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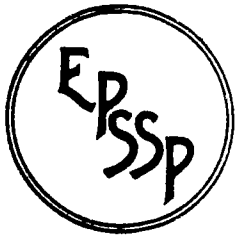
ABSTRACT

In open-ended interviews, students characterized their teachers as: mean, hard, easy, good, strict, fun, or nice. Analyses of later student interviews suggested that, when these seventh-grade students conceptualize their teachers, they attend to four major foci: (1) academic work students are expected to complete; (2) teachers' instructional facility; (3) nature of students' daily classroom experiences; and (4) teachers' personal characteristics. These foci can be further subdivided into themes. When discussing their academic work, students mentioned: the quantity of the assigned work, the difficulty of this work, and the grading standards that the teacher used to evaluate the work. When students considered the instructional facility of their teachers, their comments centered around the quality of explanations provided by the teacher, and the individual assistance the teacher was willing to provide. In describing their classroom experiences, students mentioned: (1) disciplinary strategy employed; (2) tolerance for inappropriate behavior; (3) degree to which students were encouraged to manage their classroom activities; and (4) overall affective character of the class. Students also talked about teachers' personal characteristics, including temperament, displays of temper, and relationships established with students. (JM)



Ecological Perspectives for SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLING PRACTICE

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION STUDY

Volume V

Students' Conceptions of Teachers

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Report EPSSP-81-5

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of a study of students' transition from grade six in elementary school to grade seven in junior high school, 22 target students were asked to describe their junior high school experience. The initial open-ended interviews took place in November of the seventh-grade year. At this time, it was apparent that, from the students' perceptions, a description of junior high school emphasized the students' classroom experiences, in particular, the types of teachers with whom they interacted. Eight types of teachers were mentioned repeatedly in the interviews. These were: mean teachers, hard teachers, easy teachers, good teachers, strict teachers, fun teachers, and nice teachers. To obtain more specific data regarding students' conceptions of such teachers, follow-up interviews were conducted with most of the same target students in the spring of the seventh-grade year. Analyses of these latter interviews suggested that when seventh-graders conceptualize their teachers, they attend to four major foci: (1) the academic work students are expected to complete, (2) the instructional facility of the teacher, (3) the nature of students' daily classroom experiences, and (4) the personal characteristics of the teacher.

These foci can be further subdivided into themes to allow more discrete characterizations. For example, when discussing their academic work, students mentioned three themes: (1) the quantity of the assigned work, (2) the difficulty of this work, and (3) the grading standards that the teacher used to evaluate the work.

When students considered the instructional facility of their teachers, their comments cohered around two themes: (1) the quality of explanations provided by the teacher, and (2) the individual assistance the teacher was willing to provide.

When students described their classroom experiences in general, they mentioned four themes: (1) the disciplinary strategy employed by the teacher, (2) the teacher's tolerance for inappropriate behavior, (3) the degree to which the teacher encouraged students to manage their own classroom activities, and (4) the overall affective character of the class.

Students also talked about the personal characteristics of teachers and mentioned three specific themes: (1) the temperament of different teachers, (2) the displays of temper observed, and (3) the relationships established with students.

Using the above framework, the characteristics attributed by three or more students to the different types of teachers were examined. These characteristics appear below.

Mean teachers were perceived as making it difficult for students to work as a result of their failure to provide individual help. The disciplinary strategy of mean teachers was one that emphasized immediate punishment rather than initial warning. Mean teachers exhibited a low tolerance for inappropriate behavior and discouraged students from taking an active role in managing their classroom activities. Students considered mean teachers to have unappealing temperaments and spoke of their frequent and vocal fits of temper. These teachers also were perceived as uncaring and uninterested in their students.

Hard teachers were characterized by the large amount of work they assigned and the demanding grading standards they applied in the evaluation of this work.

Easy teachers were perceived as assigning lesser quantities of work which were easy to complete.

Good teachers were described as being able to communicate clearly. They helped students to understand fully the assigned material. They were considered to maintain enjoyable and engaging classes, possess appealing temperaments, and demonstrate interest in their students.

Strict teachers were perceived by students to be similar to mean teachers in that they assigned a great deal of work and were not available to provide individual assistance. Like mean teachers, their classroom disciplinary strategy also utilized immediate punishment, and they exhibited a low tolerance for misbehavior. Student self-management was discouraged. In terms of their personal characteristics, strict teachers were described as having unappealing temperaments.

Boring teachers were characterized by the disagreeable nature of their classes. Few comments were made pertaining to the other themes.

Fun teachers, like easy teachers, were perceived as assigning little work. They provided students with individual help, and they encouraged students to manage their classroom activities. They also exhibited appealing temperaments, did not yell at their classes, and were interested in their students. Students considered their classroom experiences with fun teachers to be engaging.

Nice teachers were described as assigning less work than hard or strict teachers and providing individual help to students. In terms of disciplinary strategy, they used either warnings or immediate punishments, depending on what was an appropriate response to misbehavior. Compared with strict and mean teachers, nice teachers displayed more tolerance for misbehavior. They maintained classroom environments and assigned learning activities that engaged their students. Nice teachers were described as being appealing individuals who did not yell and who were interested in their students.

The analyses that were conducted did not directly or unequivocably link teacher types with student learning. Research on effective instruction suggests that the effective teacher does not manifest

behaviors that are uniquely descriptive of one of the eight teacher types discussed in this study. Effective teachers appear to combine aspects of good and strict teachers. At the same time, some of the characteristics ascribed to mean and nice teachers would seem to impede students' academic achievement. Effective teachers appear to combine a variety of the personal and instructional characteristics which create a classroom environment where students understand the behavioral expectations of the teacher and focus on their assigned work in a businesslike fashion. Effective teachers do not criticize or express anger toward students, but maintain student task involvement through the structuring and organization of work activities coupled with continual monitoring. Effective teachers are enthusiastic and have appealing temperaments. When teaching and assigning work, effective teachers communicate clearly. As a result of these and other behaviors, students feel the effective teacher is concerned about their learning and their personal selves and reciprocate by doing their best to achieve the learning goals set by the teacher. It is significant that the seventh-graders in this study were aware of the presence or absence of the chartacteristics of effective teachers and referred to these characteristics when describing the various teacher types.

Another analysis of the interview data investigated the relative salience of the previously identified themes in students' perceptions of classroom life. Five themes demonstrated high salience for students: (1) affective character, (2) student self-management, (3) disciplinary strategy, (4) quantity of work, and (5) temperament. These five themes appeared in approximately 58 percent of all student statements. To paraphrase these salient themes, students seemed to reflect upon: What must I do? What can I do? Do I enjoy doing these things?

The following themes were rated as having moderate salience: (1) individual assistance, (2) tolerance for inappropriate behavior, (3) difficulty of work, (4) temper, and (5) relationships with students. These five themes appeared in approximately 35 percent of the definition statements. These moderate salience themes seem to describe teachers' roles as instructors, disciplinarians, friends, and individuals who experience anger and frustration.

Two themes were considered to have low salience: (1) quality of explanations, and (2) grading standards. These themes were mentioned in six percent of the definition statements.

When considering the salience of the 12 themes as a whole, a rather dispiriting portrait of the phenomenology of the seventh-grader emerges. Work is seen as drudgery to be completed and is evaluated primarily on the basis of its quantity rather than its promise of teaching something worthwhile. Little attention is given to the correct completion of assignments. Teachers are perceived primarily as behavioral trainers, entertainers, and friends rather than intellectual authorities with something to say. The intellectual and instructional aspects of classroom life seem to be overwhelmed by students' concerns about getting into trouble and their preoccupation with petty freedoms.

Ecological Perspectives for SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLING PRACTICE

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VOLUME V

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Report EPSSP-81-5

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PREFACE

This volume is one in a series of reports of a multifaceted study that examined and described students' transition from elementary school (sixth grade) to a secondary school setting (seventh grade). It reports work conducted by the Ecological Perspectives for Successful Schooling Practices Program at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. The volumes in the series include:

Volume I: Overview of the Junior High School Transition Study

Volume II: Organization of Instruction: Elementary School-Junior High School Comparison

Volume III: Student Perceptions of Transition and School

Volume IV: Student Experience During and Response to Transition to Junior High School

Volume V: Students' Conceptions of Teachers

Volume VI: Parent Concerns Regarding Transition to Junior High School

Volume VII: A Study of the Transition to Junior High School: Summary of the Findings and Implications for Provision of Successful Transition Experiences for All Students

The Ecological Perspectives for Successful Schooling Practices Program is one of a series of long-term, innovative efforts to improve educational opportunities for all children and youth, funded by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education. Beatrice A. Ward and William J. Tikunoff are the co-principal investigators of the transition study. Other professional staff members include John R. Mergendoller, program director; Alexis L. Mitman, associate research scientist; and Thomas S. Rounds, associate research scientist.

We wish to thank Virginia Koehler and Michael Cohen, Teaching and Learning Division, National Institute of Education, for their support of the Ecological Perspectives Progam and, more specifically, the Junior High School Transition Study reported here. Their willingness to explore innovative ways of approaching the problems that confront educators and their encouragement of educational excellence are appreciated.

We also wish to thank the principals, teachers, students, and parents who collaborated with us in the conduct of this transition study. Their willingness to inquire into and analyze the multiple features of their instructional programs, and the students' experiences in these programs, made it possible to carry out the in-depth inquiry reported in the volumes listed above. Together, we learned much about successful transition experiences for students.

The school district assistant superintendent also merits special recognition. He not only contributed data collected by the school district to the study data base, he also participated in discussion and interpretation of many of the findings.

A number of individuals helped in the preparation of this particular volume. John Mergendoller, Martin Packer, Tom Rounds, and Alexis Mitman conducted the interviews on which the following analysis is based. John and Martin were responsible for the interpretation and exposition of these data. Their analytic efforts received invaluable assistance from the work of Susan Y. Osaki. Barbara Murray, Charlie Ray Altizer, and Paul Halley prepared the text. Finally, special recognition goes to the 22 seventh-graders who told us about teachers and the contours of their classroom lives. To all, thank you.

Beatrice A. Ward
William J. Tikunoff
John R. Mergendoller

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The transition from elementary to secondary school -- middle or junior high school -- is a stage in the life of American youth that is currently receiving much attention from parents, educators, and researchers. According to Lipsitz (1980), one reason for the concern is the mounting evidence that early adolescence is a troubled time for at least 20 percent of the students enrolled in middle or junior high schools. To illustrate the problems that may occur, Lipsitz notes that school violence "reaches its heights during the junior high school years," and "the most dangerous place for a seventh-grader to be is in school" (p. 8). Lipsitz also states that juvenile crime seems to reach a peak around age 14, and that 14 1/2 is the average age of runaways. Other statistics cited by Lipsitz include the fact that "the only age group for which the birth rate is not decreasing is that of fifteen-year-olds and under" (p. 8). In addition, she notes that the rate of hard and soft drug abuse "soars" during junior high school, that "somewhere between 20 percent and 30 percent of eighth-graders drink excessively," and that "the suicide rate among young adolescents, while lower than for youth aged sixteen to twenty-two, is rapidly rising and may have doubled in the past twenty years" (p. 8). Thus, it appears that the middle and junior high school years present problems for some youngsters and may be times of crisis for approximately one or two out of every ten students at this age level.

Among the problems that may face youngsters in the transition from elementary school to secondary school is the shift from the self-contained classroom -- or from participation in a limited number of classrooms -- to the multiple-classroom environment of the middle or junior high school. In the multiple-classroom setting, students must interpret and adapt to a school environment that is both instructionally and socially complex. They must deal with six or seven teachers, each of whom may place different demands on them. They must adapt to a new peer culture composed of students from a number of different elementary schools. They must shift from being the oldest students in their schooling world to being the youngest in a new educational environment.

These challenges of adaptation are accompanied by a variety of developmental changes that face early adolescents. As noted by Blyth, Simmons, and Bush (1978), transition from childhood into early adolescence can be defined in terms of both physical maturity and social criteria (p. 149). While physical maturation may be expected to vary considerably among a group of students ages 12-13 (for example, see discussion by Tanner, 1961; Elder, 1968; among others), the movement

into a secondary school (e.g., junior high school) may mark the social beginning of adolescence. Hence, middle and junior high students must not only deal with the physiological changes brought on by the onset of puberty, but also the social pressures accompanying the establishment of new types of relationships with members of the opposite sex. For example, as noted earlier, students may be exposed to a peer culture that promotes opportunities to experiment with drugs and alcohol. Further, as they strive to attain independence, they may challenge, and be rebuffed by, the requirements of adult-formulated rules and procedures both in school and at home.

For all these reasons, early adolescence may be a stressful period for students, and entry into junior high or middle school may be a difficult transition. However, if the student role that is learned in the elementary school (for example, see Dreeben, 1968; and Jackson, 1968) also prevails in the middle or junior high school, the move to the new setting may not be as difficult as one might initially expect. Students may be able to employ many of the academic and social behaviors, expectations, and so forth that worked successfully for them in elementary school in the new setting as well.

Since little is known about students' responses to entry into junior high school or middle school, determining whether the move from an elementary setting is traumatic or easy for students requires additional information. The major purpose of the Junior High School Transition Study is to provide information about this transition process and to make recommendations regarding teaching practices that help students move successfully from elementary to secondary school. The study was conducted in a single junior high school and the elementary schools from which the students came. It focuses on five areas of inquiry. They are:

(1) Does the organization of instruction change from elementary to junior high school? If so, how? What are the implications for students?

(2) What are students' concerns and feelings about their elementary school experience? junior high school experience? What are the implications for design of the transition process? for teaching practices?

(3) How do students participate in, and respond to, junior high school instruction? Do students respond differently in different circumstances? Are these differences, if any, related to the success of students' transition to junior high school?

(4) How do students describe and define various aspects of the junior high school experience? What are the implications, if any, for improvement of the schooling process in the junior high school?

(5) What are parents' concerns about students' transitions to, and experiences in, junior high school?

This volume reports how seventh-graders describe and define various aspects of their school experience and draws implications for the improvement of classroom instruction. In the present chapter, we will summarize the results of our inquiry. We focus on three questions. First, what are the teacher behaviors and classroom experiences which define the eight types of teachers 22 target students in this study used to describe their junior high school experiences. In answering this question, we examine the meanings students give to the following terms: mean teachers, hard teachers, easy teachers, good teachers, strict teachers, boring teachers, fun teachers, and nice teachers. Second, we explore the question, what are the implications of these findings for effective instructional practices? Third, we investigate those aspects of classroom experience that are most salient to seventh-graders?

Students' Conceptions of Eight Types of Teachers

To understand students' conceptions of teachers, we began by examining protocols of open-ended interviews conducted in November of seventh grade in which 22 seventh-graders described their junior high school experience. Interestingly, these spontaneous characterizations stressed descriptions of the teachers with whom the students interacted. From these accounts, we extracted eight frequently occurring descriptors for further exploration. A second set of interviews was then conducted in the spring of seventh grade with the same students. At this time, we asked our respondents to describe what a "mean" (or "hard," "strict," and so forth) teacher was like.

Analysis of these later interviews suggested that when seventh-graders conceptualize their teachers, they attend to four major foci: (1) the academic work students are expected to complete, (2) the instructional facility of the teacher, (3) the nature of students' daily classroom experience, and (4) the personal characteristics of the teacher.

Students' conceptions of teachers can be subdivided further into themes that allow more discrete characterizations. Moreover, these themes are used by students to evaluate and contrast different types of teachers.

For example, when discussing the academic work that was assigned, students mentioned three themes: (1) the quantity of the assigned work, (2) the difficulty of this work, and (3) the grading standards that the teacher used to evaluate the work. They spoke of teachers as assigning more and less work of varying levels of difficulty and noted that teachers employ both demanding and lenient standards in the evaluation of this work.

When students considered the instructional facility of their teachers, their comments cohered around two themes: (1) the quality of explanations provided by the teacher, and (2) the individual

assistance the teacher was willing to provide. Students evaluated teacher's explanations as being clear or inadequate and discussed whether or not individual assistance was available to students.

When students described their classroom experiences in general, they mentioned four themes: (1) the disciplinary strategy employed by the teacher, (2) the teacher's tolerance for inappropriate behavior, (3) the degree to which the teacher encouraged students to manage their own classroom activities, and (4) the overall affective character of the class. Contrasts were made between teachers who warned students before punishing them and teachers who punished transgressions swiftly. Students also emphasized the degree of inappropriate behavior tolerated by one teacher compared with that tolerated by another. They described teachers who encouraged student self-management of work activities and those who did not, and they talked about classes that were experienced as disagreeable or engaging.

Students also discussed the personal characteristics of teachers and mentioned three specific themes: (1) the temperament of different teachers, (2) the displays of temper observed, and (3) the relationships established with students. Contrasts were made between those teachers who had appealing temperaments and those who didn't, teachers who did or did not yell at their students, and teachers who appeared to be uncaring as contrasted with those who were interested in their students.

Profiles of Teacher Types

Using the above conceptual framework, we examined the characteristics attributed by three or more students to the various types of teachers. Our concern was to elucidate the cultural definition of the eight teacher types in order to understand seventh-graders' behavioral and affective expectations for their classroom experience.

A description of each teacher type is presented below. In reading and responding to these descriptions, the reader is urged to remember that although students found examples of the behavior of the different types of teachers in their current classroom experiences, their statements were used only to clarify the meaning of the eight teacher types in question. We were not seeking or analyzing information regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and foibles that students attributed to their present teachers. The analysis consisted solely of an attempt to elaborate the meaning of the teacher types that emerged as descriptive of the students' seventh-grade experiences, per se.

Mean teachers. Seventh-graders perceive that mean teachers make it difficult for students to work successfully by failing to provide the individual help needed for students to complete the assigned work. The disciplinary strategy of mean teachers is one that emphasizes immediate punishment rather than initial warnings.

Congruent with this disciplinary approach is the fact that mean teachers exhibit a low tolerance for inappropriate behavior and discourage students from taking an active role in managing their classroom activities. Students consider mean teachers to have unappealing temperaments and speak of their frequent and vocal fits of temper. These teachers also are perceived as uncaring and uninterested in their students.

Three different foci encompassing seven separate themes were salient in the definition of mean teachers. Based on these foci and themes, it appears that the term "mean" has a considerable range of significance for seventh-graders and encompasses a number of complex forms of behavior. However, a thread which runs through many of the definitional statements is that mean teachers treat their classes unfairly and refuse to show students the basic trust and respect they feel to be their due. Moreover, mean teachers often are viewed as being unfair, arbitrary, and self-serving when teaching students or controlling inappropriate behavior. One of the definitions given the word "mean" in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary is "characterized by petty selfishness and malice" (1979:706). This definition seems to fit the conceptions of a mean teacher expressed by the students in this study.

