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COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES OF HIGH AND LOW

EIGHTH GRADE ABILITY GROUPS IN ONE SCHOOL  
(TITLE)

BY

Roger Connor

B.A., St. Ambrose College, 1960

**PLAN B PAPER**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION  
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1966  
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS PLAN B PAPER BE ACCEPTED AS  
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DEPARTMENT HEAD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	i
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Purpose.....	2
Procedures.....	2
Limitations.....	3
Definitions.....	3
CHAPTER II - RELATED RESEARCH.....	5
Comments on the Related Research.....	10
CHAPTER III - RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH.....	13
Data from the Cumulative Records.....	14
Data from the Questionnaire.....	15
Discussion.....	32
CHAPTER IV - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	38
APPENDIX.....	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	43

LIST OF TABLES

1. Data on Both Groups from the Cumulative Records.....	14
2. Responses to Questions 1-5.....	16
3. Responses to Questions 6-11.....	18
4. Responses to Questions 12-16.....	20
5. Responses to Questions 17-19.....	21
6. Responses to Questions 20-21.....	23
7. Responses to Question 22.....	25
8. Responses to Questions 23-24.....	27
9. Responses to Questions 25-26.....	29
10. Responses to Question 27.....	31

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is an outgrowth of an interest in a particular group of students which the writer developed during the 1965-66 school year when he taught mathematics to the two lowest ability groups at South View Junior High School in Danville, Illinois. It seemed that these two groups of students were significantly different from the higher ability groups in their attitudes toward authority figures, rules, and school in general.

There is much evidence to indicate that attitudes are related to success in school. Austrin has said, "The relationship between attitudes and academic achievement has been of increasing interest in educational circles."<sup>1</sup> He went on in the article to tell of several studies in which both student and parental attitudes have been found to be significantly related to academic success.

Mill has said, "the importance of a child's attitude toward learning cannot be overemphasized. A child's

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<sup>1</sup>H. R. Austrin, "Cross-Validation of an Attitude Scale for Identification of High and Low Academic Achievers," Journal of Educational Research, LVIII (May, 1965), 426-28.

attitude toward subject matter often sets up a process of selective attention. What he will learn is determined in part by his readiness to learn."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps a comparison of attitudes of those who have been successful in school with those who have not would help us determine which attitudes are conducive to academic success and which are not.

This paper is an attempt to make such a comparison of attitudes. Also compared are a few items of background information on each group.

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to compare the two highest and the two lowest ability groups in the eighth grade at South View Junior High School in Danville, Illinois. The things to be compared are certain attitudes and opinions and a few facts about the backgrounds of students in each group.

#### Procedures

The data for this paper came from two sources: the students' cumulative records and a questionnaire.

The writer administered all the questionnaires personally and urged the students to answer each question as honestly

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<sup>1</sup>C. R. Mill, "Attitudes Affect Pupil's Learning," Educational Leadership, XVII (January, 1960), 212-216.

and thoroughly as they could. Each question was read aloud before the students started writing their responses because it was feared that some of the students in the low group could not understand all the questions. The questions were worded simply to avoid confusion, especially among the poor readers.

The information gathered from the two sources has been presented in tabular form in this paper. In most cases, since there were different numbers of students in the two groups to be compared, the figures were converted to percentages to make for quicker and easier comparison.

#### Limitations

The study is limited first of all by the use of the questionnaire method, which has not proven itself to be completely reliable. It is limited further because only eighty-six students, forty-nine in the high group and thirty-seven in the low group, were involved. That was only about twelve percent of the population of one school. Also, the students in the study were not identified by sex, so one can only speculate on the extent to which the high concentration of girls in the high group and boys in the low group influenced the answers of the groups as a whole.

#### Definitions

Ability Group - One of nine groups into which a student may be placed on the basis of scores on achievement and intelligence

tests, grades, and teachers' recommendations. One is the highest group and nine is the lowest.

High Group - The two highest ability groups combined.

Low Group - The two lowest ability groups combined.

Placed - Advanced to the next higher grade-level even though scholastic performance as evidenced by grades does not warrant it. This is done when administrators, counselors, and teachers agree that the student would not be benefited by holding him for another year at the same grade-level.

Swat - The standard unit of physical punishment at South View. It is administered across the backside of the guilty one with a wooden paddle.



## CHAPTER II

### RELATED RESEARCH

Others have done research similar in some respects to that done in this paper.

