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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1978

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONDITIONS WHICH INFLUENCE A TEACHER IN INITIATING CONTACT WITH PARENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Gerald Martin Mager, A.B., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1978

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Adviser
Faculty of Curriculum and Foundations
to Mom and Dad
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a dissertation can be a very lonesome task. Ultimately the pain and pleasure are the researcher's. It has a way of steeling the individual. Perhaps that is intended as part of the educative process. Still, this work has only been possible because of the contributions of others. I wish here to acknowledge their help.

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research to advise, console, and teach me; she, too, broke through the isolation.

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CHAPTER 1
HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS AND THE
ROLE OF THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

The Partnership Ethic

The relationships between teachers and the parents of school youngsters have always been an important concern of those two parties, of the youngsters themselves, and of the larger professional community. This concern grows from the recognition that if the best developmental experiences are to be afforded the youngsters, then parents and teachers will not only have to recognize each other's contribution toward that end but will also have to coordinate their efforts. The parent-teacher relationship is often felt to be pivotal in providing for the full education of children and adolescents. It is not surprising, then, that the relationship has been the subject of much writing and serious study. Teachers in preparation and in service are exhorted to work in tandem with the home. Popular family magazines encourage parents to communicate openly and frequently with the school. Both parties are reminded regularly of the interdependent nature of their roles in the cause of youth. There exists, among all parties, a partnership ethic.
Societal Influences on the Partnership

Through the early periods of American education, parent-teacher relationships were influenced by attributes of the educational establishment. In times when the schoolmaster was paid with room and board, parents and the teacher associated regularly. Small school enrollments made it likely that the teacher would know each younger and the younger's parents. Brothers and sisters worked their ways up through the curricular years having many of the same teachers. When teachers were local residents as well, their knowledge of families and family histories was an additional source of information in home-school matters.

Another attribute of the educational system which influenced parent-teacher relationships was the close community governance of the local school. Standards for curriculum and instruction were set. Norms, and sometimes rules, for teacher behavior were set. Less apparent, but equally operant, were norms for parent behavior toward the school. Close community governance had a stabilizing effect on parent-teacher relationships.

Yet another interwoven attribute of the system which affected relationships was the frequent match between the ethnic or cultural heritage of the teacher and the youngsters taught. "Knowing" the values and value systems, the aspirations, and the beliefs of the community, and holding them as one's own gave the teacher a context in which to define respective roles with the parent—a context in which
it was likely that a complementary relationship could be formed. Thus, historically there were several attributes of the educational establishment that potentially enhanced parent-teacher relationships.

Even with these attributes working in their favor, however, parents and teachers were not always able to mold a constructive partnership. MacConnell (in Arndt & Bowles, 1947) described the patterns of parent-teacher relationships in the Nineteenth Century as similar across the nation:

Certain families appear to have been extremely negligent, even hostile toward the school. Then again there were citizens embued with an unshakable faith in the school and in its living embodiment, the schoolmaster.

Even under conducive circumstances, a constructive partnership was not always formed. As the worlds of parents and teachers became more complex, the partnership was even less likely. MacConnell went on to state:

From 1880 until 1915, the parents' role, so far as it related to the schools, was to pay their taxes, to send their children to school, and, by staying away from the school, to give school authorities elbow room. . . . At the turn of the century and even up to the time of the First World War, a parent was rarely seen inside an American schoolhouse or in any of its classrooms. (pp. 1-2)

Changes in the nation at the turn of the century complicated the picture. Massive immigration filled the schools with children who spoke two languages: one at home and the other at school. Parents and teachers, however, were not usually so fitted, and cultural differences became points of stress. Intense industrialization thrust the labor force
into a machine world; the artistry of journeymen and masters gave way to the skills of the technician. Vocational training replaced the crumbling apprenticeship model. Once again, schools grew in complexity. Social reform movements, designed to meet the demands of cultural adaptation, economic diversification, and new political acuity, sprang from countryside and city street. And if the schools were not themselves the instigators of reform, they were soon affected by its presence. New curricula, new patterns of organization, new philosophies seemed to make education a matter of import beyond the purview of the local school. It was becoming a professional enterprise, an enterprise unto itself. If the basis of a constructive partnership had ever existed on a broad scale, it seems to have slipped away as the nation changed, and as education and its common school became more formal, less subject to local influence, and pedagogically more astute.

Divergent Paths of the Layman and the Professional

The understanding had developed that the paths of the layman and the professional part at the schoolhouse door. Parent-teacher relationships grew into home-school relations and school-community relations. To some this separation was both purposeful and healthy; others argued strongly against it. Writing in 1923, a Texas schoolman chided parents for their lack of concern:
There are too many people who believe—or appear to believe—that schools can succeed on money alone. They appear to think that the school has received all the support that is necessary when it has been voted a sufficient tax on which to operate. They never go inside the doors of a schoolhouse nor give any thought to how the schools are conducted. . . . But money will not pay the entire debt they owe the school. (Moore, M. E. p. 44)

Chastized, the parental public was called on to take an active interest in the schooling of their youngsters. But the appeal of the Texas schoolman and the similar appeals of other citizens did not resolve the problem. How to involve parents in the increasingly complex schools, and indeed, whether they should be involved, were points still at issue.

To some professionals, involvement meant granting parental sanction for the actions of the profession. A 1932 report of a White House Conference on Child Health and Protection included just that sentiment:

The essential element here, as in all school-home relationships, is the home's confidence in the school's knowledge and actions. (Reeve, p. 42)

And though the passage continued on to speak of the consequent responsibilities laid upon the school, it was clear where lay also the expertise and authority in education.

Writing in the same year, Waller (1932) criticized the call for sanction and questioned the extent to which the two parties could work together:

Parent-teacher work has usually been directed at securing for the school the support of parents, that is, at getting parents to see children more
or less as teachers see them. But it would be a sad day for childhood if parent-teacher work ever really succeeded in its object. The conflict between parents and teacher is natural and inevitable, and it may be more or less useful. (p. 69)

Waller suggested that the rift between home and school, between parent and teacher, was founded not so much in the alienation engendered by the exercise of professional muscle in the operation of the schooling enterprise, nor in public lassitude toward school matters, but in a natural enmity. Even though guided by a common interest in the youngster, parents and teachers "usually live in a condition of mutual distrust. . . . The fact seems to be that parents and teachers are natural enemies, predestined each for the discomfort of the other" (p. 68). Their common interests in the youngster are expressed in very different forms. Teachers demonstrate their concern in one fashion, parents in another. Between these fashions there is a frequent mismatch. Conflicts arise.

The paths of parents and teachers had diverged. But the partnership ethic persisted. Laymen and professionals still believed they should work together. By Waller's estimate, the chances for a constructive parent-teacher partnership were slim. But even he did not underestimate the potential impact of such a corporation:

If parents and teacher could meet often enough and intimately enough to develop primary group attitudes toward each other, and if both parents and teachers might have their say unreservedly, such modifications of school practice and parental upbringing might take place as would revolutionize the life of children everywhere. (p. 69)
Toward the development of that partnership many professionals began to direct their efforts. Though the issue of "natural enmity" had not been resolved, professionals and laymen alike yet held to the partnership ethic. Considerable efforts were undertaken to show that parents and teachers could coordinate their actions toward the enhancement of a youngster's education.

Efforts Toward the Building of a Partnership

Recognizing that the partnership was too important to be overlooked, and recognizing that a "natural partnership" was unlikely to emerge, professionals began to address themselves to plans upon which a partnership could be formulated. Such designs ranged from the philosophic to the practical. Each contributed in its own way to furthering the cause of the parent-teacher relationship.

Early Steps Toward the Partnership

Only three years after Waller's book, Baldwin and Osborne published Home-School Relations--Philosophy and Practice (1935). Four levels of parent involvement in the work of schooling were outlined, ranging from limited participation in child problem situations to participation in the governance of the school. The theoretical framework is doubly interesting because it was based on an analysis of six schools described in the first half of the book. The
theory emerged from a study of practice, practice which demonstrated effective home-school partnerships. Still the authors recognized that most schools did not function at a high level of parent involvement. Speaking of the types of more-limited participation:

Our traditional ways of doing things and the lack of preparation of parents to take more responsibility both stand in the way of a more complete relationship. . . . And, indeed, there are many intelligent and thoughtful educators and parents who feel that [a limited] degree of interaction is more desirable than a thoroughgoing one. (p. 110)

If the parents were not prepared to take greater responsibility, then it was probably also true the "traditional ways of doing things" had not encouraged teachers and other educational personnel to involve the layman. D'Evelyn's monograph, Individual Parent-Teacher Conferences (1945), recognized that teachers would have to develop new skills if they were to move beyond traditional practice. The monograph addressed the skills of parent counseling, which was seen as a new role for teachers. The conference was presented as an important schooling event. Both conferencing and parent-counseling may have been a part of teacher practice for some time, though called by different names and practiced informally. But with the recognized need for broad scale improvement in home-school relations, it had become useful to define and formalize practices. Thus, the popularity of D'Evelyn's work, which seems amazingly current, was understandable.
The National School Public Relations Association, "Founded in 1935 to serve primarily as an exchange for good public relations ideas" (1951, inside front cover), published *It Starts in the Classroom--A Public Relations Handbook for Classroom Teachers* containing such chapters as "Making Parents Partners," and "Serving to be Served." New roles were being defined and exemplified, roles which would bring parents into the schools and take teachers into the community. Published in 1951, this handbook was one of many such guides designed to generate interest in and disseminate ideas about the practice of parent-teacher relationships.

The 1950's and 1960's were marked by the appearance of individual books, and annual publications like the National School Public Relations Association's *Public Relations Gold Mine* series. Constantly, the problem of home-school cooperation was thrust into the public and professional arenas. Each work described an aspect of the problem and moved to a discussion of its resolution.

Hymes' *Effective Home-School Relations* (1953) recognized the erosion of the historical bases for relationships:

> It is clear that there is not a oneness of thinking about children and about education that youngsters need. For years the growing complexity of our society has steadily pulled our homes and schools away from each other. (p. v)

And his resolution:

> Parents and teachers have had to create an instrument--we call it home-school relations--to link home and school together. This is our man-made bridge, a modern invention that tries . . . to achieve a unity that once came naturally. (p. 2)
Again, teachers and parents were called into a relationship, requiring new roles, based on a new character of education and society.

Osborne, who had in 1935 described the levels of parent participation, in 1959 described what still amounted to "a state of armed neutrality":

All too many parents feel uncomfortable with or even antagonistic toward their children's teachers. Teachers, too, rarely feel for parents the warmth and cooperative spirit that people working toward the same goal might be expected to feel. (p. 1)

Nearly twenty-five intervening years had not seen appreciable progress, in spite of the considerable effort that had been made. Osborne might well have agreed with Mok (1964) in

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1While in America the struggle with the problem of how to involve parents in the schools continues, it would seem that the British are faced with a more extreme problem of values. McGeeney's 1969 book, entitled Parents Are Welcome, describes the vehemence with which teachers and the schools reject the concept of home-school interaction.

You don't necessarily have to meet the head to find out the sort of welcome you are likely to receive. Outside on the wall, for instance, "Only Parents of Nursery Children Are Allowed in this Playground," and underneath, a translation in Greek, presumably of this injunction. On the first door inside was a further notice: "Parents Are Not Allowed Past These Doors."

When I asked the nursery school headmistress the reason for these notices, she explained apologetically that the head of the Juniors upstairs did not want parents on the premises but that under pressure he had acquiesced in allowing nursery school parents into the yard. Hence the notice at the school gates. The schoolkeeper, however, had complained that some parents persisted in crossing the threshold when they turned up at the end of the day to collect their children. Hence the second notice.

What was disquieting about this affront to the neighbourhood which the school served was that it [To be continued on next page.]
the statement: "The cold war between home and school has been amplified, each side blaming the other, and the result is stalemate" (p. 195).

More Recent Steps and Parent Activism

In the 1960's, the advent of massive federal funding for public school programs brought with it new efforts toward a partnership. Local control of schools, at least as accomplished through community advisory boards, was emphasized and often tied as a requirement to project grants. In part

[continued]

should ever have been allowed to happen under an authority which says in one of its publications: "Cooperation and goodwill between parents and teachers is so important that no effort should be spared to make it as normal and necessary a part of the educational process as attendance at school." What made it worse was the fact that the parents locally were predominantly immigrant whose command of the English language was less than basic and whose knowledge of our education system was negligible. (p. 5)

McGeeney is quick to point out that similar conditions are just as much characteristic of affluent neighborhood schools.

In a following section, a brief comparison is made between British schools and their American counterparts, emphasizing that on the west side of the Atlantic, "it is felt that the school belongs to the local community, which has a real say in what goes on" (p. 8).

Interestingly, in the general preparation for the conduct of the present study, this researcher visited several American schools. On the main door to one of the buildings was posted a sign:

Parents: Please wait outside of building when picking up children at dismissal time.

McGeeney's observations immediately came to mind.
this was a response to the demands of minority groups within large school bureaucracies to have their particular educational needs addressed by the schools. In part it responded to communities everywhere who felt separated from but subject to "the System." This resurgence of local governance provided some basis for improved parent-teacher relationships. School and community groups came together to address immediate concerns: administrative policies, curriculum reform, student welfare. But interaction also built understanding among groups and individuals about values, aspirations, beliefs, and heritage.

Even in the very effort to encourage the relationship, however, some professionals displayed the same naivete that lies at the heart of the parent-teacher relationship puzzle. Heffernan and Todd published their *Elementary Teacher's Guide to Working with Parents* in 1969. In the book, it is recommended that teachers get to know their communities. The authors described the experience of one fictional teacher as she learned about the community in which she was a teacher.

The Friday afternoon that Miss Young saw Mary minding her baby brother, she got into home life that she had never imagined. Fortunately she had changed to a pair of walking shoes and had put her gloves in her moneyless purse, thus reducing the social distance between herself and Mary's people. She was sincerely appreciative of Mary as a girl who liked school and did her best. She found it easy to sit down on the solid part of the porch step, ignore the baby's stained clothing, and enjoy the baby's smile. Presently she was in the kitchen talking about school with Mary's mother and using the folding pocketknife from her purse to help Mary's mother peel potatoes for supper. (p. 27)
Such a basic misunderstanding as was set here as a model of acceptance evidences the extent to which differences between parents and teachers may exist. Far from the homogeneity of the past, schools have become settings for cultural clashes. Even as they struggle more vigorously for good rapport, parents and teachers can move further apart. If one were to take Heffernan and Todd's work as representative, it would seem that the key for any constructive relationship had eluded professional grasp. Of course, not all works were so poorly conceived.

The 1960's have produced a number of works which have had the effect of bringing a new understanding of the parent-teacher relationship to the fore. Lortie's sociological study of the profession, Schoolteacher (1975), is literary kin to Waller's The Sociology of Teaching, quoted above. Like Waller, Lortie explored the reasons why the parent-teacher relationship is not more uniformly constructive. Curiously, it is the interdependent nature of their roles which Lortie cited as a root of conflict. For while this interdependency may give rise to cooperation, it also restricts autonomy, leaving the professional at the mercy of parental whim. An implicit understanding has taken hold in professional ranks that "if teachers initiate contact parents should come, but other visits are 'interruptions.' The teacher is the gatekeeper. . . . Teachers, in sum, want the parent to be a 'distant assistant'" (pp. 190-1).
O'Dwyer (1977) drew on his personal experiences as a classroom teacher to write his "Classroom Collage: One Perspective." The section he devoted to the role of parents presents a picture of how one teacher sees the world:

Almost inadvertently an operational program creeps into existence. By mid-November I surface to the reality of parent conferences: I have twenty-three sets of parents to please, as well as the principal, the project director, the Governing Board and the State ECE Monitor and Review Team. Parents' reactions are mixed. Stacy's mom thinks I work the kids too hard; Peter's parents want to see more papers coming home. The Allens want more music and craft. The Steinmuns want more nutrition education. Missy's mom is so glad that I'm a man teacher; Tina's wants to know what happened to Miss Hoover.

My role during these conferences is almost political. I try to inform and encourage the parents about their children, while mollifying their concerns about the program. Usually the conferences result in little change; a tally of comments from twenty-three different families rarely provides sufficient basis for program revision. (p. 53)

Whether from the perspective of an individual practitioner or from the reports of practitioners as a group, it would seem that their relationships with parents continue to be a source of concern and some misgiving.

Each school year new issues arise which threaten "well-established" relationships. Desegregation, teacher militancy, declining test scores and accountability, high youth unemployment, rejected school levies, and controversial curricula are among the debates which now face professionals and laymen, debates beyond the more perennial issues like methods for reporting student progress, school discipline,
and selected instructional methods. Consistently, publications place emphasis on the need to "build" the partnership, and increasingly, such publications are addressed to parents, calling them to take an initiating role in establishing and maintaining the relationship.

Bell's *Active Parent Concern* (1976) is typical of the new wave of guidebooks which attempt to increase parental understanding of schools and school functioning. Out of this increased understanding, it is projected, will come heightened interest, increased participation, and finally, improved education.

Don't let a communication gap exist insofar as the vital problem of educating your child is concerned. Strive to meet the teacher more than half way in exchanging information and offering suggestions. But make sure that there is regular communication so your home and the classroom offer mutually supporting activities in accomplishing the serious task of educating your child. (p. 63)

The 1960's have provided willing parents with an array of such reading, most of which calls on parents to assume new responsibility in the workings of schools. Not all of the reading, however, has been prepared by people in the educational community: *How to Help Your Child Get the Most Out of School* was written by a child psychiatrist working with a journalist. Understandably, "the solid scientific wisdom in [the book] is dispensed in family-sized prescriptions" (Chess, with Whitbread, 1974, p. vii). And not all of the reading now assaulting the parental public is as constructive in its approach. Buskin's *Parent Power--A Candid Handbook*
for Dealing with Your Child's School (1975) contains chapter subtopics such as "What to Do When Your Child's Teacher Is a Lemon," and a badly biased view of "What It's Like in Suburban Seventh Grade."

Ryan's The Open Partnership--Equality in Running the Schools (1976), though more scholarly in tone, presents a much more useful guide for cooperative effort. It is directed at both the lay and professional publics, and does not limit itself to the consideration of traditional roles for parents, teachers, and administrators. In discussing the problems incumbent in the home-school relationship, the book presents a thoughtful perspective, and encourages the search for lateral solutions to the perennial dilemmas.

This book by Ryan, those works addressed to the parental community, and works addressed to the professional attempt to deal with an increasingly complex task. Clearly, parent-teacher relationships are not the pet interest of some isolated few. On the contrary, concern about the relationship has taken its place in the lifespace of educational practitioners, theorists, and laymen alike.

Research Steps Toward Better Understanding and Design

In the 1960's another kind of literature became available toward the understanding of parent-teacher relationships. Reports of research increased measurably as educators sought to examine more closely beliefs held about the home-school
partnership. These reports moved consideration of the phenomenon beyond the limitations of personal wisdom which had been the chief source of guidance up to that time. And though not all the studies merit the confidence that could be awarded some bits of personal insight, they do shed a different light on parent-teacher relationships.

Research in Home-School Relations

Parent-teacher associations, as arbiters of the home-school relationship, have been a focus in several studies. For example, Howe (1959), in a study limited to six schools, found that there were differences, some serious, between parents and teachers in judgments about the major educational problems they faced. Included in the list were school-community relations, methods of teaching, courses of study and teacher-pupil relations. Also of note was the expressed feeling of some teachers that the parent-teacher association "could be more effective in promoting dynamic relations." Splawn (1966) surveyed the public school superintendents of Oklahoma, and found a similar view taken toward the activities of the Oklahoma parent-teacher associations. Royce (1965), in a still more recent study of one school system in California, concluded, among other things, that the parent-teacher associations of that district had "an inflexible structure problem." These studies and others form a new view of the parent-teacher association, a traditional and widely used bridge in the home-school relations. The point
to be made is not that the association is less-than-effective, but that with research findings, professionals and laymen could bring new knowledge to bear on the actions of parent-teacher associations, and on the by now perennial problem of home-school relations.

Other studies brought different kinds of information to the fore. Diamond and House (1973) and Wood (1975), as the studies above with limited populations, found that there was considerable agreement between parents and teachers about the goals that should be pursued in elementary school programs. Welling (1974), however, found that though parents and teachers agreed on the role the home should fill in non-academic instructional concerns, there was significant disagreement about how well the home met that responsibility. Welling calls for improved communication, with educators taking the lead. Research continued to add to the understanding with which practitioners, theorists, and laymen could address the problems of home-school relations.

Research on the Effects of Parent Involvement

The 1960's may have witnessed the geometric increase in the study of home-school relations because the massive federal funding of educational programs that proceeded from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) mandated parental involvement in schools. Though that involvement varied widely, it provided a rich field from which research data could be gathered. Further, portions of the available
monies went to sponsor programs specifically designed to involve parents in the schools; assessment of the effects of that involvement was a natural next step. Of course, the research was not confined to funded programs, but generally did focus on program-like efforts in the field.

Many studies looked at the effects of parental involvement on the student. Schiff (1963) found the amount of

In addition to those studies cited in the text, others may be of interest. Wilmon (1967) concluded that active parent participation in Headstart programs, as adjudged by teacher descriptions, was significantly related to reading readiness. Terry (1970) found reading readiness in Headstart programs moderately related to parental participation in decision-making opportunities.

Niedermeyer (1969) found a strong positive relationship between parent-participation in the experiment, whether in a treatment or non-treatment group, and kindergarteners' reading achievement, when compared to two other comparison groups. Hahn (1974) reported short-term (ten week) significant gains in reading achievement related to the number of sessions of an instruction program attended by parents; but over a two-year period, the gains faded. Stabler (1969) found that four one-hour meetings held with parents produced no significant student reading achievement gains, but significantly more positive attitudes and more home support for reading activities.

Craig (1968) found a negative relationship between parent participation in reading improvement classes and seventh, eighth, and ninth graders' reading attitudes, skills, and habits. Mann (1974) found that while parent attitudes improved through participation in a "Math for Parents" workshop, their adolescent youngsters' attitudes were significantly lower than the control group scores; mathematics comprehension between the student groups showed no significant differences.
contact with parents, which was increased for a treatment group, was positively related to achievement gains in students' reading. MacLaren (1965) found that a parent information program at the early stages of a child's reading development was related positively to total reading achievement. Ryan (1964) found that a home-reading program which involved parents produced limited achievement gains in the treatment group when compared to the control group; however, the treatment group read more extensively. But not all types of programs produced expected results, as evidenced by DeLaurier's (1975) study, which found no reading achievement gains for fourth graders whose parents had participated in Adlerian study groups in child rearing.

Studies have also tied parent involvement to a student's attitude and behavioral performances. Schiff (1963) found that contacts between fifth grade parents and school personnel, when increased for the treatment group, related positively to increased student school attendance and a decreased number and intensity of student behavior problems. Duncan (1968) focused on the junior high school level and measured effects over a three-year period. He found very strong correlations between a one-hour meeting conducted by counselors for parents the summer before their youngsters entered junior high school and the youngsters' performances. The one-hour session was designed to encourage parent contacts with the school, and subsequent overt contacts with school officials actually were significantly more frequent.
for the treatment group. Students in the treatment group had higher school attendance, lower number of disciplinary referrals, higher grade point averages, and a lower dropout rate. Johnson (1974), though failing to find significant differences between control and treatment groups, found that students whose parents participated over a two-year period in Adult Basic Education classes consistently showed more positive performances in achievement, in attendance, and in school conduct.

As might be expected, parent involvement programs also have an impact on the adults—parents and teachers. Murk (1973) found that preservice teachers felt that their education had been enriched by the experience of making home visits; parents who participated in the program also registered positive attitudes. Pino (1965) and Harris (1970) both found that levels of information possessed by parents was related to their attitudes toward the school; Pino found that structured messages sent home could improve parent attitudes, and Harris found that with increased information about the school came increased interest in the school.

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3McGeeney (1969), in summarizing the importance of parents in the education of children, quotes from the Plowden Report (1966), an important review of the question conducted in Britain. It concludes:

The variation in parental attitudes can account for more of the variation in children's school achievement than either the variation in home circumstances or the variation in the state of the school (Vol. 2, p. 181).

(McGeeney, p. 32)
As early as 1961, Mara concluded that lay participation in curriculum study resulted in improved home-school relations and in added status for professionals in the community. Dromisky (1974), comparing schools in which parents were involved in curriculum development to those in which they were not, found significantly more favorable attitudes in parents toward the school, in teachers toward the principal and the community, and in students toward the teachers.


¹Interestingly, Gordon's description of the kinds of parent participation in compensatory education (pp. 27-8), is not much different from Baldwin and Osborne's 1935 description of the levels of participation found in six model schools (p. 104).
These, and other works like them, have emerged from a decade or so of experience and research with parent involvement that clearly indicates the value of such programs in terms of the educational experience of the youngsters, the functioning of the school, the personal development of parents and teachers.

In summary, starting in the 1960's, a body of research literature became available in the study of home-school relations. Though most of the studies are limited by time, the population, and the nature of parent involvement studied, results very consistently point to favorable outcomes. Clearly parent involvement holds some considerable promise for the improvement of home-school relations, student academic and behavioral performances, and even perhaps for parents' and teachers' personal development. It is not surprising that in the mid-1970's increased attention is being given to parent involvement programs as a tool in home-school relations.

The Research Gap--The Role of the Classroom Teacher

With the number of studies already conducted, it would seem that the research would have identified the important ingredients for developing home-school relations. Reference to two further studies, however, will help to point to at least one important ingredient that has been much overlooked. Bittle (1974) found that daily telephone calls from teachers to parents to relay academic information and non-academic
instructions resulted in classwide improvement in academic performance and a high rate of family compliance with non-academic instructions. Servetter (1972) studied the effects of positive messages from teachers to parents delivered through telephone calls, written notes, and home visits, over a six-month period. Though producing inconclusive objective findings, she subjectively judged, "The personal nature of teacher contacts with parents apparently resulted in increased self-value and self-worth on the part of the parents," and "the positive messages from teachers to parents reportedly established a bond and opened communication lines." In both, the teacher's role is described and is central to the measured treatment. The ingredient that has not been overlooked in these two studies is the key role the classroom teacher can play in home-school relations.

But the role of the classroom teacher in home-school relations has not been extensively studied, even when that relationship is described as "the parent-teacher relationship." When the classroom teacher has been involved, it has most typically been in the assessment of attitudes, values, or goals, compared to the parental community's attitudes, values, or goals, as in Wood (1975), Diamond and House (1973), and Mara (1961) above. Generally, the actions of the classroom teacher have gone unmarked. In the extensive studies of parent involvement programs, the focus has been in the program or its effects; the classroom teacher's part is often undifferentiated from others, if there was a specified
part at all. Only a few studies, for example, Schiff (1963), Murk (1973), and Niedermeyer (1969) cited above, along with the Bittle (1974) and Servetter (1972) studies, assign any pro-active role to the classroom teacher.

Organized programs for parent involvement have been shown to produce beneficial outcomes. But within these programs the classroom teacher is often ignored, or treated as a standard, predictable unit. Variation within the ranks of classroom teachers in the use of parent involvement has not been acknowledged. But that variance may be important. The National Education Association publication, *Parent Involvement: A Key to Better Schools* (1972), suggested that individual teacher differences may be important:

The program must be acceptable to all those who will be involved, and the parent involvement approach may not be best for everyone. If a teacher does not want parent volunteers, he should not be forced to have them. (p. 12)

Morris (1973), in a study of parental involvement in Project Head Start, concluded that an important factor which exerts a positive influence on involvement is a staff with strong, positive orientation to parents. Santry (1961), studying kindergarten teachers' public relations efforts, concluded, "The personality of the teacher is never to be disregarded in the assessment of a parent-teacher relationship program."

And Ferreira (1971), studying a community group's relationship with a local school, concluded that "a parent group can be a force for community cohesion, but affecting the
school requires the collaboration of teachers." Thus it would seem that the role of the classroom teacher could be critical, not only to the success of a program of parent involvement, but to the whole schema of home-school relations.

The Purpose of the Present Study

The role of the classroom teacher in developing home-school relations, whether through an organized program or through individual initiative, has gone largely unstudied. Research has not provided the knowledge about that role necessary for educators and laymen to act confidently in furthering the partnership. The present study is intended to begin developing that knowledge base.

Home-School Relations as a Function of Contact

The relationship between the home and the school is chiefly effected through contact. Parent contacts may be mediated or personal, frequent or infrequent, and formal or informal. Contacts may be initiated concerning a wide range of topics. The classroom teacher, as an agent of home-school relations, comes into contact with parents through three sources of contact initiation. Organized, school-sponsored programs or efforts such as report card, parent-teacher association activities, and school newsletters to which the teachers contribute are one source of contact; they are called school-initiated contacts. Parents themselves may initiate contact by sending notes to the teacher, stopping
by the school to see the teacher, or telephoning the teacher at home; these contacts and others are called parent-initiated contacts. The third source of contact initiation is the teacher. Teachers telephone parents, they prepare and send out class newsletters, they hold conferences, they make home visits, they send notes home; these and other examples in which a teacher, acting independently of a school-sponsored program or effort and independently of a parent action, makes contact with a parent, are called teacher-initiated contact.

Teacher-initiated contact, like school- and parent-initiated contact, may be direct or mediated; it may concern a particular student, or may be of a more general nature. The contact may be formal and well planned, or it may be casual and opportunistic. Unlike the other sources of contact, teacher-initiated contact represents an intentional act by the individual classroom teacher toward a parent or group of parents.

Teacher-initiated contact with parents has the potential for being a more frequent event than contact through school programs. It also has the possibility of being particularly suited to the style and circumstance of the individual teacher. Mok (1964) emphasized that "it is incumbent upon the teacher to make the first efforts toward building a close working relationship" (p. 112). And Rempson (1969) found that the more contacts initiated by the teacher, the more contacts the parents initiated. The types of contact
initiated by the parents were similar to the types initiated by the teacher. Placing a teacher in a pro-active stance may not only be necessary, but its effects may be geometric. The potential value of teacher-initiated contact in effecting home-school relations is great.

Every school day affords a new set of events about which teachers might contact parents. But teachers capitalize on only some of them. In light of the research on the value of parent involvement, one might expect consistent, and greater use of this tool by teachers. Smith (1971), in a study of parent involvement as perceived by teachers and principals, concluded that teachers and principals value involvement but their actual practices do not reflect this value. Sherman (1972), in an analysis of "effective teacher behavior" contained in critical incidents described by teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parent members of the school's governing body, developed eight categories of behaviors. Interestingly, "Teacher Develops Rapport with Parent" was ranked highest by all groups, but "Teacher Enlists Parents' Assistance" was consistently ranked lowest. There is a disparity between what is believed to be good practice and what is actually done.

**Conditions Which Influence Teacher-Initiated Contact**

The individual classroom teacher's response to the opportunity to initiate contact with a parent is important. These responses vary: some teachers contact parents more
than others; the same teacher will contact parents on one occasion and forego the opportunity on the next occasion. The variance is unexplained.

Seemingly, there are conditions which influence the classroom teacher to act in consonance with professed good practice, and there are conditions which militate against such action. "Conditions" are understood to be those elements of the teacher's background or experience which may influence his or her professional practice, such that contact with parents is promoted or discouraged. Hypothetically, such conditions could include, among others, the teacher's length of teaching experience, the physical characteristics of the teacher's school setting, the norms for parent contact operant in the teacher's school life, and the teacher's past experience with parents.

The Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of teacher-initiated parent contact and the conditions which influence teachers in their practice. It is hoped that the understanding of the role of this key agent in home-school relations--the classroom teacher--will be extended, and that the gap which now exists in professional knowledge will be narrowed.

Specifically, there are three questions for which the research should provide some answers:

a. What are the conditions which might influence a teacher in the initiation of parent contact?
b. How do practicing teachers view and organize the field of conditions?

c. Within this organization of the conditions, can profiles of teachers be developed which mark the differences between teachers with a high frequency versus teachers with low frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact?

The Design of the Present Study

In order to respond to the research questions, a design was set by which data could be generated and collected. Additionally, a method of analysis was selected which could fashion the data so as to render it usable in answering the research questions.

Definition of Terms

Several terms which already have been discussed are here defined more precisely.

Contact. Contact is any instance in which a teacher is brought into communication with a parent.

School-initiated contact. School-initiated contact is contact which occurs through an organized, school-sponsored program or effort.

Parent-initiated contact. Parent-initiated contact is contact which occurs through the initial effort of a parent or parents.
Teacher-initiated contact. Teacher-initiated contact is contact which occurs through the effort of the individual classroom teacher, acting independently of a school-sponsored program or parent action. Teacher-initiated contact represents an intentional act of communication by the teacher toward the parent or parents.

Condition. A condition is an element of a teacher's background or experience which may influence his or her practice such that contact with parents is promoted or discouraged.

The Procedure

A school district was identified that would cooperate in the study. From the elementary schools, grades 1 to 5, teachers were selected and invited to participate in the study. A questionnaire was developed to assess both the teacher's contact practices and conditions which might influence that practice. The questionnaire was administered to the teacher sample at regular faculty meetings; in subsequent visits to the schools, their responses were clarified and confirmed.

Ten teachers who completed the questionnaire were contacted and given follow-up interviews. In the interviews, the teachers were presented with a preliminary analysis of the questionnaire data and were asked to react to this analysis.
The Treatment of the Data

A combination of quantitative and qualitative data was generated and collected in the above procedures. The quantitative data was subjected to several different statistical procedures including frequency counts, cluster analyses, and various tests for significance. The qualitative data was used to complement the quantitative data. Together the two types of data were used to describe the conditions which might influence a teacher, and to develop profiles of teachers who report different contact practices.
CHAPTER II
THE SEARCH FOR INFLUENCING CONDITIONS

Introduction

In an effort to identify the fullest range of conditions that might influence teacher initiation of parent contact, three sources were tapped. Each source added to the identification process in a different way from the other sources. Together the three sources provided the range of conditions from which the study proceeded.

Research and Practitioner Wisdom

One source tapped to identify conditions was the professional literature that addresses the broad topic of home-school relations and the more specific problem of parent-teacher contact. The professional literature may be divided into two categories: research and practitioner wisdom. Research has dealt most heavily with questions about parent involvement programs, parent-teacher or home-school attitudinal comparisons, and the methods and topics of home-school communication. Only a few studies of those that have been reported provide information relevant to the focus of the present study--teacher-initiated contacts. Thus, many
of the findings that might have present application are tangential findings; they are brought to this study with the recognition that their value is tentative and that they come only through a degree of inference. Nevertheless, these research findings represent a broad range of possible influencing conditions. They raise many questions about the practice of teacher-initiated contact.

The research literature is augmented by an extensive selection of literature that can be respectably labelled practitioner wisdom. This body of knowledge dates to the earliest expressed concerns about the widening gap between home and school, and also reflects the most recent views of the home-school partnership. As is the case with the available research, teacher-initiated contact is not usually the focus of the works. How to organize programs of home-school communication, how to conduct oneself effectively and professionally in working with parents, and the potential value of parent-teacher cooperation are topics frequently discussed in this literature. But the variance in practice of individual teachers is much overlooked. The conditions influencing teacher-initiated contact are more often an appended consideration. The conditions that are culled from this literature are, once again, brought to the present study through a degree of inference.

The research literature and the literature of practitioner wisdom complement each other. Together they present a rich source for beginning to understand the conditions
which influence teacher-initiated contact. The review of literature has been a mainstay of the present study.

**Interviews with Educators**

The second source that was tapped to identify conditions was the field-based educator. Principals, teachers, and home-school liaison persons practicing in the subject school system were interviewed. Several purposes were served by this procedure. First, conditions which are context-specific were identified. For example, the nature and extent of organized programs of home-school cooperation was examined; the composition of school populations and the geography of attendance zones was discussed; the degree of variance between schools was noted. When context-specific conditions were identified, an effort was made to describe the condition using language that would most likely be recognized by educators in that context.

The second purpose served by the interviews was to insure that the most recently developing conditions would not be overlooked. Though the literature is extensive, it is, by its very nature, dated. The interviews, though they produced no substantially new conditions, at least allowed for that possibility.

The third purpose served by the interviews was the confirmation that at least some of the conditions described in or inferred from the literature were recognizable, meaningful, and pertinent to educators in the subject school system.
While no single person interviewed suggested or concurred with all the conditions drawn from the literature, the range of conditions was validated, and in many instances, particular conditions were endorsed as important and personally significant.

Thus the chief values of the interviews was the generation of up-to-date, context-specific conditions described with language appropriate to the subject school system, and the confirmation of conditions drawn from the literature.