Hard teachers. Hard teachers are characterized by the large amount of work they assign and the demanding grading standards they apply in the evaluation of this work. The three other foci -- instructional facility, classroom experience, and personal characteristics -- are not pertinent in describing hard teachers. Hence, the adjective "hard," when applied to teachers, evidently has a limited range of meaning, for it is only salient with respect to a single focus. Consequently, it does not imply the overall positive or negative affective evaluation of teachers and classroom experience suggested by some of the other teacher descriptors used by the students.

Easy teachers. In contrast to hard teachers, easy teachers assign lesser quantities of work, and these assignments are perceived as easy to complete. As with hard teachers, the adjective "easy" includes a restricted range of meaning and is salient to students only in regard to the academic work focus. No global affective characterization is given to easy teachers.

Good teachers. Students describe good teachers as being able to communicate clearly and help students to understand fully the assigned material. Students associate such teachers more strongly with the quality of explanations theme than they do any other teacher type. In addition, good teachers are considered to maintain enjoyable and engaging classes, possess appealing temperaments, and demonstrate interest in their students. Further, the range of meaning assigned to the concept of a "good" teacher is greater than that assigned to a hard or an easy teacher. It encompasses three foci: instructional facility, classroom experience, and personal characteristics. Students' approving descriptions of good teachers suggest consistent positive evaluations of such teachers' characteristics across the students who were interviewed.

It also is interesting to note that a good teacher is not viewed as the antithesis of a mean teacher, although some interesting comparisons do arise. The defining characteristics of both good and mean teachers are encompassed by the same three foci: instructional facility, classroom experience, and personal characteristics. Likewise, the nature of the academic work assigned is not a defining characteristic of either teacher type. Within the three common foci, good and mean teachers are used twice as contrasting poles of the same themes. In both instances, the themes refer to the personal characteristics of the teacher types. Good teachers are viewed as having appealing temperaments and being interested in their students; mean teachers are perceived as having unappealing temperaments and not caring about their students. Other salient contrasts occur within common foci, but these involve differing themes and contrast poles. For example, good teachers are viewed as explaining material and assignments clearly, while mean teachers are unavailable to students and do not provide individual assistance. Good teachers' classes are recognized for their engaging character, while mean teachers' classes are typified as social situations where students are quickly and angrily punished for slight amounts of inappropriate behavior. In addition, students are not given responsibility for managing their own classroom activities in mean teachers' classes, while the management strategy employed by good teachers receives slight attention from students. Perhaps the classrooms of good teachers are so well-organized that discipline problems are rare and thus do not take a prominent role in students' perceptions.

Strict teachers. Strict teachers are perceived by students to be similar to mean teachers in that they assign a great deal of work and are not available to provide individual assistance. Like mean teachers, their classroom disciplinary strategy also often utilizes punishment, and they exhibit a low tolerance for misbehavior. Student self-management is discouraged. In terms of their personal characteristics, strict teachers are described as having unappealing temperaments. However, unlike mean teachers, strict teachers are not portrayed as given to fits of temper; they do not yell at their classes. In addition, no mention is made of the nature of the relationships they establish with their students.

The comparison of strict and mean teachers is instructive. The adjective "strict" has a complex set of meanings and shares many of those significations with the mean teacher. Missing from the characterization of the strict teacher (and present in the description of the mean teacher) are negative characterizations within the personal characteristics focus. While the mean teacher is spoken of as yelling at students and not caring about them as individuals, no such characterizations are associated with the strict teacher. Although students do not speak with delight when describing a strict teacher, they also do not attribute personal vindictiveness and arbitrary exercise of power to this teacher; such characterizations are applied to the mean teacher. Strict teachers, then, seem to share mean teachers' concerns with maintaining instructional distance as well as control of the classroom, but they manage their classrooms in

such a way that students do not feel attacked or treated unfairly. Perhaps at the heart of a mean teacher is a strict teacher who has overstepped the bounds of humane treatment and moved from "meaning business" to treating students unfairly.

Boring teachers. Boring teachers are characterized primarily by the disagreeable nature of their classes. Students make few comments pertaining to other themes. It appears that when a teacher is boring, nearly all other characteristics of this individual, as well as the curriculum, elude discernment. Of all the terms examined in this study, the gerund "boring" has the most restricted range of meaning. It refers only to the affective character of students' classroom experiences.

Fun teachers. Fun teachers, like easy teachers, are perceived as assigning little work. They provide students with individual help, and, in so doing, may demonstrate the qualities that lead to their being perceived as "fun." They encourage students to manage their classroom activities and exhibit appealing temperaments. Fun teachers were perceived as entertainers by some students, while others spoke of the enjoyable nature of the work they assigned. Like good and nice teachers, fun teachers are interested in their students, and seventh-graders consider their classroom experiences with fun teachers to be engaging.

As expanded upon by the students in this study, the term "fun" has a wide range of meaning. Its significance draws upon characteristics within all four of the foci. Significant contrasts appear when fun teachers are compared to mean teachers. These two teacher types are characterized by students based on some contrasting poles of the same theme. For example, fun teachers are perceived as offering individual assistance, encouraging students to manage their classroom activities, having appealing temperaments, and showing interst in their students, while mean teachers receive the opposite characterizations. Other distinctions do not revolve around opposing contrast poles. Rather, they are based on inclusion or exclusion of a theme. For instance, fun teachers are said to assign less work, have appealing personalities, and have engaging classes; these themes are not salient in the definition of mean teachers.

Nice teachers. Nice teachers are described as assigning less work than hard or strict teachers. They also provide individual help to students. In terms of disciplinary strategy, they use either warnings or immediate punishments, depending on what is an appropriate response to misbehavior. Compared with strict and mean teachers, nice teachers display more tolerance for misbehavior. They maintain classroom environments and use learning activities which engage their students. They are described as appealing individuals who do not yell and are interested in their students.

All four foci are used to characterize nice teachers. The contrast poles associated with the qualities of nice teachers and their classrooms invariably suggest a positive attitude. Even the fact that nice teachers sometimes punish students without warning does

not alter the appreciate tone of students' statements. From the students' perspective, to characterize a teacher as being nice is

a tribute. Nice teachers are perceived to have students' interests at heart. They were considerate of students' feelings and respect them as human beings. They demonstrate tolerance for "goofing around" and are not unreasonable in the amount of work they assign. When students have problems with the work, nice teachers help them to master their difficulties.

Implications of Students' Conceptions of Teachers for Effective Instructional Practices.

Based on a review of the literature on effective instruction (e.g., Denham & Lieberman, 1980; Medley, 1979; NIE, 1982; Rosenshine & Furst, 1971; Rounds, et al., 1981; Soar & Soar, 1979; Ward, Mergendoller, & Mitman, 1982), we conclude that, as a single entity, none of the teacher types we have described in this study are directly or unequivocably linked with student learning. However, combinations of the types do reflect the effectiveness variables. In particular, teachers whose instructional behaviors have been shown to facilitate students' learning appear to combine aspects of good and strict teachers. At the same time, some of the characteristics ascribed to mean and nice teachers appear to impede students' academic achievement.

Hence, both research based on observation of instruction and the student perception data reported here appear to indicate that an effective teacher combines a variety of personal and instructional characteristics to create a classroom environment where students understand the behavioral expectations of the teacher and focus on their assigned work in a businesslike fashion. Effective teachers do not criticize or express anger toward students, but maintain student task involvement through the structuring and organization of work activities coupled with continual monitoring. Effective teachers are enthusiastic and have appealing temperaments. When teaching and assigning work, effective teachers communicate clearly. As a result of these and other behaviors, students feel the effective teacher is concerned about their learning and their personal selves and reciprocate by doing their best to achieve the learning goals set by the teacher.

Although the above description presents an instructional ideal, it is not unattainable. Several seventh-grade teachers in this transition study displayed these skills and characteristics. Self-reflection and peer visitation, coupled with guided reflection and practice, provide tools by which teachers can examine their own instructional practices and introduce elements of effective teaching that may be missing in their classes (for example, see Little, 1981). To do so may be a complex process, but it can be done.

Saliencies in Students' Perceptions of Classroom Life

Above, we have examined the nature of the foci and themes implicit in students' definitions of teachers. The following discussion ignores the distinctions students made between teacher types to focus on the relative salience of previously identified themes in students' perceptions of classroom life.

When the number of students' statements reflecting all themes was tallied, it was found that there were no sharp discontinuities in salience. Rather, a gradual and even decline in frequencies occurred from the theme mentioned by the greatest number of students (and thus demonstrating the highest salience) to the theme mentioned by fewest students (and thus demonstrating the least salience). Although some aspects of classroom life were attended to more frequently by students, at the same time, two or more themes often demonstrate the same relative importance.

Five themes demonstrated high salience for students: (1) affective character, (2) student self-management, (3) disciplinary strategy, (4) quantity of work, and (5) temperament. These five themes appeared in approximately 58 percent of all student statements.

Given the importance of the five themes, it appears that students attend chiefly to the behavioral boundaries of their classroom lives, their affective evaluations of their teachers, and their experiences within the classroom. Students' attention is focused largely on what they are allowed to do. They consider the opportunities given for the exercise of their own autonomy, the disciplinary actions they can expect from the teacher, and the amount of work they must complete to be highly relevant aspects of classroom life. Further, these perceptions interrelate and combine to influence students' general evaluation of the pleasure and involvement (or disagreeable alienation) associated with the hours they spend in each class. To paraphrase these salient themes, students seem to reflect upon: What must I do? What can I do? Do I enjoy doing these things?

Turning to the areas of attention rated as having moderate salience, we again find five themes: (1) individual assistance, (2) tolerance for inappropriate behavior, (3) difficulty of work, (4) temper, and (5) relationships with students. These five themes appeared in approximately 35 percent of the definition statements.

When the five moderate salience themes are contrasted with the high salience themes, there is a subtle shift of emphasis away from the activities of the student, which are encouraged, required, or prohibited by the teacher, to an accentuation of the central activities performed by the teacher and the manner in which the teacher interacts with students. Here, students are cognizant of the extent to which teachers talk with students and provide advice and assistance in regard to subject-related and personal matters. They consider whether the teacher behaves equitably or angrily. They take into account the varying degrees of misbehavior tolerated by the teacher and the varying

degrees of difficulty of assigned work. These moderate salience themes seem to delineate the role of the teacher as instructor, disciplinarian, friend, and individual who experiences anger and frustration.

Two themes were considered to have low salience: (1) quality of explanations, and (2) grading standards. These themes were mentioned in only six percent of the definition statements. It is striking that out of all the themes describing aspects of students' classroom lives, the themes most clearly related to instructional procedures were found to demonstrate the least salience. Students' perceptions appear to emphasize the nature of the classroom as a social organization, much like other organizations, rather than as a social institution charged merely with providing instruction to students and evaluating their academic attainments.

When the salience of the themes as a whole is considered, a rather dispiriting portrait of the phenomenology of the seventh-grader emerges. Work is seen as drudgery to be completed and is evaluated primarily on the basis of its quantity rather than its promise of teaching something worthwhile. Little attention is given to the correct completion of assignments. Teachers are perceived primarily as behavioral trainers, entertainers, and friends rather than intellectual authorities with something worthwhile to say. The intellectual and instructional aspects of classroom life seem to be overwhelmed by students' concerns about getting into trouble and their preoccupation with petty freedoms.

Such musings may be melodramatic, or they may refer only to the phenomenal experience of an unrepresentative group of seventh-graders at a single junior high school. We, however, doubt it. We believe that the daily grind of recitation, referrals, and personable and impersonal teachers is salient to junior high school students. The fact that students only mention learning or significant intellectual engagement obliquely is supported in other studies of this age student as well (for example, see Metz, 1978). The desirability or undesirability of such a finding, perhaps, is a matter of judgment. The findings regarding organization of instruction in seventh-grade classrooms at Waverley Junior High School, and 24 target students' observed participation in these classrooms (reported in other volumes of this study), suggest that some instructional features facilitate learning for students. Several of these correspond to themes that were of high or moderate salience to the students. Thus, while they may not have stated them directly, the students did appear to be aware of classroom and teacher characteristics, procedures, behaviors, and so forth that facilitated their accomplishment of assigned tasks and hopefully, as a result, their intellectual and social growth and development.

CHAPTER TWO

SEVENTH-GRADERS' CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS:

AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS

As noted in Chapter One, this volume of the Junior High School Transition Study presents the data that were obtained regarding seventh-graders' conceptions of teachers. It seeks to elaborate the categories of meaning used by the seventh-graders at Waverley Junior High School to describe their teachers. Employing interpretive techniques and assumptions common to the fields of anthropology and qualitative sociology, it explores the world of the classroom from the perspective of the seventh-grade student.

Investigation of the cultural categories of thought spontaneously expressed by students is relatively rare in the educational literature.[1] This omission is unfortunate, for students consistently use such expressions to conceptualize and discuss their classroom experience, and we believe that such ways of thinking reflect students' expectations for the instructional and management behaviors they encounter in the classrooms of different teachers. Students, we hypothesize, often act (consciously or unconsciously) in accordance with their expectations. Should one wish to understand (and even predict) student behavior within the classroom, then an analysis of the way in which students conceptualize their teachers is an important first step.

This chapter is devoted to just such an analysis. It contains eight major sections. We begin by describing the physical, human, and theoretical contexts which shaped this aspect of the transition study. We then discuss the data collection and analysis strategies which were used. Next, the students' conceptions results are presented. The results are divided into three subsections which discuss: (1) those aspects of classroom life seventh-graders used to portray different types of teachers; (2) the ways in which different types of teachers were associated with these aspects of classroom life; and (3) the relative salience for seventh-graders of different aspects of classroom life. This discussion expands upon and presents in more detail the findings that were summarized in Chapter One. Following examination of the findings, the results are compared with previous research, and the generalizability of the findings is considered. Finally, we examine the implications of this research

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[1]For exceptions, see Everhart, 1979; Metz, 1978; Osborn, 1962; White, 1971.

for successful schooling practices for the junior high/middle school student.

Physical Context: The Setting of the Transition Study

Waverley Junior High School is one of two seventh- and eighth-grade junior high schools serving a suburban-rural area with a total population of approximately 30,000 people. The school is located at the outer edge of a large metropolitan region to which many of the residents commute for employment. Historically, the area has been agricultural, and the numerous feed mills and agricultural supply stores testify that many citizens still derive their livelihood from this sector of the economy.

Located at the intersection of one of the major north-south freeways in the state and a major street leading to the commercial center of the area, Waverley draws students from a demographic cross section of families ranging from upper-middle to lower-middle income. On the whole, the other junior high in the school district serves a wealthier population. At the time of the study, over 95 percent of Waverley students were white.

The school facility is a rambling one-story structure, or rather several structures. The architectural design produces crowd-flow difficulties which, in turn, cause problems. The classrooms are in three parallel buildings, each containing eight to ten classrooms that exit onto covered walkways. The buildings are about 30 feet apart and are bisected by a hallway. At the end of each period, in order to reach either their next class, their lockers, or both, most of the school's 700 or so students must funnel through this hallway which is no more than 20 feet wide. To compound the problem, the lockers are stacked in two levels, an upper and a lower, along the sides of the hall. Students who have the upper lockers (usually eighth-graders) unintentionally -- or intentionally -- drop possessions on those with the lower lockers (usually seventh-graders). Further, as there are not enough lockers for all the students, some students have to share a single locker. Thus, even under the best of circumstances, the situation in this hall is impossible. During breaks between classes, the students' attempts to reach their lockers, and their rapid movements across, up, and down the hall to reach the next classroom, inevitably lead to bumping and jostling. Students, teachers, and administrators all report that this hallway is the locus of many fights and much bullying. Hence, the architectural design of the school has compounded a problem present at most, if not all, junior high schools -- out-of-the-classroom discipline.

On the whole, the teachers and administrators who were at Waverley during the study seemed to focus much of their energy toward disciplinary concerns and actions. The administrators often voiced concern to the researchers over fights, robberies, and molestations that occurred during or after school. The principal and the teachers discussed the school's reputation as a "tough" or "bad" school, a school

with a "drug-tough aura." Several target students discussed the impact of theft and violence on their transition. In response to concern over discipline, the assistant principal purchased a bull-horn with an electronic whistle which he used to supervise students at lunch and in the hall.

In addition, parents were worried about discipline. During a round table held on a September evening for seventh-grade parents, the researchers listened as school administrators and the parents carried on a frank, though never acrimonious, discussion of school problems. Drugs, teenage pregnancy, and school-wide discipline problems were the major topics of conversation. Altercations that occurred on the freeway overpass as the students went to and from school also were a major worry for the parents. Few classroom issues were raised, and these were all discipline related.

While emphasizing discipline, the school appeared to have gaps in the academic program. For example, there was no seventh-grade science program. Seventh-grade math seemed targeted for average and below-average students. Neither the individual teachers we observed nor the school as a whole made provision for students who already had mastered the seventh-grade math syllabus before they entered seventh grade. There was no school-wide program for academically gifted students, even though state funding was available for such a program. The academic program at Waverley seemed to be designed around the needs of the average and below-average student.

The attitudes toward learning that pervaded the school were evident during a preschool orientation meeting for seventh-graders and their parents. The principal, the counselor, and the vice-principal each spoke to the entering students, explaining procedures and school rules. Speaking of the enterprise of learning, the principal said, "Learning is not fun, but we do our best to make it enjoyable." The principal's comments were followed by a few welcoming remarks by the head cheerleader and a rally led by the cheerleading squad -- all girls. The purpose of this rally was evidently to inculcate school spirit among the neophytes. As the principal had said in an earlier interview:

> It's always been my impression, having worked in schools and watched schools, that your real esprit comes from your PE program, from a good PE program.

This may explain why the administration chose the cheerleaders to welcome the new students, rather than, say, the student government officers, members of the honor society, or the student chorus and band. In any event, whether inadvertently or not, the opening program established the cheerleaders and the members of the athletic teams as the new students' models. The administrators did not emphasize academic success during the orientation meeting.[2]

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[2]We are indebted to Thomas S. Rounds for this characterization of Waverley Junior High School.

Human Context:

The Selection of Respondents

The seventh-graders who participated in this study were the "target students" who figured prominently in different aspects of the Junior High Transition Study. Detailed portraits of their individual characteristics and experience during their transition from elementary to junior high school appear in Volume IV, Student Experience During and Response to Transition to Junior High School. Target student selection began by compiling the seventh-grade class schedules of 55 students who: (1) had attended one of the elementary schools participating in the study; (2) were categorized according to student participation style (see Ward, B.A., Tikunoff, W.J., Lash, A.A., Rounds, T.S., and Mergendoller, J.R., 1981) by their sixth-grade teachers; and (3) had received parental permission to participate in the study. Twelve boys and twelve girls were selected from this population. Students were chosen in order to: (1) maximize the number of classes in which they could be observed; (2) provide a variety of student participation styles; and (3) include boys and girls who had attended all of the elementary schools participating in the study.

