

THE TRANSITION FROM ELEMENTARY TO
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: STUDENT EXPECTATIONS
AND EXPERIENCES

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THE TRANSITION FROM ELEMENTARY
TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL:
STUDENT EXPECTATIONS
AND EXPERIENCES

by



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Abstract

This research reports on an elementary-junior high school transition study of ninety students from a suburban K-6 elementary school to a grade 7-12 central high school in the same geographical area.

By means of a questionnaire and student interviews the expectations of grade six students for junior high school were assessed. In a follow-up study a year later, these same students were asked to tell about their experiences in junior high school. Salient themes of student expectations and experiences were drawn from these two sets of data and several significant trends were identified. The identification of these trends, which sensitize us to the student perspective in schooling, can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, before entering junior high school, elementary students experienced a high level of excitement regarding the transition. At the end of the following year, this level of excitement had diminished somewhat, but still remained relatively high. This high degree of excitement is basically seen as being related to the feeling of being mature and grown up. Early adolescents seem to see this transition as one of the first steps into adulthood.

Secondly, grade six students generally expected the grade seven program to be more difficult and demanding, and at the end of the grade seven year, this idea was almost a

general consensus. Most children thought that the academic program demanded more of them and many were not doing as well as they had expected to do.

Thirdly, very few of the grade six children in the study expected, or were looking forward to, changing friendship patterns during their grade seven year. But, in effect, a surprisingly large number of these students did report being part of new friendship groups. Drastic changes did occur in friendship patterns.

Fourthly, while still in elementary school, students generally expressed some worry and concern about moving to the new environment. Some reported that their parents were also feeling this way. However, from the grade seven survey, it was found that both students' and parents' concerns, as seen by students, had increased significantly. The two main areas of this concern were academics and the influence of older students.

These trends, analysed from a symbolic interaction perspective, thereby sensitizing us to the manner in which students experience the transition period, are then discussed in relationship to implications for teachers as well as for future research into the student perspective. Such insight into students' perspectives is seen as a necessary component of the understanding, teaching and guidance of early adolescents during this transition period.

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CHAPTER I

TRANSITION FROM ELEMENTARY TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Even though researchers would probably agree that transfer from elementary school to junior high school is a significant and potentially difficult stage in a child's development, until recently very little research had been done on this aspect of school life. As transfer to junior high school occurs around the age ~~eleven~~ eleven or twelve, it seems that the rapid intellectual and personal development associated with that period might be affected by the environmental change. However, not all reports tend to agree. For example, whilst Doe (1976), Ball (1975) and Hawthorn (1976), among others, found that environmental change, that is, changing one's school, is detrimental, the opposing view contends that the extra stimulation provided fosters child development (Plowden, 1976). The fact is that neither view is satisfactory simply because of the difficulty of generalizing among such a wide variability of children, and more especially, because of the manner in which most studies have been conducted. Most studies have not given sufficient attention to children's perceptions of the transition.

As background to the focus of the present research on the expectations and experiences of ~~students~~ students as they move

from elementary to junior high school, this chapter reviews the literature that pertains to that transition. To begin, an overview of the research orientation is in order.

An Overview of Research Orientation

Transfer from elementary to junior high school is one of several critical transitions identified by Hamblin (1978). But, much research on transfer does not take into account children's definitions or perceptions. Rather, they tend to focus on evaluation, either of programs aimed at facilitating transition (Bates, 1978; Hamblin, 1978) or assessment procedures (Rundle, 1979; Sumner and Bradley, 1977). Other researchers who have examined elementary/junior high school transfer have tended to examine its structural arrangements (Neal, 1975) or age of transfer (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969).

Several studies that have centered on children's reactions have investigated rather specific problems such as school failure (Dale and Griffith, 1965) or the progress of maladjusted pupils (Pumfrey and Ward, 1977). In other studies, pupil reactions lean towards the prediction of pathological maladjustment (Dowling, 1980; Nisbet and Entwistle, 1969). Youngman (1978), however, was able to show that among children in transition there were six different reaction styles, but there was little attempt to

define the actual perceptions of the children themselves. Until recently, then, the general problem of school transfer was assessed from a limited range of orientational foci. Recently, attention has been turned to the students' perspective of transition.

Among the most important studies to date is the Elementary Junior High Transition Study done by the Far West Lab for Educational Research in San Francisco. This is a major study in seven volumes. The authors involved in this major study include Mergendoller, et al. (1982), Rounds, et al. (1982), Mitman, et al. (1981), and Ward, et al. (1982). Another group of researchers whose works have added to our understanding of school transfer is Simmons, et al. (1973, 1977, 1979), Blythe, et al. (1978), and Nottelman (1982). These authors have been concerned about different aspects of school transfer and how they are related to children's self-esteem. Other research materials that will be referred to are those of Dutch and McCall (1974), Brown and Armstrong (1982) and Measor and Woods (1983).

By way of organizing the major findings of the research dealing with the transition from elementary to junior high school, it is convenient to discuss these findings as they relate to six topics. It should be noted that some of the major studies, since they represent multiple findings, will be referred to in more than one topic. The six headings for the literature review are:

- (1) the educational context of the elementary school;
- (2) the organization of instruction and diversity of pupils' work day;
- (3) student types and transition experience;
- (4) teacher types and transition experience;
- (5) the interaction of physical maturity and transition and
- (6) students' concerns.

The Educational Context of the Elementary School

It is important to note that the experiences in the seventh grade are partly dependent upon the educational contexts of the elementary grades (especially of the grade six year). Blythe, Simmons and Bush (1978) studied grade seven students who had come from two different elementary contexts. The results of a longitudinal study of sixth grade students going into seventh grade in either an eighth grade top school (K-8) or in a three year junior high are reported. In comparing the K-8 school with the K-6 school and its associated junior high, they examined five areas of social and psychological development: (1) parent-peer orientation; (2) participation in extra curricula activities; (3) early dating behaviour; (4) the value of different personal traits and (5) the individual's self esteem. Their main question for consideration was "does the type of school structure a student goes through result in differential amounts of change in any of the five areas of social-psychological development selected for study"? (Blythe, Simmons and Bush, 1978: 151).

In the Blythe, et al. study, each student was personally interviewed for an hour by a trained interviewer in both the sixth and seventh grade. The interviews were highly structured and covered a wide range of topics including the students' self-image, perceptions of others' expectations, the importance of several different personal characteristics, attitudes towards school and several behavioral questions. Part of the findings suggested that K-8 students became increasingly more positive about themselves, participated more in activities and felt less anonymous in their school environment. The seventh graders who changed their schools, and especially the girls, felt less positive about themselves, decreased their participation in activities and felt a high degree of anonymity with their school environment.

Further, in order to assess the overall impact of the transition on the students' self-esteem, a factor noted to be of considerable importance by Wylie (1974); Wells and Marwell (1976); Simmons, et al. (1973), the authors demonstrated that both males and females in the K-8 school felt more positively about themselves in the seventh grade than they had the year before. This growth of self-esteem is notably absent in the junior high school students, especially among the girls.

These findings are supported by Simmons, et al. (1979). In a study of the impact of school structure on the self-esteem of adolescents, they demonstrated that, in

terms of self-esteem, girls who had entered a new environment in junior high school are at a disadvantage in comparison with boys in general and with girls who have not moved. This is in line with the findings of an earlier study by Simmons, et al. (1977). That research concluded that the combination of school structure and the onset of adolescence was the cause of the lower self-esteem in the students attending the junior high school. Also, in an even earlier study by Simmons, et al. (1973) in which they investigated the disturbances in the self-image at adolescence, the same conclusion had been reached. This study suggests that the lower self-esteem of twelve to thirteen year old girls might be due to the school environment rather than the chronological age and the life cycle. In this study it was found that children who had entered junior high school appeared more disturbed along those lines than their age peers still in the K-8 school.

One other study should be mentioned here. Dutch and McCall (1974) did an experiment in a Scottish comprehensive school. In this study half the children from the primary schools were transferred to grade seven in a junior high school, the other half were sent to an experimental transition department. The transition department, although separate, was operated as part of the junior high system. During this year pupils were gradually introduced to teachers for certain subjects (art and music) so that they would be

more ready for the multiple teacher structure the following year. At the end of the first year, it was found that the children from the transition department were better adjusted in the emotional and social domains than those who had not had this experience. These differences were more pronounced in the case of girls, children of average and low ability and children coming from small primary schools.

The Organization of Instruction and Diversity in Students' Work Day

If one were to ask a parent or an educator what the elementary or junior high school is like, a ready description would likely be given to include rooms filled with students' desks and chairs, chalk boards and dusty chalk racks, book cases and colorful bulletin boards dominating the walls, and at the front, a teacher's desk in a commanding position. Such descriptions, while accurate, tap only the more superficial aspects of the school milieu. For, the environment of the school is much more than a mere composite of physical things. For example, John Dewey (1916: 2) described environment as:

... the particular medium in which an individual exists, which leads him to see and feel one thing rather than another.... it strengthens some beliefs and weakens others... it generally produces in him a certain system of behaviour. In brief, the environment consists of those conditions that promote or hinder, stimulate or inhibit the characteristic activities of a human being.

The school environment, then, is the result of a complex network of human interaction which is significantly related to the organization and structure of the classroom and its activities. At the heart of this interaction are the students, and, because they occupy such a focal point, it is important to look at their school experiences in the light of different instructional arrangements. Some researchers have done that.

The organization of instruction, that is, whether the child is in an "open" or "traditional" classroom, whether he spends most of his day with one teacher being taught as part of a large group, or whether a great deal of time is spent working on project type assignments in small groups, and whether he is exposed to one or multiple teachers, will, to a large extent, determine the classroom environment and the diversity in the students' work day in that it will affect the types of interaction which will be possible. For example, Postman and Weingartner (1969: 18-19) stated:

A classroom is a learning environment and the way it is organized carries the burden of what people will learn from it ... the critical content of any learning experience is the method or process through which the learning occurs.

A study by Rounds, et al. (1982) focused on the organization of instruction in elementary and junior high schools during the transition period. It is their contention that information regarding the types of

structures students experience in elementary schools should prove helpful in planning for and carrying out junior high school transitions. They wrote:

The ways in which classrooms are structured to achieve some semblance of order among individuals and to facilitate accomplishment of classroom work activity, influence achievement, friendship patterns, etc. (Rounds, et al., 1982: 3)

In the Rounds, et al. study, issues such as the types of responsibilities students were expected to assume within the elementary school and the number of different groups in which they were required to function in any given school day were of particular interest, since junior high school programs may be expected to require students to work with several teachers across a school day, each of whom may utilize a different activity structure. Data collection for this occurred in two phases. First, students and teachers were observed in the sixth grade classes in May of that year. Written reports were made of student-teacher interaction. Second, students were also interviewed during the seventh grade and observed in early October and November. At each time also student interviews were conducted.

With regard to the organization of instruction the authors feel that the students transition can be viewed from at least two elementary dimensions. They are, multiple teachers and multiple structures. The sixth grade activity structures are described as complex and diverse (Rounds, et al., 1982, 48). Across any given day in the sixth grade

classroom, regardless of whether assigned to an open (cluster) or self contained arrangement, sixth grade students were required to understand and function successfully in several different grouping arrangements, with responsibility for completion of their work, and in some instances, in collaborative group project endeavors. The results of this study showed that the structures of the sixth grade classroom were more diversified, required the students to respond to a wider range of instructional demands and placed greater responsibility for designing and carrying out their learning activities than the seventh grade organizational structure. The diversity of the students' work day within the two structures was quite different.

Also, according to Rounds, et al. (1982: 52), this diversity in students' work day during transition was directly related to the activity structure. Sixth grade experiences, with diverse activity structures across subject areas, promoted success in transition whereas placement in sixth grade arrangements that required working with different teachers, but not necessarily different activities, did not seem to promote success in transition. In line with these findings, data presented by Ward, et al. (1982) suggested that students tended to function differently in their various classrooms and this seemed, in part, to be related to the structure the teacher had created. Bossart (1978: 3) supports this idea "... the structure and methods used to transmit the content of the curriculum and to facilitate

the development of required skills are also important". As Becker, et al. (1968) found, and as verified in the studies by Rounds and Ward, students' experiences are vastly different depending upon the interactional environment and that this difference in environment is a crucial element in the successful transition of children to junior high school.

A further point that needs to be considered in relation to different instructional settings is the amount of interaction permitted among students and the amount of cooperation with others that is involved. Interaction and cooperation as required by certain forms of division of labour were studied by Salvin (1980), Grump (1980) and Johnson and Johnson (1974). All of these studies have noted increased student motivation, increased altruism, and more positive attitudes towards learning in students who engage in cooperative group work.

As was discussed earlier, it was not the diversity of teachers (in the "open" setting) but the diversity of activity structures (in the self-contained setting) that tended to promote better adjustment in grade seven. Contrary to these findings, McPartland, Epstein and McDill (1972) found that the students from open classroom settings adjusted to high school better than students from self contained settings. This was mainly because they had already experienced multiple teachers as well as more experiences in group settings. In the study by Rounds, et al. (1982)

diversity in the structure and activity experiences was not contingent upon their being in an "open" setting.

Student "Types" and Transition Experience

Probably one of the most comprehensive studies of student types, as it relates to their transition experience in junior high school, is that conducted by Ward, et al. (1982) which was briefly referred to earlier. In this study an attempt was made to categorize students by "type" based on information given by the sixth grade teachers. The data base for this study also included student interviews as well as case descriptions for twenty-four target students who were followed from their sixth grade classes in elementary to their seventh grade classes in junior high school. Students were placed into categories: (1) success students - essentially task oriented and academically successful; (2) social students - more person than task oriented; (3) phantom students - neither noticed nor heard; (4) dependent students - the clinging vines of the classroom, always looking for help; (5) alienate students - the disadvantaged and reluctant and (6) isolate students - seldom interacts with others. Having done this the authors tried to relate student adjustment at the junior high school to student type.

The key questions being asked in this study are:
How do different student "types" respond to and participate

in junior high school? Do students respond differently in different situations? Are these differences, if any, related to the success of students' transition to junior high school? Data reported here suggested that different "types" of students tend to behave differently in different classrooms. This was seen to be partly the result of the structures which teachers had created. More importantly, there was a significant relationship between the student "types" and the degree to which students adjusted to or enjoyed their seventh grade year. For example, Ward and his colleagues reported that success and social students had an easy time in grade seven. Phantom students had a more difficult time, but most adjusted. Alienate students generally were unsuccessful. Dependent and isolate students were successful only when given the presence of certain instructional features, that is, availability of teachers or others to provide assistance or feedback, clarity of instruction and expectations, and maintenance of a reasonable work environment that allowed some freedom.

It is clear that students who exhibit dependent, isolate or phantom characteristics in grade seven require instructional settings in which teachers are accessible to students, establish and enforce classroom rules and norms that allow some student interaction, focus on the interests and needs of students rather than coverage of subject matter and are clear in their explanation of content and procedures.

They are the students who are most vulnerable if they are placed in an instructional setting in which the rule system is rigid, the teacher is unclear and/or inaccessible and not understanding. Social and success students make successful transitions, regardless of the classes to which they are assigned. Alienate students seem to be largely unsuccessful no matter which instructional features are present in the class.

Another study relevant to our understanding of student type and transfer is that of Youngman (1978). In an attempt to understand the nature of individual reactions to school transfer, two samples comprising the intakes of three rural and three city schools were assessed on a selection of intelligence, personality, self-concept and attitude measures, before and after transfer. The high ability students were placed in three categories: (1) academic; (2) disenchanted; and (3) capable. Three categories were also used for low ability students: (1) contented; (2) disinterested; and (3) worried.

An analysis of the findings showed that the two academic profiles (rural and city) are very similar with the group characteristics filling the traditional academic pattern of high ability performance, high motivation and low anxiety. Transition is obviously not a problem for them. The disenchanted group displays poor attitudes to secondary school, poor academic self-concept and motivation, but they

display moderately high academic performance. Anxiety scores are average. Apart from the relatively high performance of the capable group, its most striking features are low personality and social self-concept and only fair attitude towards secondary school. Most of this group was from the rural samples and in both the rural and urban samples, most were boys.

Among the low ability group the contented have a favourable reaction to school. Their below average intelligence is combined with good academic performance, above average motivation and a fairly good self concept. The disinterested show low ability and achievement combined with average or below average motivation. There is a tendency for motivation and attitude to deteriorate after transfer, especially with the city group. For the worried group, although their intellectual ability is similar to the previous group, the syndrome of high anxiety and low self concept identifies them as a separate and disturbing group for whom transition is likely to be very difficult.

It seems that if one is trying to locate areas of concern in school transition, the worried children together with the disenchanted would probably present major problems. The former who already experience low self-esteem and high anxiety will likely deteriorate after transfer. This could cause serious maladjustments. The disenchanted youngsters, representing a group with moderately high ability but

teachers' personality traits or "types". The important interactional features attributed to teachers by students were: (a) accessibility; (b) clarity of explanation; (c) being concerned about and interested in students as individuals; and (d) being able to use discipline strategies which facilitated productive student participation. At this level, whether open or traditional structures are being considered, failure on the part of a teacher to utilize these four interactional activity structures appears to be related to student discontent and unsuccessful transition. An analysis of student opinions shows that teacher accessibility and attention to student interest were most salient.

Another aspect of teaching research applies to the findings reported by Rounds, et al. As noted by Doyle (1979) and Evertson (1980) teachers' behaviour may be shaped more by the activity structure than by the needs of the students. In the Rounds, et al. (1982) study some teachers were victims of their own structures, that is, the structure they created prevented their behaving in ways conducive to student satisfaction. Several of the teachers in the Rounds, et al. (1982) study evidenced this characteristic.

Another interesting and very recent study which has important implications for this idea is that done by Mergendoller, et al. (1982). The authors conducted open ended interviews with twenty-two grade seven students in a

inferior performance will likely experience a deterioration on transfer of both attitude and motivation.

The six student types described here, as well as those of the Ward, et al. (1982) study, not only verify that there are substantial differences in patterns of adjustment after transfer, but point out the importance of student "types" when considering the transition experience. This suggests that the transition experience, even though affected by many factors, is partly dependent on the child, on his personality, and his level of competence in academic and other areas.

Teacher Types and Transition Experience

It has already been pointed out that transition experiences cannot be truly evaluated without looking at the student "types" who have these experiences. Neither can the transition experience be evaluated without considering the teacher "types" who, to a large degree, are responsible for the organization of those student experiences.

The study by Rounds, et al. (1982), to which we referred earlier, found that at the seventh grade level the activity structures utilized were more alike than different. For example, there was more whole class teaching and less group work than at the grade six level. Nonetheless, some students had markedly different learning experiences compared with others. The authors saw this partly as an aspect of the

single school in November. These children has transferred from a K-6 school in September. It had been found in an earlier study in this series that when children were asked to describe their classroom experiences they automatically described their teachers. Mergendoller and his colleagues, in asking about teachers, expected to get information about classroom life generally.

More specifically, this study was designed to find out how seventh graders saw their teachers. Students' responses were analyzed according to the meanings they gave to the teacher types; mean teacher, hard teacher, easy teacher, good teacher, strict teacher, boring teacher, fun teacher and nice teacher. These eight frequently used descriptions were used in open ended interviews and they were asked to describe what a mean, hard, etc., teacher was like. The study has revealed many important and interesting findings regarding the effects that teacher type can have on the transition of students. For most students the characteristics of these teachers define the quality of their classroom experiences. Other factors such as the nature of the assigned work or instructional organization were seen as resulting from these teacher characteristics rather than as a separate feature of student experiences (Mergendoller, et al., 1982: 65).

Student emphasis on the characteristics of different teachers would seem to reflect accurately the teacher's

significance of defining the quality of students' classroom lives. The major themes which were drawn from students' comments show that teachers are seen as behavioral trainers, entertainers and friends, rather than intellectual authorities with something worthwhile to say. Referring to specific teacher types, "mean", "hard", and "strict" teachers made students do more work, "easy" teachers, less work. Teachers can be "nice" and "fun" if they do not work students too hard, and this in turn adds to the enjoyment of the transition experience. Block (1981) also found that students prefer those classes which do not demand great effort. The characteristics of mean teachers as uncaring would seem to follow as a consequence of the instructional, managerial and disciplinary practices which students describe as unjust and arbitrary exercises of power. "Good", "fun", and "nice" teachers are caring. In such classes students seem to appreciate being given a little freedom to be responsible for their work, to associate with their peers and to feel that the teacher cared about them.

With regard to the amount of freedom they were permitted and the degree to which the teacher limited this freedom, it was found that students spoke positively about teachers who encouraged movement and self expression. This also increased student enjoyment of and commitment to the work they were doing (Mergendoller, et al., 1982: 33). Further, these students reported that they experienced both

engagement and enjoyment in the classes of teachers who provided for self management. For one thing, such classes allowed more opportunity to talk with friends and thus provided some satisfaction for the need of peer focused interrelations considered by most developmental psychologists to be a major adolescent motivation. Research has also shown that a need for autonomous self exploration generally manifests itself during adolescence and finds expression in defiant, stubborn and self absorbed behaviour. Mergendoller and his colleagues (1982: 40) suspect that the initial strivings of that motivation might be behind the intensity with which students criticized the more constraining teachers. For those boys and girls who feel a powerful urge to express themselves and to manage their own affairs, denial of the right to sharpen a pencil is more than a silly inconvenience; it is an affront to their evolving status as individuals competent to manage their own affairs.

In sum, students seemed to be aware of the need for a well run class, were willing to do a reasonable amount of work, but expected and were much happier with teachers who were reasonable, understanding and caring about them. There is little doubt that such teachers would improve the transition period from the students' point of view.

Everhart (1979) conducted a study in which he attempted to understand the fabric of meaning shared by teachers and pupils. Several of his findings correspond

with those of these studies. First, the students spoke favourably and acted positively towards teachers who communicated well with students, treated them fairly and with respect, and trusted them to complete work on their own. Secondly, students expected to do the work assigned to them, but felt this could be accomplished with some degree of enjoyment. Students, in evaluating their teachers, basically concentrated on personal relationships between the teacher and themselves (Everhart, 1979: 156).

It does seem, then, according to these authors, that teachers are able to provide adolescents with a positive experience in grade seven when they adopt strategies which include a reasonable amount of school work coupled with some student freedom for self expression and decision making. As pointed out earlier, students put great emphasis on the social side of schooling. This necessitates that teachers show interest in students as persons and take time to be concerned about their individual and social needs.

Interaction of Physical Maturity and Transition

A number of investigations have proposed that children's transitions from elementary to junior high school have significance beyond environmental change. Among others, Hamburg (1974), Simmons, et al. (1973, 1977, 1979), Nottelman (1982), Dowling (1980), and Blythe, et al. (1978) have, stressed the interaction of physical maturity and environmental

change. These writers have proposed that in our society, which defines adolescence more in terms of cultural rather than biological events, the transition from elementary school to junior high school has become a convenient developmental marker for childhood and adolescence. Thus, it introduces major changes into children's lives. Once in junior high school, it is expected they will assume the social role of adolescence and conform to demands for increased academic and social competence, both inside and outside of school.

At this period in children's lives, biological changes play an important role. Such biological changes begin to affect children, but their onset and rate vary widely according to individually set biological clocks. It is likely, therefore, that such development will be less uniform than the culturally synchronized transition period. Therefore, the impact of school transition is likely to be greater for pubescent children who must cope with their changing bodies and their developing sexuality in addition to the demands of their new physical and social environment. According to Nottelman (1982: 4), "Transition from elementary to junior high school represents a sharp discontinuity in children's lives because it occurs during this sensitive period of development - a time of important biological changes". Puberty begins, for girls, on the average, about a year to a year and a half before it begins

for boys which means that more girls are likely to be undergoing pubertal changes as they are making the change from elementary to junior high school. It follows that boys should be less likely than girls to experience sharp discontinuity. Research findings support this position. Simmons and her colleagues (1977) show that transition to junior high school is more difficult than later transition to secondary school, and that, indeed, it is more difficult for girls, especially early maturing girls.

Dowling (1980) did a study of ten and eleven year olds in their first year of junior high school to determine general adjustment to school and behavioral changes. It was found that the more dramatic changes occurred in the first year of transfer. The author pointed out that this might have been caused primarily by the traumatic and stimulating effects of transfer, but it was more likely partly due to the changes taking place in the children as a result of the onset of puberty. Obviously, interactional combinations of both would apply.

Nottelman (1982), in a study to clarify the complicated relationship between the onset of puberty and the transition from elementary to junior high school, had children rate themselves on three domains: (a) their cognitive competence in academics; (b) their social competence in peer relationships; (c) their physical competence in sports, etc.. They were also asked to rate

themselves on general competence which represents a measure of self esteem. Teachers also rated the children. These scales were administered three times: (a) prior to transition; (b) ten weeks after transition; and (c) at the end of the grade seven year. In analyzing the results she found that boys tended to rate themselves more positively than their teachers did, girls consistently rated themselves less positively than their teachers - more dramatically on general competence and self esteem. Generally, boys over-estimated and girls underestimated themselves. These findings are similar to other especially those of Simmons et al. (1973) and Blythe, et al. (1978). Further analyses showed that more mature boys and less mature girls saw themselves as more competent in academic matters than their counterparts. In physical maturity this also applied. In the non-transient group the opposite was found. Less mature boys and more mature girls rate themselves as quite high in physical competence. Also, in the non-transient group, less mature girls were lower than more mature girls.

In sum, then, a transition effect was evident in their perceptions of their physical and social competence, which are likely to be most crucial for successful peer relationships and consequently important for their general adjustment in school as well as outside of school. These findings add support to those of Simmons and her colleagues

(1977, 1979) and Blythe, et al. (1978). Simmons, et al.

(1979: 28) commented:

The life style necessarily presents individuals with several major role transitions, some of which coincide with periods of significant physical changes. The movement into early adolescence is one such role transition.

As a result of her study she pointed out that apparently the change from the role of a child to that of an early adolescent is more stressful for girls than boys and it is particularly stressful if it coincides with a major environmental discontinuity and if the girl has not mastered or excelled at the tasks of childhood. She goes on to say that prior vulnerability renders the child less capable of making this transition without damage to the self-esteem.

According to Simmons, et al. (1970) the exact reason why girls are more vulnerable is not clear. But, as Nottelman said earlier it is probably due to the fact that girls are one to one and a half years ahead of boys in maturity and, at the transition to junior high school, boys have not really entered puberty. It is probably difficult for girls to cope with several major changes simultaneously. The combination of environmental discontinuities, pubertal changes and new social behaviors may engender stress; more especially, adopting new social and sexual behaviors may be stressful for those girls whose physical maturity is in advance of their emotional development.

Students' Concerns

In a major study by Mitman, et al. (1981) an attempt was made to investigate students' perceptions of the junior high school transition period. Student perceptions were measured in two ways. First, students completed a Student Opinion Survey at the end of grade six and again at the end of grade seven. The Student Opinion Survey is an instrument that measures attitude towards school by having students respond to different statements about school and by having them rate different school concepts. Second, students completed a Concerns Questionnaire during the fifth week of grade seven and in May of the following year. The Concerns Questionnaire presented students with a list of possible transition concerns for which students indicated the degree to which they were concerned about them. Students responded to the list twice, once in terms of the degree of concern at the time they first entered junior high school and again in the spring. The sample in the study consisted of the seventh graders in the junior high school who had attended six feeder schools within the district. Waverly School was located in a suburb near San Francisco and served a population that was largely white middle class. It was a grade 7-8 school.