The Researcher's Experience

The third source that played a role in the search for conditions which might influence teacher-initiated contact with parents was the researcher's own experience with this phenomenon. This experience is built from five years of classroom practice with its accompanying parent contacts, from several more-limited engagements in research and consulting work with practitioners who were involved with parent contact, and from extensive reading and writing in the field of parent-teacher relationships. The researcher's experience was not used primarily to identify conditions, but to place in perspective those conditions identified through other sources. Thus, enchantment with a few or a selected subset of conditions was avoided. Equitable consideration of all conditions was maintained. It is this same organizing perspective that will be used to display the conditions in the rest of this chapter.
The Organization of the Chapter

The ordering of the identified conditions is a difficult task. Because each study, essay, or interview has given rise to multiple conditions which may be interrelated, it is difficult to distinguish, enumerate, or categorize them. Nonetheless, it is important that the conditions be placed into a perspective that modifies and enhances their meanings for the present study.

This chapter will attempt to create that perspective. It is organized into six sections which grossly encompass all the identified conditions. The chapter, thus, is organized around the conditions, not the sources from which they have been identified. Briefly, the sections are (1) conditions of a demographic nature; (2) professional practice and experience conditions; (3) conditions related to teacher's experience of parents; (4) conditions related to teacher's experience of self and role; (5) conditions related to other persons including the principal, other teachers, and students; and (6) conditions related to the school environment. These six sections are somewhat arbitrary. They are not discrete, nor are they necessarily exclusive. They were chosen simply as a reasonable means of displaying the identified conditions, from which the study could proceed.

Each of the sections presents a set of conditions drawn from the three sources. As will become apparent later,
these categories for displaying the conditions do not separate the sources. One source may recur in several sections. Each source is most fully described when it first appears; subsequent references to the same source are less detailed. Also listed within each section are the questionnaire items written to represent the set of conditions or some subset thereof. Though this may be an unusual procedure, it seems warranted. Relating questionnaire items directly to the sources from which they were derived makes apparent the degree of inference used in moving from tangential statements in the three sources to conditions as defined in this study.

Just as this sectioning of the conditions does not clearly separate the sources one from another, so too, this sectioning does not serve to map the field. The six categories chosen here have surface validity, but may not be adequate for describing the complex of conditions as they actually function in a teacher's lifespace. The field of conditions will be mapped only when the conditions are organized into functionally valid groups.

**Conditions that Can Be Related to Teacher's Demographic Characteristics**

A number of conditions best described as related to a teacher's demographic characteristics can be linked to a teacher's parent contact practices.
Teacher's Socioeconomic Status

Michael (1976) studied the relationships between and among teacher's self-concept, experience, and socioeconomic status, and parent involvement in the learning activities of children in kindergarten through third grade. Among other findings, Michael linked teacher's father's education (an antecedent to the teacher's socioeconomic status) to the extent of reported parental involvement in the children's learning activities. No link was found, however, between other antecedents of socioeconomic status (teacher's father's occupation, and teacher's mother's education and occupation) and parental involvement.

Lolis (1962) surveyed all the teachers of a small urban school system to study the relationships between teacher morale and teacher attitude toward parents. Among the conclusions was that teachers seemed best able to accept those parents whose social level was closest to their own as they perceived it. The exception to this finding was the upper-class teacher who seemed to relate to parents without a social class barrier.

E. M. Moore (1973), writing for the British journal Educational Review, supported the belief that social class differences can present "obstacles to effective parent-teacher communication." Moore qualified this conclusion by stating, "But class factors have been overstressed to the neglect of other social variables" (p. 58).
Vaughn (1966) cast some doubt on the importance of social class differences as a result of his study of parent-teacher conferences at the elementary grade level. An analysis of 100 conferences using content analysis and interaction analysis procedures revealed no significant differences in either the types of information relayed to parents or the manner in which it was relayed, even though teachers perceived differences in parents' social class.

To the extent that socioeconomic status and social class similarities are related to ethnic background, there may yet be a link between this teacher characteristic and parent contact. Rempson (1969) measured the effect of an Experimental Program designed to help parents help their children in the home. Questionnaires, interviews, and observations were used to gather data from Black and Puerto Rican parents of elementary school children, from teachers and principals, and from parent-teacher association presidents, over a period of one school year. Rempson concluded, among other things, that more high-quality parent contacts were initiated by teachers of the same ethnic background as the parents.

The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related to teacher's socioeconomic status, particularly as it relates to the parents' socioeconomic status are:
Part One.

3. How would you classify the socio-economic status of the parents of the students in your class? Check one.

____ upper class
____ upper-middle class
____ middle class
____ lower-middle class
____ lower class

8. What is the highest level of formal schooling completed by your father? Check one.

____ elementary school (to 8th grade)
____ high school
____ some college
____ bachelor's degree completed
____ some graduate study
____ advanced degree completed

12. How would you classify your own socio-economic status?

____ upper class
____ upper-middle class
____ middle class
____ lower-middle class
____ lower class

Teacher's Residence

Teacher's residence may or may not be related to teacher's socioeconomic status. Residence does seem to have some relationship to teacher's perception of parents. Bahnsen (1970) studied the perceptions of teachers and the attitudes of parents in one school system through opinion surveys. Among the findings was that teachers who resided in or within a five-minute automobile ride of the district had significantly greater accuracy of perception of parent attitudes. The same teachers displayed a significantly higher level of morale. Further analysis revealed that the
accuracy of perception of parent attitudes correlated significantly with teacher morale.

Lolis (1962, above) also found a relationship between teacher's residence and attitude toward parents. Higher parent-attitude scores were obtained by teachers who lived in the community where they taught. Teacher attitudes toward parents were positively related to general teacher morale.

Professional literature often encourages teachers to become knowledgeable about the community in which they teach, lending credence to the belief that such knowledge should lead to more positive parent relationships. One teacher interviewed in the preparation of the questionnaire demonstrated an extraordinary amount of teacher-initiated contact. She lived within walking distance of the school in which she taught though the school was in an economically poor community, and she used her proximity to the families of her students to create opportunities to maintain a close relationship with them.

The questionnaire item written to assess conditions related to teacher's residence and proximity to the school community is:

Part One.

6. Do you live 10 minutes or closer, by car, to this school building? ___ yes   ___ no
Teacher's Education

Johnson (1973) studied teacher characteristics and attitudes associated with the acceptance of and participation in a Concerned Parent Organization, a mechanism by which school bureaucracy-school constituency collaboration in problem solving could be facilitated. The study defined "adopters" as teachers who reported participation, and "non-adopters" as teachers who reported that they did not participate in the Organization. A random sample selected from the adopters was compared to a random sample of non-adopters on a series of variables. Johnson found no significant difference between the groups on the variable of teacher's education.

Michael (1976, above) found no significant relationship between teacher's education and either reported parent involvement in children's learning activities or teacher's self-concept.

Bissell (1968) compared regular elementary school teachers to elementary special education teachers on their perceptions of parents. He found both types of teachers to be significantly in agreement in their perceptions of parents, and that these perceptions did not vary with the amount of college training (four years or less of college training versus more than four years) the teachers had.

Though general educational levels, or general teacher preparation may not be a condition influencing teacher initiation of contact, specific study or preparation in the
area of parent relationships may do so. Ezair (1965), in working toward the development of teacher preparation experiences in the parent-teacher relations field, studied home-school contact and the perceptions it generated among parents, teachers, and principals. Several different types of elementary school communities were included in the sample. Among the findings was that few teachers had any pre-service preparation in the area of parent-teacher relations, and that teachers judged their own competence to engage in parent contact as inadequate. Further, comparison of data across the two most different school communities (wealthy suburb versus underprivileged urban area, a rural homogeneous community versus a heterogeneous community) revealed that teachers in those communities did not need entirely different skills and understandings to work with parents.

Rempson (1969, above), studying the effects of an Experimental Program designed to help parents help their children at home, concluded that more parent contact of high quality occurred when initiated by teachers who had taken courses that helped them in their relations with parents.

The wealth of materials available that provide teachers with suggestions and guidelines about their work with parents would seem to indicate that special knowledge and skills are necessary for effective teacher-parent cooperation. The fact that parent relationships problems are reported by teachers of many different backgrounds and school
settings may indicate that preparation experiences are non-existent or inadequate. The teacher referred to above who reported an extraordinary amount of parent contact attributed her success in interpersonal relations not to a direct educational experience but to the fact that she had attended a "smaller college" (under 6,000 students), where she had been given the personal attention she felt necessary for the development of interpersonal competence.

The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related to teacher's education are:

Part One.

9. Was the undergraduate institution from which you received your teaching certificate larger or smaller than 6,000 students?

   ___ larger
   ___ smaller

10. What is the highest level of formal schooling you have completed? Check one.

   ___ some college
   ___ bachelor's degree completed
   ___ some graduate study/continuing education
   ___ masters degree completed....Please check one.
          ___ early childhood
          ___ administration
          ___ counseling
          ___ reading
          ___ special education
          ___ other
          ___ post-masters or PhD study

13. Did you ever participate in a workshop, a program, or a course designed specifically about the topic of parent-teacher relationships?

   ___ yes....If you did, describe each of the experiences in one or two sentences. Tell whether you thought the experiences were very useful, somewhat useful, or not useful to you.
Teacher-initiation of parent contact might be influenced by a number of conditions that can be described as related to professional experience and practice.

Teacher's Experience

Johnson (1973, above), in comparing adopters to non-adopters of the Concerned Parent Organization, found that adopters had more years of teaching experience and more years of teaching experience in the school district studied than did non-adopters.

Null (1974) studied teachers' and parents' perceptions of the elementary teacher role in one school district. Comparing the two groups on their responses to role statements in four categories (Acting Toward Teachers, Acting Toward Pupils and Parents, Acting Toward Colleagues, and Acting Toward Community), Null found that teacher's experience related to the degree of agreement with parents. Teachers with zero to three years of experience or eleven years or more approached closer agreement than teachers with four to ten years of experience. Teacher's formal education did not relate to differences in perceptions with parents.

Roush (1960) found a similar pattern when he studied superintendents' and principals' uses of lay participation in the schools of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Though
there was widespread valuing of the practice, there was not nearly as much actual use. Years of administrative experience related to actual use of lay participation: administrators with less than five years or over twenty years of experience sought the most lay help, and administrators with between ten and twenty years asked the least.

Contrary to this pattern was the pattern suggested by several teachers and principals interviewed to formulate the questionnaire for this study. It was their belief that new teachers would not be comfortable contacting parents, and would do less initiating. They believed that with experience, new teachers would overcome their initial worries and would make more parent contacts. Differences among experienced teachers were not easily explained, though several of those interviewed spoke of teachers who had become established members of school and could engage in contact more confidently.

Hanley (1976) studied parent participation in 60 classrooms of the Florida Model of Follow Through program. Using an observational system in the classrooms and a parent participation reporting form, comparisons were made between teacher demographic and classroom behavior variables, and parent participation. Among the findings was that teacher behavior variables and teacher demographic variables, including years of teacher experience and years of experience in the Follow Through program, did not explain variance in parent participation.
Michael (1976, above) found no relationship between teacher's experience and either teacher's self-concept or parent participation in children's learning activities.

Bissell (1968, above), comparing regular elementary school teachers to special education elementary teachers, found their perceptions of parents to be similar, and their perceptions did not vary significantly with years of teaching experience (two years or less versus more than two years).

The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related to teacher's experience are:

Part One.

4. How many years, counting this year complete, have you been teaching? ____

5. How many years have you been teaching in this school building? ____

Teacher's Professional Affiliation

Null (1974, above), in the comparison of teachers' and parents' perceptions of the elementary teacher's role, found that teachers who were members of either professional organization affiliated with national teacher organizations were likely to differ with parents more than teachers who were not members of either organization.

The questionnaire item written to assess conditions related to teacher's professional affiliation is:
Part One.

11. Are you a member of a professional organization? Check one.

____ yes, SWEA-OEA-NEA
____ yes, other __________________________
____ no

Teacher's Classroom Enrollment and Grade Level

Brown, writing in *Partners in Education* (1950), cited several obstacles to effective parent-teacher relationships. Included is a statement about enrollment:

> When teachers have more children than they can handle well, they have neither space nor time for mothers. They cannot learn much about individual children, their homes or their families under such circumstances. (p. 20)

Similar sentiments were expressed by several of those practitioners interviewed, though they did not place primary emphasis on the classroom enrollment as important.

Contrary to the sentiment, Hanley (1976, above) found that average class enrollment did not adequately explain the variation in classroom parent participation in the Florida Model of Follow Through.

With regard to grade level, contradictory findings are also evident. One educator interviewed believed that more parent contact occurred in the primary grades than in the middle grades, in part because students in the middle grades were more embarrassed by their parents' coming to the school than primary grade children who felt no such embarrassment. This same educator and others, however, reported variation in teacher-initiation of contact that did not follow grade
level lines.

Johnson (1973, above), in the study of adopters versus non-adopters of the Concerned Parent Organization, found no significant difference between grade levels. And Michael (1976, above) actually found significant differences among teachers on the same grade levels within the same school when studying parental involvement in children's learning activities.

The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related to classroom enrollment and grade level are:

Part One.
1. What grade level are you now teaching? ____
2. How many students are in your class? ____

Teacher's Professional Practice

G. B. Wall (1975) surveyed principals of 250 elementary schools, selected to represent the full range of population centers in the State of Illinois, about their official practices with regard to parent involvement. Among his findings are the following: Over 93 percent of the elementary schools had some type of parent involvement in their schools, and over 50 percent of the programs were initiated through principals, teachers, and parents working together. Most of the schools did not have a written policy regarding parent involvement established by the school board. Most of the programs were coordinated by the principal. Parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher association meetings, and room
or grade mothers were ranked by the principals as the most important practices in their schools, while telephone calls, personal notes, progress reports, and newsletters were seen as very effective and the most frequently used means of communication between home and school.

Creaser (1966) studied the relationship between parent-teacher contact and school size, number of bussed pupils, and organizational climate. Logs of parent-teacher contact were kept for two weeks by elementary teachers in nine schools of one district. Questionnaires were administered to the principals to determine factual information about school procedures and policy. A second questionnaire was administered to both teachers and principals to assess organizational climate. Among the findings were several pertinent to conditions influencing teacher-initiation of contact. Teachers reported a range in number of contacts from one to 127, averaging 28 contacts in a two-week time block. Slightly less than half of the contacts were written. Over half of the contacts were initiated by the schools. Almost 60 percent of the non-written contacts lasted over fifteen minutes. Schools varied significantly in the total amount of contact teachers had with parents, but parent-initiated, non-written contacts did not vary significantly from school to school. The size of the school and the number of bussed pupils was not associated with the total amount of parent contact per teacher in a school.
Organizational climate, varying inversely with the size of the school, also did not relate significantly to parent-teacher contact.

Rempson (1969, above), in studying the effects of an Experimental Program on parents' help to their children at home, found that the organized parent contact methods in the subject school district were ineffective in generating widespread participation. Only six percent of the parent population in the twenty elementary schools studied attended the 137 discussion meetings offered; at a typical meeting two percent of the parent population were present. Parent-teacher conferences averaged a 34 percent attendance rate by the parent population. Few parent contacts were initiated by the teachers and principals. Parent-teacher associations were few in number among the schools. Rempson also found that as the numbers of contacts initiated by the teachers increased, so did the number of contacts initiated by the parents; the types of contacts initiated by parents were similar to the types of contact initiated by the teachers.

Bellingham (1956) studied informal communications between parents and teachers in the elementary schools of one suburban district. Included, by definition, in the list of informal contacts were such contacts as open house, telephone calls, room meetings, newsletters, class observations, home visits, notes sent home, and chance meetings. Bellingham surveyed both parents and teachers, and concluded
that both groups preferred formal communication to the informal methods, and that both groups were reluctant to initiate informal contact. Parents reported classroom observations, room meetings, notes and newsletters, home visits, and trips most helpful and most desired. Teachers also reported some contacts helpful but did not necessarily desire to have those contacts; teachers' responses were judged to be somewhat inconsistent.

In two larger sociological studies of teachers and teaching, Lortie gathered data about teachers contact with parents, using interviews and questionnaires as his data-gathering devices. Both elementary and secondary school teachers were included in the samples. The combined report of the studies appears in the book Schoolteacher (1975). Among the conclusions drawn from the data was that teachers had little contact with parents; the modal rate reported was two or fewer interactions each month, with one-fourth of the teachers reporting three to six contacts each month. Elementary teachers reported more contact than secondary teachers. Organized school-initiated contacts, such as parent-teacher association meetings, were held four or five times each year but were judged to be of little value. Lortie also found that in lower class elementary schools, teachers (88 percent) wanted more parent contact compared with teachers (23 percent) who taught in higher class schools. Finally, Lortie suggested that teachers sought
parent contact most when students were performing below the teacher's expectations. When students performed adequately, there was no "impulse" to contact parents (pp. 189-90).

The interviews conducted in preparing the questionnaire would contradict Lortie's findings. Each of the educators interviewed reported, for themselves and for their colleagues, more extensive contact with parents than reported by Lortie. One teacher averaged three home visits each week, ten telephone calls each week, and ten notes to parents each day. This would seem to represent a stronger commitment to the practice of parent contact than exhibited by most teachers. Yet in just fulfilling the school and district requirements for parent contact, the educators exhibited more frequent contact with parents than reported by other studies. The teachers and principals were able to note variations in both frequency and methods of contact among their colleagues.

J. A. Baker (1973) studied the attitudes of parents, teachers, and principals toward parent involvement in school activities. Twenty kindergarten classes were the focus of the study, and a semantic differential scale was used to assess attitudes of the subjects. Among the conclusions was that parents and educators had positive attitudes toward home visits, parent-teacher conferences, parent participation in school decisions, parents assisting in the classroom, and large and small group meetings for parents.
However, parents' attitudes toward home visits, assisting in the classroom, and large and small group meetings were significantly more positive than were educators' attitudes toward these same contact methods. The parent-teacher conference was the most favored of all contact methods.

Erickson (1973), in a study of parent-teacher conferences as method of reporting student progress, surveyed parents and teachers of elementary school children in eleven different schools. In addition to finding that more teachers preferred the conference method of reporting than parents, Erikson also found that parents perceived that teachers gave more information than teachers had thought they had given. The same was true for teachers' perceptions of parents' information giving. Except for differences in the school communities, the strongest influence on teachers' responses was the achievement level of the child: teachers were more uncertain when dealing with parents of low achievers than with parents of high achievers.

Hanley (1976, above), in examining the effects of teacher behaviors and demographic characteristics on parent participation in the Florida Model of Follow Through, did not find a significant relationship for the variables studied. But among the implications of the study was the recognition that individuals other than the classroom teacher had contact with parents, and they may have influenced parent participation. Secondly, parent involvement
options may have reduced the amount of participation in classroom activities.

The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related to teacher's professional practice are:

Part One.

14. There are several organized programs in this school district designed to bring teachers and parents together. These are called **school-initiated contacts**. Your school may or may not participate in each, or you may or may not be directly involved in each program. Please supply the information for the programs in which you are involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Contact</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Number of Contacts Each Time the Method Is Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I participate in Parent Night in the Fall</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hold parent conferences in the Fall</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hold parent conferences in the Spring</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use the Parent School Volunteer Program</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend PTA meetings</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend PTA activities:</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I send home report cards</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I send home interim reports</td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are other **school-initiated contact methods in which I participate**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Contact</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Number of Contacts Each Time the Method Is Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____ times per ____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Parents themselves sometimes initiate contact with the teachers of their children. These are called parent-initiated contacts. Please supply the information about the parent-initiated contacts you have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Contact</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Number of Contacts Each Time the Method Is Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents telephone me</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents send notes to me at school</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents stop by the school to see me</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents use other methods to initiate contact with me:</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>______________________________________________________________________</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. In addition to the school-initiated contacts and the parent-initiated contacts you described in the above questions, there is also teacher-initiated contact. Teacher-initiated contact occurs when an individual teacher intentionally contacts a parent or group of parents regarding some school matter or student matter. Counting only teacher-initiated contacts you make, supply the information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Contact</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Number of Contacts Each Time the Method Is Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I send notes home to parents</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I telephone parents to discuss school matters</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hold personal conferences with parents (not counting Fall and Spring Conferences)</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make home visits</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I capitalize with chance meetings with parents outside the school</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have parents observe in the classroom</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have parents help out on field trips</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I send home a class newsletter or bulletin</td>
<td>__ times per__</td>
<td>__</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I use other teacher-initiated methods to contact parents:

- ____________________________ times per ___
- ____________________________ times per ___
- ____________________________ times per ___

I sometimes initiate contact with parents through other school personnel:
- through the principal __times per ___
- through the staff __times per ___
- through the development teacher __times per ___
- through the room mother __times per ___
- through the school nurse __times per ___
- through the social worker/attendance officer __times per ___
- through the school psychologist __times per ___
- through the speech therapist __times per ___
- through others: __times per ___

Topics of Communication

Creaser (1966, above), in a study of parent-teacher contacts related to school size, number of bussed pupils, and organizational climate, placed content items of teacher reported contacts into four categories: the individual child's progress (52.6 percent), parent activities (19.8 percent), children’s activities (15.1 percent), and school routines (12.5 percent).

Rempson (1969, above), studying the effects of an Experimental Program to help parents help their children at home, found that the number of parent contacts initiated by teachers was a function, not of professional or sociological characteristics, but of the discipline problems they had.
Teachers initiated more contacts in response to discipline problems.

Vaughn (1966, above), in studying the content and manner of communication in parent-teacher conferences, as affected by teacher's perceptions of parents' social class, found no significant differences on the hypothesized variables. Vaughn did find differences in the kinds of information conveyed based on the child's sex and grade level: the physical development of girls was discussed significantly more often than that of boys; work/study habits, interests, and attitudes were discussed more frequently when the children were in elementary grades than in primary grades.

Langdon and Stout, in their 1954 publication, Teacher-Parent Interviews, listed ten examples of reasons teachers would initiate contact with parents and conduct an interview. The list consists of the items, an elaboration of what the cause of the circumstance might be, and suggestions as to how the interview might be conducted. Items included in the list are: 1) frequent absence resulting in poor schoolwork; 2) providing more challenging schoolwork for a child who is advanced; 3) developing some special talent in the child; 4) soliciting general information from parents new to the community; 5) providing some extra help for the child; 6) getting acquainted with the parents; 7) reporting student progress; 8) engaging parental help in the school; 9) planning with parents regarding changes in school
functioning; and 10) addressing discipline problems (pp. 78-91).

The interviews conducted in preparing the questionnaire revealed similar topics of communication. Those interviewed reported that the occasions on which teachers contacted parents varied greatly: discipline and academic problems were frequently the topics of communications, but good behavior, academic successes, health problems, and seeking classroom assistance were reported as well.

The questionnaire item written to assess conditions related to topics of communication is:

Part One.

17. Teachers contact parents for a variety of reasons. Looking at your responses to the question at the top of this page, Question 16, respond to this question.

A. Place a check (✓) by the reasons you had in mind when you contacted parents as described above.
B. Place a second check (✓) by the three reasons you consider most important for contacting parents.

___ noting academic progress
___ noting lack of academic progress
___ noting social/emotional adjustment
___ noting lack of social/emotional adjustment
___ noting discipline problems
___ collecting fees
___ seeking help in class or on field trips
___ noting student's general health, sickness, or injury
___ noting extended absences, giving assignments
___ noting frequent absences
___ seeking general information
___ seeking special help for student
___ developing an acquaintance
___ explaining curriculum
___ sharing general information
___ other reasons: ____________________

___ ____________________
Conditions that Can Be Related to Teacher's Experience of Parents

In coming into contact with parents, the teacher forms impressions and images that carry beyond the immediate situation to a more generalized picture of parents. A teacher's experiences give rise to perceptions which then carry into new parent contacts. A teacher's experience of parents might influence contacting practices.

Teacher's Experience of Parents as Being Much the Same

Lightfoot (1975), writing in the Journal of Research and Development in Education reported her own experience in a ghetto public school:

I found varying perceptions of the abilities and strengths of poor black parents--ranging from the stereotypic image of parents as shiftless, lazy, uncaring, and lacking ambitions for their children to understanding and empathetic views of parents as committed and caring but unable to negotiate the complexities and hostilities of the school system. (p. 37)

Stereotypic images of parents would seem to be a detriment to good parent-teacher relationships, hence, a damper on teacher-initiated contact. Schmidt and Atlas (1976) quoted from Goodacre to make exactly this point. "Goodacre . . . contends that 'teachers have an oversimplified, stereotyped and out-of-date image of parents" (p. 347).

Kroon (1976) demonstrated the fallacy in assuming all parents to be alike.
Because of unsystematic and often sporadic means of communication, educators and parents often resort to speculation about each other's point of view regarding educational issues.

The purpose of his study was the comparison of parent and educator attitudes in a specific school district to national attitudes reflected in the highly quoted Gallup Polls. An analysis of the responses of parents and educators to questionnaires and interviews revealed that on 76.5 percent of the questions there was a significant difference from the national responses reported by Gallup. Kroon also noted a 54 percent disagreement between parents and teachers in his sample.

Bahnsen (1970, above) found a significant positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of parent attitudes and teacher morale. The accuracy of teachers' perceptions of parent attitudes was also found to correlate with teacher morale, though not as strongly.

The questionnaire items written to assess the teacher's experience of parents as being much the same are:

Part Two:

8. Different parents respond much the same way when I contact them.

12. Parents are very different, one from another.

Teacher's Experience of Parents as Intruding

There is testament to the feeling that parents may interfere in the teacher's execution of the role and in the
teacher's professional domain. W. D. Wall (1947), in an extensive study in Britain in 1945, found considerable concern among the respondents that parents would overstep the boundaries set for them by the school. Responding to the question, "Are there any other drawbacks of parent-teacher cooperation that you would stress?" teachers gave the following responses. "The 'fussy' type of parent may take advantage of cooperation." "No interference with teacher in his profession and parents must accept opinion of teacher." "There might be the danger of some parents wishing to interfere in school organization but this could be overcome." And, "The teacher is the expert and in matters educational, in the widest sense of the term, his must be the last word" (p. 109).

In citing sources of tension in parent-teacher relationships, Kaplan (1950) underscored the same feeling.

Some teachers feel that their years of professional training and experience have prepared them to teach children and that parents are laymen who are not qualified to participate in the school program. It appears to be a matter of prestige with these teachers to insist that they know what constitutes good teaching and that parents have no right to question their decision in school matters. (p. 192)

Protection of their own interests, Kaplan suggested, could generate parental unfriendliness toward the school.

Sabine (1971) conducted a national survey of high school teachers, questioning them about the worst and the best aspects of their professional experience. In response
to the basic question of "what one group most misunderstands teachers," teachers reported parents (23 percent) most frequently, followed by legislators (18 percent), nonparent taxpayers (16 percent), reporters and broadcasters (9 percent), school board members (9 percent), principals (4 percent), superintendents (3 percent), and others including students and counselors (17 percent) (p. 1). An elaboration of the forms that parental misunderstanding takes, covers a wide array of experiences and perceptions, some of which cast parents as intruders: "Since all of them have gone to school, they are all 'experts' in the field." And, "When I go to an attorney or to a physician, or any other professional persons, I do not try to tell them how to do their jobs. Why do parents feel they know all the answers, and try to tell us how to teach, what to teach, how to grade, etc., etc., etc.,?" (p. 4) Teachers thus reported that they resented parents who think themselves knowledgeable about school based on their own past schooling. They resented parents who think they are smarter about school than the teacher (p. 55).

Lightfoot (1975, above) noted the same phenomenon, and offered an explanation of the teacher's behavior:

There is a sphere of ambivalence that surrounds the child's life in school and teachers and parents argue (silently and resentfully) about who should be in control within it. . . . The only sphere of influence in which the teacher feels that her authority is ultimate and uncompromising seems to be with what happens inside the classroom. (p. 36)
Thus, limited to but one sphere of control, the teacher carefully guards it against usurpation by those who already exert so much influence on the teacher's life.

Young (1973) conducted a study of the norms of teacher participation in decision-making. Through questionnaires, data was gathered from teachers, parent-employees, administrators, and school board members. Among the findings of the study are two which have relevance here. First, Young found that teachers perceived other populations to be more restrictive of teachers' decision-making than the other populations reported themselves to be. Parents were actually the most restrictive, followed by board members and then administrators; but, teachers perceived parents to be least restrictive. Secondly, the highest levels of actual participation by teachers in decision-making was in matters pertaining to their own classrooms.

E. M. Moore (1973, above) identified the behavior as guarding against "the prospect of uncontrolled incursions of parents into the classroom" (p. 62). Schmidt and Atlas (1976, above) labelled the behavior as protecting "professional preeminence" (p. 347). Lortie (1975, above) described the behavior as "gatekeeping" (p. 190). However the behavior is described, it would seem that teachers are sensitive to matters of their own authority and professional autonomy, and that this sensitivity may influence their response to parents and parent contact situations.
The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related to teacher's experience of parents as intruding are:

Part Two.

27. Parents place strong demands on my personal life.

30. Parents respect my authority in classroom matters.

53. In my experience with parents, I see that they know what it's like to be a teacher.

58. Parents remember schools and teachers from when they were young, and assume this makes them knowledgeable about schools today.

59. Teachers know better than parents what is good for the child's education.

64. In my experience with parents, they act like they are smarter than the teacher.

66. Parent contact reduces my options to think and act on my own.

Teacher's Experience of Parents as Threatening

In some educators' experiences, parent contact may go beyond intrusion to the point of providing the teacher with a perceived threat. In a challenging editorial in Contemporary Education, Williams (1975) spelled out the concern:

Many times and in many ways, parents can undermine their children's teachers and school administrators to the point that the children come to believe that it is acceptable behavior to be contemptuous of the school institution. . . . The teacher and principal . . . are often subjected to unfair abuse. (p. 240)

Criticism of school personnel was seen as particularly harmful because of the effects it may have had on the students.
Sayler took a much more constructive view of parents, and in the book *Parents: Active Partners in Education* (1971) encouraged teachers to form alliances with parents and involve them in the classroom. Sayler, however, also recognized that teachers may fear such undertakings because they open the teacher to criticism by the parents (p. 28).

A study conducted by Marnix (1971) may lend some ground to this fear. The parents of secondary school students were surveyed to find out their information and media preferences; the survey spanned three occupational groups. A finding of the study was that parents desire all types of information, though information about the individual student, policies, curriculum and program, school activities and guidance were more desired than other information. Marnix also found that parents in the manual and service occupational group desired more information than parents in the semi-professional or professional groups. Third, and most relevant here, Marnix found that parents across all occupational groups more frequently desired information about the needs and faults of the school than about the school's strengths. Teachers may sense or experience a biased parents' perspective, and may thus be leery of providing further evidence of faults or needs through parent contact.

Sabine (1971, above) also found that some teachers feel unjustly criticized by parents.
Many parents blame the school and its faculty for anything and everything that goes wrong with their children:

"One father raved on for 45 minutes about the poor educational system, inferior teachers, lack of memorizing as a way of studying, and never acknowledged his daughter's own refusal to take notes, pay attention, turn in assigned work, and study."

"I sent notices to the parent about the student's failure. No answer. So I telephoned. The mother yelled, 'you bitch, you should not even be a teacher' at me." (p. 61)

Belligerence and intimidation are part of some teachers' experiences with parents. Seemingly, encounters which are characterized by these behaviors are not conducive to good relationships, and may discourage teacher-initiated contact.

Lightfoot (1975, above) offered a further perspective on this aspect of parent-teacher contact.

Teachers rarely call in praise of a child. . . . Parents, on the other hand, rarely call a teacher to praise her. . . . Contacts, therefore, are rarely productive. Whether the contact is initiated by the teachers or parents, it becomes a highly charged defensive interaction.

Though teachers identified and trusted some subgroups of parents, "the parent-mass" was seen as a threatening force (pp. 37-8).

The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related to teacher's experience of parents as threatening are:

Part Two.

6. Parents undermine the efforts of teachers.

26. In my experience with parents, I find that they expect too much of me.
35. Parents tend to overlook teacher weaknesses.

50. In my experience with parents, I find that they unjustly blame the school for many things.

**Teacher's Experience of Parents as Trusting and Supporting**

Teachers report that their experiences with parents evidence a sense of trust and support. Hanges (1971) studied an inner city elementary school for one year to identify activities which are most conducive to a parent-teacher partnership. Parent and teacher logs of activities, an investigator log of activities, interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. Five factors were identified as promoting the parent-teacher partnership: an appreciative understanding of the teacher's task, the helpfulness of the parents, the development of mutual trust and respect, the development of the relationship on a human level, and a welcoming school atmosphere.

Bland (1976) studied the development of mutually supportive relationships between parents and teachers in urban school settings, over a period of several years. An analysis of tape recordings of meetings involving parents and educators did not confirm the original assumption that a high level of hostility existed between the school and community. However, Bland did observe that through a period of time, as decisions were shared, power and decision-making interplayed with mutual support.
Laird (1972) studied the teacher's role as perceived by parents and teachers in three different communities. An instrument was developed to assess the degree of freedom or restrictiveness attributed to the role of teacher. The instrument was used as both a questionnaire and as an interview guide. The results of the study revealed that there were significant differences between parents and teachers in their perceptions. Interesting, and most relevant here, however, is the finding that parents would have given more freedom from institutional restriction than the teachers perceived them to give, and than the system commonly permits. Inherent in this finding was a greater degree of trust and support than the teachers generally recognized.

Lolis (1962, above), in the study of teachers' morale and attitudes towards parents, found that teachers who perceived that parents cooperate with them had a higher general morale. Though no single cause-effect relationship was drawn by the study, the intertwining of morale, attitudes toward parents, and attitudes towards students was apparent.

Sabine (1971, above) found a similar dynamic operating at the high school level:

There were other teachers who chose as best those parents who apparently just approved of them as teachers:
"They agree with me."
"You think parents are great when they think you're a great teacher." (p. 72)
Support and trust may be interwoven with the teacher's sense of esteem and professional well-being.

Interviews conducted in the formulation of the questionnaire for this study confirmed this influence. One person interviewed suggested that teachers respond to those parents who respond to them . . . who build their egos. Good parent-teacher relationships are built upon a sense of mutual support and trust. When the relationship is characterized by such qualities, then teachers might be expected to initiate contact more readily than when the relationship is one of antagonism and distrust.

The questionnaire items written to assess conditions related teacher's experience of parents as trusting and supporting are:

Part Two.

37. In my experience with parents, I find that they act in partnership with the school.

48. In my experience with parents, I find that they are restrictive of me and my teaching practices.

52. In my experience with parents, I don't know when they are being honest with me.

54. I find that parents are sensitive to the feelings of teachers.

65. Parents of my students respect and trust me.

73. Parents fully support the school program.

77. In my experience with parents, I see that they understand how hard teachers work.
Teacher's Experience of Parents as Apathetic

W. D. Wall (1947, above) found, in a 1945 study, that parent apathy or lack of response to teacher requests was cited as one factor impeding parent-teacher cooperation (p. 110). Many teachers report similar experiences in their contacts with parents. Feeling that parents don't care about the school or the child, or that parents do not respond to the school's initiations may influence a teacher's contacting practices.

Greenblatt (1974) contrasted the ideology of parent participation in a community school with the reality of that participation. She had hypothesized that recent teacher movement demands for greater autonomy would work against parent participation. Using case study methods, she gathered data about the subject school and concluded, contrary to the stated hypothesis, that teachers were in fact receptive to parent participation in classroom and in decision-making. However, Greenblatt also found that there was actually little parent participation. The largest group of non-participant parents had no other reason for their lack of involvement than simple lack of interest.

Lightfoot (1975, above) acknowledged parent apathy as one fact of some teachers' experience. She attributed this apathy, however, to the school's own behavior toward parents:

The insensitive, paternalistic policies of the school system encouraged parents to develop an unresponsive, apathetic attitude towards participating in the educational process. (pp. 40-1)
The cause of poor response on the part of parents may be less determinate than was here suggested, but the reality remains that teachers do report parent apathy as a hindrance to constructive relationships.

Parent apathy seems to be even more strongly resented by teachers when it reflects a lack of concern for the parents' own child. Sabine (1971, above), in surveying high school teachers, found "worst parents" were often those who seemed not to care about their son or daughter and shifted responsibility to the school and teacher:

Many parents shirk and shift their family responsibilities:
"Parents neglect their responsibility, forcing teachers to assume more and more of the 'learn at home' duties such as sex education, common manners, moral values, etc."
"The teacher takes over when the parent leaves off. And ever so many parents leave off early in the child's development." (p. 3)

Parents also were reported as failing to find out the facts, and not knowing much about their children in school:

"Parents do not try to understand. In the five years . . . fewer than 20% have shown up on 'open house' occasions; 99% of these are parents of the non-problem child. During those five years, I have had only five parents request a conference. My average student load has been about 140 per school year. Most parents just do not care." (p. 8)

Also included in the description of "worst parents" were those who would not or did not spend time with their children and communicate with them, or with the teacher in discussing the child.
In the interviews conducted to formulate the questionnaire for this study, related sentiments were expressed. One of the educators interviewed felt that parents were often uncomfortable talking to the teacher; therefore, they responded to the teacher less than hoped-for. Several educators stated that the parents who most needed to be contacted were the most difficult to contact or the most difficult to get to respond. Most of the educators cited some degree of parent apathy as an influence on teachers' initiation of contact.