As a result of this selection process, the final group of target students attended from one to four classes taught by the eleven seventh-grade teachers participating in the Junior High Transition Study. In terms of student participation characteristics, four target students (each) were classified as alienates, phantoms, social, and success students, while eight students demonstrated the participation characteristics of dependents. The larger sample of dependent students was selected purposely. Since these students were hypothesized to have more problems with the transition than other students, study of their transition was given extra attention. So few youngsters in the original population of 55 students were classified as isolates by their sixth-grade teachers that no isolate participants were included in the target student sample. In terms of the sixth-grade feeder schools attended by the target students, five had attended C.H. Dana and Bluff Street Elementary Schools, while six and eight students, respectively, spent their sixth-grade years at Hawthorne and J.M. Keynes Elementary Schools.

As a consequence of this selection process, the students who participated in the students' conceptions interviews reported here were a varied group. They had attended elementary schools serving both middle-class and lower middle-class populations, and they demonstrated a variety of classroom participation patterns. Once in junior high school, their first-quarter grades varied greatly, with students receiving the range of evaluations from A to F in the observed classes. As a result, we infer that our respondents demonstrated varying levels of achievement and academic motivation. In short, a diverse and yet representative group of students was selected to act as our informants about seventh-grade culture.

Theoretical Context:

Language and the Construction/Reflection of Culture

As noted earlier, this research examines the common expressions students used in open-ended interviews to describe their teachers and their experiences within these teachers' classes. The design for this part of the Junior High School Transition Study assumed that:

> Language is more than a means of communication about reality: it is a tool for constructing reality. Different languages create and express different realities. They categorize experience in different ways. They provide alternative patterns for customary ways of thinking and perceiving. (Spradley, 1979:17)

Further, since common linguistic expressions have their origin in a social context, they express the implicit system of meanings which are shared by members of the same culture. This study is predicated on the assumption that the words that seventh-graders use to describe teachers reflect shared categories of meaning. By examining the significance of these words, we attempt to understand seventh-grade culture, or "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior" (Spradley, 1979:5). Because we are focusing on students' descriptions of teachers, our discussion of seventh-grade culture begins (and to some degree, ends) with students' interpretations of their classroom experiences. Although the classroom provides only one arena for experience as a seventh-grader, it is a central one. Most of a student's time at school is taken up by classes. Moreover, academic performance and deportment in these classes influence other aspects of a student's school experience. "Honor" students gain school-wide recognition and status as well as special privileges. "Problem" students, who violate academic or behavioral norms, also receive school-wide recognition in the form of stigmatization. Being a seventh-grader requires, above all, coping with classes and teachers. An examination of seventh-grade culture does well to begin with this central aspect of school experience.

In taking a cultural point of view, we are not studying individual differences in student's perceptions of teachers, but rather the universal descriptive categories used by students to characterize the teachers and classroom events they encounter each day. Thus, we assume that seventh-graders draw from (as well as construct) a common pool of characterizations that they apply to their daily experiences. Our analytic task is to elaborate the nature of these characterizations. In so doing, we assume that there is an implicit organizational framework uniting the characterizations under study. We are joined in such an assumption by those cultural anthropologists who share an interpretive turn of mind. Spradley, for example, asserts:

> An informant's cultural knowledge is more than random bits of information; this knowledge is organized into categories, all of which are systematically related to the entire culture. [Analysis] . . . is the search for the parts of a culture and their relationships as conceptualized by informants.
> (1979:93, emphasis in text)

Such an interpretive analysis is a particularly sensitive undertaking because it requires the analyst to make explicit in writing what has been implicit in expression. Moreover, it charges the analyst with the revelation of assumptions made by others rather than the imposition of one's own. As the early anthropologist Franz Boas cautioned:

> If it is our serious purpose to understand the thoughts of a people, the whole analysis of experience must be based on their concepts, not ours.
> (1943:311)

Data Collection Strategy

As discussed in the Chapter One overview, the initial step in in this study of students' conceptions of their junior high school experiences was to conduct open-ended interviews in which the 22 students were asked to describe what it was like to be in seventh grade. These interviews were conducted in November of the students' seventh-grade year. Early on in the interview process, it became clear that the most prominently described aspect of their experiences was the teachers with whom the students interacted. Hence, our initial task was to establish the cultural categories students naturally used to describe their teachers. We approached this task by reading transcripts of the unstructured interviews conducted in November with 12 male and 10 female students about whom we had collected extensive observational and interview data as part of the larger transition study. The interviews we examined focused on students' perceptions of their classes and their teachers at the end of the initial quarter of the school year. Five staff members read through the interviews independently and noted the terms used most frequently to describe teachers. We compared these lists and selected eight terms that appeared to warrant further exploration and clarification. These terms were:

- o Mean
- o Hard
- o Easy
- o Good
- o Strict
- o Boring
- o Fun
- o Nice

After formulating this list, we conducted a second set of individual interviews with most of the same students.[3] These interviews were conducted in the spring of seventh grade. Although the interviews were unstructured in that they were not based on a common set of questions or a common questioning sequence, they followed the same general format. The researchers began the interview by explaining that many students had used the same words to describe their teachers when we had spoken with them before, and we wondered what those words meant. We then asked each student to describe the characteristics of teachers who would be typified by the eight terms listed above. The terms were printed on 3 x 5 cards. We laid these cards, one at a time, before each student and asked him or her what a "mean" (or "hard," or "easy," and so forth) teacher was like. Throughout the interviews, probes were used to elicit detailed responses.

Data Analysis Strategy

After reading through the new set of interview transcripts, an analytic decision was made to separate the onrushing flow of discourse recorded on the verbatim transcript into discrete, quantifiable entities. Working with the complete set of transcriptions, we broke apart the flow of student speech into groups of words that made up a "definition statement." Each of these definition statements expresses a single descriptive characterization and is the conceptual and empirical unit on which the following analyses are based.

As an example of this process, consider the way we treated one boy's definition of a "fun teacher." When we had asked him what a fun teacher was like, he responded:

> A funny teacher who cracks a lot of jokes, and he's funny, or he does a lot of projects and stuff, and not, doesn't give you too much homework and stuff like that.

This verbatim statement was broken into the following three definition statements:

§ A funny teacher who cracks a lot of jokes, and he's funny.

§ He does a lot of projects and stuff.

§ Not, doesn't give you too much homework and stuff like that.

---

[3]One student was unavailable to be interviewed during this second cycle, and on target student, who had missed the fall interview, later joined the group.

These definition statements were then transcribed onto three separate index cards labeled "Fun Teacher."

After combing all the interviews for definition statements, we read through the resulting cards with the intent of sorting them into a manageable set of "foci." We were seeking superordinate, abstract concepts that could encompass the more specific and delimited definition statements. After much discussion, re-reading, and several attempts at classificatory schemes, the following four foci were established: (1) academic work, (2) instructional facility, (3) classroom experience, and (4) personal characteristics. At this point in the analysis, no attention was given to the type of teacher who had evoked the definition statement, nor was it necessary for each teacher type to be mentioned with respect to each focus. Our concern was merely to identify foci around which groups of definition statements could be said to "cluster."

Having subdivided the population of definition statements into foci, we examined all the statements that made up a single focus. It was apparent that each focus could be further delineated, and we set out to determine the common "themes" that made up each focus. We considered each theme to be a discrete facet of meaning which was sufficiently broad that it did not merely echo the manifest content of the definition statements, but reflected the quality of teacher behavior or classroom life to which the respondent was referring. It was at the level of theme that the nuances of expression used by students to distinguish types of teachers were most fully explored.

We then read the definition statements again and formulated tentative theme classifications. At this point, we became aware that students' definition statements not only contained descriptions of teachers and classroom events, but also made explicit evaluative judgments about the students' classroom experiences. For example, students spoke about the quantity of work that teachers assigned by describing whether there was "a lot" of work or "not very much" work.[4] Thus, we began to think of themes as stretching between two "contrast poles" that delineated the conceptual end points of the continuum of meaning represented by each theme. The establishment of foci, themes, and contrast poles marked the completion of the conceptual framework used to unravel the cultural meanings of the terms seventh-graders' employed to conceptualize their teachers and classroom experiences.

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[4]Osgood, Suci & Tennenbaum (1957) report a variety of studies which attempt to "measure" the meanings individuals find in their daily experience. Their results also suggest the importance of the evaluative component present in the meanings individuals make of experience. In addition, Everhart (1979) also reports that seventh-grade "students categorized teachers into one of two camps [those] . . . with negative attributes [and] . . . those with positive characteristics" (pp. 155-156).

The final coding of definition statements by focus, theme, and contrast poles was the responsibility of the senior author of this report. Three criteria guided his ultimate attempt to make the implicit explicit. First, and most importantly, the establishment of themes and contrast poles had to contain and reflect accurately the contents of the definition statements. Second, the conceptual structure of foci, themes, and contrast poles had to demonstrate its own internal logic. Finally, this conceptual framework had to evoke intuitive recognition and confirmation. Classifications and categories had to make both logical and intuitive sense and satisfy all of the interpreter's critical faculties. As this description of the final coding process suggests, an interpretive analysis inevitably bears the mark of the interpreter. In this regard, it is much like the writing of literary criticism. While requiring a searching consideration of the significance of the words and ways of thought of others, it is affected, to some extent, by the intellectual inclinations and intuitions of the interpreter. Although we have done our best to portray seventh-graders' perceptions of teachers, we remind the reader that this portrayal reflects our formulation of these perceptions.

Before proceeding to the results, we must raise a final methodological issue. In the second part of the Results section, numerical data illustrate students' association of the eight cultural terms (or "teacher types") with the themes and contrast poles described earlier. We employed the following coding procedure to make the leap from narrative description to quantitative association. First, each theme was divided into two nominal categories. We conceived these categories as encompassing one-half of the continuum of meaning represented by the themes and named each nominal category according to the contrast pole it included. Thus, the theme "quantity of work" was considered to contain two subcategories of meaning: "less work" and "more work." The number of definition statements reflecting a particular theme and contrast pole, mentioned with regard to the eight terms or teacher types, could then be calculated.

As the coding of definition statements by focus and theme continued, we became aware that there was some variation in the number of definition statements used by individual students to explain the meaning of the eight terms in question. Such differences were related to both the probing technique of the interviewer and the loquaciousness of the respondent. To diminish the impact of these variations, no more than one definition statement per student was coded for each teacher type mentioned with reference to each theme. Thus, if a student recounted three distinct ways good teachers communicate their interest in students, only one of these definition statements was coded.

Because of the small number of students interviewed, the numerical data that appear in the second discussion of the results should be approached warily. Moreover, a myopic focus on the percentage of definition statements associated with each theme and contrast pole may detract from the distinctive contributions that this interpretive analysis has to offer: a depiction of seventh-graders' conceptions

of teachers and classroom experiences. With these cautions in mind, let us proceed to a discussion of our findings.

Results

Three separate, yet interdependent, analyses are discussed in this Results section. The first analysis establishes the interpretive structure of foci, themes, and contrast poles used to elaborate seventh-graders' conceptions of their teachers. The second analysis examines the frequency with which teacher types characterized by the eight descriptive terms (i.e., mean, hard, easy, good, strict, boring, fun, and nice) were associated with themes and contrast poles. In addition, we present a descriptive matrix and behavioral profile of the eight teacher types. The final analysis reviews the frequency with which students' definition statements referred to the themes and foci and draws some speculative conclusions about the salience of these conceptual motifs to seventh-grade students.

Analysis I: An Elaboration of Foci, Themes, and Contrast Poles

Table 2.1 displays the conceptualization that emerged from the analysis of definition statements. We will discuss each focus, and the theme that delineates it, in turn.

Academic work focus. A number of the students' definition statements described aspects of the classroom tasks assigned by teachers each day. Consequently, the academic work focus was established. Three distinct themes delineate students' perceptions of academic work (see column 1, Table 2.1). These themes refer to: (1) the quantity of work teachers assigned; (2) the difficulty of this work; and (3) the grading standards teachers used to evaluate it. We consider each of these themes and its contrast poles below.

Quantity of work. Students' definition statements consistently referred to the amount of work teachers assigned. Moreover, as students described different sorts of teachers, they made explicit distinctions between teachers who assigned "less work" and those who assigned "more work." The contrast poles for this theme were thus self-evident.

Definition statements that defined the "less work" contrast pole included:

> Student A9: Sometimes they let you stop early. Finish [the work] the next day. A nice teacher really doesn't let you have homework.
>
> Student A24: Well, [they don't] give you a lot of work in class. Not a lot of homework. And like if you work real hard, they won't make you do it overnight. You could finish the next day.

Table 2.1

Summary of Foci, Themes, and Contrast Poles

FOCI	THEME	CONTRAST POLES
1. ACADEMIC WORK	(1) Quantity of Work	Less Work / More Work
	(2) Difficulty of Work	Easy Work / Hard Work
	(3) Grading Standards	Lenient / Demanding
2. INSTRUCTIONAL FACILITY	(1) Quality of Explanations	Inadequate / Clear
	(2) Individual Assistance	Not Available / Available
3. CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE	(1) Disciplinary Strategy	Punishment / Warning
	(2) Tolerance for Inappropriate Behavior	Low / High
	(3) Student Self-Management	Discouraged / Encouraged
	(4) Affective Character	Disagreeable / Engaging
4. PERSONAL CHARACTER-ISTICS	(1) Temperament	Unappealing / Appealing
	(2) Temper	Yells / Doesn't Yell
	(3) Relationship with Students	Uncaring / Interested

Student A24: [She] doesn't make you do real giant projects at the same time [you do other work], or something.

Student A25: Well, they don't pile you with work and then expect it in 50 minutes. Say, for an example, but, you know, they don't pile the work on you.

Now Teacher AC, he's a fairly easy English teacher. He's a fairly easy teacher because like when the book it says, "Write, first write the sentences down. Then write them with whatever, for instance, a noun with the initial noun or something like that or a modifier, you know, cuts out all that extra work. And that's what I consider an easy teacher.

Students also spoke of being assigned large quantities of work. Typical comments reflecting the "more work" contrast pole included:

Student A9: [They] give you a lot of work and make you do it there, and if you don't you got a lot of homework.

[In her class] you do the work how she says to, and then after you get done, she gives you more work.

Student A13: Teacher AA was too hard. He, I mean I just couldn't catch up. I would, everytime I would go home I would work on, first, I would get his math and then I would practice on my times, and it didn't work. It was too hard.

Student A24: He gives a lot of homework, makes you work hard in class. I mean, a lot of work.

Gives you real tough work, you know. Like he makes you do, say an example, he gives you a book report and then a speech. You have to do 'em at the same time. You know that's hard 'cause you got to make your speech and then you gotta write your book report. They're both due on the same date. Now you hand in your book report and then you gotta go up and give your speech.

Then he gives you tons of homework, you know. Then you tell your other teachers you didn't do the homework because you had a lot more in that class or something.

In sum, the amount of work teachers assigned was salient, and students referred to this characteristic when asked to describe different types of teachers.

Difficulty of work. The second theme within the academic work focus concerned the difficulty of the classwork and homework students were expected to complete. Students contended that almost any assignment can become difficult if it is very long, or due at the same time a number of other assignments are due. In this manner, then, "hard" work not only refers to work that is intrinsically difficult, but also work that is "hard to finish."

At the "easy work" contrast pole, students spoke of the unchallenging assignments given by some teachers. For instance:

Student A13: I had done the work that she was doing now in third grade and so I knew I was going to get an "A" in this class. [I was thinking of transferring to a more challenging class], and all the kids are saying, "Stay in her class; you're going to get an 'A.' Stay in her class."

Student A15: The work isn't hard . . . like math work, for example: 1 + 1 or 8 x 8 and stuff like that.

Student A23: [Some teachers], they're just easy for you and not for other people because they don't know the work that easy. I mean that good.

[He'll] give you easy work that's fun . . . instead of the hard, hard work. He'll, um, make it easier like on a ditto or something like that.

Student A24: Well, [laugh]. Uh, [the teacher] gives you real easy work, you know, and gives you a page of homework, you know, that's real easy. Minus and adding or something like that. Then the work you do for the day is really easy, or he doesn't give you real big tests like four hundred problems or something . . . just five, or [he] doesn't give you many tests, doesn't make you do real giant projects at the same time or something. It's, you know, you already know [the work] and it's real easy.

Student A25: Homework assignments are fairly easy.

Other comments clustered around the "hard work" contrast pole and described the more difficult work assigned by other teachers. For example:

Student A16: Um, it's more difficult, harder to understand.

Student A17: Too much and too hard. Or she'll go too fast or then she'll give too much, so I don't understand it.

Student A21: [The] teacher gives them hard work. But I think that's good, because you learn more.

In sum, students spontaneously remarked upon the difficulty of academic work assigned by their teachers.

Grading standards. The final theme that emerged from analysis of the definition statements focusing on academic work concerned the grading standards teachers applied to completed assignments or tests. Typical definition statements that defined the "demanding" contrast pole included:

Student A6: I guess maybe if you get really bad grades, you'd say that the teacher is mean because you can't get good grades. I don't got any real mean teachers. I heard of a few.

Student A24: . . . if you don't finish it [i.e., work], you get it all wrong. You know. What you don't finish is wrong. They won't let you make it up or something. If you don't make it up on certain days, they won't let you do it at all.

Student A27: [The teacher] grades hard, is kinda unfair with your grades.

At the "lenient" contrast pole were two terse definition statements:

Student A5: [The teacher] might grade easier.

Student A18: They grade easy.

In sum, the grading standards teachers employed to evaluate academic work were salient to students.

Academic work focus: Summary and discussion. When asked to distinguish and describe different types of teachers, students spoke spontaneously of the academic work they encountered in these teachers' classrooms. Three aspects of that work were salient: (1) the amount of work assigned, (2) the difficulty of that work, and (3) the grading standards teachers used to evaluate the completed work.

The definition statements that described the academic work focus clustered about the contrast poles of each theme. It would appear that teachers who assigned a moderate amount of work, which was not perceived as unusually hard or inappropriately easy, and who applied expected grading standards were not as salient to students as those teachers whose behavior defined a contrast pole for each theme.

We suspect this result is an artifact of the stimulus adjectives that defined the teacher types under investigation. It seems that students spontaneously labeled teachers as "hard" or "easy" or "good" or "mean" when their academic expectations and classroom behavior were perceived as somehow out of the ordinary. Other teachers, who did not challenge or embody students' expectations, were not spontaneously labeled. Instead, they were accepted as a taken-for-granted aspect of school experience.

