


## **Students' Feelings about School** **2**

The real question is whether it is still normal for a school child to live for years amid irrational terrors and lunatic misunderstandings. And here one is really up against the very great difficulty of knowing what a child really feels and thinks.

A child which appears reasonably happy may actually be suffering horrors which it cannot or will not reveal.

George Orwell, "Such were the days," in  
*A Collection of Essays by George Orwell*

 The emphasis in Chapter 1 on the repetitive, routinized, and compulsory aspects of classroom life may give the impression that school is an unpleasant place to be. And certainly it must be for some students, some of the time. Yet, as has also been noted, we know that the classroom is seen as a delightful and exciting place to be by others. How diverse are students' feelings about their academic life? Which feelings predominate, the positive or the negative? Furthermore, what is the educational significance of the attitudes that do exist? Can teachers tell which are the contented students and which are the unhappy ones? And even if they could make such a distinction, ought they to bother doing so? Are attitudes toward school significantly related to the quality of educational performance?

Although questions such as these sound direct enough, they lack simple answers. Moreover, despite their apparent directness and importance, not all of these questions have undergone serious scrutiny by educators and research workers. Consequently, as we seek answers to them we must be content with scraps of evidence instead of definitive findings. We must also be prepared to consider subjective testimony as well as objective fact.

## I

Both the pleasures and the pains of school life, and particularly of life in the earlier grades, have been celebrated in song and story. A pleasant nostalgia steals over some of us as we hum the lines: "School days, school days, dear old Golden Rule days." But Shakespeare, with characteristic candor, reminds us that not all the days were that sunny for "the whining school boy, with his satchel and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school." And if we were to continue our literary search the evidence would accumulate on both sides of the issue. In other words, adults who have bothered to describe their childhood experiences make it clear that the classroom was heaven for some, hell for others, and a bit of both for most.

Among negative reports of school life two themes predominate. The first has to do with frightening or embarrassing experiences resulting from the actions of cruel or insensitive teachers and classmates. Stories of unusually severe punishments and of being the object of ridicule characterize such reports. The second theme has to do with feelings of boredom arising from the meaninglessness of the assigned tasks or the overwhelming attractiveness of life outside the class. In descriptions of the first type the narrator's pain is often reported to have been public and acute. In descriptions of the second type the narrator typically portrays himself as having suffered in silence.

Accounts of unusual punishment, particularly physical punishment, at the hands of teachers are not as plentiful today as they likely were a generation or so ago. There are two major reasons for this change. First, many of our states have established legal restrictions to the teacher's use of corporal punishment. The public school teacher of today who is tempted to strike a child runs the risk, if he acts on his impulse, of getting involved in a law suit or of losing his job. Second, and more important, the practice of physical punishment is antithetical to the educational ideas that guide today's teaching practice. Modern teachers are advised to be understanding, to "meet the needs" of their charges, to be warm and "supporting." Many, if not most, teachers try to follow such advice and to avoid being harshly punitive.

For a description of a type of classroom discomfort that is rare nowadays we must turn to the recollection of older adults, or ones who were educated in other cultures. George Orwell, as an instance, related a kind of Dickensian school experience which, while seemingly extreme, is probably not too far removed from the experience of many adults who received their elementary schooling in this country a generation or two ago or who, at a more recent date, went to a private or foreign school that eschewed a more "enlightened" philosophy. Here is school as Orwell remembered it.

We would sit round the long shiny table, made of some very pale-coloured, hard wood, with Sim (the teacher) goading, threatening, exhorting, sometimes joking, very occasionally praising, but always prodding, prodding away at one's mind to keep it up to the right pitch of concentration, as one might keep a sleepy person awake by sticking pins into him.

"Go on, you little slacker! Go on, you idle, worthless little boy! The whole trouble with you is that you're bone and horn idle. You eat too much, that's why. You wolf down enormous meals, and then when you come here you're half

asleep. Go on, now, put your back into it. You're not *thinking*. Your brain doesn't sweat."

He would tap away at one's skull with his silver pencil, which, in my memory, seems to have been about the size of a banana, and which certainly was heavy enough to raise a bump: or he would pull the short hairs round one's ears, or, occasionally, reach out under the table and kick one's shin. On some days nothing seemed to go right, and then it would be: "All right, then, I know what you want. You've been asking for it the whole morning. Come along, you useless little slacker. Come into the study." And then whack, whack, whack, whack, and back one would come, red-wealed and smarting—in later years Sim had abandoned his riding crop in favor of a thin rattan cane which hurt very much more—to settle down to work again.<sup>1</sup>

Other examples might be given but Orwell's account is probably sufficient to remind us that the school day memories of many adults have been seared by encounters with cruel and despotic teachers. No one knows just how frequent such experiences are, but certainly they are not common in today's schools. Of course, the fact that teachers rarely spank their students does not mean that cruelty has disappeared from the classroom. The hickory stick was not the only weapon at the teacher's disposal, and from a psychological point of view, surely not the most painful one. Nonetheless, cruelty, in its many guises, is probably not central in the memories carried from today's classrooms, even though it may continue to be of overwhelming significance for a small number of students.

A second, and perhaps more common, memory of classroom discomfort is ~~one in which feelings of tedium dominate~~. A recollection colored by such feeling is provided by George Santayana in the following description of life in Boston's Boys' Latin School:

Each room had four great windows, but the street and the courts at the side and rear were narrow, and over-shadowed by houses or office-buildings. No blackboard was black; all were indelibly clouded with ingrained layers of old chalk; the more you rubbed it out, the more you rubbed it in. Every desk was stained with generations of ink-spots, cut deeply with initials and scratched drawings. What idle thoughts had been wandering for years through all those empty heads in all those tedious school hours! In the best schools, almost

<sup>1</sup> George Orwell, "Such were the days" in *A Collection of Essays by George Orwell* (New York: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 17-18.

all schooltime is wasted. Now and then something is learned that sticks fast; for the rest the boys are merely given time to grow and are kept from too much mischief.<sup>2</sup>

A more recent image of boredom in the classroom, and one that likely is more evocative for today's readers, is contained in the following description by an author who is recalling life in America in the mid-Thirties.

Imagine yourself thirteen summers young in a world that stretched as far as the eye could see, but no further; a world of boring visits to ancient aunts and Sunday drives and triple features, plus serial and two cartoons, of baseball in the streets and zoos and jawbreakers and Indian gum and penmanship and firecrackers and Tarzan and the Scarecrow. It's morning. Off to the grey prison, school, and the heavy books, the ceramic women with their fiery eyes, and the clock-hands that never moved. One o'clock. A century later, two o'clock. Two centuries later, three o'clock. Saved by the bell!<sup>3</sup>

Other examples of the theme of boredom surely could be added, but the two that have been given should suffice to make the point: for many people life in school, at least as preserved in adult memories of that life, is often portrayed as having been dull and wearisome. As was true for reports of teachers' cruelty, it is difficult to judge from these written accounts how pervasive such feelings might be in a typical classroom, but they obviously occur frequently enough to be understood and sympathized with by the narrator's audience. Moreover, some of the features of classroom life to be discussed in later chapters, lead us to suspect that the dull ache of boredom may be more common in our schools than occasional literary accounts would lead us to suspect.

In order to balance the picture of school day memories some attention must be given to the other extreme, ~~to happy recollections of classroom life~~. For though school was painful and dull for some, it was pleasurable and exciting for others. In fact, the heights of elation and the depths of despair connected with school events are often contained within the childhood memory of one person. The child who trudged to school on one day often raced there on the next. Even Orwell, in the midst of his gloomy account of life at Crossgates, is forced to admit, "No one can look back on his school days and say with truth that they were altogether unhappy."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> George Santayana, *Persons and Places* (New York: Scribner, 1944), p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Beaumont, *Remember? Remember?* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Orwell, p. 25.

As Orwell's experience reminds us, teachers can sometimes be very cruel or otherwise behave stupidly, but they may exhibit positive virtues as well as negative ones. Fortunately, the memories of some students are crowded with the pleasures of these early encounters. Thomas Wolfe, in a letter praising his childhood teacher, Mrs. Roberts, provides a memorable example of how some adults feel about certain aspects of their school experience.

During the years Mrs. Roberts taught me she exercised an influence that is inestimable on almost every particular of my life and thought.

With the other boys of my age I know she did the same. We turned instinctively to this lady for her advice and direction and we trusted to it unflinchingly.

I think that kind of relation is one of the profoundest experiences of anyone's life,—I put the relation of a fine teacher to a student just below the relation of a mother to her son and I don't think I could say more than this.<sup>5</sup>

Considering the number of teachers a child encounters as he passes through school, it is unlikely that all, or even many, of them will be recalled with the degree of fondness contained in Wolfe's letter. Indeed, we might wonder how many students ever have such a memorable educational experience. But the teacher's personal influence need not be particularly profound in order for the student to retain fond memories of his days in the classroom. Consider, for example, the following account in which the names of specific teachers never appear.

My neophyte awe had not abated: the moment Mademoiselle entered the classroom, every second became holy. Our teachers didn't tell us anything wildly exciting; we would recite our lessons, and they would correct our homework; but I asked for nothing more than that my existence should be publicly sanctioned by them. . . . These glittering moments shone like beacons down the year: each day was leading me further on. I felt sorry for grown-ups whose uneventful weeks are only feebly brightened by the dullness of Sundays.<sup>6</sup>

Here, then, are a handful of descriptions of extreme feelings connected with schools and schooling. Each makes interesting reading and together they provide striking evidence of the lasting

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Wolfe, "A letter of gratitude and indebtedness," in Claude M. Fuess and Emory S. Basford (eds.), *Unseen Harvests* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 438.

<sup>6</sup> Simone deBeauvoir, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (New York: Random House, 1963), pp. 66-67.

impact that school events may have on our lives. But how much do these descriptions teach us about the experience of spending thousands of hours in classrooms? Unfortunately, the answer would seem to be: relatively little. There are several reasons why this is so.