The questionnaire items written to assess teacher's experiences of parents as apathetic are:

Part Two.

13. In my experience, parents whom I most want to contact are the hardest to contact.

29. In my experience, I find that parents really try to understand what goes on in school these days.

42. Parents want to shift responsibility for raising their children to the school.

56. The parents of my students are there when children need them.

78. Parents are interested enough in the school to make contacting them worth it.

Teacher's Experience of Parent Contact as Useful

Teachers report differing views on the value of parent contact. Interviews conducted to formulate the questionnaire for this study revealed some of the different opinions. One educator suggested that teachers contact or don't contact
parents in part on the basis of whether or not they see a connection between the parents' attitudes and the child's attitude and behavior. If teachers do not see such a connection, then they are not as likely to contact parents to improve, maintain, or appreciate a child's performance. The same educator suggested that parent contact may be a function of what conditions the teacher sees as necessary for optimum learning to occur. Another educator suggested that teachers contact parents regarding a school matter if they think it will do some good. A third educator, one who herself maintained extensive parent contact, reported that she did so because she could readily see the differences it produced in her students' school performances. In general, a teacher's parent contacting practice may be influenced by the experience of such contact as useful.

The professional literature presents the contrasting viewpoint. Waller (1932, above) cited one case in which a teacher grew frustrated with parent contact because it resulted in considerable expenditure of his time with no appreciable gain in student learning or in his own reward (pp. 70-3). Lortie (1975, above) found this sentiment also expressed by the teachers in his samples. Parent-teacher gatherings, such as those sponsored by the parent-teacher association, were seen as "a waste of time," and "interpersonally awkward" (p. 189).
Doebler discussed the parent-teacher relationship in a book entitled, *Planning Your Child's Education* (1971). He suggested that contact with parents is seen by teachers as too draining, and productive of too little good to be worth the effort.

Too many teachers have been worn down by parents who do not want to hear any comments which are either negative or merely seem negative to them. The parent who takes up the cudgels in his child's behalf is not likely to get anything from a teacher but platitudes. If a parent can persuade a teacher that he really wants to know about his child's experiences and attitudes in school and will not take umbrage at anything a teacher says professionally, then it is possible to build a relationship which can be highly useful to all concerned--parent, teacher, and child. Unfortunately, too many parents have exhausted the teacher's willingness to believe parent's claims to open-mindedness, and it is not uncommon to find that any kind of parent-teacher exchange is discouraged. (pp. 32-3)

O'Dwyer (1977) recounted his own experience as a teacher with parents and gave much the same report from the viewpoint of an overworked individual facing parent conferences:

My role during these conferences is almost political. I try to inform and encourage the parents about their children, while mollifying their concerns about the program. Usually the conferences result in little change; a tally of comments from twenty-three different families rarely provides sufficient basis for program revision.

Then, too, parent comments are not necessarily reliable indicators of what the parent wants. . . . The gap between comments and commitment is obvious. (p. 53)

If teachers experience parent contact as unproductive and are at the same time faced with demands on their time and
energy in other tasks, then they would seem less likely to initiate contact often.

Bissell (1968, above), in his comparison of regular elementary school teachers' to special education teachers' perceptions of parents, found no significant differences between the two groups. However, he did find that in general, teachers perceived parents as loving their children and willing to cooperate with the school, but seldom visiting school or attending parent-teacher association meetings. Further, teachers perceived parents as knowing little about their own children or the school. If such is the case, or if teachers perceive it to be so, then they are probably less likely to initiate parent contact.

The questionnaire items written to assess teacher's experience of parent contact as useful are:

Part Two.

11. In my experience, I find that students learn best when I keep close contact with their parents.

16. I find that parents don't know enough about their children in school to be helpful when I contact them.

24. In my experience, I see a direct connection between the parents' attitude and the student's attitude and behavior.

60. In my experience, when parents say they'll do something, they follow through on it.

69. In my experience, contacting parents leads to good outcomes.
Teacher's Experience of Parents as Different from Themselves

Teachers report that there are important differences between themselves and parents. These differences may be in philosophy of education, in expectations of teachers, students, or the school, or in methods of handling important school concerns. When important differences exist between parents and teachers, there may be reluctance to make contact in which those differences could surface. When contact is made, these differences may be a source of conflict.

Hanges (1971, above), in the study of parent participation in an urban school program, found that one of the most important impediments to parent-school partnership was a difference in philosophy of education. J. A. Baker (1973, above), in the study of the attitudes of parents and educators toward parent involvement, found significant differences between the groups on methods of contact, with parents being more positive toward home visits, parental assistance in the classroom, and large and small group meetings for parents than were the educators. Dickson (1976) also studied parents' and teachers' attitudes toward parent participation, using questionnaires to collect the data. The focus was on participation in early childhood programs offered at ten schools. Dickson found significant differences between parents and teachers on several roles: in the classroom, teachers would more often have placed parents in tutorial roles, in addition to clerical duties, than...
would have the parents; outside the classroom, teachers would have limited the decision-making power of parent advisory committees more than the parents would have.

Kaplan (1950, above) cited differences between parents and teachers regarding school program as one of the major sources of conflict between the two parties. He suggested that parents tend to think of school as it was when they were young, and to evaluate the contemporary school on those "standards." Teachers were also judged responsible for misunderstandings because they did not sufficiently inform parents of the nature of school programs or the rationales on which they were based (pp. 190-2).

Sabine (1971, above) also found that teachers reported that differences between themselves and parents was a source of concern.

Some parents want the schools to teach only what they (the parents) believe in:
"They don't understand that each teacher is an individual with his or her own values. They expect teachers to reflect and teach only the values of the parent. . . ."
"Most seem to think of teachers as extensions of themselves. They project their own hopes and plans on their children and then expect today's teacher to push the student toward the goal." (p. 8)

Sometimes those expectations are unrealistic and lead the teacher to further concern.

"She wanted her brain-damaged child to stay in the most demanding academic program. She would lock him in his room at night to study."
"I discovered one of my finest boys weeping in the hall afraid to go home. After a whole
semester of strenuous effort, he had gotten only a C-plus in chemistry. His parents both expected him to enter medical school and had set up an impossible batch of hurdles for him." (pp. 58-9)

Teachers reported, also, that parents hold expectations different from themselves about what should be taught, how it should be taught, and to what degree school can influence the development of any individual child.

Lightfoot (1975, above) offered some explanation of the discrepancy between expectations. Referring to McPherson (1972), she wrote:

Parents have particularistic expectations for their children while teachers have universalistic expectations (1972, p. 121). In other words, when a parent asks the teacher to "be fair" . . . they are usually asking that the teacher give special attention. . . . When teachers talk about being "fair" to everyone they mean giving equal amounts of attention, judging everyone by the same objective standards, using explicit and public criteria for making order. (p. 34)

Thus, teachers and parents are naturally inclined to respond differently to the same circumstance. Different expectations and different responses may be a challenge to good relationships.

Bladt (1968) compared teachers and parents on how they responded to 24 common elementary school problems. A scale was used which required respondents to agree or disagree with 120 proposed solution statements to the problems described. Results from the study showed that parents and teachers disagreed significantly on many of the solution statements, evidencing different approaches to problem
situations. Parents generally favored "keeping children in," report cards, homework, and retention practices, while teachers did not. Teachers approved of constructive disciplinary measures, parent conferences for reporting progress, and isolation as a form of discipline, while parents did not generally favor those practices. Additionally, parents more than teachers were found to favor conferences for behavior problems, lecturing and scolding, tighter disciplinary limits, principal's involvement in discipline actions, and drill as a teaching method. Parents more than teachers considered the elementary school child capable of developing inner controls.

Raub (1971) studied parents', teachers', and students' perceptions of students' critical school incidents. An inventory using actual reported incidents was used in assessing fourth, fifth, and sixth grade parents', teachers', and students' responses. Raub found significant differences between and among the three groups. Parents and teachers generally placed higher value on each incident than did the students, and they had more difficulty assessing the negative incidents than positive. Teachers had more differences with students than did parents, and the teachers' responses varied more than either of the other two groups. Fathers and mothers were in agreement on 23 of the 24 items.

Vyverberg (1972) also studied responses to school critical incidents. He compared parents, teachers,
counselors, and administrators on their orientations to a proposed crisis helping model. The model presented four operationally defined concepts: the immediacy of the initial helping response; the bringing together of significant others; the focusing on the present crisis situation; and emphasis on the use of expectations and support. Vyverberg found that once defined and illustrated, all four groups rated all four concepts at 4.0 or above, on a 7.0 scale. Within the overall positive rating, however, there were significant differences. Administrators gave the lowest ratings to all four concepts; parents gave the highest ratings to all the concepts except focusing. Teachers and counselors rated the concepts fairly similarly. Teachers and administrators ranked the immediacy concept first; counselors ranked bringing first; parents ranked focusing first.

Interviews conducted in the formulation of the questionnaire for this study confirmed and added to the notion that teachers experience parents as different from themselves. Several of those interviewed suggested that when teachers do not know how the parents will respond, they are more hesitant to initiate contact. Teachers encounter parents who they feel resist them in the recognition and solution of problems. Teachers encounter parents who hold different priorities than the teachers; sometimes these priorities are set by conditions at home of which the teacher
is not aware. Generally, not knowing how parents will respond leaves teachers with some concern about contact.

Teachers also reported that believing a parent would respond with violence or other severe measures against the child influences their contacting practices. Though teachers do not necessarily see themselves in a child-advocate role, they are aware that their actions can directly affect the parent-child relationship. Teachers report that this knowledge influences their practices.

Sabine (1971, above) found that teachers reported extremes of parental response, neither of which was held in favor by the teachers. Some parents used physical violence to solve problems:

"He maintained that the best way to deal with his son's lack of academic achievement was to beat him into submission. His brutality and oversimplification explained much of the passivity and apathy of the son."

While other parents were overly permissive:

"This was a parent who had given complete permissiveness, who didn't want his children to have to sacrifice as he had and so the children had no sense of values or respect for people, rights, or property." (pp. 52-3)

Teachers report that they experience parents as different from themselves in many important ways. Parents hold different philosophies of education, different preferences for school contact, and different expectations of teachers, students, and schools. Parents might approach matters differently than school personnel, and they might respond
to a teacher's contacts in unpredicted ways. All these differences might, when experienced by teachers, influence their contacting practices.

The questionnaire items written to assess teacher's experience of parents as different from themselves are:

Part Two.

14. In my experience, I find that when I contact parents, I am surprised by their reactions.

15. I hesitate to contact parents if I don't know how they will respond.

22. I find that parents' values and mine are much the same.

47. I find that parents are extreme in the ways they treat their children: either too protective or too permissive; too demanding or not demanding enough; and so on.

63. Parents want schools to teach only what they, the parents, believe in.

67. Parents support my methods for resolving problems with children.

Conditions that Can Be Related to Teacher's Experience of Self and of Role

In the day-to-day world of school activity, the classroom teacher experiences many different events, each of which may add to that teacher's understanding of self and role. Over time, these singular impressions build into larger conceptualizations which, in turn, affect the teacher's perceptions of and responses to school events. Self concept and concept of the teacher role reflect, in
part, the teacher's experience of self and of role in the
day-to-day world of school activity.

Parents are a part of the school world of the teacher,
to one degree or another. Teachers encounter parents, and
from the encounters add to their concepts of self and
teacher role. Both the experience of self and the experi­
ence of role in parent contact situations may influence the
teacher's response to those situations. Teacher-initiation
of contact may be influenced by the experience of self and
the experience of role.

**Teacher's Experience of Self in Parent Contact Situations**

Ezair (1965, above), in a survey study designed to pro­
vide data on which preservice education of elementary school
teachers could be planned, found that entirely different
skills and understandings are not needed to work with parents
of different socioeconomic groups. Ezair also found, how­
ever, that few teachers had any preservice work in parent­
teacher relations, and that teachers judge their own compe­
tence in the matter of parent-teacher relationships to be
inadequate. Schmidt and Atlas (1976, above) confirmed this
recognition on the part of teachers. Ninety percent of
nearly 3,000 teachers, who were asked whether a course on
interpersonal relations should be required as a part of
teacher education, replied in the affirmative (p. 347).

Teachers report that in their experience they do not
feel prepared or comfortable to work well with parents.
Lightfoot (1975, above) drew a further connection between the teacher's sense of self and the practice of contacting parents:

The teachers who are more confident of their skills, expertise, and abilities to communicate will be less loyal to the protection of an insular wall around the school and more dedicated to the establishment of a good educational relationship with children, that is, encompassing of parents, rather than exclusive of them. (p. 39)

A sense of confidence, it is suggested, clears the way for more open and productive contact with parents.

More general affective reactions were found to be important in another study. In a study designed to assess the factors which impinge on the implementation of an educational innovation, MacDonald (1974) worked in four school districts which were adopting the Planning, Programming, Budgeting System (PPBS) concept. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with people at all levels of the school district organization. Among the findings which have relevance here was the strong influence of affective reactions which accompanied the implementation efforts. Affective reactions included such feelings as inevitability, fear, futility, apathy, distrust, expectations, enmity, and commitment. These feelings played an important part in educators' professional practices. Such affective reactions might well influence a teacher's practices in initiating contact with parents.
Bellingham (1956, above) found teachers and parents reluctant to initiate informal contacts which included, among others, telephone calls, newsletters, home visits, and notes sent to or from the home. Teachers were reluctant even though they acknowledged that some of these contacts were helpful. Teachers and parents were reluctant to make contacts which would result in close personal relationships (p. 108). Affective reactions seem to have played a part in this pattern of responses.

Stough (1974), in an article entitled "When PTA Meetings Are Held in Clancy's Bar," charged that teachers and other school personnel are aloof, that they are not in contact with the parents and community. This separation cuts off communication and prevents understanding. He called on educators to 'come out from behind the desk,' and meet the community on a human level (p. 37). However, Waller (1932, above) quoted from the narrative of one teacher which explains how and why that teacher responded to parents as he did. Feeling of some frustration, the teacher altered his stance towards parents:

"In general, I adopted toward the parents a somewhat reserved and cold attitude. I felt that if they cultivated me they did it with the intention of getting favors for their children, and I resented that. I therefore adopted a pose toward them that was at once respectful and aloof."

"The victory was not always with me. Some parents, in fact all who made a determined attempt, were able to break through my shell. I must admit that whenever they did I always adopted a more human attitude toward the child." (p. 71)
Teachers report that they respond on an affective level to their experiences with parents. Experiences with parents are in part experiences of self in parent contact situation. Teachers develop and hold feelings and beliefs about themselves in these contexts.

Kaplan (1950, above) wrote of the personal inadequacies of teachers as one impediment to home-school relations (pp. 93-5). Sayler (1971, above) reported that teachers fear they will not be able to establish a working relationship with parents or get along with parents (p. 28). Lortie (1975, above) noted that teachers have reason to fear and distrust parents, and that they find some parent contact occasions "interpersonally awkward" (pp. 188-9). McGeeney (1969) reported that teachers are apprehensive in the face of parent contact (p. 11). And Grace (1974) wrote of the vulnerability which teachers find in the role; vulnerability stems from the intruding presence of outsiders, including parents (p. 214). These reports add to understanding of teacher's experience of self in parent contact situations.

Interviews conducted to formulate the questionnaire for this study confirmed the literature reports. One educator interviewed described some teachers as shy in the face of parent contact. Another spoke of both teachers and parents feeling uncomfortable in contact situations, and thus avoiding unnecessary contacts. One educator spoke of the need for tact, which she felt some teachers do not have. Several
spoke of the value of experience for developing interpersonal skills and reducing anxiety.

Teachers report in many ways and on many occasions that they are aware of themselves responding on an affective level to parent contact. Their experience of self in parent contact situations influences their behavior in those situations, and when faced with the possibility of new parent contact events. Teacher-initiation of parent contact may be influenced by the teacher's experience of self.

Questionnaire items written to assess teacher's experience of self in parent contact situations are:

Part Two.

4. I feel good about being a teacher in this school.
7. I find contact with parents rewarding to me as a person.
9. I feel good about my teaching.
34. When I contact parents, I find that I am comfortable conversing with them.
36. In my experience with parents, they understand what I am trying to communicate.
46. In my experience, contact with parents leaves me feeling uncomfortable.
57. In my experience, it seems that I don't have the interpersonal skills to work with parents.
71. Parents are satisfied with the contacts they have with me.

Teacher's Experience of Role in Parent Contact Situations

By the fact that they are assigned a role, teachers bring to the situation of parent contact certain role
definitions, expectations, and norms which they believe appropriate to filling the assigned role. In parent contact situations, teachers experience the role as it functions in particular contexts and adjust their role definitions, expectations, and norms accordingly. A teacher's experience of the teacher role might influence contacting practices.

Though a teacher's classroom role is complex, many aspects of the role are at least operationally defined. A teacher's role in working with parents is much less clear. Three studies have indicated that the parents' role in the school is not well understood; this may be, in part, because the teacher's role in working with parents is also in doubt. Allison (1961) used a Q-sort methodology to compare teachers' and parents' conceptions of the parent role in the elementary school. Allison concluded that there is dissatisfaction among parents and teachers regarding the parent role, but at the same time there is little agreement between the two groups and within the two groups about what the parent role is or should be. Hanges (1971, above), studying parent involvement in an urban elementary school, identified factors which impede a home-school partnership. Included among the factors was unclear role definitions for parents and missing guidelines in joint decision-making. Finally, Diem (1975) studied conflict among parents, students, and teachers in a high school, using non-participant observation of conflict and counseling sessions, followed by questionnaire procedures. Several sources of conflict were
identified, but more importantly here, Diem noted that the people observed and questioned responded differently according to their roles. These different responses had the potential for creating conflict. For example, students did not generally approve of misconduct but would not report fellow students for violations. Teachers, accepting the authoritarian role given them, enforced all school rules whether or not they personally agreed with them. Parents expected all the school rules to be enforced, but would not themselves report a youngster for misconduct. Such different expectations in role performance may arise from misunderstandings of particular roles and their interrelationships.

In addition to unclear role definitions and differing role expectations, another influence on a teacher's experience of the role may be the interpretation of the role by the teacher. Langdon and Stout (1954), in their discussion of the teacher's feelings about conducting parent interviews, considered that some teachers do not consider work with parents as a part of their role. "Maybe there is the feeling that parents are not the teacher's job, that she is employed to teach the children and nothing more" (p. 59). Scriven (1975), in a more recent article, described two general types of parent-teacher interaction: parent education--teaching parents to become better parents, and parent involvement in the school program. Scriven stated that few teachers feel themselves qualified for the
parent-educator part of the role, and feel that part inap­propriate for them (pp. 53-4). Teachers' feelings about parent-involvedment, however, also varies, suggesting they may interpret differently their roles in parent involvement programs.

Interviews conducted in the preparation of the question­naire for this study supported the notion that teachers' interpretations of their roles may be an influence over their contacting practices. One educator interviewed spoke of the need for parent-counseling, but did not believe most teachers saw that function as part of their role. Several educators described circumstances in which the teacher or other school personnel were placed in the posture of acting as a child-advocate to the parents. Again, this was a part of the role that some teachers accepted while others did not. The educators reported that, in a general sense, teachers vary on the ways and extents to which they consider parent contact a part of their teaching role.

The literature on role conflict has been extensive. Getzels (1971) discussed "Conflict and Role Behavior in the Educational Setting," and enumerated a number of potential points of conflict which arise from the interaction of the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of behavior in a cultural context. Included in the five major points of conflict are conflicts between cultural values and insti­tutional expectations, conflicts between role expectations
and personality dispositions, conflicts between roles and within roles, conflicts deriving from personality disorder, and conflicts in the perception of role expectations (pp. 325-34).

Sykes (1953) and E. M. Moore (1973) concurred, and they moved the consideration to the event of parent-teacher conflict. Sykes stated:

Conflict tends to arise between parents and teachers insofar as the system of values and norms inculcated by the schools is different from the system of values and norms held by the parents. These differences may be very slight, no more than a shift of emphasis being involved, and yet they may evoke the most bitter recriminations. (p. 88)

E. M. Moore, in a review of human rights and home-school communications, noted the same kinds of conflicts between and among groups within British schools (pp. 53-60).

Unclearly defined roles, roles defined to include or exclude particular behaviors, differences in role performance, or conflict associated with the teacher role may all be a part of the teacher's experience of role in parent contact situations. Each of these facets of role may influence the teacher's contacting practices.

The questionnaire items written to assess teacher's experience of role in parent contact situations are:

Part Two.

18. In my experience, it is part of my responsibility to keep close contact with the parents of my students.

21. My role as a teacher in contacting parents is not clear to me.
28. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about matters concerning their child.

32. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about school matters in general.

40. In my experience, I see that teachers who care about their students maintain close contact with the parents.

62. I find that parents expect me to do things that are not part of my role as a teacher.

70. In my experience, I find that the parent role conflicts with the teacher role.

**Conditions that Can Be Related to Teacher's Experience of Others in the School Environment**

Within the school environment the teacher comes into contact with others who also have some degree of association with parents. Included in these groups are administrators, colleague teachers, and students. The teacher's experience of each of these groups might influence the teacher's contacting practices.

**Teacher's Experience of Administrators in Parent Contact Situations**

There is a belief expressed in the professional literature that the principal's actions can strongly influence the actions of the teaching staff with regard to parent contact. Piers (1955) stated:

> The teacher's attitudes in a given school tend to reflect the attitudes of the administrator, whether these attitudes are related to his educational philosophy, his concepts of discipline and guidance, or his view of the community's role in education. (pp. 39-40)
Osborne (1959, above) concurred:

The principal, because of his leadership role, is in a position to set the tone or atmosphere of the school's attitude toward parents. (p. 34)

The principal, it would seem, can exert influence on the practices of the teaching staff.

The actual nature of that influence and how it is enacted is still a question. J. E. Harris (1973) studied teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership roles in twenty public schools. Survey results revealed that the dimension of leadership which teachers rated highest was consideration--regarding comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers. The dimension of leadership which was rated lowest by teachers was the initiation of structure--clearly defining the principal's own role and letting followers know what is expected.

Grant, in *Parents and Teachers as Partners* (1952), described another kind of influence the principal can exert. Grant recounted the statement of one parent regarding teacher contact:

"I don't have many opportunities to see my child's teacher because the principal feels that teachers, who are not well paid in our town, have too many duties imposed on them in their spare time, and that if a parent wants to see a teacher she should manage to find the time during school hours." (p. 14)

The principal may thus serve as a buffer between parents and teachers. The triad of parent-principal-teacher has also been noted and briefly described by Lortie (1975, above).
He suggested that while the principal may be relied upon by the teacher to initiate and mediate contact with parents, this dependency incurs, for the teacher, another set of constraints on autonomy. It can be a double-bind situation (p. 192).

Administrative support, however, can also be a freeing influence on teacher behavior. Lolis (1962, above), in a study of teacher morale and attitudes toward parents, found that higher parent attitude scores were earned by teachers who reported that their administrators supported them in differences with parents. Administrative support might thus encourage teachers in their contacting practices. Lightfoot (1975, above) came to much the same conclusion. Where teachers saw the parents as a "threatening force," they sought institutional support, and buffers from public contact. Principals functioned in these capacities, but also held allegiances to power structures outside the school proper; principals may or may not have provided that institutional support. In their work with teachers, though, principals could play their role to provide a base for constructive parent-teacher contact:

Those administrators who support, encourage and reward personal authority will probably be, at the same time, encouraging teachers to engage in relationships with parents that do not depend on the protection of institutional barriers. (p. 39)
Interviews conducted in the formulation of the questionnaire for this study added to the understanding of the influence a principal may exert on a teacher's practices. One principal felt very strongly that the support a principal could offer a teacher plays an important part in that teacher's subsequent work with parents. Support could be general support, in the forms of demonstrated interest in the teacher and the teacher's students; support could be specifically related to parent-teacher contact situations and practices. All the principals interviewed identified variances in the practices of their teachers, evidencing a knowledge of individual differences. On this matter, principals were able to speak of many members of the staff, while the teachers interviewed were less aware of the practices of many of their colleagues. All of the educators identified specific practices encouraged by the school involving parent contact; in this way at least, each person seemed to indicate administrative support for parent contact and some involvement in creating the conditions for that contact.

The questionnaire items written to assess the teacher's experience of administrators in parent contact situations are:

1. My principal is supportive of my teaching and my other school efforts.
2. When I contact parents, my principal is aware of it.
3. I don't know what the principal expects of me regarding parent contact.
17. I find that my principal sets a positive tone among the faculty with regard to parent-teacher relationships.

39. My principal actively encourages teachers to contact parents regarding school matters.

55. In my experience, my principal supports me in front of a parent.

61. I find that my principal shows little interest in me and my students.

74. My principal supports me in my discipline decisions regarding students.

76. My principal supports me in my academic decision regarding children.

Teacher's Experience of Other Teachers in Parent Contact Situations

A teacher experiences other teachers in parent contact situations. A teacher observes, hears about, and speaks with other teachers regarding parents in general, and parent contact practices and events more specifically. Experiences of other teachers might influence a teacher's contact practices.

Hanges (1971, above) found that one of the factors impeding the development of a parent-teacher partnership was the staff's rigidity in accepting new ideas. In this finding may lie some evidence of the influence teachers exercise on one another. Lightfoot (1975, above) stated the case even more directly. Lightfoot noted that teachers depend on one another for confirmation and support.

The mutual protection of individual teachers and the structure of the total school insulated both from the forces of change. . . . Teachers think of building alliances with other teachers as a move towards strengthening their position against the criticism of parents. (p. 39)
Though teachers may not adopt their practices from the examples of other teachers, in seeking to be mutually supportive and defensive, they may be hesitant to initiate practices which appear to threaten or diminish their colleagues. Thus, some degree of peer influence may be felt.

The interviews conducted in formulating the questionnaire for this study did not confirm a strong influence of teachers on one another. Those educators interviewed spoke of individual teachers as being different, having different values, different practices, and different outcomes. It was recognized that some teachers initiate more parent contact than others, but such differences were not subjected to strong value statements by the educators. Individual preferences seemed to be paramount in the discussions.

Questionnaire items written to assess the teacher's experience of other teachers in parent contact situations are:

Part Two.

10. Maintaining close parent-teacher contact is a high priority item for other teachers in my school.

43. I see that teachers in my school initiate contact with parents less than I do.

75. I find that a good source of advice regarding parent relationships is other teachers.

Teacher's Experience of Students in Parent Contact Situations

The subject of much but not all parent-teacher contact is the student. The consideration of the student can be
the motivation for contact, and a source of concern when contact does not produce positive results. Teachers report that in their experience consideration of the student influences their contacting practices. Students themselves can directly influence the teacher's practices.

Erickson (1973, above), in a study of parent and teacher attitudes toward parent conferences as opposed to grade cards, found that teachers' responses were affected by the achievement level of the child more than any of the other variables used with the exception of school-community differences. When the children are low achievers, teachers' responses tended to be more uncertain than when the children were high achievers. Parents of girls tended to agree more with information conveyed during conferences than parents of boys. With regard to report cards, however, that trend was reversed. Thus, student characteristics influenced teachers' responses in parent contact situations.

In the interviews conducted to formulate the questionnaire for this study, teachers reported that consideration of a student's wishes influences their practices. Several educators reported that students like to have notes sent home when they do well in school. Teachers often comply with such requests. One teacher, who made home visits regularly, reported that students like the teacher to see things at home that the student cannot bring to school; in part for that reason, she continued her home visiting
practice. The educators also reported that on occasion student appeals to not contact the parents are sometimes effective. One educator reported that students sometimes "play" school against thome, teacher against parent; on such occasions, parents and teacher feel uncomfortable and resent being placed in an adversary relationship. Lastly, it was reported that at times school personnel contact parents to mediate between the parents and a frightened or upset student. Thus, teacher's experience of students in parent contact situations can be an influence over contacting practices.

The questionnaire items written to assess the teacher's experience of students in parent contact situations are:

Part Two.

3. I find that students like to me contact their parents when they do something well.

19. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the better, I contact the parents.

20. In my experience, students play parents against the teacher.

25. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the worse, I contact the parents.

68. It is important to the students that I know about their homes and families.

72. I find that students benefit when I contact their parents.
Teaching is a complex task involving knowledge, skills, and attitudes which the professional teacher must develop. Parent contact is one aspect of this complex task, and it cannot be completely isolated from the other aspects of teaching. Parent contact shares in the overall demand on the teacher's personal and professional resources; in that sense, parent contact shares with other aspects of teaching in the creation and use of the school environment. Factors in the school environment other than parent contact itself may influence the teacher's contacting practices.

Teacher's Experience of the School Organization

Creaser (1966, above) studied parent-teacher contact as related to school size, number of bussed pupils, and organizational climate. Among the conclusions reached in the study was that organizational climate was related to school size but not to the total amount of parent contact per teacher, or to particular kinds of contact. Hanges (1971, above), on the other hand, found that a welcoming school atmosphere was among the factors which promoted home-school partnership in an urban elementary school. Thus the school atmosphere or climate as the teacher experiences it, may influence parent-teacher contact.

Kozuch (1974) studied the effects of occupational identity and bureaucratic constraints on implementation of
a new educational policy. Interviews and observations were completed over a fifteen-month period of time in a junior high school, as the staff attempted to implement a new policy for reporting student progress to parents. The analysis of the data revealed that though a willingness to change was present, the situational features which foster persistence of traditional behaviors (the involvement of administrators, parents, and students with the policy; the need for academic motivation and control of students; the presence of systemic constraints on the new policy within the broad situational context; the daily classroom routine) prevented implementation on the scale intended. Though parent contact is not necessarily a new policy, it is a practice which requires facilitation by other environmental factors. Kozuch's study suggested that such factors are present and are potentially constraining.

Kelly (1974) wrote of the "complexities of the educational process" as a constraint seen by teachers on involving parents. Though Kelly was writing about the education of handicapped children, many teachers of regular classrooms would concur in this assessment.

The modern educational system deals with a bewildering number of complex teaching methods and materials as a routine matter. A standard four-year program of teacher preparation barely enables one to cope with these complexities, and in many states, fifth-year programs are now required. Such complexities tend to rule out all but the simplest forms of parental involvement. (p. 10)
The complexity of teaching and of school life may be constraints upon a teacher's contacting practices.

The questionnaire items written to assess the teacher's experience of the school organization are:

Part Two.

23. In my experience, working with parents is difficult because the bureaucracy of the school doesn't facilitate it.

38. I find that parents feel welcome in this school.

41. In my experience, the mood of the people in this school works against contacting and maintaining relationships with parents.

51. School is so complex today, it is hard to keep parents informed about what goes on.

**Teacher's Experience of Time, Space, and Energy Factors**

Brown listed five school conditions affecting home-school relations in *Partners in Education* (1950). School facilities that allow for private, uninterrupted conversations are listed first. Opportunities for contact between parent and teacher, and curricular programs which encourage cooperation are listed second and third. Development of the same educational language is fourth. Finally listed is the provision of leadership and facilities for parent education programs (pp. 19-22). Without these conditions, it was suggested, teachers would not be able to work toward the establishment of an effective home-school partnership.

Brown also wrote of the regimentation of teachers, which did not allow the necessary flexibility to work with
a variety of parent and home needs. Many other authors also listed time constraints as a critical factor. Sayler (1971) wrote that teachers fear that parents will take up too much of their time (p. 27). E. M. Moore (1973) cautioned against the uncontrolled expansion of communications that would result in usurpation of the teacher's time for accomplishing other tasks (p. 62). Lortie (1975) reported that teachers feel that most forms of parent contact are "a waste of time" (p. 189). Time limits and the physical weariness of the teaching staff are obstacles cited by W. D. Wall (1947, p. 110). Time, and the limitations imposed by space, physical stamina, and program are part of the teacher's experience of school life.

The interviews conducted in the formulation of the questionnaire for this study added some confirmation to the supposition that school environment is important. One educator who reported a considerable amount of contact, reported that she typically did not arrive home until about three hours after school. She recognized that this represented a considerable time commitment, which she was willing to make. She did not expect that other teachers did the same. Limitations on the use of equipment, such as telephones, and materials was also cited by several of the educators as a constraint on contact. No educator made reference to the organizational climate of the school as a negative factor, or as a factor which bore on their contact practices.
The questionnaire items written to assess the teacher's experience of time, space, and energy factors are:

Part Two.

31. In my experience, contacting parents is a waste of time.

33. There is sufficient space (privacy/rooms) and material (phones/paper/equipment) in my school to contact parents as I like to.

44. The more students I have, the less time I have for contact with parents.

45. I get worn down trying to keep up with parent contacts.

49. Day-to-day teaching and schoolwork do not allow enough time to contact parents.

**Summary**

Three sources were tapped to identify the fullest range of conditions that might influence teacher-initiated contact with parents. The review of literature was the mainstay of the search; it was augmented and confirmed by interviews with field-based educators. The researcher's own experience served to tentatively organize and place into perspective the possible conditions as they were identified.

The conditions were organized and displayed in six sections which grossly encompass the range of conditions. The six sections are: (1) conditions of a demographic nature; (2) professional practice and experience conditions; (3) conditions related to teacher's experience of parents; (4) conditions related to teacher's experience of self and role; (5) conditions related to other persons including principal,
other teachers, and students; and (6) conditions related to the school environment.

The six sections are neither discrete nor exclusive. They are merely a reasonable way of listing and discussing conditions culled from a variety of sources. The six sections will give way to the more functional and defensible map of the field developed in the analysis procedures of this study.
CHAPTER III
THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In Chapter I it was stated that the purpose of this study was to seek answers to three research questions. They are:

a. What are the conditions which might influence a teacher in the initiation of parent contact?
b. How do practicing teachers view and organize the field of conditions?
c. Within this organization of the conditions, can profiles of teachers be developed which mark the differences between teachers with a high frequency versus teachers with a low frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact?

In order to answer these research questions, a questionnaire was developed and administered to a sample of elementary school teachers. Based on data generated by the questionnaire, a selected number of teachers were given follow-up interviews. The combined questionnaire and interview data were used in the development of the desired profiles. This chapter will describe the teacher sample, the instrumentation, the data gathering procedures, and the data analysis techniques used in this study.
The Teacher Sample

To generate the data for this study, a sample of teachers was selected from the elementary schools of one cooperating school district in the Central Ohio area. Confining the sample to teachers at the elementary school level, and to those teachers employed in one school district placed limitations on the generalizability of the results of the study. It is believed, however, that the cooperating district is not atypical of other districts, suggesting that the results may indeed be useful on a broader scale. Further, limiting the sample in such a manner has the advantage of making possible a more context-specific questionnaire design, thus enhancing the opportunity for more accurate data. This was deemed especially important at this stage of the research in teacher-initiated parent contact.

A second limitation was placed on the sample. Participation was restricted to teachers who held positions as regular classroom teachers of grades one through five, or primary and intermediate. Though it would have been possible to include kindergarten teachers, special classroom teachers, special subject teachers, and tutors, it was likely that the data generated from their responses, because of the special nature of their teaching assignments, would have differed markedly from the regular classroom teachers.
Mixing the responses would have obscured the meanings of both groups of data. Since the unit of this study is the individual elementary teacher, and not the elementary school it was decided to seek the participation only of those whose responses could be interpreted as representative of the elementary teacher.

Description of the Cooperating School District

Working with the Office of Student Laboratory Experiences in the College of Education at The Ohio State University, a school district was identified that was willing to host the study. Coordination of the arrangements for entry into the district was handled by an officer of the district, the Director of Federal Relations and Research. This officer made the initial contacts with principals from the individual schools to obtain their consent and to initiate the process by which the consent of their staffs could be elicited. After these initial contacts, the researcher himself worked directly with the individual school principals and staffs.

The school district in which the study was conducted is a large district, relative to other districts in the Central Ohio area. Its size may be measured in terms of its enrollment, its number of schools, and the geographical area which it encompasses. A total enrollment of about 17,000 students is composed of 7,700 elementary, 4,100 middle and 5,200 high school students. The current school directory
lists seventeen elementary schools, five middle schools, four high schools, and a substantial administrative staff in the central office serving the district.

Because the school district encompasses a large geographic area, 127 square miles, a range of socioeconomic types was represented: several of the schools serve what can best be described as rural populations, while those buildings which are closer to the central city can reasonably be labeled urban. Between these extremes within the district lie several suburban schools. The socioeconomic range can also be described by a review of the numbers of students eligible for and receiving free school lunches under the School Lunch Program of the State of Ohio. One very small, rural school serves free lunches to 100 percent of its youngsters. A small, urban elementary school provides the lunches for nearly 80 percent of its enrollment. At the other end of the continuum, a small, suburban elementary school and a small, rural elementary school provide such lunches for 6.5 percent and 8.5 percent of their respective student bodies. Within the district, and including the high schools which tend to have much smaller percentages of students using the lunch program, an average of 18.3 percent of the student population are so served.

