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## An Analysis of the Gallup Poll Data Regarding the Public's Assessment of the Public Schools from 1986-1995

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

AN ANALYSIS OF THE GALLUP POLL DATA REGARDING THE  
PUBLIC'S ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM 1986-1995

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

American education is under more scrutiny today than any other time in United States history. Is this due to social or economic problems, societal values, or current practices in public education? Or, is it due to federal and state regulations, or the United States achievement test results as compared to those of other nations? In a recent article, U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley stated he was:

both heartened and dismayed by results of some national surveys conducted earlier this year that confirm what elementary school principals have known all along-- educating our children should be the nation's number one priority. I was heartened to know that people are finally putting education at the top of their lists, but dismayed that some think our schools are not up to the challenge (Riley, 1996).

According to Secretary Riley, some people believe that the public schools are unable to meet the expectations that are placed before them. It would be most beneficial for educators to determine what the public's perceptions are and develop a plan to address any negative issues. One way of

gauging popular opinions is by using data gathered by the Gallup Poll Organization. The Gallup Poll used letter grades to rate public schools' performance and the most important problems perceived for schools since 1969.

### Purpose of the Study

As a result of increased analysis on the public school system of America, in an era of high expectations and a strong demand for accountability, public school officials need to gain an understanding of the public's perception and incorporate that information to improve public opinion and support for the schools. As was discussed in Stanley Elam's book entitled, How America Views Its Schools, much of the public is informed about education through the media. Elam stated:

And how do the media gain attention? As everyone knows, by reporting-often exaggerating-the singular, the aberrant, the bizarre, and the negative. Media treatment of education in America is a topic worthy of extended analysis (Elam, 1995).

After the release of the report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*, there has been a perception by the American people that education is at crisis status. Ten years later, the Department of Education issued a second report, *The*

*Condition of Education 1994*, which cited certain areas of progress and other areas of stagnation-or even regression-since 1983. While the report cited significant gains in reading, writing, mathematics, and science, it also highlighted some disturbing deficiencies (Riley, 1994). The dropout rate has remained steady between 1990 and 1993, however, the figure was 17 percent for blacks and a shocking 36 percent for Hispanics, and these figures are increasing (Warwick, 1995). *The Condition of Education 1994* noted that many students leave school before completing tenth grade. Of the high school class of 1992, for example, nearly seven percent had dropped out of school by the spring of their sophomore year. Today, the average dropout rate for all students in the United States is at least 14 percent, compared to a nine percent rate in Germany and six percent in Japan.

In Ron Warwick's book, *Beyond Piecemeal Improvements*, he stated:

It is clear that we cannot continue to conduct our national education in a business-as-usual mode. It is critical that those concerned with our schools unite in forming an educational system that adds value to each person and is always improving. Such a system encourages careful examination of each learning process and asks "by what method" we can best achieve our

objectives (Warwick, 1995).

This method should hold educators accountable for the decisions that are made in all areas of education. The W. Edwards Deming philosophy, is a systematic application of continual improvement and is the key to quality in transforming the educational system.

The most important elements of Deming's philosophy, as they apply to school improvement, are:

1. A democratic, collegial atmosphere should prevail in schools. Ideas should be shared in a setting that recognizes and supports ongoing data collection and assessment. All decisions and practices should be information-driven; facts, reasoning, and evidence, not power or authority or personality, should determine practice and govern decision making.

2. Management should eliminate threat, encourage continuous improvement, and recognize and use the expertise that employees have acquired in their jobs. This expertise, combined with the best research, should be the basis for practice.

3. Improvement must become an obsession that employees thrive on.

The investigation undertaken in this study, supports a number of points in Deming's Management Philosophy. By using factual data gathered from the Gallup Poll and analyzing those data to determine the public's perception of the public schools, educators should be able to determine areas requiring improvement. In addition, any socioeconomic or demographic variables that exhibit a trend or pattern, should be useful in developing action plans for a targeted group of people.

The purpose of the study was two-fold. First, it was to conduct an analysis of the public's assessment of public school education between 1986 and 1995 as generated by the Gallup Poll statistics. There have been numerous changes in the field of education over the past ten years. Schools have been held more accountable with the recent additions of state goals and state testing. Testing data have been published in local newspapers as a way of communicating school progress to the public. There have also been many comparisons made between the United States and other countries in regard to student performance in the math and science areas. It was important to determine what the public's opinions were in light of all of these changes. In

this study, the Gallup Poll data were analyzed to investigate trends in the public's perception of the public school system over a ten year period (1986-1995).

The second purpose of this investigation was to compare the Gallup Poll results from 1986 to 1995 and to ascertain any similarities or differences as reported in a 1986 study entitled: A Structural Analysis of the Public's Assessment of the Public Schools (Gustafson, 1986), and to determine if the relationship between socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and the public's high or low assessment of public education has changed between 1976 and 1995.

### Hypotheses

Hypotheses numbers 1-9 were replicated from Gustafson's study and hypotheses 10-11 were added for this current 1997 investigation. The major research hypotheses of this study were as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's age and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant

relationship between parental status and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.

Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant relationship between the city size (small-towns and rural areas, mid-sized areas, and urban areas) where a person lives and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.

Hypothesis 4: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of academic problems in the public school, and the grades given to the public school, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 5: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's gender and the grades given to the public school, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 6: There is no statistically significant

relationship between a person's level of education and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 7: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of social problems (discipline, use of drugs, etc.) in the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 8: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's religious preference and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 9: There is no statistically significant relationship between people who live in different geographical regions of the country, and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 10: There is no statistically significant



relationship between a person's political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 11: There is no significant shift in the grades given to the public schools when comparing the grade point averages of results from 1974-1985 and those from 1986-1995.