While this hypothesis explains the preponderance of statements that define the contrast poles and the lack of student responses that refer to the middle of the continuum represented by each theme, it has no bearing on the fact that students clearly considered the academic work they were assigned to be an important feature when asked to define different teacher types. In short, for seventh-graders, the nature of the academic work assigned is a defining characteristic of teachers.

Instructional facility focus. The second area on which students' comments about various types of teachers focused was the proficiency with which teachers carried out their instructional responsibilities. Two themes emerged that further defined students' perceptions of the instructional process: (1) the quality of explanations, and (2) instructional assistance. We consider each theme below.

Quality of explanations. Students' comments focused repeatedly on the clarity with which teachers explained new material and clarified students' confusions regarding the assignments they were expected to complete. Some teachers were characterized as giving inadequate explanations, while others were described as providing clear, understandable explanations.

Definition statements describing the "inadequate" contrast pole included:

> Student A22: [The] teacher gives you all the work you don't understand, and then she'll explain to you, and you still won't get it. She'll go, "Well, yes you do." And you're sitting there, "I don't know what's going on."
>
> Student A26: Or maybe if they're, they try to discuss something or they, they won't let the kids dis . . . well, let the people discuss what they're talking about with the teacher even. They'll just tell 'em to sit down and do it.

Student A28: Well, they'll give you work that you don't understand or something like that, and they won't really explain it to you. They'll explain it to you a little bit, but not enough.

The "clear" contrast pole was delimited by statements such as the following:

Student A5: . . . if they explain things well or something. Something like that.

Student A11: [She] would be able to explain what she was doing better than some of the other teachers would.

Student A18: Hm . . . nice, listens. Um, hm, hm. They take time to tell you what the things are about. I'd say that's it.

Student A24: Well, some teachers make you read the directions and this one, if you, you know, he'll explain it to you and then he'll, if you need help, he'll help you and he'll tell you . . . help you understand it better. Like if you get mixed up in the directions, he'll come over and he'll explain it, you know.

Student A25: [He] would, you know, really explain it to you and make you understand it. You could come in after school. Stuff like that.

In sum, students appeared quite conscious of the quality of explanations proffered by their teachers and relied on this instructional characteristic to distinguish different types of teachers.

Individual assistance. The individual assistance theme, like the preceding quality of explanations theme, stretched between contrast poles describing inadequate and adequate instructional procedures. At one end of this continuum, students described teachers who were not available to students, or who refused to answer individual questions. For example:

Student A6: Sometimes you raise your hand, they almost like ignore you. [They] go to the next person.

Student A9: [He will] tell you to stay in your seat and be quiet and don't raise your hand or do anything.

Student A14: He doesn't help you. He makes you come after school if you want help.

Student A18: Well, I know I can't go up and ask them too much. I can't, you know, I can't ask them as much as I want to. And all I can do is just sit there and work, [do] whatever I can.

Student A23: [She] doesn't help you or help anybody else or favors one person like a pet.

Student A27: [He] never talks to you.

The actions of one teacher were particularly exemplary of this contrast pole and were discussed by one student at length:

Student A17: Well, she'll like, we'll ask her a question and then she'll say, "I'm not going to answer that question," and then . . . I go, "Why not?" She'll say, "I don't feel like answering questions like that."

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS WOULD THAT BE?[5]

How to do the papers that she gives us. She gives like little cards to do our reading, our reading cards. [I say,] "I don't understand this part," and she'll say, "I won't answer a question like that."

Other students' comments suggested that they were genuinely pained when teachers refused to answer questions about assignments or provide other forms of individual assistance. One girl described this as "not being on speaking terms";

Student A18: Teacher AD, I don't . . . he's not on speaking terms. He doesn't listen that much. It seems he's got a hearing problem or something.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HE'S NOT ON SPEAKING TERMS?

Well, like when you want to talk to him, when you raise your hand, it takes a while to get over to you. There's nobody else; you're the only one raising your hand, and he'll just look around the class. Then finally he'll come over and say, "Read it more." He doesn't talk to you that much.

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[5]Words in upper-case type are those of the interviewer.

At the contrasting pole of the individual assistance theme were definition statements that described teachers who were available to help students with assignments and clarify instructions. For example:

Student A6: You know, he helps. [If] they can't finish it in time, he helps 'em finish the project.

Student A10: They give you more time. They spend some more time with you than other people.

Student A17: They can, you know, they'll help you with it. They'll help you with it, which makes it easy.

Student A18: [You'll] be able to go up to them and talk about your stuff. Be able to sit there and let, they'll help you work it out.

Student A22: Um, when you raise your hand she'll come to you right away. She won't say, "Put your hand down, I'll come to you later."

Student A25: You could come in after school, and she would explain the work to you.

Student A26: They help me. They do anything, well mainly anything. They help me plan work . . . they help you with your work and stuff.

Instructional facility focus: Summary and discussion. As illustrated by the above comments, students spontaneously described and implicitly evaluated the instructional facility of their teachers with reference to: (1) the quality of the explanations teachers provided; and (2) the assistance teachers gave to individual students. Taken as a whole, the definition statements that fell within the instructional facility focus suggested that students wanted to learn the material they were assigned and sought to complete their academic tasks competently. Disappointment and anger were expressed when teachers' instructional behaviors were perceived as impeding students from understanding and completing their assigned work. Conversely, the seventh-graders seemed quite appreciative when teachers helped students to learn by giving clear explanations of the material they were expected to master and by being responsive to each student's questions and problems.

In short, students expected their instructors to be teachers in the root sense of the word: One who shows others how to master a subject. From the students' point of view, a teacher who abandoned students to their own devices in the face of ambiguous worksheets and confusing lectures was cheating students of the quality instruction they felt to be their prerogative. Students seemed to consider the interactive processes of teaching and learning as two parts of a bargain; they were willing to learn the assigned material as long as

teachers' instructional practices facilitated their learning. When teachers did not keep up their part of the classroom contact while continuing to assess and reward student performance, mutterings of "Foul" appeared in the transcripts as students responded to this injustice with strong (if often surreptitious) emotions.

Classroom experience focus. Many definition statements described the complexities of students' classroom lives and were grouped under the general focus of classroom experience. Four identifiable themes emerged from examination of these statements: (1) disciplinary strategy, (2) tolerance for inappropriate behavior, (3) student self-management, and (4) affective character. We consider each of these themes below.

Disciplinary strategy. The general disciplinary strategy employed by the teacher was seen by many students as a major part of their classroom experience. A significant distinction emerged between teachers who punished students swiftly without an initial warning and those teachers who warned students that their behavior was inappropriate and that punishment would follow if the behavior did not change. To capture this distinction, the contrast poles of "punishment" and "warning" were established.

Looking first at the definition statements that clustered near the "punishment" contrast pole, we find the following comments.

Student A5: Some teachers just say, "You're getting an 'F' right now. You better get your act together and do your work." And sometimes they, not yell, but talk kind of mean.

Student A6: [The teacher would probably react to students "goofing around" by sending] 'em to the office right there. Some of the teachers do that. Some of the teachers don't even warn you. They just write down your name, and, you know, if you keep that up, put a check by it. That's what the music teacher [AG] does. Keeps putting checks, and each check is so many minutes after school.

Student A9: She gives [misbehaving students a] referral, or tells them to write sentences, or something.

Student A13: If you talk in class, like if you're talking to a person about, say you're in math and you're talking to this person about math, if they come up and they say, "You've got a referral, and you've got a detention," I think that's tight. That's mean. If you're talking, you know, about what I'm gonna do in the summer or something. But if you're talking

about math or whatever class you're in, that's, that's tight.

Student A14: He's really mean. He'll give you detention if someone throws a piece of paper at you or something, and you intentionally don't.

Student A16: Uh-huh. One . . . somebody got, um, I think a plan or referral or a pass down the office today because this one, because they shouted out. I got a plan once for shouting out.

YOU MEAN JUST SHOUTING OUT AN ANSWER OR JUST SHOUTING TO A FRIEND?

Just shouting to Teacher AB. "Teacher AB." Something like that.

Student A17: [She] expects good behavior.

AND HOW DOES SHE GET IT?

She gives a plan if we don't. That's where you have to write what you're not going to do anymore.

Student A18: [They] bawl you out for dumb things.

LIKE WHAT . . . WHAT WOULD BE A DUMB THING?

Let's see -- when you . . . okay, like if they send you down to the office for just sharpening your pencil.

Student A22: Well, if you just say one little word in the class, like they will, "Can I be . . ." then she'll go, "You got a referral or a plan," or something like that.

Student A23: [He] is like, "No sharpening your pencils that break or no tardies," just detentions and stuff like that."

In contrast to those teachers who dealt with misbehavior by punishing students, other teachers were perceived as being less quick to react. These teachers generally warned students who were heading for trouble. For example:

Student A5: [She] catches you talking, then she'll write your name on the board. And then, um, and then if you get your name written out again, you have to come down to the office . . . That's a pretty good way of keeping people quiet.

Student A8: [They] just don't give you 'tentions or nothing if you're late for class. They just tell you not to be late anymore if it happens to you.

Student A16: I never saw her give any referrals.

Well, she'd, um, she wouldn't be too strict about it. She'd be nice and tell 'em to knock it off and maybe they'd consider that and stop it.

AND SUPPOSING THEY DON'T?

She'd probably given 'em a referral, or make 'em stay after to clean desks, or something like that.

Student A24: [She] treats you good, like if you, some teachers if you talk they'll give you detention. Others will just tell you to be quiet and do your work. Give you a couple warnings.

AND THEN WHAT?

And then if you don't behave after a while, I think they will give you detention. Some teachers will. Others won't. They'll keep telling you to be quiet.

Student A28: Some teachers, they just come over to you and say just, "Please be quiet. People are trying to work."

In sum, students spontaneously described teachers according to the disciplinary and strategic measures they used to manage their classes.

Tolerance for inappropriate behavior. In addition to the general discipline strategies discussed above, students referred explicitly to various teachers' apparent willingness to tolerate inappropriate behavior in the classroom. Although this theme was closely related to the above theme and appeared in some of the definition statements presented, we believe the themes to be conceptually distinct. While the theme of disciplinary strategy illuminates the teachers' reactions to inappropriate behavior, the current theme describes how much misbehavior the teacher is willing to tolerate before reacting. It is the case, however, that teachers who punished students without warning generally had a low tolerance for any sort of misbehavior.

Definition statements describing teachers with low tolerance for misbehavior defined one pole of this theme. For example:

Student A21: [The teacher] doesn't let the kids get away with anything . . .

They send out referrals every time you do something wrong.

Student A22: . . . if you just say one little word in the class . . . "Can I be . . . ," then she'll go, "You got a referral or a plan," or something like that.

Student A16 summed up the most important strategy for negotiating the classes of teachers with little or no tolerance for misbehavior: ". . . remember to watch out!"

At the opposite pole of this theme, students spoke of teachers who demonstrated high tolerance for student misconduct. The definition statements delineating this contrast pole included the following:

Student A6: Well, like in art kids goof around a lot, because a lot of the times the teacher's in the supply room or, you know, helping some other kid.

Student A16: Um, you can get away with a lot more stuff than you can get away with in the hard teacher's class, [or with a] mean teacher.

Student A24: Some teachers, if you talk, they'll give you detention. Others will just tell you to be quiet and do your work. Give you a couple warnings.

AND THEN WHAT?

And then if you don't behave after a while, I think they will give you detention. Some teachers will. Others won't. They'll keep telling you to be quiet.

Student A25: She warns you a lot. And she says, "This is my final warning." About 15 minutes later she says the same thing.

Students did not always respect such laxity. For example:

Student A15: Like I been, people been tardy and so many times in um, Teacher AG's class that, he don't care. He just let's 'em walk in. He says, "You're tardy." They say, "So what?" And he walks away. He doesn't do anything. He's nowhere near a strict teacher . . . He's not even considered a teacher sometimes the way he acts.

Another spoke of the necessity for a well-run classroom where people could attend to their work without distraction.

Student A21: Well if someone's goofing off to the point that disturbed the whole class, I think you should say something.

In sum, students were aware of the way they needed to behave in different teachers' classrooms and conceptualized their teachers according to this criterion.

Student self-management. The self-management theme characterizes different types of teachers according to the responsibilities they granted within the classroom. Some teachers actively discouraged students' attempts to manage themselves, while others encouraged student management of behavior and classroom activity. Teachers who discouraged student self-management generally did so by limiting students' mobility and their opportunities to talk to and work with their peers. In general, such teachers also curtailed the decisions students could make regarding academic participation in the classroom and the content of assigned work. Statements defining the "discouraged" contrast pole of this theme included:

Student A6: Well, some of the teachers won't let you get a drink, you know, even if you ask them they won't let you.

Student A9: [That] teacher doesn't let you get out of your seat. She makes you stay there.

Student A14: If you break your pencil, you can't sharpen it, you can't get a drink on hot days, or not any talking, or anything.

Student A18: And, I always thought of a strict teacher, you know, as not letting us get up for a drink. Or the bathroom! I mean, things like that. Almost impossible not to . . . Some people can hold it. I mean, sit in your chair; you'll be uncomfortable. So you have a sore throat or something, you get a drink of water.

Well, [the] teacher would at any times, wouldn't let us talk, work together, you know, if we have something we've got to work on together, or if after we're finished with our work, be able to chat, or something. Keep ourselves busy.

Student A23: [Well, it's] like no talking to your neighbor or anything like that or no getting to work with anybody else or helping anybody else or whatever.

It is striking that students did not discriminate teachers' noncademic prohibitions, such as getting out of one's seat or going to the bathroom, from those of a more academic nature, like working with or giving help to fellow students. Instead, students seemed to lump all restrictions together. As Student A11 commented, "A strict teacher would be one that would say that you couldn't do a whole bunch of things." This was echoed by another student who indicated a dislike for teachers who, "Just tell you, they just tell you what to do."

At the contrasting pole of this theme, students spoke appreciatively of teachers who encouraged them to act in responsible and independent ways and who allowed a certain amount of movement within the classroom. Typical definition statements describing this contrast pole included:

Student A6: [Teachers will] let you drink water and get supplies without asking.

The teacher lets you talk.

Student A9: She lets you walk around and talk to your friends.

Student A11: Well, it's when like the teacher doesn't always make you be quiet or something. They'll let you whisper between your friends or something.

Student A25: As long as you do your work pretty good, she doesn't really mind [if you talk to your friends].

In addition to the generally nonacademic pursuits mentioned above, students spoke of ways in which teachers encouraged them to manage their in-class academic time. Some teachers, for example, allowed students a choice over their activities once they had completed all of the assigned work.

Student A8: [Some teachers let] you do your own thing . . . they tell you to do something, you just do it without them telling you not to do this and not to do that wrong on it . . . [they] give you extra time to do anything you want like the last five minutes of the, if you had a seventh period, the last like ten minutes you could just put, do anythi you want.

Student A9: Well, like one teacher, after you've done your work, she lets you draw or do something.

Other teachers invited students to define the nature of the work they would complete.

Student A6: Well, if we do our exercises [in physical education] real good, we don't have to run laps. We usually get to play sports [which is] what we want [to] do. We can pick our own team sometimes. You know, do what we all want pretty much.

Student A8: Well, he just tells you what to do, then he walks out of the room 'cause he has like another class, like two classes, 'cause like a few people in metal shop, and then he's teaching class. He just tells you what to do and says, "Do it on your own," and he comes back at the end of the day.

Student A18: [She] lets you work on projects.

Student A27: Like once in a while he'll just let us do anything we want, and it's not, it's basically the same routine every week, but he makes it fun.

An examination of the definition statements delineating both contrast poles of the student self-management theme suggests that the result of these various strategies which encouraged student initiative and allowed certain freedoms was to strengthen students' enjoyment of, and perhaps commitment to, the work they completed. In addition, the general atmosphere of the classroom was affected as a result of providing opportunities for talk, movement, and self-direction. Students spoke positively about those teachers who encouraged initiative, movement, and self-expression. As one girl said, "His class is fun because you can mainly do anything you want to, except for, you know, really bad things."

Conversely, there was sometimes a sense of quiet outrage pervading students' descriptions of teachers who refused to let them sharpen pencils when necessary, work with other students, or engage in activities perceived as essential. Students saw no reason for these restrictions and occasionally expressed resentment toward teachers who constrained their activities in unjust ways:

Student A16: [She] takes the brush away. She doesn't let you get a drink of water.

WHY IS THAT STUFF MEAN?

'Cause sometimes kids need to brush their hair or get a drink of water or something like that.

AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE THERE TO LEARN AND YOU CAN'T BE RUNNING GETTING A DRINK OF WATER?

Well, sometimes she's not, she's not teaching or saying anything. She's sitting down at her desk, and you still can't get a drink of water.

Such perceived injustice would seem to be logically linked with students' negative appraisal of the class in general, hostility toward the teacher, and grudging acquiescence when confronted with assigned work.

Affective character. The final theme depicting students' perceptions of their classroom experience described students' evaluations of the overall affective character of their classes. This theme was somewhat related to the preceding theme, in that students tended to evaluate classes positively and find them engaging if they were given responsibility and encouraged to take charge of their classroom activities. A positive or negative response to a particular class, however, could also be associated with a particular teacher's personality or some other aspect of the instructional program. Consequently, the affective character theme is conceptually distinct from the previous theme.

A number of statements explicitly defined the "disagreeable" pole of the affective character theme. For some students, certain classes were disagreeable because of the way the teacher organized the lesson and presented the material. For example:

Student A13: He would just talk straight, you know. He would talk like a computer. "8 + 8 is . . . 4 + . . ." you know. He would just talk straight. And that gets boring if the teacher just talks like a machine or a robot or something. It bores you to death, and you're sitting there drifting off into another land or something.

Student A23: Oh, Mr. AG, one teacher that has to explain everything. Well, not explain everything, but always, always spends about an hour on each little thing, each little detail, and just sits there and tells you all this stuff that you don't really need to know, but tells you anyways. It's boring.

Student A24: You don't get to do anything. He'll talk th_ whole time, you know, and he's watching the whole class 'cause he's standing up in front. And if you turn around or something, he'll write your name on the board, you know. And then you gotta listen the whole time. You're listening, you know, but you're sitting like this, you know. You know, [you]

doze, and then he'll tell you to get your head up and listen. Gets boring after a while.

Like this, and you're listening, and then you gotta read, and you gotta listen for the person to read. That's a boring class. And he just, when he talks the whole time, you know, he doesn't sit down and let you do your work. He'll talk the whole class.

Student A27: Um, God. Every day it's the same thing. He talks. We work. He talks. We work. We never, he never even talks to us; the only thing he ever talks about is math, and then we spend the whole hour just talking. He talks, and we listen, and that way is just boring. I just sit there and listen. He repeats the same thing ten times. It's boring.

For others, it was the character of the work itself which was disagreeable.