Austrin, speaking of the results of research showing the relationship between attitudes and academic success, said, "Such results led to the development of a predictive instrument by Rothman<sup>1</sup> which consisted of sixteen significantly discriminating attitudinal statements. This scale was named the Multidimensional Achievement Orientation Scale (MAOS)."<sup>2</sup>

Austrin went on to say that the MAOS had been successful in differentiating students of high and low achievement in a large sample of bright secondary school students. Austrin set up an experiment to test the validity of the MAOS "with students from an intellectually broader cross-section of the secondary school population." After conducting the experiment and studying the results, he concluded that, "A cross-validation of the MAOS with 140 subjects, heterogeneous in composition....yielded

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<sup>1</sup>Frances Rothman, "A Study in the Measurement, and an Attempted Modification of, Attitudes Toward Academic Achievement Among Gifted Students in Two Independent Schools" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Education, Temple University, 1961), cited by H. R. Austrin, Journal of Educational Research, LVIII (May, 1965), 427.

<sup>2</sup>H. R. Austrin, Journal of Educational Research, LVIII (May, 1965), 427-28.

significant relationships between scores on the test and both scholastic averages and future academic aspirations."

Another experiment which sought to predict achievement from the results of an attitudinal survey was that conducted by Lois Stephens in Oxnard, California, in 1956. Stephens taught seventh and eighth grade mathematics in a junior high school in which students were placed in accelerated, average, or remedial classes on the basis of standardized test scores, teacher opinion, counselor opinion, and parents' consent (if students were to be placed in the accelerated group). However, even with all these criteria, there were often borderline cases in which the students might fit into either the accelerated or average classes. In usual practice these students were placed into the accelerated group, but some later had to be "demoted" to the average class because of poor performance. "In spite of careful counseling in these cases, there was much consternation on the part of some students moved from the accelerated to the regular classes."<sup>1</sup>

Stephens decided to try to screen these borderline cases into the right classes by using an attitude scale developed by Dutton.<sup>2</sup>

The attitude scale was administered to the borderline cases

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<sup>1</sup>Lois Stephens, "Comparison of Attitudes and Achievement Among Junior High School Mathematics Classes," The Arithmetic Teacher, VII (November, 1960), 353.

<sup>2</sup>W. H. Dutton, "Attitudes of Junior High School Pupils Toward Arithmetic," Scholastic Review, LXIV (January, 1956), 18-22, cited by Lois Stephens, The Arithmetic Teacher, VII (November, 1960), 354.

and on the basis of the results, the students were placed in either the accelerated or average classes. After the school year was over, the results were evaluated, and it was found that Dutton's scale had not been of much help in screening the students as many appeared to have been misplaced as before. Stephens concluded that when in doubt, students should be placed in the regular classes; then if it is decided that they have more ability, they can be advanced to the accelerated class. This would avoid much humiliation to the student who would have to be moved from the accelerated to the average class.

Weinberg conducted a study in which school deviants (those who were frequently in trouble) were compared to school leaders with respect to attitudes toward school and three types of achievement: reading, writing, and mathematics.<sup>1</sup> His findings supported the notion that those who conform best to the non-academic or behavioral expectations of the school do appreciably better than those who deviate. The school leaders had more positive attitudes toward school. It was also found that "blue-collar" deviants were less hostile toward the school than their "white-collar" counterparts.

Manello conducted an experiment to see if students' attitudes toward six particular areas of study (United States Constitution,

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Weinberg, "Achievement and School Attitudes of Adolescent Boys as Related to Behavior and Occupational Status of Families," Social Forces, XLII (April, 1964), 462-66, summarized in Psychological Abstracts, XXXIX (1965), 529.

United Nations, Republican Party, Negroes, Dictatorship, Russian Communism) had an effect on their learning ability in these areas.<sup>1</sup> He found no relationship between attitudes toward an area of study and learning ability in that area. He noted that this is the reverse of what most researchers have found. It was suggested that this might be because the experiment was conducted in a regular classroom and not in a laboratory school like most such experiments. Also, the fact that these six areas were not highly charged emotionally may have influenced the results.

An attempt was made by Malpass to see if children's perceptions of school in general and various aspects of school (teachers, classmates, achievement, discipline) seemed to be related to achievement in school as measured by end of semester grades.<sup>2</sup> He found that those who had more negative feelings about the various aspects of school did not achieve as well as students who had positive feelings toward school. It was stated that on the basis of present evidence it was not possible to determine a cause-effect relationship between the two variables (negative

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<sup>1</sup>G. Manello, "Attitude as a Conditioner of the Acquisition of New Facts Among Eighth Grade Pupils," Journal of Genetic Psychology, LXXXV (September, 1954), 85-103.

<sup>2</sup>L. F. Malpass, "Some Relationships Between Students' Perceptions of School and Their Achievement," Journal of Educational Psychology, XLIV (December, 1953), 475-82.

feelings about school and lower grades). Malpass did say, however, that speculation leads to one of two possibilities: Low grades are caused by negative feelings which in turn cause more low grades, etc., or negative feelings toward school cause lower grades which cause more negative feelings, etc. In either case, the result is a downward spiral.