The elementary schools in the district, the level at which this study was focused, are seventeen in number and have an approximate student enrollment of 7,700. This
enrollment includes kindergarten, special classroom, and first through fifth grade youngsters. Thus when the final teacher sample was chosen, which includes only teachers identified as regular classroom, first through fifth or primary and intermediate grade teachers, a smaller total number of students would be the population addressed by the teachers represented in the study. A count of all such teachers amounts to 219 in the seventeen schools.

Selection of the Sample

Working with the Director of Federal Relations and Research, a sample of the elementary school teachers was selected. The following procedure was used. First, the officer selected three schools which would reasonably represent the range of socioeconomic status and school sizes. These schools, A, B, and C, were contacted and used for the initial interview process, described in Chapter II. Second, each of the remaining schools was assigned a number from one to fourteen. Using a table of random numbers, six schools, over one-third of the total number, were selected; an additional school was identified as a precaution against the refusal of any single school to participate, or a poor response rate from the individual teachers within participating schools. The additional school, however, was not needed. Thus, six schools, re-numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, were invited to participate in the study, and agreed to do so.
The process used in the selection of the three schools for initial interviews is described by Kerlinger (1973) as purposive sampling. The six schools in which the questionnaire was actually administered, however, comprised a probability sample; they were selected through simple cluster sampling (p. 130). The selection by these methods was seen to be particularly appropriate to the context and the problem at hand. The purposive sampling used first, assured the inclusion of a range of schools that random sampling for a small number could not do. While a straight random sample selection of the elementary teachers for the administration of the questionnaire might have been more representative of the total district, gaining entrance to all of the schools would have been difficult if not unlikely. Further, administration of the instrument would have been complicated far beyond the offsetting gain. The final sample itself is not an unreasonable representation of total population.

**Description of the six schools in the sample.** The six elementary schools selected and agreeing to participate in the study are geographically spread within the school district. They are among the largest and smallest elementary schools in enrollment in the district, with somewhat stronger representation in the sample given to the larger schools. The schools are rural, suburban, and urban, and the socioeconomic status of the school populations varies.
Again, using the percentage of students who are eligible for and receiving free school lunches as an indicator of socio-economic types, the six schools range from a maximum of 35 percent to a minimum of about nine percent. As the enrollments of the schools varies, so too do the numbers of regular classroom teachers. The smallest school has seven positions for teachers of primary and intermediate grades; the three largest schools have twenty such positions. Table I summarizes the descriptions of the six schools, and includes similar data for the three schools chosen for the initial interviews.

Description of the Teacher Sample

In the six schools a total of 95 teachers were eligible to participate. This number includes fully 43 percent of the regular classroom, elementary school teachers in the cooperating school district. From the 95 teachers, 88 returns were received. Seven teachers did not respond to the questionnaire, in some cases because of absence on the day the questionnaire was administered or on the day the completed questionnaires were gathered. In a few cases, the teachers simply chose not to participate.

One of the 88 completed questionnaires was unusable. The responses on Part Two were always in the extremes of the continuum. In noting this pattern to the teacher, it became clear that the teacher did not know how to use the five-point continuum, and that the answers given were not
Table 1

Demographic Information on the Six Schools Selected for the Study, and the Three Schools Used for Initial Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Number</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent Receiving Free Lunch</th>
<th>Rank in District&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>20.75</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>20.19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>35.21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>20.96</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>582</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>560</td>
<td>21.63</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>79.91</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>13.57</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Based on total student enrollments; from smallest to largest.

an accurate representation of the teacher's experiences. When the use of the continuum was explained, however, this teacher chose not to review the questionnaire or to alter the responses given. This rendered the data unreliable, and it would not have served the purpose of the study well to include this respondent's data.

Thus, a total of 87 usable questionnaires was obtained from the 95 original subjects. This number represents a
return rate of 91.5 percent. The 87 teachers comprise fully 39 percent of the regular classroom, elementary school teachers in the cooperating school district.

Further information about the teacher sample is available from Part One of the questionnaire. (A description of the questionnaire itself follows later in this chapter.) Though this information was intended for use in the identification of conditions influencing parent contact practices and in the development of teacher profiles, it can also serve to describe the sample of teacher-respondents. These data will be presented here for that purpose, and to begin to build a background against which the full report of the results, in Chapter IV, should be understood.

**Question one. Teacher's assignment.** The teachers were asked to identify the grade level(s) to which they were assigned. Table 2 summarizes their responses.

**Question two. Teacher's class enrollment.** The teachers were asked to record the number of students in their classes. The counts ranged from classes of 23 students to classes of 33 students. Just over half of the teachers taught classes of 27 to 29 students. Table 3 summarizes their responses.

**Questions four and five. Teacher's experience.** The teachers were asked to report both their years of experience as teachers, and the number of years they had been in the school building they were currently assigned. The range of years in response to each question was large, though,
Table 2
Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Grade Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level(s)</th>
<th>Number of Teachers at Each Level</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Rounded to the nearest percent.
Table 3

Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Class Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students Enrolled in Class</th>
<th>Number of Teachers Per Enrollment Number</th>
<th>Percent of Sample*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
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</table>

*Rounded to the nearest percent.

Understandably the range of total years of experience was somewhat larger. Though the ranges were large, the sample teachers tended to be concentrated at the levels of less experience. Fully 50 percent of the teachers had five or less total years of experience to their careers. Sixty percent of the teachers had spent four or less years in the school building to which they were currently assigned.
Table 4

Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Teaching Experience Total and Teaching Experience in Current School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<sup>a</sup>Rounded to the nearest percent.
Table 4 summarizes the responses to both questions about teacher's experience.

**Question six. Teacher's residence.** The teachers were asked to state whether or not they lived ten minutes or closer, by car, to the school building to which they were assigned. Forty-one percent reported that they lived within that distance. Table 5 summarizes their responses.

**Question seven. Teacher's sex.** The teachers were asked to indicate their sex. Table 6 summarizes their responses.

**Questions three, eight, and twelve. Parents' and teacher's socioeconomic status.** Teachers were asked to respond to three questions which described their own socioeconomic status and that of their students' parents. In Question Eight, the teachers were asked to report the highest level of formal schooling completed by their fathers. This may be an antecedent of the teacher's own socioeconomic status. There were six levels from which to choose, and all six levels were used by the respondents. The six levels might be grouped into two larger groups: Those completing high school or less, and those with some college study or more. Using this grouping, the teacher sample divided with 46 percent in the former group and 54 percent in the latter. Table 7 summarizes the responses to this question.

The teachers were also asked to indicate directly their socioeconomic level and the level of the parents of their students. This response taps a perception of the teacher
Table 5

Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Minutes or Closer by Car</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farther than 10 Minutes by Car</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Rounded to the nearest percent.

Table 6

Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Rounded to the nearest percent.
Table 7
Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Father's Level of Formal Schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's Level of Schooling</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School (to 8th grade)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree Completed</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Graduate Study</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Degree Completed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Rounded to nearest percent.

which is not necessarily based on statistical definitions of the socioeconomic levels. As such it is less "factual" than other responses in Part One. This reservation in hand, useful information about the sample is still gained from their responses. Five levels were offered ranging from upper class to lower class. However, all of the responses regarding the socioeconomic status of the parents of the students fell into only two levels: middle class and lower-middle class. Teachers' perceptions of their own status was slightly more varied and higher. Table 8 summarizes the teachers' responses to Questions Three and Twelve.
Table 8

Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Designation of Students' Parents' Socioeconomic Level, and of Their Own Socioeconomic Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic Levels</th>
<th>Students' Parents' Socioeconomic Level</th>
<th>Teachers' Own Socioeconomic Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Teachers</td>
<td>Percent of Sample(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-Middle Class</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-Middle Class</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Rounded to the nearest percent.

A comparison was made between each teacher's indication of his or her own socioeconomic status and that of the parents of the students. The comparison placed a teacher's status in one of five categories: higher than the parents by two levels or more, higher by one level, the same level as, lower by one level, and lower by two levels or more. This comparison reveals that 70 percent of the teachers saw themselves as higher socioeconomically by one level or more than the parents of their students. Table 9 summarizes this comparison.
Table 9

Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Comparison of Own Socioeconomic Level to Socioeconomic Level of Students' Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Samplea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher by 2 Levels or More</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher by 1 Level</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Same Level As</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower by 1 Level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower by 2 Levels or More</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aRounded to nearest percent.

Questions nine, ten, and thirteen. Teacher's education.

The teachers were asked to provide information about their own educational background in three questions. They were asked to describe the institution from which they received their teaching certification as larger or smaller than 6,000 students. They were asked to report the highest level of their formal schooling. They were asked to report whether they had ever participated in an educational experience specifically designed about the topic of parent-teacher relationships. The responses to these three questions are summarized in Table 10.
Table 10

Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers on Three Indicators of Educational Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators of Educational Background</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger than 6,000 Students</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller than 6,000 Students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Formal Schooling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree Completed</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Graduate Student/Continuing Education</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree Completed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Masters or Ph.D. Study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Experience Focused on Parent-Teacher Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Rounded to the nearest percent.

Examination of Table 10 shows that over three-quarters of the teachers received their teacher certification from undergraduate institutions of over 6,000 students. Only 29 percent had completed a masters degree; their graduate studies had been chiefly in the areas of early childhood/elementary education or reading. A few of the respondents received their masters degree in administration, counseling, learning disabilities, or other fields. The table also shows that only a small percentage of the respondents reported having
participated in an educational experience that focused on parent-teacher relationships. Teachers who had participated in such an experience generally rated the experiences as useful or very useful. Notable in their descriptions of the experiences were graduate courses which focused on the topic; teachers unanimously rated the experiences as useful or very useful.

**Question eleven. Teacher's professional affiliation.** The teachers were asked to indicate whether they belong to professional organizations. Of chief concern here was membership in organizations through which contract negotiation might be conducted. Teachers also reported memberships in honorary organizations and professional sororities, but these affiliations were not counted. Table 11 summarizes the responses.

**Questions fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. School-, parent-, and teacher-initiated contacts.** The teachers were asked to report the number of contacts they have with parents through three different sources of initiation. Responses to each of these three questions was totalled separately. The responses were transformed into frequencies per school year for each teacher. Table 12 summarizes the responses of the full sample of teachers. An examination of the table reveals that the teacher sample is most uniformly influenced in parent contact through school-initiated methods. The greatest variations occur in teacher-initiated contact, which
Table 11
Number and Percentage Distribution of Sample Teachers by Professional Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership in a Professional Organization</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Percent of Sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Rounded to the nearest percent.

Table 12
Reported Frequencies and Means of Parent-Teacher Contact for an Individual Teacher per School Year by Three Sources of Initiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Initiation</th>
<th>Minimum Number Reported</th>
<th>Maximum Number Reported</th>
<th>Mean Number Reported</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-Initiated</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>341.2</td>
<td>133.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Initiated</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>182.9</td>
<td>149.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Initiated</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2,220</td>
<td>374.8</td>
<td>438.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is also by mean score the most frequent form of parent-teacher contact. Parent-initiated contact is the least frequent overall form of contact reported.

Question seventeen. Reasons for teacher-initiated contact. The teachers were asked to indicate which of several reasons they felt were influences on their decisions to initiate contact with parents. Fifteen reasons were given as options, and a sixteenth blank was left for unique responses. The teachers were asked to indicate both the range of reasons by marking all those which were applicable, and the most important reasons by double-marking three reasons. Table 13 presents the summary of their responses. Noting lack of academic progress and noting academic progress are most frequently cited as important reasons for teacher-initiated contact. Noting discipline problems follows. Interestingly, while 22 teachers report that noting social emotional adjustment was not a reason for contacting parents, 21 teachers cited it as an important reason. Similarly even splits toward the extremes may be marked in noting a student's general health, sickness, or injury, and seeking special help for the student. Collecting fees is never seen as an important reason, and several other reasons are viewed nearly the same. The additional reasons cited by three teachers are to discuss "squabbles among children; unhealthy quarreling, playground injuries, and the use of 'non-school' language," "seeking parents' reaction to trips
Table 13
Teachers' Views of Various Reasons for Teacher-Initiated Contact with Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>No Reason</th>
<th>One Reason</th>
<th>An Important Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Noting academic progress</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Noting lack of academic progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Noting social/emotional adjustment</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Noting lack of social/emotional adjustment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Noting discipline problems</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Collecting fees</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Seeking help in class or on field trips</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Noting student's general health, sickness, or injury</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Noting extended absences, giving assignments</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Noting frequent absences</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Seeking general information</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Seeking special help for students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Developing an acquaintance</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Explaining curriculum</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Sharing general information</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Other reasons</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
outside of school," and "keeping children for tutoring."
One teacher who had established a "Parent Day" each week, in
which "a child and his or her parents share interests,
hobbies, experiences with class," cited this as one of the
important reasons for initiating contact with parents.

Instrumentation, Procedures, and Analysis--
the Parent Contact Questionnaire

Two instruments were developed and used to generate the
data of this study. The first is a two-part questionnaire,
administered to the full sample of elementary school
teachers. The second instrument is an interview guide used
with a selected number of teachers in follow-up interviews.
The instrumentation, procedures, and analysis techniques for
each of these instruments will be described separately and
in series, because that is the manner in which they were
developed and used. Analysis of the data from the question-
aire was the basis for the development of the interview
guide; this same sequence seems to be the most promising
for purposes of clarity in explanation, as well.

Development of the Questionnaire

As stated in Chapter II, three sources were tapped to
identify the field of conditions that might influence teacher-
initiated parent contact. The review of literature was the
mainstay of the search. The review was augmented and
confirmed by interviews with field-based educators, who practice in the same school district chosen for the study. The researcher's own experience served to tentatively organize and place in perspective the possible conditions as they were identified.

The generation of items. Each of the possible conditions was placed on a 4 x 6 index card along with the source reference from which it was derived. These cards were, in turn, organized into what seemed to be reasonable categories and sub-categories for displaying and discussing the conditions. These categories are neither discrete nor exclusive, but they do function well for the purposes intended.

Each of the categories and sub-categories was examined toward the goal of generating items that could represent that category on what was, at this point, called an inventory. Such a process requires a degree of inference in moving from one source, such as a prior research study or interview statement with its own context and specific meaning, to a new statement which represents that source and other sources in a more generalized sense. In writing the inventory items, efforts were made to represent the spirit of the conditions cited in the sources while removing the context and specified meanings. Furthermore, attention was given to representing the breadth of each category and sub-category, if not the depth of possible meanings.
Through this judgmental process, 128 items were generated. These items were divided into two groups and placed on the preliminary draft of the Parent Contact Inventory (see Appendix A). The first group of sixteen items, demographic and professional practice information, comprised Part One. One additional item, Number Seven, was added to determine the sex of the respondents. The remaining 112 items were placed in Part Two of the Inventory and were designed to assess the respondent's experience of various aspects of parent contact situations. These items were examined and several were rewritten to reverse the polarity of the scaled responses. The items were placed in random order. In total, the preliminary draft of the Parent Contact Inventory contained 129 items spaced over ten pages.

**The pilot test.** In order to determine the useability of the Inventory, a pilot test was arranged. The full teaching staff of an elementary school, selected from outside the subject school district, responded to the Inventory. On the basis of the pilot test several conclusions were drawn about both the Inventory and the procedure by which it could best be administered. Among the conclusions were the following:

i. Part One of the Inventory is relatively easy to understand and respond to. The critical questions about the teacher's parent contact practices were clear but complex; several teachers in the pilot test gave incomplete information on these questions.
ii. Part Two of the Inventory is easy to respond to, but is also long and somewhat repetitious. Several items were reported to be ambiguous or to contain educational jargon. Teachers made full use of the range of responses from Never-the-Case to Always-the-Case and reported no difficulty in using such a scale.

iii. The administration of the Inventory is critical to obtaining complete and accurate information, and to relieving the respondent teachers of unnecessary labor. Part One, especially the questions about parent contact practices, would be best completed in a group meeting where the instructions can be given, concepts explained and illustrated, and respondents' questions fielded. Part Two can be completed independently with ease.

The pilot test provided important insights about both the instrument and its administration.

Developing the final instrument. On the basis of the pilot test the instrument was revised and called the Parent Contact Questionnaire. Part One remained essentially the same, though the questions were spaced differently. The parent contact practices questions were rewritten in sentence-like form to clarify their meaning and ease response. Part Two was revised more extensively. Ambiguous items and those that contained jargon were rewritten. Items that were
duplicates or so close in meaning as to be indistinguishable were eliminated. The overall number of items was reduced. Fewer items were placed on each page, and items were spaced so as to ease the reading of and responding to each. The final form of the Questionnaire is more streamlined than the Inventory, but continues to reflect the breadth of the categories and sub-categories from which it was initially drawn.

Description of the Questionnaire

In its final form, the Parent Contact Questionnaire is ten pages in length, containing a total of 95 items (see Appendix B). The Questionnaire is divided into two parts.

Part one. Demographic and professional practice information. The first section of the Questionnaire consists of seventeen items which gather pertinent information about the teacher's personal background and the teacher's professional background and practices in contacting parents. The items are arranged with simpler questions appearing first and more complex questions following. There are some logical connections between several sequenced questions, but most items are independent of adjoining items.

The critical questions about the teacher's practices of contacting parents appear in Part One. These items, Questions Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen, are preceded by a page on which instructions are given. The instructions include guidelines for counting contacts, directions for how
to respond to the three questions, and an example which illustrates and uses the format of responses. The three questions themselves and Question Seventeen appear on the following two pages of the Questionnaire.

Part two. Information about experiences in parent contact situations. The second section of the Questionnaire consists of 78 statements based on the categories and sub-categories displayed in Chapter II. Teachers respond to the statements on a five-point continuum from Never-the-Case to Always-the-Case. The statements are written in experiential terms and teachers are instructed to base their responses on their own past experience. The responses to these items indicate the teacher's experience of the various aspects of parent contact that may comprise conditions which influence that teacher's parent contacting practices. In order to offset the tendency for universally positive or negative responses, care was given to include items with positive valence and items with negative valence. In Part Two, the items are randomly ordered.

Administration of the Questionnaire

When the Parent Contact Questionnaire was developed into its final form, the principals of each of the six schools were contacted to arrange for the administration of the Questionnaire to their respective staffs. Because it was necessary to administer the instrument at regularly scheduled faculty meetings, and because four of the six schools held
their meetings on the first day of the school week, it became necessary for the principals of two of the schools to administer the Questionnaire to their own staffs. A set of instructions were written to guide the administration of the Questionnaire (see Appendix C). These instructions and the necessary number of Questionnaires were delivered to the schools on the day of the staff meetings. The administering principals were coached on both the Questionnaire and the instructions. The researcher administered the instrument to the four other schools over a period of several days. The researcher also followed the written instructions for administration.

The instructions for the administration of the Questionnaire generally call for the administering person to explain the purpose of the study, to assure participants of its confidentiality, to distribute the Questionnaire according to the coded numbers, and to assist the respondents in the completion of Part One. Once this section of the instrument was completed, respondents were asked to complete Part Two at their convenience. Completed Questionnaires were collected by the researcher one or two days after the staff meetings.

The Questionnaires were carefully checked to discover ambiguous or incomplete responses. On a third or fourth visit to each of the schools, individual teachers were contacted to clarify any ambiguities in their responses, to
complete incomplete information, and in some cases simply
to confirm the responses given. Every teacher in the sample
was contacted at least once in this part of the procedure
to assure complete and accurate data. The entire procedure,
from administration of the Questionnaire to subsequent
confirmation of responses lasted eight school days. At the
end of the eight days, the 87 usable Questionnaires had been
obtained.

Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

In order to use the Questionnaire responses to their
fullest potential, several different analyses were under­
taken. These analyses were independent of one another, and
sometimes focused on different items on the Questionnaire.
To facilitate the analyses of the Questionnaire responses,
they were prepared for computer technology. Two different
computer programs were run on the data; one of the two
programs itself was altered to provide two different ways of
viewing the data.

Processing the questionnaire information. The raw
information from the Questionnaire was essentially ready for
statistical methods. Two operations had to be performed,
however, before computer analysis could be done.

In the first operation, responses to Part One, Questions
Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen had to be standardized to the
unit of contacts-per-school-year. Thus, responses that
reported frequency per day, per week, per month, per quarter,
or per semester had to be multiplied by constants to convert to the standard unit. The constants were 160, 32, 8, 4, and 2 respectively. The first three of these constants represent a conservative estimate of the length of the school year: in days, in weeks, and in months. Though they are conservative, they are more likely to be accurate estimates when focusing on the real occasions and frequencies of parent contact. The normal 180 day school year is dotted by lengthy vacations, free days, student and teacher absences, and periods when contact is likely to be low by virtue of other school matters. Furthermore, use of a conservative estimate has not damaged the responses which report contact on a per quarter, per semester, or per year basis; these units were generally chosen by the respondents because they represent natural units of the school calendar; frequencies based on them are not affected by vacations, free days or absences.

Once the reported frequencies had been converted to the standard unit of contacts per year, they were summed to give independent totals for Question Fourteen: school-initiated contacts, Question Fifteen: parent-initiated contacts, and Question Sixteen: teacher-initiated contacts.

The second operation performed on the raw information from the Questionnaire was the transformation into codes adaptable to computer use. Thus, alternate responses for Questions One, Three, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten, Eleven,
Twelve, Thirteen, and Seventeen of Part One were assigned code numbers. The school and teacher codes, Questions Two, Four, Five, Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen already appeared in numerical form, and needed no such transformation. Part Two responses, given on a Never-the-Case to Always-the-Case continuum were transformed by assigning values of one to five to each of the responses. Reversed polarities built into some items when they were written were taken into account when number values were assigned.

When each of the items had thus been transformed into numerical form, the data was transferred to computer cards through a key punching process. Each Questionnaire required two cards: on the first card, 48 columns were used in the recording of school and teacher codes and the responses to Part One; on the second card, the two-digit teacher code number and the responses to the 78 items of Part Two were placed, filling the card. The data from the 87 teachers created a data deck of 174 cards total.

SAS computer program analysis. The Statistical Analysis System computer program was used to supply frequency counts and percentages for Questions One through Thirteen and Seventeen. Frequencies, means, and ranges were determined for parent contacts, Questions Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen. Using the same program, the data was divided and displayed according to each of the six schools of the sample. Some of the results of the SAS computer program analysis
have already been displayed in this chapter as a part of the description of the teacher sample. The remainder of the analysis, which is appropriate to the discussion of results, will be presented in the next chapter.

**BMDP computer program analysis.** The second, and somewhat more sophisticated program used with the data from the Questionnaire was the Biomedical Computer Program (BMDP) for Cluster Analysis.

Cluster analysis is a multivariate analysis technique for discovering the underlying structure of interrelationships, if there is one, of a given set of objects or mental constructs. As such it is often termed a tool of numerical taxonomy. Anderberg (1973) distinguishes between and among three tools for category formulation: classification, discriminant analysis, and cluster analysis:

The cluster analysis problem is the last step in the progression of category sorting problems. In classification the category structure is known, while in discriminant analysis only part of the structure is known and missing information is estimated from labeled samples. The operational objective in both these instances is to classify new observations, that is, recognize them as members of one category or another. In cluster analysis little or nothing is known about the category structure. All that is available is a collection of observations whose category memberships are unknown. The operational objective in this case is to discover a category structure which fits the observations. The problem is frequently stated as one of finding the "natural groups." In a more concrete sense, the objective is to sort the observations into groups such that the degree of "natural association" is high among members of the same group and low between members of different groups. (pp. 2-3)
Because of its ability to "discover" such underlying structures, cluster analysis is often used in the life sciences as a tool by which the relationships among living organisms, or the phenomena of their physical development, can be determined. More recently the taxonomic properties of cluster analysis have been employed in a wider range of fields including the earth sciences, engineering sciences, information sciences, and the behavioral and social sciences. Cluster analysis serves a useful function by making apparent hidden relationships, and also as a means by which theoretical relationships may be tested.

In an article by F. B. Baker entitled "Numerical Taxonomy for Educational Researchers" (1972), the use of clustering techniques is applied to the field of education, and several of the more fundamental considerations in using cluster analysis are discussed. Among those considerations are the selection of a grouping algorithms, the selection of a measure of association between clusters, and the judgmental identification and limitation of clusters in a given set of data. A consideration not addressed in this article, but fundamental to cluster analysis is the decision to cluster either variables or subjects. Though for taxonomic purposes the clustering of subjects is common, for theory testing and development, clustering by variables is equally useful. Both, clustering by variables (the statements in Part Two of the Questionnaire) and clustering by subjects (the teachers responding to the Questionnaire)
were used in this research, for both had the potential of providing answers to the basic research questions.

The computer programs used for the clustering are described in *BMDP Biomedical Computer Programs* (Dixon, 1975). Clustering by variables was done using the program identified as BMDP1M, and clustering by subjects used BMDP2M. Both of the programs are available through the Instruction and Research Computer Center at The Ohio State University. The programs offer several options with regard to algorithms, measures of association, and data displays.

F. B. Baker, in the 1972 article cited above, points to the importance of selecting an appropriate algorithm and measure of association. Though this would seem to be a critical set of decisions, research on cluster analysis techniques demonstrates a great similarity in products even when using different algorithms and measures of association. Everitt (1972), in a review of the field of cluster analysis, discusses various algorithms and measures, and demonstrates this similarity of products. He does not suggest, however, that the options are interchangeable. Rather, he suggests that for a given set of data a number of options might produce useful results, and that the value of the differences is in the judgment of the user.

Selecting from those options available through the Instruction and Research Computer Center, a number of decisions were made. For the present study, hierarchical
clustering was selected. Hierarchical clustering produces a tree structure to display the iterative order in which objects and groups of objects have been joined. The display tree ranges from one extreme in which every object is its own cluster (weak clustering) to the other extreme in which every object is a member of one cluster (strong clustering). Such a display provides the opportunity to use judgment between the extremes in deciding where clusters make mathematical and conceptual sense. The measure of association chosen was Euclidean distance. Euclidean distance is the most commonly used distance measure, and Everitt has suggested that, in general, measures of distance are preferable over measures of similarity, as might be generated by correlations (p. 54). Euclidean distance is defined as "the square root of the sum over all cases of the squared differences between the values of a pair of variables" (Dixon, 1975, p. 308). The distance measure is a metric and may be treated as such. Finally, the amalgamation rule, the rule by which new clusters were assigned values which could, in turn, be used as an order for amalgamation, was the group average method. The group average method defines distance between clusters as the average of the distances between all pairs of variables in the two clusters (Everitt, 1974, p. 15). Milligan (1978) found the group average method to be preferable over other options such as the minimum distance and maximum distance methods.
**Summary: Parent Contact Questionnaire**

The first of two instruments developed to gather data for this study was a two-part questionnaire called the Parent Contact Questionnaire. The instrument was developed using three sources to suggest conditions which might influence a teacher's parent contact practices. The instrument was pilot tested and revised before arriving at the final form. Part One of the Questionnaire gathers demographic and professional practice information about the teacher; Part Two gathers information about the teacher's experiences in parent contact situations. The Questionnaire was administered using a set procedure, designed to gather the most complete and accurate information possible.

Information on the completed Questionnaires was transformed into a format compatible with computer technology. Two distinct analysis programs were set and run on the data. The first program computed frequencies and means chiefly on the data of Part One of the Questionnaire. The second program, called cluster analysis, was run on the data in Part Two of the Questionnaire. Cluster analyses were completed on both variables (statements in Part Two) and subjects (teacher-respondents).

**Instrumentation, Procedures, and Analysis—the Follow-Up Interview**

The second instrument developed to gather data toward answering the research questions is the Follow-Up Interview.
guide. The guide was developed based on the initial analyses of the Parent Contact Questionnaire information. The purpose of the Follow-Up Interview was to arrive at a fuller understanding of the information generated by the Questionnaire. Thus, the two instruments, procedures, and analyses are complementary.

Development of the Interview Guide

The initial statistical analysis procedure applied to the statements of Part Two of the Questionnaire was the cluster analysis. The cluster analysis procedure generated patterns of twelve groups among the 78 statements of Part Two. Each of these groups is statistically identifiable. The purpose of the Follow-Up Interview was to come to a better conceptual understanding of each group, and specifically so as practicing teachers would view and speak about the groups of statements. Three questions designed to focus the interviewee's attention and thought on the conceptual sense or nonsense of a group of statements were written. Each of the groups of statements, without the corresponding place numbers from the Questionnaire and without the five-point scale from Never-the-Case to Always-the-Case, was placed on a separate sheet of paper. Each group was then given a letter name so that one group could be discussed and distinguished from the other groups.
**Description of the Interview Guide**

The Follow-Up Interview guide consists of an instruction sheet and twelve pages on which the groups of statements have been placed (see Appendix D). The instruction sheet served the purpose of stabilizing the administration of each interview by placing the interview into the larger context of the data gathering procedures for the study, by providing an introductory statement to the viewing of the twelve groups of statements, and by consistently focusing on the three basic interview questions. The instruction sheet was intended for use by the researcher, though it also served the teacher-interviewee as visual focus for the questions being posed. The three basic questions posed were:

1. Is this group of statements meaningful? Are the statements related to each other?
2. How would you name this group of statements?
3. How important would you say this group of statements is in influencing a teacher's parent contact practices?

Each of the basic questions was supplemented by probing questions where appropriate, based on the teacher's initial response.

The twelve groups of statements, labelled Group A through Group M (omitting the use of I), appeared on separate sheets of paper. The largest group, Group C, contained twelve statements. Group A contained eight. Beyond these
two groups, the number of statements per group is small: B contained three; D, five; E, two; F, two; G, two; H, five; J, four; K, four; L, two; and M, three. The order of the letters reflects the organization of the cluster analysis process, but it is not suggestive of statistical value of the groups. The letters should be understood merely as labels for each group.

Conduct of the Interview

When the Follow-Up Interview guide was developed, a selection of teachers were contacted and asked to participate in an interview. The teachers were selected from among those who comprised the high and low groups of the full sample in reported frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact. Five teachers from each group were selected so that different schools were represented, men and women were included, and variations on frequency and methods of contact were present. Two of the selected teachers declined to participate; two other teachers were selected in turn.

During the Interviews, the instructions set and described earlier were followed. Because the Interviews were tape-recorded, it was necessary to obtain written consent from each of the participants. To do so, a simple form was presented to each teacher at the start of the Interview (see Appendix D). The Interviews began with a declaration of purpose, after which the introduction to the presentation of the groups of statements was read, and the groups were
presented. Each of the twelve groups was considered separately and in series, and the three basic Interview questions were posed after each group. The groups of statements were presented in no uniform order. A small group was presented first to provide an easy start to the Interview. The most lengthy and complex groups were then presented. Finally, if time allowed, the smallest groups were presented to the teachers. In this fashion each group of statements was considered by several teachers, and some groups received the consideration of all the teachers in the Follow-Up Interviews. Each Interview took approximately one-half hour to complete.

Analysis of the Interview Data

Each of the Interviews was tape-recorded, and thus was available for review after the Interviews were complete. Each of the recordings was replayed, and the comments of the teachers about each of the groups were written, in paraphrased form, below the group of statements. Particular attention was given to the teachers' identification of statements that were seen to be related or those that seemed not to belong in the group, to the names or phrases chosen by the teachers to label the groups, and to comments intended to address the question of the possible importance of the group of statements in influencing a teacher's parent contact practices.
The commentary, thus extracted from the Interviews and directly connected with each of the groups of statements, complemented the statistical descriptions of the clusters. The commentary, thus processed, was used in the naming and explanations of each cluster as it appears in the following chapter.

**Summary: Follow-Up Interview**

A Follow-Up Interview was developed and conducted to complement the information generated by the Parent Contact Questionnaire. The Interview guide was based on initial analyses of the Questionnaire data. Teachers who were in the high and low groups with regard to reported frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact were selected to participate in the interviews. Five teachers from each group were selected. The Interviews were tape-recorded. Specific comments about each group of statements were then excerpted from the recordings and used to name and explain the meaning of the groups as they appear in Chapter IV.

**The Development of Teacher Profiles**

The first two research questions set for this study seek answers which would map the field of conditions which might influence a teacher's parent contact practices. The third research question set for the study seeks to move beyond the mapping of the field of conditions to focus on
those conditions which might be more promising in accounting for variations in teachers' practices of initiating parent contact. The research question asks that profiles of teachers who report different frequencies of teacher-initiated parent contact be developed.

Selection of Two Teacher Groups

The first step in the development of the profiles was the selection of two groups of teachers who report different frequencies of teacher-initiated parent contact. Question Sixteen of Part One of the Parent Contact Questionnaire asked teachers to report the frequencies with which they initiate contact with parents in a variety of ways. The responses to this question were used to differentiate among three broad groups: teachers with a high frequency of teacher-initiated contact, teachers with a medium frequency, and teachers with a low frequency.

The 21 Percent Rule. Two points had to be selected at which the three groups in the sample could be differentiated. This might seem to be a fairly arbitrary decision because the frequencies reported are entirely independent of each other; thus, it would seem possible to designate the high and low groups to contain anywhere from one to 50 percent each, of the full sample. It was anticipated, however, that the two groups would eventually be compared to each other on their responses to Part Two of the Questionnaire, responses
not entirely independent of each other. It was also anticipated that, based on such a comparison, the two groups of teachers might differ significantly in their response patterns.

Under such conditions, D'Agostino and Cureton (1975) have suggested that an optimum number to be included in the two tails of a distribution of scores is 21 percent in each. (This suggestion represents a shift from the more traditional 27 Percent Rule.) Though high and low frequency of teacher-initiated contact does not comprise the tails of a distribution of test scores, the responses to Part Two of the Questionnaire more closely resembles such a condition. The 21 Percent Rule was used in the selection of the high and low groups of teachers.

As reported earlier in this chapter, the responses to the question counting teacher-initiated parent contact, Question Sixteen of Part One, evidenced considerable variation. The minimum number of teacher-initiated parent contacts was 19, and the maximum number was 2,220. The mean number reported by the 87 responding teachers was 374.8 contacts per teacher per school year. Twenty-one percent of the 87 respondents is eighteen; thus, the high and low frequency groups consisted of the eighteen teachers highest in frequency and the eighteen teachers lowest in frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact. Table 14 displays the frequencies and means of teacher-initiated parent contact for both the High and Low Frequency Groups.
Table 14

Frequencies and Means of Teacher-Initiated Parent Contact per Teacher per School Year for High and Low Frequency Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Minimum Number Reported</th>
<th>Maximum Number Reported</th>
<th>Mean Number Reported</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Frequency Group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>2,220</td>
<td>1030.9</td>
<td>576.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Frequency Group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptions of the Two Groups

Each of the two groups, thus chosen, are described in Table 14, on their practices of initiating contact with parents. Full profiles of each of the groups were developed by comparing the two groups on a wider range of characteristics. Just as responses to Part One of the Questionnaire were used to describe the total sample, an analysis of the teachers' responses were used to describe the High and Low Frequency Groups. Those descriptions are presented as part of the teacher profiles in Chapter IV.

The second way of describing the two groups is to assess their responses to Part Two of the Questionnaire. The cluster analysis technique used to disclose the underlying structures of the field produced twelve clusters of statements. Teachers' responses to each of the statements
within a cluster were assigned a value from one to five; this was done as part of the information processing, to prepare for the use of computer technology. The values may be averaged to produce a cluster score for each teacher in the High and Low Frequency Groups. These scores, in turn, can be used to describe how a teacher with high frequency of contact, or a teacher with low frequency of contact views each of the clusters of experience.

Comparison of the Two Groups

When the two group profiles were developed, they were compared in order to determine the characteristics on which the two groups differ significantly. The purpose of such a comparison is not prediction of different parent contacting practices, based on differences in profiles. Rather the purpose is to point up differences in response to the field of conditions that may be promising for further study.

Because the data comprising the characteristics differs, a number of different statistical tests were employed in the comparisons. For that data which was nominal, the chi square statistic was used (Guildford, and Fruchter, 1973, p. 199). Characteristics compared using chi square are teacher's assignment, class enrollment, experience, residence, sex, socioeconomic status, education, and professional affiliation. To compare the High and Low Frequency Groups on their practices of contacting parents through the three
different sources of initiation, the Distribution-Free Rank Sum Test (Wilcoxon) was used (Hollander, and Wolfe, 1973, pp. 68-9). Finally, to compare the two groups on the twelve clusters of experiences in parent contact situations, Hotelling $T^2$ statistic for a two-sample problem was used (Tatsuoka, 1971, pp. 81-3).

**Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

**Incumbent on the Methodology**

Every methodology has its inherent strengths and its inevitable weaknesses. Understanding these characteristics of a research method is important if the usefulness and importance of the complete study is to be grasped. Before the results of the present study are displayed in the next chapter, the strengths and limitations incumbent on the selected methodology are purposefully set forth here.

**Considerations of Sample Composition**

Early in this chapter two limitations of the teacher sample were described. The sample was limited to elementary school teachers from one school district. The sample included only those teachers within the selected schools who could be classified as regular classroom teachers. These restrictions on the sample, however, are not viewed as severe for this research. What may have been lost by circumscribing participation, may have been offset by more acutely designed
instruments, procedures, and analyses. That is, limiting the composition of the sample made possible the gathering of more accurate information, and more useful analyses.

While both these limitations restrict the generalizability of the study, they are appropriate for this stage in the research of teacher-initiated parent contact. Some educational research is justly open to the criticism that too quickly, broad principles and definitive statements are sought; the groundwork of preliminary studies is overstepped. In conjunction with that criticism, educational researchers have more recently been encouraged to redirect the focus of research from national and regional study to study at the local level: district, school, and classroom. It is believed that more useful results might thus be generated, and that the criticism of educational research as "unproductive" might be offset. While the present study does not flag these criticisms in defense of its own limitations, it does argue along with them that research on a smaller scale is not only appropriate but necessary.

Considerations of Teacher Estimates of Contact

A critical variable in the study is the amount of parent contact each teacher reports. Parent contact in this study is divided into three distinct forms: school-initiated, parent-initiated, and teacher-initiated contacts. Arriving at a reliable count of these kinds of contact is a problem of methodology.
The methods of other studies. Several studies in the past have addressed the problem and have chosen differing solutions. Some studies have asked the teacher-respondents to keep a log of the frequencies and kinds of contact experienced over a defined time interval. While this method has the advantage of gathering precise counts, it has several disadvantages. It must be limited to a relatively narrow time slot within the school year. As such it glosses over cyclical variations in frequencies and kinds of contact that teachers and administrators report to exist: beginning of the year get-acquainted efforts, reporting period fluctuations, seasonal and holiday variations, and others. A second disadvantage of this method is that it may influence the teacher-respondent's practices in contacting parents. Feeling obligated to report more frequent or different forms of contact, the teacher-respondent may adjust practices to accommodate the need. Finally, the method is subject to some degree of reporting fatigue; at the end of a school day, the teacher-respondent may have forgotten several contacts or may tire of recording them all.

A second method used in studies to measure the amount of parent-teacher contact is to limit the counts to specified types of contact in an effort to be more precise in the counts. Parental attendance at scheduled reporting conferences is one commonly used measure. Parental attendance and/or teacher attendance at parent-teacher association
meetings or sponsored events is another. While precision is
gained in the estimation of contact, much of the individual
variation in teachers' styles and parents' styles is obscured.
Thus, a teacher who initiates a great deal of contact with
parents, but does so in a way unspecified by the limited
methodology, may be inaccurately represented.

Though both of these methods have their disadvantages,
they have recognized a key point: the only reasonable
source of a measure of the frequency of parent contact is
the teacher. No other source could provide as full or as
accurate an estimate.

The method of this study. The present study also turns
to the teacher for a count of the frequency of parent con­
tact. Three forms of parent contact are distinguished:
school-initiated, parent-initiated, and teacher-initiated.
The frequencies of contact in each of the three forms is
assessed separately in Questions Fourteen, Fifteen, and
Sixteen of Part One of the Questionnaire. These Questions,
therefore, become pivotal both in generating knowledge
about teachers' parent contact experience and practice, and
in distinguishing among teachers with high, medium, and low
frequencies of initiating contact.

The teachers' responses to the three Questions repre­
sent estimates of their professional practice. As estimates,
the responses contain a degree of accuracy and a degree of
error. Efforts were made to maximize the accuracy and
minimize the error. First, all the common forms of contact, reported during the initial interviews with teachers and principals, were listed to stimulate teacher-respondents' recall of various kinds of contact. This listing also served to tie teacher-respondents' estimates to real forms of the contact: phone calls, notes, report cards, newsletters, and so on. Estimates made in conjunction with various forms of contact are likely to be more accurate than broad estimates based on the abstraction "parent contact."

The second step intended to maximize accuracy was leaving the time unit for basing a response to the teacher-respondent's option. If a teacher could estimate the number of phone calls reasonably on a weekly basis, this was acceptable; if another time unit was more appropriate, that unit was a reasonable option. The effort was to allow the teacher-respondents to report their experience and practice as they understand it. The third step taken to maximize accuracy was the review of completed Questionnaires and the subsequent checking done with teacher-respondents to complete missing information, to clarify ambiguities, and to confirm responses given. This step, perhaps more than the others, supports confidence in the responses to the three Questions. It also served to point out the shortcomings of this method of counting contacts: misuse of the format for responses, misinterpretation of differences between kinds of contact; failure to thoughtfully review
past experiences and practices. The checking of responses with the teacher-respondents helped to offset these shortcomings. It is believed that the final counts are reasonably accurate estimates.

The estimates will themselves be used in such a way that pinpoint accuracy is unnecessary. The High and Low Frequency Groups, the top and bottom 21 percents, were selected from the extremes of total teacher sample. Clearly 58 percent of the sample lies in between. In actual counts of teacher-initiated parent contact, the two groups are separated by 459 reported contacts. Allowing for even substantial estimation error from both directions, it is unlikely that the two groups would overlap. Thus, though the counts of teacher-initiated parent contact are not precise, they are sufficient to demonstrate the range of frequencies and to separate a group of teachers who initiate a good deal of contact from a group who initiate contact considerably less often.

Considerations of the Nature of the Contacts

Research methods which select and focus on the frequency of particular kinds of contact may do so, in part, because those kinds of contact are believed to be of importance in themselves or useful indicators of some other important factor. Clearly different kinds of contact hold different potential for the variety of goals in parent-teacher
relationships. Some kinds of contact may be more useful than others for establishing rapport; some for communicating information; some for decision-making. Not all contacts serve these and other functions equally well. It is understandable that some studies have, therefore, narrowed their foci.

Though this option would have been possible for the present study, it was not selected. A premise of this study, presented and developed in Chapter I, is that the actions of individual classroom teachers are potentially more important in establishing parent-teacher relationships, as mediated through contacts, than the actions of the school or the parents. If the individual teacher is to be honored as such, then idiosyncracies of style must be recognized. The kinds of contact valued by one teacher must be treated as equivalent to the kinds of contact valued by the next, even though those contacts may be very different in nature. It is recognized that such a decision in the methodology may not serve to provide information to those who would care to study the quality of parent-teacher contacts. That consideration is simply not within the scope of this study.
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Dissertation contains pages with small and indistinct print. Filmed as received.

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS
CHAPTER IV
RESULT S, ANAL YSES, AND PROFILE DEVELOPMENT

The methodology outlined in the last chapter was employed to generate a variety of data about the conditions that might influence a teacher in the practice of contacting parents. The data are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Together, these two types of data provide answers to the research questions of this study.

The purpose of this chapter is to display the data and the results of the data analyses. It will proceed by completing the summary of Questionnaire responses begun in Chapter III, by displaying the results of the cluster analyses, by describing the clusters, and by developing teacher profiles for those who have a high frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact and those who have a low frequency thereof.

Presentation of the Questionnaire Responses

The teachers' responses to the Parent Contact Questionnaire provided the raw data from which the analyses and the gathering of qualitative data proceeded. The responses to Part One of the Questionnaire were presented in Chapter III.
as a part of the description of the teacher samples. That early display was deemed appropriate because of the usefulness of the data for describing the full teacher sample, and because of the intent to focus in this chapter on the analyses and the development of profiles of sub-groups of the sample. To complete the presentation, however, and to begin the analyses, the responses to Part Two of the Questionnaire are here reviewed.

Teachers' Reported Experiences of Parent Contact Situations

In Part Two of the Questionnaire the teachers were asked to describe their experience of parent contact situations by responding to each of 78 statements on a continuum from Never-the-Case to Always-the-Case. In the data processing procedure, each response was assigned a value from one to five. Items that had been written with negative valences were assigned values opposite to those written with positive valences.

Teachers responded to the 78 statements using the full range of the continuum. Table 15 presents a selection of six statements and a summary of how the entire sample of teachers responded to the statements. Also presented is the valence built into the statements, indicated by the value assigned when a teacher selected Always-the-Case as a response. (The full set of statements and the summary of responses is displayed in Appendix E.)
Table 15
Selected Statements Describing Teachers' Experiences of Parent Contact Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Statement</th>
<th>Value Assigned to Always-the-Case Response</th>
<th>Mean Response of the Full Teacher Sample</th>
<th>Standard Deviationa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My principal is supportive of my teaching and my other school efforts.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I don't know what the principal expects of me regarding parent contact.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. In my experience, parents whom I most want to contact are the hardest to contact.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. My role as a teacher in contacting parents is not clear to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. There is sufficient space (privacy/rooms) and material (phones/paper/equipment) in my school to contact parents as I like to.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Parents are satisfied with the contacts they have with me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Rounded to the nearest hundredth.
Interpretation of the responses. The table should be interpreted as follows. For statement Number One, the value of 5 was assigned if a teacher's response was Always-the-Case. The mean of the responses of all the teachers is 4.38, indicating that the teachers experience being supported by their principals in their teaching and other school efforts nearly always. For statement Number Five, the value of 1 was assigned if a teacher's response was Always-the-Case. The mean of the responses of all the teachers is 4.08. This mean indicates that teachers responded opposite to Always-the-Case, and came closer to Never-the-Case. The teachers seldom experience not knowing what the principal expects of them regarding parent contact.

It is difficult to summarize all 78 statements usefully. And it is doubtful that any individual statement should be given great heed. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that statement Number Twenty-one had the highest mean response, at 4.68, indicating that the teachers as a group feel little ambiguity in understanding their role in contacting parents. At the other extreme of mean scores statement Number Thirteen, at 2.36, indicates that the teachers more frequently than not experience that the parents whom they most want to contact are the hardest to contact.

Using the standard deviation as an indication of homogeneity, it can be noted that teachers are most homogeneous on statement Number Seventy-one, and least homogeneous on
statement Number Thirty-three. The teachers more often than not experience that parents are satisfied with the contacts they have; the teachers as a group hold this experience much in common. Less often than not, the teachers experience that there is sufficient space and material in the school to allow them to contact parents as they wish; however, the teachers differ most widely in reporting this as their experience.

Those points of interest are stimulating, but fail to make fullest use of the data. The cluster analyses which follow serve to much more efficiently and usefully organize these data.

The Results of the Cluster Analyses

The teachers' responses to Part Two of the Parent Contact Questionnaire were subjected to the quantitative analysis procedure called cluster analysis. Through the use of two separate computer programs, cluster analysis was done on the responses to determine underlying structures, if any, within the group of teacher-subjects and/or the group of statement-variables.

Cluster Analysis of Teacher-Subjects

The BMDP2M computer program for cluster analysis of subjects was used to determine the underlying structure of groups within the teacher sample. The computer displays
the results of the analysis in the form of a hierarchical cluster tree. This display affords a visual representation of the cluster formations, and eases the identification of clusters within the subject sample.

The first analysis. The first cluster tree of teacher-subjects obtained from the data is presented in Figure 1. This tree is taken directly from the computer printout, but has been reduced photographically. Examination of the tree shows that the first amalgamation united teacher 71 with teacher 49. The second amalgamation united teacher 39 with teacher 30. The third amalgamation combined teacher 73 with the pair just formed, to make a cluster of 39, 30, and 73. The fourth amalgamation united teachers 51 and 14. The fifth amalgamation united teacher 78 with the previously formed cluster of 71 and 49. From this point on, the teachers were added to the cluster tree almost entirely in series. That is, one teacher was added at each amalgamation to the previously formed cluster; in that manner, all teachers were eventually included in the cluster tree.

The serial adding of subjects is an indication that an underlying structure does not exist. In completely random data, it is expected that subjects would add serially from the first amalgamation on, to the completion of the cluster tree. No structure would be apparent. "Noise," which is data that is not random but does not belong to the sought-after underlying structure also affects the cluster tree.
Figure 1. The Cluster Tree of Teacher-Subjects Based on the Full Set of 78 Statement-Variables Processed by the BMDP2M Program
When random data or noise data are added to data which does belong to the underlying structure, the cluster structure will suffer and perhaps will be obscured.

The cluster analysis of the statement-variables, to be discussed later in this chapter, suggested that some of the statement-variables were functioning more like noise than like part of an underlying structure of teachers' experiences of parent contact situations. It was believed that these same statement-variables could have obscured the formation of clusters of teacher-subjects. For this reason, the BMDP2M program was adjusted to drop the suspected noise statement-variables, and to re-cluster the teacher-subjects.

The second analysis. The second cluster tree of teacher-subjects, obtained from the data minus the noise statement-variables, is presented in Figure 2. An examination of the cluster tree shows that, once again, the amalgamation proceeded serially. Though it united teachers in a different order from the first cluster tree, sub-groups did not emerge. There is, again, nothing to suggest that an underlying structure among the teacher-subjects exists.\(^5\)

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\(^5\)The cluster analysis was actually performed twice more--with the full set of statement-variables and with the shortened set--using a different computer program. The SAS Cluster program was selected and run because, unlike the BMDP2M program, it did not automatically standardize the data before beginning the analysis. Standardizing the data could alter the cluster structure. [To be continued.]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE NO.</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
<th>ORDER OF ANALAGATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. The Cluster Tree of Teacher-Subjects Based on the Shortened Set of 57 Statement-Variables Processed by the BMDP2M Program
Cluster Analyses of Statement-Variables

The BMDP1M computer program for cluster analysis of variables was used to determine the underlying structure of groupings within the statement list. As in the BMDP2M program, the results are displayed in a hierarchical cluster tree. The display affords a visual representation of the cluster formations, and eases identification of clusters with the variable list. The display, however, is not as clear visually as the display produced for the BMDP2M program.

The triangular cluster tree. In Figure 3 a limited section of the computer printout has been reproduced to exemplify the cluster tree. Using the accompanying table of merger distance measures, Table 16, the tree can be interpreted. The first amalgamation occurs between variables 9 and 4. There are two items in this cluster. This is known to be the first amalgamation, because the distance between the two variables when they were merged was the smallest distance listed in the accompanying table of merger distances.

5[continued]

The SAS Cluster program is a hierarchical clustering program, using Euclidean distance as a measure of association, and with maximum distance as the agglomerative rule. The SAS Cluster program, however, has the disadvantage of tending to create structure where there actually is none.

The SAS cluster analyses, of both the full and shortened statement-variable sets, produced no interpretable clusters. It thus confirmed the two BMDP2M analyses reported above.
Figure 3. A Section of the Triangular Cluster Tree of Statement-Variables Processed by the BMDP1M Program
### Table 16
Cluster Formation of the 78 Statement-Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE NO.</th>
<th>OTHER BOUNDARY OF CLUSTER</th>
<th>NUMBER OF ITEMS IN CLUSTER</th>
<th>DISTANCE OR SIMILARITY WHEN CLUSTER FORMED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X(1)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(2)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(3)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(4)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(5)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>X(6)</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(7)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(8)</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>-0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(9)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(10)</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>-0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(11)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(12)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(13)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(14)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(15)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(16)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(17)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(18)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(19)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(20)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(21)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(22)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(23)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(24)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(25)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(26)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
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<td>X(27)</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(28)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(29)</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
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<td>X(30)</td>
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<td>X(31)</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
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<td>X(32)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(33)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(35)</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(36)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(37)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(38)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
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<tr>
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<td>56</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
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<td>X(40)</td>
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<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(41)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(43)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(44)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(45)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(46)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(47)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(48)</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(49)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X(50)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the cluster tree variables 9 and 4 are merged between the metric values of 0 and 13, on an adjusted scale of 0 to 100.

The second union, the next smallest merger distance, is between variables 74 and 76. These two variables are .01 further from each other than were variables 9 and 4 when they were merged. The second clustering, between 74 and 76, occurs at .51 distance units. On the cluster tree, the merger is represented, and occurs between 0 and 22 units on a 0 to 100 scale.

Cluster formation continues. After several amalgamations at lower levels, two smaller clusters join to form a larger cluster. For example, working from the cluster tree it can be seen that between the adjusted scale values of 16 and 31, the previously formed cluster of 1, 55, 74, 76 is merged with cluster 4, 9, 7, 61. Reference to the merger distance table reveals, more precisely, that the union of the two clusters occurred at .81 units on the untransformed scale. There are eight statement-variables in the new cluster.

The triangular cluster tree printed by the computer program is limitedly useful because two different scales (in this case .50 to 1.46, and 0 to 100) are used to present the clusters, necessitating frequent conversion. The second limitation of the triangular cluster tree is that significantly different merger distances appear equivalent.
For example, referring to Figure 3, variables 37 and 38 visually appear to merge at about the same point as variables 9 and 4. Yet 37 and 38 actually merge at .81, while 9 and 4 merge at .50. The merger of 37 and 38 is more equivalent to the larger merger of eight variables, 1, 55, 74, 76, 4, 9, 7, 61, described above. Both mergers occur at a .81 merger distance. But, visually these two mergers appear very different on the triangular cluster tree. The computer display can be confusing.

The dendrogram display. To avoid the limitations of the triangular cluster tree, the results of the BMDP1M cluster analysis printout were converted into a dendrogram. A dendrogram is simply another, visually more accurate, data display. The dendrogram for the BMDP1M cluster analysis of statement-variables is presented in Figure 4. The interpretation of this figure is much the same as the interpretation of the triangular tree, except the visual representation more accurately depicts the different levels at which mergers occur, and the precise distances at the point of merger are given directly on the display.

The first merger, between variables 9 and 4, occurs at .50. The second merger, between variables 74 and 76, occurs at a distance of .51, which is .01 metric units greater than the first merger. The earlier confusion between the merger of variables 37 and 38, and the already formed cluster of 9 and 4, is avoided. The distance equivalence of the
Figure 4. The Dendrogram Display of the Full Set of Statement-Variables Processed by the BMDP1M Program
merger of 37 and 38 and the larger cluster 1, 55, 74, 76, 4, 9, 7, 61, is clear in the dendrogram display.

The emergence of clusters. Examination of the dendrogram for the formation of clusters revealed that, unlike in the BMDP2M clustering of teacher-subjects, there appeared to be discernible and interpretable clusters in the set of statement-variables. The task remained to identify the clusters and distinguish them, at some point in the hierarchy, one from another. It was also important to distinguish between the meaningful clusters and the union of statements that occurred merely as part of the iterative process which eventually joins all statement-variables into one cluster. (Extensive discussion of the final clusters will occur later in this chapter.)

Two criteria are useful in the identification process. First, the statistical information about each prospective cluster must be considered. The number of statement-variables and the distance at which they unite, relative to the other distances, indicates how "strong" a prospective cluster might be. The second criterion is the conceptual sense any prospective cluster makes. Ultimately, the results of any cluster formation must be understandable and interpretable. Together, the statistical and conceptual examinations of each potential cluster lead to decisions about cluster identification.
The dendrogram produced to display the first BMDP1M analysis of statement-variables revealed that a number of potential clusters were supported by both statistical and conceptual sense. These clusters appear in the top two-thirds or so of the display. In the lower third of the dendrogram, the joining of statement-variables made less sense, both statistically and conceptually.

The merger distance of 1.00 was chosen as a cut-off point between the potentially meaningful clusters and the noise statement-variables. Selection of this point is reasonable on several counts. First, any statement-variables that cluster for the first time after the 1.00 merger distance must be considered relatively weak statistical mergers. 1.00 is about one-half way between the extremes of the metric distances .50 and 1.46. Further, by the point that the 1.00 distance becomes the smallest distance between unmerged clusters, nearly all the early, strong clusters have been merged into one large cluster. Thus, referring to the dendrogram, by the 1.02 merger distance, all the previously formed clusters in the top two-thirds of the dendrogram are merged. Beyond that point, single or pairs of statement-variables are added to the large cluster serially. As stated earlier, serial addition of items in cluster analysis suggests that there is no real underlying structure among the data. Serial addition also suggests that the items may
be serving as noise, thus obscuring the true cluster structure.

For these reasons, the BMDP1M program was adjusted to drop any items that did not cluster sooner than the 1.00 merger distance, and to re-cluster the remaining statement-variables. Twenty-one items were eliminated from further consideration. Reading from the bottom of the dendrogram, the dropped statement-variables were: 33, 5, 8, 15, 49, 51, 44, 13, 75, 12, 2, 68, 20, 32, 3, 35, 58, 43, 41, 63, 27. Items 52, 48, 62 and 16 were kept in the set of statement-variables, because, though they were joined to the rest of the structure late, and though they made less conceptual sense as pairs, a re-clustering might have altered the order and make-up of various potential clusters. They could have been integrated into the structure or remained isolated from the other groups.

The re-clustering of the statement-variables produced a second dendrogram that was identical, except for the dropped items, to the first. Clusters remained the same. Merger distances remained the same. It was as if the bottom third of the first dendrogram had been scissored away. The four statement-variables, retained in case of a significant reorganization, merely added on to the larger cluster as they had done before; even the merger distances at which they joined were the same. This unexpected development--the duplication of the overall cluster structure--does not suggest that there is meaning to the cluster structure. That
is a statistical and conceptual matter. It does suggest that there is stability within the data set, and that meaning attributed to the clusters will be attributed to a stable structure.

Based on this second dendrogram display five more statement-variables were dropped. Items 52 and 48 joined the rest of the cluster structure at a merger distance of 1.08. Furthermore, the two items together seemed to make little conceptual sense. Items 62 and 16 similarly seemed to be outlying statement-variables that, together, made less interpretable sense. Finally, item 23 was dropped as well; it too clustered with items 26 and 46 relatively late, making a relatively strong cluster appear to be weak, both statistically and conceptually. These final five deletions from the set of statement-variables left a pool of 52 items that combined to form clusters that have a degree of statistical and conceptual sense.

**Twelve Clusters of a Teacher's Experiences of Parent Contact Situations**

Based on the statistical display of the dendrogram and the conceptual potential of groups of statement-variables, twelve clusters of a teacher's experiences of parent contact situations were identified. Each of these twelve clusters were presented to teachers in the Follow-Up Interviews to gain their reactions and insights. These twelve clusters
are presented here, in the sequence of their appearance on the dendrogram. Each cluster is described statistically and, with the analyses of the Follow-Up Interviews, is discussed conceptually.
Cluster A. Teacher's Experience of Principal's Support

Statement-Variables:

1. My principal is supportive of my teaching and my other school efforts.  
55. In my experience, my principal supports me in front of a parent.  
74. My principal supports me in my discipline decisions regarding students.  
76. My principal supports me in my academic decisions regarding children.  
4. I feel good about being a teacher in this school.  
9. I feel good about my teaching.  
7. I find contact with parents rewarding to me as a person.  
61. I find that my principal shows little interest in me and my students.

Teachers' Comments on Cluster A:

Cluster Composition

- the items belong together except #7.
- not sure why #7 is there.
- #4 is somewhat related; having a supportive principal and feeling good about teaching are not necessarily coincident; one can occur without the other.

*indicates statement-variables written with a reversed valence
some belong together, and some don't; take out #7.

feeling good could come from support.
	here are a couple different areas here: what I feel vs. what is real; it's the symbolic vs. the concrete; it's what I see versus what actually occurs.

the items belong together; maybe take the feelings out of the group.

the items loosely form a group; split it into two, feelings and principal's support; feelings are more encompassing than support.

separate into two groups.

the first six go together; #7 goes somewhere else.

all items go together very well.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

what the principal does, does not influence me; feeling good about teaching, however, is important.

these are very important; if the principal is supportive, you feel you can do things; you do things he wants you to do, because he has power over you.

there's a connection here; a good relationship with the principal and feeling good about school go hand in hand.

even if you don't need the principal's support, it helps to have someone to talk to; if the relationship wasn't good, it would affect the teacher's work; most people want to be appreciated, and the principal can show that in small ways.

it's very important for the principal to be behind the teacher on decisions; the principal has the last word.

principal's support can lead to feeling good about teaching.

contact can be rewarding or unrewarding, but it's necessary.
- principal's support here is more specific: it's for teaching and other school efforts; it's important because if the teacher did not feel supported, then she would likely not contact the parents.

- the principal's support is super important; can't imagine how difficult it would be if the principal did not support.

- 90% of the time the contacts with parents are pleasant and easy going; 90% of the time principal's support is not real important; but when it comes down to one where you need support, it's vital even when you make contacts where you don't expect a problem; it's nice to know the support is there; sometimes it's not used all year.

- the principal's support pushed me into parent contact; when I first started teaching, I was apprehensive about parents, but I had to contact them; I became more comfortable; the more strokes you get from the administration, the more outgoing you'll be, and the more likely you won't be inhibited.

- a teacher must feel good about teaching and the school if the child is to feel good; it rubs off.

- these items are creating an atmosphere; a good atmosphere leads to good things; it sets the teacher free to contact, because in this atmosphere the teacher assumes the principal's support.

- without the principal's support in a problem situation, a teacher may be reluctant to contact parents; but the individual teacher is more important: some need help, and others act without it.

- Cluster A is more specific than Cluster F; Cluster A speaks of "teaching" and "other school efforts"; Cluster A is more important than Cluster F.

- Cluster A is more important than the cluster on parent cooperation.

- Cluster F and Cluster A should be together; they say about the same thing.

Cluster Names

- principal-teacher relations, and my feelings about things related to teaching.
- a matter of communicating with your superior.
- principal's support, and a teacher's feelings about self.
- principal's support; principal's acknowledgement.
- relationship with principal.
- feelings; teaching backup.
- support practices of the principal.

Discussion:

Cluster A consists of eight statement-variables, among which are the first two mergers from the entire cluster structure. The eight statement-variables merge into one cluster at a merger distance of .81, the third shortest distance among the twelve identified clusters. Teachers' responses to the eight items are converted to a mean response of 4.34, indicating a very positive experience of the statement-variables in this cluster.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Principal's Support." Though several of the teachers in the Follow-up Interviews suggested that the cluster be split, each teacher was able to draw a connection between the two parts--principal's support and the teacher's feelings about teaching and the school. One teacher expressed it as the difference between what is real or "concrete" and what is felt or seen by the teacher. The principal's support can lead to feeling good about teaching and the school. And feeling good "rubs off" on the students. The principal's
support creates an atmosphere in which other things can happen. Knowing that the support is there, the teacher will venture out and contact others. As stated by one teacher, the more strokes a teacher gets from the administration, the more confident the teacher becomes in the overall task of teaching, including parent contact. Several teachers spoke of having the support as a back-up. One teacher even stated that 90 percent of the time, the support is not needed; it's not called upon. But in the ten percent of the times when it's used, it's vital.

Extremes in the relative value of principal's support were also reported by teachers. One teacher said that what the principal does, does not influence him. Another suggested that in the initial years of her career, the principal's requirements for parent contact forced her beyond her hesitance to becoming experienced and more confident of her ability. Finally, a third teacher intimated that the principal's support can almost be a coercive force: a teacher must do what the principal is supportive of because the principal has power.

While the principal's support for the teacher and the sense of feeling good which may arise from it were seen as important, at least one teacher suggested that the individual teacher—the idiosyncrasies, the needs, the strengths—was more important. Some teachers act only with the support of the principal. Others are self-assured enough to act on
their own. Thus, as important as the principal's support may be, it may be superseded by other conditions.

Cluster A was frequently compared with Cluster F in the Follow-up Interviews. Those comparisons will be discussed in connection with Cluster F.
Cluster B. Teacher's Experience of the Parent-School Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement-Variables:</th>
<th>Mean Response Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Maintaining close parent-teacher contact is a high priority item for other teachers in my school.</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. In my experience with parents, I find that they act in partnership with the school.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I find that parents feel welcome in this school.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher's Comments on Cluster B:

Cluster Composition

- the items go together.

- #37 and #38 are about yourself and your partnership with the parents; #10 is about other teachers.

- #37 and #38 are about parents relating to the school; #10 should be in a separate category.

- all these could go together.

- it's public relations.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- once heard a parent say she did not feel welcome in the school because we use too much jargon; if that were the case, then we should contact more often to keep parents informed.

- if parents say they are not welcomed, a teacher may either increase contacts or take offense and not contact as much.
- the items speak to an overall thing in the school; it involves the whole staff.

- this is related to the sensitivity thing; parents who do come in to school know how hard teachers work and appreciate it; it's an important influence.

- this is the attitude that prevails in the school; it follows from the principal's support, from parent cooperation, and from more contacts.

- the atmosphere in the school comes back to the teacher through parent reactions; if the school is cold toward parents, the parent will be cold toward the teacher; it's circular.

- this is an ideal; some teachers don't care about the parents, and some parents don't care about the teachers.

- it's not as important as the principal's support.

- some teachers would resent it if it were a PR thing.

- some parents don't value contact with the teacher until afterwards; then they become great supporters.

- teachers are not interested in other teachers' contacts with parents; out of 100 contacts, there are ten or less that would interest other teachers.

- it's something all the teachers have to work at; the teacher has to make the first effort, because the parent is less secure in coming in to the school.

- conversation in the lounge may influence a teacher more than the teacher realizes; if talk in the lounge is about successful contact, and promotes positive feelings, then a teacher might expect to be successful in contact with parents; a teacher might be more confident; of course, a teacher contacts parents expecting some good to come from it.

- this is not as important as some other groups; like Cluster A it helps create an atmosphere; it's a supplemented attitude; more important is the individual teacher and how that teacher reaches her own goals; if they see parent contact as a tool they can use, then they make contact.
Cluster Names

- school openness; majority attitude.
- parent-teacher contact as valued.
- relationship of school with parent.
- parent-school relationship.
- parent experiences in the school.
- public relations.

Discussion:

Cluster B consists of three statement-variables which merge into one cluster at a merger distance of .85. This merger distance represents one of the larger merger distances in the twelve identified clusters. Teachers' responses to the items are converted to a mean response of 3.80.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of the Parent-School Relationship." Generally, #37, and #38 are reported to be conceptually closer than is #10 to either. Yet most teachers said that the three statement-variables could be grouped together. The three items describe an atmosphere created in the school, primarily by the teachers and principal, but also by the presence of cooperative, interested parents. As such, this parent-school relationship is related to other conditions; it comes from the principal's support, from parental cooperation, and from frequent contacts. The relationship is cyclical: what the parents feel, they reflect back to the school and its staff.
The parent-school relationship is effected through or reflected in a variety of ways: the parent-teacher association activity, the educational jargon of the school, the teacher's lounge talk. It may influence teachers in ways they are not consciously aware of. If it seems to take the form of a public relations effort, teachers may resent it.

The relative importance of the parent-school relationship as experienced by the teacher, in influencing a teacher's parent contact practices, is unclear. One teacher reported that a negative relationship may encourage a teacher to contact parents more in the hope of improving the relationship; or, a teacher may take offense and be discouraged from further contact. Some teachers and parents are unaffected by the atmosphere of the relationship; they are not interested in the other party. Teachers are also not generally interested in other teachers' parent contacts. Again, the individual teacher, while being influenced by the tone of the relationship, may be more influenced by other conditions, including a sense of whether or not contact will be useful for his or her own goal achievements.
Cluster C. Teacher's Experience of the Results of Parent Contact

Statement-Variables:

11. In my experience, I find that students learn best when I keep close contact with their parents.  
   Mean Response Value 3.94

72. I find that students benefit when I contact their parents.  
   4.03

30. Parents respect my authority in classroom matters.  
   3.86

69. In my experience, contacting parents leads to good outcomes.  
   4.06

71. Parents are satisfied with the contacts they have with me.  
   3.92

65. Parents of my students respect and trust me.  
   3.87

36. In my experience with parents, they understand what I am trying to communicate.  
   3.76

78. Parents are interested enough in the school to make contacting them worth it.  
   3.86

73. Parents fully support the school program.  
   3.48
67. Parents support my methods for resolving problems with children. 3.87

31. In my experience, contacting parents is a waste of time. *4.38

45. I get worn down trying to keep up with parent contacts. *3.52

Teacher's Comments on Cluster C:

Cluster Composition

- the items do belong together.
- these are related; they all deal with teacher contact with parents.
- #30 and #65 might be outcomes of contact.
- the last two are negative.
- all fit but the last two; they are positive parent reactions, and two negative ones.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- #45 sums it up; no, I'm teasing.
- there's no way you can say that contacting parents is not a good thing.
- parents seem more and more interested the more you contact them.
- this is important; parent contact is one of my goals this year; it's just worked out for the best.
- this is more important today than it used to be; students' attitudes have changed such that they don't care anymore; establishing contact at the beginning may help to avoid student problems later on.
- my responsibility is to the kids first; they are more important than my feelings and the parents; some teachers see the kids more than the parents do.
- it's important that the teacher feel that some good will come from parent contact; that there will be trust and respect.
- if a teacher agrees with these statements, there would likely be more contact.

Cluster Names

- results of contacts on teacher, parent, and student.
- parents trusting me with school decisions.
- communication.
- parents and teachers working together.
- parent contact; keeping parents informed; parent satisfaction.
- results of contacts.

Discussion:

Cluster C consists of twelve statement-variables, which makes it the single largest cluster identified. Though the cluster is large, the distance at which the cluster items merged is not large, at .83. The teacher responses to the twelve statement-variables average to 3.88.

Though the group of statement-variables is large, teachers did not seek to divide it. The negatively worded statement-variables at the end of the group were included when they were restated in positive ways. The teachers spoke about this cluster in more general terms than about some of the other clusters.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of the Results of Parent Contact." One teacher said that it is important that a teacher feel that some good will come from contacting parents. That good can take many forms, including
improved student learning, parent satisfaction, parental support, and trust and respect for the teacher. Undesirable outcomes will not result: a teacher's classroom authority is left intact, and the teacher is not worn down by contact. If good outcomes result from contact, then a teacher is likely to contact parents more. As one teacher expressed, it can't be said that contacting parents is not a good thing. Expecting and witnessing good results from contact with parents may be an important condition influencing a teacher's practices.
Cluster D. Teacher's Experience of Being Responsible for Parent Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement-Variables:</th>
<th>Mean Response Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. In my experience, it is part of my responsibility to keep close contact with the parents of my students.</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. In my experience, I see that teachers who care about their students maintain close contact with the parents.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. My role as a teacher in contacting parents is not clear to me.</td>
<td>*4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. As a teacher, I find it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about matters concerning their child.</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the better, I contact the parents.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher's Comments on Cluster D:

Cluster Composition

- #21 doesn't belong in the group; it's vaguely related.

- the items deal with the responsibility of a teacher in contacting parents; #19 less so.

- they all have the general idea of informing and keeping in touch.
it's a group in that they focus on part of being a teacher; the group doesn't raise the question of whether or not it's a part of teaching.

the items go together.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

if a teacher feels this way, that these statements are true, but doesn't have the skills or support, then the teacher might feel bad; they might feel like they are not doing their job.

some teachers want to do things on their own but they feel they must contact parents because it's part of their responsibility.

when a teacher sees other teachers who have better rapport with parents, she may not feel as good about her own performance.

if a teacher agreed with these statements, then there would likely be more contact.

despite the importance of the teacher's responsibility to initiate contact, one can't expect parents to do it first.

you assume that a teacher's sense of responsibility will include parent contact; it should be automatic.

this is not as important as the principal's support or the parent's cooperation; it will follow from these.

role clarity depends on school policy; the principal makes clear what he wants as far as parent contact.

it's all related to knowing beforehand how they'll react; you have to feel parents out, and you can do that right away; it's very important.

Cluster Names

- initiating contacts.
- parent contact as a part of teaching.
- informing parents about any good or bad.
- teacher responsibility.
- role and responsibility.
- informing parents; contacting parents.
- teacher's role in parent contact.

Discussion:

Cluster D consists of five statement-variables that merge at a .82 merger distance. Teachers responses to the statement-variables combine to give a mean of 4.38.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Being Responsible for Parent Contact." The comments from teachers about the statement-variables point to role and responsibility as the central theme. One teacher stated that responsibility for parent contact is something that is automatic: teachers expect that contacting parents is part of their job. Another teacher reported that the particulars of that responsibility are defined by the principal and school policy. The teacher's role should thus be very clear. At least one teacher spoke of the difficulty of fulfilling the responsibilities. This teacher said that guilt feelings could result if a teacher sees parent contact as important, but for lack of skill or support cannot meet the demand. This same teacher described how a teacher might feel inadequate, seeing other teachers who have better rapport with parents. Finally, a teacher observed that the statement-variables don't raise the question about whether or not it is part of a teacher's role; the statements assume so.
This sense of responsibility for keeping contact with parents is seen as important. How important it is, is not clear. One teacher suggested that the sense of responsibility in parent contact is not as important as a principal's support or a parent's cooperation. The responsibility would follow from these conditions. But another teacher felt that a sense of responsibility is very important, because a teacher must initiate the contact and must feel responsible to do so. Teachers' experience of being responsible for parent contact may vary more than their experience of other conditions which influences that practice.
Cluster E. Teacher’s Experience of Comfort in Interpersonal Contact Situations

34. When I contact parents, I find that I am comfortable conversing with them. 3.85

57. In my experience, it seems that I don't have the interpersonal skills to work with parents. *4.29

Teachers' Comments on Cluster E:

Cluster Composition
- these items belong together.
- these refer to the actual doing of contact, not to the results.
- this is teacher communication with parents.