When students' responses to the Student Opinion Survey at the end of grade six were compared with their responses at the end of the seventh grade, a general trend was found. This trend indicated that students were less

satisfied with school at the end of seventh grade than they had been at the end of the sixth grade. The only area where students indicated a more positive response to junior high was in academic performance. This more positive attitude may have been in part a reaction to the unchallenging curriculum offered in the junior high. Students filled out the Concerns Questionnaire at the beginning of grade seven. They were asked to indicate the importance of thirty-two possible concerns associated with transitions from sixth to seventh grade. In May they were asked how important these concerns were when they first entered and how important they were at the present time. Descriptive statistics for both the November and May portion of the questionnaire indicated that most junior high children did not have great concerns about the items listed. Nevertheless, it was possible to distinguish between the items in terms of the relative degree of expressed concern. In general, students expressed more concern having to do with academic work and relatively little concern about those items having to do with the social aspects of junior high school. When students were given a total concerns score, results showed a significant decrease in total concerns from November to May. This suggests that children view themselves as having adjusted to whatever few transitional problems existed the first few weeks of junior high school.

The results of the two student perspective instruments used in the Mitman, et al. study are worth comparing because

there is some similarity between the two findings. Specifically, many of the transition concerns listed in the Concerns Questionnaire touch on features of school that also are the focus of items on the Student Opinion Survey. But, in reviewing the results for both instruments, it appears that they are quite different. The differences may be summarized thus: (a) Student Opinion Survey showed students were dissatisfied with school in many ways; (b) Concerns Questionnaire showed up very few concerns; (c) Student Opinion Survey revealed academic work was one area in which students felt more positive; (d) in the Concerns Questionnaire academic work got highest concern score.

Perhaps the best explanation for the discrepancy in the results of the Student Opinion Survey and the Concerns Questionnaire has to do with the times they were administered. In sorting out these differences it is important to remember that the results of the Student Opinion Survey, which was given in November and May of the seventh year, would be influenced by their whole year's experience. Therefore, the results would show how they felt at the end of grade seven. The fact that they showed themselves to have many dissatisfactions with school, compared with only few concerns on the Concerns Questionnaire in November suggests that students may have been favourably inclined toward junior high school at the beginning of the year (the Concerns Questionnaire is based on the November survey). Two studies that administered

the Student Opinion Survey both at the beginning and end of the first year of junior high school lend support to this claim. Both Evans and Richardson (1980) and Power and Gotterall (1979) report that student attitudes were more favourable at the beginning of the first year of junior high school than at the end. These authors specifically suggest that the early period of the first year in junior high school might be the most satisfying period in the transition experience; the reason for this being that students are generally more enthusiastic about change in environment; for example, we might say, the "novelty effect" is evident. With regard to academic work, at the beginning of the year, the nature of academic demands may have remained an unknown for some time, especially because they expected it to be more difficult. This explains the high rate of concern on the Concerns Questionnaire at the beginning of grade seven. By the end of the year the Student Opinion Survey showed that academic work was one area in which students felt more positive. By this time, they had practically done the year's work and had realized that it was not as difficult as they had expected.

Given this review of the educational literature on transition from elementary to junior high school, the next task is to outline the orientation and focus of the present research.

CHAPTER II

A SOCIOLOGICAL ORIENTATION TO TRANSITION FROM ELEMENTARY TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The sociological orientation to the study of society has evolved to include both scientific and humanistic approaches. By way of setting the stage for the present sociologically oriented study of transition from elementary to junior high school it is deemed appropriate to give an overview of the sociological orientation. It will be necessary to focus specifically on one theoretical perspective in sociology and to deal with interrelated concepts in the perspective which are taken as theoretical framework of the present research. The theoretical perspective in question is symbolic interactionism and the three concepts which provide the theoretical anchorage for the present study are definitions, meanings, and subjective careers.

The Sociological Orientation

It has been said that sociology, as a science, is different from all other sciences. This difference consists of the fact that the person who wishes to make sense out of what is happening in society, to understand the web of relationships that makes a society function, is himself/herself a product of that society. In this sense, in trying to understand society, one is, at the same time, trying to

better understand one's position of it. One is part of and is sensitive to the phenomena under study. Abrahams (1973: 18) states,

To understand a sociological object is more than just to know everything about it. It is also to "feel" something towards it, so that such understanding, as it is acquired, is, in a real sense, sympathetic understanding.

In other words, a sociologist cannot take an entirely impersonal view of what he studies. Sociology, in this way, is not merely an intellectual exercise, or a problem having a certain practical end. It is an integral part of one's education and is its own justification. This insistence on distinguishing sociology from the other sciences, as it requires a special kind of thinking, a special kind of understanding, points out the close relationship of sociology to the humanistic disciplines.

In recent years there has been a growing emphasis on the humanistic nature of sociology. One of the best known sociologists who has been a long time proponent of humanistic sociology is Peter Berger (1963; 1971). He observed that sociology is virtually concerned with what is, after all, the principal matter of the humanities, the human condition itself: Abrahams (1973: 17) puts it this way:

In making out a claim for sociology as a distinctive field of human inquiry, we are at the same time claiming for society, a place not only in the sciences, but also in the humanities.

The co-existence of scientific methods and humanistic orientation in sociology and the idea that both have contributions to make in the sociology of education has been cited by Martin and Macdonell (1982: 4) in their sociological analysis of Canadian education. They wrote:

There is, however, a growing acceptance of the idea that while sociology in general and sociology of education in particular, must be scientific, they must also be humanistic in that they analyse everyday life from the perspectives of those involved.

The sociology of the school is being greatly influenced by this humanistic approach. Researchers have come to realize that they must explore more fully, the ways in which the students' definitions of the situation as well as the teachers' definitions of it help to determine its social arrangements.

Sociology, then, represents a certain orientation to life. The essence of the sociological perspective is the practice of viewing human groupings and behaviour as though they were things or objects in order to identify their basic natures and characteristics. The purpose of this perspective is to provide the sociologist with knowledge of structure, functioning and interrelationships of the parts of whatever social grouping he is studying (O'Brien, et al. 1964: 8). Furthermore, the sociologists' task is to show that man is essentially a social animal and that the life of the individual cannot be understood apart from the socio-historical situation in which he finds himself.

The sociologist does not think in terms of people, but by contrast places emphasis on social relationships, and, these not only include relationships between people but between major parts of the society. (Hurd, 1973: 1)

The sociologist, then, focuses on the interactions between the parts of society.

This discipline tries to understand the way in which individuals interact in a group setting. Thus, one of the aspects of a sociological study of the school is the study of the interrelationships between the students and teachers of the school. This transition study will do just that. It will help us to understand the complexities of the day-to-day life in the classroom, especially as it occurs within the transition period. We will see the situation as it is seen by its participants. In the present elementary/junior high transition study an attempt is made to understand how the identity, the meanings and definitions held by students influence the school climate, and how the conflicting ideas of influence and control can affect, not only the interpersonal relations in the classroom, but also the amount and kind of learning which takes place. Although outside of the present study as such, it must be realized that the micro setting of the classroom is not an entity in itself, as in any classroom study, we must remember that what goes on there is related to the larger society. The types of relationships that exist between students and teachers are closely related to the class structure, the economic

condition, the family unit and other features of the wider society.

In short, then, the sociological perspective tries to encompass the acting person and the acting group. Its long run aim is to try to discover the basic structure and processes of human society, to identify the main forces that hold groups together, and to learn what conditions transform social life. The main task in a sociological study of the school is to look for the interrelationships between school structures and school processes. Such a study, from an individual, humanistic approach, ought to reveal the salient issues and concerns of the students. Working with this approach the theoretical perspective which underscores the analysis and reporting of this transition study data regarding students' perceptions of and experience in junior high school is that of symbolic interaction. This perspective deals with the actions, interactions and concerns that must be considered in this period. It centers around the tenet that, while academic achievement is an important aspect of students' lives, other factors, such as peer and teacher relations, and adaptations to classroom rules and norms are also worthy of notice.

The remainder of this chapter will deal with the basic tenets of symbolic interactionism. The intent is to give an overview of this orientation, paying specific attention to the importance of meanings, definitions of the situation and subjective careers as addressed in the

interactional orientation to school. This theoretical framework will then be used as the background for the specific problem of the present study. Finally, this chapter will discuss data processes and analysis.

Symbolic Interaction: An Interpretative
Approach to the School

The label, symbolic interactionism, was first used by Herbert Blumer and has caught on as a label for a distinctive approach to the study of sociology. The ideas signified by symbolic interactionism, however, have a much larger heritage. This approach traces its roots to the philosophical orientations of pragmatism, as expounded by William James, John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. Other influential writers of this tradition are Charles Cooley, William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki.

Regardless of the ways in which symbolic interactionism has been interpreted, most of those who identify with the perspective trace its primary origin to the works of George Herbert Mead. Mead's ideas have been interpreted and expounded on by several sociologists throughout the years, but the acquaintance of most sociologists with his works comes through the teaching and writings of one of his best known students Herbert Blumer, and one of the clearest statements of the sociological implications of the works of Mead can be found in Blumer (1969). Another noteworthy

contributor to the early development of symbolic interactionism in the tradition of Mead and Blumer is Anselm Strauss. Strauss not only expounded on the theoretical ideas of symbolic interactionism, but he also did extensive field research using the symbolic interaction orientation, thereby adding to the theoretical development of this perspective by analysing concepts in interaction processes of everyday life (e.g. Strauss, 1959; 1978).

While presenting the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism, the main focus here is on the Blumer - Strauss orientation. Here we find close ties with the theoretical framework of Mead and emphasis on the more subjective aspects of interaction. The essential features of Mead's analysis of the bases of symbolic interaction are as follows: that human society is made up of individuals who have selves (that is, make indications to themselves); that individual action, through the use of symbols, is a construction and not a release, being built up by the individual through noting and interpreting features of the situation in which he acts; that group or collective action consists of the aligning of individual actions, brought about by the individual's interpreting or taking into account each other's actions.

Such a framework can, of course, be applied to schools and basic to this framework is the idea that the changing patterns of classroom life are socially constructed over time and are constantly subjected to negotiation and

renegotiation (Martin, 1976). Also, it has been observed that symbolic interactionists assume that students can be taught. These students learn, interpret, and define situations, and they develop selves. All of these processes require communication, which by definition involves meaning (Martin and Macdonell, 1982: 346). The Meadian approach to classroom life is neatly summarized by Blumer,

... in short, one would have to take the role of the actor and see the world from his standpoint. The actor acts towards his world on the basis of how he sees it and not on the basis of how the world would appear to the outside observer. (Blumer, 1969: 23)

The following focus on the two interrelated concepts of meanings and definitions demonstrate the importance of these notions in a symbolic orientation to the school.

Meanings and Definitions

To make sense out of a situation is to interpret it. Symbolic interaction theory argues that the core of classroom reality is active human beings trying to make sense of their social condition. Their experiences are dependent upon the interpretations they place on the things around them. These interpretations give symbolic interaction its symbolic character. Blumer (1969) calls attention to this process and points out that symbolic interaction, as a point of view, deals with the person centered process that takes place in

everyday life. It concentrates on process and keeps the individual at the center of the stage.

At the heart of symbolic interaction is the idea of the participants as constructors of their own actions and meanings.

The vast proportion of human interaction is symbolic, which means it involves interpretation....the idea is that when two people are interacting, each is constantly interpreting his own and others acts and reacting and reinterpreting and reacting, etc (Delamont, 1976: 24)

Human interaction is a positive shaping process in its own right. The participants in it have to build up their respective lines of conduct by constant interpretation of each other's ongoing line of action. As participants evaluate each other's acts they have to adjust or arrest their own intentions, wishes, feelings and attitudes, accordingly. In addition, they have to evaluate the fitness of rules, consensus and norms for the situation being formed by the acts of others. "It is the interpretation that counts as far as outcomes are concerned, and therefore people's own thoughts and evaluations, not instincts, nor simply the 'objective' reality of the situation" (Woods, 1983: 3).

The term symbolic interactionism directs our attention to the most fundamental proposition of the perspective, that is, that distinctively human behaviour and interaction is carried out through the medium of symbols and their meanings. Man lives not only in a physical world but also in a symbolic

one, and people react through symbols. A symbol is a stimulus that has learned meaning and value for people and man's response to a symbol is in terms of the meaning and value, rather than in terms of its physical stimulation of the sense organs (Rose, 1962: 5). Language, as well as gestures and objects, are all symbols. The meanings of many of these are, of course, shared and this enables smooth social interaction. Some have even greater consistency and we respond to them almost by instinct. These have been called "natural signs" as distinct from significant symbols (Mead, 1936). The latter are learned. Mead, then, identified two forms or levels of interaction: symbolic and non-symbolic. In non-symbolic interaction humans respond directly to one another, without gestures or actions. In symbolic interaction they interpret each other's gestures, and act on the basis of the meanings yielded by those gestures. An unwitting response to the tone of another voice illustrates non-symbolic interaction. Interpreting the shaking of a fist as signifying that person is preparing to attack illustrates symbolic interactions.

The concept of self is an important one in Mead's interactional analysis. For Mead, the learning of significant symbols with their meanings and definitions is done in a process of socialization, and the self develops through the social process, that is, the self is an emergent from the social interaction. As that which can be an object to itself, the self may be said to exist in the activity of

viewing itself reflectively. In discussing the self in the context of symbolic interaction theory Blumer writes:

Briefly, the central notion of the theory is that all humans are possessed of a self and that they are reflexive or self-interacting. That simply means, that we can think about what we are doing, and that what goes on inside our heads is a crucial element in how we act. (Blumer, 1966: 23)

Woods (1983: 2) puts it this way, "What enables the construction of meaning is the individual's possession of "self". We can converse with ourselves, we can stand outside ourselves and look inward with others' eyes".

We also know that the self is not a fixed structure, but rather a dynamic ever-changing process (Blumer, 1966: 23). Mead saw the self as a process and not as a structure. The actions of the self are influenced by and partly dependent on the person's social situation, but, because of its reflective nature, the human being is an object to itself. That is, he may perceive himself, have conceptions of himself, communicate with himself, and act towards himself. Mead regards this ability of the human being to act towards himself as the central mechanism with which the human being faces and deals with his world. This mechanism enables the human being to make indications to himself of things in his surroundings and thus to guide his actions by which he notes. Anything of which the human being is conscious is something which he is indicating to himself. To interpret the actions of another is to point out to oneself that the action has

this or that meaning or character. This process of self interaction and change puts the human over against the world instead of merely in it, requires him to meet and handle his world through a defining process instead of merely responding to it, and forces him to construct his own actions instead of merely releasing them. Hence, the self is not static and is not solely a product of outside forces. One has as many "selves" as he has social roles and in each role one behaves differently on the basis of the meanings and definitions his interpretations yield.

This brings us to the idea of role taking. This perspective recognizes that the formation of action by the individual through a process of self indication always takes place in a social context. From the standpoint of others, role taking is the process through which the self is built. Role taking may be described as anticipating others' responses on the basis of common participation in a communication process.

Each individual aligns his action to that of the other. He does this by taking the role of the other, by making indications to his "self" about the others' likely response. He constructs how others wish or might act in a certain circumstance and how he himself might act. He might try to "manage" the impressions others have of him. He might put on a "performance" to try to influence the others definition of the situation. (Woods, 1976: 16)

In role taking we take into account the attitudes of others towards us and towards the situation that we share. We attempt to see "oneself" from the outside (Martin and Macdonell, 1982: 346). Teachers are familiar with the egotistical and apparently selfish young child who wants everything his/her way. Such a child possesses only an "I" at this stage, the social development is not yet complete. But gradually one learns to put oneself in the position of other people and to look in on oneself from their positions. This "taking the role of the other" is vital for social life and cooperative activity. Its importance in the classroom is obvious.

Thus, the individual can only become "whole", in the sense of a social person by internalizing the expectations embodied in the generalized other; and, it is through the generalized other that the community exercises influences over the individual through his thought processes (Mead, 1936: 155). In the classroom the will of the individual must be subjected to that of the group; teachers and pupils must try to understand each other; and be sensitive to each other's point of view, which is indeed derived from interpretations of the situations at hand.

When applied to education, the symbolic interaction approach is important for the analysis of the processes of schooling in general and the teaching-learning situation in particular. From this perspective, social order in the

classroom, like in any other setting in every day life, is always in a state of becoming. Both teachers and students use certain strategies as they develop plans of action and then attempt to negotiate their identities and interactive roles. Also, and especially in this study, since students move into already developed structures, there is the question of how this structure imposes itself on them. In this respect it is necessary to focus on students' perspectives of the social order of which they are a part.

The phrase "definition of the situation" was first used by W.I. Thomas to examine the impact of definitions and meanings on the structure of human action (Thomas, 1928). From the interactionist point of view, people are seen as acting towards objects on the basis of meaning for them. To derive meanings, these people go through a process of interpreting and defining what they see by matching up their impressions with their knowledge at hand and with their typification which has already been established from past experiences. Individuals interpret, define and then organize their actions towards all social objects (Martin and Macdonell, 1982: 346).

Individuals, then, organize these actions in terms of their definition of the situation which takes into account physical and social factors in the environment, as well as their own physiological and psychological states. In this sense, although in itself an undisputable truth, there is

An important point in Mead's analysis of symbolic interaction is that human beings, in interpreting, defining and drawing meaning from others' actions can and do meet each other in the full range of human relations. It embraces, equally well, such relationships as co-operation, conflict, domination, exploitation or consensus. The participants in each of these relations have the same common task of continuing their action by interpreting and defining the acts of each other.

Earlier we discussed the meaning of symbols in relation to interpretation. We shall now look more closely at how symbols are important for meanings and definitions. The concept of symbol, or object as Blumer prefers to call them, are fundamental concepts in Mead's scheme of analysis.

Because human beings live in a world of objects, their activities are centered around them. But, for Mead, objects are human constructs and not self-existing entities with intrinsic natures. Such objects are given meaning based on the orientations and actions of people towards them. In this sense, an object is anything that can be designated or referred to. It may be as physical as a chair, as imaginary as a ghost or as vague as a philosophical doctrine.

In an analysis of objects and meanings, several important points need to be considered. We shall discuss them separately. Firstly, the nature of the object is constituted by the meaning it has for the person or persons

nevertheless, more to the "definition of the situation" than W.I. Thomas's (1928: 572) celebrated adage: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences". Symbolic interaction, then, involves interpretation, or ascertaining the meaning of the actions or remarks of other people. It also involves definitions, or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act (Blumer, 1969: 13). Through this process, the participants fit their own acts to the ongoing acts of others.

The process of interpretation and its consequent definitions and meanings is part of all human associations. The theory suggests that to understand the workings of a group (such as the classroom) we must first understand how those in the group define their positions and what meanings they attach to significant symbols.

After all a group is a collection of individuals continuously in the process of forming definitions of objects and events around them, so that they may determine how they should behave within the group. (Dodge and Bogden, 1974: 67)

These individuals become part of an established pattern of group behaviour, as more and more definitions become common among them. "But the behaviour is more complex than a simple stimulus-response model, and patterns of group behaviour (as well as of individual behaviour) are open to change at any time members' definitions cease to be confirmed" (Dodge and Bogden, 1974: 67).

for whom it is an object. To understand this we must realize that man inhabits two different worlds, the natural world, where he experiences drives and instincts and where the external world exists independently of him, and the social world, where the existence of symbols, such as language, enables him to assign meanings to objects. It is this attribution of meaning, this interpretation, which makes man distinctively human and a social being. The symbolic interactionist, therefore, is interested in the world of subjective meanings and the symbols by which they are produced and represented. In relating this to the school, we are led to see the importance of the students' perspective in the classroom situation. We realize that teachers and students often assign different meanings to the same events or objects. In this case the task of the interactionist has been to explore the properties and dimensions of the various processes.

Secondly, this process of interpretation takes place, in a social context. In this sense one aligns one's actions to that of the other. One does this by taking the role of the other. One makes indications to oneself about how the other might act and about how one might or should act. In the case of the student, one might put on a performance to try to influence the teacher's definition of him. He might try to impose his definition of classroom discipline on the teacher. Constant negotiations are required to preserve an

equilibrium in the classroom.

Thirdly, these meanings are handled and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. The attribution of meaning to objects through symbols is a continuing process. Action is not simply a consequence of drives and attitudes in the traditional meanings of these terms, but results from a continuous process of interpretation and re-interpretation. The individual constructs, modifies, pieces together, weighs the pros and cons and bargains. The symbolic interactionist then is interested in process; in what goes on in the school. One wants to know how teachers negotiate with students, how teachers, as well as students, react to different situations and, how these classroom processes are interpreted by others in the learning environment (Martin, 1976).

In summarizing these three points, it is necessary to point out that, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, the principal theoretical idea behind the socialization process is the assumptions concerning definitions and meanings. In other words, we act towards things, or other people, on the basis of the meanings they have for us. These meanings are derived from the socialization process, and because of our ability to interpret and reflect on the meanings in our social world, they are modified by us. From this perspective, an important dimension of socialization is the part played by reference groups, generalized others and significant others in self and role processes.

Referring to the points just made and relating them to this elementary/junior high school study, we might say that the meanings and definitions that children attach to classroom events grow out of the social interaction which takes place there, and are changed and modified in the interpretative process itself. In this case students will act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these objects or events have for them. Hence, the need to focus on the idea of subjective careers in general and student careers in particular.

Subjective Careers

The most widely used theoretical approach to careers has been objective in nature and with this approach a commonly understood definition has been "a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige through which persons move in a predictable sequence" (Wilensky, 1960: 127). This notion of career was originally borrowed from the sociology of occupations where it was also viewed as the movement of persons through a series of positions within some sort of occupational system. Such a view approaches the concept in a way not directly related to the personal view position of the persons under study. Wilensky's definition makes this point clear. This moving, or series of adjustments, is typically considered in terms of movement up or down between positions differentiated by their rank in some formal or

informal hierarchy of prestige, influence and income. At the objective level, an occupation such as teaching may be studied concerning its career characteristics, or the career line of the organization in which those involved in teaching perform most of their duties. This perspective of careers does not take into account the personal views of the human actors. The fact that the view of the actors ought not be overlooked was brought out by Goffman (1961: 127). He notes that one value of the term "career" is its two sidedness. One side is linked with internal matters held dearly and closely by an image of self and felt identity; the other side concerns official positions, jural relations and style of life and is, in part, a publicly accessible institutional complex.

When looking at the careers of either teachers and/or students, the public and private are obvious. For example, we watch a teacher playing the role of music teacher and doing all the ordinary things that go with that position, but the actual experiences felt within that role are private and known mostly to the individual. Similarly, we view a student as a member of a grade six or a grade seven class. We observe how that student participates in and performs tasks expected in that role, but we do not really understand the role as it is experienced by the child. When we view careers "objectively", we miss this personal aspect.

Traditionally, then, the term career has been reserved for those who expect to enjoy the promotions laid

out within a respectable profession. The term is coming to be used, however, in a broader sense, to refer to any social and personal dimension of one's life course. The widespread inclusion of subjective data and discussion in studies and discourses on careers, points to the growing importance of this view and suggests that a clearer statement of this idea and its integration with the objective approach is desirable.

The subjective career is the interactionists' focus, and, as we shall see, it does offer us a means of linking the individual's experience with the institutional provision of formal careers and ultimately with society-at-large. This concept of career allows one to move back and forth between the personal and the public, between the self and its significant society. Career can be viewed subjectively as a personal and real concept in a person's mind.

But, the idea of subjective career is not new. More than four decades ago, Everett Hughes (1937: 407) was viewing a person's life career as "a moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meanings of his various attributes, actions and the things which happen to him". More recently, the subjective career has received much attention from symbolic interactionists. It is regarded as "the actor's recognition and interpretation of past or future events associated with a particular identity and especially his interpretation of important contingencies as they were or will be encountered" (Stebbins, 1970: 34).

It emphasizes, according to Stebbins, the actor's recognition and interpretation of past events in one's biography. More especially, a career is, in this sense, the person's awareness of a particular sequence of events associated with a particular identity. This sequence is usually seen as extending into the future with some degree of clarity. The individual's career is his personal view of these happenings as they relate to the important features of his life. Such recognition and interpretation of events, which are seen by Stebbins to be important concepts in the subjective career, results in a certain type of knowledge. It is this knowledge which enables the individual to have a special view of the world. When activated in a social situation, the subjective career influences behaviour through this world view and simultaneously heightens the individual's awareness of it. Put into a classroom context, this means that students (or teachers) in the process of recognizing events in their lives, interpret them as well. This results in meanings and definitions which influence their actions. We cannot know why students acted in a certain manner unless we know what meaning the situation had for them.

Obviously, part of one's subjective career is one's personal recognition and interpretation of parts of its pattern. When personal interpretations enter the picture, behaviour may appear that cannot be predicted from or explained by the objective approach alone. This personal

interpretation has been referred to as the definition of the situation (Stebbins, 1967).

It also has been noted that career, in the subjective sense, is most compatible with our conceptualization of commitment. Commitment is described by Kanter (1974: 126) as "a consideration which arises at the intersection of organizational requisites and personal experience...commitment then, refers to the willingness of social actions to give their energies and loyalties to social systems". As we shall see later, the degree of commitment in a social system, especially the classroom, will vary. We shall see also how it is tied up with the idea of identity. In referring to identity, it is known that individuals carry an array of characteristics from the different roles in which they play and project images of selves to others in their actions. One of the main assumptions of symbolic interaction is that people are concerned with developing, protecting and safeguarding a desired image of self. This image provides them with identity. But, selves are not necessarily unilinear and not necessarily unidimensional; that is, people may choose to project different images of self in different contexts. Some might be complementary, others might be compensatory. For example, one particular form of presentation of self might be forced, rather than self chosen, such as the rebellious student forced to be dutiful or the kind hearted teacher forced to be autocratic. It generally follows that the greater the level of conflict between pupils and teachers,

the more likely this forced, false presentation of self will occur. There will be increasing emphasis on types of compensatory behaviour. In such a classroom situation, neither teachers nor students are able to act out their real identities, and this, in turn, will affect meanings and definitions as well as the degree of commitment to the tasks at hand.

It is important to note, then, that the process of recognition and interpretation along with the concepts of commitment and identity are part and parcel of the subjective approach to career. These ideas will be referred to again in the section on students' careers.

Student Careers

In this discussion on student careers, two important points will be made. First, students' careers must be looked at not only vertically, but from a horizontal perspective. This idea has been stressed by Becker (1963) and Woods (1983). Second, the students' level of commitment to their roles will be influenced, not only by their own interpretation and definitions of the work, but by the behaviour of teachers in the classroom. This will come about through a discrepancy between their personal identities and the roles they are required to play. A symbolic interaction approach to the classroom, based on the notion of humans as reflective actors,

provides an excellent view of student careers. Any individual classroom encounter between a teacher and class can be conceived of as an interaction of student and teacher careers.

Delamont (1976: 27) argues that given the conceptualization of classroom life as shared meaning, an understanding of the development of such meaning is an essential prerequisite for the comprehension of what is involved in classroom careers.