Student A15: . . . then he hands out a worksheet that's real boring. Sometimes it's easy. Usually it's easy if it's boring. If it's, if it's an extra story to read, I don't like 'em, cause those stories are real boring. They, you do the same thing every week. That I forgot to tell you that, um, sometimes they can be hard, and those borings, um, those boring things. But that's only if you do 'em every week. If you do 'em once in a while, and they're hard, then they're gonna be fun.

. . . he didn't make us do anything, but after he told us a bunch more, he told us we had to write about different things, and that was no fun.

Student A18: Teacher AD makes us do the same work. He'll always put . . . we're finally doing something different. We have to write a report, but usually he just puts the stuff on the board, we copy it down and do it. And some people have books. And then you have homework in books. And that's almost the only thing we've done, except for one thing when we have to make a booklet on different math figures, put a book together. And this and that book have been almost the only thing we've done different the whole year.

Student A23: Mrs. AE . . . she makes us write down the formulas for the math [which is not fun].

Student A25: You can't have fun in there. It's all work.

In contrast, some definition statements referred to classrooms where students were engaged in the instructional and nonacademic activities occurring there. Definition statements at the "engaging" contrast pole provided examples of students who enjoyed coming to class. Three factors seemed to be associated with students' engagement. First, some assignments were perceived as interesting, either because of their inherent character or because they offered a change of pace. For example:

Student A16: Well, sometimes [in music] we have the clap-a-rhythm, or we play recorders on Friday.

Student A18: [With] Teacher AB, we can do extra-credit drawings. We are doing Ulysses' books and draw drawings of the character. Something for extra credit. That was fun.

[The teacher] gives you different work things instead of having to do the same thing over and over.

Student A25: She does fun things with her class. Like in eight-grade Spanish, they cook enchiladas and stuff like that in there.

One student summed up the consequences of such diversified instructional activities, "it seems like the time goes faster when you're doing something you like instead of doing just work, boring work."

Instructional activities, however, were not always sufficient in themselves to encourage student engagement. Often the personality of the teacher appeared to be inextricably intertwined with the assigned work, and this personality-assignment linkage was also described by students. Definition statements that delineated this second affective factor included:

Student A16: She makes class interesting -- like doing that "Around the World in 80 Days" thing.

Student A28: He just, he um, he makes fun things to do. He has these sheets. He calls them handy-dandy [Teacher AA] sheets, and they're for a book that we're using. But he makes 'em fun to do, so they're not hard and boring like usual.

Finally, the third factor that was mentioned in conjunction with the positive pole of the student engagement theme was the entertaining character of teachers' personalities. This factor appeared to be

conceptually distinct from the previous factor in that the mere presence of some teachers (rather than the attraction they instilled into their assignments) made the class engaging. A number of definition statements referred to some teachers' propensities to joke and have fun with the class. For example:

> Student A13: He isn't all serious, and he doesn't make you, like if you joke, if you make a joke, he won't, he won't go, "to the office; you've got a referral!" Or talking in class. He'll, like sometimes he'll make a joke with you and, but sometimes he's got to be strict.
>
> Student A14: He sings all the time . . . opera: everybody laughs. It's funny the way he sings it.
>
> [Teachers] tell jokes and stuff, instead of just working you hard. Like in gym. Our teacher is really nice . . . she fools around a lot and stuff.

Definition statements also portrayed certain teachers as accomplished storytellers.

> Student A5: Before or after the period or something, about the last ten minutes, he'll sit down and tell us a story about when he was a little kid.
>
> Student A26: [The teacher will] tell stories, probably just have a good time with the kids while they're teaching them or so . . . They tell stories, and they're funny, and we make jokes about them, and they make jokes about us and stuff, and they have comebacks to their jokes.

For many students, the personality of the teacher seemed to be the major defining factor in their perceptions of the class. Consequently, this was a crucial factor in encouraging student engagement. As Student A16 pointed out, it is the "teacher that makes the class interesting." This was echoed by Student A8 as he described a defining characteristic of the "nice" teacher, ". . . just how they do, how they do their whatever they have to do -- teach. They do, just, it's more fun."

Classroom experience focus: Summary and discussion. Students specifically described their classroom experiences with reference to four themes: (1) the disciplinary strategy employed by different teachers; (2) the tolerance teachers exhibited for inappropriate behavior; (3) the opportunities teachers allowed for student self-management; and (4) the affective character of their daily classroom experiences.

Taken as a whole, the definition statements that make up the classroom experience focus depict concerns common to most people who find themselves part of a social organization that stresses task accomplishment and is characterized by hierarchical authority relations. Such concerns include: (1) What is the definition of appropriate and inappropriate behavior? (2) What are the consequences of inappropriate behavior? (3) What responsibilities, freedoms, and opportunities for self-expression are offered me? and (4) How do I feel about my experience as a member of such a social institution? In short, the classroom experience focus includes themes which describe individuals' experience in social institutions.

This is not to imply that most students consciously reflect upon the above questions, or purposively plan their classroom behavior with such questions (or the answers to such questions) in mind. Rather, we would expect the prominence of these concerns to modulate from conscious to subliminal awareness as students "learn each teacher's system" and form expectations for their behavior as students and the enjoyment to be found in their various classes. Further, we believe students' expectations should relate to the range, frequency, and intensity of behaviors students demonstrate in different classrooms as well as the enthusiasm they bring to their assignments.

Our respondents' attention to the opportunities different types of teachers offered for self-management bears further discussion. In part, this would seem to be due to the implicit relationship between opportunities for self-management and the affective character of classroom experience, i.e., students reported that they experienced both engagement and enjoyment in the classes of teachers who provided opportunities for self-management. For one thing, such classes allow more opportunities to talk with friends and thus provide some satisfaction of the need for peer-focused social interaction considered by most developmental psychologists to be a major adolescent motivation (cf., Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Erickson, 1968; Havighurst, 1953). The note of resentment, outrage, and bewilderment found in some of the definition statements describing the types of teachers who discouraged self-management, however, suggests that it is more than social hedonism that makes this theme salient to students.

Many observers have noted that a need for autonomous self-expression generally manifests itself during adolescence and finds expression in defiant, stubborn, or self-absorbed behavior. We suspect that the initial stirrings of this motivation may be behind the intensity with which students chastised the more constraining teacher types. For those boys and girls who feel a powerful urge to express themselves and manage their own affairs, denial of the right to sharpen their pencils, to choose their assignment, or to leave their seats to get a drink of water is more than a silly inconvenience; it is an affront to their evolving status as independent young men and women competent to manage their own affairs.

It must be noted, however, that while such an explanation can help us to interpret the outrage expressed in some of the definition statements, it does not provide a prescription for teacher behavior.

We are not advocating that teachers should give students more responsibility to manage their own classroom activities. Such a blanket pronouncement may be inappropriate and might lead to varying results with different teachers and different groups of students. We do, however, wish to emphasize that adolescent students generally experience powerful drives for autonomous expression, and such developmental urges can often be harnessed to appropriate academic tasks with favorable results. Moreover, denial of these urges may lead to a good deal of student recalcitrance. As a result of these considerations, we urge teachers to reflect upon the opportunities provided students for self-management in the classroom and consider whether these opportunities should be increased.

Personal characteristics focus. The final area on which students focused in their descriptions of teachers was the personal characteristics of the teacher. While the information presented above indicates that students often described teachers in conjunction with their instructional programs, they also referred to the teachers' characteristics as individuals and the ways in which they interacted with students. This aspect of the teacher is separated as a focus that warrants attention in and of itself.

Three distinct themes emerged from inspection of the definition statements that delineated the personal characteristics focus. These themes were: (1) temperament, (2) temper, and (3) relationships with students.

Temperament. A large group of definition statements captured students' perceptions of teachers' temperaments. These statements described teachers with appealing and unappealing temperaments. At the "unappealing" end of the temperament continuum were the following comments:

Student A5: They might just, it seems like they're always in a grouchy mood or something.

Student A8: They [kids] think the teacher is meaner at them than other people. In the class they say, "Oh, he hates me." "The teacher hates you," people think.

Student A10: They're kind of cranky.

Student A27: Um, [he] always picks out your faults, like if you do something, he immediately sees it.

At the "appealing" contrast pole, students described teachers who displayed positive characteristics. There were a number of definition statements that included adjectives such as kind, nice, happy, generous, helpful, humorous, and fun. For example:

Student A6: Well, nice, I guess, [I] mean generous.

Student A10: [A teacher] who's fun to be with.

Student A14: She's just nice, she just says, "Y'all" a lot.

Student A15: He's always happy.

Student A21: Someone who doesn't get mad that much, you know, who can laugh and, you know, not be so stern all the time . . . .

Student A22: [She] is really nice to you all the time, I guess, and, you know, they don't give you hard times at all.

Student A23: A teacher that um, helps you . . . a lot and just nice, nice personality, nice to you.

Student A28: I guess just a kind person.

Well, he, he just seems to be just a fun type of person. He doesn't seem to be the grouchy old type like some teachers or some people.

Students also spoke of the changeability of temperament demonstrated by some teachers:

Student A11: She would be kind of in-between being nice . . . sometimes she'd be kinda mean or something, and sometimes she'd be nice.

Student A25: Like . . . she can be fun, nice, and mean when she wants to. You know, at different times and everything.

In sum, students spontaneously referred to and made implicit comparisons of the temperaments of different types of teachers.

Temper. Separate from the general temperament characteristics mentioned in the above theme, a number of definition statements centered around the anger displayed in the classroom by some teachers. Conversely, students also referred to the restraint shown by others. Inspection of these definition statements suggested contrast poles "yells" and "doesn't yell," the labels of which reflect the concreteness of the students' talk.

At the "yells" contrast pole were emphatic descriptions of the anger some instructors expressed:

Student A5: He gets all hysterical if you just, like you start talking or something, and he'll start yelling at your for talking; or someone comes back the class to say, "Hi!" and you say, "Hi!" back. He'll start yelling for that.

Student A9: She, like if you do something wrong on your papers, like you get a whole bunch of answers wrong, she gets real mad and starts yelling and saying that you don't listen.

Student A14: He just, he yells for every little thing and everything.

Student A22: Oh, they always, they're always yelling. Like my English teacher, she's kind of mean and . . . She has these big things in the class. When she's mad, she pounds on it and it hurts my ears. I sit right in front of it.

WHAT IS IT SHE POUNDS ON?

It's just these desk things. She uses her fist and she hits on it.

The opposite contrast pole consisted of descriptions of teachers who rarely lost their tempers in class and, consequently, rarely yelled at their students. For example:

Student A8: Mm, if they don't yell a lot. They don't yell very much.

Student A15: He doesn't do much yelling.

Student A22: Well, she doesn't lose her temper too easily.

Student A25: A nice teacher, first off, doesn't yell.

Student A27: Doesn't always yell at you. Well, is reasonable with the yelling.

In sum, some students spontaneously referred to teachers' tempers and distinguished teachers according to the frequency with which they displayed their anger.

Relationships with students. The final theme that emerged as part of the teachers' personal characteristics focus concerned the nature of the relationships they established with students. At one pole of this theme were teachers who maintained their distance and appeared relatively unconcerned with the details of students' lives, thoughts, or affections. For example:

Student A18: I mean, they can keep you after, but don't go to the trouble -- just sending you down to the office. They don't take care of it, they just get rid of you.

Student A21: Like, they don't care. They just want, they just like to get you in trouble. Well, not really, they just want to catch you.

Student A26: They don't, don't know what the kids like or something and they just do it their way and not take the kids in consideration or anything.

At the other extreme, students spoke of teachers who were interested in their students. For example:

Student A22: Before she sends you to the office if you did something wrong she'll, you know, say, "Well, see me after class and we'll talk about your problem."

They listen to you, what you have to say and you listen to them, what they have to say. And [that's a] really good teacher.

Student A25: And um, you have a friendly relationship with your teacher instead of just her giving you the books, uh, the work and telling you to do it.

Well, she kinda likes her class.

Student A26: They get involved with the kids and they just, they're just nice. I don't know how to say it.

Teachers that let themselves down to the level of the kids and they understand them and they know what they're doing.

Student A27: Um, he understands, like he's a teenager again. And he'll kid around with you about it.

You know, like he'll be serious most of the time and then he'll just, you know, he'll start talking to us like regular people, and it's fun.

Perhaps Student A26 provided the best summary statement, "They can relate with the kids".

In sum, students were quite aware of the affective distance teachers maintained from their students and differentiated teachers according to this characteristic.

Personal characteristics focus: Summary and discussion. Students spoke spontaneously of the personal characteristics of their teachers, focusing explicitly on teachers': (1) temperaments (2) tempers and (3) relationships with students. This focus was clearly related to the three previous foci in that teachers' personal characteristics influenced the work they assigned, the way they taught their classes and maintained discipline among students, and the enjoyment students derived from being in these classes. Nevertheless, students also spoke of their instructors as individuals in their own right with distinguishing characteristics. At times, students separated the personal characteristics of the individual occupying that role. At other times, the role was perceived as an inalienable characteristic of the individual role incumbent (such as the "grouchy old teacher"). This "figure/ground" distinction between personal characteristics and institutional role raises questions for further investigation such as: What behaviors do students attribute to role-related rather than personal characteristics? What other types of information do teachers display to the class regarding their personal characteristics? How and when is this information communicated?

Analysis I: Concluding remarks. This completes our elaboration of the characteristics to which seventh-graders refer when asked to describe different types of teachers. Taken as a whole, the broad outlines of the foci and the themes within them suggest intuitive confirmation of the characteristics of more and less effective classrooms and teachers. Asked to describe different types of teachers, students referred to the work they were assigned, their instructors' facilities as teachers, the institutional characteristics of their classrooms, and teachers' personal characteristics. Although one may disagree about the categorization of individual definition statements or the labels given different themes, it is difficult to name additional characteristics necessary to delineate a broad range of classroom experiences and teacher characteristics.

In the following analysis, we examine the relationship of the cultural terms that describe different teacher types (good, mean, boring, fun, nice, hard, strict, easy) and the themes and contrast poles found to be salient in student thought. To be sure, these descriptive terms use a broad brush to depict teachers while ignoring individual

subtleties. Our goal, it must be remembered, is not the discrimination of individual variations, but rather the depiction of behaviors and characteristics typically associated with different types of teachers. To this task, we now turn.

Analysis II: A Thematic Definition of Teacher Types

In this section we return to the interpretive schema elaborated in the previous analysis and examine the teacher types associated with each theme and contrast pole. Our discussion takes place at the thematic level and ignores the aggregation of themes into foci. We begin with a consideration of the quantity of work theme and proceed through each theme, one by one, until reaching the relationship with students theme. Throughout this discussion we refer to tables illustrating the number of students whose descriptions of a teacher type reflected the theme under consideraton. Following this theme-by-theme analysis, we present a summary profile of each teacher type.

Teacher types associated with the quantity of work theme. Table 2.2 displays the associations students made between types of teachers and the quantity of work they assigned. Mean, hard, and strict teachers were perceived as requiring students to do more work than easy, fun, or nice teachers. Not surprisingly, easy teachers were most frequently associated with giving less work, and hard teachers were most frequently associated with giving more work. No mention was made of good or boring teachers.

Table 2.2

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements
for the Quantity of Work Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
QUANTITY OF WORK	Less Work	0	0	8 (47%)*	0	0	0	4 (24%)	5 (29%)	17 (100%)
	More Work	2 (14%)	7 (50%)	0	0	5 (36%)	0	0	0	14 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

The frequency with which fun and nice teachers were associated with giving less work, and the number of times mean teaachers were asociated with more work, bears comment. It would appear that the quantity of work students are expected to complete has a direct influence on their overall affective evaluation of the teacher. Teachers can be "nice" or "fun" if they do not work students too hard. Conversely, they can be considered "mean" if they expect students to produce more work than students believe reasonable.

The moderately strong association of strict teachers with the more work contrast pole is also of interest. Part of a teacher's strictness has to do with the productivity requirements s(he)establishes. Students' perceptions of teachers as strict apparently do not -- as might have been expected -- result solely from disciplinary practices.

It is interesting to note that no mention was made of the quantity of work theme theme in regard to good or boring teachers. This suggests that the students did not perceive the proficiency of their teachers or the lassitude they inspired to be related to the amount of work they assigned.

Teacher types associated with the difficulty of work theme. Table 2.3 displays the manner in which definition statements making up the difficulty of work theme were associated with types of teachers. The results displayed on this table echo some of the results appearing on Table 2.2. Hard and strict teachers were characterized

Table 2.3

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements
for the Difficulty of Work Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
DIFFICULTY OF WORK	Easy	0	0	10 (77%)*	0	0	0	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
	Hard	0	2 (33%)	0	0	4 (67%)	0	0	0	6 (101%)**

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

** Total does not equal 100% because of rounding.

as assigning difficult work, while easy, fun and nice teachers were recognized as giving students easy work. No mention was made of mean, good, or boring teachers.

When one considers the teacher types most frequently associated with each contrast pole, easy teachers were most frequently described as giving easy work and strict teachers most frequently associated with hard work. Although this characterization of easy teachers seems appropriate, the more frequent association of strict rather than hard teachers with difficult work is somewhat surprising and bears examination. First, this result may be a methodological artifact stemming from the unstructured interview methodology. Given more structured procedures, hard teachers might be shown to be the teacher type most frequently associated with hard work. Alternatively when this finding is taken together with those resulting from examination of the quantity of work theme, the data suggest that students discriminate among teachers they consider hard and those they term strict. Hard teachers are perceived to assign large quantities of work, while strict teachers are known to assign work which is difficult.

Twice as many of the students' definition statements referred to easy as to hard work, and nearly all of the easy statements were made with respect to the definition of an easy teacher. This overrepresentation of definition statement at the less difficult contrast pole may suggest that teachers, who do not assign hard work, and consequently, who make students' classroom experience more tolerable, are more salient to students than those who have high academic expectations for their classes. Anecdotal evidence, and at least one ethnographic study (Block, 1981), suggests that students often take great pleasure in those classes which do not demand great effort. Comments from some of the students interviewed in the current study support this notion. The students suggested that they would gladly tolerate boredom as the price for easy work.

Teacher types associated with the grading standards theme. Table 2.4 displays the types of teachers mentioned in conjunction with the Grading Standards theme. Special caution should be exercised with the interpretation of this table because the total number of definition statements for this theme was small, an issue to which we will return when we consider the relative saliency of the themes and foci in the final analysis section.

Nevertheless, the same general pattern of results seen with the previous two themes appears once more. Mean, hard, and strict teachers were associated with the demanding contrast pole, while easy and good teachers were associated with the lenient contrast pole. No definition statements referred to boring, fun, or nice teachers.