### Significance of the Study

As Donna Uchida in her book entitled, Preparing Students for the 21st Century, stated:

In 1908, Harvard President Charles William Eliot recommended that schools tailor their curricula to different students depending on their 'evident or probable destinies.' Several decades later, former U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett said we must help children find a better destiny' (Uchida, 1996).

In order to meet this challenge, schools will need to work in collaboration with parents and also receive a significant amount of community support.

The data gathered from this study should be useful to public officials. School officials are continuously looking for ways to fund school programs. If funding is to come from the community, it is critical that the public have a

positive perception about the schools, otherwise it is likely that referenda will not be passed and other financial support may not be readily available. The results of this study should assist school officials in gaining an understanding of certain segments of the public and their changing perceptions of the public schools. School officials could use the information to develop better ways to communicate positive information to improve the public's opinion and support of the public schools.

#### Limitations of the Study

Similar to the Gustafson study, the data for this research were taken from four available data sets collected by the *Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward Public Education* in 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995. The analysis of the data were limited by the types of questions which were originally used for polling by the Gallup organization. In addition, this study limits the analysis to only those questions which were repeated on each of the four poll years being examined. The restrictions prevented the development of original questions which could have enhanced the hypotheses of this study.

One final limitation of this study was that the data

used from the Gallup Poll represented the public's opinion from all over the nation. If a district or a school needed specific data about their own community opinions, they would need to create a poll similar to that of the Gallup Poll and administer it to the public they serve.

#### Definition of Terms

As was the case in the Gustafson study, the following terms were used as defined below:

(1) Parent (also referred to as public school parent) - Any adult who has children five to 18 years of age who attend public schools.

(2) Non-parent (also referred to as non-public school parent) - Any adult without children five to 18 years of age, or any adult who has children five to 18 years of age who attend private schools.

(3) Public schools - The term refers to publicly supported schools housing students from kindergarten through grade twelve.

(4) Private schools - The term refers to all non-public schools housing students from kindergarten through grade twelve.

(5) Assessment - The term refers to the public's

determination of the importance or value of the public schools. A positive assessment would indicate support of the public schools while a negative assessment would indicate non-support for the public schools.

(6) Support - The term refers to promoting the interest or causes of public school education.

### Organization of the Study

This study was divided into five chapters. Chapter I provided the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework used, the hypotheses to be tested, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, the definition of terms, and the organization of the study.

Chapter II included a review of the related literature. The subdivisions of Chapter II included an overview of Gallup Polls and public opinion, a discussion on quality schools research, and an examination of factors causing an impact on public support for the public school system.

Chapter III described the design and methodology of the research including the design of the study, data collection, population and sample, and the methods used to analyze the data.

Chapter IV summarized the findings based on the results

of the study. It also provided a comparison and an analysis of the results from both studies.

Chapter V provided a summary of the investigation, the conclusions drawn, and suggestions for further study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, there is a discussion of literature related to W. Edwards Deming's theory behind quality management and its implications for quality schools, public opinion and the public schools, Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, and an examination of the factors causing an impact on public support for the public schools. This review of literature seeks to assist educators in gaining a better understanding of their public to increase support for the public school system.

#### Quality Schools Research

In institutions that depend on public support for their existence, perception is reality. In education, it is not just that the public must be supportive of school programs, but it must also be financially supportive. Join this fact with the demographics that show that less than 50 percent of the people in this country have children in public schools, and one can see the need for schools to be perceived as top

quality (Bradley, 1993).

In 1983, the Firestone tire plant in La Vergne, Tennessee, was bought by Bridgestone, a Japanese company. Until then, Firestone manufactured and sold three grades of tires: excellent, average, and inferior. Under the new management, they now produce only one kind of tire-- excellent (Walton, 1990). This could be analogous to the types of students produced by the American public schools: well educated, satisfactorily educated, and poorly educated.

The man whose work contributed to the success of Bridgestone, as well as Japan's industrious accomplishments, was an American management theorist and statistician by the name of W. Edwards Deming. He believed that by building quality into every stage of a process and letting employees themselves do their own quality control, the need for "quality control experts" would be diminished (Schmoker, 1993).

According to Lester Thurow, noted economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, both industrial and educational reform are essential for survival and competition at the international level. He also pointed out that the new world economy is one in which the quality of

labor has become the primary determinant of success (Thurow, 1992).

Deming's work and methods bring together morality and practicality, as well as industrial and educational interests. Schmoker asks, "Why does every tire have to be excellent at Bridgestone? Why is it important for us to educate all students, not just some of them?" He answers "because in a country that embraces the ideal of social and economic equality, education can be a great equalizer" (Schmoker, 1993).

Deming's principles evolve around 14 points that in his own words, "apply anywhere, to small organizations, as well as to large ones, to the service industry as well as to manufacturing" (Deming, 1986). The following is a list of Deming's 14 points:

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service.
2. Adopt the new philosophy.
3. Cease dependence on mass inspection
4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag alone.
5. Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service.
6. Institute training.
7. Institute leadership.
8. Drive out fear.
9. Break down barriers between staff areas.
10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for



the workforce.

11. Eliminate numerical quotas or targets for the workforce.
12. Remove barriers to pride of workmanship.
13. Encourage education and self-improvement for everyone.
14. Put everybody in the company to work to accomplish the transformation. The transformation is everybody's job (Deming, 1986).

It is evident that industry today is attempting to provide better services with the same or fewer resources. The budget for education at the federal and state levels continues to decrease. The statewide tax cap in Illinois has caused schools to cut expenditures and prioritize their needs. Regardless of budget cuts, schools must continue to provide excellent service to their students.