Student careers, like other subjective careers, are never static; they are situated in time. In addition, they have to be seen in the context of child development, especially as this relates to primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization is the very early learning that takes place in the family and prepares the child to face the world. Secondary socialization, according to Berger and Luckman (1976: 158) involves "the internalization of instructional and institutional based sub-worlds... the acquisition of role specific knowledge...role specific vocabularies and understanding". One "sub-world" phases into another. For example, the first lesson the child has to learn on going to school is how to become a student, in general terms as distinct from a certain mother's child. Other changes in student careers occur when they move to junior high or senior high schools. At each level the child enters a new "sub-world" with all its demands and consignments.

These changes in socialization require students to adapt various coping skills. Above all they must learn to

be students - not the role as designated by those in authority, but as made by students. Adolescents are less concerned about how to become teachers, lawyers or anything else than they are about how to become students. They live in the present. They are called on to devise short-term measures to cope. "At each stage there is a marked change in the status and role of students. Having mastered the previous stage, new problems and new situations arise in the next, making new demands on coping resources and ingenuities" (Woods, 1983: 164). This socialization, in that it is a preparation for life, is undoubtedly one of the most valuable lessons a child learns in school.

The students' careers, then, consist of a number of steps or stages which comprise status passages. The objective aspect of those careers is visible to us. They are the newcomers in different schools or in the new class in the same school. But, the subjective aspect of their careers is likely much more important to them. They have to establish themselves into a different situation, they have to interpret and define new situations and events. Also, they have to become involved with and committed to a new system. They have to learn how to be students, how to manage the demands made upon them and to cope with problems that may arise while, at the same time preserving their identity.

But, students' careers are not totally guided by their definition of the situation. Students do not manage their careers alone. At school they are instructed, directed and

subordinated. The whole period is transitional, from being unsocialized and irresponsible children to being fully-fledged students and then citizens of society. In this respect, we find the contours of many student careers laid down by teachers. Two major culturally defined channels for student careers that are usually/identified are those based on social class and gender. The influence teachers exert in the crucial process of subject and occupational choice is of great importance. For example, students are, in most schools, channelled into different groups or strata depending on the teacher's idea of the student's ability and interest. Guidance counsellors reinforce this movement. Cicourel and Ktsuse (1963) show how counsellors "typed" students into appropriate channels, how the labeling of students might launch them into delinquent careers, and how teachers and counsellors "show" students into certain careers.

It was said earlier that one of the main assumptions of symbolic interaction is that people are seen as being concerned with developing, protecting and safe-guarding a desired image of self. With regard to student careers, and given the fact that they are often channelled or labelled into certain slots or groups, which undoubtedly affects their identities, we can assume that the student is fighting a battle to maintain a desired self-concept. In this respect, we can also expect that children, when confronted with situations which they deem derogatory to their desired self-image, will seek out other social situations to reinforce

this definition. In short, as Woods points out, students' careers are more noted for their continuities and channelling than for their initiated direction. On the surface it appears that students are given choices for their careers, but the choices are heavily circumscribed and may be non-existent for some. Student perspectives are often made to match teacher perspectives and they operate with a notion of appropriateness (Woods, 1983: 170). Once students are situated in certain slots, distinct career paths exist, associated with a hierarchy of knowledge, based on the test and examination system. In this manner student careers are formalized in accordance with the stratified nature of the structure.

This discussion on student careers has drawn our attention to the fact that they must be looked at not only vertically, but horizontally as well. Two other important points need to be made. Firstly, since student careers are seen in relation to child development, they are never static, but continually change as the child progresses through the various stages of secondary socialization. These "status passages" are especially important when children transfer from one school to another and must make the necessary adjustments. Secondly, students' careers may not be as much influenced by students themselves as they appear to be. It has been noted that teacher management of student careers is an important phenomenon, and we have tried to show how this in turn affects students' identities and commitments. However,

student interpretations of their objective careers as laid down by others are, nonetheless, extremely important. Hence, the focus of the present study on the expectations and experiences of pupils as they move from elementary to junior high school.

In conclusion, this discussion of student careers has shown how interactionist studies can reveal the sense of order and rationality which lies behind much student behaviour, which on the surface could seem pointless and meaningless. In the school, interactionism not only induces reflexivity and analysis of one's own career, but also draws attention to that of others. With its emphasis on the individual it counteracts the tendency to use labeling induced by people-processing institutions. In reference to teachers and students, it puts one in the perspective of the other so that one can better appreciate alternative perspectives and strategies. In other words, individuals can come to appreciate each other's career.

As was stated earlier, one of the important phases in students' careers is the transition from elementary to junior high school. Having highlighted the importance of interactionist studies in helping us understand student careers and teacher careers, an interactional approach to the transition period seems to be a promising endeavour.

The following sections will present the problem for this study and the research process followed in focusing on this problem.

Research Problem

Young people between the ages of ten and fourteen go through some of the most dramatic life changes that they will ever experience. It is during these years that puberty transforms the child into a young adult and the achievement of the biological capacity to reproduce has profound repercussions on all other aspects of development - intellectual, moral, social and emotional. Yet, from a sociological orientation, this period is one of the least understood and most under-studied of the entire span of human life.

As a social institution that serves all young people, the school is in a pivotal position with respect to both the problems and promises of the young. Transition from elementary to junior high school takes place during those critical years and, as research shows, it is often a traumatic change, bringing new problems and concerns to compound those connected with growing up.

Among the problem that may face students in the transition from elementary to junior high school is a shift from a self contained classroom or from participation in a limited number of classrooms to a multiple classroom environment of the junior high school. In the junior high setting students must adapt to a school environment that is both instructionally and socially complex. Not only are there more teachers to get to know, but good friends are often separated in various classes and often students must

make new friends. The problem resides in the child's ability to move from one social setting where he basically dealt in a one-to-one client relationship to one in which he is part of a bureaucratic social system, where power, compliance, reward and punishment are fragmented.

Early adolescence, then, being in itself a stressful period for students, is complicated by the transition from grade six to grade seven when it involves a change of school. Just at the time when the young students need some stability to help them cope with their changing bodies and changing self images, they are placed in a new social setting which may demand of them new methods of behaviour, new work patterns and often to associate with new friendship groups.

It is for an understanding of students' perceptions and experiences in this transition, that the present research is directed. The problem is one of trying to better understand how young adolescents interpret this period of their school careers. It is hoped that this research will sensitize educators to the student perspective, especially as it relates to the transition from elementary to junior high school.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first phase of the research was carried out in May 1983, in a suburban elementary school (K-6) of about 450 students. (Grade six students from this and two other feeder

schools were transferred for grade seven, to a central high school in the same suburb. During this phase of the research an open ended questionnaire was administered to ninety grade six students (three classes), who would be attending the central high school in September. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) contained questions that pertained to student expectations of junior high school. These questions, covering a wide range of topics, were directed at finding out the students' expectations regarding study and academic work, extra-curricular activities, friendship patterns, parents' attitudes regarding the transfer among others. Student expectations were further assessed when twenty of these students, selected at random, were interviewed on the same topic.

The second phase of the research took place in the central high school in the same suburban area. This high school had an enrolment of nearly 1,400 students. Because of the reorganized high school program and the necessity of now having students remain in school one year longer for grade twelve, new portables were attached to the school to accommodate the incoming eight grade seven classes from three feeder schools. These portables were somewhat self contained and, no doubt, helped make the grade seven transition a little less traumatic than it would have been if they had been placed in the larger area of the school with so many students spanning such a wide age range. The second phase, of the study was done towards the end of May of the grade

seven year. Eighty-eight of the same students, who were now nearing the end of the grade seven year at the central high school were again asked to respond to a questionnaire. This was similar to that given a year earlier, except that questions were worded to elicit responses regarding their experiences in the grade seven program (Appendix 2). It was not convenient, however, to do interviews with grade seven students. In this regard, students' comments on tape, which were sometimes used to support comments from the grade six questionnaire, are not available for the grade seven analysis. However, given the detail of the comments from the grade seven classes, this is not seen to present any drawbacks for the purposes at hand.

These two sets of data, then, the grade six data, which provided the students' expectations for junior high school and the grade seven data, which supplied their experiences in junior high school, present a picture of the expectations and experiences of students during the transition period from elementary to junior high school. The questions on each of the questionnaires relate to somewhat specific themes in student transition. For example, questions 5, 8 and 9 deal with student study and performance and questions 1, 3 and 13 deal with student emotions. The questions on each of the questionnaires collected data on six themes. Briefly these themes are: (1) study and performance; (2) teachers; (3) parents; (4) extra-curricular

activities; (5) friends and (6) student emotions. These themes form the sub-headings for Chapter III, (an analysis of students' expectations for junior high school) and Chapter IV, (an analysis of student experiences in junior high school). The aim of the data analysis is to pinpoint more specific topics within each of these themes. These themes were identified and discussed by following the idea of "theoretical saturation" as explained by Glaser and Strauss (1967: 61). In other words, these themes were identified as such when no additional data were found, whereby one would develop properties of the theme under study.

CHAPTER III

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The expectations which students have for junior high school as revealed in the present research can be analysed by focusing on their perceptions of (1) their study and performance at the junior high level; (2) potential changes in teacher and parental expectations for them; (3) involvement in extra-curricular activities; (4) their relationship with their friends and (5) personal emotions about schooling. This chapter gives a detailed analysis of each of these aspects of student expectations regarding junior high school. First, however, it is deemed appropriate to look at the attitudes of these elementary students towards their present school.

Leaving One's School

As background to the study on the transfer of students to junior high school, three of the questions attempted to get at their feelings about leaving their elementary school. These questions (Appendix 1) were (a) What do you think you will miss about this school? (b) What have you enjoyed most about this school and what have you enjoyed least? (c) Do you feel you have had a good final year here? Why or why not? Responses to these questions can be divided into seven categories as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
SALIENT FEATURES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS

Features of School as Identified by Students	Features of School Expected to be Missed		Features of School Enjoyed		Reasons for Having A Good Year in School	
	N*	%**	N*	%**	N*	%**
Teachers and other staff	63	70	13	14	18	20
Friends	19	21	5	6	10	11
Academics	5	6	18	20	29	32
Feeling mature	18	20	18	20	9	10
Sports	12	13	29	32	6	7
People and other activities	13	14	25	28	20	22
Physical aspects	11	12	0	0	0	0
Other	2	2	4	4	1	1
Nothing	7	8	7	8	-	-

*Since several students gave more than one reason for enjoying school, for having a good year in school, and several have identified more than one thing they will miss about school, the total number of responses in each of these categories is more than 90; that is, the total number of students in our sample.

**These percentages are based on the total number in the sample (90) rather than on the total number of responses, which, as identified before, is more than 90. For these reasons, totals have been omitted from this and subsequent tables in this analysis.

The first question asked students what they thought they would miss most about the elementary school. It was responded to by all ninety students and of those only seven said that they would not miss anything. The responses for the remainder of the students can be divided into eight categories and range from five to sixty-three responses. There is a firm belief among elementary school children that they will miss their elementary school teachers. In this study some seventy percent indicated they would miss teachers and other school staff. This is probably partially related to the fact that since it was getting towards the end of term and students knew that going to grade seven would be dependent upon their doing well in grade six, they probably thought it suitable and profitable to say they would miss the teachers, especially their classroom teacher. But, this strong feeling of attachment of teachers is generally widespread in elementary grades. Many of the responses from this group are similar to the following:

I think I will miss the school because
of the teachers, especially you.

What I think I will miss at this school
are my favourite teachers - you and Miss
_____.

Nothing except for a couple of teachers,
Miss _____ and Mrs. _____.

I will miss my teachers, especially Miss
_____ and Mr. _____. They're great!

Another probable explanation for this high percentage is that the music and physical education teachers were very popular with the students. Each had been in the school several years and spent a lot of time involving children in sports or music-related activities, both inside and outside of the school. This went over well with the children and would understandably be something they would miss. Some examples will illustrate their feelings towards the school's physical education and music teachers.

I think I will miss the teachers, especially Mrs. _____ and Miss _____ because we've had them as teachers since kindergarten.

I will miss my teachers and the fun we had with Mrs. _____ and Miss _____.

I will miss Mrs. _____ and Miss _____ because they are everything you could possibly ask for in a teacher.

Another possible explanation for the fact that a large number of students said they would miss teachers is that some non-teaching staff members seemed to get along very well with the children and had built up a good relationship with them. The principal, who was in her second year at the school, had won their respect and love, while at the same time, getting their cooperation.

I most certainly will miss the wonderful teachers, the principal and other important people.

I will miss the principal who showed my brother and I our classrooms on our first day.

The secretary, who had been there since these children were in primary grades had become their friend. They believed they could always go to the office if they needed help or advice.

I will miss the secretary who was very kind to me my first day here.

The office, which was generally managed by the principal and the secretary, became a place to go to get help or advice. It was a place where scratched knees were bandaged and where arrangements were made to get a ride home. Children felt an attachment to it and to those who worked there.

I will miss Mrs. _____ and Mrs. _____ who I have enjoyed having in the office when there was trouble.

Oh, I will miss the teachers and Mrs. _____, the principal, and Mrs. _____, the secretary.

The janitor, who was spending his first year at the school, was very popular with the children. It was not unusual to hear him speaking in a fatherly fashion to the children, if they were doing something he thought they should not be doing. He always took time to speak with the children. His question, "Hello, how are you?" was a very common one. Children were often heard telling him about their academic work, test marks, or about activities in which they were involved. Their feelings about him are evidenced in comments like these:

But most of all I'll miss the janitor, Mr. _____.

I think I will miss Mr. _____ (spud), the janitor.

Factors such as we have just discussed will probably explain why such a high percentage of children said they would miss teachers and staff. Many students develop an attachment and a love for certain teachers and staff, especially after being in a school for seven years. This was obvious from comments such as these:

The teachers from kindergarten all the way up to grade six have been so nice to me.

I think I'll miss all of the nice teachers who helped me in my seven years of school.

I think I will miss all the wonderful teachers I grew up with and all the fun I had.

Even children who thought they would miss nothing, had to admit that they would miss some teachers.

I don't think I will miss anything, only the teachers.

Nothing, but I might miss the teachers a bit.

Except for a couple of different teachers, nothing to tell the truth.

Of the other responses to this question, the most interesting is that of feeling mature. This being their last year in the elementary school, these students considered themselves leaders. This idea was reinforced by their teacher, who put them in leadership positions such as being corridor prefects, canteen operators, supervisors for smaller children, assistants to the librarian and so on. About twenty percent reported that they would miss being leaders.

This is a fairly high representation but given student responses in class interviews one is inclined to suggest that more students actually feel like leaders than is indicated by this percentage. Students generally equated being leader with being a prefect and since only a small proportion of the grade six students were prefects during the year, many omitted to mention the leadership aspect on the questionnaire. Several students who had not mentioned the leadership aspect on the questionnaire did stress its importance to them when they were being interviewed. The importance of this feeling to the students is shown by these comments.

I think I will miss being looked up to by younger children and hearing their problems.

I will miss being the oldest in the school.

About an equal number of students (slightly over twenty percent) said they would miss friends. This would imply that they will be leaving friends behind in grade five or that they expect that when in high school they would be separated from them. They already knew about the fact that classes would not remain the same in grade seven, and, in many instances, children feared that this separation would actually occur. This separation was a strong concern in the children's responses, both in the interviews and on the questionnaire.

I will miss my friends if we are separated from one another.

I will miss my friends in the lower grades.

And next year, probably all of my friends won't be in the same class.

Sports and other activities both received a fairly high rating (about thirteen percent) but not as high as one would expect considering the degree to which many students were involved in those activities and their feelings about them as expressed in response to question number twelve, which is to be discussed next in this section. This is probably due to the fact that students are aware that at the junior high school there are many clubs and activities for them to be involved in and also, that the sports program is no doubt as good as the one they had in the elementary school. So, whereas they did, in fact, participate in a lot of these clubs and activities, and would not want to be without them, many children did not expect to "miss" them, because they expected that at the next school a similar program would be available to them.

I will miss all the after school activities.

I will miss being in track meets and tournaments.

I will miss the field trips.

The second question related to leaving one's school is number twelve on the questionnaire and was directed towards finding out what students enjoyed most or least about their

elementary school. In looking at what children enjoyed most, again eight categories are represented (Table 1). Over one-third of the students reported they enjoyed sports. This is not surprising because, as noted earlier, sports activities, including various games and tournaments were an important part of the grade/six program. The enjoyment related to this program was stressed very expressively.

I enjoyed sports very, very much.

I have enjoyed extra-curricular activities in sports the most.

I enjoyed being in almost everything in gym and being on teams.

Nearly one-third of the students cited "other people and activities" as something which they really enjoyed. In this category would be found various activities related to music, art and drama. It would include the glee club, the ukulele club as well as the various functions and performances which children attended either as participants or observers. Many of these such as participation in the music festival and other performances as well as seeing puppet shows, ballets, demonstrations by local orchestras and bands were often shared projects between the classroom teachers (at grade level) and the music teacher. Children expressed their enjoyment of these activities.

The most enjoyment I have had at the school was getting into activities with all the grade 6 teachers.

I think what I enjoyed most was playing the drums at the concert.

The most I liked is the singing concerts and all the trips.

Singing in the glee club and being in the ukulele club.

In their responses to this question students were, no doubt, referring also to their skating program, assemblies held in the gym which involved stage performances and to art and other classroom contests. They would also be referring to group projects like doing Canadian scrap books for Geography or mobiles for Canadian writers which they did during library week. Sending and receiving letters to pen pals was always regarded as a highly valued activity.

The thing I enjoyed most was seeing movies on the VTR.

The "reach for the top" game.

The most I have enjoyed is parties and field trips.

With regards to "feeling mature", again there were eighteen students who said they enjoyed this. This compares with the former question for which eighteen had said that they would miss being leaders. Students expressed a feeling of maturity and importance in such statements:

What I have enjoyed most at the school is being prefect.

I enjoyed being a leader.

The thing I enjoyed most was being the oldest students in the school.

This feeling gave students the idea that they had been given more responsibility, and more importantly, that they were ready to take it.

What I enjoyed most was being a leader and having a little freedom.

At first it was hard getting used to the younger children but now I really like it.

Nearly fifteen percent of the students said they enjoyed teachers and staff.

What I've enjoyed most is my grade _____ teacher, Mrs. _____.

Well, the teachers were very nice - having Miss _____ and Mrs. _____ for my teachers.

I enjoyed the nice and friendly teachers.

This is considerably lower than the seventy percent who said they would miss them. A possible explanation for this is that when asked what they enjoyed most, activities like those in sports, where they were personally involved and where they could have obtained a certain amount of satisfaction and identity were more salient to them. These were really the things they enjoyed most, and teachers were simply there to help make them happen.

It is interesting to note that eighteen of those grade six students said they enjoyed academics more than anything else. The reasons given for their enjoying this was generally that they liked the subjects and got good marks in them. The following examples demonstrate this.

What I enjoyed most about the school is when I got my mid-term report card.

What I have enjoyed most is getting good grades.

Only five responses indicated having enjoyed friends.

I believe this to be related to the fact that at this age friends are sort of taken for granted and it is not until they realize that they are leaving their old school that they seem to realize their importance. No children said that they enjoyed the physical aspects of the building, even though eleven had said they would miss it. The former can be explained by the fact that their school was in a rather dilapidated condition, had some leaks and had an overall unattractive appearance. The latter refers more to a sentimental feeling towards the building. They will miss the school because they had been in it seven years and they know most of the teachers. One girl put it this way.

I will miss the building because it has a lot of memories.

Another girl wrote:

I will miss this school because it is the only one I have ever gone to.

One boy reported:

The classrooms I've been in can be a bit special so I guess I'll miss them.

Children showed very little attachment to the physical structure of the building as such. In other parts of the questionnaire, comments such as "it will be nice to get rid of leaks" would show their dissatisfaction with the building.

Question number twelve also asked children to tell what they had enjoyed least about their elementary school (Table 2). A large percentage (forty-nine percent) reported

TABLE 2
LEAST ENJOYABLE FEATURES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Features Least Enjoyed By Students	N	%
a) academics	44	49
b) cancellation of activities	27	30
c) nothing	15	17
d) school rules	10	10
e) physical aspects	8	9
f) teachers and other staff	7	8
g) other people and activities	6	7

that they enjoyed some aspect of the academic program least. This is contrary to what they had said in the first part of this question when asked what they enjoyed most. Eighteen students had responded that they enjoyed academics, but now over half of them say that there is some aspect of the academic program which they least enjoyed. This is not as contradictory as it might seem because in the second half of the question children were generally referring to one specific aspect of the academic program. To illustrate:

I least enjoyed religion, I find it boring.

I have enjoyed science least this year.

The things I enjoyed least was music and library skills.

And the thing I enjoyed least was math because I can't stand it.

This category also included negative remarks concerning homework or references to school work generally, without reference to subjects.

What I enjoyed least was homework.

The least I enjoyed was the subjects.
That's surely true.

It is not surprising to find such a large number of children disliking aspects of the academic program. Even when children have a fairly healthy attitude towards academics there is generally a subject or so that they dislike. This is the type of thing which showed up in this question.

Except for the fact that several children responded that they disliked the physical aspects of the building, "I also hate the design of the building." and "I don't like the desks", most (thirty percent) of the other responses complained about the cancellation of various activities. Thus far in this data it has been pointed out that "other activities" has been very popular with children and in addition to that a fair amount of "other activities" had been offered in the school. The fact that children seem to be dissatisfied with a reduced number of such activities can be explained by the occurrence of a three-week teacher lockout in the spring of the school year in question which necessitated the cancellation of various commonly held events. These included an operetta, the major part of the orientation to the junior high school, various sports tournaments, field

trips and "fun" day. These cancellations took place in the last month or so of the school year.

Students' dissatisfactions were very strong and there was a sense of resentment.

The things I enjoyed least is the cancellation of the track meet and the basketball tournament.

Something I enjoyed least was the strike. We didn't have any field trips, basketball tournament, track and field day and we only had half a day for sports day.

Not being able to do the play.

Even though several children (about ten percent) complained about certain school rules, for example, having to wait outside until the bell went except on wet or cold days, and having to stay in after school to complete unfinished homework, only two children reported having disliked teachers. This again supports their high regard for teachers as evidenced in responses to question number one. Also, fifteen children seemed to have nothing to complain about and displayed a completely positive attitude toward their grade six year.

What I enjoyed least was knowing that I had to leave the school at the end of this year.

I can't think of anything I enjoyed least.

Finally, for the last question related to leaving one's school, children gave some interesting responses regarding their feelings about their grade six year.

Question number sixteen, "Do you feel you had a good year here?"

received some very thorough responses. Of those who replied "yes" there were no students who said that it was because of the physical aspects of the building. This falls in line with their responses to the last question. It seems, however, that in responding to the term "good year" most students were thinking in terms of academics and whether or not their grades had been good. Over thirty percent of the children said they had a good year academically. When this is related to the twenty percent who said they really enjoyed academics (Question 12, Appendix 1) we get the feeling that academics were of a high priority to those students. Even though more students reported that they enjoyed sports activities, when it came to evaluating the year as a whole, it was done more in terms of school subjects. One boy reported: "I think I had a good year because my marks are generally very high." Another said, "Yes, I'm good in everything except French, but I don't think another language is necessary." Other examples include the following:

I never failed a test.

I got straight A's.

I did really well on my mid-term report card.

I got good grades and improved a lot.

Their high regard for teachers and staff was again evidenced as twenty percent said they had a good year because of the help they were given by the teachers.

As in the other two questions a fairly large number (about one-quarter) said that their good year was due to the "other activities" which they were involved in. Students made comments like:

I think I had a good year because we did a lot of things like Reach for the Top (a game) and had a fun time.

I had a good year because we have a good library and a VRG. I also liked the Jump Rope for Heart.

Yes, I feel this has been a good year because a lot of things were fun especially after school activities.

This evidence further supports what was said earlier, that the school did support quite a number of extra-curricular activities and this seemed to please the students. As was expected, very few responses indicated the good year being due to friends. Students seem to be thinking more along the lines of how well they did academically or how well they had performed in non-academic activities. They were concentrating more on their personal performance as it related to the year in general. It was rather astonishing, however, to find that only six children said that their "good year" was because of sports. This was astonishing because of the high involvement and interest demonstrated for sports thus far. But it is understandable in that children seemed to be evaluating the year in terms of academics and that a large percentage indicated their good year to be the result of all the "extra activities". This term "extra activities" could very well have been used by students to include sports activities.

also. I believe it is fair to assume that sports activities rate more importantly here than the data would suggest. This idea is supported by student interview responses: When asked, Do you feel that you had a good final year at this school?%, over half of the twenty-three students who were interviewed said they did because of the sports activities.

Study and Performance Expectations

The first group of questions dealing with the students' expectations for junior high school deals with their expectations of their own academic work and performance. The questions are as follows:

- a) Do you think there will be a difference in the way you are supposed to study? (Question 5, Appendix 1)
- b) How do you expect to do in your courses? (Question 8, Appendix 1)
- c) Do you expect your grades will be better than, worse than or about the same as this year? Why? (Question 9, Appendix 1)

Question number five asks if there would be a difference in the way they would be expected to study in junior high school. ~~All~~ children responded and only two felt that there would be no difference. The responses of the other students can be represented in five categories. These students felt there would be a difference in the way they would have to study because of the following reasons:

<u>Student Responses</u>	(N)	(%)
(a) school work being harder and requiring more study	57	63.3
(b) being more mature and should be capable of more	15	16.6
(c) more teachers, books and courses	11	12.2
(d) having to write exams and more tests	28	31.1
(e) more homework	0	0

Clearly the majority of students expect the academic load to be heavier. They expect the work to be more difficult and they expect to have to study more. Over sixty-three percent of the responses were to this effect. These responses will demonstrate how children felt:

Yes, because the work and the tests will all be harder.

The work will be harder and more homework.

Yes, I will have to take notes and read a lot more.

It seems as if grade six students are socialized to believe that the work will be more difficult in grade seven. To speculate, it seems that this belief is reinforced in different ways. First, it may be because their elementary teachers tell them it is important to do well in grade six because things will be much more difficult in grade seven. Second, parents reinforce this idea and third, junior high students may relate to those students stories of difficult work and people failing tests and courses. In this way they go through the last year in elementary school knowing that

next year things will be "harder". Related to this is the relatively high number (over thirty percent) of students who thought that having exams would require them to study differently. Many students who had talked about the work becoming more difficult connected this to the fact that they, in addition to writing units tests, had to write exams based on all the work covered during a whole term. This seems to be quite a high concern for these students as evidenced in their remarks:

It will be different because we will have not only tests but exams and will have to study longer.

We will have to study for tests and after that we will have to study it all over again for exams.

Yes, because of a new adventure - exams.

The other categories were of much less concern to the students. Only about twelve percent thought that having more teachers, books and courses would cause them to study differently and just over sixteen percent thought they would be required to study differently because of the greater age and maturity. In referring to the idea that courses would be more difficult, students often mentioned having to take notes, having to get assignments in on time, and not being reminded about homework. This seems to be closely tied to the increase in the number of students that teachers would have to work with as indicated in these responses.

You will have to do all your homework.

Yes, there are many more children and teachers can't urge you on as much.

Yes, there will be a lot more books and I will have to work hard to keep track of everything.

When responding to the question of, "How do you expect to do in your courses?", most student felt fairly confident. The majority of them, almost sixty percent, expected to do fairly well. A very common phrase reported here was "if I study hard". The need for more study which is related to their expectations of "harder" courses is evidenced.