Hughes set out to determine whether or not student attitude had an effect on achievement in an introductory statistics course.<sup>1</sup> He used an attitude scale which consisted of fifty questions to which the students were asked to respond. He found that student attitude accounted for a four to five percent variability in course achievement. His conclusion was that student attitude is apparently a partial determinant of student achievement.

Kishida, a Japanese, did research which was translated and summarized in an American publication.<sup>2</sup> "The relation between pupils' attitudes toward teachers and their attitudes toward school was one of a close correlation, as denoted by a coefficient of correlation which is statistically significant. Thus it was found that the more pupils formed an intimate attachment for

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<sup>1</sup>J. B. Hughes, "Student Attitude and Achievement in a Course in Introductory Statistics," Journal of Educational Psychology, XLV (May, 1954), 268-76.

<sup>2</sup>Motomi Kishida, ("Studies of Human Relations Between Pupils and Teachers"), Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology, X (January, 1962), 1-10, quoted in Psychological Abstracts, XXXVII (1963), 556.

their teachers, the more they came to like school."

Crescimbeni matched ninety-two pupils from "united" homes with ninety-two pupils from homes in which the parents were separated, divorced, or dead.<sup>1</sup> The groups were matched on the basis of chronological age, I.Q., sex, grade, school, teacher, and socio-economic level. It was found that children from intact homes were achieving an average of nine-tenths of a year beyond the children from broken homes. Irrespective of the reason for family disorganization, achievement was significantly lower than that in the united homes.

#### Comments on the Related Research

In a sense, Austrin's research is just the opposite of this writer's. He set out to deduce academic ability from responses to attitudinal statements. The writer knew the academic ability of the students with whom he was dealing and was trying to find what attitudes were characteristic of each group.

The studies of Stephens and Manello indicated that one must be very careful when trying to relate student attitudes to student achievement in any area. Dutton's scale, used by Stephens, failed to separate those who would be successful and unsuccessful in mathematics, and Manello's results were contrary to what most

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<sup>1</sup>J. Crescimbeni, "Broken Homes Affect Academic Achievement," Education, LXXXIV (July, 1964), 437-41.

researchers had found about the relationship between student attitudes toward a subject area and student learning ability in that area. Being aware of the work done by these two researchers, and recognizing the imperfections of his own attitude-measuring device, this writer was very careful in drawing conclusions from his research.

Weinberg's research was not directly related to that described in this paper because he was comparing deviants with school leaders rather than high achievers with low achievers. It was cited because it was an attempt to correlate attitudes and achievement. In this case the researcher found what he expected to find. His work merely confirmed the widely-accepted belief that those who conform to the rules of the school do better academically than those who do not.

Malpass' research was very similar to Weinberg's in that he sought to relate feelings toward school to achievement. He found what most would expect--that negative feelings went with low grades (and vice-versa). Some might criticize research such as this on the grounds that everybody already knew what the outcome would be. One must not forget that at one time everybody "knew" what would happen if one sailed off the edge of the "flat" earth.

Hughes' questionnaire must have been a very delicate instrument to have been able to detect a variability in student

achievement of only four or five percent. He is the only researcher in this area, of all those considered, who makes such definite and exact claims. Kishida's research indicated that in places other than the United States, educational studies are being carried out. Finally, Crescimbeni found that there is a relationship between broken homes and achievement in school. This was in agreement with the findings in this paper which indicated a far greater rate of broken homes in the low group.

It was not easy to find research related to that attempted in this paper. This may indicate that there is a need for more research in this area.



## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

#### Data From the Cumulative Records

Table 1 (page fourteen) shows data collected on both groups from the cumulative folders. Data was available on everybody in nearly every category for the high group. Practically the same is true of the low group, but there were a very few instances in which certain information on a particular individual was not available.

There were forty-nine students in the high group, thirty-seven in the low group.

Negroes comprised 6% of the high group and 32% of the low group. The total school population is 13% Negro.

The high group had 33% boys and 67% girls; the low group had 68% boys and 32% girls. The figures were almost exactly reversed for the two groups.

The average age for those in the high group as of May, 1966, was fourteen years and zero months; for the low group it was fifteen years and two months. Those students in the low group were, on the average, fourteen months older than those in the high group.