Educators need a process to improve the quality of schools. Industry in Japan has thrived from the use of Deming's principles. Many companies in the United States have had success in following the process Deming generated. The public school system could greatly benefit from adapting the Deming model to educational services and programs. Some districts in Illinois have already implemented Deming's philosophy and have been quite pleased with their results.

The primary thrust of the model is that a process should exist for any task to be completed. There is a need

for checks and balances along the way that should be monitored by those directly involved/impacted in the process. To apply the principles to education, systems would need to be created, processes delineated, and results of accomplishments publicly shared. It is possible that more confidence by the American public in the public school system could be generated if the Deming model was used as a way to approach and communicate improvement in our schools.

In this research project, the analysis of data gathered by the Gallup Poll Organization was used to determine areas in need of development as perceived by the American public.

### Public Opinion and the Public Schools

The second section of this chapter discusses the value of public opinion and its application to decision making.

John Dewey referred to education as the engine that drives our society. That is why it is so important and why it generates such intense discussion--even controversy. Most of us have been to school and we have opinions on how schools should operate and what they should teach (Uchida, 1996). Recently, there has been a trend in education to get parents and the community involved in their public school system. When these stakeholders become more involved in the

schools, they tend to be more visible and eventually more empowered to share their opinions and views on educating children. People's opinions vary based upon their own experiences and background. As an educator, it is a challenge to meet all of the needs of all of the stakeholders: children, parents, teachers, community, board of education, etc. To assist and guide educators in their decision making, it is critical that school administrators have a perspective of the people they are servicing. Awareness of the perceptions of the community will strengthen the action plans and outcomes of solving problems.

As George Thomas in his essay entitled, *Education-- Past, Present, Future* stated:

Much has been written on the failures of public education in the last few years. Those of us in the profession have at times agreed and at other times been angered by these reports. Public opinion, according to the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls, varies from support of the local school to condemnation of schools in general. One fairly consistent belief of the public is that schools were "better" in the past and are failing the students today (Walling, 1995).

Society is constantly changing as is education. The cultural changes that have occurred in the past will continue in the future. Two-parent, middle-class families

with strong family, religious, education and community values are a scenario of the past. Non-English-speaking, at-risk, and special needs children exist in growing numbers in the public schools of America. Drugs and violence also affect the children who attend our schools. Isolating ourselves from the society is not the solution. Educators must react to these issues if the needs of children are to be met.

Individuals, private organizations, government agencies, and others who rely on the public for their support often concern themselves with public opinion. Knowing and understanding the opinions of people in our society give educators an outside perspective. The information gathered from reliable polls/surveys can help steer decision making in a direction that gains public support and confidence.

#### **Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education**

Abba Eben, the brilliant Israeli statesman, once remarked that "one who keeps his ear permanently glued to the ground will have neither grace of posture nor freedom of movement." It was clever phrase making, but the thought is only corollary to another maxim (author anonymous): "He who

doesn't frequently test the wind, runs the risk of being blown away" (Elam, 1995).

If properly used, public polls and surveys can measure the sometimes changing opinions of the public with considerable accuracy. Public opinion can distinguish the possible from the impossible in public education. If the public is supportive of a movement in a school, the chances are very high that the movement will succeed. "After all, we live in a democracy and the will of our people is our dictator" (Elam, 1995).

The third section of this chapter will review the history of the *Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*.

The late Charles F. Kettering II set up a foundation to support education-related programs. The foundation, CFK Ltd., developed three important education projects. One provided collegial inservice education for teams of school administrators throughout the nation. The second was a program to improve school climate and the third project was the annual *Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, inaugurated in 1969.

George Gallup, Sr. was a member of the Kettering

Foundation Board of Trustees. When Gallup was asked by Kettering what he thought about the idea of an annual education poll, Gallup was extremely enthusiastic. Gallup had been a university professor before pioneering the development of scientific polling in the 1930s. He quoted a very low figure for conducting the poll and has devoted a great deal of time to the poll ever since.

Since 1983, due to a lack of funds, Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) has beared the full cost of the poll which costs over \$40,000. The PDK/Gallup polls are usually done in April, however, preparation begins at least six months earlier. Much time and consideration is given to the selection of questions. The most critical element is a question's promise of giving useful information to education practitioners and particularly to policy makers, including state legislators and congressmen.

As *Newsweek* noted, "*A Nation at Risk* could have been just another dull report, one of thousands issued annually by faceless bureaucrats and academics" (Elam, 1995). However, it proved to be a landmark in the history of school reform. Elam questions where Gardner found the data that persuaded him to believe that Americans are losing faith in

their public schools, so much that the schools "may not be salvageable." When Gardner was asked, the response was not based upon opinions from the general American public which tells a different story from the PDK/Gallup attitude/opinion polls.

Public confidence in public education did decline somewhat between 1974 and 1983, as did confidence in many U.S. institutions immediately following Watergate. After 1983, public confidence in the public schools, as measured by the grades people gave schools for the job they were doing, rose in the face of generally negative and often misleading media reports and a declining proportion of parents in the adult population. Nationally, the schools ranked with the churches and the military as the most highly regarded U.S. institutions (Elam, 1995).

#### **Factors Impacting Public Support**

The Gallup Organization has conducted other studies that have shown a decline of confidence in many public and private institutions (Elam, 1995). There are several factors which can have an impact on the way the public perceives education. One of the largest factors that plays into public opinion, is that gained from the media. News

media can have a great influence on public perception of education. Certainly, *A Nation at Risk*, published in Newsweek in 1983, had a significant impact on public perception. Pauline Gough, writer of the Editor's Page for the September 1990 *Phi Delta Kappan*, concluded that a majority of the annual PDK/Gallup poll respondents are naive observers who lack firsthand information about the schools. "Indeed," she wrote, "when respondents were asked in 1988 where they got their information about schools, the largest number (52%) said they relied on newspapers--up from 38% in 1973, when the largest number said they relied on students for their information." (The change reflects a drop in the proportion of adults who have children in school.) (Elam, 1995).