Maybe I will do good because my parents will be on my back to study.

I expect to do good if I study hard.

I will do fairly well but I will have to work harder.

If I study real hard I will do OK.

The thirty percent who expected to do very well seemed much more confident and did not make as much use of the "if I study" phrase. This is shown in these responses.

I expect to do very well.

I expect to do well. I will study very hard.

I expect to do well, because I am going to study a lot more.

I expect to do good because I never failed yet that means I'll do good in high school.

I plan on getting A's and B's.

Only two students seemed to be overwhelmed with the thought of academics in high school and thought they would not do as well. One student figured he would do about the same and one said he wasn't really sure how he would do.

Finally, in order to assess their study and performance expectations, students were asked to compare what they expected to do in grade seven with what they had done in grade six. This question was worded as follows:

"Do you think your grades will be better than, worse than, or the same as last year? Why?" (Question 9, Appendix 1)

The responses can be summarized in this way:

<u>Student Responses</u>	(N)	(%)
(a) better than last year	42	46.6
(b) as well as last year	39	43.3
(c) worse than last year	6	6.6
(d) don't know	4	4.4

Almost an equal number of students said they would do either as well as this year or better than this year. Of the thirty-nine children who said they would do as well as this year, most gave as a reason, the fact that they would continue to study a lot and that their parents would be urging or making them do so.

My grades will be the same because
if I work hard I can get the same
marks.

I think my report card will be just
as good as this year...but it all
depends on how hard I study.

I think I'll do about the same. Make
my family proud of me.

Those who expected or hoped to do better than they had in
their grade six year generally had a sense of dissatis-
faction with their present performance and were determined
to improve in grade seven.

I think I will do better because my
parents will be on my back.

I'm going to improve my grades because
my parents will be happier and so will
I.

Only six students thought they could not measure up to this
year's performance and would likely not do as well as they
had this year. These comments were all based on the fact of
the work being more difficult. Four children were not
sure how they would do.

From the information given in three questions on
performance expectations, it is quite clear that the majority
of students are approaching the transition to junior high
school with a very positive attitude about their academic
abilities. About ninety percent expected to do as well as,
or better than, they had done in grade six.

Teacher Expectations

Only one question was asked which attempted to
determine how students felt about their teachers' expectations
for them. This question asked students if they thought their
junior high school teachers would be different from those they

had in elementary school (Question 7, Appendix 1). The responses to this question can be placed in six categories (Table 3). Some children responded that teachers will

TABLE 3
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS
IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Salient Expectations of Teachers</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
a) will expect more academically	36	40
b) will be more strict	29	32
c) will not be easy to get to know	22	24
d) will not be different	12	13
e) will be less strict	8	9
f) will treat you more maturely	2	2

expect more academically. Others thought that the teachers would not get to know them as well because there would be more students. About one-third of the children said teachers will be more strict than those in grade six, a few thought they would be easier on them, a couple expected to be treated more maturely and some expected no change in teachers at all.

The idea that teachers would expect more academically seemed to trigger the most responses. Exactly forty percent fell in this category. This falls in line with what we found

in the last section on study and performance expectations. It was pointed out there that children had great academic concerns because they believed the work and the testing would get more difficult and they would be expected to study much harder. In answering question number seven, as in the last section, children seemed to be taken up with the idea that the more difficult program would demand more of them. In this case forty percent of the children, when asked if teachers would be different, focused on the academic aspect of their relationship with the teachers. The following student comments demonstrate this:

Yes, I do because they will expect a lot more of you. They'll expect you to study harder and more.

Yes, because at (name of school) teachers are taught to teach easy work and at the junior high school they are taught to teach hard work.

Yes, they will give you more homework and assignments.

Yes, they won't help you as much, more homework, more school work and more studying.

But, over one-quarter of the students were not thinking along academic lines. Twenty-two students expressed concern that their relationship with teachers would be different because, as there would be many more students to get to know, they might not have much opportunity to mix with teachers socially and to feel close to them. These students obviously were concerned with the social aspects of schooling

and were concerned with their personal relationships with the teaching staff.

They won't have a lot of time to spend with you, where there are so many students.

I think teachers will be different because there are more people and that means she won't be able to be worried about you as much as teachers in the smaller schools would.

A few of this group actually combined academic and social aspects. In stating that teachers would not have time to spend with them, they referred to the idea of helping them with their school work.

They will be teaching so many students, they won't have time to help a particular student.

They won't have so much time for you because of many more students to teach.

Have more students to cope with and can't help you as much as teachers here.

It seems as if those students were fearful that since teachers had to share their time among many more students, they would not have time for individuals and thus less time to help them with academics.

Slightly more than one-third of the children in the study expected teachers to be more strict. This seemed again to be related to the fact that teachers would have to behave this way because of the greater number of students. Teachers would have to be firm about homework and assignments. This was obvious from student comments:

For example, when something has to be in, it has to be in. They mean business.

If the project isn't in on time you don't get any marks for it.

They will be more strict and will make sure you get your work done.

The teachers won't be pushing you too because they think you should have your assignments in on time.

Being more strict is also tied in with the idea of a heavier academic program. Because there are a lot of bigger children to manage and a lot of work to be done, the teacher would be more serious and work oriented. Children expected this. "They are mostly concerned about good marks and some can't even take a joke", meaning there would be little time for fooling around.

They definitely won't tolerate foolishness in class. Definitely!

They won't allow people clowning around, forgetting their homework, not listening and things like that.

Very few students thought that teachers would be less strict. For the eight who did say this, being less strict was tied up with the notion of the teacher having more students and thus would not have time to check every piece of homework, would not check to see if home lessons were copied and would not bug them too much to get assignments in. These children seemed to look forward to this situation and figured it would be a way to get away with being less studious. One girl reported, "Teachers won't bug you as much for your homework".

A boy said, "They won't care if you don't pass in your assignment". They seemed to be prepared for the consequences that if assignments were not in on time they would lose marks.

One of these students saw being able to chew gum in some classes as an indication of the teacher being less strict. She reported that, "Some teachers will be meaner. Some will allow you to chew gum in class while others don't."

In spite of the great emphasis on large numbers of students and a heavier academic program which would probably cause teachers to be more strict, twelve students indicated that they expected to find no change in teachers. A couple of these responses are of interest here. Said one boy, "No, I think of it as - you've seen one teacher then you've seen them all". Another girl said, "I don't think they will be different. Teachers are teachers." And still another boy expressed his confidence in the stability of teacher types, "No, I don't think they will be any different. I've heard that they are nice just as they are here."

By way of summarizing these findings on student perception of teacher, it is noted that children's expectations of teachers are dominated by academic concerns. As was pointed out over forty percent of the children felt that teachers will expect more academically. Another thirty percent expect teachers to be more strict and it was pointed out that this can be seen in relation to "getting the work done", that is, with emphasis on the academic aspects of schooling. Taken together these two categories indicate

heavy academic emphasis in students' expectations of teachers. In addition to this concern, students seemed to fear the loss of personal contact with teachers. It was pointed out earlier that students had a deep attachment for teachers in the elementary school. Their responses here indicate that many children feel that this might not continue in the junior high school due to the large numbers of students teachers are required to teach each day.

Parental Expectations

Two questions were aimed at finding out about parental expectations (Question 6 and 15, Appendix 1). Question 6, asking if they thought that parents' expectations would be different, tended to set children thinking mostly along academic lines, but a considerable number were responding from a personal and social perspective. Eighty-nine children responded to this question and the responses can be categorized as follows:

<u>Student Responses</u>	(N)	(%)
(a) yes, they will be different	76	84.4
(b) no, they will not be different	10	11.2
(c) don't know	3	3.3

Very few, only ten said that their parents' expectations would not be different; three said they were not sure if they would or would not be different, and all of the other students were

sure that such expectations would not be the same. These seventy-six responses can be placed in two categories: academic reasons (sixty percent) and reasons based on maturity (twenty-four percent).

A great majority of those who said that their parents' expectations would differ because of academics were not referring to the idea that parents would expect them to do better, but rather that parents would expect them to work and study "harder" both in school and at home. This seemed to be related to the idea of school work being more difficult in grade seven and this would require more effort. A few examples will illustrate:

They will want me to study harder.

They expect me to bring homework home every night, study hard and no time for TV.

My parents will expect me to work harder because a lot of people fail Grade VII.

Yes, my parents will expect more because of the extra subjects.

My parents say its a higher grade and its a lot harder.

Some of the above comments suggest that not only students, but parents also expect the academic work to be more difficult in grade seven. It is little wonder that sixty percent of the students said their parents would expect them to put more effort into school work.

Over thirty percent of the responses said that parents' expectations would be different, but this group did not mention academics. They believed their parents

would expect more of them because they are now older and more mature.

They were waiting until I got in the junior high school to be responsible.

Yes, because they will accept the fact that I'm grown up.

They will think we are more responsible because we are getting older.

I think my parents' expectations will be different. They will put me in charge of things I have not been in charge of before.

An analysis of these twenty-two responses shows that, even though academics were not mentioned, many of them have academic overtones. One girl said, "Yes, my parents' expectations of me will change because I am in junior high school and more and more responsibility will be put on me this year." Similarly, another girl put it this way, "It will be different because they'll think you are more grown up and they will expect more of you."

It is evident then that the majority of children are cognizant of the fact that parents will expect more of them academically - more in the sense of being more responsible for their own study and consequent performance. This was also brought out in many of the responses in the interviews with students. Of the ten responses which stated that there would be no differences in parental expectations, most seemed to be from those students who saw themselves working at the

best of their ability and who had a fairly good understanding of that idea with their parents.

No because I'll be the same. I will be studying when I should and I'll be working hard.

No; because they have confidence in me that I can go good.

No, because they always expect me to do my very best.

In those students, there is evidence of a quiet assurance that, "I think they know I'm doing my best." This was evidenced in the above responses. The final group, that is, those who responded "I don't know" seemed to be saying "I haven't had a chance to talk to my parents yet. I really don't know." "I don't know what my parents think." These students held a sort of "let's wait and see" attitude.

Responses to Question 15, which asked the students how their parents or family felt about their move, were divided into three categories. Some children said "I don't know" (4 responses), others said that their family members were confident and not worried (61 responses) about their move and a third group thought that they would be concerned and worried (25 responses). Only four children said they didn't know how their family members felt about their move. All of these four responses suggested that the issue had not been discussed and probably would not be discussed.

The largest group of responses (nearly sixty-eight percent) were that family members were confident and not worried. The reasons why students said this can be

categorized as follows:

<u>Student Responses</u>	(N)	(%)
(a) factors related to maturity	35	38.8
(b) factors related to academics	17	18.8
(c) are just happy	16	17.7
(d) physical aspects	6	6.6
(e) have brothers or sisters in the school	5	5.5

Factors related to maturity got the highest rating in the confident/not worried group. These children (nearly forty percent) were saying that they believed their parents to be confident about the transition because they now saw their children as being more grown up and better able to cope.

Children were aware of this and said so in their responses.

They think it is good and I will learn to take some responsibility.

My family are pleased about my move because it shows that I am grown up and responsible for things.

They think its great! They can hardly believe I'm finally going to junior high school.

Almost twenty percent made mention of academics. These children believed that their parents were not worried because they (the children) had done well academically in grade six and would likely ~~do the~~ same in grade seven.

They are happy because they know I passed grade six.

I think my parents and family feel that I am going to do as well as I did this year because my parents have a lot of confidence in me.

Nearly twenty percent of the students did not elaborate, they just said they knew their parents were confident and that the move would be successful. Very few (just six children) based their responses on physical aspects, that is because the school was near home which would permit them to walk to school and to walk home for lunch. A further five percent believed that their parents thought the move would be successful either because the child had a brother or sister in the school who was already successful, or because having an older sibling in the school would help the grade seven student in the process of adjustment.

Looking at the group of twenty-five students who said that their parents were concerned and worried, an interesting phenomenon is revealed. All but a couple of the responses fall into one category, which represent concerns about the influences from older children. These children felt that their parents were experiencing a feeling of concern and worry mostly because of the fact that at the high school there were many older children. There were fears that such older children might not be a good influence on their sons or daughters and might entice them to be involved in undesirable experiences.

I think my dad and mom are a little concerned because they probably think I might get hooked into smoking.

Because I'll be with teenagers.

They feel I'm going to be up there
with students twice my age and
almost twice as tall.

At the high school a lot of people
smoke.

Worried because of the big kids.

They think there are too many older
kids up there.

Much concern was expressed about the use of drugs and the practice of smoking. Thus, twenty percent of the students believed that their parents were concerned about their social adjustment. Parents seem to be worried about their children's change of friends, the groups they will "hang around" with and the experiences they will have. According to many students this seems to be a very real concern of junior high parents. Several students brought out this idea in their taped interviews when asked how their families felt about the move. Of the twenty-three students interviewed about sixty percent made reference to this idea.

Extra-Curricular Activities

In an attempt to find out what interests children had and what activities they expected to be part of at the junior high school, students were asked the following question: What extra-curricular activities will you get involved in? (question 10, Appendix 1). Responses to this question are divided into five categories as set-out in

Table 3. As has already been pointed out in this research, students, when asked what they enjoyed most about their former school, very often indicated sports, to be one of their high priorities. The fact that a large percentage of students

TABLE 4

EXPECTED INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRA CURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Junior High School Activities</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
a) sports	60	67
b) other clubs and activities	47	52
c) arts and music activities	36	40
d) none/don't know	5	6

when asked what they would miss, said teachers and other staff, was again partly related to the popularity of the sports program and the teacher who conducted it. It is not surprising therefore, that when asked about what extra-curricular activities they would become involved in at their new school, sixty of the ninety students cited sports. Students, at this time in the school year, have some familiarity with the type of sports program which will be available in the junior high school. Sports, having been such a positive experience in grade six, would be expected to be a major interest in grade seven. This is evident from their comments.

The extra-curricular activities I would like to be involved in are basketball, floor hockey, indoor soccer and outside activities such as ice hockey, road hockey, baseball and soccer.

Basketball definitely. I will also try for the volleyball team.

All kinds of sports and the Canadian fitness award.

Physical education because it is my favourite activity.

Another area where children indicated a fairly high degree of interest is in the arts and music activities. A total of thirty-six responses fell into this category. Unlike the sports category which involved an almost equal number of boys and girls, nearly all the responses in this group were girls. These girls had had a fair amount of exposure to these activities in grade six and it seems that their interest has continued. There was no art group as such in grade six, but children knew there would be one in grade seven, and since many had had positive experiences with art poster contests, and other such projects, some interest was established and remained. It is usually found that, for boys, interest in those activities dwindles in higher elementary grades, and it was evident in this study that very few boys planned on being involved. Many of the girls spoke with enthusiasm and excitement.

I hope to be involved in arts. I am a very good dancer.

I hope to be in the drama club, the choir and dancing. I enjoy that a lot.

Art, music, drama and things like that.

I like to take jazz lessons and play an instrument in the school band.

Over fifty percent of the students reported an interest in other clubs and activities. These clubs included the sevens' club, the stamp club, cheerleader group, badminton club, and debating club. Some of these groups had not been available to them in grade six and a high degree of excitement and enthusiasm was expressed.

I've heard they have a stamp club, and I might get involved in that.

I would like to be in the high school cheerleaders group.

I will be in the sevens' club and I will be a cheerleader if my mom lets me.

A very interesting observation that can be drawn from these responses is that the high regard for academics which was evidenced earlier was brought out again in the responses to the question relating to extra-curricular activities. Many of the students, in responding to the question "What extra-curricular activities will you be involved in?" pointed out that they would have to choose with caution or under their parents' discretion because of the fact that more time would be needed for study. One boy wrote:

I will be in some clubs, but not too many so it won't interfere with my studies.

A girl reported:

I would like to be in all extra-curricular activities but I'll have to study and do homework, so I'll choose about two.

Another girl said:

I'll be in the sevens' club and the cheerleaders group (if Mom lets me).

By way of concluding this section, and in looking at the preference for extra-curricular activities as a whole, it seems that students going into grade seven have a great desire to become involved in available activities. Of the total of ninety responses only five students reported that they would not become involved in any extra-curricular activities, or that they did not know what they would prefer. The remainder had some preference for either sports, the arts activities, or other clubs and activities. Basically, there is a trend for more girls to steer towards the arts activities such as music and drama, whereas the boys seemed to prefer other groups and clubs like the stamp club, the debating club and so on. There seemed to be quite a bit of interest in the sevens' club, including just as many girls as boys. Interest in sports seemed to be equally divided as the majority of both boys and girls in the study expressed interest in being involved along those lines.

Friends

Two of the sixteen questions on expectations regarding the elementary - junior high school transition focused on student relationships with their friends. One of these questions (Question 11, Appendix 1) asked students if they thought their moving to junior high school would affect their relationship with their friends. Students were also asked to elaborate on their reasons for their belief in this regard. All children responded to this question and of this number eleven stated that they were not sure if it would or not. In the "yes" category, forty-two responses fell into five different categories. In the "no" category thirty-four responses represented two areas. These classifications are shown in Table 5.

Taking a closer look at the "positive" responses of those children who said that the new school would affect their friendships, we find that being placed in different classes was a big concern. Twenty-three children felt that friendships would not be the same because their present classmates and friends might be placed in different classes. Their grade six friends were now in three classes, but in the junior high school they would be disbursed in eight classes. Being in different classes would probably necessitate being friendly with others and losing contact with "old" friends. Some children considered this to be a serious matter.

TABLE 5
 EXPECTED RESULTS OF MOVE TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
 ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS

<u>Reasons for No Change in Relationships</u>		
a) will try to remain friends	39	43
b) because of factors related to distance	5	6
c) other	2	2
<u>Reasons for Change in Relationships</u>		
a) won't be in same class	23	26
b) will have more and new friends	8	9
c) will have less time for friends	4	5
d) some friends still in elementary school	4	5
e) other	4	4
f) factors related to distance	3	3

It will be hard because my friends will be in different classes and I won't get to see them that much.

It will change the relationship with my friends because people in your class this year might not be in your class next year.

Most of us will be in different classes.

We will be all split up.

Most of the twenty-three responses were of this type.

Very few students (about five percent) felt that friendships would change because they would not have enough time for friends due to the increased amount of study and homework.

I will be in all the time doing work and not get a chance to play with my friends.

You don't have much time for anything but study.

More than four percent felt that friends would change because they had good friends in grade five who would be remaining in the elementary school. "Yes it will because my best friend is in grade five." One boy figured that some of his friends might not pass and would remain in the elementary school. "Yes because some of my friends might fail." Only three percent felt that the distance of their home from the school might change their friendships. For example, students who had ordinarily walked to school together felt that friendships would change if one had to stay for lunch and the other didn't, or if one walked to school and the other got a drive.

I will be home for some of my lunches and my friends might not be home for theirs.

My friend lives farther away from the school than I do and she will probably walk home with someone else.

A little more than nine percent of the respondents expected friendships to change, not necessarily because of

being in different classes, because of spending more time studying, of remaining in the elementary school or of distance, but because of the fact that the new school would be more people and that some of those could possibly become new friends. It was pointed out earlier that a large percentage of students were concerned about maintaining their present friendship groups, but feared that it might be difficult due to classes being split up. These students expressed great concern over the possibility of losing friends. Those nine percent who seemed to look forward to making new friends appear to be those who did not have many friends in elementary school, or who were relatively new to the area. They saw the possibility of meeting new people as an opportunity to make new friends.

Looking at the students who said that going to junior high school would not affect their relationship with their friends, that is, the "no" category in Table 5, we find that over one-third of the ninety students responded to that effect. Except for a couple who did not elaborate only two categories were distinguishable in this "no" group of forty-six responses. Over forty percent of these children were very confident that the change would not affect their friendships because of their loyalty to each other. This is very interesting, but not surprising because early adolescents tend to develop strong friendship patterns. Such comments as "No, it won't because friends won't stop being your friends

because of the school." shows this commitment to friends.

Other comments go like this:

No, because if they are really my FRIENDS, we'll see each other. You won't lose your "good" friends just because you're not in the same class.

No, because I will still be the same and nothing will ever change me.

My friends are life time companions. I like my friends.

No, because my friends will stay my friends forever.

Such comments indicate that children consider their friends to be "true" friends and did not expect transition to affect the relationship. This feeling, no doubt, afforded them a certain confidence and security about moving to a new school. The remaining five percent in the "no" group felt that friends would not change due to the fact that, as they lived near each other, they would walk or drive together and, in some cases, would have lunch together at school.

Another question (Question 14, Appendix I), also relating to friends, asked, "Do you think that your friends are pleased to move? Explain." Responses for this question were grouped "yes", "no" and "don't know". A large percentage (over seventy percent of the ninety children who responded) said they thought their friends were pleased to move. Another thirty percent said they figured friends were not pleased to move and the other eleven percent said they did not know (Table 6).

The responses that fell within the "yes" category, that is, the responses of children who said that their friends

TABLE 6

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FRIENDS' ATTITUDES
TOWARDS MOVING TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Reasons Why Friends Are Pleased to Move</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
a) to be involved with new people and activities	27	30
b) physical aspects	17	19
c) to meet new friends	8	9
d) will feel more mature	7	8
e) other	4	4
f) academics	3	3
<u>Reasons Why Friends Are Not Pleased to Move</u>		
a) fear of older children and new experiences	14	16
b) will not be in same class	7	8
c) other	5	6
d) fear of academics	4	4

will be pleased to move can be divided into five groups which represent their reasons for being pleased. They are: (a) to be involved with new people and activities; (b) because of physical reasons, that is, structure and conditions of the buildings involved or distance of home from the school; (c) to meet new friends; (d) to feel more grown up and mature;

and (f) for academic reasons (Table 6). Of the sixty-six children who answered "yes" only eight of those seemed to think their friends were excited about meeting new friends.

Yes, they want to go up in the high school to meet new friends.

Seeing old friends and meeting new friends.

They want to get up there so they can meet new friends too.

The relatively small number who anticipated the breaking up of or disturbance in friendship groups is another indication of the closeness and commitment of these children to each other and supports the data collected by the question which asked if the move to junior high school would affect their relationships with their friends. There is evidence of a degree of concern that, because of the large number of classrooms and children, some friendship changes might occur. One boy saw it this way.

Yes, friends might change because some of my friends might find so called better friends at the high school.

About eight percent of the students felt their friends' moving to junior high school would make them feel more grown up. This relatively small number is understandable since most children didn't really see going to the junior high school as representing the idea of being more grown up. There was evidence that a lot of children felt "grown up" in grade six because there, they had been prefects, the oldest group in the school and were given positions of responsibility. Further,

there is evidence that going to grade seven caused them to fear being small, the youngest, and having to start all over again. Clearly, then, the feeling of being grown up is not a big concern at this time. One girl put it this way.

It's like going to kindergarten on the first day.

Down here we are leaders, up there we will be followers.

A considerably higher number felt that friends would be glad to move to the new portables and to be finished with the old school, with its leaks and other structural inadequacies (physical aspects). Seventeen children made such comments as:

They want to see our new classrooms.

They are very excited because they are going to a different school with lockers and cafeteria.

Again, there is an indication of excitement related to the new physical plant. Some of the comments in the "physical" section had to do with distance.

Most of them will live close to the school.

They will not have to walk so far.

The idea of being involved with new people and different activities was by far the most popular reason for friends being pleased to move. As has been pointed out on several occasions, this study has revealed a high level of excitement related to the transition from elementary to junior high school. It was found that a great deal of this

excitement is related to the fact that students are looking forward to being with all the new people (but not necessarily becoming friends) and being involved in activities with them. The nature of many of these activities, that is, that they are different from those at the former school, gives rise to favourable attitudes and anticipation. Of the sixty-six "yes" responses to the question "Do you think your friends are pleased to move. Explain?", twenty-seven said that their friends would look forward to new people and activities.

Some are pleased about the new activities at the junior high school.

There are new experiences at that school.

Being involved in activities and other things.

These responses may be taken to indicate the interest in activities including clubs and groups. Other students concentrated on the new people who would be present and the opportunity to work with them.

Because they will meet new people.

They want to leave because they want to be among older people.

In all of these responses there is an indication of excitement about the sense of adventure connected with the transition to junior high school.

Thirty students felt that their friends were not excited about going to junior high school. These "no" responses were divided into three groups: (a) fear of older children and new experiences; (b) will not be in the

same class as friends; (c) fear of academics (Table 6). As is evidenced by the smaller number of "no" responses, most students thought their friends were excited about the move. This, as we shall see in the next section, coincides with their own feelings related to the move. They were generally excited as well. But some students thought their friends would not be pleased to move. These three groups in the "no" category represent three of the most likely concerns of children who might not be looking forward to the move: fear of losing friends, "because we might not be in the same class"; fear of academics, "I don't think (pupil) is because he's not doing good here, and he might fail up there"; and finally, fear of older children and new experiences, "They really don't want to go up there because they are afraid of all the older people".

Student Emotions

The emotional aspect of students' perceptions is an important part of their perspective. It is important to know how they "feel" about their schooling. Hence, the present focus on the results of three questions relating to student emotions. We want to know what the students feel about this whole transition period as it relates to them personally. This section will deal with the responses to three questions, "Are you excited? Why or why not?", (Question 1, Appendix 1);

TABLE 7

REASONS FOR EXCITEMENT ABOUT THE MOVE
TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Reasons for Being Excited</u>		N	%
a)	different people and activities	49	54
b)	physical aspects	23	26
c)	will be challenging	13	14
d)	will make new friends	10	10
e)	meet new teachers and staff	10	11
f)	feel more mature	9	10
g)	other	5	6
<u>Reasons for Not Being Excited</u>			
a)	might lose friends	5	6
b)	nothing to be excited about	3	3
c)	worried about academics	2	2
d)	other	2	2

We will have new subjects, groups
and a cafeteria.

There are many, many things to do
and many people to see.

are similar to those we cited in the last section as
responses to the question, "Do you think your friends are

"Are you worried? Why or why not?" (Question 3, Appendix 1); and "Are you pleased to be moving? Why or why not?" (Question 13, Appendix 1). Responses for these questions are represented in Tables 7, 8 and 9 respectively.

The first question on our questionnaire to elementary students was designed to get students' views of the level of their excitement about going to the junior high school. Eighty respondents said they were excited about it, the remaining ten indicated that they were not excited about it at all. In some cases students gave two or more reasons for being or not being excited.

Those in the "no" category were divided into three groups: (a) might lose friends, (b) nothing to be excited about, (c) worried about academics. The "yes" category represents responses in six different areas: (a) different people and activities, (b) physical aspects, (c) will be challenging, (d) meet new friends, (e) meet new teachers, (f) will feel more mature (Table 7).

There seems to be a generally high level of excitement about moving to junior high school. Almost ninety percent of the students related that they were excited. This excitement seemed to be centered in the prospect of being involved with new people and new activities. Forty-nine students responded in this manner. To illustrate, such comments as

I will be meeting new people and taking on new responsibilities.

New faces and new places to see.

pleased to move?". Also, in that question, we found that the excitement was largely related to new people and activities. This seems to be related to a sense of adventure, of being with and working with new people in new situations. It is likely that students whose responses are placed in the category "it will be challenging", were also thinking along those same lines when they made such statements as:

I am excited because of the challenge
and all the different faces.

A new school seems like a new
adventure.

Its going to be a whole new
experience for me.

Implications are that these children were excited about new people and activities as well.