Teacher types associated with the quality of explanations theme. Table 2.5 displays the number and percentage of definition statements for the quality of explanations theme relative to different teacher types. Mean and hard teachers were spoken of as providing inadequate

explanations, while good and nice teachers were characterized as giving clear explanations. Easy, strict, boring, and fun teachers were not mentioned with reference to this theme.

Table 2.4

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements
for the Grading Standards Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
GRADING STANDARDS	Lenient	0	0	1 (50%)*	1 (50%)	0	0	0	0	2 (100%)
	Demanding	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	0	0	2 (33%)	0	0	0	6 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

Again, only a small number of definition statements were given for this theme. Hence interpretation must proceed carefully. A greater number of definition statements described the clear, rather than the inadequate, contrast pole. This may suggest that good instructional practice is quite salient to students, in contrast, perhaps to the mediocre and confusing instruction which is often their daily fare.6

6 This comment is made in light of the instructional practices depicted in Volume II. See: Rounds, T.S.; Ward, B.A., Mergendoller, J.R., and Tikunoff, W.J., Organization of Instruction: Elementary School-Junior High School Comparison. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1982; Report EPSSP-82-3.

Comment must be made about the frequency with which good teachers were described as giving clear explanations. These definition statements accounted for over half the definition statements representing the clear contrast pole, and 40 percent of the definition statements for the theme as a whole. As discussed in the previous analysis section, one characteristic students attributed to good teachers was the teachers' ability to explain themselves and their subject matter to their students. Teachers perceived as good or nice (adjectives suggesting a positive emotional tone) were contrasted with teachers found to be mean or hard (adjectives implying a negative affective evaluation). Thus, it seems that this instructional skill not only facilitates students' learning, but also is related to students' affective evaluation of teachers.

Table 2.5

Number and Percentgae of Definition Statements
for the Quality of Explanations Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
QUALITY OF EXPLANATIONS	Inadequate	2 (50%)*	2 (50%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 (100%)
	Clear	0	0	0	4 (67%)	0	0	0	2 (33%)	6 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

Teacher types associated with the individual assistance theme. Table 2.6 displays the number and percentage of students' definition statements for the individual assistance theme associated with different teacher types. Mean and strict teachers were described as providing inadequate individual assistance, with the greater percentage of definition statements made in reference to mean teachers. At the other contrast pole, easy, good, fun, and nice teachers were described as being available to answer students' questions. Nice teachers were described in the greatest percentage of definition statements.

No mention was made of hard or boring teachers in reference to the instructional assistance theme.

Table 2.6

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements
for the Individual Assistance Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE	Not Available	6 (67%)*	0	0	0	3 (33%)	0	0	0	9 (100%)
	Available	0	0	1 (7%)	2 (13%)	0	0	3 (20%)	9 (60%)	15 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

The implicit comparison of nice and mean teachers, in regard to this theme, is instructive. The perception of "meanness" is not delimited, as one might expect, by the teacher's style of classroom management or disciplinary privations, but can extend to the way in which teachers carry out their instructional programs. Teachers who refused to answer students' questions and give them the assistance to which they considered themselves legitimately entitled were perceived as mean, unfair, and punitive--all of which, in students' opinions may suggest an arbitrary display of power rather than the appropriate exercise of instructional prerogatives. Conversely, a teacher who facilitated student learning by providing the help necessary to reduce confusion and assist comprehension was perceived as a "nice" individual who cared about student learning. Hence, again teachers' instructional practices seemed to have a definite influence on the affective evaluation they received from their students.

The argument that students view the availability of instructional assistance as an interpersonal and affective matter more than an instructional question is further supported by the fact that nice

teachers were more frequently mentioned as providing adequate aid in the classroom than were good teachers.

Perhaps suprisingly, hard teachers were not mentioned in the definition statements for this theme even though one might hypothesize that hard teachers require students to complete their work with a minimum of instructional assistance.

Teacher types associated with the disciplinary strategy theme. Table 2.7 displays the manner in which the definition statements for the disciplinary strategy theme were associated with different teacher types. Definition statements describing mean, hard, and strict teachers defined the punishment contrast pole, while descriptions of easy, and good teachers defined the warning contrast pole. Nice teachers had some definitions in each pole.

Table 2.7

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements
for the Disciplinary Strategy Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
DISCIPLINARY STRATEGY	Punishment	12 (50%)*	1 (4%)	0	0	8 (33%)	0	0	3 (13%)	24 (100%)
	Warning	0	0	2 (22%)	1 (11%)	0	0	0	6 (67%)	9 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

The association of mean and strict teachers with the punishment contrast pole is unambiguous, but the association of hard and nice teachers with this pole, as well as easy and good teachers with the

opposite contrast pole, appears more problematic because of the small number of definition statements involved.

In light of the small number or absence of definition statements referring to hard, easy, good, boring, and fun teachers, it would appear that their disciplinary strategies did not play a major role in students' characterization of them. By contrast, mean and strict teachers seemed to be known for punishing students. Similarly, students associated nice teachers with a warning-oriented disciplinary approach. Yet, at the same time, nice teachers also were described as punishing students. Two interrelated interpretations of this finding may be suggested. First, nice teachers may be perceived as able to vary their disciplinary strategy according to the individual case in question, although they generally warn students that their punishment is imminent. Alternatively, the "niceness" of teachers may be perceived as a global attribute which has no distinct relationship to the disciplinary strategies which these teachers employ. As a result, while nice teachers may be expected to warn students before punishing them, the use of immediate punishment without warning is not considered out of character and, perhaps more importantly, may not diminish their fundamental "niceness."

Further, the tone of the definition statements which make up the disciplinary strategy theme suggests strongly that students preferred to be in the classes of teachers who punished rarely and warned much. Students disliked, as Student A14 remarked, "getting in trouble," and appreciated the advance notice which teachers' warnings provided.

Teacher types associated with the tolerance for inappropriate behavior theme. Table 2.8 displays the manner in which the definition statements making up the tolerance for inappropriate behavior theme were associated with different teacher types. Mean, good, strict, and nice teachers were mentioned with respect to the low contrast pole while easy, fun, and nice teachers were mentioned in conjunction with the opposite pole. Not surprisingly, mean and strict teachers were most frequently mentioned as having a low tolerance for misbehavior; definition statements about these teachers accounted for approximately 90 percent of the statements describing the low contrast pole. No mention was made of hard or boring teachers in relation to this theme.

Because there were relatively few definition statements referring to nice teachers, we offer the following interpretation with some uncertainty. Nonetheless, the appearance of nice teachers at both ends of the tolerance continuum seems to confirm our previous suggestion that students' perceptions of nice teachers are neither defined nor constrained by the different disciplinary approaches employed in their classrooms.

Table 2.8

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements for the Tolerance for Inappropriate Behavior Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
TOLERANCE FOR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR	Low	7 (41%)*	0	0	1 (6%)	8 (47%)	0	0	1 (6%)	17 (100%)
	High	0	0	2 (29%)	0	8	0	1 (14%)	4 (57%)	7 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

It is somewhat surprising that hard teachers were not characterized as having a low tolerance for misbehavior. This omission provides more evidence to confirm the thesis discussed in relation to the previous theme: the disciplinary management procedures employed by the teacher are not a salient part of students' perceptions of the teacher's "hardness."

Teacher types associated with the student self-management theme. Table 2.9 displays the teacher types whose behaviors gave rise to the student self-management theme. Mean, hard, and strict teachers were perceived as discouraging student self-management, while easy, good, fun, and nice teachers encouraged students to take an active role in managing their classroom behavior and activities. No students spoke of boring teachers in relation to this theme.

The most suggestive contrast appearing in Table 2.9 is between strict and mean teachers on one hand and fun teachers on the other. The perception of strict teachers as limiting the classroom mobility and academic initiative described by this theme is not surprising. Such teachers, as one student remarked, generally have "a bunch of things you're not supposed to do." The association of mean teachers with the discouraged contrast pole suggests that instructors who cur-

tailed students' prerogatives to manage their classroom affairs were sometimes perceived as unfair and arbitrary. In contrast, students found it "fun" to be with teachers who gave students some amount of freedom in the classroom and allowed early adolescents' needs for sociability, mobility, and autonomy to express themselves in a controlled fashion.

Table 2.9

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements for the Student Self-Management Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
STUDENT SELF MANAGEMENT	Discouraged	7 (30%)*	1 (4%)	0	0	15 (65%)	0	0	0	23 (99%)**
	Encouraged	0	0	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	0	0	8 (62%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

** Total does not equal 100% because of rounding.

Teacher types associated with the affective character theme. Table 2.10 displays the way in which teacher types were associated with the affective character theme. Boring teachers were described as having generally disagreeable classes, while good, fun, and nice teachers were characterized as engaging students in their schoolwork. Mean teachers appeared at both contrast poles, and if one can have faith in the small number of definition statements in question, their classes were more frequently characterized as disagreeable than engaging. No mention was made of hard, easy, or strict teachers.

These data suggest two points for discussion. First, the fact that no definition statements were made involving hard, easy, or strict teachers suggests that the defining characteristics of these three teacher types do not include students' affective evaluations of such teachers' personalities or instructional programs. In other words, hard and strict teachers do not necessarily have disagreeable classes, and teachers who give easy assignments are not necessarily

perceived as directing pleasant and engaging class periods. Second, the association of mean teachers with both disagreeable and engaging classes may suggest that, in some instances, the generally negative instructional and managerial characteristics discussed in relation to previous themes which have been associated with mean teachers do not inevitably lead students to perceive the classes of such teachers as disagreeable. Other factors such as the presence of friends or the nature of the assignments may provide a positive counterbalance to the negative perceptions students have associated with mean teachers.

Although such an interpretation must be speculative, since it is based on the presence of a single definition statement, it gives rise to the question of how significant a factor a teachers' "meanness" is in students' global evaluation of the affective character of a particular class, and when this characteristic may be outweighed by other considerations. Finally, it is interesting that the preponderance of definition statements referred to engaging rather than disagreeable classroom experiences. This numerical imbalance of definition statements may suggest that truly engaging classroom experiences are unusual events and thus worth remarking upon.[7]

Table 2.10

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements for the Affective Character Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
AFFECTIVE CHARACTER	Disagreeable	2 (15%)*	0	0	0	0	11 (85%)	0	0	13 (100%)
	Engaging	1 (4%)	0	0	3 (13%)	0	0	14 (58%)	6 (25%)	24 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

7 This speculation finds some confirmation in the portraits of individual classrooms found in Volume II of this study. See: Rounds, T.S., Ward, B.A., Mergendoller, J.R., and Tikunoff, W.J., Organization of Instruction: Elementary School-Junior High School Comparison. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1982 (Report EPSSP-82-3).

Teacher types associated with the temperament theme. Table 2.11 displays the teacher types associated with the temperament theme. Mean and hard teachers were characterized as having unappealing personalities, while good, fun, and nice teachers were described as having appealing personalities. Strict teachers appeared at both contrast poles while no mention was made of easy or boring teachers.

Table 2.11

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements
for the Temperament Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
TEMPERAMENT	Unappealing	3 (38%)*	2 (25%)	0	0	3 (38%)	0	0	0	8 (101%)**
	Appealing	0	0	0	5 (24%)	1 (5%)	0	7 (33%)	8 (38%)	21 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

** Total does not equal 100% because of rounding.

Relative to the data in Table 2.11, several points suggest themselves for discussion. First, since strict teachers were characterized as having both unappealing and appealing temperaments, it would appear that they were perceived as strict more on the basis of their instructional and management practices than their characteristics as individuals. Although such an interpretation must be speculative, it is as if students were saying that some strict teachers have appealing temperaments while others do not; thus the locus of teachers' strictness lies outside their personal characteristics. Second, the lack of association of boring teachers with the unappealing contrast pole implies that students separated their perceptions of teachers as boring instructors responsible for disagreeable and unpleasant classes from their perceptions of these teachers as individual personalities. Such a discrimination suggests that students viewed at least some disagreeable classroom experiences as resulting from the instructional skill of teachers rather than flaws in their personalities. Similarly, teachers who gave their students easy work were not inevitably esteemed for their appealing personalities.

Types of teachers associated with the temper theme. Table 2.12 displays the teacher types associated with the temper theme. Mean and strict teachers were characterized as losing their tempers and yelling at their classes, while easy, good, fun, and nice teachers were described as maintaining equanimity. No mention was made of hard or boring teachers. The numerical contrast suggested between mean teachers (who yell) and nice teachers (who do not) is striking and reinforces once more the dichotomy between positively and negatively evaluated teacher types. The infrequent association of the remaining teacher types with the temper theme suggests that the emotional volatility or restraint displayed by hard, easy, good, boring or fun teachers is not one of their defining characteristics.

Table 2.12

Number and Percentage of Definition Statements for the Temper Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
TEMPER	Yells	6 (75%)*	0	0	0	2 (25%)	0	0	0	8 (100%)
	Doesn't Yell	0	0	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	0	0	1 (11%)	6 (67%)	9 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

The definition statements which made up this theme suggest strongly that, for many students, being yelled at was not only unpleasant but also frightful. Once more, mean teachers appear to be associated with an unfair exercise of their institutional status. Should students become angry and raise their voices to a teacher, a "plan," a referral, or explusion could result. In contrast, teachers seemed to have the prerogative to berate their students at will. Those teachers who exerexercised this prerogative were unequivocably perceived as being mean to students.

Types of teachers associated with the relationship with students theme. Table 2.13 displays the teacher types mentioned in regard to the relationships with students theme. Mean and strict teachers appear at the uncaring contrast pole, while good, fun, and nice teach-

ers are associated with the interested contrast pole. No definition statements were made with respect to hard, easy, or strict teachers.

Table 2.13

Number and Percentage of
Definition Statements for the Relationship with Students
Theme Associated with Types of Teachers

THEME	CONTRAST POLES	TYPES OF TEACHERS								TOTAL
RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS		Mean	Hard	Easy	Good	Strict	Boring	Fun	Nice	
	Uncaring	4 (80%)*	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)	0	0	5 (100%)
	Interested	0	0	0	3 (25%)	0	0	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	12 (100%)

* Percentages in parentheses are calculated according to row totals.

The characterization of mean teachers as uncaring would seem to follow as a consequence of the instructional, managerial, and disciplinary practices which have been described earlier as unjust and arbitrary exercises of power from the students' perspective. Conversely, the personal interest good, fun, and nice teachers take in their students also seems to be reflected in their instructional and managerial behaviors. The neglect of hard and easy teachers in relation to this theme suggests that students do not perceive the difficulty of the work teachers assign to be related to the concern teachers express for their students. Similarly, teachers' strictness also does not appear to be related to the relationships they establish with their students.

Summary profile and discussion of the eight teacher types. The preceding discussion examined the relationship of teacher types and the perceptual themes which emerged from the analysis of students' definition statements on a theme-by-theme basis. Table 2.14 unites all foci, themes, and contrast poles to present a summary profile of the teacher types.

The four foci of academic work, instructional facility, classroom experience, and personal characteristics appear along the top margin of Table 2.14. Individual themes are listed below the appro-

Table 2.14. Summary Profile of the Eight Teacher Types

	ACADEMIC WORK			INSTRUCTIONAL FACILITY		CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE				PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS		
	Quantity of Work	Difficulty of Work	Grading Standards	Quality of Explanations	Individual Assistance	Disciplinary Strategy	Tolerance for Inappropriate Behavior	Student Self-Management	Affective Character	Temperament	Temper	Relationship With Students
MEAN					Not Available	Punishment	Low	Discouraged		Unappealing	Yells	Uncaring
HARD	More Work		Demanding									
EASY	Less Work	Easy Work										
GOOD				Clear					Engaging	Appealing		Interested
STRICT	More Work	Hard Work			Not Available	Punishment	Low	Discouraged		Unappealing		
BORING									Dis-agreeable			
FUN	Less Work				Available			Encouraged	Engaging	Appealing		Interested
NICE	Less Work				Available	Warning or Punishment	High		Engaging	Appealing	Doesn't Yell	Interested

priate focus. The eight cultural terms describing teacher types are listed along the left margin of the table. Cell entries displaying contrast poles appear when three or more students (roughly 15 percent of the sample) referred to a specific contrast pole to characterize a teacher type. In the one instance, in which both contrast poles were mentioned by three or more students, both poles appear in the cell. Blank cells indicate that fewer than three students referred to a theme and contrast pole to describe a teacher type. type. (This criterion was established to ensure that this summary analysis would reflect cultural understanding rather than individual idiosyncrasies.) We consider below the profile of teacher types summarized on Table 2.14.

Mean teachers. Seventh-graders perceived that mean teachers made it difficult for students to work successfully by failing to provide the individual help they needed to complete their assigned work. The disciplinary strategy of mean teachers was one that emphasized immediate punishment rather than initial warnings. Congruent with this disciplinary approach was the fact that mean teachers exhibited a low tolerance for inappropriate behavior and discouraged students from taking an active role in managing their classroom activities. Students considered mean teachers to have unappealing temperaments and spoke of their frequent and vocal fits of temper. These teachers also were perceived as uncaring and uninterested in their students.

Three different foci encompassing seven separate themes were salient in the definition of mean teachers. The term, "mean," evidently had a considerable range of significance for seventh-graders and encompassed a number of complex forms of behavior. A consistent thread, however, which ran through many of the definition statements was that mean teachers treated their classes unfairly and refused to show students the basic trust and respect the students felt to be their due. Moreover, mean teachers were often viewed as being unfair, arbitrary, and self-serving when teaching students or or controlling inappropriate behavior. One of the definitions given the word mean in Websters New Collegiate Dictionary is "characterized by petty selfishness and malice" (1979:706). This definition would seem to fit our students' conceptions of a mean teacher.

Hard teachers. Hard teachers were characterized by the large amount of work they assigned and the demanding grading standards they applied in the evaluation of this work. The three other foci--instructional facility, classroom experience, and personal characteristics -- were not pertinent in describing hard teachers. The adjective "hard," when applied to teachers, evidently had a limited range of meaning, for it was only salient with respect to a single focus. Consequently, it did not imply the overall positive or negative affective evaluation of teachers and classroom experience suggested by some of the other teacher terms.

Easy teachers. In contrast to hard teachers, easy teachers assigned lesser quantities of work. These assignments were al-

so perceived as easy to complete. As was found with the previous teacher type, the adjective "easy" had a restricted range of meaning and was salient only in regard to the academic work focus. No global affective characterization was given to easy teachers.

Good teachers. Students described good teachers as being able to communicate clearly and help students to understand the assigned material. Such teachers were more strongly associated with the quality of explanations theme than any other type of teacher. In addition, good teachers were considered to maintain enjoyable and engaging classes, possess appealing temperaments, and demonstrate interest in their students.

The range of meaning assigned to the concept of a good teacher was greater than for the previous two teacher types and encompassed three foci: instructional facility, classroom experience, and personal characteristics. Students' approving descriptions of good teachers suggested consistent positive evaluations of such teachers' characteristics.