The public relies on a variety of sources for information. The newspaper is one place people gain information. Television is another. As George Kaplan writes, "When sophisticated polls repeatedly demonstrate our dependence on TV as a central source of information on public issues, it is folly [for education leaders] to ignore or ridicule it" (Kaplan, 1992). Recently, the TV networks have attempted to promote schools and teaching. One network



features commercials entitled "The More You Know". These brief commercials use a famous actor or actress to encourage students to stay in school, stay off of drugs, respect/thank their teacher, etc. This has certainly shed some well needed positive light on education.

However, the news reports continue to highlight the negative situations. As author Mark Walsh in his article titled, "*Are Newspapers Missing the Beat?*" stated:

The media are prone to limit their coverage of [the schools] to what journalists describe as 'spot' news.... Unfortunately, these stories usually concern vandalism, drugs, absenteeism, theft of school property, attacks on teachers, and the like. 'Good news' is difficult to find and report. Consequently, the public receives a distorted picture of schools and tends to regard them as blackboard jungles (Walsh, 1994).

Educators will have to continue to work with the media to emphasize the accomplishments of schools more often. In addition, school officials will have to communicate to the public any pertinent information regarding the progress of their schools.

A second factor influencing public opinions about the public schools involves the recent state mandates of goals and assessments. Most recently, state governments have had an impact on school leaders with increased regulatory

statutes, curriculum innovations, and additional assessment devices (Haynes & Chalker, 1997).

State-mandated proficiency testing is widespread across the United States. State legislators respond to the accountability situation by mandating proficiency tests, many of which assess memory and recall. State education departments have had to develop curricula intended to set standards for student attainment (Walling, 1995). The assessment results are published yearly and schools are ranked by achievement in the local newspapers. As parents see these scores, their opinions about schools can be altered.

In addition to state mandates, school leaders are waiting for a shift to national curriculum guidelines and national tests promised by Washington and national goals identified by state governors (Haynes & Chalder, 1997). In fact, Congress has already adopted eight national goals for education. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act was put into place to help prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Through Goals 2000, states and local school districts may apply for funding to help improve education. A National Education Goals Panel is responsible for

reporting on the progress toward reaching the national goals (Uchida, 1996). The National goals have received a significant amount of press over the past few years. The information that has been disbursed certainly has had an impact on public opinion of the public school system.

A fourth area the public has recently heard much about involves international comparisons of educational systems and schools. According to David Halberstam, in his book, The Reckoning, "there are two real weaknesses in America's attempt to be competitive in the new economic era of international competition. They are the public school system and the low literacy rate" (Halberstam, 1986). He quotes the studies that concluded that if a foreign power had wanted to undermine the United States of America, it would have given it the public school system it already has (Bradley, 1993). This is only a perception of one author, however, whether it is accurate or not, it does represent a point of view shared by many groups in our society.

Much of the public's impression of how American schools rank internationally, comes from reported results of an international assessment which is given yearly to determine student achievement in the areas of math and science. The

test is called the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Countries like Singapore, Korea and Japan consistently achieve the highest educational rankings year after year. In 1994, the United States' eighth graders ranked number twelve, slightly below the International average, in mathematics performance. In science performance, they ranked number 11, slightly above the International average (Hawkes, 1997).

The information regarding the American students' performance was distributed across the nation via newspapers, radio, television and magazines. One consortium of districts along Chicago's North Shore responded to the criticism by administering their own TIMSS among all of the school districts to determine how well students in these schools were performing. Action plans are currently being developed at the local level to work toward achievement of the national and international benchmarks. All of the attention given to international comparisons have sparked parent interest and opinion.

Politics has also played a role in encouraging public opinion about education. According to Jack Frymier, in his essay entitled *Professionals and Politics*,

The trail of declining public confidence in public education has paralleled the path of the National Education Association's involvement in political activities: The more intensely NEA devoted attention and pressure to political issues, the more negatively the general public has come to view public education, and the more positively the general public has come to view the possibility of using public funds for private schools (Walling, 1995).

It is the perception that some educational associations are interested only in serving their own welfare rather than that of the public good. Since the NEA is such a large organization, the public may believe that all educators have the same political beliefs as the organization. Frymier encourages educators to stick to those areas of professional concern: teaching, learning, curriculum and the like (Walling, 1995).

In addition to the way professional educators handle politics and education, politicians also incorporate educational issues into their political platforms.

Elected officials become beholden to party platforms and special interest groups. Staying in office is a powerful motivator that often steers decision making (Haynes & Chalker, 1997).

Politicians will use any relevant research and recent reports to persuade the public of the areas in education that need improvement. They will then make promises to

improve those deficiencies if they are elected. Every time there is a local, state or national election, one can be sure that educational issues will be discussed at great length.

The world economy has a great influence on what the American people have to say about education. It also has a great impact on how much the public is willing to financially support school programs. In Fenwick English's Foreward, written for World Class Elementary Schools by Haynes and Chalker, he states,

Our economic position is linked to our investment in and our battle to transform our schools to prepare intelligent citizens, traders, engineers, scientists, and humanitarians (Haynes & Chalker, 1997).

In the early 1970's, the federal government initiated a number of projects in career education. Then *A Nation at Risk* and other reports of the early 1980's accelerated the influence of the business world into education classrooms. For the last two or three decades businesses have been blaming education for the lack of skills students bring to the workplace (Haynes & Chalker, 1997).