A fairly large number of children (over twenty-five percent) are excited about physical aspects. As was pointed out earlier, these fall into two main areas. Most of the responses concern the fact that they would be moving to new portables and they were excited about that.

There are lockers and a cafeteria
there.

Because I'd like to get out of these
old portables and get a better
classroom.

A couple of responses concern the idea that some children will live nearer to the school and so would be able to walk to school and not have to stay for lunch. When children

were asked if their friends were pleased to move (Question 14, Appendix 1), we found that the responses were very similar to those for this question, both in number and kind.

Only ten of the children said they were excited over the prospect of meeting new friends. Considering the evidence of strong friendship bonds which have been shown so far, and the fact that only eight children said their friends were probably glad to be moving so that they could make new friends, this finding is not surprising. Returning to the group who expect the move to be challenging, thirteen out of ninety said they were excited because the move would be challenging for them. Responses in this category seemed to come from the more academically capable students who felt that being faced with new and different experiences would be a personal challenge. It will be sort of like an adventure.

I'm excited because it is going to be a whole new experience for me.

It's going to be challenging with all the new subjects.

It will be a challenge having new and more of the subjects needed to complete my education.

Some of these comments related to the challenging academics whereas others saw the whole experience, including meeting new friends and teachers, a challenge in itself.

Only about eleven percent of the students said they were excited to meet new teachers. This is understandable, because, as was shown above, there is a rather strong sense

of apprehension about meeting new teachers after having been in the same school with many of the same teachers for seven years. The fact that most teachers in the junior high school would be men has been mentioned on several occasions. Another ten percent were excited about feeling more grown up in the high school. This is as expected because there has been much evidence that most children, having felt grown up and responsible in grade six, are conscious of being the smallest, the youngest and having to start all over again in grade seven. One girl explained:

Because now we are the leaders, we are not afraid of anyone, but up there we will be the youngest and I will be afraid of them (I think).

One question asked students to indicate whether or not they were worried about the move and to give reasons for their feelings (Question 3, Appendix 1). The thirty-two students who said they were not worried gave the following reasons for their choice: (a) nothing to worry about; (b) physical aspects; (c) still have my friends; (d) will do well academically. The "yes" category (57 respondents) contained the following responses: (a) older students and influence; (b) academics; (c) losing friends; (d) physical aspects; (e) teachers (Table 8).

It was evident that many children were aware of the large numbers of older children with whom they would be required to mix. Looking at the group who said they were worried, fifty of the eighty-nine responses to this question

TABLE 8

REASONS FOR BEING WORRIED ABOUT THE MOVE
TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Reasons for Being Worried</u>	N	%
a) older students and influence	50	56
b) academics	13	14
c) losing friends	13	14
d) physical aspects	11	12
e) teachers	10	11
f) other	3	3

<u>Reasons for Not Being Worried</u>	N	%
a) nothing to worry about	20	22
b) physical aspects	13	14
c) will still have my friends	4	4
d) will do well academically	3	3

said their worry was due to the older students in the school. This is a significantly high number and indicates that, whereas there is a high degree of excitement about going to high school, (Question 1, Appendix 1) there is an even greater degree of worry. An examination of these comments indicate that many children are worried about new experiences in

which they might be influenced by older children. Smoking and the use of drugs were mentioned on several occasions.

I am worried about the drugs the teenagers sell to younger people.

The older students try to get you into trouble up there.

I'm worried because of cigarettes up there.

I am worried I might go hanging around with the wrong gang.

I am worried about the people I socialize with because mom says not to get in with the wrong crowd.

Because the high school is one of the worst rackets with drugs and smoking in Newfoundland.

Others are just worried that the older children might "pick on" them or beat them up.

Kids might pick on me, and I heard people say you might get beaten up by them.

I am worried because of all the big kids.

Thirteen children said they were worried about academics. This is a reasonable number because there would certainly be some children going to junior high school, having barely met the requirements for grade seven. Such children would probably be concerned about their performance in the grade seven program. Of course, even those with good academic records might also worry about how they will perform in junior high school.

However, most of the worries that were pointed out were related to the idea of having exams at mid-term and at the end of the year. This is a different system of evaluation from what they had been used to having at the elementary school. Such comments as, "I am worried because we will be having exams for the first time" are fairly common responses. But, in spite of the fact that these students expressed worries about academics, there is still a positive attitude towards the academic program. As noted in the first section of this chapter, a large percentage of students contributed their "good year" at the elementary school to the fact that they had done well academically. In talking about their expected personal academic performance in grade seven, as presented in the above discussion on study and performance, students appeared to be extremely confident and enthusiastic.

More than fourteen percent of those responding were worried about losing friends. This is consistent with the findings in the above section on Friends. There, we found that nearly fifty percent of the children thought that the new school environment would affect their relationship with their friends, and they were concerned about it. This concern was largely due to being in different classes and the fact that old friends might meet up with new friends. This girl was not alone in stating:

I am afraid that all of my friends
will be in different classes than
I will.

Roughly, an equal number of students had concerns about the new teachers or the physical aspects of the building. With regards to teachers, one girl said, "I think the teachers will be kind of mean and I might not be able to adjust. I don't know any of the teachers that I might get." Concerns about the building itself had to do with size and the possibility of getting lost and confused. "I feel I will get lost at least five times the first week", said one girl. "I don't know where all the rooms are", or "It's a big school and I'm not familiar with it", said others.

The other one-third of the students (32 respondents) said they were not worried about the transition. Most of these simply stated that there was nothing to worry about, and thirteen students cited reasons related to the fact that the school is in the neighbourhood (physical aspects). Such comments went like this:

I'm not all that worried because I know a lot of people there.

Because I have an older brother in grade twelve and he will give me a lot of help.

It's right near our house.

Many of the comments in this group seem to be based on the fact that since the new school would be in their present neighbourhood, they would be familiar, at least, with the exterior surroundings, even though many had not been inside the building. Also, many students in addition to knowing other

students already there, had brothers or sisters attending the school. This afforded them a sense of security and cut down on worry. Obviously this is a very significant factor and it seems likely that if the new school had been located in a different neighbourhood the level of students' worry, even though already high, would likely be considerably higher.

A final question on student emotions was stated as follows: "Are you pleased to be moving? Why or why not?" Responses to this question (Question 13, Appendix 1) were at first separated into two categories: "No"/"Not Sure" and "Yes". Ninety students responded to this inquiry and seventy said they were pleased to be moving. Those "yes" responses were then divided into six categories. The "no" responses were placed in four categories (Table 9).

Looking more closely at the "yes" category, generally, students said they were pleased to be moving because they were looking forward to being with different people and being involved in different activities. This is consistent with what we found in Question 1. In that question over fifty percent of the children were excited because of the prospect of new people and activities. It was pointed out earlier that the elementary school in question did have a considerable number of activities in which children were involved, and children did indicate in responses to Question 2 that they would miss such activities. The high degree of enthusiasm

TABLE 9

REASONS FOR BEING PLEASED ABOUT EXPECTED
MOVE TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Reasons for Being Pleased</u>	N	%
a) different people and activities	38	42
b) physical aspects	24	27
c) will be challenging	19	21
d) feel more mature	17	19
e) will make new friends	9	10
f) other	5	6
g) meet new teachers and staff	4	4
<u>Reasons for Not Being Pleased</u>		
a) fear of new people, influence and experiences	10	11
b) physical aspects	9	10
c) will miss teachers	8	9
d) will miss friends	6	7
e) academics	0	0

regarding people and activities in grade seven can probably be explained by the fact that students were aware of many new clubs and activities which would be available to them in junior high. A large number of the students either had friends or siblings attending the school and were well

versed on what went on there. The junior high school undoubtedly offered more and different types of activities which those grade six students aspired to. High on the preference list, as we saw earlier, is the Sevens' Club. Such comments were commonplace:

There will be more clubs and sports to be involved in.

To get involved in extra-curricular activities that we don't have here.

Again, as we found in responses to question number one in this section, only a small number said they were especially looking forward to meeting new friends. Whereas the excitement of being with new people seemed to run high, there is evidence that the majority of students did not expect to change their friendship patterns; at least they were not looking forward to it.

More than twenty percent thought that grade seven would be challenging. This ties in with their responses to the question of whether they are excited about going to junior high school. As was pointed out then, these responses seem to come from competent students who had had a successful experience at the elementary school and were ready for further challenge. One boy put it this way:

I am pleased to be moving because I went through elementary school without any difficulty and going to high school means a new challenge.

Slightly more than that number were pleased to be moving because of the new physical surroundings. This again

is similar to our findings in Question 1, and as has been pointed out earlier, refers to the new portables which were being attached to the high school. This was necessary because of the beginning of the reorganized high school program which necessitated that children remain in high school one year longer to do grade twelve. Thus, new portables were added to the school for the incoming grade seven classes. These new portables were expected to be quite a contrast from the old portables on their elementary school where they had studied in grade five and six, and thus added to the degree of enthusiasm surrounding the transfer.

Whereas, in responses to the question, "Are you excited?", (Question 1, Appendix 1) only ten children said that they were not excited, in the responses to the question, "Are you pleased to be moving?" (Question 13, Appendix 1), twice as many children said they were not pleased or that they were not sure if they were pleased or not. The response of one student will indicate some of the indecision amongst students. He wrote: "I am not sure if I am pleased to be moving because I don't know what it will be like." Such responses probably suggest that even though, as evidenced thus far, there is a high degree of excitement about moving to grade seven and the new school, there is also a degree of apprehension brought on by not knowing what to expect in the new school. These children are facing a lot of unknowns and

this could explain the twenty-two percent response of "no" to the question of whether or not they were pleased to be moving to the junior high school. A close look at these "no" responses reveals that children are not pleased to be moving because they expect to miss either teachers, friends or the building. These responses can be viewed as indicating that children would be apprehensive and cautious of new teachers, friends and the new school. As indicated by one girl, "Everything will be different and I'm so used to this school". It seems that students in this group are simply expressing a fear of the unknown rather than having a dread of, or dislike for, any specific aspect of the junior high transition.

CHAPTER IV

STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Chapter three focused on student expectations of what junior high school would be like for them. The present chapter deals with student experiences in junior high school. The experiences which children have in their new school, as revealed in this study, can be analyzed by focusing on student perceptions of: (1) study and performance experiences; (2) teacher expectations; (3) parental expectations; (4) extra-curricular activities; (5) friends; and (6) student emotions. A detailed description of student perceptions of their actual experiences in grade seven is presented here. Before addressing each of the above topics, it is necessary to look at student attitudes regarding their leaving the elementary school and their overall impressions of their first year in the junior high school. Their impressions are discussed in relation to their feelings about leaving the elementary school.

Entering the New School

Three of the questions on the grade seven questionnaire attempted to tap students' feelings regarding their experiences in the new school as compared with those of the elementary school. One of those questions (Question 2,

TABLE 10

SALIENT FEATURES OF ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS

Features of School as Identified by Students	Features of Elementary School Missed		Features of Junior High School Enjoyed		Reasons for Having a Good Year in Junior High School	
	N*	%**	N*	%**	N*	%**
Teachers and other staff	55	62	7	8	16	18
Friends	10	11	39	44	31	35
Academics	15	17	10	11	36	40
Feeling mature	10	11	33	37	27	30
Sports	0	0	27	30	10	11
People and other activities	19	21	14	16	7	8
Physical aspects	15	17	21	24	10	11
Other	4	4	1	1	1	1
Nothing	11	12	2	2	-	-

Note: In answering Question 16, 73 respondents said "yes" and 15 said "no".

*Since several students gave more than one reason for enjoying school, for having a good year in school, and several have identified more than one thing they will miss about school, the total number of responses in each of these categories is more than 90, that is, the total number of students in our sample.

**These percentages are based on the total number in the sample (90) rather than of the total number of responses, which, as identified before, is more than 90. For these reasons, totals have been omitted from this and subsequent tables in this analysis.

Appendix 2) asked what they missed about the elementary school. Two questions (Questions 12 and 16, Appendix 2) asked them to think back over their grade seven year and elaborate on it in terms of what experiences they deemed to be worthwhile or enjoyable for them. The classifications of responses for Questions 2 and 16 are presented in Table 10, and for Question 12 they are listed in Tables 10 and 11.

Looking first at Question 2 which asks what they had missed about their previous school, over sixty percent of the students said they had missed teachers and other staff. Their comments include the following:

I think what I have missed most are the women teachers, all the subjects I have. this year, men are teachers.

I have missed some of the teachers.

The thing I missed from the previous school are the teachers.

TABLE 11

LEAST ENJOYABLE FEATURES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Features Least Enjoyed by Students	N	%
a) academics	48	54
b) other people and activities	24	27
c) teachers and other staff	12	13
d) physical aspects	10	11
e) school rules	3	3
f) nothing	2	2
g) cancellation of activities	0	0

Some children, looking back over their relationship with teachers throughout the primary and elementary grades, expressed their attachment to them.

I have missed some of the teachers because
I have known them since kindergarten.

I feel that the teachers had a little more
time to spend with us.

I miss my old teachers. I knew all of them
and could chat with them.

Even children who said they had not missed anything, admitted missing teachers somewhat. One boy said:

Nothing really because it's the same up here
as it was down there, except the teachers.
The teachers in my old school were wonderful
and kind but up here they have to be more
strict.

As was pointed out in the last chapter, such an attachment to teachers is understandable due to the fact that most of these children had spent seven years in their elementary school and had known many of those teachers for that period.

Only ten of the responses to this question indicated that they had missed friends. Not only in relation to this question, but from the responses in other areas as well, the majority of children seemed to be happy to be making new friends in grade seven and the fact that old friendship groups were often breaking up did not seem to bother them much. This idea will be taken up in the next chapter.

The fifteen children who said they missed academics were generally referring to the fact that the academic program was easier in grade six and they enjoyed not having to do exams in the elementary school. One girl reported:

The thing I miss most is having easy work.
In this school the work is much harder.

Another girl said:

I have missed the easy tests because here you have hard tests and exams.

And a boy saw it this way:

I have missed the lower amount of homework, tests and assignments given.

No children said they missed sports because at the junior high school the sports program was varied enough to cater to the needs of all children and thus they were able to be involved in anything they preferred. Over twenty percent reported missing other people and activities. These "people" referred to often meant, not teachers or other staff, but rather other students in the school, who were not really friends, but with whom they associated in various school activities. The "activities" referred to here often implied those groups or clubs which were absent or not as common in junior high school. One boy said;

I have missed the times we went swimming or skating.

Another reported:

I have missed all the after school activities and helping the teachers.

Other comments include:

I have missed helping to make displays

and,

I liked all the times we went places on the bus.

In many instances such activities were those more appropriate for elementary school and were not now part of the program. Students seemed generally to be expressing a sentimental feeling towards "things we used to do".

As was pointed out earlier, of the fifteen who said they missed physical aspects, the majority of them were referring to the smaller size of the building or the convenience of being near the elementary school and not that they actually "liked" the building itself. There seems to be no real attraction to the physical structure of the elementary school. Referring to the location or the size of the school students said:

I missed going home for lunch at lunch time, because here it is far away from the school,
and,

Our school was big, but not this big, I like being in a smaller school.

Our grade seven data also revealed that children actually feel more mature in junior high school than they had expected to feel. It was reported in the last chapter that children generally felt mature in grade six because they were the oldest children in the school and were placed in positions of responsibility like being corridor prefects, bus and canteen prefects, and were often left with responsibility for younger children. Further, the grade six students did not expect to feel mature in grade seven. However, this was not the case. Only about ten percent of grade seven students reported that they missed feeling mature. These grade seven

students, generally did not miss feeling mature, because they did, in fact, feel mature in grade seven. This was not due to being the oldest students in the school, or being given extra responsibilities around the school, but somehow or other, being in junior high school made them feel more mature and more grown up. This idea will be further discussed in chapter five.

Interestingly, more than ten percent of the grade seven students thought they had missed nothing about the elementary school. These children, according to their comments, seemed to be either very happy to be among older children and to feel grown up;

I have missed nothing, because there is nothing to miss. I only enjoy my new school.

or, had had a bad experience in elementary school and were glad to get away from it as is the case with these girls.

Absolutely nothing!!! Especially certain teachers.

No, I certainly don't miss nothing about that place.

One of the questions asked the children what they enjoyed most and what they least enjoyed at the junior high school (Question 12, Appendix 2). The responses to the first part of the question were divided into nine categories (Table 10). An analysis of grade six data revealed that children thought they would be upset about having to be separated from some of their friends in junior high school. By contrast, over forty percent of the grade seven students reported that

they enjoyed making new friends. There seemed to be a certain excitement about being able to be with students from other elementary schools whom they had known through activities outside of their elementary school; for example, youth groups or sports teams. They were able to enlarge their circle of friends and appeared to be not overly concerned about being separated from friends they had known the previous year. Two girls reported:

I am enjoying all the new friends I am making,

and,

What I am enjoying most is being able to have a lot of new friends.

Some children commented that they had friends in the higher grades and were glad to be near them. One of them responded:

I am glad to be with my friends in the higher grades.

With regards to feeling mature nearly forty percent related that what they enjoyed most about junior high school was having a feeling of maturity. One girl reported:

I am enjoying the way they treat you up here.

A boy seemed to enjoy the extra responsibility as he wrote:

I am enjoying being given some responsibility,

and, still another boy said,

I am enjoying being given more privileges.

Children's positive feelings about the new portable classrooms for grade seven were evidenced in this data.

Nearly twenty-five percent reported enjoying the building.

This, as was pointed out before, was expected, since students

generally disliked many physical aspects of the elementary school and, more importantly, were looking forward to the new portables at the junior high school.

I like the cafeteria most.

I like the new classrooms and desks.

I love the new portables.

Some children indicated their preference for the class scheduling and other aspects of the junior high school such as the cafeteria or the lockers.

The lockers are just great!

I like the cafeteria most.

I enjoy moving from class to class.

Just over fifteen percent of students reported having enjoyed people and other activities. There seems to be a certain amount of excitement about being with so many students, especially older students, but, as will be brought out in other sections of this analysis, there is also a certain amount of apprehension. The activities referred to generally include clubs such as the Sevens' Club, the Stamp Club and the Badminton Club which were not available to students in grade six. A great deal of interest was expressed concerning these. A substantial number of grade seven students reported having enjoyed the sports program. More than one-third of the respondents cited sports as their greatest source of enjoyment. This, along with other data in this study, indicate a high level of interest in sports and undoubtedly shows that student involvement in sports activities affords them a

great deal of satisfaction.

Only seven students reported having enjoyed teachers and other staff. This is due to the fact that compared with elementary school, children have not really had time to get to know teachers and staff as well. Coupled with this is the idea that children in primary and elementary school tend to form closer relationships with teachers. This is probably because they spend more time with one teacher due to the relative absence of subject teaching which is more common in junior high school. It is probably also a factor of the children's age and maturity, in which case, beginning with junior high school, there is a gradual breaking away in the close teacher-student relationship common in primary and elementary school.

Following along the same line is the category of academics. Only about ten percent said they actually enjoyed academics in grade seven. This relatively low number can be partly explained by the fact that children generally saw academics as being more difficult especially since it involved exams, which appears to be a distasteful area for junior high students (evidenced in other areas of the responses to the questionnaire). Those who said they enjoyed academics generally said so because they did well in their courses and would probably represent the top academic students in the grade.

I love getting good marks and all my marks are good.

What I have enjoyed most is being a top student.

Many students, it seems, regard academics as a necessary evil, and could not say they really enjoyed it unless of course they were exceptionally good in that area. Most children, as has been pointed out in this section, seem to get more enjoyment out of sports, clubs and just hanging around with friends.

The second part of Question 12 asked the students what they enjoyed least about the junior high school. These responses are divided into seven categories as set out in Table 11. A substantially large number (nearly fifty-five percent) reported having disliked academics. The comments regarding the dislikes seemed to focus on either a dislike for one particular subject such as:

I dislike the French class.

I am not enjoying Math.

What I least enjoy is Health and Religion,
or, a dislike for the increase in the amount of work expected
which include comments such as these:

I least enjoy the hard work.

The thing I enjoy least is when I get a low
mark on a hard test.

We don't have as much fun, but more work.

I don't like all the studying.

or, a dislike of more tests and exams:

I dislike exams.

What I am least enjoying is exams.

5
Given this type of response to the academics it seems evident that most children see academics as a very important but sometimes unpleasant aspect of school life. Their dissatisfaction with an increase in work is expected and the number of complaining students is undoubtedly higher due to the introduction of mid-year and final exams, which is a method of evaluation students had not been familiar with. There seems to be a high degree of dislike for, and fear of, such examinations at the grade seven level.

Only eight students reported a dislike for physical aspects and most of these were related to the distance of their home from the school. Some children complained about having a longer walk or having to stay for lunch or having to use the bus. There were no complaints about the physical aspects of the building itself. As will be seen throughout this research, there seems to be fairly positive attitudes to the physical plant, especially the new portables which housed the eight classes of grade seven students.

A further look at other categories shows that there were very few complaints about school rules. Children seemed to feel that, in some respects, rules were more relaxed than in elementary school. One important factor here is their having permission to chew gum as was evidenced by these two boys:

Yeah, here some teachers let you chew gum,
and,

The teachers don't have the rule about gum.
Some teachers let you chew it.

Twelve students reported not having enjoyed teachers and other staff. Most of these comments had academic overtones and such students seemed to blame the teachers for the fact that they were expected to work harder. One girl said:

The least I am enjoying is having work and having the teachers yell at you.

A boy said:

What I am enjoying least is a few subjects and a few teachers,

and another child reported:

What I am enjoying least is detention for homework and Mr. _____.

With regards to the category "people and other activities", twenty-four children said they disliked this aspect of their school year. Most of the comments are along this line.

I don't enjoy seeing people smoke.

What I am enjoying least is a few people I've met are always looking for trouble.

I'm not enjoying the drugs and smoking that's going on.

When responding to this question such children were not thinking about organized activities as such but generally about the older children and the various undesirable activities some of them were involved in. As will be evidenced in other parts of this study, this idea was very prevalent in the minds of these young grade seven students. As would be expected, a couple of students were completely satisfied with their grade seven year and everything connected with it.

There was nothing which those children did not enjoy. These comments will demonstrate.

I am enjoying the 'hole' school.

I just love being here.

One question in this section (Question 16, Appendix 2) drew responses which fit into the same categories as Questions 1 and 12 and was again directed at having children evaluate their first year of the junior high school. They were asked to explain why they did or did not have a good year in grade seven. Seventy-three students said they had had a good year and fifteen said it had not been good for them (Table 10). When children were asked to evaluate their school year, a large number (forty percent) were thinking in terms of academics. In other words, it had been a good year for them if they had experienced a good year academically. Of the fifteen students who said they did not have a good year, several based their reasons on having done poorly academically. Such responses are common.

No, because I did not study enough and that will cause me to fail.

No, because I know I could do better if I tried, but I don't think I'm going to pass.

No, I don't like any subjects, any teachers and there is too much work to do.

I do not think I had a good year, because they gave too much work for us to start of with.

Others based their reasons on their dislike for older children in the school. Many children expressed fear of being hurt by

a favourable attitude towards teachers because teachers are so closely involved with them in their academic progress.

In some responses teachers and staff were directly mentioned in relation to academics. One girl said:

Yes, because I have a wonderful teacher who makes work really easy.

Another girl's comment went like this:

Yes, because I have a good teacher who helps me get good grades.

In other comments the liking for teachers was connected with various activities that teachers organized for students.

Yes, because I have got involved with many activities with the teachers.

The teachers are involved with us a lot.

Over one-third of the respondents said they had a good year because they had felt more mature. The responses in this category suggest that students had different reasons for feeling mature. Some were thinking in terms of being able to take more responsibility.

Yes, because I have adjusted well, I am with more students and I have more responsibility.

Others were thinking along the lines of feeling more independent and self-sufficient.

Yes, because it is fun to be a teenager and your parents let you stay up later.

As was found in comments on Question 12, friends were given a high rating. More than one-third had a good year in grade seven because of friends. Comments are of two types. There are those who enjoyed their friends, particularly their "old" friends.

them or of being influenced by them to get involved in, as one girl said, "older boy things". This girl was referring to smoking and other undesirable behaviours.

The thirty-six grade seven students who said they had a good year because of academics made some interesting comments. This again is evidence of a high regard for academics, not only by the top students but by some who are just considered to be average.

Yes, I feel I had a good year in this school because my grades are still average.

Yes, because it has shown me that I have to study to get through this school.

Yes, because I am getting the same marks as I got last year.

Yes, because I still have an 'A' average.

Even though very few students reported having enjoyed teachers most, nearly twenty percent said that they had a good year because of teachers and other staff. The number of responses favouring teachers and staff is rather low, but this is understandable when one looks at what the majority of students reported as being enjoyed most. Friends, physical aspects, sports, people and other activities were often cited as being most enjoyed. In this respect, students probably saw teachers as being partly responsible for much of the enjoyment connected with some of these activities, and thus saw no need to mention them separately. Some of them were prompted to say that their good year was partly due to teachers and staff. The fact that a large percentage had said that their good year was due to academics would indicate

Yes, because I still have my friends,
and,

Yes, me and _____, are still best friends,
just like last year,

then there are those who enjoyed having new friends.

I have had a good year because I have a
lot more friends now,

and,

Yes, because of all the new friends I made.

This "making" of new friends seemed to be very important to the students. In fact, a large number of children specifically mentioned making new friends completely or adding new friends to their already established group.

Before concluding this discussion on the responses to the question which asked if they felt they had a good year in grade seven, one other category deserves mention. Only seven students reported having had a good year because of people and other activities. As was evidenced earlier in this chapter, some children disliked certain behaviours of the older children and the low number in this category refers not so much to the activities but to older children in the school. This idea can be clarified somewhat by thinking again about the "no" category for this question. Fifteen children said they did not have a good year at the junior high school. The reasons for this are not listed in the table but they can be categorized as follows: (a) did not have a good year because of academics, and (b) did not have a good year because of people and other activities. One might assume that children

who are not doing well academically would have a feeling of dissatisfaction and would consequently say they had a poor year. Two boys, no doubt, spoke for all who felt this way,

It was a bad year. I think I'll fail,
and,

I didn't have a good year. I did bad.

The majority of responses, however, were related to the presence of older children in the school. Several of the grade seven students said they did not approve of the behaviour of some older children.

I don't like all the smoking and drugs was a common theme in these responses. Others voiced some concern about being a little scared of them.

Some of them act right big and might beat us up,
may be taken to represent these concerns. This idea further explains why only seven students actually said that they had a good year because of people and other activities. It was not the activities they were complaining about. For, as was evidenced earlier, children quite enjoyed the various clubs and activities but there was a certain amount of discontent because of being among so many older children, especially since many of those children were from five to seven years older than the grade seven students. For some children, there is evidence that this was a frightening experience.

Study and Performance Experiences

In an effort to understand how they saw their study and performance experiences at the grade seven level, students were asked to respond to three questions (Questions 5, 8 and 9, Appendix 2). These questions were directed at getting responses regarding:

- (a) differences in the way students are required to study in grade seven as compared with that of grade six,
- (b) how students felt they were doing in their various courses,
- (c) if students thought that they were doing better than, worse than or about the same as last year.