TABLE 1

DATA ON BOTH GROUPS FROM THE CUMULATIVE RECORDS

	High Group	Low Group
Number of students in each group.....	49	37
Percent of group that are Negroes.....	6%	32%
Percent of total school population that are Negroes.....		13%
Percent boys in each group.....	33%	68%
Percent girls in each group.....	67%	32%
Average age (years and months; as of May, 1966).....	14-0	15-2
Range of ages.....	13-6--14-4	13-6--17-0
Percent who failed or were placed in at least one grade.....	0%	74%
Percent who failed or were placed in at least two grades.....	9%	42%
Percent who have attended more than one school (not including South View).....	30%	61%
Average number of schools attended.....	1.4	2.3
Percent from broken homes <sup>1</sup> .....	13%	38%
Average I.Q. score.....	117	80
Median I.Q. score.....	118	79
Range of I.Q. scores.....	96-143	62-105

<sup>1</sup>Not at present living with natural father and mother for any reason whatsoever (death, divorce, etc.).

The range of ages for the high group was from thirteen years, six months to fourteen years, four months; that is a range of ten months. For the low group the ages ranged from thirteen years, six months to seventeen years, zero months--a range of forty-two months.

No one from the high group failed or was placed in any grade. In the low group 74% failed or were placed in at least one grade, and 42% failed or were placed in at least two grades.

In the high group 30% of the students had attended more than one school before coming to South View. For the low group the figure was 61%.

About one-eighth (13%) of the high group came from broken homes, and about three-eighths (38%) of the low group came from same.

The average I.Q. score for the high group was 117; for the low group it was 80. The median I.Q. score for the high group was 118; for the low group it was 79. The range of scores for the high group was from 96 to 143 (47 points); for the low group it was from 62 to 105 (43 points).

#### Results of the Questionnaire

For the purposes of this chapter, the questionnaire has been divided into several parts so that it can be examined a little at a time. It is presented in its original form in the appendix.

TABLE 2

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 1-5

		High Group	Low Group
1. Do you like school most of the time?	YES	98%	78%
	NO	2%	22%
2. Do you like math most of the time?	YES	86%	81%
	NO	14%	19%
3. Is math a hard subject for you?	YES	35%	22%
	NO	65%	78%
4. Do you think the rules in this school are too strict?	YES	23%	39%
	NO	77%	61%
5. Do you think the rules in this class are too strict?	YES	2%	8%
	NO	98%	92%

Almost all of the high group and nearly four-fifths of the low group liked school most of the time.

Eighty-six percent of the high group and 81% of the low group liked mathematics most of the time. A comparison of the responses to questions one and two indicates that students in the high group liked mathematics somewhat less than they liked school as a whole. For the low group the answers to the two questions were about the same.

Thirty-five percent of the high group considered mathematics a hard subject, but only 22% of the low group thought it was hard.

Only 23% of the high group and 39% of the low group thought the rules in the school were too strict.

Just one student (2%) in the high group and three (8%) in the low group thought the rules in their respective mathematics classes were too strict.

Table 3 indicated that over nine-tenths of the high group thought that most of the teachers care if they learn. Three-fourths of the low group thought the teachers care whether or not they learn anything.

A high 86% of the high group thought teachers are justified in giving swats sometimes, but only slightly over half of the low group condoned the practice.

Very few students, about one of sixteen in the high group and one of six in the low group, thought teachers should assign more homework.

TABLE 3

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 6-11

		High Group	Low Group
6. Do you think most of the teachers in this school really care if you learn anything or not?	YES	92%	75%
	NO	8%	25%
7. Do you think any teacher should ever give swats to any student?	YES	86%	53%
	NO	14%	47%
8. Do you think that your teachers should assign more homework than they do now?	YES	6%	16%
	NO	94%	84%
9. Do you like most of your teachers?	YES	100%	84%
	NO	9%	16%
10. Do you like most of your classmates?	YES	100%	81%
	NO	0%	19%
11. Do you usually take books home?	YES	84%	51%
	NO	16%	49%

Questions nine and ten were the only ones in the whole questionnaire that got unanimous answers. Everyone of the students in the high group liked most of his teachers and most of his classmates. In the low group 84% of the students liked most of their teachers, and 81% liked most of their classmates.

Approximately five-sixths of the students in the high group said they usually take books home; very slightly over one-half of the low group did likewise.

Homeroom is the first period of the day. It is thirty minutes long and usually it just amounts to another study period. Table 4 indicated that 80% of the high group and 68% of the low group liked this period.

About one-fifth of the high group and three-fifths of the low group preferred to work at the blackboard rather than at their seats.

The average number of study halls for the high group was 4.3 per week; for the low group it was 6.7 per week. So on the average the members of the low group had 2.4 more study halls per week than did their fellows in the high group.

Eighty percent of the high group and 81% of the low group felt that they had enough study periods. So only about one-fifth of each group felt that they needed more study periods.

Only 6% of the high group felt that they had too many study periods; the figure for the low group was higher--30%.