Although particular school experiences clearly have been occasions of joy for some people and of hatred for others, all varieties of emotion between the extremes of joy and hatred doubtlessly have been felt by some students some of the time. But mild emotions are not too interesting to hear about and, therefore, they likely are not described as often as are those that hold the reader's attention. As another source of bias, autobiographical accounts tend to be written chiefly by people of note. Thus, from such accounts we may be able to learn something about what school meant to a small number of authors or famous scientists or statesmen, but the recollections of housewives or accountants or salesmen rarely get into print. In other words, we can learn a little about what school must have been like for a very select group of highly articulate people but it is unsafe to trust the representativeness of these reports. Moreover, in the last analysis we have no guarantee that school days recollected in the tranquility of adulthood provide a trustworthy picture of the immediate experience of living in a classroom. Memory, as we know, has a way of becoming distorted with time. Those long afternoons in the third grade may not look so bad from a distance of twenty or thirty years. Conversely, the delight that filled many of our childhood hours may be eclipsed by the more immediate pleasures of our adult life.

For these reasons, among others, it is wise to avoid relying too heavily on adult memories as a source of insight into the students' world. However much we might enjoy reading such accounts we had better move up closer to the immediate experience of young children if we are to discover what life in the classroom is really like. In short, we had better get to our informants while the smudge of chalk dust is still on their sleeves.

Strangely enough not too much is known about how young children themselves look upon their school experience. This fact is particularly surprising in a day when it has become almost a national pastime to find out how people feel about things. We do seem to become mildly interested in learning about student opinion by the time the students have reached high school, and on our college campuses the pollsters are almost as plentiful as in the supermarket. But grade school student's sentiment with regard to classroom life is relatively unexplored.

Among the few studies that have been conducted one of the most interesting was undertaken about 25 years ago by Samuel

Tenenbaum, who was then a New York City high school teacher.<sup>7</sup> Tenenbaum constructed a questionnaire consisting of 20 straightforward statements about the respondent's attitudes toward his school, his teacher, and his classmates. The following is a typical item:

- I am happy in school
  - a. all the time.
  - b. most of the time.
  - c. pretty often.
  - d. hardly ever.
  - e. never.

This questionnaire, which appears to have been constructed with reasonable care,<sup>8</sup> was administered to 639 sixth and seventh grade students enrolled in three New York City schools situated in high, middle, and low income areas of the city. Each student also wrote a brief essay in response to the question: "Do you like school?" All answers were submitted anonymously and no teachers or supervisors were present during the testing sessions.

Responses to the essay questionnaire provide the clearest summary of Tenenbaum's findings. Each essay was judged to reflect one of three attitudes toward school—liking, disliking, or having mixed feelings—with the following results.

Table 1 Student Responses to the Question:  
"Do You Like School?"<sup>a</sup>

	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Like school	48.6%	69.0%	58.8%
Dislike school	23.8%	10.3%	17.1%
Have mixed feelings	27.6%	20.7%	24.1%

<sup>a</sup> From Tenenbaum, "Uncontrolled expressions of children's attitudes toward school," *Elementary School Journal*, 40: 670-678, May 1940.

<sup>7</sup> Tenenbaum's work is reported in four separate articles. These are: "A test to measure a child's attitude toward school, teachers, and classmates," *Educational Administration and Supervision* 26:176-188, March 1940; "Uncontrolled expressions of children's attitudes toward school," *Elementary School Journal*, 40:670-678, May 1940; "A school attitude questionnaire test correlated with such variables as IQ, EQ, past and present grade marks, absence and grade progress," *Educational Administration and Supervision*, 27:107-124, February 1941; and "Attitudes of elementary school children to school, teachers, and classmates," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 28:134-141, April 1944.

<sup>8</sup> Tenenbaum reports a reliability coefficient (internal consistency) of .85 for the instrument as a whole and .91 for the fourteen items dealing with general school attitudes. He also describes as successful his efforts to assess

Two aspects of this summary require special comment. First, even though the majority of the responses were judged to contain expressions of positive feelings, the percentage of negative sentiments is too large to be ignored. Although a quick reading of these results would lead to the conclusion that most students like school, it is equally valid to conclude that somewhere between one-third and one-half of the students have their doubts about the matter. Second, girls have more positive feelings toward school than do boys. Slightly less than half the boys had clearly positive feelings as compared with a little more than two-thirds of the girls. This sex difference, which confirms what most people probably would have predicted, appears in several studies and will be the subject of further comment in this and subsequent chapters.

Tenenbaum's comments on the content of the essays provide further information useful in interpreting the summary statistics. He remarks on the relative absence of strong sentiment in the students' responses. In his judgment, many responses tended to be stereotyped and to follow "conventional patterns." He also notes that the responses often had an "adult character" about them. These qualities of the students' writings lead him to conclude,

The study reveals the seriousness of children excepting [sic] in infrequent instances. They do not look at school as a place of joy or pleasure. There is no exuberant enthusiasm displayed. There is no zestful approach to the school situation. The children attend school with consciousness that it will help them out in later life. School is not pleasurable for itself. It is important for its future promise.<sup>9</sup>

The feelings expressed in the student's essays are broadly corroborated by their responses to the questionnaire itself. The amount of open discontent expressed on each of the questions dealing with school life in general seems to hover around 20 percent. For example, 21 percent of the students claim to be "sad at the thought of going to school"; 22.2 percent indicate that they "do not like school" (as compared with 17.1 percent in the "Dislike" category on the essay); 23 percent say they "would rather work than go to school." Interestingly enough this margin of discontent is noticeably reduced when the questions focus on the teachers or fellow students rather than school in general. Only 8 percent of the

the concurrent validity of the questionnaire by comparing it with results obtained through personal interview. In preparation for developing sub-scores on the questionnaire, independent judges decided whether each question dealt principally with school in general, teachers, or classmates. Agreement among the judges was almost perfect.

<sup>9</sup> Tenenbaum, "Uncontrolled expressions of children's attitudes toward school," p. 675.

students express a dislike for their present teachers and just 6 percent indicate a dislike for teachers as a group. Roughly, the same percentages are obtained in response to questions dealing with schoolmates. In other words, it seems as if it were the institution of the school rather than the specific people it houses that occasions most of the discontent.

As was true for the essays, an interpretation of the students' responses to the questionnaire may emphasize either their positive or their negative aspects. On the one hand, it might be concluded that most students are relatively satisfied with life in school, or at least they *say* they are satisfied. On the other hand, it is equally legitimate to stress the importance of the disgruntled minority. The figures indicate that as much as 20 percent of the students, or about 6 children in every class of 30, have serious misgivings about the value of classroom life.<sup>10</sup> It is possible, in other words, to become either elated or depressed by the questionnaire findings, depending on the perspective from which they are viewed.

Although there is a natural proclivity to stress either the positive or negative aspects of the findings, it is also possible, by combining the results from both the essay and the questionnaire, to argue that the majority of the students do not feel strongly about school life, one way or the other. That is, the majority of the students may "like" school and a smaller number "dislike" it, but one group does not "love" school and the other "hate" it. An interpretation stressing the neutrality of the students' feelings is hinted in Tenenbaum's own conclusions. He states,

Since the school is an institution in the community, assigned by the community to do a definite task, the child takes it for granted that the institution is doing the task. He is not critical of the institution, he accepts it. This attitude does not make him happy about being a member of the institution. He may be very unhappy within its environs, but, nevertheless, he thinks that the institution is good and desirable and serves worthy ends. The school, it would seem, is a *receiver* of attitudes, *not a creator of them*. The child comes to school with preconceived notions of how to regard school and tries to get and thinks he gets from school what the community expects the school to give.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Tenenbaum goes even further and claims that at least 20 percent of the students "are unhappy and maladjusted at school and are ready to quit at any or no pretext." However, the data he presents hardly justify that conclusion. Tenenbaum, "Attitudes of elementary school children to school, teachers, and classmates," p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> Tenenbaum, "Attitudes of elementary school children to school, teachers, and classmates," pp. 140-141.

It is dangerous, of course, to rely too heavily on Tenenbaum's data. His study has obvious limitations that prevent our taking his findings as the final word in estimating how many students like or dislike school. Fortunately, two or three other investigators used procedures roughly comparable with those employed by Tenenbaum and reported findings that can be compared with his.

The questionnaire developed by Tenenbaum was used by another investigator, Sister Josephina, almost twenty years after the first report. The subjects in Sister Josephina's study were 900 students in grades five through eight drawn from nine parochial schools.<sup>12</sup> As in the original design, the students were permitted to respond anonymously to the questionnaire. Although the students did not write an essay on their liking for school, their responses to the single item "I like/do not like school" were tallied (see Table 2).

Table 2 Student Responses to:  
"I Like/Do Not Like School"<sup>a</sup>

Grade level <sup>b</sup>	BOYS				GIRLS			
	5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8
Like school	82%	70%	82%	65%	88%	80%	94.6%	83%
Dislike school	15%	29%	17.7%	33.3%	11%	19%	5.3%	16.9%
No reply	2%	.9%	0%	.9%	.9%	1%	0%	0%

<sup>a</sup> Adapted from Sister Josephina, "Study of attitudes in the elementary grades," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 33:56-60, October 1959.

<sup>b</sup> The exact number of students in each grade was not reported.

The information in Table 2 is roughly equivalent to the summary description of the student essays in Tenenbaum's study, except that here there is no category for "mixed feelings." As before, the overall impression is one of students being satisfied with their school experience, even more satisfied than the students in the original sample seemed to be. Again, however, there is a noticeable percentage of students who admit to disliking school. Moreover, this percentage is about the same as that reported in the earlier study. It seems, then, that the apparent abundance of positive feelings among the parochial students, as compared with the New York public school group, is largely due to the absence of a category in

<sup>12</sup> Sister Josephina, "Study of attitudes in the elementary grades" *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 33:56-60, October 1959.

which to register markedly ambivalent feelings. Finally, and again as before, girls are seen to be more pleased with school life than are boys.

