the University of Rochester. They now have two children, Allison, born in 1969, and Lori, born in 1971.