It was found that all but two students felt there was a difference in the way they were required to study. Their explanations for this difference were arranged in five categories as follows:

<u>Student Responses</u>	(N)	(%)
(a) school work is harder and requires more study	72	81
(b) am more mature and should be capable of more	36	40
(c) have more teachers, books and courses	35	39
(d) have to write exams and more tests	19	21
(e) more homework	19	21

Looking first at the category "school work is harder and requires more study", over eighty percent admitted that this was so. About eighty percent found that they actually did

have to study more in grade seven than they did in grade six. This is an indication of the increased pressure of the academic program as indicated by these comments:

Definitely, in grade six we studied only what we had to.

Yes, you have to pay more attention in class and you have to study every night if you want to do good in your tests and exams.

Last year I didn't study, this year I have to study or fail.

With regards to the category of exams and more tests, it is surprising that only slightly over twenty percent actually mentioned exams. This does not indicate, however, a low concern about exams in grade seven. One can assume that since the category "school work is more difficult and requires more study" is so large, many of the students simply aired their views about the academic program without actually mentioning exams, and that when eighty percent of the students said the program was more demanding on them, they actually were including the idea of exams. Generally, then, with about twenty percent of grade seven students mentioning exams and another eighty percent saying that the work is more difficult and requires more effort, we can conclude that students do view the academic program at the junior high level as being both more demanding than that of the elementary school and also more demanding than they had expected it to be. One girl put it this way:

Yes, because you have more exams and more tests.

Another said:

There are more tests in a week up here than there are in two weeks at the other school.

And finally, a boy reported:

Yes, in grade six we didn't have a lot of tests and in junior high school you have to study for a lot of tests plus exams.

Many children felt that having more teachers, books and courses had increased their academic work load. Almost forty percent of the respondents evidenced this idea.

Yes, because of all the subjects.

Many more teachers giving us work.

Yes, because of all the subjects and books. I don't have enough time to study some.

The idea of having more teachers was sometimes brought out when discussing homework and many students saw the increase in the amount of homework as a result of one teacher not knowing what another teacher was giving.

I'll say, the homework they give you up here is 'atrous'. At times I've had as much as five assignments and four tests.

In high school the teachers don't know what the last teacher gave you so you get a lot.

A further indication of the increased pressure of the academic program is that nineteen students complained about having more homework. Students have a distaste for homework as evidenced in their comments.

In grade seven you have to study everything.

Every night they think they have to give you some homework.

A final category in responses to the question asking if there was a difference in the way they were supposed to study has to do with their ideas of feeling more mature and thus being able to cope with a more difficult academic program. Thirty-six of the respondents reported to this effect. These comments were from two girls.

Yes, you have to study more in a shorter time, and you forget there aren't teachers always reminding you.

In grade seven you have more responsibility for your work than in grade six.

Some students' responses seemed to indicate that they would have to blame themselves if they failed and that they ought to be responsible enough to do adequate work. One child reported:

Yes, I have been studying harder now than ever before. Grade seven is where people up and fail.

Another said:

Yes, because if I want to pass I will have to study harder and get good grades.

A second question asked to assess students' study and performance experiences was directed at finding out how students were doing in their courses (Question 8, Appendix 2). The three main groups of responses to this question are as follows:

<u>Student Responses</u>	(N)	(%)
(a) fairly well	58	65
(b) very well	14	16
(c) poorly	13	15
(d) no change	3	3

In responding to this question, more than sixty percent of the respondents took a modest approach and said they were doing fairly well. But, it appears that students in this group were commenting from quite different positions academically. There were those who had done well but considered themselves to be slipping back. One boy explained:

At the beginning of the year I was doing well but since then I have been going downhill in my work but I still haven't failed anything.

Another boy said:

I am not doing as well as I was in grade six. I'm not doing so well in Math, Religion, Health, Art, Gym and History.

Then there are those who are possibly working to their full potential and who also consider themselves as doing fairly well:

I am doing pretty well except in one or two that I don't like or can't do.

I am doing good in some, not so good in others, but they are my best.

There are also those who had probably done badly in the elementary school or at the beginning of grade seven, but now are determined to improve. A girl reported:

The first term I done the pits but after mid term exam I have done good except in Math because it is hard and not easy to understand.

A boy explained:

I am doing better than last year. I am passing every subject with higher marks than last year.

Another child said:

I didn't do as well as I hoped in the first term because I was adjusting to a new school and exams, but I'm sure I'll do good in the second term.

Only fourteen students felt that they were doing very well in their courses this year. A lot of these students portrayed a great deal of academic confidence and many of them were no doubt superior students academically. These comments represent what the students said.

I am doing just as good in my courses this year as I did last year. I am an 'A' student and I am proud of it.

I'm doing good so far as I'm concerned. My all around average so far is about ninety-two.

I'm getting A's. In the progress report I got all A's. I'm doing exceptionally well.

A few of those students seemed to combine their academic confidence with a feeling of being mature and independent.

One boy said:

I'm doing very well in my courses this year. It is kind of hard but if you do what teachers expect of you, you'll be all right. I am very sure I'll pass this year with flying colors.

A girl said:

I feel I am doing very well in my courses this year because I study a lot more without anyone reminding me.

Looking at the third category of responses to the question asking how they were doing in their courses, about fifteen percent figured they were doing poorly in grade seven. Some of these students seemed to blame their poor

performance on the courses they were doing:

Bad, but its because of the subjects I don't like, or am not interested in, especially in French, it is stupid and boring.

or on the work load, for example:

Bad because we get too much work up here,
or on the teachers:

Some have changed for the better, like in French. But some are worse because of the teachers I have. He does not explain good.

Other students seemed to recognize that they were doing badly because of a lack of effort on their part. Such comments can be represented by those two:

I am not doing as good as last year and it is not as good as I wanted.

I am failing and I think I could do better.

Others recognized the fact that they were not doing well but were determined to improve. One boy put it like this:

I was not doing well but now I am beginning to do better and I am really trying to pass this year.

Generally speaking, these pupils make up a fairly normal representation of grade seven students in that the majority of them were doing fairly well and a much smaller number were either doing very well or poorly.

A final question aimed at the assessment of students' study and performance experiences in junior high school was worded, "Are your grades better than, worse than or about the same as last year? Why have they changed or why have they

remained the same?" (Question 9, Appendix 2). The total number of responses for this question were separated into four groups as follows:

<u>Student Responses</u>	(N)	(%)
(a) same as last year	40	45
(b) better than last year	27	30
(c) worse than last year	21	24
(d) don't know	0	0

As evidenced in the responses to the last question, students seemed to take a middle of the road approach. About forty-five percent said they were doing as well as last year. Students made some interesting remarks regarding why their grades were about the same. Some said that consistent studying had helped.

They are about the same this year as last year because my parents keep me studying for at least two hours every night.

My grades are about the same as last year because I didn't change much in my studying habits.

Others admitted that their grades were the same as last year, but intended to improve.

My grades in the first term and second term were about the same thing, but the third term are going to be up a nice bit.

Others seemed to accept the fact that their grades were about the same and made no apologies for that.

They remained the same as last year. I am doing my best.

Still others admitted that their grades were the same but only because of the increased effort on their part, made

necessary by the increase in the work load. A boy said:

My grades are the same because I am studying more than last year, but the tests are longer and harder.

And another boy said:

My grades are about the same. That is the case because I have studied harder.

Slightly over one-third of the students felt that they had done better than last year. Here again students gave very good explanations among which we find some that attributed the increased success to more effort on their part.

They are better, they are better because I study harder.

In most subjects I am getting higher marks than last year because I study more.

Better because I'm putting more effort into the subjects.

Nearly all of the respondents in this category attributed their success to hard work, but a few did take extra time to further elaborate and to say that they had had a change in attitude and were now more determined to do better. One girl explained:

I think they are better than last year because I've realized that you can't float things in junior high school like in elementary school.

Another girl reported:

My grades are better than last year. I guess they have changed because I know what the teacher expects of me and I am determined to get my marks as high as possible.

And finally from a boy we read:

They are better because I have changed my attitude totally towards it for the better.

It is not surprising that almost one-quarter of the students reported that they are doing worse than last year. The increased difficulty, according to students, of the grade seven academic program has been evidenced on several occasions in this study. This is in fact partly responsible for some of the decrease in grades. Student comments will demonstrate their feelings.

My grades are worse than last year because junior high school has a lot more classes.

My grades are down from last year because the work is a lot harder.

The work is getting harder. My grades are down from last year because it requires a lot more studying.

Still other children attribute their lower grades to the fact that they are not working hard enough.

They are a bit lower than last year because I should study a bit more.

My grades are a bit worse than last year because I don't have enough time to study.

A few of the students actually recognized the fact that they had not quite adjusted to the new program: One girl said:

They are worse than last year. I am only now adjusting to this school but in next term I'll do better.

Finally, adjustment to the teachers and their teaching methods was also pointed out. A boy stated:

They are probably a bit lower because I didn't really know what the teachers expected of me in the first two terms.

Teacher Expectations

The seventh question on the junior high questionnaire was directed at eliciting from students responses regarding their ideas of teacher expectations of the grade seven classes. They were asked if grade seven teachers were different from those they had in elementary school. They were further asked to elaborate on the answers they gave. Looking at Table 12 we can see that all but twenty-one students reported that teachers were different at the junior high level. Several of these twenty-one students did not explain, but simply said, in one form or another, that they did not find teachers to be different. Several others just said that in elementary school most of their teachers were women, whereas now they had mostly men teachers.

They are about the same except they are all men, but some of them are pretty good teachers, was the comment of one boy. Another stated:

The only difference is that most of the teachers are men.

Some children, however, did elaborate. One girl said:

No, I find them to be about the same. They explain things you don't understand, same as last year.

Another said:

Not really, the teachers here are trying to help you through school as much as in elementary school.

TABLE 12
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS
IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Saliént Experiences with Teachers	N	%
a) expect more academically	41	46
b) treat you more maturely	41	46
c) more strict	33	37
d) are not easy to get to know	25	28
e) are not different from elementary teachers	21	24
f) less strict	13	15

A boy reported:

From the teachers I've had all those years I don't find hardly any difference. The teachers we have now probably expect a little more particularly in school work.

One very perceptive little girl saw it this way:

No, they still get mad if you chew gum, but one thing that hasn't changed is their good attitude towards the students.

A couple of disgruntled boys had a slightly less favourable view of teachers generally. To quote them:

No, they still yell at me.

No; they still make us work hard.

As presented in Table 12 we can see that responses in the "yes" category, that is, responses of students who said that teachers are different at the junior high school,

are divided into five groups. Forty-six percent of the total respondents said that teachers expect more academically. This follows along the same trend as our data thus far and is further indication of the more involved academic program. Many students seemed not to be complaining about this but appeared to attribute it to the fact that they were now in grade seven and the work was more difficult. Some student comments will demonstrate:

Yes, the work is harder and we are expected to do more on our own.

Yes, teachers have to give hard work and give punishment for homework not done.

Yes, they have to give a lot of homework because we got exams.

Other children were not so understanding and expressed a twinge of resentment at having to do so much work.

Yes they are more stricter and don't let you have so much fun,

said one girl.

Yes they are more bossy and give you more assignments,

said another.

The former group of responses is closely tied with the next, that is of "being more strict". Over one-third of the respondents opined that the teachers were too strict and that they were more strict than teachers in the elementary school. Very often, this "being more strict" was related to the academic program and children refer to having to get detention for not having homework done or assignments handed in.

In the other school you got a warning, in this school you get detention for not doing homework.

Yes, they are different. In junior high they give harder punishment for not having work done.

The junior high teachers are more harsher than the ones in my elementary school.

They don't let you explain. When you don't have your work done they just give you detention.

Very little aggression seemed to be directed at teachers for this. Most Children seemed to accept the fact that being more strict is necessary because of the increase in the number of students and of the academic work load. *Such comments as these were common.

Yes they are a little stricter than in elementary school but they are a lot more fun.

Yes, they are strict because they are rushed.

Some teachers are understanding, others are like a best friend, but they are strict.

In contrast to grade seven teachers being seen as more strict than elementary teachers, about fifteen percent of the students regarded them as being less strict. Children's comments in this area seemed to focus either on being less strict with regards to academics or being less strict regarding behaviour around the school. Comments that focused on academics are:

Less strict, most of them are understanding, if you forget something they understand.

There aren't as many rules and you get more leeway in getting your work done.

Yes, these teachers don't handle minor things so harshly as other teachers.

Regarding behaviour, one boy saw rules as being more relaxed and seemed to like that.

They don't get mad when you get a drink at the fountain as long as you are not late for class and some let you chew gum.

With regards to rules and behaviour generally several students evidenced a liking for the idea of being able to chew gum. Teachers who permitted this were seen as being less strict.

Related to the idea of teachers expecting more academically and thus being more strict is the notion that they are not as easy to get to know. More than one-quarter of the students expressed the feeling that it was difficult to get to know the teachers. These children, in comparing the teacher-student relationship in grade seven with that of grade six, are no doubt focusing on years in elementary school other than grade six and thus on the relationship they had built up with teachers over those years. It is understandable that grade seven students would feel this discrepancy in the relationship with teachers, especially during the first year or so in the new school. Most of the comments in this category again focused on the idea that with more students around, teachers did not have as much time for individual attention, especially that personal contact which many students like. These comments are representative of what was said.

The teachers in junior high school are more rushed than in grade six. They have only forty minutes for everything.

Yes, the junior high teachers are different because they don't have as much time to spend with us, because there are so many students to teach and they are so busy.

Yes they are different because in grade six they seemed to pamper us but now they don't have time for us and they don't have much time to get to know you.

A final category of responses to this question and one that rates highly with students is that of "treat you more maturely". Forty-one students said that their grade seven teachers treated them more maturely. Many of the students enjoyed being treated this way as can be seen from these comments:

The teachers are different. They leave you alone to be responsible.

Yes, they expect a lot more from you.

Yes they have higher expectations of you and leave you with a lot more responsibility.

Yeah! They expect more of us because we are older.

But some students seemed to be complaining because they were left with too much responsibility for the academic program, and did not get as much help as they would like.

Yes, the teachers in the elementary school tell you about all the things you have to do and they keep after you, but in junior high school they expect you to know those things.

Yes they are because they don't worry about helping you if you are doing bad and they mark harder.

Yes, because here they just show you what to do and say do it, but in elementary school they helped you do it.

Parental Expectations

According to students' perceptions of the situation, in most cases, their parents have different expectations for them in grade seven than they had in grade six. In this study, two questions (Questions 6 and 15, Appendix 2) were directed at an assessment of students' perceptions of their parents' expectations for them. The first question asked students if they believed that their parents' expectations had changed and to elaborate on their answer. Most students, in fact more than two-thirds of them, felt that parental expectations had changed since the grade six year. Reasons for this change, as seen by students, fall mainly into two categories: (a) because of academic reasons, and (b) because of reasons based on maturity. Fifty-five responses fell into the A category, twenty-three into the B category and a further five children said that their parents expected them to be involved in more extra-curricular activities. Those who suggested that the change was due to academic reasons generally stressed that grade seven was more difficult than grade six and therefore their parents would expect them to work harder and study more. The student comments included these:

They expect me to do two hours a night instead of one hour like last year.

My parents want me to study more because this year is harder than last year.

They want me to study extra because they think junior high is more important than elementary school.

Some children were more specific and thought that parents wanted them to do more work because of exams.

They expect me to study more especially because of exams.

Yes, they make you study more for an exam.

Yes, but only in exam time.

Twenty-three responses fell into the category representing reasons based on maturity. Many of these comments had academic overtones and stressed that parents felt they should be better able to handle school work because of being more mature. One girl said:

Yes, my parents think I can now do lessons on my own and not have someone looking over my shoulder all the time.

A boy felt this way:

They expect me to do my best without being told to do so.

And still another boy reported:

Yes, they feel I am more mature and should do my homework that has to be done without them telling me.

The majority of the comments seemed to be positive with regards to being more mature. In other words, students felt good about the fact that they thought their parents considered them to be more mature. Some of the comments in this group, however, did not relate to academics and children were saying that their parents considered them to be more mature and that they should take more responsibility generally.

They expect me to do more mature things.

They feel I am more responsible than last year and can have more privileges.

They trust me to do well and not get into any trouble.

They have changed. They keep saying I'm old enough to keep out of any trouble.

A couple of students seemed to exaggerate their parents' expectations and showed a resentment of parental pressure regarding study. Two boys reported:

They expect me to study from the time I get up till I go to bed.

Yes, last year they didn't mind if I got a B. This year they expect me to get all A's - even better.

A considerable number, in fact nearly one-third of the students, reported that their parents' expectation of them had not changed since they were in grade six. Some very confident students, who undoubtedly have a good relationship with their parents, made comments like these:

No, they haven't, because they can trust me to do good in school.

No, they expect me to always do my best and get into sports and so on.

Not really, they still expect me to get good grades and be a good worker.

Except for the six students who said "no" without any explanation, most of the other comments were to this effect. Such children seemed to have met their parents' expectations in grade six and were continuing to do so this year.

One question attempted to elicit from the students their ideas regarding how their parents felt about their being in grade seven and in the junior high school (Question 15, Appendix 2). Children's responses to this question were

divided into three groups. Forty students said they felt their parents were confident and not worried about the move, another thirty-six said their parents were concerned and worried and twelve said they did not know. Here we have an interesting phenomena. Nearly as many students were concerned and worried as were confident and not worried. Comments from some students were two-fold. They reported that parents were worried about some aspects of junior high school but confident about others. Remarks which fell into the confident/not worried group sometimes referred to the idea of being more mature. Many children felt that parents were glad that they were growing up and were not worried about them. These are some of the comments.

My parents feel I am older and more responsible.

They feel I have become more mature and more responsible so they give me more freedom.

Other parents, according to student comments, are confident and not worried about the transition because they were convinced that their children would do well academically.

They are pleased because I'm going to do real good here.

They feel good because I am passing and getting good marks.

A few children gave the impression that their parents were not much concerned as long as its a school.

They don't mind. I got to do grade seven, eight and nine somewhere. It might as well be here.

They don't care what school I'm in as long as I get good grades.

Still others said their parents were happy as long as they were happy.

They feel good because they know I am happy about being in junior high school.

They seem to like it because I like it.

A surprising number of children thought that their parents were concerned and worried about them. There were thirty-six responses to this effect. As was pointed out earlier, several children made comments which fitted into more than one category. For example, some children reported that parents were confident in some respects but concerned in others. These boys felt that their parents were both worried and not worried.

They are pleased about the move but not about my marks.

They feel good, but sometimes worry about me.

The comments of children who felt that their parents were worried fell mainly into two groups: (a) those who were perceived to be worried about academic progress, and (b) those who seemed to be worried about their social life. Children who felt that their parents were concerned about their academics were much less in number than those who were worried about the social development of their children. Regarding academics, comments from three girls were as follows:

They are very worried because my teacher gives too much homework and I don't have enough time to study.

They are worried that I won't pass this year.

They always worry about my marks.

Those who stressed things related to the social life of students generally mentioned drugs and smoking. This was a big concern in the minds of students. Their comments include the following:

They feel I am too young to be here.

They think its all right but they are scared that any day I'll start using drugs or start to smoke.

I think my mother worries about me at times because older students are smoking and doing things she doesn't want me to get involved with.

Nervous that something might happen.

They feel that all teenagers are rough and they are more protective since I came up here.

It appears that children perceive their parents to be greatly concerned about their social development and are worried about undesirable influences at the junior high school.

A final group of responses to the question asking what they thought their parents felt about the move are from those who said they did not know how their parents felt about the transition. There were twelve responses in this group. Several of these simply said, "I don't know." Others were more expressive. One boy said:

I don't know, I never asked them, but I guess its the same way they felt in elementary school.

A girl said:

I can't really think how they feel. We don't really talk about it.

Another boy, obviously experiencing difficulties with parents, wrote:

I don't know, I hardly ever talk to my father and mother.

Responses such as these indicate poor student-parent relationships, but such comments were rare and apparently do not present a problem for the students involved in this study.

Extra-Curricular Activities

By way of ascertaining which, if any, extra-curricular activities they were involved with at the junior high school, students were asked to respond to a question which asked them with which activities they had been involved (Question 10, Appendix 2). Many students reported that they had been involved in several different activities during the school year. From the total number of responses, nineteen students said that they had not been part of anything, the remainder of the students listed one or more activities. These responses were put into three categories: (a) those having to do with sports, (b) those having to do with other clubs and activities, and (c) those having to do with arts and music activities (Table 13).

TABLE 13

INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Junior High School Activities	N	%
a) sports	57	64
b) other clubs and activities	42	53
c) arts and music activities	20	22
d) nothing	19	21

Looking first at the nineteen students who reported not being in any extra-curricular activities, we realize that this number represents nearly one-quarter of the students in the sample. That is, nearly one-quarter of the students are not involved in any extra-curricular activities in grade seven. The reason for this would undoubtedly be very interesting but is not available from most of the responses as the question did not specifically ask students to give reasons. Because of this, most of the responses in this category simply said "none" or "I'm not involved in any", but some students did go on to explain even though they had not been asked to do so. The responses contained these comments. One girl was thinking of sports.

Nothing, because I have trouble with my back and the doctor won't allow me to take part in sports.

Another girl valued time with her friends to be more important than extra-curricular activities.

I am not involved in any because then I have Hardly any time with friends.

A boy had decided that he was more interested in getting higher marks.

I am not involved in any extra-curricular activities because it will probably affect my marks.

Another girl seemed to express a little disappointment at not being involved.

I'm not in any extra-curricular things like I was hoping to be in.

As was said earlier, this number represents a fairly high percentage of children not involved in any extra-curricular activities and the reasons behind this lack of involvement would be interesting. However, an important message did come through in the responses for the other two categories for this question. Some students, after saying what they were or were not involved in did indicate that they would like to be further involved, but they did not want to neglect their school work.

I am not involved in choir this year because mom says it takes too much time from study.

Nothing really, there is a lot of school work to do. I got to spend a lot of time studying so I didn't get into anything this year.

Such comments open to us a possible explanation for the lack of involvement on the part of many students. They had probably decided to put more effort into academics, especially for the first year in junior high school. Parental influence is probably very important in some of these decisions as can be seen in the comments.

Looking at the other three categories which were mentioned earlier, the sports area seems to be most popular. Over two-thirds of the students reported being involved in sports. Some of these students mentioned one particular sport, others named several.

I'm involved in volleyball, basketball and floor hockey.

Such sports as floor hockey, tennis and gymnastics.

A large number of children indicated their enthusiasm for tournaments and other competitive sports. Such comments included these:

I am involved in mostly soccer. I am on an all star team going to England. I was on the soccer team and won the championship and I'm on the all star team.

I am interested in sports mainly and like to compete. I am on the soccer team, volleyball team, the junior girls basketball team (captain) and I tried out and made the girls softball team. I am also captain of our class floor hockey team.

Students' involvement and excitement regarding sports are seen in these comments:

Basketball! I absolutely love it. I think its great!

I'm on the girls basketball team and I enjoy it its a lot of fun.

Those involved in sports represent roughly an equal number of girls and boys as both boys and girls generally enjoy sports.

But, however, the same cannot be said for the arts and music activities. Of the twenty students who reported

being involved in this area, all but two were girls. It seems that this is the age group which suddenly begins to see such activities as being more suitable for girls. This impression tends to keep many boys from joining. As was the case with sports groups, many of those who really seem to enjoy arts and music related activities are involved in more than one aspect of them. These girls reported:

I am in jazz, choir and another small singing group. I find it fun and exciting.

I am with the school band, choir, dancing and the art group.

The school choir seemed to be a popular pastime for many students.

The category of "other clubs and activities" which includes the Sevens' Club was well represented. Forty-seven responses were to this effect and, in this area again we find a relatively equal number of boys and girls. The Sevens' Club is the group most often mentioned. This is as expected because as grade six students, these children knew about the Sevens' Club and had been looking forward to being part of it. Comments such as the following were commonplace.

I'm involved in all the activities of the Sevens Club, like dances.

I'm in the Sevens Club and I take pictures.

The only thing I'm in is the Sevens Club.

I'm on the Sevens Club executive.

Other clubs and activities got mentioned only occasionally.

Friends

In an attempt to determine whether or not friendship patterns had changed during the transition period from spring of the grade six year to spring of the grade seven year, students were asked to respond to two questions. One of these questions asked if the new school had affected relationships with friends that had existed before the transition. Children were asked to elaborate on their answers (Question 11, Appendix 2). Of the total number who responded to this question, sixty-eight students reported that their friendship groups had changed and twenty said there had been no change. In analyzing the comments for this question the "yes" responses were divided into five categories and the "no" responses into two categories (Table 14).

Going first to the group who said there had been some change in their relationship with friends, a surprisingly high number (nearly seventy percent) said that they had made more and new friends. Many children seemed to be dropping old friends and picking up friends from the grade eight or nine classes.

Yes the friends I made last year seem to spend less time with me and the friends I have made make me feel right at home.

Yes, it has. Most of my friends are in the other grades.

Yes, because I hang around with people older than me.

TABLE 14
RESULTS OF MOVE TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
ON RELATIONSHIP WITH FRIENDS

Reasons for Change in Relationship	N*	%
a) have more and new friends	60	67
b) are not in the same class	38	43
c) factors related to distance	5	6
d) other	4	4
e) some friends still in elementary school	3	3
f) have less time for friends	2	2

Reasons for No Change in Relationship	N**	%
a) have tried to remain friends	15	17
b) factors related to distance	7	8
c) other	2	2

*There were 68 respondents in this "yes" group.

**There were 20 respondents in this "no" group.

Other children indicated that long time friendships had been severed.

A friend I had since kindergarten is not much of a friend any more.

A lot of my old friends I've known for seven years are not my friends any more.

Other children seemed to be making friends with other grade seven students who transferred in from other schools.

Yes, my friends made friends with the people from other schools which affected our relationship.

Some children who reported that friendships had changed seemed to be concerned about it.

Yes it has because when they have new friends, they tend to forget the old ones.

It has with some of my friends because they have found new friends and tend to forget about the ones they had last year.

Others, relating that friendships had been altered, seemed to welcome the novelty of it and seemed to appreciate the opportunity to make new friends.

Yes some of the friends I had last year have new friends and so have I.

Yes because when you get up to the high school you make new friends, and we don't want to hang around with them any more.

Another very prominent reason given for friendship changes is being in different classes. The fact that children were now in different classroom groups from their grade six year is probably the chief reason for changes in friendships. Thirty-eight children reported that their friends had changed because they were not in the same classes as their

friends. In other words, in their present classrooms there were some children from the three classes of their old school, plus some from two other elementary schools. With this arrangement there is a likelihood that former friends were separated. But, most children did not complain about the arrangement; in fact they probably liked being with a different group, and many simply said that they had made friends with other people in their classes. Their comments include these:

Yes, the friends I had last year are in different classes and I don't see them any more.

Yes, all my old friends I had last year are in other classes. We are all broken up.

One girl saw breaking up of classes as an opportunity to make new friends.

Yes, because they have broken up the classes and this is part of life and an advantage because you get to make new friends.

The remainder of the group who said that friendships had changed attributed it to either that with so much school work, they had little time for friends, or that their good friends were still in the elementary school, or that it was due to factors related to distance. Those who mentioned distance said they had made different friends because they were staying for lunch this year and did not see as much of each other.

With regards to the group who said that friendships had not changed, fifteen of those twenty students said it had not changed because they had tried to remain friends, even in

a new setting. Those children were determined not to let the transition alter their friendships. Some student comments are as follows:

Not really, you might not be as close but you try to see each other.