Cluster Meaning and Influence
- parent contact is really easy if you have the skills and are confident about it.
- a lot of teachers feel this way; they feel they don't have the skills because there's not much training given in this area; teachers learn by trial and error.
- using the right language in talking with parents is hard to do.
- these items really relate to that feeling of comfort a teacher has; it relates to the individual teacher differences.
- a teacher gets a better response from the child when the home is contacted; most parents are interested in their children doing well, and they like to feel that the teacher takes extra care for their children.
- I can see a difference in the children when I contact the home.

- a teacher learns more how to do this with more experience; experience is important.

- some teachers don't contact parents much but get results in other ways; it's an individual thing; they do what they think is best.

- this is important; if a teacher is not comfortable in contacting parents, or he has few skills to do so, then he's less likely to make contact.

Cluster Names

- the way the teacher views contact.

- positive self-concept of a person.

- teacher communication with parents.

Discussion:

Cluster E consists of two statement-variables that merge at a merger distance of .76, which is the smallest distance of any of the identified clusters. The teachers' responses to the two statement-variables produced a mean of 4.07.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Comfort in Interpersonal Contact Situations." The teachers in the Follow-up Interview to whom this cluster was shown had no difficulty in linking a sense of comfort with the interpersonal skills to be successful in parent contact situations. One teacher stated that parent contact is easy when the skills and the confidence are there in the teacher. But skills are not taught, another teacher reported, and many teachers do not feel that they have enough training in this area. Teachers learn by trial and error.
Some teachers do not choose parent contact as a means to the goals they set. These teachers get results using other alternatives. Perhaps they did not learn to view parent contact as a tool; perhaps they do not see the good effects of contact reported by other teachers. It is, again, an individual difference among teachers. Teachers do what they can do; they do what they think is best.
Cluster F. Teacher's Experience of Principal's Encouragement for Parent Contact

17. I find that my principal sets a positive tone among the faculty with regard to parent-teacher relationships. 4.24

39. My principal actively encourages teachers to contact parents regarding school matters. 4.44

Teachers' Comments on Cluster F:

Cluster Composition

- these items go together.
- these two belong together.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- this group is similar to Cluster A, but they are somewhat different; A is more about the teacher-principal relationship, it's broader; F is more definite; A is not the same as F.
- this is important with regards to contacting parents.
- this relates to A, and could be with Cluster A; it's another form of support.
- a teacher should know her own responsibility, but this is important, especially for beginning teachers; knowing the principal is behind you and pushing gets you into the habit of contacting parents.
- this is about the principal's activity; it's the principal's role in parent-teacher relations.
- if the principal sets a positive tone, the active encouragement follows.
- once you know the principal is behind you, then it's easier to contact parents.

- if the principal is in favor of contact, then the teachers will do it; the principal is a leader.

- the principal is more active here than in Cluster A.

- if a principal does what is described in Cluster A, then it only makes sense that Cluster F would follow.

- this is not as important as Clusters J and C; the principal can set the mood, but he can't force teachers; the individual teacher must decide on his own; so the teacher must want to contact, then a principal's encouragement helps.

Cluster Names

- the value the principal places on parent-teacher contact.

- principal influencing teacher in parent contact.

- principal encouraging parent-teacher relationships.

- principal's support.

- positive role for the principal.

- support practices of the principal.

Discussion:

Cluster F consists of two statement-variables that merge at a merger distance of .83. Teachers' responses to the statements convert to a mean of 4.34.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Principal's Encouragement for Parent Contact." Several of the teachers in the Follow-up Interviews compared Cluster F to Cluster A, a reasonable conceptual move because both deal heavily with the principal. Cluster A seems to describe a more general support afforded the teacher by the principal.
Several teachers, in speaking about that cluster, identified "teaching" and "other school efforts" as the focus of the support. Cluster F focuses on the principal's support specifically for parent contact. Though at one level of generality both clusters might be taken as one, neither the discussion of the teachers nor the cluster analysis itself forced such a union.

As in the discussion of other clusters, at least one teacher emphasized the preeminence of the individual teacher in describing influencing conditions. The teacher said that though the principal could set a tone or mood for good parent-teacher relations, as effected through contact, the principal was unable to force a teacher to act. A teacher, it was suggested, would be more responsive to other influencing conditions, such as experiencing good results from contact or having a sense of mutual support with parents. In the presence of these conditions, however, the principal's encouragement could further influence a teacher to contact parents.

On a somewhat different approach, another teacher spoke of a principal's active encouragement as being important particularly for new teachers. It was suggested that a beginning teacher could be influenced to form the habit of contacting parents. Without such an influence, the practice might not develop. Here the principal is seen as a leader, setting new patterns of behavior.
Cluster G. Teacher's Experience of Parental Influence on the Child

Statement-Variables:

24. In my experience, I see a direct connection between the parents' attitude and the student's attitude and behavior. 4.06

25. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the worse, I contact the parents. 4.23

Teachers' Comments on Cluster G:

Cluster Composition

- the two items go together.
- #24 and #25 are related.
- I don't know if they go together; there is a strong connection between attitudes, but not between #24 and #25.
- they do belong together, but I may be looking into it too much.
- there is a connection between parent and student attitudes, and home life can be a cause of a student's school behavior; these statements are true, but I'm not sure they are related; this is less of a group than others.
- they belong together, but they are different.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- to #25 should be added when the behavior changes "for the better"; it should not be just "for the worse."
- both of these statements hold true.
- #24 is another way of saying, "Like father, like son."
- teachers can't modify the attitudes of parents, except by making them more aware of what we're trying to do.
- changes at home lead to changes in school.
- the importance of this group depends on the severity of the change; big changes or changes that last are of greatest concern.
- there is a direct connection here but it might not be a mirror influence; the child may be reacting opposite to what the parents are doing.
- a teacher needs to work with the child alone sometimes, not with the parent; unless it's a severe problem.
- there are two reasons here for contact: to be generally aware of how the home treats the child, and to learn what measures are used effectively at home by the parents; it's extremely important.
- you don't even have to contact the parents to tell their attitudes; you can tell from the children which parents think school is important.

Cluster Names
- parent and child relationship influence.
- effecting student's behavior.
- relationship of parent attitude and student attitude.
- relationship between parent and teacher.
- being aware of child's performance and contacting parents if it changes.
- correlation of parent attitude and child attitude.
- home influence; parental influence.

Discussion:

Cluster G consists of two statement-variables which united at a .77 merger distance. Teacher responses to the
two statements produced a mean response of 4.14.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Parental Influence on the Child." The teachers in the Follow-up Interviews reported that they experienced a very strong connection between the parents' attitude and the child's attitude, and that changes at home for the child often caused changes in school performance or behavior. Yet the two statement-variables in this cluster were judged to be only indirectly related. One teacher suggested that, though the ideas followed, one from another, a teacher could not modify the parents very easily, and therefore the direct connection could not be of great use to the teacher in working with the child. Another teacher stated that sometimes a teacher needs to work with the child without involving the parents; the teacher needs to work alone. Thus, the parents' influence may not always be chosen as means toward the goals held by the teacher. Yet another teacher saw two reasons why parental influence should be acknowledged: to be aware, generally, of how the child is treated at home, and to learn from the parents what they do that is effective in working with the child.

Several teachers suggested that change for the better should as well be included as a reason for parent contact. A statement-variable which directly included this reason for contact was #19; this statement-variable clustered, not with its opposite, #25, but with Cluster D, Teacher's
Experience of Being Responsible for Parent Contact. Through the cluster analysis procedures, teachers' responses appear to group negative changes in student performance or behavior with parental influence, more than positive changes, though teachers consciously would not express such a differentiation.

Teachers strongly attest to the influence a parent can have on the child. The influence comes in many areas from values to habits to language. One teacher reported that the influence is not always in the same direction: a child can rebel against parent wishes. In either case the influence is strong, and it is potentially a useful means to a teacher's goals in working with the student. But because the teacher does not control the parent or that influence, it may be a less important condition influencing a teacher's parent contact practices.
Cluster H. Teacher's Experience of a Negative Portrait of Parents

6. Parents undermine the efforts of teachers. *3.52

42. Parents want to shift responsibility for raising their children to the school. *2.76

47. I find that parents are extreme in the ways they treat their children: either too protective or too permissive; too demanding or not demanding enough; and so on. *2.98

64. In my experience with parents, they act like they are smarter than the teacher. *3.77

59. Teachers know better than parents what is good for the child's education. *2.59

Teachers' Comments on Cluster H:

Cluster Composition

- these statements go together.

- these are loaded items; it knocks me back; they bother me.

- they are all negative statements.

- #6, #42, #47, and #64 are negative toward the parent; #59 is positive toward the teacher.
- if you take out #59, this is a teacher feeling; the rest are parent viewpoints.

- I don't agree with them; #6 and #42 go together; they all go together.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- if a teacher agreed with these statements, he would not meet with parents very often; he would only meet with them when necessary.

- teachers need to listen to parents--some parents, but not all.

- these statements are too bad.

- these are rather harsh views of parents.

- I had one parent who told me he had tried to shift this responsibility to the school; it was related to his frustration; parents have no support from neighbors and friends like they used to, to help out; so parents feel like they can't keep up.

- it used to be that when a child got into trouble at school, he was also in trouble at home; that's lost now; even the most supportive parents don't have that; some might, but most don't.

- #64 is true; some parents do have unrealistic expectations.

- when teachers try to work with parents, but feel undermined, they soon stop trying; if a teacher agreed with these statements, she would either contact parents less, or react just the opposite, and contact all the more.

- it wears you down if too many parents are like this; then teachers sometime take it out on the child.

- this relates to Cluster G, parents' influence on the child.

- parents who are also teachers think they know everything.

- these statements sound like they are coming from a teacher who is mad at parents.

- #59 is not true all the time.
- if the teacher agreed with these statements, it would have to be an excuse for other problems.

- parents who have these attitudes make contact difficult, especially if the child is difficult to work with.

- this group is not important; I would want to ignore these as rash statements.

- these are important only if the teacher believes it.

- it could be both positive and negative; positive, if the parent is trying to help out at home but doesn't know how; negative, if the parent can't be worked with.

- it's sad to say, but a lot of this is true; teachers have felt this way; I've never experienced #64 to be true; I don't know if it's me and the way I act, or if it's the parents who act timidly.

- these are not important; if you believed these, you'd start with such a negative attitude, and you can't afford that; you have to assume the parents are going to be supportive and helpful; if you're wrong, you're wrong, but you've got to start out that way.

- if a teacher felt these to be true, she should get out of teaching.

- these are important, but it's something a teacher must work against, must rise above, must not let influence too much.

Cluster Names

- how to hate teaching.

- attitudes to avoid in contacting parents.

- it's the parents' attitude toward the school.

- parents' ideas of how their children should be acting, as opposed to the teacher's ideas.

- a harsh teacher view of parents.

- parental criticism of the teacher.

- negative portrait of parents.
- negative attitudes of parents and teachers.
- against the grain of teacher's teaching.

Discussion:
Cluster H consists of five statement-variables that unite at a merger distance of .92, one of the larger distances among the identified clusters. In Cluster H every one of the five statements are written in negative terms and given a reverse valence. Nevertheless, teacher responses to the statements are noticeably less positive, combining to form a mean response of 3.12.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of a Negative Portrait of Parents." The teachers in the Follow-up Interview uniformly reacted against this set of statement-variables. The negative valence of the statements dominated each teacher's discussion. Though the teachers disagreed with most of the statements, and declared the clusters as an unimportant influence on a teacher's practices, they also spoke strongly about how belief in such statements was indicative of a very bad parent-teacher relationship.

Several teachers spoke of this cluster as a set of attitudes to avoid, to work against developing, or to rise above. Inadvertently, several teachers confirmed that teachers did, at least occasionally, experience these feelings, and that parents were perceived to behave in these negative ways. The general course of behavior under the influence of this negative portrait of parents is to cease contact or to
contact only as necessary. One teacher did describe the alternate possibility of contacting parents all the more, to offset the basis for the attitudes. One teacher felt that a teacher who bases his practice on these beliefs, would be using them as excuses for other problems in parent contact or teaching.

One teacher diverged from the topic somewhat to explain why parents might behave in these negative ways. The teacher spoke of the lack of support that parents feel in the absence of neighbors and friends who might share in the raising of the child. Parents feel singularly responsible but cannot raise the child alone. In frustration, parents sometimes turn to the school--to blame, to shift responsibility, to get help.

Though teachers declared that this group of statements was not an important influence, the relatively low mean cluster score evidences that a considerable number of teachers reported these statements to be part of their experience. Many of the teachers have a less-than-positive portrait of parents.
Cluster J. Teacher's Experience of Parental Support

Statement-Variables:

22. I find that parents' values and mine are much the same. 3.15

56. The parents of my students are there when children need them. 3.14

29. In my experience, I find that parents really try to understand what goes on in school these days. 3.37

60. In my experience, when parents say they'll do something, they follow through on it. 3.29

Teachers' Comments on Cluster J:

Cluster Composition

- these items go together.
- yes, they are related.
- they belong together; the values part doesn't go with the rest; take #22 out.
- these items should be grouped with Cluster C.
- yes, this is a group; they're about the type of person a parent is.
- #29 doesn't really belong; it does if it means to show that the parents are interested.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- these basically are about values, and follow-through, and consistency.
- it's the school reflecting the community values.

- if the school is a true reflection of the community, then talking to parents is easy; you're looking at the child through the same eyes; it's very, very important.

- a teacher who agrees with these statements is more likely to contact parents; a child responds when the parent is interested; it shows.

- it's what I'm doing with the children and how the parents are reacting to it.

- the more a teacher feels this way, the more contact there will be.

- I have a parent helper in whom I can confide; that's an example of this.

- this is more important than Cluster M.

- if these things were true, then parents would initiate more contact; that's important.

- as a teacher you have to know that parents are interested; then you know how to go; if they are not, well... . . .

- this is so important; teachers need positive reinforcement too; it's like incentive, and it only takes a few parents to make the teacher feel the support.

- our academic values are the same; other values may differ.

- you tend to feel that your values are also held by others; that's not true; you have to remind yourself of that.

- some values are being clean, coming on time, doing well.

- this group is important for the same reasons Cluster H was not.

Cluster Names

- parent-teacher agreement; harmony; mutual support.

- a positive look at parents.
- awareness of interaction of parents and teachers.
- parental interest.
- teacher's view of the parent.
- how the school reflects community values.
- parent interest in the child.

Discussion:

Cluster J consists of four statement-variables that merge at a merger distance of .85. Teachers' responses to the statements produced a mean response of 3.24.

This cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Parental Support." In the Follow-up Interviews, teachers spoke of the importance of knowing that parents are supportive of the teacher's efforts. One teacher spoke of the support using the metaphor of positive reinforcement. She said that if even only a few parents show that they are supportive, that they acknowledge and commend your efforts, the teacher is spurred on to work harder. In the absence of such support the effort is more difficult to make.

Teachers spoke of the role of values in parent-teacher relationships. For several teachers, the ideal would be to have the school reflect the community's values. But two teachers took exception to this goal. One teacher said that it would be important to have certain values in common, like those related to academics; other values could be different. A second teacher pointed out that value differences exist and that a teacher should frequently remind herself of
that fact. The differences are not as important as the teacher's ability to recognize and deal with those differences.

Just as it is important to work against the negative portrait of parents presented in Cluster H, it is important to work toward the development of parental support here. However, taking the mean cluster score as an indication of teacher's sense of parental support, it would have to be judged that a lower number of teachers than might be hoped for feel such support. Cluster H and Cluster J, though opposites in views of parents, are closer to each other than to the other mean cluster scores.
Cluster K. Teacher's Experience of Parent-Teacher Role Conflict

Statement-Variables:

14. In my experience, I find that when I contact parents, I am surprised by their reactions.  *3.47

66. Parent contact reduces my options to think and act on my own.  *4.30

50. In my experience with parents, I find that they unjustly blame the school for many things.  *2.95

70. In my experience, I find that the parent role conflicts with the teacher role.  *3.87

Teachers' Comments on Cluster K:

Cluster Composition

- these items belong together.
- this is not as close a group as some other clusters.
- these items go together, but I'm not sure of a central idea.
- the statements do not belong together; #70 should go with the group on parental support; #50 is just opinion.
- these statements go together, except for #70; #70 should go with the group on parental support; #50 is just opinion.
- these statements go together, except for #70; #70 goes with all groups; it's so true.
- this group goes with Cluster H.
- #66 belongs with the group on the parents' view of the teacher.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- if teachers agreed with these statements, they might not contact parents; it depends on the individual teacher; some are inhibited by parents but some don't let parents stop them.

- the wording of these statements suggests that contact limits the teacher in some way.

- parents don't blame the school directly to you; they do it later on; but blaming is a way of seeking help; I take criticism as seeking help.

- if a teacher agreed with this, then if the teacher felt that it was possible to help the parent, she would contact more often; if the parent blames the school for everything, then the parent needs more help than the child.

- I probably wouldn't avoid contact with parents because of these ideas.

- #66 could be true; if parents come down on you, you would be less likely to feel free about acting on your own.

- these are a bit on the negative side.

- these statements are not that important an influence on teachers; I would be concerned if there were a great number of teachers who felt this way.

- actually parent contact can increase options; a teacher can find new ways of working with the kids.

- I'm sometimes surprised by the concern I get when I hear from parents; it's not bad and it's not blame.

Cluster Names

- working together; coinciding; complementary role.

- bad feelings from parent contacts.

- role conflicts.
- reactions from parent contacts.
- parent-teacher conflicts.
- contact with parents.

Discussion:

Cluster K consists of four statement-variables that merge at a distance of .95. This is the largest merger distance of any of the identified clusters. As with Cluster H, all of the statement-variables in this cluster are written in negative terms and given a reversed valence. The teachers' responses to these statement-variables produce a mean response of 3.65.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Parent-Teacher Role Conflict," though the cluster seems less strong, both statistically and conceptually, than the other clusters. In Follow-up Interviews, the teachers recognized this looseness of fit and emphasized it by suggesting that various statement-variables in this cluster would be better placed in other clusters. The fact that the merger distance for the cluster is large, confirms the weakness of the cluster.

Several teachers linked this cluster to Cluster H, "Teacher's Experience of a Negative Portrait of Parents." Cluster K also presents a less-than-positive image of parents. If there is a difference between the two clusters, it might lie in the more active exchange between parents and
teachers intimated in Cluster K. Thus, the conflict arises in interaction between parent and teacher. Cluster H, on the other hand, presents a general portrait of parents which is not specifically linked to interaction of the two parties. The distinction is slight, and may be superfluous.

In discussion of Cluster K, teachers spoke of the pre-eminence of the individual teacher in responding to parent-teacher conflict. One teacher views parental criticism as an indirect way of seeking help. This view is not unlike the discussion of one teacher, regarding Cluster H, about the causes of parent frustration. In response to such challenges, the individual teacher is unique: some will offer help, if they are able to do so; some will seek to avoid situations where criticism arises. Other conditions, presumably, influence the individual teacher in choosing the course of action.
Cluster L.  Teacher's Experience of Comfort in Meeting Parental Expectations

26. In my experience with parents, I find that they expect too much of me.  *3.47
46. In my experience, contact with parents leaves me feeling uncomfortable.  *4.02

Teacher's Comments on Cluster L:

Cluster Composition

- these statements do go together.
- they are related to each other.
- these are two separate items; one talks about contacting, and the other talks about the entire experience.
- these items can go together.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- some parents do expect too much; they expect me to discipline the children and change them around; I don't know how it can be done in such a short time; but I don't feel uncomfortable.

- this is not important; in my early years of teaching these were extremely important because parents were a big threat to me; I had to gain self-confidence; for the inexperienced teacher, principal's support and parent cooperation are all the more important in becoming comfortable.

- this is, again, an example of parent frustration; it usually comes at the end of the year when the parents despair and want help; it allows the teacher to understand what the homelife of the child is like; if the child is under too much pressure at home, the teacher might be more tactful in what is reported to parents.
- this is important for further contact; if a contact leaves you feeling uncomfortable, then you are less likely to contact the parent in the future.

Cluster Names

- teacher's reaction after parent conference.
- lack of communication; too big expectations for teachers; unreachable goals.
- parent frustration.

Discussion:

Cluster L consists of two statement-variables that unite at a .83 merger distance. Teacher responses to the statements produced a mean response of 3.74.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Comfort in Meeting Parental Expectations." This cluster is not unrelated to Cluster E, Teacher's Experience of Comfort in Interpersonal Contact Situations, insofar as both focus on teachers' feelings of comfort. But each cluster ties that comfort to a different source: Cluster E to the teacher's interpersonal skills; Cluster L on the teacher's ability to meet parental expectations. This distinction may be an important one.

In the Follow-up Interviews, teachers spoke of both teacher and parent frustration. Both originate in the inability to meet expectations held for the child. The teacher feels limited by the time and energy it is possible to afford each child in meeting parents' expectations. Parent frustration, one teacher suggested, arises mostly at
the end of the year when concern about unmet expectations develops. The parent brings the frustration to the school.

The importance of this condition for influencing a teacher's parent contact practices is uncertain. One teacher who reported that it does not influence her now, also reported that early in her career, when she was less confident of her abilities, the condition was much more influential. Principal's support, parent cooperation, and self-confidence were necessary to boost her above feeling uncomfortable in working with parents. Another teacher, however, suggested that this condition has a continuing influence throughout the career. She stated that if a teacher felt uncomfortable after meeting with a parent, the teacher would be less likely to contact the parent again. In either case, the feeling of comfort in meeting parental expectations probably works with other conditions in influencing a teacher's practices.
Cluster M. Teacher's Experience of Parental Empathy

Statement-Variables:

53. In my experience with parents, I see that they know what it's like to be a teacher.

54. I find that parents are sensitive to the feelings of teachers.

77. In my experience with parents, I see that they understand how hard teachers work.

Teachers' Comments on Cluster M:

Cluster Composition

- these do belong together.
- I see how they go together.
- yes, it's how parents feel or understand teachers.
- they are related to each other.
- they fit into a group.
- #53 and #54 belong together; parents respect the work of teachers, but #77 is not true.

Cluster Meaning and Influence

- this is about whether parents are aware of how teachers feel; this is really important; if parents are sensitive, then teachers would be more willing to contact them.

- parents don't know what it's like to be a teacher today, nor do preservice teachers; they're shocked; they don't know what schools are like today.
- this is fairly important; when we contact parents we need the understanding of the home, and they need the understanding of the school.

- it makes the whole job easier if they understand; if parents have the ability to understand; but it's not as important as Cluster J.

- parents know their own children, and they can relate to the feelings teachers have.

- I make the initial contacts, and then these things follow.

- #53 is not really that possible, but it is important; #54 is important, but my feelings are not as important as the kids are; #77 is important.

- teachers don't always feel that parents feel these ways.

- this definitely affects a teacher because part of being human is that we do things that are favorable to us; we'll want to contact a parent who understands more than one who does not.

- a lot of times parents don't really understand; they should come to school to see what goes on; if a teacher agreed with these statements, there would be more contact.

- it's such an individual thing; a teacher could work hard.

- parents are not aware of the work of either the teacher or the child.

- the teacher's work and feelings are not important as the child, as long as the parents know I'm doing my best and that there is trust there.

- if they understand my feelings it's nice, but it's not an objective of contact.

Cluster Names

- relating; relationship between parent and teacher; being sensitive.

- parents' views of teacher.
- parents' reactions to teachers.
- teacher awareness; parents' awareness of teacher's feeling.
- parents' reactions to teachers; parents' feeling toward teachers; knowledge and feelings and reactions.
- teacher understanding by parents.
- parents' ideas of teachers.
- identifying with the teacher's purpose.
- feelings of the teacher.

Discussion:

Cluster M consists of three statement-variables that unite at a merger distance of .88. Teachers' responses to the statements combine to produce a mean response of 2.93. This is the lowest mean cluster score of the twelve identified clusters.

The cluster has been named "Teacher's Experience of Parental Empathy." In the Follow-up Interviews, teachers described this cluster as the parents' ability to understand a teacher's job and feelings. The teachers reported mixed experiences: some felt that parents do try to understand what it's like to be a teacher and what goes on in schools, and because they know their own children can know how the teacher feels; most teachers felt that parents can only limitedly understand what teaching and schools are like, and that it's impossible to understand fully. The fact that the mean cluster score for this cluster is the lowest of all the
cluster scores, and the only one below 3.00, suggests that many teachers do not experience parental empathy.

The importance of this condition in influencing a teacher's parent contact practice was doubted by the teachers. While each of them felt that gaining a parent's understanding of the teacher's job is nice and would make teaching easier, each also said it was less important than the students' welfare. Toward the goal of working well with children, parental support and cooperation are highly valued. A teacher's feelings and sensitivity are less so. One teacher, however, qualified this ranking by noting that it is important to her that parents know she is doing the best job she can do, and that they trust and respect her. This qualification suggests that while empathy may not have to be demonstrated, an underlying appreciation may be important to the teacher.
Table 17
Twelve Clusters of Teacher's Experiences of Parent Contact Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviated Cluster Name</th>
<th>Number of Statement-Variables in Cluster</th>
<th>Merger Distance at which Cluster Formed</th>
<th>Mean Responses to Cluster Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Principal's Support</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Parent-School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Results of Parent Contact</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Being Responsible for Parent Contact</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Comfort in Interpersonal Contact Situations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Principal's Encouragement for Parent Contact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Parental Influence on the Child</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Negative Portrait of Parents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Parental Support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Parent-Teacher Role Conflict</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Comfort in Meeting Parental Expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Parental Empathy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aRounded to the nearest hundredth.
Summary

Twelve clusters of teachers' experiences of parent contact situations have been identified and discussed using statistical and conceptual viewpoints. The twelve clusters of experiences represent conditions inherent in parent contact situations that might influence a teacher's practice. The clusters cover a range of topics, and vary as well in size, in merger distance values, and in mean responses to cluster statements. The twelve clusters are summarized in Table 17.

Profiles of Teachers with Different Parent Contact Practices

The third research question for this study called for the development of teacher profiles which might mark differences between teachers with different parent contact practices. Specifically and according to the chosen methodology,

The twelve clusters were also assessed for internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha as the statistical measure (Cronbach, 1951). Though the cluster analysis procedures themselves would seem to organize internally consistent groups of statement-variables, it was felt that a further measure would provide yet another perspective on the clusters.

The results of the Cronbach's Alpha tests showed that the clusters have varying degrees of internal consistency. On a 1.000 scale, the clusters ranged as follows: A, .869; B, .590; C, .839; D, .763; E, .652; F, .690; G, .656; H, .779; J, .741; K, .564; L, .671; and M, .736.
profiles of teachers with a high frequency of teacher-initiated contact were compared to profiles of teachers with a low frequency. The profiles consist of 21 characteristics in two categories: demographic and professional practice characteristics, and characteristics based on the experiences of parent contact situations as organized through cluster analysis.

When the profiles of the High and Low Frequency Groups had been developed, only a number of characteristics evidenced any notable differences. Among the demographic and professional practice characteristics, which included teacher's assignment, class enrollment, experience, residence, sex, education, professional affiliation, parents' and teacher's socioeconomic status, alternate sources of contact, and reasons for contact, only the last three characteristics differed markedly across the two teacher groups. From the twelve clusters of teacher's experiences of parent contact situations, only the experiences of being responsible for parent contact, parental support, and comfort in meeting parental expectations separated the Low and High Frequency Groups. For economy, these six characteristics for which there was a marked difference will be displayed and discussed here. The remainder of the characteristics are reported in Appendix F.
Part One of the Profile. Demographic and Professional Practice Characteristics

In Part One of the Parent Contact Questionnaire, the teachers supplied a variety of information about their demographic backgrounds and their professional practices. For the whole population of the study this information was summarized and presented in Chapter III as part of the description of the teacher sample. For the two subgroups within the sample, those teachers in the High and Low Frequency of teacher-initiated contact Groups, only three of the characteristics differentiate. Those three characteristics are described here.

Parents' and teacher's socioeconomic status. Teachers' judgments of the socioeconomic status of the parents of their students, and of their own socioeconomic status are characteristics of the profiles.

Table 18
Low and High Frequency Groups by Father's Level of Formal Schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's Level of Schooling</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School to High School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College to Advanced Degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The teachers' fathers' level of formal schooling may be an antecedent of the teachers' socioeconomic status. Teachers in both the Low and High Frequency Groups have fathers whose formal education stopped at every level of schooling (see Table 18). As in the full teacher sample, slightly less than half of the teachers' fathers completed high school; slightly more than half went on to college and possibly earned one or more degrees. Using the high school completion as a breakpoint, the Low and High Groups were compared. Nearly equal numbers of teachers' fathers were represented on each side of the breakpoint. The two groups did not differ significantly ($X^2 = .1140, df = 1$) at the .05 level of probability. Teachers' fathers' level of formal schooling is an element of socioeconomic status on which the Low and High Groups did not differ significantly.

Table 19

Low and High Frequency Groups by Teachers' Judgments of the Socioeconomic Status of the Parents of Their Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic Levels</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-Middle Class</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About one-third of the teachers' judgments of the socioeconomic status of the parents of their students placed the parents in the middle class; about two-thirds of the teachers' judgments placed the parents in the lower-middle class (see Table 19). These fractions are comparable to the judgments of the full teacher sample. Comparing the Low and High Frequency Groups on their judgments revealed no significant difference ($X^2 = .12040, df = 1$) between the two groups at the .05 level of probability. Teacher's judgments of the socioeconomic status of the parents of their students is an element of socioeconomic status on which the two teacher groups did not differ significantly.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic Levels</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-Middle Class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle and Lower-Middle Class</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In judging their own socioeconomic status, the teachers used three levels: upper-middle class, middle class, and lower-middle class. In both the Low and High Frequency
Groups only one teacher judged his or her own socioeconomic status to be lower-middle class (see Table 20). Decidedly, teachers placed themselves at a higher socioeconomic level than they placed the parents of their students.

The Low and High Groups were compared contrasting the numbers of lower-middle class plus middle class teachers with the numbers of upper-middle class teachers. The High Group was evenly split: nine teachers in the upper middle class and nine in the middle class or lower. The Low Group was decidedly imbalanced, with only two teachers describing themselves as upper-middle class and sixteen as middle class or lower. The Low and High Frequency Groups differed significantly \( (X^2 = 6.4146, \text{df} = 1) \) at the .02 level of probability.

Teachers who reported a high frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact also described themselves as upper-middle class significantly more frequently than teachers who reported a low frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact. Teachers' judgment of their own socioeconomic levels is an element of socioeconomic status on which the Low and High Groups differed significantly.

Teachers' judgments of their own socioeconomic status were compared with their judgments of their students' parents' socioeconomic status (see Table 21). The comparisons could place the teachers at the same level as the parents, or at one or more levels higher, or one or more
Table 21
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teachers' Judgments of Their Own Socioeconomic Status Compared to Their Judgments of the Students' Parents' Socioeconomic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher's Status as Compared to Parents' Status</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher by 2 Levels or More</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher by 1 Level</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Same Level As or Lower</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

levels lower than the parents. This comparison, like the judgments of socioeconomic status themselves, generally placed teachers at the same level of the parents or higher socioeconomically. Comparing the Low and High Groups across three levels of comparison--same level as or lower, higher by one level, and higher by two levels or more--revealed no significant difference \( (X^2 = 2.6202, df = 2) \) at the .05 level of probability. However, significance was reached between the .20 and .30 levels of probability, evidencing a weak difference between the two teacher groups. The differences between a teacher's judgment of his or her own socioeconomic status and the judgment of the students' parents' socioeconomic status is an element of socioeconomic status on which the two groups differed somewhat, but not significantly.
Teacher's contacts through school-, parent-, and teacher-initiation. The Low and High Frequency Groups were selected on the basis of reported number of teacher-initiated parent contacts. Two other sources of initiation have been noted: the school and the parent. The Low and High Groups differ considerably on the frequency of teacher-initiated contact, and they also differ considerably on the reported number of contacts through other sources of initiation (see Table 22). Teachers in the High Group also report more contact through parent-initiation (Distribution-Free Rank Sum Test--Wilcoxon, $p < .001$) and more contact through school-initiation (Distribution-Free Rank Sum Test--Wilcoxon, $p < .004$) than teachers in the Low Group. School-initiated contact is the most frequent form of contact for teachers in the Low Group, while parent-initiated contact is second, and teacher-initiated contact is the least frequent form. Teacher-initiated contact is the most frequent form of contact for teachers in the High Group, while school-initiated contact is second, and parent-initiated contact is the least frequent form.

Frequency of contact through one source of initiation by the teachers is not offset by a contrasting frequency of contact through another source or combination of sources. Teachers who initiate contact frequently also have frequent contact by other sources; teachers who initiate contact infrequently, also infrequently have contact through other
Table 22
Low and High Frequency Groups by Reported Frequency of Parent-Teacher Contact by Three Sources of Initiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Initiation</th>
<th>Minimum Number Reported</th>
<th>Maximum Number Reported</th>
<th>Mean Number Reported</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Frequency Group Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Initiated</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>299.8</td>
<td>99.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Initiated</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Initiated</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Frequency Group Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Initiated</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>422.9</td>
<td>142.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Initiated</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>249.9</td>
<td>173.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Initiated</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>2,220</td>
<td>1,030.9</td>
<td>576.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

soures. The frequency of contact through differing sources is a characteristic of the profile on which the Low and High Groups differ considerably.

Teacher's reasons for initiation of contact. In the Low Frequency Group the reasons cited most frequently as important for teacher-initiated contact are noting lack of academic progress and discipline problems (see Table 23). The reasons most frequently cited as "no reason" for
Table 23

Low and High Frequency Groups by Reasons for Teacher-Initiated Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Contacting Parents</th>
<th>Number of Teachers Reporting As:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Reason for Teacher-Initiated Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low-High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Noting Academic Progress</td>
<td>1-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Noting Lack of Academic Progress</td>
<td>2-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Noting Social/Emotional Adjustment</td>
<td>8-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Noting Lack of Social/Emotional Adjustment</td>
<td>6-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Noting Discipline Problem</td>
<td>0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Collecting Fees</td>
<td>14-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Seeking Help in Class or on Field Trips</td>
<td>8-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Noting Student's General Health, Sickness, or Injury</td>
<td>6-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Noting Extended Absences, Giving Assignments</td>
<td>8-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teacher-initiated contact are developing an acquaintance, collecting fees, seeking general information, sharing general information and explaining curriculum. Teachers in the Low Group cited no other reasons for contact.

In the High Frequency Group, teachers cited these reasons most frequently as important reasons for teacher-initiated contact: noting academic progress and lack of academic progress. The reasons most frequently cited as "no reason" for teacher-initiated contact include developing an acquaintance, collecting fees, seeking general information and explaining curriculum. Three other reasons were listed by individuals in the High Group as reasons for teacher-initiated contact.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Noting Frequent Absences</td>
<td>5-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Seeking General Information</td>
<td>12-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Seeking Special Help for Student</td>
<td>5-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Developing an Acquaintance</td>
<td>15-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Explaining Curriculum</td>
<td>10-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Sharing General Information</td>
<td>11-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Other Reasons</td>
<td>18-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTALS

128-71 104-158 54-57
Though the reasons for contact do not differ much between the Low and High Groups, the frequencies with which they are cited do. Teachers in the Low Group placed greater emphasis on lack of progress and discipline problems than teachers in the High Group who placed emphasis on academic progress. Teachers in the High Group also placed more importance on noting social-emotional adjustments, on developing an acquaintance, sharing general information, and noting extended absences/giving assignments. On several of the reasons, such as seeking help in class or on a field trip, noting student's general health, noting frequent absences, and seeking special help for the student, the Low and High Groups are reasonably similar.

In general, teachers in the High Frequency group cite more reasons than teachers in the Low Group as reasons they have had for teacher-initiated contact. Teachers in the High Group also cite fewer reasons as "no reason" for teacher-initiated contact than teachers in the Low Frequency Group. Different views of reasons for teacher-initiated contact is a characteristic of the profile on which the Low and High Groups differ noticeably.

Part Two of the Profile. Characteristics Based on the Teacher's Experiences of Parent Contact Situations

In Part Two of the Parent Contact Questionnaire, teachers responded to a number of statements to describe their experiences of parent contact situations. (The responses of the
full teacher sample are summarized in Appendix E.) Through the process of cluster analysis, and through the Follow-up Interview process, twelve clusters of teachers' experiences were identified and named. The clusters are described in the third part of this chapter. The cluster scores of the High Frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact Group were compared to the cluster scores of teachers in the Low Frequency Group, once again, marking those characteristics on which the profiles differ (see Table 24).