In the 1990's, one of the major focuses of national education remains to be economic. International competition

is a concern of our nation, and society is convinced that having a trained workforce will have a positive effect on successful competition. Economic competition is what drove Goals 2000. Business has found a way to influence the educational agenda by promoting school partnerships, taking sides on tax issues that provide public school support, and by influencing state legislators and local school board members (Haynes & Chalker, 1997).

Education is closely related to the priorities set by the economy and the state. Those priorities affect funding decisions that decide the destiny of programs, curriculum, and sometimes whole institutions (Bellah, 1991). Changes in the economy have an influence over the decisions people make to support the school system.

In general, poll findings show that school finance is an area of great confusion for most lay people. Much of this quandary is due to political leaders sharing inaccurate information with the public. For example, John Sununu, in 1989, declared "We spend twice as much [on education] as the Japanese and about 40% more than all of the other major industrial countries of the world." Sununu's remarks were widely quoted and have been perpetuated as a misconception

for more than a decade. In fact, the U.S. does not lead the world in K-12 education expenditures (Berliner, 1993).

In 1993, inadequate funding was the number-one problem perceived by many people for their local public school. Most people, as was revealed in the 1993 Gallup Poll, have arrived at two very important conclusions about school finance:

1. Differences in funding from state to state and from district to district are largely responsible for the uneven quality of public education in America.

2. Not only do people believe that more must be done to improve the quality of public schools in the poorer states and poorer communities, but they are willing to pay more taxes in order to do it.

The American public seems willing to pay for a good education, however, they want to be assured that the money will be used wisely.

The final factor impacting public support for the public schools is that of current practices and trends in education. Over the past decade, educators have had to deal with many challenges. Some of which include: special education, growing enrollment, accountability for student



achievement, drug abuse and violence, differences in the American family, financial cutbacks, vouchers and school choice, use of technology, international comparisons, etc. (Snyder, 1997).

As schools are attempting to provide appropriate services and facilities for all of these changes, the Gallup polls and other similar surveys are gaining information about public opinion on many of these issues. As decisions are made by policy makers, the account of public opinion must be taken into consideration.

#### Summary

This chapter contained a summary of related literature and research. It was divided into four major topics-- Quality Schools Research, Public Opinion and the Public Schools, Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, and Factors Impacting Public Support.

The first section reviewed Dr. Edwards Deming's quality management principles. Deming's principles and its application to school quality was discussed.

The second section discussed the value of public opinion and its impact on decision making. Educators can gain an outside perspective in understanding opinions of

people in our society.

The third section focused on the *Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*. A review of this poll and its history was discussed.

The last section of this chapter dealt with factors impacting public support. Several political and economical factors impacting the way the public perceives education were analyzed. In addition, a major portion of this section was attributed to how the media impacts public opinion and support.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

There were two purposes for this study. First, it was to conduct an analysis of the public's assessment of public education between 1986 and 1995 as generated by the Gallup Poll statistics; and secondly, to compare results of this study to a similar dissertation conducted in 1986. This was done to determine if the relationship between socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, and the public's high or low assessment of public education has changed between 1976 and 1995.

The study was an analysis of trends from an existing data source. The research accessed the results of the *Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* for the years 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995. The use of the existing data sets of the Gallup Polls ensured that the data was both professionally collected and based on national probability samples.

As was stated in Chapter I, hypotheses numbers 1-9 were replicated from Gustafson's study and hypotheses 10-11 were added for this current 1997 investigation. The major research hypotheses of this study were as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's age and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant relationship between parental status and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.

Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant relationship between the city size (small-towns and rural areas, mid-sized areas, and urban areas) where a person lives and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.

Hypothesis 4: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of academic

problems in the public school, and the grades given to the public school, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 5: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's gender and the grades given to the public school, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 6: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's level of education and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 7: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of social problems (discipline, use of drugs, etc.) in the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 8: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's religious preference and the

grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 9: There is no statistically significant relationship between people who live in different geographical regions of the country, and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 10: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

Hypothesis 11: There is no significant shift in the grades given to the public schools when comparing the grade point averages of results from 1974-1985 and those from 1986-1995.

The Gallup Poll's research procedure included a sample of citizens in the United States who were 18 years of age and older. Each participant was interviewed personally or via the telephone using questions from the *Gallup Poll of*

*the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools.*

### **Population and Sample Selection**

The population and sample for the study were all of the respondents to the *Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* for the years 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995. The sample used in this survey incorporated a national population. The sample sizes for each of the four years were: 1986-1,571; 1989-1,584; 1992-1,306; and 1995-1,311. The sampling procedure was designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, 18 years and older, living in the United States, except for those persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

The respondents in each of the selected sample years were individually interviewed. In 1986, 1989, and 1992, personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in all areas of the nation and in all types of communities. However, for the 1995 survey, the Gallup Organization used its standard national telephone sample.

The sampling procedure for the in-home, personal interview was designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, age 18 and older, living in the U.S., except for persons in institutions such as prisons or

hospitals. A replicated probability sample was used, down to the segments of townships in rural areas and block levels in urban areas. More than 300 sampling locations were used in each survey.

The sampling design included stratification by the following factors regarding the size-of-community strata, using 1980 census data:

- 1) incorporated cities of population 1,000,000 and over;
- 2) incorporated cities of population 250,000 to 999,999;
- 3) incorporated cities of population 50,000 to 249,000;
- 4) urbanized places not included in 1 and 2;
- 5) cities over 2,500 population outside of urbanized areas;
- 6) towns and villages with populations less than 2,500 and;
- 7) rural places not included within town boundaries.