With respect to the children's liking of their present teacher, Sister Josephina found an even smaller amount of discontent than did Tenenbaum. The largest number of students expressing a dislike for their present teacher was found in the eighth grade where the relevant percentages were 3.8 and 3.7 for boys and girls respectively. In the lower three grades the percentages for the boys beginning with the fifth grade class were .8, 3.3, and 2.5; for girls the equivalent figures were 1.8, 1.8, and 0. As before, the data support the hypothesis that it is school itself rather than individual teachers that provokes the student's discomfort. Unfortunately, Sister Josephina only reports findings with respect to these two aspects of the students response—their general liking for school and their attitude toward their present teacher. Therefore, other comparisons with Tenenbaum's original study are impossible.

A third study, though even less fully reported than the preceding one, was conducted by L. E. Leipold, the principal of a Minnesota high school.<sup>13</sup> Leipold asked his ninth grade students, 273 in all, to write short essays in response to the query: "Do you like school? Why? Do you dislike school? Why?" His analysis of these essays is summarized in the following table.

Table 3 Student Responses to the Query:  
"Do You Like School?"<sup>a</sup>

	BOYS <sup>b</sup>	GIRLS	TOTAL
Like school	70%	81%	75.5%
Dislike school	23.4%	14%	18.5%
No reply	6.6%	5%	5.9%

<sup>a</sup> Adapted from: L. E. Leipold, "Children do like school," *Clearing House*, 31:332-334, February 1957.

<sup>b</sup> The percentages for boys were not given in the report itself but were calculated from the data given for girls and the total group, using the assumption that there was an approximately equal sex division in the sample.

The data from the Minnesota students tell about the same story as that provided by the other two investigators. Again, there is the impression of massive satisfaction, counterbalanced, or at least tempered, by the presence of a disgruntled minority. Again, the girls exceed the boys in the expression of satisfaction.

<sup>13</sup> L. E. Leipold, "Children do like school," *Clearing House*, 31:332-334, February 1957.

Finally, some data recently collected in a suburb of Chicago warrant mention in this overview of student opinion.<sup>14</sup> The data in question, which are part of a larger study of student attitudes, consist of the responses of sixth graders to questions about their life in school. The entire sixth grade (293 students from 11 classes located in nine public schools) of the suburban community participated in the study. The questionnaires were administered in the spring of the year in order to give sufficient time for student opinion to develop and become stable.

Responses to only three of the questions from one of the attitude questionnaires (the *Student Opinion Poll*) are of direct relevance to the topic at hand. Other aspects of the findings will be presented in later sections. The first question deals with the students' attitudes toward the subject matter taught in their classes; the second with the friendliness of the teachers in their school; and the third with their attitudes toward school in general. The specific questions and the percentage of students choosing each response are shown in Table 4.

These findings corroborate, for the most part, those already cited. The percentage of boys whose responses lay on the "negative" side of each question ranged from 20.3 for question #3, to 25.7 for question #1; the percentages of girls taking the "negative" side ranges from 9.7 on question #2 to 18.6 on question #1. Thus, the proportions of discontent are roughly the same as those reported by other investigators. Also, the girls in this study, as in the other studies just described are less critical of their experience than are the boys. In particular, the present group of girls seems to be more satisfied than are the boys with the friendliness of their teachers.

There is one noticeable difference between these results and those reported by Tenenbaum and by Sister Josephina. Both of the latter investigators found students to be less critical of their teachers than of school in general. But, in the responses of the sixth graders presented in Table 4, criticism of teachers, with respect to their friendliness, occurs with about the same frequency as do criticisms of school in general. There is no apparent explanation of this difference, other than the fact that the two earlier studies dealt with the students' general liking for their teacher, whereas question #2 in Table 4 is concerned with a somewhat more specific evaluation.

Before leaving these four sets of data it is well to consider once more what they have told us about students' attitudes toward life in school and to reflect briefly on that information. For these four studies, it appears, contain the only descriptions of grade school

<sup>14</sup> The data were collected by Miss Henriette M. Lahaderne while working under my direction.

Table 4 Student Responses to Three Questions from the Student Opinion Poll

	BOYS (148)	GIRLS (145)	TOTAL (293)
QUESTION 1. "MOST OF THE SUBJECTS TAUGHT IN THIS SCHOOL ARE			
a. very interesting."	38.5%	42.8%	40.6%
b. above average in interest."	35.1%	38.6%	36.9%
c. below average in interest."	17.6%	13.1%	15.4%
d. dull and uninteresting."	8.1%	5.5%	6.8%
QUESTION 2. "IN GENERAL, TEACHERS IN THIS SCHOOL ARE			
a. very friendly."	41.9%	53.8%	47.8%
b. somewhat friendly."	34.5%	35.9%	35.2%
c. somewhat unfriendly."	16.2%	7.6%	11.9%
d. very unfriendly."	6.1%	2.1%	4.1%
QUESTION 3. "IN GENERAL, MY FEELINGS TOWARD SCHOOL ARE			
a. very favorable—I like it as it is."	35.1%	47.6%	41.3%
b. somewhat favorable—I would like a few changes."	44.6%	40.0%	42.3%
c. somewhat unfavorable—I would like many changes."	12.2%	9.0%	10.6%
d. very unfavorable—I frequently feel that school is pretty much a waste of time."	8.1%	3.4%	5.8%

students' general liking for school that have been reported in the past thirty years.<sup>15</sup> Until more thorough studies are made, these data are all we have to go on when we ask a question such as: "What proportion of students claim to like school?"

As has been pointed out several times in the last few pages, the overall impression provided by the summary statistics contained in Tables 1 through 4 is that students are relatively content with their life in school. Although the proportions differ markedly for boys and for girls, it looks as if about 80 percent of the students in our upper elementary grades would place themselves in the "like"

<sup>15</sup> Many other studies of students' attitudes have been made, but they do not contain normative data with respect to the student's general liking for school and teachers. For the most part research has focused on the correlates of students' attitudes—in studies, for example, of college students' ratings of their instructors and course grades—or on the origin and treatment of extreme attitudes in particular students—in studies, for example, of school phobia or of school dropouts.



category if asked to describe themselves as either liking or disliking school. For some people this majority may seem sufficiently large to discourage further inquiry into the matter. Leipold, for example, after presenting the findings summarized in Table 3 adds the following comment on the meaning of the study to him as an educator, "paramount is the conviction that things aren't too bad when four out of five boys and girls frankly admit that they *like school* and can give good reasons."<sup>16</sup> This attitude is likely shared by many others who work with school children. So long as most students seem to like school, "things aren't too bad." We may then ask, "Why bother to probe more deeply?"

The most obvious reason for desiring to probe more deeply is that the proportion of students who claim to dislike school comprise a significant number. If we believe the statistics they would seem to indicate that about one child in five or six students in every average-sized classroom feels a sufficient amount of discomfort to complain about it when given the opportunity. If this figure were similar in all grades and all geographic regions (a big "if" to be sure!) it would mean that when we talk about the child who does not like school we are discussing the problem of some seven million students in our elementary schools alone. Certainly not a number that can be easily dismissed.

Moreover, there is reason to believe that 20 percent may be a conservative estimate of the proportion who privately dislike school. In three of the four studies that have been reviewed the investigators took special precautions to ensure that responses would be treated confidentially and would not be seen by teachers or other school officials. It was hoped that these procedures would increase the honesty of the students' reports. Underlying this belief is the assumption that dishonesty, if it occurred, would bias the reports in the favorable direction. Children, for the most part, like to please adults, and adults, for the most part, like to hear that children are enjoying school. Hopefully, the precautions did work, on the whole, and the students did give an accurate report of their true feelings. But it is unlikely that they worked perfectly. It is probable, therefore, that the actual amount of discontent in the classroom is somewhat greater than the amount revealed in the students' essays and questionnaire responses.

A second reason for wanting to take a closer look at student attitudes than that provided by the studies described so far arises

<sup>16</sup> Leipold, p. 334. Leipold's optimism apparently accounts for the slight inaccuracy in his statement. The actual percentage of the students in his study who were found to like school yields a ratio that is closer to three out of four than to four out of five.

from a recognition of the exaggerations contained in a black and white image. When attitudes are dichotomized, as they were in most of the data already discussed, much of their subtlety is lost. When we force students to describe themselves as being either "for" or "against" school, we do obtain a crude picture of their views—one that is easy to recall and to talk about—but this picture is obtained at the cost of ignoring the psychological richness of student opinion. A school is a complex institution, and students are complex creatures. Surely not all youngsters who are "for" school are for it unequivocally. Similarly, not every student whose response is placed in the "nay" column of an opinion poll is eager to have done with everything educational.<sup>17</sup> To understand more fully the information provided by the gross categorization of students' opinion we must move to a consideration of the variability that likely exists on both sides of the like-dislike dichotomy. In other words, we must add gradations of gray to the black and white picture.

A crude indication of the range of dissatisfactions expressed by students is contained in a study conducted at the University of Chicago several years ago.<sup>18</sup> At that time we constructed a 60-item questionnaire, titled the *Student Opinion Poll*, designed to assess a student's satisfaction with his school experience. Each item in the questionnaire consisted of a multiple choice question relating to one of four aspects of school life: teachers, students, curriculum, and classroom practices. Among the responses to each item one alternative contained an expression of complete satisfaction with that particular feature of school life; a student choosing that alternative was given one point. Thus, the possible range of scores was from 0 to 60. When this questionnaire was administered to more than 500 students from grades six through twelve in a well-known private school, the average score was 37.3, and the standard deviation 9.57. In other words, in that advantaged environment the average student (who probably would be placed in the "like school" column if the methods of one of the previously discussed studies were employed) expressed some dissatisfaction on almost half the items.

More recently the same questionnaire was administered to 258

<sup>17</sup> After interviewing 52 emotionally disturbed students, each of whom was diagnosed as revealing "a serious school problem" one psychiatrist reported that only ten out of the total group seemed to have "a pure dislike" for school without an admixture of other feelings. See C. E. Schorer, "How emotionally disturbed children view the school," *Exceptional Child*, 27:191-195, December 1960.

<sup>18</sup> Philip W. Jackson and Jacob W. Getzels, "Psychological health and classroom functioning: a study of dissatisfaction with school among adolescents," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 50:295-300, December 1959.

juniors in a suburban high school.<sup>19</sup> The average score for that group was 29.0. Moreover, the average for the top quartile of those juniors, the group most content with their present school experience, was 39.0, with a standard deviation of 3.45. Thus, even for the most satisfied group some dissatisfaction was expressed on about one-third of the questionnaire items.