Comparison of the Low and High Frequency Groups on their mean cluster scores for all of the twelve clusters combined produced a significant difference (Hotelling $T^2 = 43.0697; F$ value $= 2.4279; df = 12, 23; p < .033$) between the two groups. The High Group had higher mean cluster scores on seven of the twelve clusters, and a higher total score overall. In general, the High Group felt more positive about the results of parent contact, being responsible for parent contact, interpersonal contact situations, parental influence on the child, meeting parental expectations, parental empathy, and was not as bothered by parent-teacher role conflicts. The Low Group felt more positive about principal's support, the parent-school relationship, the principal's encouragement for parent contact, parental support, and had a less negative portrait of parents.

**Teacher's experience of being responsible for parent contact.** The Low and High Frequency Groups differed
Table 24
Low and High Frequency Groups by Mean Cluster Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviated Cluster Name</th>
<th>Mean Cluster Scores</th>
<th>Abbreviated Cluster Name</th>
<th>Mean Cluster Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Frequency Group Teachers</td>
<td>High Frequency Group Teachers</td>
<td>Probability Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Principal's Support</td>
<td>4.4097</td>
<td>4.3542</td>
<td>0.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Parent-School Relationship</td>
<td>3.8330</td>
<td>3.7034</td>
<td>0.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Results of Parent Contact</td>
<td>3.9303</td>
<td>3.9903</td>
<td>0.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Being Responsible for Parent Contact</td>
<td>4.1000</td>
<td>4.6000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Comfort in Interpersonal Contact Situations</td>
<td>4.0556</td>
<td>4.1111</td>
<td>0.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Principal's Encouragement for Parent Contact</td>
<td>4.4167</td>
<td>4.2500</td>
<td>0.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Parent Influence on the Child</td>
<td>4.0833</td>
<td>4.3056</td>
<td>0.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Negative Portrait of Parents</td>
<td>3.2444</td>
<td>3.1639</td>
<td>0.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Parental Support</td>
<td>3.3889</td>
<td>3.0139</td>
<td>0.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Parent-Teacher Role Conflict</td>
<td>3.5972</td>
<td>3.7639</td>
<td>0.377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Comfort in Meeting Parental Expectations</td>
<td>3.6111</td>
<td>4.0556</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Parental Empathy</td>
<td>3.0368</td>
<td>3.1479</td>
<td>0.644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
significantly ($p < .001$) in their reported experience of being responsible for parent contact. The High Group had a higher mean cluster score than the Low Group, indicating a stronger sense of the responsibility.

**Teacher's experience of parental support.** The Low and High Frequency Groups differed significantly ($p < .061$) in their reported experience of parental support. The Low Group had a higher mean cluster score than the High Group, indicating a stronger sense of being supported by parents.

**Teacher's experience of comfort in meeting parental expectations.** The Low and High Frequency Groups differed significantly ($p < .093$) on their reported experience of comfort in meeting parental expectations. The High Group had a higher mean cluster score than the Low Group, indicating a sense of greater comfort in meeting parental expectations.

**Summary**

In order to answer the third research question of this study, profiles of teachers with different parent contact practices were developed. Teachers with a high frequency of teacher-initiated contact were compared with teachers with a low frequency of teacher-initiated contact. Profile comparisons were made on two sets of characteristics: Demographic and Professional Practice Characteristics, and Characteristics Based on the Teacher's Experiences of Parent Contact Situations. Table 25 summarizes the profile characteristics and the difference between the High and Low Groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile Characteristics</th>
<th>Assessed Indicator of the Characteristics</th>
<th>Noted Profile Differences Between Low and High Frequency Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Reported grade level(s)</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Enrollment</td>
<td>Reported number of students</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Reported years of teaching experience total</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reported years of teaching experience in the school building currently assigned</td>
<td>No significant difference at the .05 level of probability; significance is reached between .10 and .20 levels of probability, with the High Group having more experience in the building assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>Reported distance from the school building currently assigned, measured as greater or less than ten minutes by car</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Reported sex</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 25 (continued)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Teacher's and Students' Parents' Socioeconomic Status</th>
<th>Reported teacher's judgment of students' parents' socioeconomic status</th>
<th>Reported teacher's judgment of their own socioeconomic status</th>
<th>Comparison of reported teacher's judgment of students' parents' status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
<td>Significant difference between the two groups at the .02 level of probability, with the High Group having more teachers describing themselves as upper-middle class</td>
<td>No significant difference between the two groups at the .05 level of probability; significance is reached between .20 and .30 levels of probability with the High Group having more teachers two or more socioeconomic levels above the parents</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>Education</th>
<th>Reported size of undergraduate, certifying institution</th>
<th>Reported level of formal schooling completed</th>
<th>Reported participation is a learning experience focused on parent-teacher relations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 25 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Affiliation</th>
<th>Reported membership in a professional teacher organization</th>
<th>No significant difference between groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contacts through School-, Parent-, and Teacher-Initiation</td>
<td>Reported frequencies of contact through each of the three sources of initiation</td>
<td>Teachers with more teacher-initiated contact also have more contact through other two sources; teachers with more contact have most frequent contact through teacher-initiation, and least frequent through parent-initiation; teachers with less contact have most frequent contact through school-initiation and least frequent through teacher-initiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Reasons for Teacher-Initiated Contact | Reported views of the appropriateness of several reasons for teacher-initiated contact | High and Low Groups place different emphases on several reasons for contact, with the High Group more concerned about academic progress, and the Low Group more concerned about lack of progress and discipline problems; High Group also cites developing an acquaintance, noting social-emotional adjustments, sharing general information, and noting extended absences/giving assignments as reasons for contact more frequently than Low Group; |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part Two.</th>
<th>Mean cluster scores</th>
<th>No significant difference between groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal's Support</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-School Relationship</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of Parent Contact</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Responsible for Parent Contact</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>Significant difference between groups at the .001 level of probability; High Group having a higher mean cluster score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort in Interpersonal Contact Situations</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal's Encouragement for Parent Contact</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence on the Child</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Portrait of Parents</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>No significant difference between groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Support</td>
<td>Mean cluster scores</td>
<td>Significant difference between groups at .061 level of probability;</td>
</tr>
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Table 25 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean cluster scores</th>
<th>Low Group having a higher mean cluster score</th>
<th>No significant difference between groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Teacher Role</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort in Meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Empathy</td>
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</table>

Significant difference at .093 level of probability; High Group having a higher mean cluster score
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was conducted to explore the field of conditions that might influence a teacher in the practice of contacting parents. The study set for itself three guiding questions whose answers would (1) identify the conditions, (2) organize the conditions as teachers would, and (3) point to those particular conditions which vary with the frequency of contact. This chapter will summarize the study, discuss the results and draw warranted conclusions, and make recommendations for further research.

Summary

The relationship between home and school is an important concern of parents, educators, and the students themselves. Parents and teachers are exhorted to maintain close contact so that they may be mutually supportive and work in the best interests of the school youngsters. Maintaining such a relationship may never have been easy, however, and through the history of American education, combinations of economic, social, and cultural forces seem to have made the task more difficult. Schooling itself, as it has grown in size and
complexity has not facilitated the maintenance of good home-school relationships.

Concern about the problem has long been evident in the professional literature: plans and guidelines have been espoused as ways of correcting the situation; both theory and practice have received much attention. In more recent years, with the introduction of research in the problem area, educators have gained new insights in working toward better parent-teacher relations. The research has concentrated on the problems of home-school relations and the effects of parent involvement. Consistently, research has shown the importance and value of a good relationship.

The Problem

However, the research has ignored the part the individual classroom teacher plays in effecting a home-school partnership. Researchers may have miscalculated the importance that differences among teachers may make. It is the actions of the individual teacher more than the activities of school-organized programs which has the potential of enhancing the parent-teacher relationship through more frequent communication. Thus, one focus of this study has been the individual classroom teacher.

The parent-teacher relationship can chiefly be effected through contact. Contact can be made in many forms and for many purposes. A distinction, important for this study, has been made between contacts according to the source of
initiation. School-initiated contact is that contact which occurs through school-wide organization such as open house, report cards, school newsletters, and parent-teacher association activities, among others. The individual teacher may or may not have the option to contact parents through these means. Parent-initiated contact is that contact which occurs through the efforts of the parent. Telephone calls, notes, and stopping by the school to say "hello" are examples of the ways parents intentionally make contact with the teacher. The individual teachers does not usually have the option of not participating in such contact.

Teacher-initiated contact is the third kind of contact. Teacher-initiated contact is that contact which occurs through the efforts of the individual teacher, acting independently of school-organized programs. Telephone calls, notes, classroom newsletters, home visits, and special conferences are ways in which teachers initiate contact with parents for a variety of reasons. Some teachers have organized programs of parent contact for themselves, while others initiate contact chiefly on an ad hoc basis. The option for contact lies strictly with the individual teacher. Teacher-initiated contact, because it is suited to the style of the individual teacher, and because it is potentially the most frequent form of contact, may also hold the greatest potential for effecting the parent-teacher relationship. For these reasons, teacher-initiated contact has been a second focus of this study.
Teacher-initiated contact varies. Some teachers contact parents a great deal; others initiate very little contact. Seemingly, these are conditions which influence a teacher in the frequency of contacting parents. What those conditions are, and which of them seem related to differences in frequency has been the problem of this study.

Three research questions were set for the study:

a. What are the conditions which might influence a teacher in the initiation of parent contact?

b. How do practicing teachers view and organize the field of conditions?

c. Within this organization of conditions, can profiles of teachers be developed which mark the differences between teachers with a high frequency versus teachers with low frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact?

The Methodology and Analyses

In order to respond to the three research questions a multi-step plan was established and implemented. In the first step, work was done to establish the range of conditions that might influence a teacher's parent contacting practices. Three sources were tapped to do so: the professional literature was extensively reviewed to identify possible conditions; interviews were held with practicing teachers and principals to note further conditions and to
confirm those found in the literature; the personal experience of the researcher was used to tentatively organize the conditions and to insure balance in their inclusion and display.

A questionnaire was developed which would allow a larger number of teachers than those in the interviews to report about the conditions to which they were subject in their parent contacts and about their practices. In the formation of the Parent Contact Questionnaire, the conditions identified in the first step of the study were divided into two parts. Part One of the Questionnaire gathered demographic and professional practice information; Part Two gathered information about the teacher's experiences in parent contact situations. The instrument was pilot-tested and refined before it was administered to the sample population of the study. Based on the pilot-test, a procedure was set for the administration of the Parent Contact Questionnaire.

A cluster random sample of teachers was selected from the elementary schools of a cooperating school district in the Central Ohio area. The regular classroom teachers, grades one through five, in each of six schools were invited to participate and agreed to do so. In regularly scheduled faculty meetings the Questionnaire was administered, and in subsequent visits to the schools each teacher was contacted to clarify and confirm responses to the instrument.
Information from the completed Questionnaires was coded and prepared for computer technology. Several different analyses were performed on the data. The first produced information which was useful both for further describing the teacher sample, and for identifying, within the sample, two subgroups--those teachers with the highest frequencies of teacher-initiated parent contact, and those teachers with the lowest frequencies. The second analysis, called cluster analysis, served to organize the remainder of the field of conditions by disclosing the underlying patterns of teachers' experiences of parent contact situations. Through this second analysis, twelve clusters were identified which, to some degree, made both statistical and conceptual sense. The twelve clusters were joined to the demographic and professional practice information to complete the field of influencing conditions.

Follow-up Interviews were held with ten of the teachers who responded to the Questionnaire. In these Follow-up Interviews each of the twelve clusters was presented to the teachers to gain their perspective on the meaning and importance each cluster might have. Thus, the statistical and conceptual sense of the clusters was enhanced by the understandings brought to bear by practicing teachers. Through the process of computer analysis and analysis of the Follow-up Interviews, the twelve clusters were identified, named, and described.
In order to respond to the third research question, profiles of the two subgroups of teachers were developed and compared. Eighteen teachers who reported having the most frequent teacher-initiated contact were described, using the demographic and professional practice information and the twelve clusters of experiences. This profile of the High Frequency Group was contrasted with a similar profile developed for the eighteen teachers in the Low Frequency Group. Differences which were statistically significant, or approached significance, and differences which were otherwise ascertained were marked and discussed.

Discussion

The results, analyses, and profile development of Chapter IV have presented new information about the field of parent-teacher relations as seen from the viewpoint of the classroom teacher. Some of that information seems to contradict earlier understandings present in the literature, while other information confirms what has already been reported. New insights, independent of earlier knowledge have also been gained. It is the purpose of this discussion to place in perspective the findings displayed in Chapter IV.

The Amount of Parent Contact

When all the various reasons, methods and media are considered, the teachers in this study reported considerably
more contact with parents than has been previously reported by teachers in other studies. This discrepancy may reflect emerging patterns of behavior in parent-teacher relations, or it may be the by-product of the more encompassing measure of contact used in this study. Other explanations could also be proposed. In any case, the lack of communication often noted in the literature would seem to be less a problem than expected, in this school district.

A question as to the nature and the quality of the communication still exists. Mediated contact may not be as effective in establishing a good relationship as personal contact. However, mediated contact may be more frequent or less threatening, and thus may actually serve equally as well. Whether the contacts are satisfying, or lead to the outcomes of cooperation and partnership has not been within the scope of the study. It might be argued, though, that such frequent contacts as reported by many teachers in the sample would not have been likely to continue if they were neither satisfying nor productive. Implied in the sheer numbers was some quality or effect.

The amount of parent contact varied considerably from teacher to teacher. For some teachers, contact was an important investment of professional time; for others it was a task secondary to the many other tasks of teaching. School-initiated contact supplied the most stability in this variance; it represented contacts teachers had to undertake
as a required part of their role. Teacher-initiated contact provided the most variance; left to the personal decision of the teacher, this form of contact varied from near non-existence to incredible frequencies. Different forms of contact, however, did not produce offsetting total contacts. Teachers who reported the more frequent teacher-initiated contact also reported more frequent contact through the other sources of initiation than teachers who reported a low frequency of teacher-initiated contact. Some teachers simply had much more parent contact than others.

The Influencing Conditions

In Chapter I, "conditions" were defined as those elements of a teacher's background and experience which have been incorporated into his or her professional practice such that contact with parents is promoted or discouraged. The range of conditions which might influence a teacher in the practice of initiating contact with parents was derived from a review of the literature, interviews with practitioners, and the researcher's own experience. Twenty-one conditions were grouped into two broad categories: demographics and professional practices, and a teacher's experiences of parent contact situations. There are nine conditions in the first category. (Teacher's sex has not been suggested by the literature nor is it suggested here as an influencing condition.) There are twelve conditions in the second. Each of the conditions was assessed through
one or more indicators. When profiles of two groups of teachers with different parent contact practices were developed, the conditions were examined to mark those that varied with the two groups. Six conditions were found to vary.

**Conditions related to demographics and professional practices.** Of the nine conditions which have been categorized as demographics and professional practices, only three differed significantly between the Low and High Frequency Groups of teachers, though several conditions pointed in the direction of important differences.

It is the general belief that teachers at the primary level have more contact with parents than teachers at other levels of schooling. The data did not support this belief. Teachers who initiated contact less frequently were found as much at the primary grade levels as not. The data did indicate a tendency toward less contact in the upper grades considered in this study, but such a tendency does not argue that at the primary levels there is necessarily more contact.

Large class enrollments are supposed to influence a teacher's practices by making contact more difficult. Few of the teachers in this study had enrollments that could be considered small, while many had large classes. Over the range of class sizes, however, differences between the Low and High Groups were not significant. It may be that class enrollments must fall below the sizes represented in this study before their influence is marked.
Experienced teachers are believed to develop greater comfort and skill in parent contact, and thus contact is expected to increase. Several of the teachers involved in this study reported strong beliefs that experience was an important condition. The data of the study did not support these beliefs with such certitude. The Low and High Frequency Groups both contained teachers with more and less total teaching experience. A more important aspect of experience would seem to be the amount of experience in a particular school building. This experience may reflect familiarity with the community, or past experiences with particular parents through older siblings, or the ability to move beyond the day-to-day demands of teaching placed on the teacher by a particular school environment, or some other development with experience. Again, though there was a marked tendency for teachers with less experience in the school building to also have less contact, the difference between the Low and High Groups was not significant. Total teaching experience and experience in a particular school building may work in conjunction with other conditions to influence a teacher's practices.

A teacher's residence may influence a teacher in several ways. Living in the community may create more opportunities for contact than would otherwise be available. Living in the community may also be an indication that the teacher shares the values and norms of the parents, thus
creating a basis for cooperative contact. A fairly large percentage of the teachers in the sample lived, as defined by this study, in the community in which they taught. However, in comparing the Low and High Frequency Groups no differences were observed.

The socioeconomic status of the teacher and the students' parents is widely studied as a condition that influences the parent-teacher relationship. Differences in status are generally believed to work against good relationships because of value differences, cultural differences, or personal discomfort. The data from this study did not include a wide enough range of parental socioeconomic status to develop a full picture of this influence. Across the range of parents' socioeconomic status represented—the middle and lower-middle class levels—teachers did not differ much in their practices. The Low and High Frequency Groups of teachers report about the same numbers of parents at each socioeconomic level. The teacher's own reported socioeconomic status presented quite a different picture. While an antecedent of socioeconomic status, the father's education, did not show any marked differences, teachers who reported a high frequency of teacher-initiated contact often classified themselves as upper-middle class socioeconomicly. This was at least one level above the status at which they place the students' parents. This finding lends support to an earlier study which found upper-class teachers to be unaffected by social
class barriers in establishing parent relations (Lolis, 1962). The finding has several possible explanations. Teachers who are upper-middle class socioeconomically may not feel threatened by contact with parents of middle or lower-middle class backgrounds; the comparisons of socioeconomic status--teachers to parents--lend some support to this explanation, but not without reservation, for some teachers who placed themselves even two levels above the parents were among the Low Frequency Group. Another explanation may be that upper-middle class teachers may have experienced more frequent parent-teacher contact as a norm when they themselves were students. They now practice the way they learned. A third explanation is possible: upper-middle class teachers may be more altruistic; they may see themselves as contributing to the resolution of social ills, and may thus have more intensive motivation for parent contact. Though there is a significant relationship evident, it is plausible that socioeconomic statuses of the parents and the teachers interact with other conditions in influencing a teacher's practices.

A teacher's education might influence the teacher's practice in several ways. A teacher who has received a more personal education by attending a smaller college may have better developed the interpersonal skills for working with other adults. Data from the study did not support this belief. Teachers who have gone beyond the bachelor's degree
in formal schooling may have developed a better knowledge base in education which would encourage them to work more closely with parents. Again, no support was found for this belief. Finally, teachers who have had a learning experience which was focused on parent-teacher relations might be expected to be more skillful, more motivated, or more knowledgeable, and thus more frequent in working with parents. Relatively few teachers report having such learning experiences; for those who did, the experiences seem not to have greatly influenced their practices.

With increasing teacher militancy and the negotiation of working conditions, teachers have, at times, moved to limit the demands placed on them by administrators and parents. Membership in a professional organization responsible for contract negotiation might be an indicator of concurrence in such a movement or simply sentiment in that direction. No evidence was found to support the influence of such a sentiment. Because the study was confined to one school district in which only one teacher organization was functional, it may have been difficult to find otherwise. A study in which several professional organizations with differing degrees of militancy were represented would more accurately assess the influence of the condition of teacher's professional affiliation.

As discussed earlier, having alternate sources of contact in the forms of school-initiation, parent-initiation,
and teacher-initiation, did not lead to a balance among teachers in the frequencies of their contacts. The Low and High Frequency Groups differed markedly in their use of the three sources of contact initiation, but the High Group consistently had the most frequent contacts. Having alternate sources of contact seemed to enhance the differences among teachers by providing teachers who want to contact parents with more opportunity to do so. As the teacher- and school-initiated contact increased, parents increased the contacts they initiated as well. A reinforcing pattern may be established which influences all parties in the direction of increased contact. Low frequency of contact may have a similar but opposite effect; it may damper contact. Having alternate sources of initiation is a condition which enhances the differences among teachers.

Having different perspectives on the reasons for contacting parents was also a condition which distinguished between teachers with low and high frequency of contact. The influence was not unqualified, however. Some reasons for contact were viewed as equally important or unimportant by teachers in the Low and High Groups. In general, though, the Low Group cited fewer reasons for contacting parents than the High Group. The High Group noticeably placed more emphasis on the positive reasons than the Low Group. Certainly, teachers who have less cause for parent contact, and that which they have is often negative, are likely to
have less contact overall. The reverse case would also seem true. The data from this study supported both cases. Having a different perspective on the reasons for parent contact is a condition which markedly influences a teacher's practices.

Conditions related to a teacher's experiences of parent contact situations. The second category of conditions was organized by analyses of teachers' responses which reported their experiences of parent contact situations. Past experience may influence future behaviors. Thus the twelve groups of experiences may be considered conditions which have been incorporated into practice such that they promote or discourage parent contact.

Across all twelve of the condition-clusters considered at once, the Low and High Frequency Groups differed significantly. The two groups of teachers reported different experiences of parent contact situations. When the conditions were taken separately, however, the differences between the Low and High Groups were less prominent, except for three conditions.

The most significant difference was the teacher's sense of being responsible for parent contact. The High Group teachers see themselves as more responsible for contact than the Low Group teachers. This sense of responsibility is apparently very important for frequent teacher-initiated contact.
The second condition on which the two groups differ markedly was the experience of parental support. Interestingly, the Low Group reported a stronger sense of support than the High Group. This finding, though unexpected, may be explained in several possible ways. Teachers who have infrequent contact with parents may be assuming more support than warranted. In assuming such support, the teacher may feel less need to contact parents as often. Perhaps teachers who have a high frequency of contact more often find that parents are not as supportive as they would hope; this may spur the teachers on to even more frequent contact in an effort to gain the support desired.

The third condition on which the Low and High Frequency Groups differed importantly was in the experience of comfort in meeting parental expectations. The High Group reported greater comfort than the Low Group. This may have been the result of the High Group teachers' ability in better meeting the expectations, or perhaps, a better ability to handle concern about expectations. Because of more frequent contact, the High Group may not have experienced parents as placing unrealistic demands on them, or the parents may have been better able to understand the efforts and limitations of the teacher.

Though these three conditions were the only conditions that distinguished between the Low and High Frequency groups, that does not mean that the other conditions did not influence
a teacher's practices of initiating contact with parents. Many of the teachers reported that principal's support was an important condition influencing teacher practices. Yet neither principal's support nor principal's encouragement for parent contact differed significantly between the Low and High Groups. Indeed, on both conditions, the Low Group reported a more positive experience. While it would be foolish to conclude that the principal's support and encouragement for contact was uninfluential, it is impossible to conclude that these conditions were sufficient.

**Conditions as necessary and sufficient.** Further consideration of the conditions gives rise to the suggestion that some of the conditions may be necessary if parent contact is to be initiated frequently, but that these conditions may not be sufficient. These necessary conditions may have to be augmented by other conditions to become sufficient. For example, a principal's support may be a necessary condition; without the principal's support parent contact may be held at a minimum. But before the support is effective, it may have to be augmented by a teacher's sense of responsibility for parent contact. Or perhaps it must be augmented by the experience of good results from parent contact, or perhaps by parental empathy. Perhaps this condition combines with a demographic condition to create a circumstance sufficient for frequent teacher-initiated parent contact.
The complementary relationship between and among conditions may be useful in explaining why some conditions are so widely reported as important, but at the same time do not give rise to the same patterns of practice among teachers. Where a necessary condition may be present for all teachers within a school, the augmenting conditions may not be present for all. Thus practices in initiating contact with parents may differ markedly.

The Importance of the Individual Classroom Teacher

An early premise of this study was that the role of the classroom teacher had not received the attention in research commensurate with its potential importance. For that reason the classroom teacher became one focus of the study. It was also premised that the actions of the individual teacher held the potential for greatest impact on parent-teacher relations. Teacher-initiated contact can be suited to the styles of the individual teacher, and it is potentially the most frequent form of contact. Teacher-initiated contact became a second focus of the study.

The importance of the individual classroom teacher has received much support from the study. The cluster analysis procedures completed to determine subgroups within the full teacher sample failed to develop any interpretable patterns. Teachers from the same schools did not respond in such a way that they formed subgroups. Nor did teachers who teach the same grade levels. Nor did teachers who have more experience,
or more education, or even teachers who have greater or lesser frequency of teacher-initiated parent contact. The absence of subgroups within the full teacher sample, on any definable basis, argues for the uniqueness of experience of the individual teacher. In the Follow-up Interviews, though asked to speak of teachers in general, the teachers often qualified remarks by pointing to alternate responses or behaviors other teachers might choose. They place unmistakable emphasis on the primacy of the individual.

The importance of the actions of the individual teacher, in the form of teacher-initiated parent contact, has also been underscored by the study. The sheer frequency with which some teachers initiate parent contact surpasses the potential for school-wide programs. Acting on their own, some teachers work to effect a home-school partnership which far exceeds the expectations of principals and central office administrators. It is equally important to note, however, that teacher-initiated contacts for some teachers fall below the minimal expectations that could be held for a practicing teacher. Nevertheless, the potential for effecting parent-teacher relations through frequent contact seems to lie in teacher-initiation. Both the uniqueness of each classroom teacher and potential of individual action argue for the recognition of the importance of the individual classroom teacher in matters of parent-teacher relationships.
Conclusions

This study has selected two foci which have largely been overlooked in previous research on the parent-teacher relationship. The foci were selected because they were believed to fill important gaps in knowledge based on research. One focus has been the part the individual classroom teacher plays in effecting that relationship through contact with parents. Relatedly, the second focus of the study has been contact initiated specifically by individual teachers. Because these foci combine to bring a new perspective to the research on parent-teacher relations, the study has added to professional knowledge and understanding. This same newness, however, makes any conclusions drawn from the study tentative. Despite the limitations imposed on the study, several conclusions may be drawn. The conclusions are presented here concisely.

1. When all the forms of contact were counted, teachers in the school district studied had considerably more contact with parents than previously reported by teachers in other studies.

2. The amount of parent contact reported varied widely from teacher to teacher.

3. Teacher-initiated contacts were the source of the greatest variance in the amount of parent contact reported.

4. Teacher-initiated contact was the most frequent form of parent contact for teachers who reported the highest contact totals.
5. School-initiated contact provided the greatest stability in frequencies of parent-teacher contact reported.

6. Teachers' experiences of parent contact situations seemed to be unique. On the basis of the reported experiences, meaningful subgroups of teachers could not be organized.

7. A field of 21 conditions which might influence a teacher in the practice of contacting parents was organized.

8. Profiles of groups of teachers who report greatly different frequencies of teacher-initiated parent contact were developed; several characteristics of the profiles were markedly different for the two groups of teachers.

9. Some conditions which might influence a teacher's practices, may be thought of as necessary but not sufficient; some necessary conditions may need to be supplemented by other conditions before a situation sufficient for frequent teacher-initiated parent contact is created.

10. The uniqueness of the experience of the individual teacher, and the potential which lies in individually determined action argue for the recognition of the importance of the classroom teacher as a focus for effecting the parent-teacher relationship.

Recommendations for Further Research

The present study has added to existing perspectives on the parent-teacher relationship from the viewpoint of the
classroom teacher. At the same time, it has given rise to new questions which only further investigation can answer. It is appropriate, now that the present study is complete, to identify several directions subsequent research might take to further detail the map of conditions drawn here, and to better demonstrate the relationship between that map and a teacher's practice.

It is recommended that the focus of future research in this field be placed again on the part played by the classroom teacher. This study provides firm evidence of the potential such a focus may have. Because so little previous research has taken the individual teacher into account, much has yet to be understood about how the classroom teacher functions in effecting the home-school, or parent-teacher relationship.

It is recommended that the distinctions made in the present study among school-, parent-, and teacher-initiated contact be maintained. Such a distinction more clearly defines the part played by the individual teacher, and more accurately describes the reality of parent contact.

It is recommended that future research seek a simpler, perhaps more accurate means of assessing the amount of parent contact. While the methods used in the present study provide a satisfactory measure, it may be possible to simplify the procedure and reduce the degree of estimation required of teachers. Any new methods, however, should recognize and
capture the differences among individual teachers, and should not prejudice teachers for valuing particular forms and patterns of contact.

It is recommended that efforts be made to incorporate into the assessment of contacts some recognition of the qualities of different contacts. Thus, personal contact and mediated contact might be valued differently; contact intended for sharing information might be valued differently than contact of a more social nature; contacts which are felt to be satisfying and productive might be distinguished from contacts which are not. The recognition of the different qualities of contacts was beyond the scope of the present study, but it would be a useful consideration as the present line of research is continued.

It is recommended that the conditions identified through the process of cluster analysis be further refined and detailed. Clusters which are less stable because of their size or less certain because of their merger distances should be strengthened. New statements designed to capture the essence of meaning in each cluster should be written to determine if the statements do indeed cluster with the intended groupings. Thus more careful definition and description of the clusters of conditions is needed.

It is recommended, that the present study be repeated with different populations to determine the stability of the findings and to extend the usability of the instrument.
While studies which include larger populations from several very different school settings may be attractive, care should be taken that important, context-specific conditions are not obscured or lost by the drive for generalization. Preferably, useful generalization would grow from several repetitions of the study in different locales.

It is recommended, finally, that research be undertaken to illustrate how conditions influence a teacher's practice of contacting parents. Is the presence of a condition an inducement to the teacher or merely a support for intended action? Relatedly, research should seek to determine the possible relationships between and among various conditions. Which conditions are necessary but not sufficient; which combinations of conditions are sufficient? Research should undertake to determine which conditions in themselves hold greater influence. From these lines of research, important implications for administrative practice and for teacher education may surface.
APPENDIX A

PARENT CONTACT INVENTORY
Part One. Demographic and Professional Practice Information

Please supply the following information about yourself and your professional practice.

1. Grade level you are now teaching. _____

2. Number of students in your class. _____

3. How would you classify the socio-economic status of the parents of the students in your class? Check one.
   _ _ _ _ _ upper class
   _ _ _ _ _ upper-middle class
   _ _ _ _ _ middle class
   _ _ _ _ _ lower-middle class
   _ _ _ _ _ lower class

4. Number of years (counting this year as complete) of your teaching experience. _____

5. Number of years of teaching experience in the school building you are now in. _____

6. Do you live 10 minutes or closer, by car, to the school in which you teach? _____ yes _____ no

7. Sex. _____ male
   _____ female

8. What is the highest level of formal schooling completed by your father? Check one.
   _ _ _ _ _ elementary school
   _ _ _ _ _ high school
   _ _ _ _ _ some college
   _ _ _ _ _ bachelor's degree completed
   _ _ _ _ _ some graduate study
   _ _ _ _ _ advanced degree completed

9. Was the undergraduate institution from which you graduated larger or smaller than 6,000 students?
   _ _ _ _ _ larger
   _ _ _ _ _ smaller

10. What is the highest level of formal schooling you have completed? Check one.
    _ _ _ _ _ some college
    _ _ _ _ _ bachelor's degree completed
    _ _ _ _ _ some graduate study/continuing education
    _ _ _ _ _ masters degree completed
    _ _ _ _ _ post-masters or PhD study
    _ _ _ _ _ early childhood administration
    _ _ _ _ _ counseling
    _ _ _ _ _ reading
    _ _ _ _ _ special education
    _ _ _ _ _ other

11. Are you a member of a professional organization? Check one.
    _ _ _ _ _ yes, SWEA
    _ _ _ _ _ yes, other
    _ _ _ _ _ no
12. How would you classify your own socio-economic status? Check one.

- upper class
- upper-middle class
- middle class
- lower-middle class
- lower class

13. Did you ever participate in a workshop, program, or course designed specifically about the topic of parent-teacher relationships?

- yes
- no

If yes, describe the experience in one or two sentences. If no, there were no more than one experience, describe each.

1. ____________________________________________________________________________
   rating

2. ____________________________________________________________________________
   rating

3. ____________________________________________________________________________
   rating

Go back and rate each of the experiences as:
A = very useful;
B = somewhat useful;
C = not useful.

In the following three questions, you will be asked to count the number of contacts you have with parents. Here are some guidelines for your counting:

1. When you contact one parent, count that as one contact.
2. When you contact mother and father together, count that as one contact. If you contact them separately, count that as two contacts.
3. When you contact many parents at the same time, count the contacts according to the number of students the parents represent.
4. Count step-parents, other relatives, and guardians as you would count parents.

The instructions for the next three questions are:
A. Place a check (✓) by the methods that bring you into contact with parents.
B. Indicate how many times per week, month, or year the method is used.
C. Indicate how many parents you come into contact with each time the method is used.

Here is an example that follows the format used in the questions:

✓ Parent Night in Fall 4 times per year

✓ class bulletin 3 times per month

✓ notes sent home 2 times per week

This teacher had a class of 27 children. In the fall, parents of 15 children came to Parent Night. This teacher sends a class bulletin home 3 times during the year to each of the 27 children's parents. This teacher also sends about 4 notes home each week, thus making one contact each time.
14. There are several organized programs in this school district designed to bring teachers and parents together. These are called school-initiated contacts. Your school may or may not participate in each, or you may or may not be directly involved in each program. Please supply the information about the programs in which you are involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF USE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CONTACTS EACH TIME THE METHOD IS USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Night in Fall</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Parent Conferences</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Parent Conferences</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent School Volunteer Program</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA Meetings</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA Activities:</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Cards</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim Reports</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Methods:</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Parents themselves sometimes initiate contact with the teachers of their children. These are called parent-initiated contacts. Please supply the information about the parent-initiated contacts you have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF USE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CONTACTS EACH TIME THE METHOD IS USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>phone call</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>note sent to school</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visits at school</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other methods:</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. In addition to the school-initiated contact and parent-initiated contact described in the above questions, there is also teacher-initiated contact. Teacher-initiated contact occurs when an individual teacher intentionally contacts a parent or group of parents regarding some school or student matter. Counting only teacher-initiated contacts, supply the information about your practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF USE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CONTACTS EACH TIME THE METHOD IS USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>note sent home</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phone call</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal conference</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home visit</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capitalizing on chance meeting with parent</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inviting parent to observe in class</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inviting parent to assist in class or on field trip</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class newsletter or bulletin</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contact through other school personnel:</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff development</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>room mother</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school nurse</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 16 continued:

_____ speech therapist _____ times per ________

_____ social worker/ attendance officer _____ times per ________

_____ school psychologist _____ times per ________

_____ other persons: _____ times per ________

_____ other contact methods: _____ times per ________

17. Teachers contact parents for a variety of reasons. Looking back at your responses to Question 16, teacher-initiated contact, respond to the following question.

A. Please read through the full list first.
B. Place a check (✓) by the three reasons you had in mind most often when you contacted parents as described in Question 16.

_____ noting academic progress

_____ noting lack of academic progress

_____ noting social/emotional adjustment

_____ noting lack of social/emotional adjustment

_____ noting discipline problems

_____ collecting fees

_____ seeking help in class or on field trip

_____ noting health of the student, sickness or injury

_____ noting extended absence, giving assignments

_____ noting frequent absences

_____ seeking general information regarding the child

_____ seeking special help for the child

_____ developing an acquaintance with the parent

_____ explaining curriculum

_____ inviting parent to observe class

_____ sharing general information about the child

_____ sharing general information about the class or school
**Part Two. Information about Your Experiences in Parent-Contact Situations**

This part of the inventory is designed to find out how you have experienced various aspects of parent-contact situations. Please read each statement thoughtfully, and respond candidly. Base your responses on your own experience.

Place a check (✓) in the appropriate square on the continuum from Never the Case to Always the Case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never the Case</th>
<th>Always the Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My principal is supportive of my teaching and my other school efforts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents act like their children are always right.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When I contact parents, my principal is not aware of it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I find that students like me to contact their parents when they do something praiseworthy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel good about being a teacher in this school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I don't know what the principal expects of me regarding parent contact.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Parents do not have time for their children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parents undermine the efforts of the teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In my experience with parents, I see that they tend to overlook school deficiencies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I find contact with parents rewarding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Parents all respond much the same when I contact them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel good about my teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Maintaining close parent-teacher contact is a high priority item for other teachers in my school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. In my experience, I find that to achieve optimum learning, it is necessary to keep close contact with parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Other teachers in my school see parent contact as an important part of their responsibility as teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Parents are very different, one from another.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I find that I have sufficient time to contact parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. In my experience, parents whom I most want to contact are the hardest to contact.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. In my experience, I find that parents react quite differently to my contacts than I expect.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. I hesitate to contact a parent if I don't know how they will respond.