Each of these strata was then further stratified into four geographic regions: East, Midwest, South, and West. Within each city-size/regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized



groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities were selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1980 census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

For each survey, within each subdivision, a sample of blocks or block clusters was drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions, block or segments were drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks, a randomly selected starting point was given to the interviewer on the map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers were required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignment was completed. Interviewing occurred mostly on weekends or on weekdays after 4 p.m. for women, and after 6 p.m. for men, when such adults were most likely to be at home. Allowance for people not at home was made by a "times-at-home" weighting (Politz & Simmons, 1949) procedure rather than by "callbacks." This procedure was used to reduce the sample bias that would occur as a result from under-representation in the sample of people who were difficult to find at home.

The pre-stratification by regions was routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the most up to date Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also, minor adjustments of the sample were made by educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau (derived from its Current Population Survey) and by age.

The telephone sample used in the 1995 survey was an unclustered, directory-assisted, random-digit telephone sampling design. In order to avoid "listing" bias, a random-digit aspect of the sample was used. There have been a number of studies that have shown that households with listed telephone numbers differ in many ways from those households with unlisted numbers. Unlisted telephone numbers are due to household mobility or to customer requests to prevent publication of the telephone number. To avoid this source of bias, a random-digit procedure was developed to include representation of listed and unlisted (including not-yet-listed) numbers.

Telephone numbers for the continental United States were stratified into four regions of the country. Within

each of the regions, they were further stratified into three size-of-community strata. Only working banks of telephone numbers were chosen. All non-working banks of telephone numbers were eliminated increasing the likelihood that any sample telephone numbers would be associated with a residence.

The sample of telephone numbers produced by the described method allows for representation of all telephone households within the continental United States. Within each contacted household, an interview attempt was made with the youngest man 18 years of age or older who was at home. If a man was not at the home, then an interview was sought with the oldest woman at home. Since Gallup wanted a distribution by sex that closely approximates the age distribution by sex of the total population, this method of "respondent selection" within households was used.

To complete an interview, up to three calls were made to each selected telephone number. Varied times and days were used for callbacks so as to maximize the chances of finding a respondent at home. In order to contact the potential respondents of the working population, all interviews were conducted on weekends or weekday evenings.

To ensure that the distribution of the final sample matched current estimates derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) for the adult population living in telephone households in the continental U.S., the sample was weighted.

In 1995, as has been the case in more recent years of the Gallup poll, parents of public school children were over sampled. This procedure was used to produce a large enough sample to ensure that findings reported for "public school parents" are statistically significant (Elam & Rose, 1995).

The composition of the sample included the type of adult surveyed (No children in school, Public school parents, Non-public school parents), gender, race, age, occupation, income, region, community size, and level of education.

#### **Instrumentation**

The *Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools*, inaugurated in 1969, is usually taken in April of each year. However, preparation begins at least six months earlier. Although questions have been generated in a variety of ways, the prime consideration in the final selection is the question's promise of giving useful

information to education practitioners and particularly to policy makers, including state legislators and congressmen.

Stanley Elam described the process for the development of questions for the Gallup Poll survey in his book, How America Views its Schools. To begin, an advisory panel of knowledgeable educators was created to submit question suggestions. The question ideas were then edited, categorized, and consolidated into a master list of approximately 100 questions. This list was then resubmitted to the advisory panel who ranked the questions in accordance with the question's potential for gathering useful information. Since there is a strong emphasis on tracking opinion trends on perennial problems and issues, as is being done in this study, at least one-fourth of the questions asked in each poll have been asked at least once in previous polls. Therefore, only 25 to 30 questions asked in any year are new. Due to financial limitations, only about 40 questions can be asked in any one poll during the limited 30 minute interview time.

Once the question list was complete, it was submitted to the Gallup Organization, usually in March, for a final screening. At this point, questions were refined and

sometimes field tested. The Gallup professionals were responsible for ensuring that the wording and intent of each question was clear. They wanted to be sure that questions were not overly technical or use professional jargon with which the public was not familiar. The questions, so far as it was possible, must be "unloaded". The final phase was to identify and eliminate all sources of bias (Elam, 1995).

### Validity

The Gallup Organization has been conducting polls for over 60 years. Since the organization has been polling public opinion for so many years, it is in the fortunate position of having a historical track record. Gallup has the advantage of continuing a question in the same way it has been asked over time. Asking the same question over time assists in providing a precise measurement of trends.

The trend data that Gallup has acquired helped in determining whether or not a question was understood by the public. Once a question was determined to be a valid question, any substantial change in how the public responded, was usually representative of an underlying change in attitude.

For brand new questions, Gallup tested several

different wordings. In addition, it was not uncommon for Gallup to ask several different questions about a content area of interest. When Gallup analysts looked at responses generated from these questions, they made note of the way the public responded to various question wordings. This provided a more complete picture of the population's underlying attitudes.

Before questions were placed on the Gallup Polls survey, a pilot test was done. The pilot test used 50 or 60 people to answer newly developed questions. Gallup analysts examined the responses to determine whether or not the questions were measuring what they wanted them to be measuring. In addition, Gallup has often used a split sample technique to measure the impact of different question wordings. The split sample technique consisted of a randomly selected half of a given survey being administered one wording of a question, while the other half was administered the other wording. This method assisted Gallup in comparing the impact of wording differences in questions.