Of even greater relevance, because of their bearing on material that has already been discussed, are further results from the study of suburban sixth graders from which the data in Table 4 have been taken. A shortened version of the *Student Opinion Poll*, this one containing 47 items, was administered to that group also and the average scores found to be 25.3 for the boys (with a standard deviation of 8.2), and 29.4 for the girls (with a standard deviation of 8.2). The average student in this sample, it will be recalled, clearly declared himself as being "for" school and "for" his teachers. Yet he proceeded, when questioned more fully, to reveal many areas of school life with which he was not completely satisfied.

Obviously, the opposing argument could be applied by compiling corresponding statistics for the smaller group of students who describe themselves as being against school. That is, there are doubtlessly several things about school with which the disgruntled student is perfectly content. But the point has probably been made with sufficient force by focusing on the "satisfied" group. Although they were not originally collected for this purpose, and therefore leave much to be desired, the data that have been presented should be enough to disturb the complacency of educators who maintain their calm by pointing to the fact that "most students like school." Most do like school, but not entirely.

Another way of revealing some of the subtleties of student attitudes is by calling attention to the ambiguities, if not downright contradictions, occasionally revealed in students' opinion of life in school. In a study of 1000 high school students, for example, 91 percent of the sample agreed that "teachers as a whole are friendly."<sup>20</sup> Yet 40.5 percent of the same group of students agreed that "teachers are glad when 3:00 o'clock comes so the brats can go home." About 21 percent of these students, who saw teachers as being so friendly, also said "yes" to the statement: "The facial expression of most teachers is distressing." An additional 26 percent were "undecided." Perhaps there is no logical contradiction revealed here, but these results are at least a bit puzzling.

<sup>19</sup> Richard C. Diedrich, "Teacher perceptions as related to teacher-student similarity and student satisfaction with school," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, March 1966.

<sup>20</sup> Paul R. Cobb, "High school seniors' attitudes toward teachers and the teaching profession," *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals*, 36:140-144, January 1952.

A more subtle kind of ambiguity is revealed (but not commented upon) in a survey of the attitudes of 314 fifth grade students in Tennessee.<sup>21</sup> The investigator, Myrtle G. Dye, compared the opinions of two groups of students—one comprised of "gifted" youngsters (taken from the top ten percent of the school population on the basis of IQ test performance), the other of "average" youngsters (scores between the 45th and the 55th percentiles on the same IQ tests)—on a 60-item questionnaire dealing with school life. Among the average group 97 percent of the boys and 94 percent of the girls were found to be "happy" in school. Equivalent figures for the gifted group were 79 and 87 percent. Yet 25 percent of the boys thought the school day could be shortened and when asked to nominate their favorite grade from among those they had experienced so far, about 40 percent of the total group chose one of their previous grades rather than the one in which they were presently enrolled.

In other words, although almost all of the Tennessee fifth graders were judged to be "happy" with their present classroom experience, about a quarter of the boys could do with less of it, and close to half of the students could remember a time when they had been more satisfied with school life. As one considers these contrasts it seems as if many of the students were trying to say something like, "School is fine—but it could be better."

Usually when students are found to like their school and their teachers it is assumed that they are "happy" while in the classroom. But the equating of "liking" with "happiness" is unnecessary and serves only to reinforce the simplistic view of student attitudes that we are attempting here to dispel. Not all children who like school can be described as being continually happy while there. Some consideration of the negative feelings that might be engendered by the classroom experience is appropriate, therefore, as we seek to move beyond a dichotomous pro-or-con view of student attitudes.

If a sizeable proportion of high school seniors find their teacher's facial expression distressing, as the study described a few paragraphs ago would seem to indicate, how distressing are teachers' facial expressions and their general actions to younger children? A partial answer to this question is provided in one of the few studies to examine the school attitudes of students in the primary grades.<sup>22</sup>

Interviews were conducted with 128 children from four schools in a large suburban system. The sample contained 32 students in each of four grades: kindergarten, first, second, and third. The

<sup>21</sup> Myrtle G. Dye, "Attitudes of gifted children toward school," *Educational Administration and Supervision*, 42:301-308, 1956.

<sup>22</sup> Lee B. Sechrest, "Motivation in school of young children: some interview data," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 30:327-335, June 1962.

children were asked many questions about their life in school and the investigator reports that, on the whole, they seemed to be enjoying school very much. But when they were asked: "What does your teacher do that frightens or scares you?" about 44 percent of the students were able to name some behavior of the teacher that upset them ("yelling and making loud noises" was mentioned most frequently).

Another study in which school-related feelings are prominent is one in which a 53-item inventory, cataloging some of the things about which children might worry, was administered to "several hundred" fifth- and sixth-grade students in New York City.<sup>23</sup> The matter about which the children admitted worrying the most was "failing a test." Among the boys, 29 percent described themselves as being afflicted with such a worry "often," 59 percent answered "sometimes," and 12 percent said "never." The equivalent figures for girls were 37 percent "often," 54 percent "sometimes," and 9 percent "never."

It is possible, of course, that such worries may be less frequent today than they were in 1940 when the study was made, but it should be remembered that these concerns were revealed in the same year, in the same school system, and at approximately the same grade level, at which Tenenbaum was conducting his studies, which, as we have seen, reported that about 20 percent of the students disliked school. A reasonable conclusion would seem to be that many who like school also worry about it.

The existence of negative feelings among students who are basically satisfied with school life is dramatically portrayed in data collected in two of our Chicago studies.<sup>24, 25</sup> In the first of these investigations (Study I) a group of "satisfied" students was identified on the basis of their responses to the *Student Opinion Poll*.<sup>26</sup> A student was classified as "satisfied" if his score on the instrument was at least one and a half standard deviations above the mean of the entire student body. Forty-five students were selected in this manner from among the 531 students who responded to the questionnaire. The students in this study were enrolled in grades six through twelve in a Midwestern private school.

The second investigation (Study II) was conducted in a public high school in the Midwest. All students in the junior class of that school participated in the study. The "satisfied" group, which con-

<sup>23</sup> R. Pintner and J. Lev, "Worries of school children," *Pedagogical Seminary*, 56:67-76, March 1940.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson and Getzels.

<sup>25</sup> Philip W. Jackson and Richard C. Diedrich, "The evaluation of school experiences: a study of satisfied and dissatisfied students," Mimeographed, 1965.

<sup>26</sup> See p. 55 for a brief description of this questionnaire.

sisted of 69 students, was selected by the same procedure as that employed in Study I.

In both studies all of the students responded to a checklist, which consisted of 25 adjectives. Each student was asked to choose the six adjectives that best described his characteristic feelings while attending classes in particular school subjects. The list contained 12 "positive" adjectives (for example, confident, happy, eager) and 12 "negative" adjectives (for example, bored, restless, angry). The responses of the "satisfied" students to the negative adjectives are summarized in Table 5.<sup>27</sup>

Table 5 *Negative Adjectives Chosen by "Satisfied Students" Asked to Describe Classroom Feelings*

ADJECTIVE <sup>a</sup>	TIMES CHOSEN			
	Boys		Girls	
	Study I (25)	Study II (34)	Study I (20)	Study II (35)
Bored	13	26	13	25
Uncertain	21	25	13	26
Dull	16	24	9	25
Restless	15	20	9	26
Inadequate	16	20	7	24
Unnoticed	5	16	4	15
Unhelped	8	16	6	17
Ignorant	13	15	3	15
Angry	4	14	4	14
Restrained	2	11	3	10
Misunderstood	5	11	2	15
Rejected	3	9	0	10

<sup>a</sup> Adjectives have been ordered in this Table on the basis of the ranking of the responses of boys in Study II.

The data in Table 5 tell a clear story. In both studies students who were apparently satisfied with school made frequent use of negative adjectives when asked to describe their *typical* classroom feelings. In Study I, for example, half of the boys and more than half of the girls claimed that a feeling of boredom was typical in

<sup>27</sup> In both studies groups of *dissatisfied* students were also identified. These groups, as might be expected, chose negative adjectives to describe their classroom feelings much more frequently than did the students whose responses are summarized in Table 5. The complete reports of these two studies contain comparisons of the satisfied and the dissatisfied students.

some of their classes. In Study II the proportion of students reporting boredom and other negative feelings is even higher than it is for the private school group.

Here then is further evidence of the complexity of student attitudes toward school. As we look more closely at these phenomena the extremes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction draw closer together. Gradually the black and white picture changes to gray.

When Tenenbaum analyzed the essays from his sample of students he commented, the reader will recall, on the relative absence of expressions of strong feeling. He talked about the frequency of "stereotyped" responses that followed "conventional patterns." Having obtained a glimpse of some of the ambiguities and contradictions that characterize student attitudes, we are now in a better position to appreciate the significance of Tenenbaum's remarks.

The number of students who become ecstatic when the school bell rings and who remain that way all day is probably very small, as is the number who sit in the back of the room and grind their teeth in anger from opening exercises to dismissal. One way of interpreting the data we have reviewed so far is to suggest that most students do not feel too strongly about their classroom experience, one way or the other.<sup>28</sup>

This fact, if we can assume for the moment that it is a fact, must be considered in the light of what has already been said about the classroom environment and the nature of the child's participation in that environment. Just as extreme feeling is sometimes occasioned by what happens to a person, so, too, is the absence of extreme feeling. Apathy and neutrality are no less adaptive than are joy and hate, and to some extent might even be considered more so. Therefore, it is reasonable to inquire into the causes behind the seemingly restricted range of student feelings. Although this task will occupy us in several of the chapters that lie ahead, at least a beginning may be made here.