No, I still hang around with the same friends. I guess there is no way to break up old friends. No, because we are true friends.

A second question dealing with friends was aimed at uncovering friendship patterns and asked students if they thought their friends were pleased to be in junior high school. They were then asked to give indications why they figured these friends felt this way (Question 14, Appendix 2). Twenty-one students said that they thought their friends were not pleased (Table 15). Some children said they thought their friends disliked the academics.

No they don't like being here because they expect too much of you.

They don't like all the work teachers give us.

My friends don't like doing all the work.

Then there were those thinking along social lines. Fears of older children were evidenced by some. One girl said:

No they don't like it because in elementary school we were the oldest now we are the babies and they pick on us.

Some figured their friends disliked being in different classes from last year's friends.

No, they tell me they hate it because they don't have their friends in their class.

TABLE 15.
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FRIENDS' ATTITUDES
TOWARDS MOVING TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Reasons Why Friends Are Pleased About the Move	N*	%
a) have met new friends	49	55
b) feel more mature	28	31
c) are involved with new people and activities	20	22
d) academics	9	10
e) other	3	3
f) physical aspects	2	2

Reasons Why Friends Are Not Pleased About the Move	N**	%
a) fear of older children and new experiences	15	17
b) are not in the same classes	7	8
c) fear of academics	5	6
d) other	2	2

*There were 67 respondents in this "yes" group.

**There were 21 respondents in this "no" group.

Two boys did not elaborate on why their friends preferred to be in elementary school, but said it this way:

Some don't because they say they rather be back in elementary school.

Some say the elementary school is better.

Of the number who reported that friends were pleased, several were believed to be pleased for more than one reason. That is, some children said that friends were pleased to have new friends, to feel more mature and to be doing well academically. The responses for these students were divided into five categories (Table 15). According to student perceptions, the majority of their friends were pleased to be in junior high school because of the new friends they were making. Roughly fifty-five percent of the respondents felt that the friends were pleased about this. One girl said:

I think they are generally glad to be here because most of them enjoy having new friends.

Another reported:

Also a lot of them are pleased about the friends they make.

And finally from another girl we read:

Yes they are because they have friends from other schools now.

The idea of feeling more mature was also well represented in student responses. Over one-third of them said friends were pleased because the transfer made them feel more mature.

Well yes, they seem to get along well with others, and enjoy themselves and get more privileges.

Most of my friends like it here because they are free to do what they want.

I think they are pleased to be here this year, because, like me, they feel more important.

A little less than one-quarter of the respondents stated that their friends were pleased to be involved with new people and different activities. It was mentioned earlier that some of the clubs and activities of junior high school were different from what children had been used to in elementary school. This "novel effect" for the new activities revealed itself again in the responses to this question.

I think so because they meet a lot of people here and enjoy the after school activities.

Yes because there are so many things to do and everyone is always happy.

Academics were not a big priority in those responses, but nine children did comment that their friends were happy because of academics. This comment will represent their feelings.

Most of my friends like it here because they are getting higher marks than before.

Even though, as was explained earlier, students were generally pleased with and were enjoying the new portables where the grade seven classes were housed, only two said they thought that friends were pleased to be in junior high school because of physical aspects. This, no doubt, is understandable because having been in the school for eight months, the physical aspects were somewhat taken for granted. The ideas, perhaps of new friends, different activities and that special

feeling of being mature were now more salient in the minds of students.

Student Emotions

In an attempt to elicit from the students responses regarding, their own feelings about their own experiences in junior high school, they were asked to respond to three further questions (Questions 1, 3 and 13, Appendix 2). The first question was aimed at finding out why students were or were not excited about junior high school. Of the eighty-eight students in this grade seven study, seventy said they were excited and eighteen said they were not (Table 16).

First, to examine the positive responses, these comments are divided into six groups. Some children said they were excited because junior high school made them feel more mature; others said it was because they had made new friends; some liked the physical aspects of the building. Still others stressed different people and activities; a few were excited about new teachers and staff and still a few others simply said they were excited because the whole transition had been challenging. As shown in the table, the main sources of student excitement are the ideas of feeling more mature and of making new friends. Roughly fifty per cent of the responses fell in each of these two categories. This seems to follow the trend thus far in the grade seven data analysis. Students did enjoy being more grown up and making new friends. Looking first at the comments related

TABLE 16
REASONS FOR EXCITEMENT ABOUT BEING
IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Reasons for Being Excited *	N*	%
a) feel more mature	46	52
b) have made new friends	45	51
c) physical aspects	29	33
d) different people and activities	23	26
e) have met new teachers and staff	10	11
f) it is challenging	9	10
g) other	2	2

Reasons for Not Being Excited	N**	%
a) worried about academics	12	13
b) have lost friends	6	7
c) nothing to be excited about	3	3
d) other	2	2

*There were 70 respondents in this "yes" group.

**There were 18 respondents in this "no" group.

to maturity, generally students simply expressed a sense of feeling older.

Yes, because it is a new experience with all the privileges.

Yes, because it makes you feel grown up, among the big people.

Yes, because being in junior high school gives me more privileges and I think that I've become more responsible and my parents think that.

But sometimes they made comparisons with their former school in an effort to explain how the new school really made them feel older.

Yes because it makes you feel older and there are no prefects to make you stay outside till the bell rings.

Because I am given extra responsibility and I am treated like a teenager instead of like a little girl.

Yes, because it gives me a chance to be with people my own age, not younger people.

With respect to being excited about having new friends, again most students simply expressed joy at having the opportunity to make new friends and there was little sign of remorse about former friendships being severed. The comments included the following.

Yes I am very excited because I have made a lot of new friends.

Yes, I've met a lot of friends and it isn't half as bad as I thought it would be.

Yes because I enjoy making new friends from different schools and different grades.

The group consisting of comments on different people and activities was again well represented. Twenty students

said they were excited because of people and activities they were involved with. Many of these comments mentioned sports which has been a high source of interest in junior high school. One boy reported:

I'm excited about being in junior high school because there are a lot more sports activities.

Another boy said:

I am involved in a lot of sports. I am excited to be involved in all sorts of sports.

Others referred to clubs and other groups including those of the music program.

Yes I am excited about all the activities like Chess Club and dancing.

I am excited about being part of the Sevens' Club executive.

Some children pointed out that there were more clubs and activities than had been available in their former school.

I'm excited because there are more activities to be involved in than at the old school.

Yes, because there is a different atmosphere and many more activities.

Yes, because there are a lot of things in junior high that were not in elementary school.

More than one-third of the students were still excited about physical aspects, even after being in the school for eight months. The idea of the seats being new and of having one's own locker were mentioned many times.

Yes because its fun having your own space in the junior high school.

I like having my own locker and the new desks with lots of room to put things in.

Others referred to the cafeteria or the good sports facilities. Said one boy:

It's better than other schools, it does have a cafeteria.

A girl said:

Eating in the cafeteria is fun.

Another child liked the sports equipment:

Yes, because all the new sports things are better in this school.

Some children found it exciting to be with new teachers and staff, still others saw junior high school simply as a challenging experience. About ten percent of the responses fell into each of these categories. Many of those who reported being excited about new teachers indicated their preference for having a variety of teachers for different subjects.

Yes I'm excited about junior high school because we don't have the same teachers for all subjects.

Comments referring to junior high school being challenging seemed to come from students who are seemingly more confident and academically capable. The challenge to them was more in terms of excelling academically.

The work has been hard but it has been a real challenge for me.

Turning to the reason for not being excited about junior high school it is noted that the responses are of

three kinds (Table 16). Twelve of those said they were not excited because they were worried about academics.

No because the work is too hard.

Six said they had lost their friends.

No, because we are all split up and my friends have found other friends.

And three simply said there was nothing to be excited about as expressed by this boy:

I'm not excited because it's still a school, same as any other school, its much the same as elementary school.

One question asked the children if there was anything at junior high school which caused them to worry (Question 3, Appendix 2). They were asked to give details with their answer. Sixty-nine students admitted that they were worried about some aspect of junior high school, whereas nineteen reported not being worried about anything. Students were worried about things which fell into five categories as may be seen in Table 17. Only three said they were worried about losing friends, three about leaving teachers and three about physical aspects. The major focus of student worries in junior high school are academics and influence of older students.

Over two-thirds of the students said they were worried about the academic program. Many of these comments were related to the difficulty of the academic program generally, but the majority of children specifically mentioned exams. Comments included the following:

TABLE 17
REASONS FOR WORRY ABOUT BEING
IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Reasons for Being Worried.	N*	%
a) academics	68	76
b) other students and influence	34	38
c) teacher	6	7
d) losing friends	3	3
e) physical aspects	3	3
f) other	1	1

Reasons for Not Being Worried	N**	%
a) nothing to worry about	11	12
b) am doing well academically	5	6
c) still have my friends	4	4
d) physical aspects	2	2

*There were 69 respondents in this "yes" group.

**There were 19 respondents in this "no" group.

When exams come up I sort of worry and shake.

I worry about exams, because they are sixty percent of your year's mark.

Some responses were dealing with the amount of school work.

What causes me to worry is how much harder you have to work in school to get anywhere.

Others expressed concern about failing.

If you fail an exam or a few tests you could fail the year.

And still a few others were worried about punishment that would be given if they forgot homework or did not get assignments in on time.

The only thing that worries me is what will happen if I forget my homework.

Yeah, projects, I never have them in on time.

As was pointed out earlier in this study, junior high students generally expressed a sense of fear and apprehension of older students. This is especially true in this school because as it is a central high school with grades seven to twelve, there is a considerable gap in the age range of students and such an experience can be a frightening one for the more timid eleven year olds. Students' comments in this area expressed either a general fear and apprehension of older students and fear that they could be hurt physically by them or a rather more specific fear of influence from the children in the higher grades. That is, some grade seven children felt that older students could encourage

them to smoke or to be involved in other undesirable activities. Comments directed at the physical side were similar to what this girl said:

Yes, sometimes you get those Big shots that will knock you into the lockers, or in the winter they will throw snow balls at you,

and to what was expressed by this boy:

Yes the older kids bother some of us and don't give us freedom to move around.

Some more general comments demonstrating this idea in children's minds are as follows:

There are a lot of people here and some will pick on you.

Yes, I thought I would get beat up by the older students because I'm so small.

And this very perceptive little girl explained:

Yes, I worry because sometimes people laugh at you. They are with their friends in the corridor and try to act big so they can laugh and you feel a bit out of place.

The responses which expressed worry about the influence of older children contained the following:

Yes I worry about being caught up in a gang of drug abusers or smokers or things like that.

Yes, one thing is drugs. But you don't usually see them and its like there aren't any.

Yes the thing that worries me is that I am going to get tangled up in smoking or taking drugs or alcohol. If I do that my grades will drop.

Taking another look at students who said they were not worried, the data presented in Table 17 show that

basically, these students said that there was nothing to worry about. Such students felt very content and happy at the junior high school. Five students said they were not worried because they were doing well academically. Four said they did not need to worry because they still had their close friends and only two mentioned being worried about the physical aspects which in these cases referred to the size of the building and the fear of not finding one's way around.

A final question regarding student emotions asked the students to explain why they were or were not pleased to be in junior high school (Question 13, Appendix 2). Table 18 indicates that a large majority of the students were pleased to be in junior high school and the reasons for their pleasure are separated into six categories. Again, as in the responses to the question asking if they were excited about being in junior high school, the largest number of respondents indicated their pleasure at having a feeling of being more mature and of making new friends. Nearly two-thirds of the responses fell into each of these categories. Forty-nine students said they were pleased to be in junior high school because they felt more mature. For some children, this sense of maturity meant that they were allowed to have more freedom and to make more decisions. One girl reported:

I am pleased to be in junior high school because it makes me able to do things I wasn't allowed to do last year.

TABLE 18
 REASONS FOR BEING PLEASED ABOUT BEING
 IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Reasons for Being Pleased	N*	%
a) feel more mature	49	55
b). have made new friends	48	54
c) different people and activities	11	12
d) physical aspects	10	11
e) have met new teachers and staff	8	9
f) it is challenging	5	6
g) other	2	2

Reasons for Not Being Pleased	N**	%
a) fear of new people, influences and experiences	15	17
b) academics	15	17
c) physical aspects	3	3
d) miss teachers	2	2
e) miss friends	2	2

*There were 71 respondents in this "yes" group.

**There were 17 respondents in this "no" group.

Another girl stated:

In elementary school you are treated like a baby, but now you are free to do things your way.

For others, maturity represented being a step further along in completing school and going on to further education. A boy responded:

Yes, because now I know I can go all the way to my goal.

Another replied:

Yes because it puts me one year closer to getting out of school and off to college.

In the majority of comments regarding maturity there was a sense of pride, of importance at being in the new school as these comments illustrate.

Yes, because it makes me feel nice to be thought of as a teenager.

Yes, it makes me feel I'm grown up.

I am pleased to be here because I am proud of myself.

About the same number of students said they were pleased to be in the new school because they had made new friends. Their comments generally showed pleasure at having met new friends. In some cases old friendship groups had been broadened to include new friends.

Since being in junior high school I still have my old friends but I have new ones too.

I am pleased to be here because it seems like your old friends think more of you because you meet some new friends.

But in other instances old friendships were severed and new ones formed.

My old friends have found other friends, but I have found new ones too.

Yes, I am pleased to be in junior high school because I like the new friends I have made.

Apart from the two major categories just discussed, the only other group of any great significance is that of "different people and activities". As was said in the analysis of Question 1, most of the children in this category seemed to enjoy the different activities including those groups and activities which had not been available in the elementary school. Ten children were pleased about the physical aspects of the building, again they liked the new portables, cafeteria and lockers; eight were happy with meeting new teachers and staff, and only five said that their pleasure was because they found the experience challenging.

In the "no" responses, these seventeen students made comments which were separated into five groups (Table 18). Many of those who said they were not pleased to be in junior high school gave several reasons for their feelings. The two categories of "fear of academics" and "fear of older students and their influence" seemed to cause the children more displeasure. There were fifteen responses in each of these groups. These two areas have been a source of dissatisfaction throughout our analysis of this data and generally, when complaints have been aired, the reasons are

related to these specific concerns. For the remainder of the students of the "no" group, only three were not pleased with junior high school because they did not like the physical aspects; only two missed friends and another two missed teachers and staff.

CHAPTER V

A COMPARISON OF STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

By way of comparing student expectations and experiences, it will be necessary to draw attention to the salient responses of students which were pointed out in chapters three and four. In so doing, only the most obvious and significant trends will be mentioned, as a somewhat thorough overview of all categories of student comments was given in those earlier chapters. The trends and patterns between student expectations of, and experiences at, junior high school will be analyzed under six headings: (1) study and performance; (2) teachers; (3) parents; (4) extra-curricular activities; (5) friends; and (6) student emotions. We shall turn first to study and performance.

Study and Performance

An analysis of the study and performance expectations along with the study and performance experiences reveals, at least, three important conclusions which may be stated as follows: (1) students found that the grade seven academic program was more difficult than they had expected, (2) in the grade seven survey, fewer students responded that they were doing "very well" or "better than last year," than had been expected from the grade six data, (3) the number of children

who reported doing "poorly" or "worse than last year" was higher in grade seven than the grade six data had led us to expect.

With regard to the difficulty of the academic program, it has been demonstrated throughout this analysis and especially in chapter three, that grade six students expect grade seven to be more demanding academically. This was also pointed out in the Mitman, et al. (1981) study. In chapter four of this study it was shown that grade seven children did indeed find that the program demanded more of them (Table 19). As was made clear by children's comments, one of the main reasons why school work was considered to be more difficult was that they were required to write mid-term and final exams. This seemed to be an area of great concern for these children. Coupled with this, there was the idea of having more courses to take and more teachers to work with, as well as having more homework to do, a reality which the children had not expected (Table 19). This finding is contrary to that of Mitman, et al. (1981). Mitman and his colleagues found that whereas the degree of concern for academics was high at the end of grade six, this concern has all but disappeared by the end of the grade seven year, as children were finding the program less difficult than they had expected.

It is interesting to note that more than one-third of the students, during their grade six year, had expected to do "very well" in grade seven, but only about half of those actually reported having done so. Also, forty-six percent of

TABLE 19
EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES CONCERNING
STUDY AND PERFORMANCE

Expectations	N	%	Experiences	N	%
Expect school work to be more difficult and require more study	57	63	School work more difficult and requires more study	72	80
Expect school work will be more difficult because of more teachers, courses and books	11	12	School work is more difficult because of more teachers, courses and books	15	19
Expect to have more homework	0	0	Have more homework	19	21
Expect to do fairly well in grade seven	52	58	Am doing fairly well in grade seven	58	65
Expect to do very well in grade seven	29	32	Am doing very well in grade seven	14	16
Expect to do poorly in grade seven	2	2	Am doing poorly in grade seven	13	15
Expect to do better in grade seven than in grade six	42	46	Am doing better than in grade six	27	30
Expect to do about the same as in grade six	39	43	Am doing about the same as grade six	40	45
Expect to do worse than I have done in grade six	6	7	Am doing worse than I did in grade six	21	24

*Data for this and subsequent tables in this chapter have been extracted from tables and information given in chapters three and four. For this reason no totals are given. Only significant categories of responses are represented. In each table, the expectations column represents the grade six data and the experiences column represents the grade seven data. In the experiences column percentages are based on (90) the number in the sample, whereas in grade seven data they are based on 87 students in the sample. Each table in this chapter represents significant responses from whatever questions were dealt with in that particular section of the study. For example, Table 19 has extracts from questions number 2, 12 and 16 for both the grade six and grade seven data.

grade six students expected to do better in grade seven than they had done in grade six, but only about thirty percent reported having done better (Table 19). These figures indicate that many students are not meeting their own expectations as far as academics was concerned. This is an interesting phenomenon and is undoubtedly, partly due to the fact that the grade seven program, with the introduction of formal examinations; is more demanding. But one must not overlook, however, that this drop in academic performance is partly due to the trauma experienced by those children during the transition, coming as it does, at a very important and yet difficult period in their development. The idea of the transition being difficult because of its occurring during the onset of adolescence, has been pointed out in studies done by Simmonds, et al. (1973, 1977), Blythe, et al. (1978), and Nottelman (1982).

A further analysis of Table 19 reveals that only a relatively small number of students expected to do poorly in academics, or to do worse than they had done in grade six. In other words, there was a high degree of confidence along academic lines. The grade seven comments show that toward the end of the grade seven year, this confidence had diminished somewhat. Fifteen percent actually reported doing poorly and twenty-four percent said that they were not doing as well as they had done the previous year. If it can be assumed that many of the lower ability or poorly motivated

students were in this group, then this idea is in line with the findings of the Ward, et al. (1982) study. They found that their "low ability" or "poorly motivated" student "types" often did poorly in the first year after the transfer to junior high school. This idea is also brought out in a study by Youngman (1978).

Teachers

An analysis of student expectations of and experiences with grade seven teachers, shows that, other than for the idea of being treated more maturely, students' actual experiences with teachers at the grade seven level are not really very different from what they had expected them to be. It was generally borne out that those who expected teachers to be more demanding academically or to be more difficult to get to know, found this to be the situation. In both sets of data there is fairly heavy emphasis on junior high teachers being more strict and demanding more academically. As was pointed out earlier, these two areas are interrelated in the minds of students. They seem to see "being more strict" as a necessary component of getting through the more demanding academic program and they were not really displeased with it. This is comparable with the findings of Mergendollar, et al. (1982) who found that students in grade seven expected and enjoyed having a reasonable amount of school work to do and also valued a well run and well organized classroom in which to do it.

One category of responses in this area is, however, worthy of our attention, that is, those responses which refer to maturity. Only two percent of grade six students expected to be treated more maturely in grade seven, but their actual experiences revealed that forty-six percent really felt that they were being treated more maturely by the grade seven teachers than they had been treated by teachers while they were in grade six. This is an interesting phenomenon and merits some discussion. As was pointed out in chapter three, grade six students, because they are the oldest students in the school and often filled positions of responsibility, generally express a feeling of being mature. In Table 1 (Chapter Three) roughly twenty percent of grade six children said they expected to miss the feeling of maturity which they had experienced and in response to another question, another twenty percent said they enjoyed "feeling mature". Also, as Table 20 shows, it can be assumed that those children must have seen themselves as being treated maturely by their teachers as only two reported that they expected grade seven teachers to treat them more maturely. There seems, generally, to have been a consistent relationship between their feeling mature and their being treated in that manner at the elementary school. In this connection, it was also pointed out in chapter three that grade six students tended to think that in grade seven they would lose this sense of maturity and would feel like, as one girl put it, "the kindergarten class again".

TABLE 20

EXPECTATIONS OF AND EXPERIENCES WITH
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Expectations	N	%	Experiences	N	%
Will expect more academically	36	40	Expect more academically	41	46
Will be more strict	29	32	Are more strict	33	37
Will not be easy to get to know	22	24	Are not easy to get to know	25	28
Will not be different from elementary teachers	12	13	Are not different from elementary teachers	21	24
Will treat you more maturely	2	2	Treat you more maturely	41	46

As revealed in Table 20, this was not the case. These children, even though they were the youngest children in the school, did experience an increased feeling of maturity. Over half of them felt they were being treated more maturely by their teachers. As was pointed out in the analysis of grade seven student comments (Chapter Four) some students commented on this in a negative manner relating it to academics. Their comments generally stressed that they had been given more responsibility for their school work and that they had to accept the consequences of uncompleted or

overdue assignments. This, for those students, meant that teachers were treating them more maturely. But, however, many students enjoyed being treated in this manner by their teachers. They seem to be experiencing a special feeling of being "grown up". This concentration on personal relationships between the teacher and themselves was an important trend in a study by Everhart (1970). Students in his study reported a favourable attitude towards teachers who treated them in a mature and responsible fashion. This behaviour, according to Mergendollar, et al. (1982) is valued by adolescents, as they tend to see teachers more as friends rather than intellectual authorities.

Parents

An analysis of what students expected concerning their parents' reactions to the transition and what they actually experienced with regards to their parents' feelings about their grade seven year reveals a high degree of consistency with regards to the children's expectations and experiences of parental opinions on academics (Table 21). Children generally believed that their parents would expect more academically and actually found that to be the case. The same trend followed with regards to maturity. Children very often thought that more would be expected of them because of their increase in maturity and reported their parents did have higher expectations of them during the grade seven year because of

TABLE 21
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS

Expectations	N	%	Experiences	N	%
Think that parents are confident and not worried	61	68	Parents are confident and not worried	40	45
Parents will expect more because academic program will be more difficult	54	60	Parents do expect more because academic program is more difficult	55	62
Think that parents are concerned and worried	25	28	Parents are concerned and worried	36	40
Parents will expect more because of reasons based on maturity	22	24	Parents do expect more because of reasons based on maturity	23	26

this. There seemed to be very little inconsistency in these two areas.

However, an area with considerable inconsistency is that of student perceptions of their parents' feelings about them, as they experience the transitional year. A number of parents, according to their children's estimation, are worried and concerned about their children being in the junior high school program and this number increases for the grade seven data. More specifically, while still in

grade six over twenty-five percent of the children believed their parents to be concerned and worried about the transition, and in grade seven, forty percent reported their parents as feeling this way.

With regards to parents being confident and not worried, this number had decreased in the second set of data. During the grade six year sixty-eight percent of the children reported to this effect, whereas this number dropped in the grade seven data. Looking at the grade six and grade seven data separately, it is found that while still in grade six nearly seventy percent of the children reported that their parents were confident and not worried about the transition and only twenty percent expressed belief in their parents' concerns. But, in grade seven, roughly an equal number of students reported their parents to be either concerned and worried or confident and not worried. In other words, students perceive an increase in parental concern regarding their children in the seventh grade.

Extra-Curricular Activities

For an overview of students' expectations of and experiences with extra-curricular activities in junior high school, we turn to Table 22, which represents the most important findings of Table 4 (Chapter Three) and Table 13 (Chapter Four). Two main points of interest may be drawn from these tables. They are: (1) the number of students

TABLE 22

EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES CONCERNING
EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Expectations	N	%	Experiences	N	%
Expect to be involved in arts and music act	36	40	Am involved in arts and music activities	20	22
Expect to be involved in no extra-curricular activities	5	6	Am involved in no extra-curricular activities	19	21

actually involved in arts and music activities, is less than was expected from the grade six data, and (2) the number of students not involved in any extra-curricular activities is greater than was reported in the expectation column. In response to another question, forty percent of the children expected to be involved in extra-curricular activities in grade seven, but only twenty-two percent were and, further, only six percent of grade six children said they would not be involved in anything in grade seven, but, in reality, over twenty percent of them reported to this effect.

These findings, representing a reduced involvement in extra-curricular activities could be due to several factors. As the figures reported for involvement in sports and other activities remained about the same for grade seven as in grade six (Tables 4 and 13), one cannot conclude that interest

in arts and music activities gave way to those. Neither can it be concluded that opportunities for involvement in arts and music activities were not available at the high school. A more likely explanation, and one that fits in with the analysis thus far, is that many children who were involved in extra-curricular activities in grade six just did not become involved in them in grade seven. As was pointed out in chapter four, many children indicated that their reduced level of involvement was due to the pressure of the academic program. In many cases, this decision was made with parental encouragement. This development, which is further emphasized in other parts of this chapter, indicates a high concern for academics both on the part of students themselves and of their parents, especially in this their first year of the junior high school program. But, another possible explanation for this lack of involvement on the part of many students is that they might be having difficulty coping with the transition to a new school. This idea was prevalent in studies by Simmonds, et al. (1973, 1977, 1979). They found that when transition to grade seven involved going to a new school, many children, especially girls, did not become involved in school activities. These authors saw this as a result of a change in self concept resulting in an inability to cope with both a changing environment and changes related to adolescence at the same time. Nottelman (1982) also stressed this point.

Friends

One question (Question 11, Appendices 1 and 2) asked the children if they expected their relationship with their friends to change (or to have changed) because of the transition from grade six to grade seven. Two important points can be drawn from the findings: (1) many grade six students expected to maintain their old friendship groups, but only a few of them did; and (2) not many grade six students expected to make new friends, but, in effect, a large number of them reported that they had. Forty-three percent of students thought that high school would not affect their relationship because they would try to maintain old friendships, but while in grade seven, only seventeen percent found that such relationships had not changed (Table 23). In other words, for many students, friendship patterns did change. A further analysis indicates that very few of the grade six students were expecting to make new friends in grade seven. As was just said, many of them intended and desired to keep "old" friends. But, when asked about their friendship patterns at the end of grade seven, nearly eighty percent of the students reported having made other friends. And, as reported in Chapter Four, these children often mentioned having severed relationships with friends from their former elementary schools. Their new friends very often were from one of the other two feeder schools. This is an interesting finding and one which merits further attention. During the

TABLE 23
EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES CONCERNING FRIENDS

Expectations	N	%	Experiences	N	%
Friendships will not change because we will remain friends	29	43	Friendships have not changed because we have tried to remain friends	15	17
Friendships will change because we will have more and new friends	8	9	Friendships have changed because we have more and new friends	60	67
Friends are pleased to move because they expect to make more and new friends	8	9	Friends are pleased to be here because they have made more and new friends	49	55
Friends are pleased to move because they expect to feel more mature	7	8	Friends are pleased to move because they do feel more mature	28	31

grade seven year, many children have actually ended friendships which have continued, in many cases, since primary grades, and have formed new friendship groups.