It is interesting to note that the good teacher was not viewed as the antithesis of the mean teacher, although some interesting comparisons did arise. The defining characteristics of both good and mean teachers were encompassed by the same three foci: instructional facility, classroom experience and personal characteristics. The nature of the academic work assigned was not a defining characteristic of either teacher type. Within the three common foci, there were only two times when good and mean teachers were described using contrasting poles of the same themes, and both of these themes themes referred to the personal characteristics of the teacher types. Good teachers were viewed as having appealing temperaments and being being interested in their students; mean teachers were perceived as having unappealing temperaments and not caring about their students. Other salient contrasts occurred within common foci but involved differing themes and contrast poles. Good teachers were viewed as explaining material and assignments clearly, while mean teachers were unavailable to students and did not provide individual assistance. Good teachers' classes were recognized for their engaging character, while a mean teacher's classes were typified as social situations where students were quickly and angrily punished for slight amounts of inappropriate behavior and where students were not given responsibility for managing their own classroom activities. The management strategy employed by good teachers received slight attention from students; perhaps the classrooms of such teachers were so well organized that continuing discipline problems were rare and thus did not take a prominent role in students' perceptions.

Strict teachers. Strict teachers were perceived by students to be similar to mean teachers in that they assigned a great deal of work and were not available to provide individual assistance. Like mean teachers, their classroom disciplinary strategies utilized punishment, and they exhibited a low tolerance for misbehavior. Student self-management also was discouraged. In terms of their per-

sonal characteristics, strict teachers were described as having unappealing temperaments.

Unlike mean teachers, strict teachers were not portrayed as given to fits of temper; they did not yell at their classes. In addition, no mention was made of the nature of the relationships they established with their students.

The comparison of strict and mean teachers is instructive. The adjective "strict" had a complex set of meanings and shared many of those significations with the mean teacher. However, missing from the characterizations of the mean teacher (and present in the description of the mean teacher) were negative characterizations within the personal characteristics focus. The mean teacher was spoken of as yelling at students and not caring about them as individuals. No such characterizations were associated with the strict teacher. Students did not speak with delight when describing a strict teacher, but they did not attribute personal vindictiveness and arbitrary exercise of power to this teacher. Such characterizations were applied to the mean teacher. Strict teachers, then, would seem to share mean teachers' concerns with maintaining instructional distance as well as control of the classroom, but they managed their classrooms in such a way that students did not feel attacked or treated unfairly. Perhaps at the heart of a mean teacher is a strict teacher who has overstepped the bounds of humane treatment and moved from "meaning business" to treating students unfairly.

Boring teachers. Of all the cultural terms examined in this study, the gerund "boring" had the most restricted range of meaning and referred only to the affective character of students' classroom experiences. Boring teachers were characterized by the disagreeable nature of their classes. Few comments pertaining to the other themes were made about boring teachers. It appears that when a teacher was boring, nearly all other characteristics of this individual, as well as the curriculum, eluded descernment.

Fun teachers. Fun teachers, like easy teachers, were perceived as assigning little work. They provided students with individual help and, in so doing, may have demonstrated the qualities that led to their perception as being "fun." They encouraged students to manage their classroom activities and exhibited appealing temperaments. Fun teachers did not yell at their clases, and, like the good and the nice teaachers, they were interested in their students. Students considered their classroom experiences with fun teachers to be engaging.

Thus, the term "fun" had a wide range of meaning and drew its significance from all four of the foci. Significant contrasts appeared when fun teachers were compared to mean teachers. These two teacher types were often characterized using contrasting poles of the same theme. For example, fun teachers were perceived as offering individual assistance, encouraging students to manage their classroom activities, having appealing temperaments, and showing interest in their students, while mean teachers received the oppo-

site characterizations. Other distinctions did not revolve around opposing contrast poles, but were captured in the selection of themes. Fun teachers were said to assign less work, have appealing personalities, and have engaging classes; these themes were not salient in the definition of mean teachers.

Nice teachers. Nice teachers were described as assigning less work than hard or strict teachers and providing individual help to students. In terms of disciplinary strategy, they used either warnings or immediate punishments, depending on what was an appropriate response to misbehavior. Compared with strict and mean teachers, nice teachers displayed more tolerance for misbehavior. They maintained classroom environments and used learning activities which engaged their students, and they were described as being appealing individuals who did not yell at and were interested in their students.

Students used all four foci to characterize nice teachers. The contrast poles associated with the qualities of nice teachers and their classrooms invariably suggested a positive attitude toward these teachers. Even the fact that nice teachers sometimes punished students without warning did not alter the appreciative tone of the definition statements. From the student's perspectives, to characterize a teacher as being nice was a tribute. Nice teachers were perceived to have students' interests at heart. They were considerate of students' feelings and respected them as human beings. They demonstrated tolerance for "goofing around" and were not unreasonable in the amount of work they assigned. When students had problems with the work, nice teachers helped them to master their difficulties.

The depth of meanings suggested by individual teacher types. Although the preceding discussion has been predicated on the assumption that students use common themes to conceptualize and evaluate different types of teachers, there is a second way of thinking about the range of behaviors which the eight cultural terms encompass. This concerns the depth of meaning represented by the various teacher types. Although we have touched upon this in the above discussion, no comparison has been made across all eight teacher types. By counting the number of foci mentioned with respect to each teacher type, we arrive at an indication of the depth of meaning encompassed by each of the eight terms. Terms with few significations are considered to have limited or superficial meanings, while terms with multiple significations are considered to have complex meanings.

Three teacher types (hard, easy, and boring) were defined in reference to a single focus and thus demonstrated the most restricted range of meaning of all the cultural terms. Hard and easy teachers were characterized solely according to the academic work they assigned and evaluated; boring teachers were only mentioned with regard to the disagreeable nature of students' experiences within their classrooms. More complex in their significations were mean and good teachers; they were defined in relation to three foci: instructional facility, classroom experiences and personal characte-

istics. Finally, students used all four foci to describe the remaining teacher types (strict, fun, and nice teachers). These teacher types thus received the most detailed characterization, with the qualities of nice teachers and their classrooms being most elaborated.

The most striking contrast which emerges from this comparison is between the three terms which referred to a single focus (hard, easy, and boring) and the remaining teacher types (mean, good, strict, fun, and nice). These latter five terms are both more ambitious and more ambiguous in their meaning. A variety of qualities apparently make a teacher nice (or fun, strict, good, mean). Moreover, teachers may manifest these qualities in different ways and to different degrees. This makes an incontestable definition of the behaviors associated with these complex teacher types impossible to attain.

Consistent with this greater depth of meaning is the dilemma often expressed by researchers and practitioners concerning the qualities associated with these five teacher types. Observers of teachers whether seventh-graders or educational psychologists, find the characteristics of good teachers complex and interrelated in many different ways. This in turn, leads to a multi-dimensionality of the terms and the inherent difficulty (or impossibility) of providing a concise definition of good, fun, nice, strict, or mean teachers.

Analysis III: Saliencies in Students' Perceptions of Classroom Life

Previous analyses in this report have examined the nature of the foci and themes implicit in students' definitions of teachers. The following discussion ignores the distinctions students made between teacher types to focus on the relative salience of previously identified themes in students' perceptions of classroom life.

In conducting this analysis we make two assumptions. First, we assume that students' definition statements not only reveal the salient characteristics of different types of teachers, but also describe students' global perceptions of the classroom. This assumption follows from our previous experience interviewing students. We have found that when students are asked to describe their classes they respond in large part by describing their teachers. For most students, the characteristics of the teacher defined the quality of their classroom experience. Other factors such as the nature of assigned work or instructional organization were seen as resulting from these characteristics rather than as separate features of the students' schooling experience.

Such fundamental importance of the teacher in students' classroom lives is hardly surprising. The constitution of a classroom as a functioning social entity is dependent upon the presence of the teacher. While classes continue in spite of the absence of one or more students, a teacher's absence disrupts the social unit --

unless a substitute teacher is hired. Students' emphases of the characteristics of different teachers would seem to reflect accurately the teacher's significance in defining the quality of students' classroom life.

Our first assumption, then, is that questions about teacher types will evoke global perceptions of students' classrooms lives. In addition, we assume that the salience of students' perceptions will be reflected in the numerical frequency with which various perceptions appear. That is, themes mentioned frequently by students are more salient than those mentioned less frequently. Our procedure allows that only one definition statement associating a teacher type with a theme and contrast pole be counted for each student. Consequently, analysis can be most directly conducted at the theme (rather than the focus) level. We consider below the comparative salience of all 12 themes.

The comparative salience of individual themes in students' perceptions of classroom life. Table 2.15 ranks the 12 themes according to the number of definition statements made about each theme and categorizes the themes as demonstrating high, moderate, and low salience. Degrees of salience were assigned according to the following criteria. If a theme appeared in 10 or more percent of the definition statements, it was considered to have high salience for students. If a theme was mentioned in 5 to 9 percent of the definition statements, it was deemed to have moderate salience for students. Themes appearing in less than 5 percent of the definition statements were defined as having low salience for students.

There were no sharp discontinuities in salience. A gradual and even decline was observed from the theme demonstrating the highest salience to that of least salience. It would seem that although some aspects of classroom life are more significant to students within the range of themes, two or more themes often demonstrate the same relaative importance.

Five themes demonstrated high salience for students: (1) affective character; (2) student self-management; (3) disciplinary strategy; (4) quantity of work; and (5) temperament. These five themes represented approximately 58 percent of all definition statements and thus the highly salient features of classroom life for our seventh-graders is encompassed in these themes. Students attend chiefly to the behavioral boundaries of their classroom lives, their affective evaluation of their teacher, and their experience within the classroom. Their attention is focused on what they are allowed to do. They consider the opportunities given for the exercise of their own autonomy, the disciplinary actions they can expect from the teacher, and the amount of work they must complete. These initial concerns interrelate and combine to influence students' general evaluation of the pleasure and involvement (or disagreeable alienation) associated with the hours they spend in each class. To paraphrase these salient themes, students seem to reflect upon: What must I do? What can I do? Do I enjoy the experience of doing these things?

Table 2.15

Salience of Individual Themes

	RANK	THEME	NUMBER (PERCENT) OF DEFINITION STATEMENTS	FOCUS
THEMES WITH HIGH SALIENCE	1.	Affective Character	37 (13%)	Classroom Experience
	2.	Student Self-Management	36 (13%)	Classroom Experience
	3.	Disciplinary Strategy	33 (12%)	Classroom Experience
	4.	Quantity of Work	31 (11%)	Academic Work
	5.	Temperament	29 (10%)	Personal Characteristics
THEMES WITH MODERATE SALIENCE	6.	Individual Assistance	24 (8%)	Instructional Facility
	6.	Tolerance for Inappropriate Behavior	24 (8%)	Classroom Experience
	8.	Difficulty of Work	19 (7%)	Academic Work
	9.	Temper	17 (6%)	Personal Characteristics
	10.	Relationship with Students	17 (6%)	Personal Characteristics
THEMES WITH LOW SALIENCE	11.	Quality of Explanations	10 (4%)	Instructional Facility
	12.	Grading Standards	8 (3%)	Academic Work
		TOTAL	285 (101%).*	

* Total greater than 100 because of rounding.

Turning to the areas of rated as having moderate salience, we again find five themes: (1) individual assistance; (2) tolerance for inappropriate behavior; (3) difficulty of work; (4) temper; and (5) relationships with students. These five themes appeared in approximately 35 percent of the definition statements. When five moderate salience themes are contrasted with the high salience themes, there is a subtle shift of emphasis away from the activities of the student which are encouraged, required, or prohibited by the teacher to an accentuation on the central activities performed by the teacher and the manner in which the teacher interacts with students. Teachers talk with students and provide advice and assistance in regard to subject-related and personal matters, they behave equitably or angrily, they tolerate varying degree of misbehavior, and they assign work of varying degrees of difficulty. These moderate salience themes themes seem to delineate the role of the teacher as instructor, disciplinarian, friend, and human being who experiences anger and frustration.

Two themes were considered to have low salience: (1) quality of explanations, and (2) grading standards. These themes were mentioned in six percent of the definition statements. They refer to teachers' instructional behaviors. It is striking that out of all the themes describing aspects of students' classroom lives, these themes demonstrate the least salience. Students' perceptions seem to emphasize the nature of the classroom as a social organization, much like other organizations, rather than a social institution charged with providing instruction to students and evaluating their academic attainments.

When considering the salience of the themes as a whole, a rather dispiriting portrait of the phenomenology of the seventh-grader emerges. Schoolwork is seen as drudgery to be completed and is evaluated primarily on the basis of its quantity rather than its promise of teaching students something worthwhile. Little attention is given to the correct completion of assignments. Teachers are perceived primarily as behavioral trainers, entertainers, and friends rather than intellectual authorities with something worthwhile to say. The intellectual and instructional aspects of classroom life seem to be overwhelmed by students' concerns about getting into trouble and their preoccupation with petty freedoms. Only their attention to instructors' provision or refusal to provide instructional assistance suggests that they are concerned largely with completing their work in an appropriate fashion.

Such musings may be melodramatic, or they may refer only to the phenomenal experience of an unrepresentative group of seventh-graders at a single junior high school. We, however, doubt it. It appears reasonable to anticipate that what is salient to junior high school students is the daily grind of recitation, referrals, and personable and impersonal teachers. The fact that students only mention learning or significant intellectual engagement obliquely may be congruent with the aspects of the schooling experience emphasized in at least some junior high schools; that is behavioral and social issues.

The comparative salience of individual foci in students' perceptions. It will be remembered that four foci emerged as conceptual umbrellas in the earlier interpretive analysis. These are classroom experience, personal characteristics, academic work, and instructional feability. Although these foci do not represent empirical clusterings, they do encompass themes which are logically related. Further insights into the phenomenology of seventh-graders may be attained by examining the comparative salience of these foci in students' perceptions.

Table 2.16 displays the comparative salience of each focus on the basis of a global salience score. This score allows the salience of each theme to be related to the appropriate focus without confounding the number of themes which make up a focus and the salience of that focus. To calculate the global salience score for a focus, one, two, or three points were assigned to each theme associated with that focus according to its salience. "Low" themes received one point, "moderate" themes two points, and "high" themes three points. The number of points given to the themes in each focus was calculated, and this number was divided by the number of themes in the focus. Thus, the instructional facility focus which included two themes rated as having low and moderate salience, respectively received a score of 1.50 or (1 + 2)/2. Based on the global salience score, "high" salience foci correspond to a score of 3.00; "moderate" salience foci receive a score of 2.00; "low" salience foci correspond to a score of 1.00.

Table 2.16

Comparative Salience of Individual Foci

RANK	FOCUS	GLOBAL SALIENCE SCORE	ESTIMATION OF SALIENCE
1.	Classroom Experience	2.75	High -
2.	Personal Characteristics	2.33	Moderate +
3.	Academic Work	2.00	Moderate
4.	Instructional Facility	1.50	Low/Moderate

The results displayed in Table 2.16 echo those discussed in the previous section. The institutional aspects of classroom life were most salient to students as represented by the classroom experience

focus. The individual and relational qualities of the teacher which make up the personal characteristics focus were of more moderate salience. The nature of the academic work assigned by the teacher was next in importance. Finally, the explanatory and helping behaviors described by the instructional facility focus had the lowest global salience score.

Relationship of this Study to Previous Research

As noted at the beginning of this report, few studies have examined the manner in which students characterize their teachers and school experience, and thus few data are generally available to confirm, contradict, or extend the current research. Three studies, however, allow us to draw some tentative conclusions regarding the generalizability of the findings reported here.

Mallery (1962) interviewed students in eight high schools about the significance and meaning of their daily school experience. Part of this interview focused on students' perceptions of their teachers. Mallery summarizes the relevant findings:

> Great variety in viewpoints about the teachers' classroom techniques appeared. These themes recurred: the need for teachers to build confidence in the students; to explain adequately; to open a subject up for exploration rather than simply present it; and to allow students, if not even to challenge the teacher's statements, at least to think on their own rather than just to accept or recite.
>
> (in Silberman, 1971:33; emphasis in text)

Although these comments, voiced over two decades ago, reflect the desires expressed by high school students for certain types of teacher behavior, they are congruent with several of the themes found in the current study. Teachers who "build confidence" in students could be hypothesized to have appealing temperaments, to provide adequate individual assistance, to assign work of appropriate difficulty, to demonstrate interest in their students, and to create engaging classroom experiences. Moreover, such teachers would be expected to explain adequately the mysteries of both the content and their assignments. Teachers like those longed for by Mallery's respondents, who "allow students to think on their own," would probably also encourage student self-management. Thus, we see that although they employed slightly different terms, the students in Mallery's study could be expected to respond positively to many of the teaching behaviors and personal characteristics which were salient to and sought by the seventh-graders with whom we spoke. Based on this conceptual commonality, we hypothesize that these "elder states-

Table 2.17

Coding System Used in Osborn's Study of Saliencies in Students' Perceptions

PERSONAL TRAITS	MANAGERIAL TRAITS	TASK TRAITS
Friendly Teacher (Teacher is friendly, kind, agreeable.) Harsh, Grouchy Teacher (Teacher is mean, harsh, sour.) Humor Teacher (Teacher has a quality of wit or humor.) Deviate Teacher (Teacher is characteristically an odd or unusual person behaving in a fashion quite different from expectations of how Teacher should behave.) Neutral Teacher (Student describes Teacher in a manner which neither indicates liking nor dislike for the teacher.) Like Teacher (Student describes Teacher in terms which indicate that s/he views Teacher in a positive manner.) Dislike Teacher (Student describes Teacher in terms which indicate that s/he views Teacher in a negative manner.)	High Tolerance (Student reports that Teacher has few rules or regulations or seldom punishes or enforces the rules.) Low Tolerance (Student reports that Teacher has many rules and regulations or is very strict in "punishing the crime." Student may also indicate that Teacher frequently yells and hollers.) Just Teacher (Student reports that Teacher is condignly tolerant in her management of the class.)	Explains Well (Student reports that Teacher teaches the subject-matter material adequately and that Teacher can explain the material well.) Explains Poorly (Student reports that Teacher does a poor or inadequate job of explaining the subject-matter material.) Knowledge of Subject Matter: Positive (Student reports his/her perception of the Teacher's knowledge of the subject matter is adequate to outstanding.) Knowledge of Subject Matter: Negative (Student reports that Teacher's knowledge of the subject is inadequate.) Task Approach: Positive (Student reports that Teacher's method is adequate and s/he likes the approach used. Task Approach: Negative (Student reports that s/he is dissatisfied with the manner in which Teacher presents the subject-matter material.) Work Demands: Adequate or Great (Teacher makes adequate or great demands on students in assignment of classwork or homework.) Work Demands: Few (Teacher makes few demands on students in assignment of classwork or homework.) Evaluation of Demands: Positive (Student evaluates Teacher's demands positively. Evaluation of Demands: Negative (Student evaluates Teacher's demands negatively.) Task Interesting (Student reports that s/he is interested in the subject matter being presented.) Task Not Interesting (Student reports that s/he is unhappy, displeased, or not interested in the course *per se*.

men (and women)" might have used the identical cultural terms to typify their own teachers.