First, as we have already seen, ~~reactions to school life are considerably varied.~~ Students tend to like some aspects of that life and dislike others. Moreover, as we have also seen, even the most satisfied students have their complaints, and the least satisfied their pleasures. These combinations of feeling, which, when summed, yield a general attitude of ambivalence, arise in part from the inevitable mismatch between individual desires and institutional

<sup>28</sup> It is possible that attitudes toward school are not constant throughout the year. In the beginning and ending of the term, for example, school might be approached with greater eagerness than is true the rest of the year. Clarence Darrow once remarked, "School had at least two days that made us as happy as children could well be. One was the first day of the term, and the other was the last."

goals. ~~The needs and interests of the child as he experiences them subjectively are often not consonant with his needs as perceived by the institution; or with the needs of others who are also served by the institution.~~ This means, in short, that sometimes he will want to do the tasks assigned him and other times he will not. Under the one condition he should experience a certain amount of pleasure, and under the other a certain amount of pain.

A second reason ~~why certain kinds of extreme feelings may not appear too frequently in the classroom is that students must attend whether they want to or not.~~ ~~The fact of compulsory attendance likely does much to reduce outbursts of protests and complaints.~~ When the bonds are sufficiently secure, resistance becomes futile. If school is inevitable, better relax and accept it.

A third, and perhaps the most important, reason ~~why attitudes toward school tend toward neutrality is that school becomes "old hat" for most students.~~ Shortly after his initiation into the institution the young child develops an understanding of what school is like and in the years that follow his initial views are not modified radically. ~~Patterns of social interaction remain about the same throughout the grades and the physical environment remains very much the same as he moves from one room to the next in the same school building.~~ The content of the work may change in each successive grade but, essentially, arithmetic is arithmetic and spelling is spelling. This year's teacher may be nicer than last year's but both are teachers and the student's relationship with both is a highly standardized flowering of stable role expectations. After the first few thousand hours of attendance (and possibly long before then) the global experience of being in school probably holds few surprises for most students. This is not to say, of course, that surprising events do not take place in the classroom. Many otherwise dull days are brightened by unexpected happenings, and many teachers do their best to inject novelty into the daily lesson. But the excitement of school, its sharp disappointments as well as its joys, is contained in colorful interludes that interrupt, rather than characterize, the normal flow of events.

## II

In the first section we saw how students' attitudes toward classroom events are really more complex than is implied by the conventional practice of asking youngsters whether or not they like school, even though answers to that standard query often provide useful information. This complexity derives from two related aspects of student

opinion. First is the admixture, to be found in some, of strong likes and dislikes and of contradictory attitudes toward specific features of school life. Second, and perhaps partially as a consequence of these contradictory elements, there seems to develop, in some students, a separation between their feelings and the daily business of classroom life. For these students (and no one seems to know how many fit this description) school is just another of life's inevitabilities toward which is adopted in I-can-take-it-a-leave-it attitude.

Yet, despite this complexity, stable differences do exist among students in their over-all liking for school. It is evident, for example, that girls react more positively to school than do boys. We know, further, that thousands of students dislike school sufficiently to withdraw from it at the earliest opportunity, while others look forward with regret to the end of their days in school. The purpose of this section is to examine some of the educational consequences of these differences, beginning with the simple question of how visible they are to teachers.

Certain aspects of the teacher's perception of students' attitudes are almost too obvious to bear comment and, therefore, can be dispensed with rather quickly. It seems clear, for example, that extreme forms of student opinion are often visible to even the most insensitive teacher. When a student openly declares his distaste for school or does it only slightly more subtly by indicating his desire to quit school, the need for guesswork on the part of the teacher is eliminated.

Most teachers are equally aware, in all probability, of differences in the reactions of the entire class to specific parts of the school program. Most would agree, for example, that their students prefer physical education to spelling, or watching a movie to completing an exercise in an arithmetic workbook. No teacher in the lower grades can fail to miss the groans of disappointment that erupt when she announces that recess will be held indoors, or the shouts of delight that accompany the announcement of an early dismissal. In sum, almost all teachers are surely aware of gross differences in their students' reactions to recurring classroom events.

When it comes to the more subtle and individual aspects of student opinion, however, less is known of their visibility to the teacher. It is safe to say that the teacher typically does not know all there is to know about his students' attitudes toward school, but this does not say much. In order to say more some kind of empirical evidence is called for.

One way of considering the visibility of students' attitudes is to ask whether teachers can predict how their students will respond to a school attitude questionnaire. Naturally, no teacher could

accurately predict his students' responses to each and every item on such a questionnaire. No one would expect him to be that perceptive. A more reasonable task might be to ask for a categorization of the students into groups representing varying levels of satisfaction. The teacher might be asked, in other words, to identify the most and least satisfied students in his room, allowing several students in each category, and this classification could be matched against a similar one based on the students' actual responses to questions about their school attitudes. This approach was used in the study of the sixth graders described in the last section (see pp. 52), and the results, while not highly generalizable, are sufficiently interesting to warrant a detailed discussion.

Two hundred and ninety-three students from eleven classrooms (all of the sixth grade rooms in the public school system of a suburban community) responded to a 47-item questionnaire designed to assess attitudes toward school.<sup>29</sup> The teacher in each classroom was shown sample items from the questionnaire and was given a brief description of its avowed purpose. He was then asked to predict, in a relative way, how each of his students might respond to such a set of questions.<sup>30</sup>

When expressed as a correlation coefficient the overall relationship between the teachers' ratings and the students' responses to the questionnaire yielded a value of .35. This single statistic does not provide much information, but it does indicate that the accuracy of the teachers' predictions was decidedly better than chance. The same statistic also indicates, of course, that these teachers were far from perfect in their estimates. Apparently some aspects of students' attitudes are visible to teachers and others are not. To learn more about this partial visibility we must undertake a more refined analysis.

A second way of depicting the gross character of the relationship between the teachers' predictions and the actual responses of the students is by applying the concepts of "hits" and "misses" in

<sup>29</sup> The questionnaire was a revised version of the *Student Opinion Poll* described on page 55.

<sup>30</sup> The procedure for obtaining the ratings was as follows: Each teacher was presented with an alphabetized list of his students. He was asked, first, to divide the group into thirds by classifying his students into three levels of satisfaction: "most," "average," and "least." He was then asked to identify from within the groups labelled "most" and "least" a smaller number of students (one fourth of each group) who seemed to represent extreme positions ("very satisfied" and "very dissatisfied"). Thus, each student's attitudes was described by his teacher as falling into one of five categories. In each classroom the approximate proportion of students in the five categories were: 1/12, 1/4, 1/3, 1/4, 1/12. When the ratings were treated quantitatively the values 15, 12, 10, 8, and 5 were assigned to the five groupings, the highest number being used to represent the students whom the teacher described as "very satisfied."

describing the accuracy of the teachers' judgments. "Hits," as the term implies, are instances in which the teacher guessed correctly and "misses" are instances in which he guessed incorrectly. What is meant by a correct or incorrect guess needs definition, of course, because the judgments (teachers' placement of the students into five categories) and the qualities being judged (students' total scores on a school opinionnaire) are not expressed in the same units.

In order to make the definition as unambiguous as possible, and, thus, to increase the ease with which the findings can be discussed, certain of the complexities in the raw data have been ignored or eliminated. First, the students who themselves expressed a middling attitude toward school, and whose scores therefore might be the most difficult to interpret, were withdrawn from the sample.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in the analysis that follows we are concerned only with the teachers' judgments of those students who have expressed rather clear-cut opinions, either positive or negative, of what life in school is like. Second, the teachers' judgments have also been simplified by reducing, from five to three, the number of categories into which the predictions were grouped. This reduction was accomplished by ignoring the labels "most" and "least" attached to the extreme groups and by treating the entire sample as if the students had been classified into three groups, "satisfied," "average," or "dissatisfied," with approximately one-third of the sample in each.

A teacher's judgment was considered a "hit" if he classified as "satisfied" a student whose score on the *Student Opinion Poll* was at least one-half a standard deviation above the mean of the total sample, or as "dissatisfied," a student whose score was at least one-half a standard deviation below the mean. A "miss" was defined as occurring when the teacher judged the student to be in the top or bottom third of the class but his actual score in the questionnaire placed him in the opposite group. The teacher's judgment was considered "uncertain" when he placed into the "average" category any of the students whose scores on the opinionnaire were more than one-half of a standard deviation away from the mean. Applying these definitions, we would expect the teachers' judgments to be classified, by chance alone, as one-third "hits," one-third "misses,"

<sup>31</sup> The withdrawn group was composed of students whose scores on the *Student Opinion Poll* were within one-half of a standard deviation from the mean of the total sample. In a normally distributed population this procedure would have eliminated approximately 38 percent of the sample, leaving 31 percent in each of the two remaining groups. However, because scores on the *Student Opinion Poll* were slightly skewed toward the positive end of the scale, the actual percentage of students in the withdrawn group was 38.6, leaving 34.6 percent in the "satisfied" category and 28.8 percent in the "dissatisfied" category.

and one-third "uncertain."<sup>32</sup> Deviations from these chance expectations were tested to see if they were statistically significant and the results, along with the actual numbers and percentages in each category, are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Accuracy of Teachers' Predictions of Students' Attitudes

PREDICTIONS	STUDENTS' ATTITUDES			
	"Satisfied"		"Dissatisfied"	
	N	%	N	%
Hits	53	52.5	30	35.7
Uncertain	25	24.8	36	42.8
Misses	23	22.7	18	21.5
	$\chi^2 = 16.7^a$		$\chi^2 = 6.00^b$	

<sup>a</sup> Significant at the .01 level.

<sup>b</sup> Significant at the .05 level.

The data in Table 6 confirm the information contained in the correlation coefficient for the total group (that is, the teachers can predict student attitudes with a greater-than-chance accuracy). But a refinement can now be added to that general conclusion. Apparently the teachers can identify "satisfied" students more accurately than they can "dissatisfied" ones. Also, the reduced accuracy with the "dissatisfied" group does not arise from a larger proportion of outright "misses" with these students, rather the teachers are less likely to judge these students as fitting either extreme. In other words, the teachers were no more likely to misjudge one group than the other but the opinions of the satisfied students were somehow more visible than were the opinions of the dissatisfied students.