Another question in this section (Question 14, Appendices 1 and 2) asked the students if they thought their friends were glad to be moving (or to have moved) to grade seven. A couple of other important points can be drawn from their responses. First, very few grade six students believed that their friends were glad to move so that they

could make new friends, but, in fact, over fifty percent of grade seven students reported that their friends were glad to be in junior high school because they had formed new friendship groups. Second, very few grade six students (only eight percent) felt that friends were glad to move because it made them feel more mature, but, in grade seven, over thirty percent of them admitted that the feeling of maturity was the cause of their friends' pleasure. Children's expectations and experiences did not correspond. The breaking up of old friendship groups and the formation of new ones was a much more important and enjoyable aspect of junior high school than students had expected, both for themselves and for their friends. This urge for peer-focused interrelations, considered by most developmental psychologists to be a major adolescent motivation, is probably one of the chief reasons for changes in friendship patterns. This idea is revealed in the Mergendollar, et al. study (1982).

Commenting on the second point, as was noted earlier, students did not expect themselves (nor their friends) to feel more mature in grade seven, but, in their actual experiences, they did indeed feel more mature, and, as was said earlier in the discussion on teachers, they found that teachers in junior high school treated them more maturely. The fact that a fairly large number of the grade seven students report that both themselves and their friends feel more mature and are treated more maturely by teachers is

evidence that, in addition to being concerned about the academic side of schooling, they are also concerned about the social. This is similar to findings by Meryendollar, et al. (1982) and Everhart (1979) who found that teachers need to "care" about the social aspects of their relationships with students, as it is a priority in students' minds.

Student Emotions

Focusing on student emotions regarding the transition period, several important trends need to be discussed. Each of the questions which students were asked to respond to concerning their emotions will be analysed separately. One of these questions (Question 1, Appendices 1 and 2) has to do with student feelings of excitement about the transition and Table 24 represents the salient features of their expectations and experiences. As was explained in Chapters Three and Four, excitement about going to junior high school was generally high and remained high throughout the grade seven year. This is contrary to findings reported by Evans and Richardson (1980) and Power and Collerall (1979) who found that excitement, while high at the beginning of grade seven, had practically disappeared by the end of the year. In the present study, only ten children out of a total of ninety said they were not excited about going to grade seven. At the end of grade seven, this excitement had dropped somewhat but still only eighteen of the eighty-eight students in the

Only the first point needs further clarification here, as points two and three simply add further emphasis to what has already been said regarding friends and maturity. Generally, students were looking forward to new people and activities even though they were not looking forward to changing their friends. The present data reveal that they did indeed enjoy the activities in grade seven, especially the various clubs and groups, but they, in their responses, evidenced a dislike for and a fear of other people. These other people referred to are the older students in the school (Table 11, Chapter Four). It is probably fair to assume that the apprehension of these older children is partly due to the large enrolment (nearly fourteen hundred students) in the school and the age gap between children ranging from grades seven to twelve. For an eleven year old from a rather sheltered school environment, this could indeed be a rather frightening experience.

Another question (Question 3, Appendices 1 and 2) regarding student emotions dealt with student worries about the transition. From an analysis of Tables 8 and 17 two important categories have been extracted, as represented in Table 25. The grade six data had shown fifty-seven students saying they were worried and thirty-two responding that they were not worried (Table 8). In the grade seven survey, sixty-nine students said they were worried and only nineteen did not express concern at being there (Table 17). These figures suggest an increase in student worry about some

TABLE 24

STUDENT EXCITEMENT

Expectations	N	%	Experiences	N	%
Excited because I expect to be involved with different people and activities	49	54	Excited because I am involved with different people and activities	23	26
Excited because I expect to meet new friends	10	11	Excited because I have made new friends	45	51
Excited because I expect to feel more mature	9	10	Excited because I feel more mature	46	52

survey said they were not excited. The "novel effect" reported by the above studies was not present here. Excitement remained high at the end of the school year.

An examination of the data presented in Table 24 suggests three important points: (1) Fifty-four percent of the students were looking forward to being involved with different people and activities, but only twenty-six percent did enjoy this in grade seven; (2) Only ten percent looked forward to meeting new friends, whereas fifty-one percent were actually excited about this the following year; (3) Only ten percent thought they would feel more mature but over fifty percent actually did.

TABLE 25

STUDENT WORRIES

Expectations	N	%	Experiences	N	%
Worried about expected relationships with older students and their influences	50	56	Worried about actual experiences with older students and their influences	34	38
Worried about expected performance in academics	13	14	Worried about actual performance in academics	68	76

aspect of the transition. From the percentages given in Table 25, one might say that, in grade seven, students are still worried about older students and their influence, but the main focus of worry is how the academic program. It is also interesting to note that, while in grade six, only fourteen percent of the students said they were worried about academics in grade seven, but, at the end of their grade seven year, seventy-six percent actually reported that they were worried in this respect. This is contrary to the findings of a study by Mittman, et al. (1981). He and his colleagues found that students were concerned about academics early in the year, but by spring, this worry had virtually disappeared. In the present study, this data is

further evidence of the increased pressure of the academic program. Taken together, we might say that, from the students' perspective, these two areas, that is, older students and academics are the main source of worry, with the latter increasing significantly toward the end of the grade seven year. Hamblen (1978) pointed out the importance of teachers being aware of the various types of "worries" that students experience during the transition period, and stressed the need for guidance to help students adjust to the new environment.

The third question (Question 13, Appendices 1 and 2) which attempted to tap student emotions regarding the transition asked if and why they were pleased to be in junior high school. Responses show that seventy of the grade six children said they were pleased to be moving and twenty said they were not pleased. This trend remained very much the same throughout the following year as seventy-one grade seven students responded "I am pleased to be here" and seventeen said "I am not pleased". Such consistency was not found in similar studies by Evans and Richardson (1980) and Power and Cotterall (1979). Both these studies reported student attitudes to be more favourable at the beginning of grade seven than at the end of that year. Each of these three trends found in Table 26 has already been referred to in other sections of this chapter. To briefly recapitulate them in point form: First, a substantial number of children were

TABLE 26

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Expectations	N	%	Expectations	N	%
Pleased about expectations of being involved with different people and activities	38	42	Pleased about the experiences involved with different people and activities	11	12
Pleased because of expectations of feeling more mature	17	19	Pleased because of experiences of feeling more mature	49	55
Pleased because of expectations of meeting new friends	9	10	Pleased because of experiences of meeting new friends	48	54

pleased about the expectations of being involved with other people and activities, but a small number actually reported having found pleasure in this. As was stated earlier, according to student comments, this was more a dislike of "other people", rather than of other activities. Second, a very small number of grade six students were looking forward to changing their friendship patterns, but over half of them did. Students indicated great pleasure at making new friends and little regret at severing ties with old ones. Third, whereas less than twenty percent of grade six children expressed pleasure at the expectation of feeling more mature

in junior high school, fifty-five percent of them were[?]
pleased about feeling more mature a year later.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present research focused on students' perspectives of their transition from elementary to junior high school. By way of summarizing this research, the task of the present chapter is to give a brief overview of the theoretical orientation, the research method, and the research findings. In addition, theoretical and practical implications of the research are outlined and suggested directions for future research in this area are noted.

Theoretical Orientation

The purpose of this research has been to focus on a particular sociological dimension of the transition from elementary to junior high school. An interactional framework has been adopted to help us delve more deeply into the life of the school as perceived by students. One of the values of examining school transfer by means of the interactionist's perspective has been to help us to get closer to some resolutions of the complex questions of "how", and "with what consequences", students experience the transition period. For, unless one can understand the transition period from the students' point of view, the nature and outcome of the teaching-learning process at the junior high school level will not be completely understood. It is necessary, perhaps, to

emphasize that one is dealing with students' perceptions. In other words, one is fully aware that students' views regarding the transition period might not accurately describe the objective reality of the classroom. But, at the same time, one must realize that students' beliefs and interpretations are important, since this subjective reality will undoubtedly influence students' attitudes and behaviour.

The most fundamental proposition of the symbolic interactionist perspective is that distinctively human behaviour and interaction is carried out through the medium of symbols and their meanings. This becomes clear when one realizes that man inhabits two different worlds, the natural world, where he experiences drives and instincts and where the external world exists independently of him, and the social world, where the existence of symbols, such as language, enable him to assign meanings to objects. A symbol is a stimulus which has learned meanings and value for people. Mead's identification of two forms or levels of interpretation, that is, of symbolic and non-symbolic interaction, are important to one's understanding of the symbolic interactionist orientation. In non-symbolic interaction, humans respond directly to one another without interpretation. In symbolic interaction they interpret each others' gestures and act on the basis of meanings yielded by those gestures.

The majority of all human interactions is symbolic, which means it involves interpretations. All participants in it have to build up their respective lines of conduct by

constant interpretation of each others' on-going lines of conduct. It is the interpretation that counts, as far as outcomes are concerned, and, in this case, peoples' thoughts and actions, not instincts nor simply the objective reality of the situation, are seen to be important.

The symbolic interactionist, therefore, is interested in the world of subjective meanings and the symbols by which they are produced and represented. In relating this to the present research one is led to see the importance of the student perspective in the classroom situation. From this perspective, students are seen as acting towards objects on the basis of the meanings that objects have for them. To derive those meanings they go through a process of interpreting, reinterpreting and defining their physical and social environments. They interpret, define and then organize their actions towards all social objects. In other words, their actions are organized according to their definition of the situation, which takes into account physical and social factors in the environment as well as their own physical and social states. Behavioral outcomes are based on the students' subjective reality and not on the actual objective reality of the situation. It is with this idea in mind that this research tries to understand what students experience in their transition from elementary to junior high school.

Research Methods

The research problem for this study was one of trying to understand how students, who are experiencing the trauma of adolescence, experience the transition from elementary to junior high school. In other words, this study has tried to sensitize educators to the expectations and experiences students have in this transition period.

Data on which this research is based are taken from responses to two student questionnaires and student interviews. To begin with, a questionnaire was administered to ninety students in late May of their grade six year. In the following year (early April) a similar questionnaire was administered to eighty-eight of the same students again, who were then completing their first year of junior high school. Questions on the grade six survey were aimed at finding out about student expectations of junior high school, whereas the grade seven survey asked questions directed at their actual experiences in the junior high school. In this way the researcher was able to obtain from students their expectations of and their experiences during the transition period. In both surveys, the questions were the same, except for the fact that one set was worded to elicit responses regarding expectations (Appendix 1) and the other for responses regarding experiences (Appendix 2).

Data analysis for the study was very similar for both the grade six survey and the grade seven follow-up survey. In

both cases, themes were drawn from student comments on the open ended questionnaires. Following this, a qualitative analysis, which was supplemented by some numbers and percentages, was then done on the various themes. Conclusions and implications for this study are subsequently based on the dominant themes in student comments.

Research Findings

Having given a comparison of children's expectations for, and their experiences at, the junior high school, the present task is to briefly recapitulate the main findings.

Turning first to student study and performance, three important conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, many students were not doing as well academically in grade seven as they had expected to do. Table 19 (Chapter V) shows that thirty-two percent of the children expected to do very well but, in grade seven, only sixteen percent reported that they were. Also, related to this forty-six percent of the respondents thought they would do better in grade seven than they had done in grade six, but only thirty percent reported to that effect.

Secondly, more students reported doing poorly in academics than had been expected from the grade six survey (Table 19). While in grade six, only two percent said they expected to do poorly whereas in grade seven, fifteen percent reported that they were. Also, only seven percent of the

grade six students said they expected to do less well than they had done in the grade six year, but at the end of grade seven, twenty-four percent reported that to be the case. Twenty-four percent said they were not doing as well as they had done in grade six.

Thirdly, the academic program in grade seven is, according to students' opinions, more difficult than they had expected. Table 19 reveals that none of them had expected more homework but twenty-one percent admitted that they did have more. Over sixty percent of grade six students thought that the academic program would be more difficult but over eighty percent found this to be so. And, further, twelve percent of the grade six students expected the academic program to be heavier because of more books, teachers and courses, but over three times that many reported this to be the reality.

Clearly, the academic program was expected to be heavier and more demanding but it proved to be even more demanding than students had expected. In addition, students were generally not meeting their own expectations in academics. Many students had expected to do "very well" but not many did and many of the seemingly slower students are performing less well than they had expected. In other words, there are more students doing poorly, or not doing as well as they had expected, than would have been suspected according to the grade six data.

One further comment is necessary regarding student study and performance expectations and experiences. Students generally dislike the academic aspects of schooling and react much more favourably to the social aspects of the program. However, this dislike of academics does not tend to lessen the importance of it in the minds of students. To do well academically is very important to most students and helps them to evaluate schooling positively. In other words, many children report having had a good year at school if they have done reasonably well academically (Tables 1 and 10).

With regards to student expectations of and experiences with teachers, as was pointed out in Chapter V, with the exception of the idea of maturity, student experiences with grade seven teachers were not very different from what students had expected them to be. According to student comments, it was most often expected that they would demand more academically, would be more strict, would not be easy to get to know and would not really be very different from elementary teachers. This is in fact how grade seven students found their teachers to be. Their experiences with teachers did coincide with their expectations of them (Table 20, Chapter V).

But, it is with the idea of being treated more maturely that student experiences did not coincide with their expectations. In this connection, only two grade six students said they expected to be treated more maturely by

teachers in grade seven, while in grade seven, forty-six percent of them reported that they were. As was suggested earlier, grade six students, being the oldest children in the school and being partly responsible for various aspects of school life, could not possibly imagine being treated more maturely in grade seven. While in grade seven, and being associated with activities more becoming to older students, they came to realize that many of the things they did in elementary were more suitable to younger children. Even though they were no longer the oldest, somehow or other that personal feeling of being "grown up" which dawns on adolescents at this time was reflected in their relationship with teachers. They actually saw themselves as being more mature and they saw the teachers as treating them so.

Except for saying that students expected and found that parents demanded more from them academically during the seventh grade, the most dominant theme regarding parents relates to the idea of being confident or concerned about the transition period. To summarize these findings it is noted that the number of parents who were reported by children to be worried about the transition increased during the grade seven year, whereas the number who were confident and not worried decreased during that same period (Table 21, Chapter V). This increase of concern for children during the first year of the transitional period is, according to student comments, due mainly to two factors: academics and

and influence from older children. Such concern on the part of parents is probably warranted due to the large number of students in the school and the very large age range of students involved.

With regard to extra-curricular activities two important points may be made. First, during the first year of junior high school less students were involved in arts and music activities than were expected from the grade six data and second, the number of children who were not involved in any extra-curricular activities is greater in grade seven than was expected (Table 22). Since there was little change in the number of children involved in sports and other activities between grade six and grade seven, it is not easy to account for the decreased participation in arts and music activities, nor was it expected that over twenty percent of grade seven students would not be involved in any extra-curricular activities. According to student comments, one explanation for this is that because of the increased emphasis on the academic program, many students, as well as their parents, felt it more important to keep extra activities at a minimum especially for the first year of junior high school. This seems to be a very likely explanation for the decreased participation in this aspect of the curriculum and, it could indicate the high concern for academics evidenced in this research. Another possible reason, as was explained in Chapter V, has to do with the difficulties connected with the adjustment period in the

new school.

In the area of friends and friendship groups two important conclusions need to be drawn. One conclusion is that many grade six students expected to maintain old friendship groups and not many expected to make new friends at the junior high school. But, the grade seven data shows this not to be the case (Table 23). Another point is that during grade six only a small number of children and their friends were pleased to move to the junior high school because they hoped to make new friends. This number increased considerably in the grade seven survey, thereby suggesting that new friendships played a much more important part in the first year of junior high school than students had expected. Making new friends seemed to be very much a part of the high level of excitement associated with the new school.

A final area of consideration in this summary of findings is that of student emotions regarding the transition period. Table 24 shows the main focus of student excitement regarding the transition. One general statement that can be made about the findings on student excitement is that at the end of the grade seven year, students were more excited about their experiences with new friends and their feeling of being mature, than they had expected to be, whereas experiences with other people (older students who are not friends) and activities caused them to be less excited than they had

expected. In other words, whereas, in the grade six data, the main source of excitement was the new people and activities they expected to be involved with, at the end of grade seven this still high level of excitement can be largely attributed to having experienced new friends and a feeling of being mature. The importance of both of these trends was mentioned earlier. As for the reduced level of excitement about being with older children, it was pointed out in Chapter V that many of the grade seven students expressed concern about their affiliation with them.

Regarding children's worries about the transition period, the data indicate a relatively high level of concern both in the grade six and grade seven data for the influences of older children. But, an important point here is the large number of children in grade seven who are worried about academics. The percentage increased from about fifteen percent in grade six to well over seventy percent in grade seven. It is obvious that the academic program is seen by students to be very demanding on them. It is an area of student perception which needs to be investigated by both the teachers at the elementary school as well as those at the grade seven level.

A final area of student emotions, that of student pleasure with regards to the transition period, is also worthy of note. According to grade six data, a relatively small number of students were pleased to be moving because they were expecting to meet new friends or because they thought

they would feel more mature. However, this was not realized the following year. Over fifty percent of grade seven students derived a great deal of pleasure both from meeting new friends and from feeling more mature. Conversely, from our grade six data, over forty percent expressed pleasure at the expectation of being involved with new people and activities at the junior high school. But, interestingly enough, at the end of the grade seven year, only twelve percent felt this way. It has already been said that, according to student responses, this decreased pleasure was because of their relationship with older children in the school and not with school activities as such. In this connection, it has been pointed out that grade seven students expressed concern for the undesirable influences of older students in the school. This idea was also prominent when students talked about their parents' concerns for them.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical stance of the present research suggests the need for greater appreciation of the students' definition of schooling. In educational writings, it is the child centered theorists who have come closest to this approach, largely because of their concern to treat students as persons. But, the switch to the student perspective is often difficult for teachers, since it is a natural tendency to look at problems of teaching and learning from their own

perspective and on the basis of their own assumptions. The complexities of student-teacher interrelations are such that they demand strong and continuous efforts from teachers and students to understand each other's views on all dimensions of schooling. Concerning the student perspective of schooling, the following points merit some consideration.

Since behaviour is forged by the student out of what he/she perceives, interprets and judges, those studying teaching-learning situations must focus on the perspectives of all participants, teachers and students alike. Focusing specifically on the transition from elementary to junior high school, for example, the student perspective is at the core of understanding the social and psychological complexities of this phase of schooling. It is necessary to be aware that, in the day-to-day activity in the classroom, the meanings that students assign to all social objects in the environment, are not always those that the teacher intended. Teachers should not assume that students understand or accept the teacher's definition in situations dealing with the demands of school work, the relationships with family and friends or with student emotions generally.

This idea becomes more evident when one considers the concept of student "careers". As was explained in chapter two, the term "career" needs to be viewed as being two-sided. One side is linked with internal matters held closely and dearly by an image of self and felt identity. It is private. The

other side concerns an official position, and is, in part, the public aspect. In looking at the careers of teachers and/or students the public and the private aspects are obvious. For example, we view a student as a member of a grade six class, of a grade seven class, and so on up through the grades. One observes how a particular student operates within a particular role, but one cannot really understand the subjective reality connected with that career, unless the student reveals his thoughts to us. When one views student careers "objectively" he/she misses the personal and "subjective" aspect of them.

The subjective career is the interactionists' focus, and allows one to see a person's awareness of a particular sequence of events, associated with a particular identity. The student's subjective career is his/her personal view of these happenings as they relate to important features in his/her life. When activated in a social situation, this subjective career influences outlook and behaviour. Put into the context of this research, this means that students, in the process of recognizing events in the transitional period, interpret them as well. This results in meanings and definitions which influence their actions. It is impossible for teachers to know why students behave in a certain manner unless they have some understanding of what meaning that situation had for those students.

The grade seven students in this study have entered a new "status passage" in their careers. They have had to

establish themselves in a new situation; they had to interpret and define new situations relating to new physical surroundings, new teachers, new classroom structures and even new friends. In short, they had to learn to cope in a new situation while, at the same time, maintaining and preserving a desired image of self. The "subjective" reality of these students in transition needs to be understood. There is a need for a greater appreciation, on the part of educators, for the subjective careers of such students. What is being suggested here is that a symbolic interactionist approach alerts us to the possibility that the student perspective might usefully be taken into consideration in attempts to explain the problems of adjustment associated with the transition from elementary to junior high school.

Practical Implications

Educators have a wealth of information on students' achievement and reading levels in grade six and seven, but know very little about how they perceive the schooling process during the transition period. Since learning is often a result of the interaction between the student and his environment, it is readily apparent that we must know more about educational environments to better understand the learning process. One of the more critical periods of schooling is the transition from elementary to junior high school. While students' achievement is often assessed before

and after the introduction of the new program, the students' expectations or experiences of the new school environment is rarely ever assessed. Yet, the institutional impact of the transfer is a legitimate and necessary concern. How do students' perceptions of school change as a result of the transition? How does one's perception of oneself change? Are one's new peer relationships the cause of one's poor academic performance? These are the kinds of questions that educators need to ask, but because measures of pupil perspectives on schooling have been lacking, these questions, even though they have been asked, have been unanswered. Without information on student perceptions of the school environment, the teachers' view of the pupil is one dimensional and static.

The results obtained from this and similar studies can make the teachers' picture of students more complete. Students' perceptions of their transition experiences can help the teacher identify classroom activities and attitudes that are likely to facilitate or hinder learning. By assessing students' perceptions of the environment, an elementary junior-high school survey can help measure the consequences between many school objectives and practices. Such an instrument can indicate to teachers and administrators the strengths and weaknesses of current programs. By providing information on student worries, alienation, interests and friendships, it can be helpful for improving

decision making, for helping students with specific problems and for establishing priorities for change.

The findings drawn from this research suggest the following practical implications:

1. Since so many children are concerned and worried about the grade seven academic program, educators would be wise not to let this continue without being investigated. The academic expectations at the grade six and grade seven level must be re-evaluated. Efforts by educators in this area could eliminate unnecessary worry and frustration which children might be experiencing during the transition year and this, in turn, could help alleviate some of the problems that occur with unmotivated and frustrated junior high students.

2. Educators would do well not to overlook the high degree of parental concern for their children who are placed in a school with a large number of much older students. Neither can we underestimate the influence of older students on the lives of eleven and twelve year olds, who are telling us their own fears and worries about their school associations.

3. We cannot assume that the formation of new friendship groups will not affect students socially as well as academically. Because, according to this study, many students changed their friends in junior high school, teachers must be aware of potential behavioral changes and must be alert to the presence and the powerful influence of the peer group.

4. Remembering the high level of excitement, and the sudden strong feeling of maturity which was evidenced in this study, educators ought to remember that early adolescence is a very special, but yet a very difficult, time for students. Because these students are trying to cope with the transition to a new school at the same time as they are learning to live with physical and psychological changes in their own bodies, changes in behavioral patterns often occur. As educators, we must be cognizant of this and endeavour to help them through a transition which occurs, through no fault of theirs, at a difficult period in their lives.

Future Research

One of the objectives of this study has been to emphasize the need for research into the student perspective. Rich stores of information await future investigation and analysis along those lines. It must be remembered that school is more than just an institutional factory where teachers mold their products and where the products to be (the students) resist that molding process. It is perhaps, more importantly, an institution where a human drama - the uncertainty, the joy, the frustration, decisions based on superficial information, laughter, a need for identity are all played out every day. The importance of schooling, especially during the transition period in question, lies,

not so much in the ends that are reached, but more importantly, in the process associated, both directly and indirectly with those ends.

In general, research on students in classrooms has opened up important avenues for inquiry into how classroom processes affect students' development and learning. Some examples of such were mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis. On the basis of our inquiry and findings for this research, future endeavours might consider some of the following directions:

- (1) Research on student perspectives on the elementary-junior high transition period needs to be done in the classroom by classroom teachers. But, since this is such a natural environment, the researcher needs to be aware of all the factors that might influence or bias the results.

- (2) There is a need to find out how teachers can actually use information on the students' perceptions of transition. That is, how can such knowledge help teachers to improve the transition period.

- (3) Future research ought to be of a conceptual rather than a prescriptive nature. Such findings will encourage teachers to think about how they define processes in the classroom and what they can do to help students.

- (4) It is necessary to examine more closely our methods of ascertaining student perceptions and thought. Future research might aim to integrate student, teacher and observer views of the transition period.

(5) There is a need to find out how children from various socio-economic backgrounds experience the transfer from one school to another.

(6) In the present study, children moved from elementary to junior high school within the same community. One might well ask, How do students from small communities who are bussed to a larger centre experience the transition period?

(7) Future research should try to better understand the transition period by finding out how the academic and social development of the child is affected by (a) changes in friendships and peer groups; (b) influence from older children in the school; (c) changes in self concept resulting from the adjustment during the transition period.

Future research along these lines needs to be guided by an awareness that in order for students to make a successful transition into junior high school, the student perspective must be considered, and in so doing one must look beyond the factors of intelligence and motivation to the social influences at work in the school. In this way, the whole transition period will be seen as one in which a complex interplay of social as well as psychological processes occur.

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APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1

Grade VI Elementary School Questionnaire

I am interested in learning as much as I can about your expectations of Junior High School. Please respond to each of these questions giving as much information as you are able.

1. Are you excited? Why or why not?

2. What do you think you will miss about this school?

3. Are you worried? Why or why not?

4. What do you expect to find different at the Junior High School?

5. Do you think there will be a difference in the way you will have to study?

6. Do you think your parent's expectations of you will be different? How?

7. Do you think teachers will be different? How?

8. How do you expect to do in your courses?

9. Do you think your grades will be better than, worse than or about the same as this year? Why?

10. What extra-curricular activities will you get involved in?

11. Will your new school affect your relationship with your friends? Explain.

12. What have you enjoyed most about this school? What have you enjoyed least?

13. Are you pleased to be moving? Why or why not?

14. Do you think your friends are pleased? Explain.

15. How do your parents (or family) feel about your move?

16. Do you feel you had a good final year at this school?
Why or why not?



Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2

Grade VII Junior High School Questionnaire

I am interested in learning as much as I can about your junior high school experiences. Please respond to the following questions giving as much information as you are able.

1. Are you excited about being in junior high school? Why or why not?

2. What have you missed about your previous school since coming to the junior high school?

3. Is there anything at junior high school that causes you to worry? Explain.

4. What did you expect to find different at junior high school and did you actually find what you expected?

5. Are there any differences in the way you are expected to study in grade seven compared with study expectations in grade six?

6. Have your parents' expectations of you changed since you came to junior high school? If so, how have they changed?

7. Are the junior high school teachers different from those you had at elementary school? Give details.

8. How are you doing in your courses this year?

9. Are your grades better than, worse than, or about the same as last year? Why have they changed, or why have they remained the same?

10. What extra-curricular activities are you involved in?

11. Has your new school affected your relationship with your friends you had last year? Explain how.

12. What are you enjoying most at this school? What are you enjoying least?

13. Are you pleased to be in junior high school? Why or why not?

14. Are your friends pleased to be here? What indications do you have that they are or are not?

15. How do your parents and family feel about your being in junior high school?

16. Do you feel you have had a good first year at this school. Explain fully.

17. Give the name of the school you attended last year?

Thank you.