TABLE 4

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 12-16

		High Group	Low Group
12. Do you like the homeroom period?	YES	80%	68%
	NO	20%	32%
13. Would you rather work at the blackboard than at your seat?	YES	22%	62%
	NO	78%	38%
14. How many study periods do you have each week?		4.3 (avg.)	6.7 (avg.)
15. Is that enough study periods?	YES	80%	81%
	NO	20%	19%
16. Is that too many?	YES	6%	30%
	NO	94%	70%



TABLE 5

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 17-19

17. What do you usually do during the homeroom period?<sup>1</sup>

	Study	Talk	Read	Sit around or play around	Other
High Group	84%	10%	47%	4%	14%
Low Group	68%	22%	27%	22%	11%

18. How far do you intend to go in school? (quit when you are sixteen, finish junior high, finish high school, go to college, etc.)

	Quit when sixteen	Finish junior high	Finish high school	Go to college	Post-high school training (not college)
High Group	0%	0%	20%	63%	16%
Low Group	11%	3%	62%	24%	0%

19. What do you think you will do whenever you leave school?  
(get a job, marry, join army, etc.)

	Job	Marry	Join armed forces	Other
High Group	69%	10%	16%	5%
Low Group	57%	13%	30%	0%

<sup>1</sup>Percents add up to more than 100 because some students gave more than one answer.

Table 5 indicated that during the homeroom period, 84% of the students in the high group study, 10% talk, 47% read, 4% "sit around or play around," and 14% do something that does not fit into any of the other categories. For the low group the figures were: 68% study, 22% talk, 27% read, 22% "sit around or play around," and 11% other.

Everyone in the high group intended to at least finish high school. Four out of five intended to take some training after that; 63% hoped to go to college, and 16% intended to enter nurse's training, business school, etc.

In the low group 14% of the students did not intend to finish high school. Sixty-two percent of them hoped to finish high school, and 24% intended to go to college. None of the low group mentioned other types of post-high school training.

In the high group 69% thought they would get a job whenever they left school; 10% thought they would get married; 16% thought they would join some branch of the armed forces, and 5% had some other plans. As for the low group, 57% thought they would get a job; 13% wanted to get married, and 30% thought they would join the armed forces.

TABLE 6

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 20-21

20. What would you like to do for a living? <sup>1</sup>								
	0	1	2	3	4-5	6-7	8-9	could not classify, left blank, or undecided
High Group	63%	14%	6%	2%	6%	4%	0%	4%
Low Group	30%	3%	16%	5%	11%	8%		19%

  

21. What do you think is the best job in the world?								
	0	1	2	3	4-5	6-7	8-9	could not classify, left blank, or undecided
High Group	55%	2%	12%	2%	4%	2%	0%	23%
Low Group	49%	8%	5%	5%	14%	8%	0%	11%

<sup>1</sup>The numbers 0-9 represent the major classifications of occupations as coded in the D.O.T. That is: 0, professional and managerial; 1, clerical and sales; 2, service occupations; 3, 5 agriculture, forestry, fishery, and related occupations; 4-5 skilled occupations; 6-7, semi-skilled occupations; 8-9, unskilled occupations.

Of the students in the high group, 63% wanted to do something in the professional and managerial line for a living. Most of these wanted to be teachers with doctors, nurses, scientists following in that order. Of the 14% who chose an occupation in the clerical and sales category, all but one (2%) wanted to be secretaries. Nobody wanted to do unskilled labor. The rest of the responses were spread out fairly evenly among the other categories.

Table 6 showed that 30% of the low group would like to do something in the professional or managerial line. The remainder were distributed thus: clerical and sales, 3%; service occupations, 16%; agriculture, forestry, fishery, etc., 5%; skilled occupations, 8%; and there were 19% who either failed to answer the question or whose answers could not be classified.

Fifty-five percent of the high group thought that a professional or managerial job would be the best in the world. Twelve percent thought a service occupation would be best. No one chose unskilled labor. There were 25% in the could not classify, etc. category. None of the remaining categories got more than one or two votes.

Forty-nine percent of the low group thought a professional or managerial job would be best. The most popular answer was "President." No one in the low group chose teaching as the best job in the world. No one chose an unskilled job. Skilled occupations were chosen best by 14%. The remainder of the answers were spread fairly evenly among the remaining classifications.

TABLE 7

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 22

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22. Where would you like to go if you had all the money you needed?

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	Florida- California- Hawaii	Europe	Around The World	Other
High Group	20%	33%	12%	35%
Low Group	43%	8%	8%	41%

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Table 7 indicated that if they had all the money they needed, 20% of the high group would head for Florida, California, or Hawaii; 33% would go to Europe; 12% would go around the world; 35% would go to a great variety of other places. One student wanted to go "to the moon if at all possible." Another wanted to go to Venus.

If they had all the money they needed, 43% of the low group would go to Florida, California, or Hawaii; only 8% would go to Europe; 8% would travel around the world; 41% picked a variety of other places. Some of the more unusual answers were..."to the world's warmest place"... "right here"... "to college"... "to a tavern."