<sup>32</sup> This is so because the teachers are required to classify their total group of students by thirds, into "satisfied," "average," and "dissatisfied" categories. Thus, if the students whose score on the *Student Opinion Poll* caused them to be classified as "satisfied" had been randomly arranged by the teachers, one-third of them would be called "satisfied" and, thus, would be counted as "uncertain;" and one-third would be called "dissatisfied" and would be counted as "misses." The same reasoning also applies to those students whose score on the opinionnaire caused them to be labeled "dissatisfied." The fact that the "satisfied" students (by SOP scores) comprise a little more than one-third (34.6 percent) of the sample and the "dissatisfied" a little less than one-third (28.8 percent), means that it is impossible for the teachers to achieve perfect accuracy (100 percent "hits") or perfect inaccuracy (100 percent "misses") in their predictions. But this limitation is relatively unimportant because the observed degrees of accuracy never approach these extremes.

It is naturally unwise to move from these findings, based on such a small number of students in a single school grade, to the general conclusion that student satisfaction is more visible to the teacher than is student dissatisfaction. But the teachers' perception of these sixth graders does seem to make sense in the light of what we know about human behavior in general. In any social situation dissatisfaction is potentially threatening to the well-being of the group and the continued participation of its members. Moreover, the expression of dissatisfaction is often perceived as an affront by the person or persons in charge of the gathering. The social affront implied in an expression of dissatisfaction explains why we compliment our hostess when we leave the party and keep to ourselves any unpleasant feelings that might have been aroused by the experience. We behave in this way not just to conform to social convention but to ensure our social survival.

In the classroom the damage that might be done by the expression of dissatisfaction is magnified by the power of the sanctions available to the teacher. Unlike the hostess, who might only give her critic an icy stare and fail to invite him back, the teacher is in a position to respond to criticism in ways that are at once more enduring and more painful. The fact that most teachers would not use their authority to squelch honest criticism does little to reduce the fact of that authority and its implicit threat to would-be critics. The dominant strategy of "pleasing the teacher" likely involves more than handing in homework papers on time or keeping in line on the way to the playground; it also involves being vocal about satisfactions while keeping silent about many of the discomforts engendered by classroom life.

If the fact that girls seem happier with their school experience than do boys were recognized by teachers, the job of predicting student attitudes should become somewhat easier when both boys and girls are to be judged than when either sex is considered separately. In other words, when all of his students are considered together a teacher might increase the accuracy of his predictions by consistently giving slightly higher ratings to girls. This effect can be observed in the correlational data obtained from the study under discussion. It will be recalled that the relationship between the teachers' ratings and the actual responses of the total student sample yielded a coefficient of .35. That same relationship, when computed separately for the two sexes is .28 for boys and .28 for girls. The decrease in the size of the coefficients when the sexes are considered separately is not great, but it does call attention to the slight advantage that comes from knowing that girls, on the whole, express more positive attitudes toward school than do boys.

The fact that the coefficients between teachers' predictions and

students' scores on the *Student Opinion Poll* are the same size for both boys and girls makes it appear that the teachers can predict the attitudes of both groups with equal accuracy. However, this conclusion, like the one about the general relationship, can be refined somewhat if we turn again to an analysis of the "hits" and "misses" made by the teachers in their estimates of students' attitudes, this time focusing on sex differences in the accuracy of the teachers' judgment. As before, the students under consideration include only those whose expressed attitudes were relatively extreme. The data are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7 Accuracy of Teachers' Predictions Related to Sex of Students

PREDICTIONS	BOYS' ATTITUDES				GIRLS' ATTITUDES			
	"Satisfied"		"Dissatisfied"		"Satisfied"		"Dissatisfied"	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hits	11	35.4	24	46.1	42	60.0	6	18.7
Uncertain	10	32.3	21	40.4	15	21.4	15	46.9
Misses	10	32.3	7	13.5	13	18.6	11	34.4
	$\chi^2 = .06$		$\chi^2 = 9.5^a$		$\chi^2 = 22.48^a$		$\chi^2 = 3.81$	

\* Significant at the .01 level.

Table 7 reveals a striking sex difference in the accuracy of the teachers' predictions. This difference, however, is not the simple one of teachers being more accurate in predicting the scores of girls than of boys, or vice versa. It involves the quality of the attitude as well as the sex of the person holding it. The teachers seem to perceive two of the groups—the "satisfied" girls and the "dissatisfied" boys—more accurately than they do the other two. In other words, the girls who seem to be the happiest with their school experience and the boys who seem to be the least happy are the ones the teachers have the least difficulty in assessing, whereas the attitudes of the contrasting groups of "satisfied" boys and "dissatisfied" girls are not predicted with greater than chance accuracy by the teachers.

Naturally, we must be cautious in making inferences from these findings. But it is important to point out that they do make sense in the light of what is already known about sex differences and classroom characteristics. There is some evidence, for example, that dissatisfied boys are more willing to criticize persons in positions of authority than are dissatisfied girls. In one of the studies mentioned earlier it was found that when students were asked to describe



their typical classroom feelings, the dissatisfied boys, more frequently than the dissatisfied girls, used "extrapunitive" adjectives—words that placed the blame for the students' condition on others (for example, misunderstood, rejected). The dissatisfied girls, in contrast, tended to employ more "intropunitive" adjectives—words that placed the blame for the student's condition on the student herself (for example, inadequate, ignorant).<sup>33</sup> If a similar phenomenon were in operation in the sixth grade classrooms under discussion—that is, if dissatisfied boys were more willing to express criticism toward authorities—it would help to explain why such boys might be more visible to the teacher than are dissatisfied girls.

The reason why the satisfied girls are more visible to the teachers than are the satisfied boys is not so easily apparent. Perhaps girls are just more willing to give direct expression to their satisfactions than are boys. Or perhaps the girls who are particularly pleased with school are more likely than are boys to express their feelings to their teachers indirectly by volunteering to help on classroom chores (most of which are feminine in character) or by preferring to stay with or near the teacher when alternative activities are available (on the playground, before and after school).<sup>34</sup>

Somewhat unexpectedly, another variable, the IQ scores of students, was found to be related to the accuracy of the teachers' predictions. As a group these teachers were noticeably more accurate in estimating the attitudes of students with high IQ than they were in estimating the attitudes of the students with low IQ. For the group of sixth graders whose IQ scores were 120 and above (49 students in all) the correlation between the teachers' predictions and actual scores on the *Student Opinion Poll* was .56; for those whose IQ scores were between 90 and 119 (193 students) the corresponding correlation was .30; finally, for those with scores below 90 (46 students) the correlation was .11. When translated into the language of "hits" and "misses" this set of relationships yields the figures presented in Table 8.

Notice that the data in Table 8 refer to the *accuracy* of the teachers' judgments and not to the *type* of attitudes they ascribe to each of the three IQ groups. Apparently something happened to make the attitudes of the high and middle IQ groups visible to the

<sup>33</sup> Jackson and Getzels.

<sup>34</sup> The possibility that the sex of the teacher may be related to the perception of student attitude was considered, but no evidence was found to support it. Four of the eleven sixth grade teachers were men, and so far as could be determined the correlations between their predictions of student attitudes and the responses of their students did not differ systematically (even when examined separately for boys and girls) from those obtained from the women teachers.

Table 8 Accuracy of Teachers' Predictions Related to IQ of Students

PREDICTIONS	IQ 89 AND BELOW		IQ 90-119		IQ 120 AND ABOVE	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hits	10	34.5	55	44.4	17	54.9
Uncertain	9	31.0	44	35.5	8	25.8
Misses	10	34.5	25	20.2	6	19.3
	$\chi^2 = .07$		$\chi^2 = 11.14^a$		$\chi^2 = 6.66^b$	

<sup>a</sup> Significant at the .01 level.

<sup>b</sup> Significant at the .05 level.

teachers and the attitudes of the low IQ group obscure. Without further information we can do no more than speculate on a few of the possible causes of this finding. One possibility is that the greater verbal fluency of the high IQ students allows them to communicate their views on school matters more clearly than can their classmates who lack these verbal skills. It is also possible that the teacher interacts more frequently with the high and middle IQ student and, thus, has a greater exposure to their views on school matters than those of the low IQ students. Again, perhaps the high IQ students are more likely to assume positions of leadership in the class, and, thus, might be called upon more frequently than the low IQ students to make their views public. Of course these conditions described in the three explanations are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, all three of these possibilities (and others not mentioned here) may be operating simultaneously. To this point the findings from the sixth-grade classes may be summarized as follows. In general, satisfaction seems to be more visible to the teachers than is dissatisfaction, satisfied girls and dissatisfied boys tend to be particularly salient, and students whose IQ scores are average or above manage in some way to communicate their attitudes more clearly to teachers than do students with low IQ's. These findings are evident when the total group of students and teachers is considered, but they cannot always be seen clearly in the results from each classroom. Some teachers seem to be plainly better than others in estimating how their students will respond to a school attitude questionnaire. Moreover, differences in the accuracy of individual teachers does not seem to be accounted for by differences in the composition of their class, at least not with respect to the students' sex, intelligence level, or degree of satisfaction with school. This conclusion is derived from the data presented in Table 9.



Table 9 Accuracy of Individual Teachers' Prediction of Student Attitudes

CLASS	$r^a$ BETWEEN PREDICTED AND ACTUAL SOP SCORE	CLASSROOM CHARACTERISTICS				Average IQ	SOP <sup>b</sup> Score
		Sex of Teacher	Boys	Girls			
1	.10	F	12	19	101.1	28.71	
2	.38	F	18	12	109.0	31.00	
3	.52	F	13	15	105.1	25.43	
4	.00	F	12	10	98.0	28.27	
5	.45	M	20	8	107.4	27.96	
6	.30	F	10	19	112.5	21.44	
7	.56	F	11	13	93.5	24.67	
8	.42	M	18	10	97.0	28.11	
9	.46	M	11	19	99.3	28.33	
10	-.51	F	6	4	109.9	28.90	
11	.26	M	17	16	106.2	28.36	

<sup>a</sup> Pearson correlation coefficient.

<sup>b</sup> Student Opinion Poll.