The final approval of questions prior to 1984 was done by George Gallup, Sr. After 1984, Alec Gallup and Stanley Elam made the final determination. In a report by The

Gallup Organization found in the book, Where America Stands,

Gallup writers state:

Anyone using the Gallup Poll can do so with assurance that the data were obtained with extremely careful and reliable sampling and interviewing methods. Gallup's intent is always to be fair and objective when writing questions and constructing questionnaires. The original mission of polling was to amplify the voice of the public, not distort it, and we continue to be inspired by that mission (Golay, 1997).

Gallup warns against using a single poll question asked a single time to ascertain public opinion on a given topic. Opinions should be measured along several different dimensions, attitudes reviewed based on a variety of different question wordings, findings verified on the basis of multiple askings, and attention should be paid to changes in opinion over time.

### Reliability

The *Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* measures public opinion toward the public school system. Research indicates that, similar to the voting process, polls can also measure people's attitudes and opinions.

The basic goal of a survey is to generate responses that would have been obtained had every single person of a



population been interviewed. According to the Gallup Organization,

... a randomly selected, small percent of a population can represent the attitudes, opinions, or projected behavior of all of the people, if the sample is selected correctly (Golay, 1977).

When preparing to conduct a national opinion poll, Gallup selected a place where all or most Americans were likely to be found. Since most Americans were likely to be found in their home, Gallup began reaching people at home for their national surveys.

The earliest Gallup Polls were conducted in-person, with Gallup interviewers covering areas across the country, knocking on Americans' doors. This standard method of interviewing occurred from about 1935 to the mid 1980's. It was proven to be a reliable method. For example, Gallup polls across the 12 presidential elections held between 1936 and 1984 were highly accurate, with the average error in Gallup's final estimate of the election being less than three percentage points.

By 1986, an appropriate proportion of American households had at least one telephone. By the end of the 1980's, the vast majority of Gallup's national surveys were

being conducted by telephone. This method was substantially less expensive than the in-person interviews.

Over the years, statisticians have developed techniques to measure the accuracy of samples as long as the fundamental principle of equal probability of selection is adhered to. This means that respondents to be interviewed need to be selected entirely at random. In addition, the size of the group interviewed can make a difference in sampling accuracy. Gallup and other major organizations use sample sizes between 1,000 and 1,500 because they ensure a balance of accuracy against the increased economic cost of larger and larger samples.

Once the interviewing had been completed, the data were carefully checked and weighted before the analysis began. The purpose of the weighting process was to correct any possible sampling biases on the basis of demographic variables such as age, gender, race, education, or region of country.

After the data had been weighted, results were tabulated by computer programs. The programs showed how the total sample responded to each question and could also break out the sample by relevant variables.

### Data Analysis

The data in this study were collected from Gallup Polls that were given in the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995. Once the raw data were acquired from the Roper Center, located in Storrs Connecticut, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Nie, 1988) was used for analysis purposes. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) method was chosen to measure the differences on variables between two or more groups.

The goal of this dissertation was to examine the demographic differences in the public's grading of the public schools. To do this, a formal procedure was necessary to divide the data set into groups according to the demographic variables of interest and to compare the grades given by each group.

The pragmatic reasons for selecting ANOVA included the fact that this method would provide the researcher the ability to compare the results of this study to that of Gustafson's. Glenn Gustafson also selected the ANOVA as one of the statistical methods in analyzing his data. In addition, the ANOVA allowed the researcher to statistically compare average grades. It gave a simple framework for

examinations when interactions were considered.

One-way ANOVA was used when dividing up the sample into groups based on a single variable (i.e., grades given by gender) and two-way ANOVA was used when the sample was divided into groups based on two different variables (i.e., grades given by gender and geographical regions).

There were several methodological reasons for using the ANOVA. The first being that the distribution of grades was shown by an initial exploratory analysis to be roughly normal across groups. Secondly, the sample size was so large (>1,000) that the ANOVA was appropriate even if the distribution of grades substantially deviated from normality (Runyon, 1991).

Lastly, the F test used in the ANOVA was robust enough that inferences drawn from the test were likely to be valid even though some assumption of the ANOVA is violated (Runyon, 1991). With the F statistic, a significance value was computed. If this value was less than the standard  $\alpha=.05$ , then it was concluded that the result was significant.

### Summary

Chapter III contained the design and methodology used in this study. First, a review of the purposes of the investigation and an outline of the instrument from which data were retrieved was done. A description was made of the population and the sample that was used in the study. In addition, the sampling procedure used to gather data was discussed.

The data used in the study were generated from the *Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* survey. There is significant research on polling that supports the validity of this survey and numerous studies on Gallup surveys done over the years proving a high level of accuracy. The final part of the chapter described the statistical method chosen to analyze the data as well as the procedures used in examining the data.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of the public's assessment of the public schools from 1986-1995. The researcher investigated whether or not certain socioeconomic or demographic variables of the public had an impact on how people assessed the public schools. A high assessment was considered at the A and B grade level. A low assessment was considered a grade of C, D, or F. Data for the study were collected from the *Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools* for the years 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995. The findings of this study, in regards to the grades given to the public schools when comparing grade point averages, were also compared to the results found in Glenn Gustafson's study from 1973-1985. To obtain comparable results to Gustafson's study, the same statistical procedures have been used. This study used the ANOVA method to analyze the grades given by the public to the public schools.

The findings of the dissertation are reported by individual variables stated in the hypotheses. As was the case in the Gustafson study, the null hypothesis was rejected if any single result achieved significance at the .05 alpha level or better. If significant interactions were found between two or more variables, those were discussed as well. In addition, a report is made on each of the four years investigated. At the end of the analysis the ANOVA results are reported in table form (see Tables 1-4).