TABLE 8

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 23-24

23. What is the biggest thing wrong with this school?

	Faculty	Students	Rules and Organization <sup>1</sup>	Certain Subjects or Activities	Other
High Group	10%	22%	41%	0%	27%
Low Group	35%	16%	24%	0%	24%

24. What do you like best about this school?

	Faculty	Students	Rules and Organization	Certain Subjects or Activities	Other
High Group	33%	10%	18%	18%	20%
Low Group	30%	14%	3%	27%	26%

<sup>1</sup>Organization refers to such things as size of classes, number of teachers, length of periods, etc.

Table 8 indicated that 10% of the high group thought the biggest thing wrong with the school was the faculty, and 22% thought the biggest problem was the students. Rules and organization got 41% of the votes. No one thought any subject or activity was the worst thing about the school. "Other" claimed 27% of the answers. There were so many in this category because the answers of the students were so diverse that it would have taken a different category for almost every answer.

Thirty-five percent of the low group thought the biggest thing wrong with the school was the faculty, and only 16% said it was the students. Rules and organization got 24% of the votes. Nobody picked certain subjects or activities as the biggest thing wrong with the school. "Other" claimed 24% of the answers.

Turning to the brighter side of things, one-third of the high group thought the faculty was the best thing about the school. Ten percent liked the students best, 18% the rules and organization, 18% also picked certain subjects or activities, and 20% voted for a number of things that defied categorization.

In the low group 30% picked the faculty as the best thing about the school; 14% picked the students; 3% voted for the rules and organization; 27% picked a certain subject or activity; 26% picked something else.

As can be seen, considerable difficulty was encountered in fitting the responses to some of the questions into categories. From question seventeen on, with the exception of number twenty-five, there were no categories on the questionnaire. These were added later to help organize and tabulate the data.



TABLE 9

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 25-26

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		High Group	Low Group
25. Would you like to be a teacher?	YES	35%	17%
	NO	65%	83%

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26. Why or why not?<sup>1</sup>

lack patience to deal with students who misbehave or who do not want to learn.....	39%	20%
either not able or not willing to go to college.....	18%	20%
have other plans or just not interested.....	27%	17%
teachers are not paid enough.....	3%	10%
do not like school or teachers.....	6%	23%
other.....	6%	10%

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<sup>1</sup>This table deals only with those who said they would not like to be teachers. The great majority of those who would like to be teachers gave some "altruistic" reason.

Table 9 indicated that 35% of the high group and 17% of the low group would like to be teachers. Of these people, 100% of the low group and 69% of the high group gave what could be considered "altruistic" reasons for wanting to teach. That is, they expressed in some way, a desire to help other people by being a teacher. The remainder of these people (still talking about only those who would like to be teachers) gave a variety of other reasons--"my aunt did it"... "seems like the thing to do"... "You don't have to work too long," etc.

Consider now those who said they would not like to be teachers. First of all, remember that in this paragraph we are talking about the 65% of the high group and 83% of the low group that did not want to be teachers. Of these students, 39% of the high group and 20% of the low group felt that they lacked patience to deal with students who misbehaved or did not want to learn; 18% of the high group and 20% of the low group were either not able to nor willing to go to college; 27% of the high group and 17% of the low group had other plans or were just not interested; 3% of the high group and 10% of the low group said teachers were not paid enough; 6% of the high group and 23% of the low group said they just do not like school or teachers; 6% of the high group and 10% of the low group gave other reasons for not wanting to be teachers.

The last item (see Table 10) asked students to use the back of the questionnaire to say anything they wanted to about the school or any of the teachers.

TABLE 10

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 27

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	High Group	Low Group
27. Use the back of this sheet to say anything else you want about this school or any of the teachers. (Use no names, please.)		
said something good about the school or teachers.....	12%	14%
said something uncomplimentary about the school or teachers.....	31%	24%
said something that was partly complimentary and partly uncomplimentary.....	8%	14%
said something that could not be interpreted as either complimentary or uncomplimentary--neutral.....	40%	5%
no comment--wrote nothing at all.....	49%	43%

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Their responses (or lack of responses) have been classified into five categories: 12% of the high group and 14% of the low group said something complimentary about the school or teachers; 31% of the high group and 24% of the low group wrote something uncomplimentary about the school or teachers; 8% of the high group and 14% of the low group made remarks that were partly complimentary and partly uncomplimentary; 0% of the high group and 5% of the low group said something that could not be interpreted either way (neutral); 49% of the high group and 43% of the low group wrote nothing at all on the back of the questionnaire.

#### Discussion

As stated previously the purpose of this paper was to compare the two highest and the two lowest ability groups at South View Junior High School. The paper was exploratory in nature. The purpose was not to attempt to confirm or disprove any hypothesis. However, after a review of the data from the cumulatives and the results of the questionnaire, it seems that a few particular items are worthy of mention.