The data in Table 9 support two generalizations. First, there is considerable variability from teacher to teacher in the accuracy of their predictions. The estimates from the teacher in class 4, as an instance, bear no systematic relation to the actual responses of her students, whereas those from the teacher in class 7 parallel, at least roughly, her students' scores on the questionnaire.<sup>35</sup> Second, the variability among the teachers does not seem to be related in any systematic way to the variability of the classes on those characteristics that have already been discussed. That is, the teachers who seem to have done relatively well in estimating their students' attitudes do not seem to owe their success to the fact that their classes contained an unequal sex distribution or large numbers of very bright students, or students who were unusually satisfied with school. Why some teachers do seem to do better than others on this task is a question yet to be answered.

Thus far the discussion has focused on the conditions that enhance the visibility of student attitudes. But it is also possible to

<sup>35</sup> The correlation obtained with the data from class 10 would obviously provide an even more dramatic example of the differences among the teachers. However, that coefficient is based on such a small number of students that it seems unwise to emphasize its atypicality.

focus on a consideration of the conditions that cloud the teacher's vision. Instead of asking, as we have been, what student qualities are associated with an unusual proportion of "hits" for these teachers, we might change the question to: What student qualities are associated with "misses"?

The findings already presented with respect to the IQ levels of students provide a useful clue in answering this last question. The material in Table 8, it will be recalled, indicated that the attitudes of students with high IQ's seemed to be more visible to the teachers than did corresponding attitudes among students with low IQ's. In other words, the teachers made fewer "misses" with the high IQ group. But what the figures in Table 8 do not reveal is that the teachers' "misses" with both the high and the low IQ groups are of a special sort.

All 10 of the "misses" in the low IQ group involved students who seemed to be satisfied with school, but whom the teachers perceived as dissatisfied. In contrast, all six of the "misses" in the high IQ group involved students who seemed to be dissatisfied with school but whom the teachers perceived as satisfied. In other words, the teachers tended to overestimate the amount of satisfaction to be found among the students with high IQ's and the amount of dissatisfaction to be found among the students with low IQ's. The teachers' "misses" in the middle IQ group were almost equally divided between "satisfied" students whom the teachers predicted would be dissatisfied (12 of the 25 "misses") and "dissatisfied" students whom the teachers predicted would be satisfied (the remaining 13).

This apparent bias in the teachers' judgments raises the question of whether these teachers are basing their estimates of student attitudes largely upon evidence of the student's intellectual prowess or possibly on related evidence of the students success in mastering academic objectives. Perhaps the teachers' beliefs, if summarized in the form of an adage, would be expressed in something like: "The student who *does* well in school *thinks* well of school." A hint of this kind of belief is revealed in Table 10 in which are shown the correlations between the teachers' estimates of student attitudes and the students' scores on IQ and achievement tests. The correlations between the teacher's estimates and the students' scores on the *Student Opinion Poll*, which have already been presented, are included in Table 10 for purposes of comparison.

In the judgment of these sixth-grade teachers the brighter students, who are also among the top performers on achievement tests, are the ones who appear to be the most satisfied with school. Indeed, the teachers' estimates of their students responses to a school opinionnaire turn out to be more closely related to the

Table 10 *Correlations between Teachers' Estimates of Students' Attitudes and Measures of Intellectual Performance*

	IQ	ACHIEVEMENT TESTS			SOP SCORES
		Reading	Language Arts	Arithmetic	
Boys (148)	.44	.49	.51	.45	.28
Girls (144)	.39	.36	.37	.31	.27

students' academic standing than to their actual responses to the questionnaire. This effect is more pronounced for boys than for girls, but it is evident for both sexes. According to these teachers, "good" students are the ones who appear to be satisfied with school and "poor" students are the ones who appear to be dissatisfied.

But are the teachers really in error? After all, there does seem to be something logically compelling about the conjoining of success and satisfaction. Perhaps the better students really are more content with what goes on in the classroom, and the poorer students more discontent. Perhaps the teachers have merely overestimated the extent to which this is so. This possibility requires an examination of the relationship between academic achievement, on the one hand, and attitudes toward school, on the other. It is to this important topic that we now turn.

### III

At least two lines of reasoning can be used to arrive at the expectation that scholastic success and positive attitudes toward school go hand in hand. Both are common enough to have been heard several times by most readers; but because each contains some unwarranted assumptions to be discussed later in this chapter, an overview of both arguments is presented here.

The first set of expectations in support of a success-satisfaction linkage derives from the well-known fact that rewards tend to arouse positive feelings and punishments, negative feelings. People are usually happy when the good things of life come their way and unhappy when their good fortune ceases. Indeed, the connection between rewards and punishments, on the one hand, and particular feeling states, on the other, is so compellingly evident that Edward L. Thorndike, in his pioneering studies of learning, adopted the

terms "satisfiers" and "annoyers" to refer to the conditions that led to the strengthening or weakening of response tendencies. When Thorndike wanted an animal to repeat an act he arranged to have that behavior followed by a "satisfier" and when the goal was to eliminate the behavior, "annoyers" were used. Although present-day psychologists might prefer more neutral terms, such as "positive reinforcement" or "negative reinforcement," no one seriously questions the aptness of Thorndike's language for describing what happens in higher organisms, and particularly in man, when rewards and punishments are introduced.

Not only is reward satisfying and punishment annoying, but (the argument continues) after a time the settings in which one or the other of these conditions is continually experienced begins to engender the associated feeling on its own. In other words, the attitudinal components of rewards and punishments tend to rub off, as it were, and become attached to the situations in which they are administered. For example, the sights and smells of the dentist's office become almost as disquieting as the drill itself for many people.

The application of this line of reasoning to educational affairs is easily made. Obviously, schools are places in which rewards and punishments are administered in abundance. Smiles, compliments, special privileges, good grades, and high scores on tests are occasioned by certain kinds of classroom behavior. Frowns, scoldings, deprivations, poor grades, and low scores on tests are occasioned by other kinds. Further, these satisfying and annoying experiences are not evenly distributed among the students but, instead, tend to be concentrated in both kind and number. Some students become accustomed to receiving the classroom rewards; others to receiving the classroom punishments. Paralleling what was said about human behavior in general we would expect rewarded students to develop, over time, a genuine liking for schools and the process of schooling. Similarly, we would expect students who typically are not rewarded and who frequently may even be punished, to become more or less dissatisfied with life in the classroom. Hence the general expectation: scholastic success will be associated with positive attitudes toward school.

A second line of reasoning leading to the same conclusion is a derivative of the age-old observation that the best milk comes from contented cows. In this case the direction of causality between effective performance and the feelings of the performer is the reverse of that implied in the first argument. Here the emphasis is on the contribution of positive feelings to the worker's output, rather than vice versa.

The effectiveness of performance, so the argument goes, is at

4 least partially dependent on the motivation of the performer. The man who does not want to work often does not do his job as well as does the man who approaches his task enthusiastically, or at least willingly. The ability to concentrate and the willingness to endure petty annoyances—two conditions that contribute substantially to success on complicated tasks—seem to be derived in large measure from the general predisposition of the worker. In most important tasks it is impossible to succeed without trying, and trying, as we know, involves a complicated engagement of desires, attitudes, and other motivational constructs. Moreover, these motivational components are not developed *sui generis* in each work situation but, instead, contain pervasive and enduring elements that are brought to the situation by the worker. The person who enters a situation feeling generally satisfied with the condition in which he finds himself is more likely than is his disgruntled companion to cope successfully with the specific demands of that situation.

The translation of this argument into the language of classroom events is, as before, a simple matter. Schoolwork, like tasks encountered in other settings, requires concentration and effort. To succeed in the classroom a student must continually try to succeed and this implies, in turn, that he must want to try. Now we might expect that those students who are the most eager to cope with specific learning tasks are also the ones who respond most positively to the general experience of schooling. In other words, the youngsters who are the most satisfied with school, other things equal, ought to be among the ones who are the most successful in the classroom.

Thus by two separate paths it is possible to arrive at the same conclusion: scholastic success and satisfaction with school ought to be positively related. Moreover, although they have been treated separately, the two arguments by which this conclusion has been reached can also be shown to reinforce each other. Scholastic success, in this view, may be thought to engender positive attitudes toward school, which, in turn, enhance the possibility of further success, and so on. And of course the same cyclic process is expected to operate at the opposite end of the continuum where the outcomes are not so pleasant. Thus, at the same time as the successful student is pictured soaring on to new heights of achievement with a smile on his face, the failing student is seen as sinking further and further down in the academic heap, his frown deepening as he descends.

As often happens, however,—largely because the logical and the psychological are seldom the same—things do not work in real life quite the way the armchair theorist would like them to. The logically anticipated relationship between students' attitudes toward school and their scholastic success is rather difficult to demonstrate empirically, except perhaps in extreme cases. Indeed, such evidence

as does exist points to an absence of a direct link between the way students view their school life and their relative mastery of academic objectives. Because this evidence contradicts our common sense expectations it deserves special attention.

In several of the studies already discussed an effort was made to examine the relationship between student responses to attitude questionnaires and measures of academic success. The results, without exception, were disappointing. Time and again the statistical manipulations of the data reveal the disquieting fact of no significant relationship. The correlation coefficients in Table 11, which are based on responses from the sixth graders that have been discussed, are typical of what has been found.

The main message contained in Table 11 is simply that none of the thirty-two correlation coefficients differs significantly from zero. But there is more to it than that. It is also important to note that the same results were obtained with teachers' grades as with achievement tests. Moreover, similar findings occurred when using either of two student attitude questionnaires.<sup>36</sup> No matter how it is looked at, the relationship is nil between these sixth graders' attitudes toward school and measures of their academic prowess.

Another set of correlations from a study that has already been discussed is presented in Table 12.<sup>37</sup> In this study the students were high school juniors and the attitude measure used was the *Student Opinion Poll*. The achievement information from these students deals only with performance in English, but the inclusion of IQ data affords a rather good indication of what might have been found had achievement scores and grades in other school subjects been available.

Again, the message contained in the correlation coefficients is simple: no apparent relationship exists between student attitudes and academic performance. Also, the relationship is again the same for boys and girls and does not depend on whether achievement test scores or course grades are used in the computations.