Everhart (1979) conducted an ethnographic study of a federally funded innovation in a medium-sized school district. Over a period of two years, he became a participant-observer of two student peer groups made up of seventh- (and then eighth-) grade boys. From this vantage point, Everhart attempted to understand the "fabric of meaning shared by students and teachers in the same junior high school. Several of Everhart's findings regarding students' "perspectives on teachers" correspond with our own.

First, the students Everhart observed applied implicit evaluatory criteria to the behaviors and personal attributes of their instructors. It will be remembered that we found the same assessments occurring and formulated contrast poles to capture this quality of student thought. In addition to this structural similarity, students in Everhart's study spoke approvingly and acted positively toward:

> ... teachers who communicated well with students, treated them fairly and with respect, and trusted them to complete the work on their own. Students appreciated teachers who listened to them and who allowed them to have a good time in class . . .
>
> Most [students] expected to do the work assigned them, but felt that this could be accomplished with some degree of enjoyment. Students did not use actual teaching ability as a criteria for differentiating among teachers, but rather centered on the personal relationships between teachers and themselves. (Everhart, 1979;156)

Many of the themes expressed by the seventh-graders in the current study provide apt paraphrases for the points made by Everhart. Students valued teachers who encouraged self-management and formed relationships reflecting their personal interest in students' well-being. Teachers with appealing personal characteristics and engaging classes were preferred to the strict disciplinarians who punished frequently and tolerated no misbehavior. The students in Everhart's study did not emphasize the instructional capabilities of their teachers; a finding which echoes the low salience our students attributed to the quality of explanations theme. At the same time, however, Everhart's students were greatly conscious of teachers' concern for them and the equitable treatment they received. In the current study, one important way teachers expressed concern and fairness was by providing ing individual assistance. Mean teachers, those instructors perceived as neither caring about nor acting justly toward their students, denied students the individual assistance they felt they needed.

The final research comparable to the current study was conducted by Osborn (1962) and examined the saliencies found in students'

perceptions of teachers. Osborn and his associates interviewed 125 tenthgrade students (62 females and 63 males) who were entering three Detroit, Michigan public high schools. The interviews were conducted during the first and twelfth weeks of school. Students were asked a number of questions about the teacher in whose class they felt the most motivation to learn, and the teacher with whom they felt the least motivation. The questions of most interest to the current study were: "Suppose a friend of yours was trying to decide whether to get this teacher for this course. What would you tell him/her about about the Teacher? How would you describe the Teacher?" (1962:5). Interviewees answers to these questions were analyzed using a twenty-two category coding system. Coding categories referred to the "Personal Traits," the "Managerial Traits," or the "Task Traits" of the teachers being described. Table 2.17 displays this coding system.

Before comparing the similarities between the coding system used by Osborn and the interpretive categories used in the present study, a significant difference concerning the design of the two studies should be noted. While Osborn began by coding students' spontaneous responses to a semi-structured interview, we began by selecting eight terms students used to describe teachers and then asked seventh-graders to explain the meaning of these terms. Consequently, our research analyzes the meaning of the expressions Osborn takes for granted in building his codes. At the same time, however, we have restricted the range of teacher behaviors and classroom characteristics under examination and limited the interview situation by asking all respondents about the same eight terms. A further difference is that the present study uses "themes" to capture the defining characteristics of different teacher types, while Osborn uses "traits" to distinguish different individuals. The theoretical distance between our theme-centered approach and Osborn's trait-centered one is significant. Osborn's study appears to assume that teachers exhibit certain traits in the same way they exhibit hair and eye color. These traits do not change and attract relative degrees of student attention. The current study does not emphasize traits exhibited by teachers; instead, it focuses on ways of thinking utilized by students and the associations between teacher behavior and descriptive terms.

In spite of differences in the purpose, methodology, and subject populations of the two studies, extensive correspondence can be detected. The personal traits mentioned by the students in Osborn's study reflect the same themes which we assembled under the personal characteristics focus with one exception: the deviate teacher. Osborn notes that this category was used when the respondent reported that "[Teacher] is characteristically an odd or unusual person behaving in a fashion quite different from expectations of how [Teacher] should behave" (1962:95). Since we did not ask students about "oddball" or "queer" teachers (two words used by Osborn as examples of students' characterizations of deviate teachers), it is not surprising that this theme did not appear in our seventh-graders' definition statements. The remaining personal traits attributed to teachers by by Osborn's respondents (friendly, harsh, humor, neutral, like, dis-

like), however, can be seen as variations in teachers' temperaments, tempers, or the relationships they establish with students. In addition, while we have considered the contribution of teachers' personal styles to the general affective character of a class as a defining characteristic of students' general classroom experience, Osborn considers this contribution as resulting directly from teachers' personal traits. This difference, it should be noted, is one of conceptual organization; the underlying saliency appears in both studies.

Two of the managerial traits mentioned by Osborn's subjects appear as restatements of four of the themes found in the current study. Osborn's coding manual suggests that the remarks which Osborn categorized as "High Tolerance", "Low Tolerance," or "Just Teacher" would be found under the themes of disciplinary strategy, tolerance for inappropriate behavior, student self-management and temper in the current study. Once more, common saliencies were categorized in both studies.

Finally, the Task Traits mentioned by Osborn's respondents capture qualities we have catalogued under the academic work and instructional facility foci. In addition, Osborn's "Task Interesting" and "Task Not Interesting" categories would be part of the affective character theme in the present study. As the above discussion indicates, there is substantial agreement concerning the categories of thought which are salient in students' perceptions of teachers across the studies.

Several differences between the two studies should also be noted. Most importantly, four of Osborn's task traits were not mentioned by the seventh-graders in our study: Knowledge of Subject Matter: Positive; Knowledge of Subject Matter, Negative; Task Approach, Positive; and Task Approach, Negative. We believe this divergence results from procedural differences in the two studies. Osborn's interviewers asked students what they would tell their friends about the teacher if they were trying to decide "whether to get this teacher" for a certain subject. In beginning the interview in this fashion, and mentioning the teacher in an instructional context, the interviewer questions may have encouraged students to describe and evaluate a teacher's knowledge of subject matter and instructional performance. If such encouragement did occur, we would expect students might talk at length length about their teacher's instructional prowess. If this hypothesis is plausible, there is no major discrepancy between the way in which Osborn's and our respondents perceived their teachers, but only a difference in the methodology employed to probe these perceptions.

In sum, when one allows for the conceptual and methodological differences distinguishing the two studies, the findings are strikingly congruent. When asked to describe their teachers, Osborn's ninth-graders spoke of the same qualities that were mentioned by the seventh-graders in the present study. Although Osborn conceptualized and organized these qualities slightly differently, students talked about nearly identical characteristics of teachers and classroom ex-

perience. The fact that such commonality of expression is found in studies conducted 20 years apart with populations of different ages living in different parts of the country increases our confidence that the results of the current inquiry can be generalized beyond the confines of the junior high school in which it was conducted. When the commonalities found in Osborn's study are combined with those found in the previously described work of Mallery and Everhart, it can be argued with some confidence that our findings explicate more than the culture of a single group of seventh-graders. We believe they give insight into the perceptions of secondary school students in general.

Relationship of this Study to Successful Schooling Practices

Our goal has been to understand the ways in which seventh-graders perceive and describe the teachers they encounter each school day. As such, our intent has been interpretive rather than prescriptive. Still, this study has several important implications for successful schooling practices, and we examine these below.

First, it is essential to remember that students are more than passive recipients of knowledge -- they actively interpret the classroom environment and evaluate the actions and personal characteristics of their teachers. While most teachers and researchers would agree that students are thinking human beings, the fact remains that a great deal of research on effective instructional practices has ignored the active, intellective capacity of the student and has not considered the relationship of students' perceptions of teachers and classroom life to their academic attainments. Rhona Weinstein, a noted scholar in the area of student perceptions, has made the same point at a "Benchmark Conference" organized by the National Institute of Education to review the preceding eight years of research on effective instructional practices. Weinstein noted:

> Although knowledge about student perceptions of schooling is clearly in its infancy, there is much to be learned from the research that has been done to date. First, what is learned from this body of research is a new attitude what student life in the classroom, that is, that students actively struggle to make sense of the social reality of schooling. Knowledge of the rich social-cognitive life of students increases our sensitivity to the multiple challenges that classroom living poses for students. We can come to know the world of school through the eyes of students. (1982:35)

Teachers who confront hallway accusations of being "mean" or "hard" or who hear their colleagues praised as being "nice" or "good" may wonder what students refer to when they express such judgments. This study provides information about the categorizations made by a group of seventh-graders and argues strongly from a review of other studies that such conceptions are typical of other secondary school students as well. Teachers may wish to examine (either through self-

reflection or peer visitation) their behavior in relation to the themes which are at the heart of this analysis and draw their own conclusions about the type of teacher they most resemble. While we do not encourage teachers to pander to the interests of their students in order to gain praise, we do believe it important to remember that students and teachers may perceive the same behavior in very different terms. While teachers may perceive that they are establishing an appropriate discipline system by punishing students without warning, or encouraging initiative and independence by refusing to answer students' questions, the youngsters in their classrooms may not understand their rationale and charge them with being unfair, uncaring, and mean.

While we have no data to suggest that students' perceptions of different types of teachers are linked to their learning in various teacher's classes, some of our respondents talked of how they "felt" with different types of teachers. Such data suggest that, for some students, there is a definite relationship between their perceptions of the teacher and their affective response to that teacher's class. To illustrate, let us explore briefly comments made by several students concerning mean, nice, strict, and good teachers.

Students reported that they felt "uneasy," "uncomfortable," or "scared" in mean teachers' classrooms and implied that such classrooms were aversive environments which made them want to retaliate or leave. One girl noted that she felt "like getting even" with mean teachers; a boy remarked, "I just want to get out." Perhaps the lack of enthusiasm expressed by the following student is characteristic of the feelings of many boys and girls in classes taught by mean teachers.

> You just don't, you just feel like not doing anything. Just, you know, sitting around talking. See, 'cause, when a nice teacher is there, you know, it makes you want to work, because just their being nice makes you want to give them something in return. See [with a] a mean teacher, just, I guess, [you want] revenge. I won't learn nothing! You know.

When one compares such comments with those made by students in relation to nice teachers, the difference is arresting. Students reported feeling "comfortable," "good," and "secure" with nice teachers and respected and valued these instructors. Students expressed appreciation, and the teachers responded in kind. One girl told us:

"If the teacher is nice, it makes you want to work." A second girl stressed the same idea:

> I can work, you know, without having all this stuff moving in my head; [I] sit there and work nice and peaceful or whatever, and then be able to go up and ask them questions all the time, I mean, not all the time, but whenever I need it.

she has, you know, you can work on it for the whole period. You've got other classes!

The above characterizations of mean, nice, good, and strict teachers do more than describe teachers from the viewpoint of seventh-graders; they suggest that students' participation in assigned work will vary with their perception of the teacher. Students desired to leave or disrupt classes taught by mean teachers. Alternatively, they expressed commitment to and involvement with work assigned by nice, good, and, to some degree, by strict teachers. This implication, while requiring several interpretive and methodological leaps, is supported by the results of a number of studies of teacher effectiveness.

Soar and Soar (1979) found that students learned more in the elementary classrooms of teachers who did not express negative affect toward students. Rosenshine and Furst (1971) found that criticism of a student was negatively related to that student's academic achievement. This same result is cited in a comprehensive review of teacher effectiveness studies compiled by Medley (1977) in regard to the learning of low SES pupils in the primary grades. Interestingly, a positive relationship was not found by Soar and Soar between teachers' expression of positive affect and student learning. Such a result does appear, however, in the studies cited by Medley (1977). Our respondents characterized mean teachers as individuals who punished rather than warned students, demonstrated low tolerance for inappropriate behavior, and yelled frequently. Such characteristics are associated with the expression of negative affect and might suggest that students learn less when taught by mean teachers. This interpretation, it should be remembered, is highly speculative and begs further empirical validation.

Although mean and strict teachers were both perceived to punish students and manifest low tolerance for misbehavior, they differed in significant ways. Strict teachers were not described as yelling at their students. In addition, they assigned a great deal of hard work. By avoiding displays of temper, strict teachers may avoid expressing some of the negative affect found to be negatively related to learning. Moreover, by assigning noticeable quantities of difficult work, they they defined their classrooms as workplaces. Such a definition of the classroom as a place for working and learning has correlates in the literature of effective instruction. Teachers' usage of taskoriented and businesslike behaviors were found by Rosenshine and Furst (1971) to be among the five variables most consistently related to student learning. A similar finding is reported by Medley (1977). .Interpolating from these results, we would argue that strict teachers facilitate student learning and we would note that the distinction made between mean and strict teachers lies primarily in the anger teachers express toward their classes (teacher behaviors interpreted by students to imply that teachers do not care about them) and in the emphasis given to the work students are to complete.

Students' descriptions of good teachers also recall some of the

WHAT SORT OF STUFF MOVES IN YOUR HEAD?

> Uh, uh, this is got to be due tomorrow. We are having a test today. We gotta get this over with. What do I do on this paper? I don't know this word. Stuff like that.

As noted earlier, students' descriptions of nice and good teachers were generally congruent regarding these teachers' personal characteristics and the affective character of their classes. It is not surprising, therefore, that students reported that they felt "good," "comfortable," and "happy" in the classroom of a good teacher. As one girl commented:

> I feel good. I feel like they're really trying to help me learn and that they're trying to help me.

Another boy commented:

> With a good teacher you can usually get your work done better, you can get a better grade and everything so you can do the work better 'cause you don't have a nagging teacher on your back all the time.

The statement of another seventh-grader summed up students' responses to a good teacher: "You just feel good because you'll understand what they're teaching." This understanding, which results from the clear explanations given by a good teacher, presents a significant issue to which we will return shortly.

Not surprisingly, students were less positive in their characterization of strict teachers and reported feeling "uncomfortable" in their classes. This affective response seemed to be related to strict teachers' low tolerance for inappropriate behavior and their use of immediate punishment as a disciplinary strategy. One girl commented:

> Well, you feel uneasy, because you are afraid that if you'll turn around you'll get blamed for doing something.

Another boy noted, "You just don't feel secure around them." Respondents also remarked on the businesslike atmosphere of strict teachers' classrooms. One boy told us that students "gotta listen, read directions all the time," and commented:

> Well, a strict teacher . . . wants more, you know, better work from you than some of the other teachers.

This task orientation was confirmed by another student who complained:

> It's like they think that you're the only class

variables researchers have found to be associated with the behavior of effective teachers. Most importantly, good teachers are clear in their explanations; teacher "clarity" is highly related to student achievement (Rosenshine and Furst, 1971). The recent "Benchmark Conference" organized by the National Institute of Education reached similar conclusions regarding the importance of clear explanations and communication of the teacher's expectations in the instructional process. A summary of the conference presentations and discussion concludes:

> Student learning is enhanced when there is a clear understanding of a teacher's intent as well as the content of instruction. (NIE, 1982)

Good teachers, it would seem, are so defined not only in the eyes of their students, but also in the outcomes of teaching research.

Both good and nice teachers were characterized by our seventh-graders as having appealing temperaments and engaging classrooms; two qualities linked conceptually with the variable of teacher enthusiasm. Rosenshine and Furst (1971) found teacher enthusiasm to be highly related to student achievement. In regard to good teachers, students made no definitive characterization about the discipline strategy they employed or their tolerance for misbehavior. They characterized nice teachers as using both warnings and punishments, depending upon the situation, and having a high tolerance for misbehavior. Perhaps good teachers have established an effective classroom management system is unobtrusive and, consequently, is not salient to students. If the teacher's disciplinary activities are salient to students, then a considerable amount of time may be devoted to keeping classroom order. This time could better be spent in instruction. The NIE "Benchmark Conference" concluded:

> Teachers who are effective managers prevent problems from arising in the first place, rather than develop special skills for responding to problems once they have occurred. (NIE, 1982)

As a result of the above similarities between findings reported in the literature on teacher effectiveness and the characteristics cited by our respondents, it may be concluded that the "good" teachers described by our seventh-grade students are also good instructors who help students to achieve.

Although our seventh-grade respondents spoke positively about nice teachers, the literature on effective instruction does not suggest that the characteristics of this feature are associated with student achievement gains. There are several reasons for this. Although nice teachers are characterized as being flexible in their disciplinary strategy, they also are seen as having a high tolerance for inappropriate behavior. This would suggest that they must spend considerable class time sanctioning or responding in some way to classroom disruptions. This time could be better spent on instruc-

tion. Moreover, it would seem that students spend less time completing academic tasks in nice teachers' classrooms. This assumption is based on the perception that nice teachers tolerate more inappropriate behavior from their students than other teachers. Perhaps part of this off-task behavior is related to students' perceptions that they are given less work to complete. "Time-on-task" has been shown to be a potent predictor of student achievement (Denham & Lieberman, 1980), and "unbusinesslike" classrooms (Rosenshine & Furst, 1971), where students have ample opportunity to misbehave, would appear to be unconducive to student achievement.

Based on the foregoing logical analysis, it appears that none of the teacher types we have described in this study are directly or unequivocably linked with student learning. Effective teachers -- teachers whose instructional behaviors have been shown to facilitate student learning -- seem to combine aspects of good and strict teachers. Some of the characteristics ascribed to mean and nice teachers appear to impede students' academic achievement. (The relationship of hard, easy, boring, and fun teachers to student learning has not been discussed because these relationships are even less clear than the tentative formulations advanced above.)

The effective teacher, then, combines a variety of personal and instructional characteristics to create a classroom environment where students understand the behavioral expectations of the teacher and focus on their assigned work in a businesslike fashion. Effective teachers do not criticize or express anger toward students, but maintain student task involvement through the structuring and organization of work activities coupled with continual monitoring. Effective teachers are enthusiastic and have appealing temperaments. When teaching and assigning work, effective teachers communicate clearly. As a result of these and other behaviors, students feel the teacher is concerned about their learning and their personal selves and reciprocate by doing their best to achieve the teacher's goals for them.

Although this description presents an instructional ideal, it is attainable. Self-reflection and peer visitation are powerful tools by by which teachers can examine their own instructional practices and experiment with new approaches. In this manner, we hope this aspect of the Junior High School Transition Study will contribute to the establishment and maintenance of successful schooling practices.

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