It was expected that there would be less Negroes and less boys in the high group, but the magnitude of the difference was not expected. The percent of Negroes in the low group was more than five times as great as in the high group; and the percent of boys in the low group was more than twice as great as for the high group. It appears that at South View, as in most schools,

the white female has the best chance of success, and the Negro boy the poorest chance. Some see this tendency as a sign that our school systems cater to the white girls to the detriment of the rest of the student body. But it was not the purpose of this paper to delve into such matters.

Most of the students in the high group had attended only one other school before coming to South View, whereas most of the lower group had attended two or more schools before coming to South View. This may indicate that a family that stays in one place tends to give the children a better chance to do well in school.

The rate of students from broken homes was almost three times as great for the low group. This should be shocking, but, to most educators at least, it probably is not.

Even though the groups are supposed to be homogeneous, the range of I.Q. scores was over forty points in both groups. This gives some indication of the necessity for the teacher to attempt, even in homogeneously grouped classes, to make some provision for individual differences. Of course, that is very easy to say and not always so easy to do.

Another interesting thing about the I.Q. scores is that although the two lowest and two highest groups (out of a total of nine) were considered, there was still a slight overlapping of scores.

Students in the low group have often been heard to complain about having to come to school. Yet almost four-fifths of them said they do like school most of the time. So perhaps all their complaining is not to be taken at face value.

Thirty-five percent of the high group and only 22% of the low group thought mathematics was a hard subject. Perhaps the relatively low number of students in the low group who thought mathematics was a hard subject was due to the remedial program carried on during the last three months of school. During that time a leisurely pace was maintained in class, and the threat of failure was reduced to a minimum. One of the aims of this program was to convince the poorer students that mathematics was not as difficult as they had thought. Evidently this aim was achieved.

Only four of the eighty-six students involved in the study considered the rules in their respective mathematics classes too strict. Quite a few more than that felt that the rules in the school as a whole were too strict. What that means can probably be interpreted in more than one way. Does it mean that the rules in the mathematics classes were too lax? Does it mean that the rules in the school were too strict? Perhaps it means neither, or both. Perhaps it means nothing. The responses to several items in the questionnaire affected the writer in about the same way as this one did. It was not always

easy to draw any conclusions at all from the responses. In such cases the material was just presented factually, and the reader left free to make of it what he would.

All but a few of the high group thought most of the teachers care if they learn, but one-fourth of the low group were not convinced of it. Maybe they felt that the teachers did not want to waste a lot of effort on them because they were too dumb to learn anyway. Perhaps they thought most of the teachers were primarily concerned with keeping order in the classroom rather than in teaching. It might be that a negative answer was just one way of showing hostility toward the teachers.

Six out of seven in the high group thought it was all right for teachers to give swats to students, at least sometimes. But only half of the low group condoned the practice. This probably had something to do with the fact that they are the recipients of many more swats than the high group.

A comparison of the responses to questions six and nine reveals that evidently there were some students in each group who liked certain teachers even though they did not think these teachers cared if they learned anything or not--an interesting situation.

Eighty percent of the low group and 68% of the high group said that they did like the homeroom period. Most of the teachers at South View think the homeroom period is too long (thirty minutes)

and would like to see it shortened. There is also a general feeling among the teachers that the students do not like the homeroom period either because all it really amounts to most of the time is a study period, and most of them have enough of those already. The responses, however, indicated that the students do like the homeroom period.

It is doubtful that 64% of the low group will be able to carry out their intention to finish high school. Although that is a laudable goal, it is felt that not that many have the necessary ability to go that far. The 24% of the low group who wish to go to college are real dreamers.

Thirty percent of the low group wanted to enter a professional or managerial occupation. It is extremely unlikely, perhaps even impossible, that anywhere near that many could successfully enter such occupations. These answers may indicate that these students have an unrealistic estimate of their own capabilities. Of course, they are only eighth-graders. Perhaps in the next few years they will come to have more realistic aspirations.

Thirty-three percent of the high group and 30% of the low group thought the faculty was the best thing about the school. This was a real compliment to the faculty--they even outvoted physical education and lunch.

Thirty-five percent of the high group and 17% of the low group would like to be teachers. Most of those in the high group probably



have the ability to become teachers, but it was unexpected that so many of them would like to enter the profession. Many of them will probably change their minds in the next few years. Perhaps their responses indicated that the teachers they have known have impressed them favorably. Those in the low group who would like to become teachers probably do not have the necessary ability.

The last item on the questionnaire, the one which asked the students to make comments about the school or teachers on the back of the questionnaire, was ignored by more than half of each group. This was a little puzzling in view of the fact that they were specifically asked not to ignore it. Perhaps they felt that the other questions covered the subject well enough.