21. Some parents don't want to be contacted.

22. I find that parents don't know enough about their children in school to be helpful when I contact them.

23. I find that my principal sets a positive tone in the building with regard to parent-teacher relationships.

24. In my experience, it is not part of my responsibility to keep close contact with the parents of my students.

25. Contacting parents is too draining to be worth the effort.

26. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the better, I contact the parents.

27. In my experience, children play parent against teacher.

28. In my experience with parents, I find that they understand their roles in school-related matters.

29. My role as a teacher in contacting parents is not clear to me.

30. In my experience with parents, they do not put their children under too much pressure.

31. I find that parents' values and mine are much the same.

32. In my experience, working with parents is difficult because so many other aspects of school life don't facilitate it.

33. In my experience, there is a direct connection between the parent's attitude and the child's attitude and behavior.

34. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the worse, I contact parents.

35. In my experience with parents, I find that they expect too much of me.

36. Parents place strong demands on my personal life.

37. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about matters concerning their child.

38. Parents all act differently when I contact them.

39. In my experience, I find that parents really try to understand what goes on in school these days.

40. Parents don't infringe on my classroom authority.
41. Parents know enough about the school to be helpful when I contact them.

42. I find that when I contact parents, I don't know how to direct the situation to convey my message and take in information.

43. In my experience, contacting parents is a waste of time.

44. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about matters in general.

45. In my experience, I find that when I contact parents, their understanding of school matters matches mine.

46. There is sufficient space (privacy, rooms) and material (phones, paper, equipment) in my school to contact parents as I like to.

47. When I contact parents, I find that I am comfortable conversing with them.

48. Parents tend to overlook teacher weaknesses.

49. In my experience, part of my responsibility as a teacher is to counsel parents about their children.

50. In my experience with parents, they understand what I am trying to communicate.

51. Parents are sensitive to and understand the role of the teacher.

52. In my experience with parents, I find that they are not in a partnership with the school.

53. I find that parents feel welcome in this school.

54. My principal doesn't actively encourage teachers to contact parents regarding school matters.

55. In my experience, I find that teachers who care about their students maintain close contact with parents.

56. In my experience, other factors in the school life make it difficult to contact and maintain relationships with parents.

57. Parents want to shift responsibility for raising the child to the school.

58. I find that there is conflict between the parents' values and my role as a teacher.

59. I see that teachers in my school initiate contact with parents less than I do.

60. The more students I have, the less contact I have with parents.
61. I get worn down trying to keep up with parent contact.
62. Parents think the teacher is wrong.
63. In my experience, contact with parents leaves me feeling uncomfortable.
64. I find that parents are extreme in their treatment of their children; too protective, too permissive, too demanding, etc.
65. In my experience with parents, I find that they are restrictive of me and my teaching practices.
66. Day-to-day teaching and school work do not allow enough time to contact parents.
67. In my experience with parents, I find that they unjustly blame the school for many things.
68. School is so complex today, I find it is difficult to keep parents informed about what goes on in class.
69. I find that teachers don't support each other in matters involving parents.
70. I find that when I contact parents we are not able to arrive at satisfying understandings and/or agreements.
71. In my experience with parents, I don't know when they are being with me.
72. In my experience with parents, I see that they don't know what it's like to be a teacher.
73. Parents are uncomfortable when contacted by me or other school personnel.
74. In my experience with parents, I find that they are intimidating to me.
75. I find that parents are insensitive to the feelings of others.
76. In my experience, my principal supports me in front of a parent.
77. Parents of my students are there when the children need them.
78. I find that I am shy around parents.
79. In my experience, it seems that I don't have the interpersonal skills to work with parents.
80. Parents have memories of schools and teaching in their own youth, and assume this makes them knowledgeable about schools.
81. I find that other teachers in my school initiate contact with parents more than I do.
82. Teachers know better than parents what is good for the child's education.
83. In my experience, when parents say they'll do something, they follow through on it.
84. In my experience, my principal shows interest in supporting good parent-teacher relationships.
85. In my experience, my principal fosters a variety of means by which teachers can contact parents.
86. I find that my principal shows little interest in me and my students.
87. I find that parents expect me to do things which are not part of my role as a teacher.
88. Parents want schools to teach only what they, the parents, believe in.
89. In my experience, if the student asks me not to contact the parents, I won't contact them.
90. In my experience, I see that I have the written communication skills to convey my messages to parents.
91. In my experience with parents, they don't act like they are smarter than the teacher.
92. Parents of my students respect and trust me.
93. Parent contact lessens my autonomy.
94. Parents support my methods for resolving problems with children.
95. It is important to the students that I know about their homes and families.
96. In my experience, contacting parents leads to good outcomes.
97. Parents of my students and I have a good rapport.
98. In my experience the parent role conflicts with the teacher role.
99. Parents are satisfied with the contacts they have with me.
100. I find that students benefit when I contact their parents.
101. Parents of my students support the school program well.

102. My principal supports me in my managerial decisions regarding children.

103. I find that a good source of counsel regarding parent relationships is other teachers.

104. My principal serves as a buffer between me and parents.

105. In my experience, I see that my principal supports me in my academic decisions regarding children.

106. Parents respond to me when I contact them.

107. Parents assume responsibility for their children's behavior.

108. I find that it is not part of my responsibility to help parents understand their children.

109. In my experience with parents, I find they understand how hard teachers work.

110. Parents are interested enough in the school to make contacting them worth it.

111. I find parents to be consistent in their responses to my contacts.

112. In my experience with parents, I find that home conditions of the family cause them to act differently than I would expect.
APPENDIX B

PARENT CONTACT QUESTIONNAIRE
Part One: Demographic and Professional Practice Information

Please supply the following information about yourself and your professional practices.

1. What grade level are you now teaching? ______

2. How many students are in your class? ______

3. How would you classify the socio-economic status of the parents of the students in your class? Check one:
   - upper class
   - upper-middle class
   - middle class
   - lower-middle class
   - lower class

4. How many years, counting this year complete, have you been teaching? ______

5. How many years have you been teaching in this school building? ______

6. Do you live 10 minutes or closer, by car, to this school building? ______ yes ______ no

7. What is your sex? ______ female ______ male

8. What is the highest level of formal schooling completed by your father? Check one:
   - elementary school (to 8th grade)
   - high school
   - some college
   - bachelor's degree completed
   - some graduate study
   - advanced degree completed

9. Was the undergraduate institution from which you received your teaching certificate larger or smaller than 6,000 students?
   - larger
   - smaller

10. What is the highest level of formal schooling you have completed? Check one:
    - some college
    - bachelor's degree completed
    - some graduate study/continuing education
    - master's degree completed
    - post-masters or PhD study
    - early childhood
    - administration
    - counseling
    - reading
    - special education
    - other ______
11. Are you a member of a professional organization? Check one.

   ___ yes. SWEA-DEA-NEA
   ___ yes. other __________
   ___ no

12. How would you classify your own socio-economic status? Check one.

   ___ upper class
   ___ upper-middle class
   ___ middle class
   ___ lower-middle class
   ___ lower class

13. Did you ever participate in a workshop, a program, or a course designed specifically about the topic of parent-teacher relationships?

   ___ yes. If you did, describe each of the experiences in one or two sentences. Tell whether you thought the experiences were very useful, somewhat useful, or not useful to you.
   ___ no
In the following three questions, you will be asked to count the number of contacts you have with parents. Here are some guidelines for your counting:

1. When you contact one parent, count that as one contact.
2. When you contact mother and father together at the same time, count that as one contact. If you contact them separately, count that as two contacts.
3. When you contact many parents at the same time (as at a PTA meeting), count only those parents whom you directly communicate with. Remember that mother and father contacted at the same time should be counted as one contact.
4. Count step-parents, other relatives, and guardians as you would count parents.

The instructions for the next three questions are:
A. Place a check (✓) by the methods that bring you into contact with parents.
B. Indicate how many times per week, month, or year the method is used.
C. Indicate how many parents you come into contact with each time the method is used.

Here is an example:

A teacher has a class of 27 children. In the Fall, parents of 12 of the children came to Parent Night. This teacher sends home a class bulletin 6 times per year, to each of the 27 children's parents. This teacher also averages about 4 notes sent home each week to parents of 4 children. Finally, this teacher attends a PTA party two times each year; even though there are many parents there, this teacher gets a chance to speak with only about 10 parents of different children at each party.

Here is how this teacher would complete the questionnaire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD OF CONTACT</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF USE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CONTACTS EACH TIME THE METHOD IS USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ I participate in Parent Night in the Fall</td>
<td>1 times per year</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ I send home a class bulletin</td>
<td>6 times per year</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ I send notes home</td>
<td>2 times per week</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ I attend PTA activities:</td>
<td>2 times per year</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 3.
14. There are several organized programs in this school district designed to bring teachers and parents together. These are called school-initiated contacts. Your school may or may not participate in each, or you may or may not be directly involved in each program. Please supply the information for the programs in which you are involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD OF CONTACT</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF USE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CONTACTS EACH TIME THE METHOD IS USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Parent Night in the Fall</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold parent conferences in the Fall</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold parent conferences in the Spring</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the Parent School Volunteer Program</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend PTA meetings</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend PTA activities</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send home report cards</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send home interim reports</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are other school-initiated contact methods in which I participate:</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Parents themselves sometimes initiate contact with the teachers of their children. These are called parent-initiated contacts. Please supply the information about the parent-initiated contacts you have.

| Parents telephone me | times per | |
| Parents send notes to me at school | times per | |
| Parents stop by the school to see me | times per | |
| Parents use other methods to initiate contact with me: | times per | |
16. In addition to the school-initiated contacts and the parent-initiated contacts you described in the above questions, there is also teacher-initiated contact. Teacher-initiated contact occurs when an individual teacher intentionally contacts a parent or group of parents regarding some school matter of student matter. Counting only teacher-initiated contacts you make, supply the information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD OF CONTACT</th>
<th>FREQUENCY OF USE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CONTACTS EACH TIME THE METHOD IS USED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I send notes home to parents</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I telephone parents to discuss school matters</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold personal conferences with parents</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not counting Fall and Spring Conferences)</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make home visits</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I capitalize with chance meetings with parents outside the school</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have parents observe in the classroom</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have parents help out on field trips</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I send home a class newsletter or bulletin</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use other teacher-initiated methods to contact parents:</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes initiate contact with parents through other school personnel:</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through the principal</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through the staff development teacher</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through the room mother</td>
<td>times per</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through the school nurse</td>
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<td>through the social worker/attendance officer</td>
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<td>through the school psychologist</td>
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<td>through the speech therapist</td>
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<td>through others</td>
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</table>

17. Teachers contact parents for a variety of reasons. Looking at your responses to the question at the top of this page, Question 16, respond to this question.

A. Place a check (√) by the reasons you had in mind when you contacted parents as described above.

B. Place a second check (✓) by the three reasons you consider most important for contacting parents.

- √ noting academic progress
- √ noting lack of academic progress
- √ noting social/emotional adjustment
- ✗ noting lack of social/emotional adjustment
- √ noting discipline problems
- √ collecting fees
- ✗ seeking help in class or on field trips
- √ noting student's general health, sickness, or injury
- √ noting extended absences, giving assignments
- ✗ noting frequent absences
- ✗ seeking general information
- ✗ seeking special help for student
- ✗ developing an acquaintance
- ✗ explaining curriculum
- ✗ sharing general information
- ✗ other reasons:
- ✗ other reasons:
**Part Two. Information about Your Experiences in Parent Contact Situations**

This part of the questionnaire is designed to find out how you have experienced various aspects of parent contact situations. Please read each statement thoughtfully and respond candidly. Base your responses on your own experience.

Place a check (✓) in the appropriate square on the continuum from Never the Case to Always the Case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. My principal is supportive of my teaching and my other school efforts.</th>
<th>Never the Case</th>
<th>Always the Case</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. When I contact parents, my principal is aware of it.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
<td>Always the Case</td>
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<td>3. I find that students like me to contact their parents when they do something well.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
<td>Always the Case</td>
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<td>4. I feel good about being a teacher in this school.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
<td>Always the Case</td>
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<td>5. I don't know what the principal expects of me regarding parent contact.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
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<td>6. Parents undermine the efforts of teachers.</td>
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<td>7. I find contact with parents rewarding to me as a person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Different parents respond much the same way when I contact them.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
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<td>9. I feel good about my teaching.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Maintaining close parent-teacher contact is a high priority item for other teachers in my school.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
<td>Always the Case</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. In my experience, I find that students learn best when I keep close contact with their parents.</td>
<td>Never the Case</td>
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<td>12. Parents are very different, one from another.</td>
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<td>13. In my experience, parents whom I most want to contact are the hardest to contact.</td>
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<td>14. In my experience, I find that when I contact parents, I am surprised by their reactions.</td>
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<td>Always the Case</td>
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</table>
15. I hesitate to contact parents if I don't know how they will respond.

16. I find that parents don't know enough about their children in school to be helpful when I contact them.

17. I find that my principal sets a positive tone among the faculty with regard to parent-teacher relationships.

18. In my experience, it is part of my responsibility to keep close contact with the parents of my students.

19. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the better, I contact the parents.

20. In my experience, students play parents against the teacher.

21. My role as a teacher in contacting parents is not clear to me.

22. I find that parents' values and mine are much the same.

23. In my experience, working with parents is difficult because the bureaucracy of the school doesn't facilitate it.

24. In my experience, I see a direct connection between the parents' attitude and the student's attitude and behavior.

25. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the worse, I contact the parents.

26. In my experience with parents, I find that they expect too much of me.

27. Parents place strong demands on my personal life.

28. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about matters concerning their child.

29. In my experience, I find that parents really try to understand what goes on in school these days.
30. Parents respect my authority in classroom matters.

31. In my experience, contacting parents is a waste of time.

32. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about school matters in general.

33. There is sufficient space (privacy/rooms) and material (phones/paper/equipment) in my school to contact parents as I like to.

34. When I contact parents, I find that I am comfortable conversing with them.

35. Parents tend to overlook teacher weaknesses.

36. In my experience with parents, they understand what I am trying to communicate.

37. In my experience with parents, I find that they act in partnership with the school.

38. I find that parents feel welcome in this school.

39. My principal actively encourages teachers to contact parents regarding school matters.

40. In my experience, I see that teachers who care about their students maintain close contact with the parents.

41. In my experience, the mood of the people in this school works against contacting and maintaining relationships with parents.

42. Parents want to shift responsibility for raising their children to the school.

43. I see that teachers in my school initiate contact with parents less than I do.

44. The more students I have, the less time I have for contact with parents.

45. I get worn down trying to keep up with parent contacts.

46. In my experience, contact with parents leaves me feeling uncomfortable.
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<td>47. I find that parents are extreme in the ways they treat their children: either too protective or too permissive; too demanding or not demanding enough; and so on.</td>
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<td>48. In my experience with parents, I find that they are restrictive of me and my teaching practices.</td>
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<td>49. Day-to-day teaching and schoolwork do not allow enough time to contact parents.</td>
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<td>50. In my experience with parents, I find that they unjustly blame the school for many things.</td>
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<td>51. School is so complex today, it is hard to keep parents informed about what goes on.</td>
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<td>52. In my experience with parents, I don't know when they are being honest with me.</td>
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<td>53. In my experience with parents, I see that they know what it's like to be a teacher.</td>
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<td>54. I find that parents are sensitive to the feelings of teachers.</td>
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<td>55. In my experience, my principal supports me in front of a parent.</td>
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<td>56. The parents of my students are there when children need them.</td>
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<td>57. In my experience, it seems that I don't have the interpersonal skills to work with parents.</td>
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<td>58. Parents remember schools and teachers from when they were young, and assume this makes them knowledgeable about schools today.</td>
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<td>59. Teachers know better than parents what is good for the child's education.</td>
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<td>60. In my experience, when parents say they'll do something, they follow through on it.</td>
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<td>61. I find that my principal shows little interest in me and my students.</td>
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<td>62. I find that parents expect me to do things that are not part of my role as a teacher.</td>
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</table>
63. Parents want schools to teach only what they, the parents, believe in.

64. In my experience with parents, they act like they are smarter than the teacher.

65. Parents of my students respect and trust me.

66. Parent contact reduces my options to think and act on my own.

67. Parents support my methods for resolving problems with children.

68. It is important to the students that I know about their homes and families.

69. In my experience, contacting parents leads to good outcomes.

70. In my experience, I find that the parent role conflicts with the teacher role.

71. Parents are satisfied with the contacts they have with me.

72. I find that students benefit when I contact their parents.

73. Parents fully support the school program.

74. My principal supports me in my discipline decisions regarding students.

75. I find that a good source of advice regarding parent relationships is other teachers.

76. My principal supports me in my academic decisions regarding children.

77. In my experience with parents, I see that they understand how hard teachers work.

78. Parents are interested enough in the school to make contacting them worth it.
APPENDIX C

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE
Announce that the questionnaire is being administered as a part of a research study on Parent-Teacher Contact being conducted in the College of Education at Ohio State University. South-Western City Schools have agreed to help with the study. Six elementary schools in the district have been asked to help in the collection of the data.

The results of the study will be made available to the district and to the participating schools. The results will not distinguish between or among the six schools, and will not identify individual teachers. All information is strictly confidential.

A. Distribute the questionnaire to all the teachers. Use the Parent Contact Questionnaire Code Sheet to ensure that teachers receive the questionnaire coded to their names.

The coding is very important. It will serve two possible functions:
1. It will allow the researcher to contact individual teachers if the responses on their questionnaire cannot be read.
2. It will allow the researcher to locate particular teachers for the follow-up interviews.

B. Teachers can respond to Part One, Questions 1 - 13, as soon as they receive the questionnaire. Before going on to Questions 14 - 17, they should wait for instructions.

C. For Questions 14, 15, and 16, explain the difference between school-initiated contact, parent-initiated contact, and teacher-initiated contact. Explain that each of these three kinds of contact is treated separately in the three Questions.

Explain how to count parent contacts, as is explained in the box on Page 3 of the questionnaire. Read through the example provided.

Proceed through Questions 14, 15, and 16, one at a time, working with the whole group.


Emphasize that teachers should respond only to those methods in which they are involved.

Teachers may refresh each others' memories about past events in the school.

CHECK TO SEE THAT TEACHERS ARE SUPPLYING INFORMATION CORRECTLY.
Question 15. Parent-initiated contacts.

Emphasize that these are contacts that parents have initiated to the teacher.

Teachers should work individually on this part, because their responses will be unique.

CHECK TO SEE THAT TEACHERS ARE SUPPLYING INFORMATION CORRECTLY.

Question 16. Teacher-initiated contacts.

Emphasize that teachers should now think of contacts that they initiated with parents. These contacts were not counted above.

Teachers should work individually on this part, because their responses will be unique.

CHECK TO SEE THAT TEACHERS ARE SUPPLYING INFORMATION CORRECTLY.

D. For Question 17, teachers may read and respond to the question on their own.

E. For Part Two, teachers should be instructed to work alone. They should base their responses on their own experience. Teachers may wish to complete Part Two, on their own, at some time other than at the present meeting.

F. Instruct teachers to submit completed questionnaires to . The researcher will collect the questionnaires at the end of the following school day.

If there is a problem in interpreting one or several of the responses on a teacher's questionnaire, the researcher will contact the teacher individually for clarification.

G. Announce that several teachers from the six schools will be contacted for follow-up interviews. They will be contacted individually at some later time.
Please distribute the questionnaires so that teachers receive the one questionnaire coded to their name.

The coding is very important. It will serve two possible functions:
1. It will allow the researcher to contact individual teachers if the responses on their questionnaires cannot be read.
2. It will allow the researcher to locate particular teachers for the follow-up interviews.

All information provided is completely confidential. Under no circumstances will a teacher's responses be shared with anyone else. Only in the above two possible instances will the teacher's name be connected with a completed questionnaire.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School #</th>
<th>Teacher #</th>
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APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW GUIDE AND CONSENT FORM
PARENT CONTACT QUESTIONNAIRE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

Instructions:
A. Explain that this interview is the final step of data collection for the research on parent-teacher contact. The Parent Contact Questionnaire was one earlier part of the research.
B. Explain that the purpose of the follow-up interviews is to come to a better understanding of the data that was collected on the Questionnaire.
C. Explain that the interview will be tape recorded, with the consent of the interviewee, so that it will be easier to recall the content of the interview later on. All discussion will be confidential. Ask the interviewee to sign the Interview Consent Form.
D. Begin the interview by reading the following statement, and proceed from there.

Teachers responded to statements on the Parent Contact Questionnaire such that some of the items seem to group together. I'm not sure if the groups make sense or not. I'd like you to tell me whether the groups are meaningful to you.

I'll present you with each group, one at a time. I'd like you to read the statements, and then I'll ask you a few questions about the group of statements.

Present the teacher with each of the groups of statements. Pose the following questions after each group is read. Probe responses as needed.

Is this group of statements meaningful? Are the statements related to each other?

How would you name this group of statements?

How important would you say this group of statements is in influencing a teacher's parent contact practices?
PARENT CONTACT QUESTIONNAIRE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW
CONSENT FORM

I consent to serve as a subject in the research investigation entitled:

An Analysis of Conditions Influencing Teacher-Initiated
Parent Contact Practices

The nature and the general purpose of the research procedure have been
explained to me. This research is to be performed under the direction
of Dr. Charles M. Galloway and Gerald M. Mager.

I understand that any further inquiries I make concerning this procedure
will be answered. I understand my identity will not be revealed in any
publication, document, recording, video-tape, photograph computer data
storage, or in any other way which relates to this research. Finally,
I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue
participation at any time following the notification of the research
directors.

Subject________________________________________

Date________________________________________

Researcher____________________________________

Date________________________________________
GROUP A

My principal is supportive of my teaching and my other school efforts.

In my experience, my principal supports me in front of a parent.

My principal supports me in my discipline decisions regarding students.

My principal supports me in my academic decisions regarding children.

I feel good about being a teacher in this school.

I feel good about my teaching.

I find contact with parents rewarding to me as a person.

I find that my principal shows little interest in me and my students.
GROUP E

Maintaining close parent-teacher contact is a high priority item for other teachers in my school.

In my experience with parents, I find that they act in partnership with the school.

I find that parents feel welcome in this school.
In my experience, I find that students learn best when I keep close contact with their parents.

I find that students benefit when I contact their parents.

Parents respect my authority in classroom matters.

In my experience, contacting parents leads to good outcomes.

Parents are satisfied with the contacts they have with me.

Parents of my students respect and trust me.

In my experience with parents, they understand what I am trying to communicate.

Parents are interested enough in the school to make contacting them worth it.

Parents fully support the school program.

Parents support my methods for resolving problems with children.

In my experience, contacting parents is a waste of time.

I get worn down trying to keep up with parent contacts.
GROUP D

In my experience, it is part of my responsibility to keep close contact with the parents of my students.

In my experience, I see that teachers who care about their students maintain close contact with the parents.

My role as a teacher in contacting parents is not clear to me.

As a teacher, I find it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about matters concerning their child.

When a student's performance or behavior changes for the better, I contact the parents.
GROUP E

When I contact parents, I find that I am comfortable conversing with them.

In my experience, it seems that I don't have the interpersonal skills to work with parents.
I find that my principal sets a positive tone among the faculty with regard to parent-teacher relationships.

My principal actively encourages teachers to contact parents regarding school matters.
GROUP G

In my experience, I see a direct connection between the parents' attitude and the student's attitude and behavior.

When a student's performance or behavior changes for the worse, I contact the parents.
GROUP H

Parents undermine the efforts of teachers.

Parents want to shift responsibility for raising their children to the school.

I find that parents are extreme in the ways they treat their children: either too protective or too permissive; too demanding or not demanding enough; and so on.

In my experience with parents, they act like they are smarter than the teacher.

Teachers know better than parents what is good for the child's education.
GROUP I

I find that parents' values and mine are much the same.

The parents of my students are there when children need them.

In my experience, I find that parents really try to understand what goes on in school these days.

In my experience, when parents say they'll do something, they follow through on it.
In my experience, I find that when I contact parents, I am surprised by their reactions.

Parent contact reduces my options to think and act on my own.

In my experience with parents, I find that they unjustly blame the school for many things.

In my experience, I find that the parent role conflicts with the teacher role.
GROUP 1

In my experience with parents, I find that they expect too much of me.
In my experience, contact with parents leaves me feeling uncomfortable.
GROUP M

In my experience with parents, I see that they know what it's like to be a teacher.

I find that parents are sensitive to the feelings of teachers.

In my experience with parents, I see that they understand how hard teachers work.
APPENDIX E

TABLE 26. SUMMARY OF TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE 78 STATEMENTS OF PART TWO OF THE PARENT CONTACT QUESTIONNAIRE
Table 26

Summary of Teachers' Responses to the 78 Statements of Part Two of the Parent Contact Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Statement</th>
<th>Value Assigned to Always-the-Case Response</th>
<th>Mean Response of the Full Teacher Sample</th>
<th>Standard Deviationa</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. My principal is supportive of my teaching and my other school efforts.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I contact parents, my principal is aware of it.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I find that students like me to contact their parents when they do something well.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel good about being a teacher in this school.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I don't know what the principal expects of me regarding parent contact.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents undermine the efforts of teachers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I find contact with parents rewarding to me as a person.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Different parents respond much the same way when I contact them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I feel good about my teaching.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Maintaining close parent-teacher contact is a high priority item for other teachers in my school.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>In my experience, I find that students learn best when I keep close contact with their parents.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Parents are very different, one from another.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>In my experience, parents whom I most want to contact are the hardest to contact.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>In my experience, I find that when I contact parents, I am surprised by their reactions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I hesitate to contact parents if I don't know how they will respond.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I find that parents don't know enough about their children in school to be helpful when I contact them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 26 (continued)

17. I find that my principal sets a positive tone among the faculty with regard to parent-teacher relationships. 5 4.24 .90

18. In my experience, it is part of my responsibility to keep close contact with the parents of my students. 5 4.45 .73

19. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the better, I contact the parents. 5 3.98 .68

20. In my experience, students play parents against the teacher. 1 3.48 .94

21. My role as a teacher in contacting parents is not clear to me. 1 4.68 .64

22. I find that parents' values and mine are much the same. 5 3.15 .77

23. In my experience, working with parents is difficult because the bureaucracy of the school doesn't facilitate it. 1 4.25 .90

24. In my experience, I see a direct connection between the parents' attitude and the student's attitude and behavior. 5 4.06 .63
Table 26 (continued)

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. When a student's performance or behavior changes for the worse, I contact the parents.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. In my experience with parents, I find that they expect too much of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Parents place strong demands on my personal life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about matters concerning their child.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. In my experience, I find that parents really try to understand what goes on in school these days.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Parents respect my authority in classroom matters.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. In my experience, contacting parents is a waste of time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. As a teacher, I find that it is my responsibility to keep parents informed about school matters in general.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>There is sufficient space (privacy/rooms) and material (phones/paper/equipment) in my school to contact parents as I like to.</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>When I contact parents, I find that I am comfortable conversing with them.</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Parents tend to overlook teacher weaknesses.</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>In my experience with parents, they understand what I am trying to communicate.</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>In my experience with parents, I find that they act in partnership with the school.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>I find that parents feel welcome in this school.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>My principal actively encourages teachers to contact parents regarding school matters.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>In my experience, I see that teachers who care about their students maintain close contact with the parents.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 26 (continued)

41. In my experience, the mood of the people in this school works against contacting and maintaining relationships with parents. 1 4.36 .85

42. Parents want to shift responsibility for raising their children to the school. 1 2.76 .89

43. I see that teachers in my school initiate contact with parents less than I do. 1 3.41 .83

44. The more students I have, the less time I have for contact with parents. 1 2.52 1.09

45. I get worn down trying to keep up with parent contacts. 1 3.52 .71

46. In my experience, contact with parents leaves me feeling uncomfortable. 1 4.02 .79

47. I find that parents are extreme in the ways they treat their children: either too protective or too permissive; too demanding or not demanding enough; and so on. 1 2.98 .76
Table 26 (continued)

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48. In my experience with parents, I find that they are restrictive of me and my teaching practices.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Day-to-day teaching and schoolwork do not allow enough time to contact parents.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. In my experience with parents, I find that they unjustly blame the school for many things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. School is so complex today, it is hard to keep parents informed about what goes on.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. In my experience with parents, I don't know when they are being honest with me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. In my experience with parents, I see that they know what it's like to be a teacher.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. I find that parents are sensitive to the feelings of teachers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. In my experience, my principal supports me in front of a parent.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>The parents of my students are there when children need them.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>In my experience, it seems that I don't have the interpersonal skills to work with parents.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Parents remember schools and teachers from when they were young, and assume this makes them knowledgeable about schools today.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Teachers know better than parents what is good for the child's education.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>In my experience, when parents say they'll do something, they follow through on it.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>I find that my principal shows little interest in me and my students.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>I find that parents expect me to do things that are not part of my role as a teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Parents want schools to teach only what they, the parents, believe in.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 26 (continued)

64. In my experience with parents, they act like they are smarter than the teacher.  
   1  3.77  .79

65. Parents of my students respect and trust me.  
   5  3.87  .62

66. Parent contact reduces my options to think and act on my own.  
   1  4.30  .73

67. Parents support my methods for resolving problems with children.  
   5  3.87  .62

68. It is important to the students that I know about their homes and families.  
   5  4.11  .91

69. In my experience, contacting parents leads to good outcomes.  
   5  4.07  .54

70. In my experience, I find that the parent role conflicts with the teacher role.  
   1  3.87  .74

71. Parents are satisfied with the contacts they have with me.  
   5  3.92  .53

72. I find that students benefit when I contact their parents.  
   5  4.03  .74

73. Parents fully support the school program.  
   5  3.48  .64
### Table 26 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>My principal supports me in my discipline decisions regarding students.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>I find that a good source of advice regarding parent relationships is other teachers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>My principal supports me in my academic decisions regarding children.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>In my experience with parents, I see that they understand how hard teachers work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td>Parents are interested enough in the school to make contacting them worth it.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rounded to the nearest hundredth.*
APPENDIX F

DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE CHARACTERISTICS WHICH EVIDENCED NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LOW AND HIGH FREQUENCY GROUPS OF TEACHERS
Demographic and Professional Practice Characteristics Which Evidenced No Significant Differences Between the Low and High Frequency Groups of Teachers

For six of the nine demographic and professional practice characteristics, no significant differences were found between the Low and High Frequency Groups. Additionally, there was no significant difference found for teacher's sex. These non-significant differences are presented here.

Teacher's Assignment

The two groups of teachers generally covered the range of grade levels in the elementary school (see Table 27). The Low Frequency Group was evenly split between the first two grade levels (one and two) and the three upper grade levels (three, four, and five). The High Frequency Group was not so evenly split, with twelve teachers in the first two grades and six teachers in the upper three.

There would appear to have been less contact in general within these groups at the upper grade levels, because fewer numbers of the High Frequency Group taught there and more of the Low Frequency Group did. The differences between the Low and High Groups on the basis of assigned grade level, however, was not a significant difference ($X^2 = 1.02857, df = 1$) at the .05 level of probability.
Table 27
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Assigned Grade Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assigned grade level is not a characteristic on which the two profiles differed significantly.

Teacher's Class Enrollment

The two groups of teachers reported student enrollments of nearly as wide a range as the full teacher sample (see Table 28). In the full sample, one-half of the teachers reported class sizes of 28 students or less. Using this number as a breakpoint, the subgroups were compared. Both the Low and High Frequency Groups had a larger fraction of teachers with smaller class sizes than the full teacher sample. Approximately two-thirds of the teachers in each group had 28 students or less.

When the Low and High Groups were compared to each other on the basis of class size, there was no significant difference ($X^2 = .08, df = 1$) at the .05 level of probability. Class enrollment is not a characteristic on which the two profiles differed significantly.
Table 28
Low and High Frequency Groups by Number of Students Enrolled in Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students Enrolled in Class</th>
<th>Number of Teachers per Enrollment Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Frequency Group Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher's Experience

Both the Low and High Frequency Groups ranged in teaching experience rather widely (see Table 29). The Low Group contained teachers in their first and second years of the career while the High Group did not. In the full teacher sample, one-half of the teachers had five years or less experience; one-half had six years or more. Using the fifth year as a breakpoint, the Low and High Groups were compared. The High Group was split evenly, with nine teachers on each side of the fifth year breakpoint. The Low Group contained twelve teachers with five years or less experience, and six teachers with six years or more; a two-thirds/one-third split. Though this seems to indicate a tendency for teachers with less experience to initiate contact with parents less frequently, the differences between the two groups were not significant ($X^2 = 1.02857$, df = 1) at the
Table 29
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Experience:
Total Years and Years in Building Currently Assigned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>Teaching Experience in the School Building Currently Assigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1-4 14 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5-20 4 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

.05 level of probability. Total years of teaching experience is not an element of experience on which the two profiles differed significantly.

The Low and High Frequency Groups were also compared on the number of years of teaching experience in the school building to which the teachers were currently assigned (see Table 29). In the full teacher sample 60 percent of the teachers had spent four years or less on the building in which they were currently teaching. Using the fourth year as the breakpoint, the Low and High Groups were compared. The High Group, once again, was split evenly with nine teachers on each side of the fourth year breakpoint. The Low Group was, however, heavily imbalanced toward the side of less experience; fourteen teachers had four years
or less experience in the currently assigned building, while only four teachers had more years. The differences between the Low and High Frequency Groups were not significant \( (X^2 = 2.49002, \text{df} = 1) \) at the .05 level of probability. However, the difference reached significance between the .10 and .20 levels of probability, suggesting some difference between the two teacher groups. Teaching experience in the school building currently assigned is an element of experience on which the profiles differed somewhat, but not significantly.

**Teacher's Residence**

The Low and High Frequency Groups both had less than half of the teachers living ten minutes or closer by car to the school building in which they taught (see Table 30). The percentages for both Groups approximated the percentage of split, 41 percent to 59 percent, in the full teacher sample. Comparing the Low and High Groups, resulted in no significant difference \( (X^2 = .1140, \text{df} = 1) \) at the .05 level of probability. Teacher's residence is not a characteristic on which the profiles differed significantly.

**Teacher's Sex**

The Low and High Frequency Groups had identical numbers of men and women (see Table 31). Women far outnumbered the men, but the percentages within the Low and High Groups were comparable to the percentages of the full teacher sample.
Table 30
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence with Regard to School</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Minutes or Closer by Car</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farther than 10 Minutes by Car</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher's sex is a characteristic of the profile on which the two teacher groups did not differ significantly.

Teacher's Education

A teacher's education is a characteristic of the profile which has been assessed three ways. The size of the undergraduate institution from which the teacher received certification, the level of formal schooling completed,
and participation in a learning experience focused on parent-teacher relations are indicators of a teacher's education.

More of the teachers in the Low and High Frequency Groups received their certifications from institutions larger than 6,000 in student enrollment than from institutions smaller than 6,000 (see Table 32). This pattern followed the pattern evident in the full teacher sample. Comparison of the Low and High Groups produced no significant difference ($X^2 = 1.1780, \text{df} = 1$) at the .05 level of probability. Size of the undergraduate, certifying institution which the teacher attended is an element of education on which the two teacher groups did not differ significantly.

All the teachers in the Low and High Frequency Groups had completed bachelor's degrees, and none of the teachers had studied beyond the Masters degree (see Table 33). Slightly more of the teachers in the High Group completed the Masters degree than teachers in the Low Group. Comparison of the Low and High Groups across the three levels of formal schooling, produced no significant difference ($X^2 = 1.5873, \text{df} = 2$) at the .05 level of probability. The level of formal schooling completed by the teacher is an element of education on which the Low and High Groups did not differ significantly.

Few of the teachers in either the Low or High Groups participated in a learning experience which focused on parent-teacher relations (see Table 34). This pattern was
### Table 32
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Undergraduate Certifying Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate Institution</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Larger than 6,000 Students</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller than 6,000 Students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 33
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Level of Formal Schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Formal Schooling</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree Completed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Graduate Study/ Continuing Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree Completed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparable to the pattern evident in the full teacher sample. Identical numbers of teachers in the Low and High Frequency Groups did and did not participate in such an experience. This element of a teacher's education is an element of education on which the Low and High Groups did not differ significantly.
Table 34

Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Learning Experience Focused on Parent-Teacher Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Experience Participation</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher's Professional Affiliation

Most of the teachers in both the Low and High Frequency Groups held membership in a professional organization responsible for contract negotiation (see Table 35). Membership in such organizations far outnumbered non-membership in both the full teacher sample and in each of the subgroups. Comparison of the Low and High Groups revealed no significant difference ($X^2 = .79998, df = 1$) at the .05 level of probability. Membership in a professional organization is a characteristic of the profile on which the two teacher groups did not differ significantly.
Table 35
Low and High Frequency Groups by Teacher's Professional Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership in a Professional Organization</th>
<th>Low Frequency Group Teachers</th>
<th>High Frequency Group Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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