One possible explanation of the zero correlations would be that they were caused by the presence of a large group of students who do not feel strongly, one way or the other, about their school

<sup>36</sup> The *Student Opinion Poll* has already been described (see pp. 55-56). The *Michigan Student Questionnaire* contains 60 items which focus almost exclusively on the student's opinion of his present teacher (for example, "This teacher makes it fun to study things." "This teacher praises us for good work.") The revised version contains 23 fewer items than does the original. For a fuller description of the instrument and its use in research see Ned A. Flanders, "Teacher influence, pupil attitudes and achievement." OE-25040, Cooperative Research Monograph No. 12 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965).

<sup>37</sup> Diedrich.

Table 11 Correlations between Sixth Graders' Attitudes toward School and Measures of Their Scholastic Achievement

ATTITUDE MEASURE	SEX	N	TEACHERS' GRADES				ACHIEVEMENT TESTS			
			Reading	Language Arts	Arithmetic	Science	Reading	Language Arts	Arithmetic	IQ
Student Opinion Poll	Boys	148	.15	.13	.08	.15	.14	.13	.06	
	Girls	144	.16	.16	.14	.19	.08	.12	.14	
Michigan Student Attitude Inventory (revised)	Boys	148	.01	.01	.00	.06	.08	.06	-.08	
	Girls	144	.06	.01	.00	.04	-.07	-.05	.01	

Table 12 Correlations between High School Juniors' Attitudes toward School and Measures of Their Academic Ability

SEX	N	VERBAL	NONVERBAL	ACHIEVEMENT	GRADE IN
		IQ	IQ	TEST IN ENGLISH	ENGLISH
Boys	127	.06	.01	.05	.05
Girls	131	-.06	-.07	.05	.10

experience. This possibility was investigated by eliminating students with middling scores on the attitude instrument and by examining the achievement records of students whose scores on the opinionnaire were relatively extreme. When the scholastic performance of students whose SOP scores were at least one and a half standard deviations above the mean was compared with that of students whose SOP scores were correspondingly low, no significant differences appeared. Exactly the same results were obtained in an earlier study employing the same methods.<sup>38</sup>

Although the three studies that have just been discussed all report the same result, the importance of the apparent lack of a relationship requires us to seek evidence elsewhere before a conclusion is reached. Also, most of the evidence to this point has involved the use of the *Student Opinion Poll* and has been obtained from students within a rather narrow geographical region. If similar findings were obtained using students in other parts of the country and with different attitude questionnaires, our confidence in the independence of success and satisfaction in school would be increased.

The study by Tenenbaum previously discussed helps to extend the evidence. Tenenbaum, it will be recalled, constructed a school attitude questionnaire which he administered to 639 sixth and seventh graders in three schools in New York City. The correlation coefficients between those students' responses to the questionnaire and such academic variables as IQ, educational quotient (EQ), proficiency marks, and grade progress ranged from .003 to .13.<sup>39</sup> Again, no relationship between attitudes toward school and academic success.

There is an additional point to be made using Tenenbaum's findings. One of his variables, educational quotient, provides a measure of the extent to which the student is academically advanced or retarded in relation to his ability level. The fact that this variable, like the others, was not found to be correlated significantly with

<sup>38</sup> Jackson and Getzels.

<sup>39</sup> Tenenbaum, "Attitudes of elementary school children to school, teachers, and classmates."

attitudes toward school would seem to indicate that even when the effects of differences in ability are sharply reduced the more successful students do not think any better of their school than do the less successful ones.

In another study, this one conducted in Indiana, the investigators developed a diagnostic teacher-rating scale which they administered to 1357 students in grades four through eight.<sup>40</sup> Although they report highly significant differences among individual teachers—for example, some teachers are liked much more than are others—the correlations between expressed attitudes and achievement are about the same as those already reported ( $r = .1$  with both achievement and IQ obtained from sub-samples of 527 and 552 students).

A different approach to the problem is reported in a study conducted by L. F. Malpass in a small town in New York.<sup>41</sup> In this investigation 92 eighth grade students responded to two types of projective devices (a sentence completion test and "TAT-type" pictures) designed to reveal their attitudes toward school. The same students also wrote essays about their classroom experiences. A composite rating reflecting his overall view of school life was obtained from each student. The correlation between these composite scores and achievement test performance did not differ significantly from zero. Significant correlations (ranging between .31 and .57) were found, however, between the global estimates of the student's opinions and the grades they received in school. Malpass does not speculate on why the correlations should be found with course grades but not with achievement test scores.

In combination the six studies reviewed thus far provided a rather impressive array of evidence. They involve more than 3000 students from at least 15 schools in several geographical areas. At least five different instruments were used to collect the information concerning student attitudes and a variety of tests were used to obtain the achievement data. Moreover, the six studies cover a time span of 25 years. With the exception of one set of significant correlations with grades the story told by these six investigations is of a piece. Each casts doubt on the common-sense expectation that there will be a noticeable relationship between the way a student feels about his school experience and his relative success in coping with the academic demands of school.

A study recently conducted in Minnesota deserves special men-

<sup>40</sup> Sister M. Amatora Tschachtelin, Sister M. John Frances Hipskind, and H. H. Remmers, "Measuring the attitudes of elementary school children toward their teachers," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 31:195-203, March 1940.

<sup>41</sup> L. F. Malpass, "Some relationships between students' perceptions of school and their achievement," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 44:475-482, December 1953.

tion because it contains findings that are contradictory, in certain respects, to those summarized in the last paragraph.<sup>42</sup> In this study the investigator administered the *Student Opinion Poll* to 505 high school juniors and selected extreme scorers who were designated as "highly satisfied" and "highly dissatisfied" students. These groups were compared on the basis of their performance on nine subtests of the *Iowa Test of Educational Development*. The results indicate that the satisfied and dissatisfied students differed significantly (at the .05 level) on seven of the nine scores, with the satisfied group attaining the higher achievement levels. However, when the groups are divided by sex an examination of the mean scores reveals that all of the significant differences were due to the unusually low performance of the small group ( $N = 18$ ) of dissatisfied girls. The investigator offers no explanation of the unusual performance of this group of girls, and because similar results have not been obtained by any other researcher, to the writer's knowledge, it seems proper merely to note this anomaly before moving on to a consideration of the general meaning of the phenomenon in question.

~~Any evidence that runs counter to common-sense expectations is best approached with healthy skepticism, if not actual disbelief. It is troublesome to change our characteristic views of the world and before we set about trying to do so we want to be sure the effort is necessary. This means, with respect to the topic at hand, that we should consider first the arguments that might be used to discredit the evidence that has been presented.~~

The most logical target of the skeptic would be the questionnaires used to assess the student's attitudes. He doubtlessly would begin with some form of the general question: How reliable and how valid is the information provided by these paper-and-pencil tests? It is well to remember as we approach this question that we are talking about the merits of several data-gathering procedures rather than a single questionnaire.

Information is not available on all the instruments whose results have been described, but such as there is indicates that these devices would compare favorably with other kinds of questionnaires. The *Student Opinion Poll*, for example, yielded a reliability coefficient (internal consistency) of .85 when tested on a group of about 300 sixth graders. Tenenbaum obtained an equally high reliability coefficient with his questionnaire, as did Sister M. Amatora and her associates with the instrument they developed. Comparable figures are not available for the *Michigan Student Attitude Inventory* or for the procedures employed in the study by Malpass.

~~Unfortunately, nothing is known about the stability of students'~~

<sup>42</sup> Thomas A. Brodie, Jr., "Attitude toward school and academic achievement," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 43:375-378, December 1964.

attitudes over time, but there seems to be no special reason why feelings toward school and teachers would be any less stable than would attitudes toward other aspects of the students' world. They might be expected to change with time, but it is doubtful that they would do so capriciously. The fact that the teachers can predict the scores of students a few days in advance of the administration of the questionnaire provides at least indirect evidence of the stability of the attitudes being examined.

The truthfulness of the students' responses might also be questioned, but again, the greater-than-chance accuracy of the teachers' estimates and the fact that predictable relationship did appear between the expressions of attitudes and other variables (sex, psychological health measures) reduces the power of this explanation. Also, in most of the studies the usual precautions were taken—the assurance of anonymity, no teacher present—to encourage honesty in responding. It is probable that some students did try to cloak their true feelings, but it is doubtful that dishonesty was sufficiently widespread to mask a stable link between attitudes and achievement, if such a link did exist.

Finally, some critics might argue that there are aspects of student attitudes related to differences in achievement but these aspects were not included, or at least were not adequately represented in any of the attitude questionnaires. If this criticism is to be taken seriously, however, the critic must be able to identify the components of attitude that have been overlooked. And this is not easy to do. It is not enough to say that the results might have been different if the research instruments had been different. So far as can be seen the school attitude questionnaires do not have any obvious omissions that would easily explain the results that have been described.

The evidence with respect to the stability and validity of the instruments and the honesty of the students' reports is clearly not sufficient to rule out completely any of the arguments that have been presented thus far. There are, further, the slight but undeniable contradictions to be found in two of the studies. Nonetheless, even with these weaknesses it is safe to conclude that the relationship between attitudes and scholastic achievement, if it exists at all, is not nearly as easy to demonstrate as common sense would lead us to believe it might be. Even though we might want to reserve our final judgment until future studies have been made, the available evidence is sufficient to provoke speculation. Let us assume for the moment that there is little or no relation between the students' attitude toward school and their relative academic success. Why might this be so? And what meaning might this lack of a relationship have for the classroom teacher?

It was acknowledged at the beginning of the last section that certain crude relationships between attitudes and achievement do exist and are visible to most teachers. For example, potential drop-outs probably like school less than do average students and their dislike is coupled with lower-than-average achievement records. Most teachers would take this fact to be incontrovertible. Indeed, it is extreme cases, such as the potential drop-out, or the obviously contented valedictorian at the other extreme, that lead to the general expectation that there will be a linkage between attitude and achievement all along the line.

But suppose the gradations of differences revealed by attitude questionnaires do not represent significant differences in the subjective feelings of the students. Suppose, that is, that a small number of students dislike school intensely and an equally small number are correspondingly positive in their opinion, but that most students have either mixed or very neutral feelings about their classroom experience. Perhaps for attitudes to interact with achievement they have to be extreme, and extreme attitudes, either positive or negative, may be much rarer than is commonly thought.