There is really a great deal of information in the various tables included in this paper. These comments cover only a few items which were of particular interest to the writer.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Very few definite conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study.

The most striking conclusion was that the high and low groups were not very far apart in their attitudes toward school. Consider the sixteen questions that could be answered yes or no: on four of the sixteen the answers of the two groups were within ten percentage points of each other; on seven of the questions they were within eleven to twenty percentage points of agreement; on two questions they were between twenty-one and thirty points apart; on the other three questions they were from thirty-one to forty points apart. None varied more than that.

An examination of the results of the questions that could not be answered yes or no indicated that here, too, there were several areas of fairly close agreement between the groups. For example, the two groups were fairly close together on what they thought they would do when they left school, on what was the best job in the world, and on what they liked best about the school. Their responses to the last item (in which they were asked to

make additional comments on the back of the questionnaire) were also very similar.

A large majority of each group liked school, their teachers, and they believed that most of the teachers wanted to help them learn. This would appear to be a healthy situation, and in the writer's opinion is a compliment from the students to the faculty.

A few of the results were somewhat hard to understand and are probably deserving of further investigation:

- 1) One-fourth of the low group thought most of their teachers did not care if they learned anything or not.
- 2) Over one-third of the low group thought the faculty was the biggest thing wrong with the school.
- 3) Forty-one percent of the high group thought the rules and organization of the school were the worst thing about it.

No great concern is felt about these items, but it is felt that they merit a little closer scrutiny to find, if possible, the reasons behind the answers.

In addition to the three items just mentioned, there were a few other responses that were at least slightly surprising or disturbing. For example: Over one-third of the high group thought mathematics was a hard subject; almost nobody in either group thought the rules in their mathematics classes were too strict. (This was a pleasant surprise.); one-half of the low group were against swats under any circumstances; 24% of the low group intend to go to college; 35% of the high group would like to be teachers. These responses seem to indicate that in some

cases, the faculty does not know what the students think about various things that go on in the school. It is possible that student-faculty communication is not all that it should be.

Two recommendations are offered:

1) That an attempt be made to facilitate student to faculty communication. A very simple way to start would be to place suggestion boxes in strategic places and encourage the students to use them. It might not do any good, but it could not do any harm either--and the cost would be negligible.

2) That studies similar to this one be undertaken periodically. Questionnaires are easy to make, and if they are kept short, the results can be quickly and easily tabulated. And, of course, they need not be elaborate. Perhaps just a simple tabulation of the results, along with (or without) a short explanation, posted where all the teachers (why not students, too?) could see it.

One last recommendation: A "forced answer" (true-false, yes-no, multiple choice, etc.) questionnaire should be used. It is very difficult to fit the responses to such questions as, "What is the biggest thing wrong with this school?" into categories; and even after it is done, the results are not completely satisfactory--at least not to this writer.

APPENDIX X

QUESTIONNAIRE

- |   |       |    |
|---|-------|----|
| 1. Do you like school most of the time?   | Yes   | No |
| 2. Do you like math most of the time?   | Yes   | No |
| 3. Is math a hard subject for you?  | Yes   | No |
| 4. Do you think the rules in this school are too strict?                                      | Yes   | No |
| 5. Do you think the rules in this class are too strict?                                       | Yes   | No |
| 6. Do you think most of the teachers in this school really care if you learn anything or not? | Yes   | No |
| 7. Do you think any teacher should ever give swats to any student?                            | Yes   | No |
| 8. Do you think that your teachers should assign more homework than they do now?              | Yes   | No |
| 9. Do you like most of your teachers?   | Yes   | No |
| 10. Do you like most of your classmates?  | Yes   | No |
| 11. Do you usually take books home?   | Yes   | No |
| 12. Do you like the homeroom period?  | Yes   | No |
| 13. Would you rather work at the blackboard than at your seat?                                | Yes   | No |
| 14. How many study periods do you have each week?   | _____ |    |
| 15. Is that enough study periods?   | Yes   | No |
| 16. Is that too many?   | Yes   | No |
| 17. What do you usually do during the homeroom period?  |       |    |

18. How far do you intend to go in school? (quit when you are sixteen, finish junior high, finish high school, go to college, etc.)
19. What do you think you will do whenever you leave school? (get a job, get married, join the army, etc.)
20. What would you like to do for a living?
21. What do you think is the best job in the whole world?
22. Where would you like to go if you had all the money you needed?
23. What is the biggest thing wrong with this school?
24. What do you like best about this school?
25. Would you like to be a teacher? Yes No
26. Why or why not?
27. Use the back of this sheet to say anything else you want to about this school or any of the teachers. (Use no names, please.)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

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