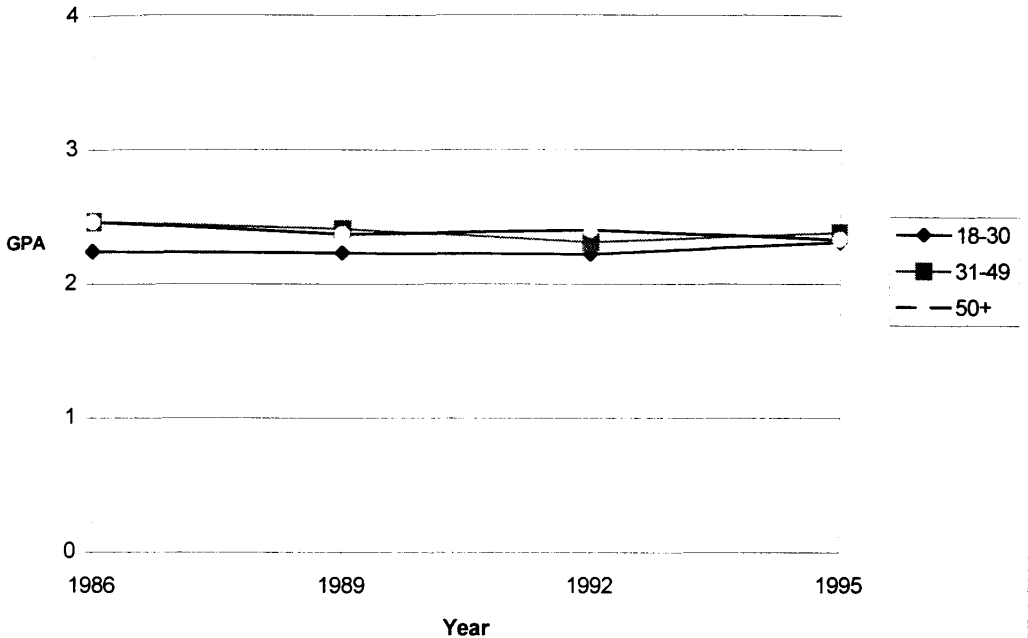
#### Analysis of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's age and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, age, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by people in the three individual age categories of 18-30, 31-49, and over 50.

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for each of the age categories.

Figure 1. Grade Point Average by Age.



### 1986

The relationship between age and the grades given to the public schools was significant at the .006 level. People over 30 years old were significantly more likely to give a high grade to the public schools (2.46 g.p.a.) than were people under 30 (2.24 g.p.a.). There was no difference in the averages of grades given by the age group 31-49 as



compared to that of the 50 and over group.

There was a significant interaction at the .013 level between age and religious preference. An interaction indicates that two or more independent variables have a significant combined effect on the dependent variable. In this case, people who are between the ages of 31 to 49, and are Catholic gave significantly higher grades to the schools (2.66 g.p.a.). In both the 18-30 and the 31-49 groups, Catholics gave higher grades, however, in the 50+ group, the non-Catholic people gave higher grades.

### 1989

There was a significant relationship at the .031 level between age and the grades given to the public schools. People in the 31-49 age group were more likely to give a high grade than those people age 31 and under and those people age 50 and over. The grade point average for the 50 and over age group fell from 2.46 in 1986 to 2.37 in 1989. However, people of the two age categories over 30 were more likely to give high grades than were younger people. The average grade point average for people over 30 was 2.39 g.p.a. compared with a 2.23 g.p.a. given by people 30 years and under. The average grade point average for the entire

population fell slightly from 2.39 in 1986 to 2.34 in 1989.

### 1992

No significant relationship was found between age and the grades given to the public schools in 1992. The level of significance was .094 for the relationship. However, the average grade point average for the entire population fell slightly from 2.34 in 1989 to 2.31 in 1992. In addition, this was the only year that the 50 and over age group (2.40 g.p.a.) assessed the schools higher than the 31-40 age group (2.31 g.p.a.). People of the two age categories over 30 were again more likely to give high grades than were younger people. The average grade point average for people over 30 was 2.36 g.p.a. compared with a 2.22 g.p.a. given by people 30 years of age and younger.

### 1995

No significant relationship was found between age and the grades given to the public schools in 1995. The level of significance was .557 for the relationship. However, the average grade point average for the entire population rose slightly from 2.31 in 1992 to 2.34 in 1995. People of the two age categories over 30 were once again more likely to give high grades than were younger people. The average

grade point for people over 30 was 2.36 g.p.a. compared with a 2.31 g.p.a. given by people 30 years of age and younger.

An interaction at the .024 level of significance existed between age and geographical region. People older than 50 who lived in the South rated the schools significantly lower than 49 year olds and younger living in the South. People 49 and younger who lived in the South were more likely to give high grades to the public schools than the people over 50 years of age.

#### Summary of Hypothesis 1

The null hypothesis could be rejected in 1986 and 1989 because a level of significance of less than .05 was found in each of these years. However, the null hypothesis could not be rejected in 1992 and 1995 because the level of significance was not reached. For the four years, the average grade point average for people over 30 was 2.39, while an average of 2.25 was found for people 30 years and under. Also, the total grade point average for all age categories declined steadily during 1986-1992. The average grade point average rose slightly in 1995.

In 1986 there was a significant interaction between age and religious preference. The interaction indicated people

in the 31-49 age group, who were Catholic were more likely to give the public schools high grades than those in the other age groups with the same religion. In addition, the group of people over 50 who were Catholic gave lower grades than the non-Catholic people in that age group.

Moreover, in 1995, age and the geographical region people were from was also found to be significantly related. The 50+ age group who lived in the South were more likely to give low grades to the schools. The average grade point average given by this group was 1.83. In the other two age groups, people living in the South gave higher grades to the school than did those people living in other geographical regions.

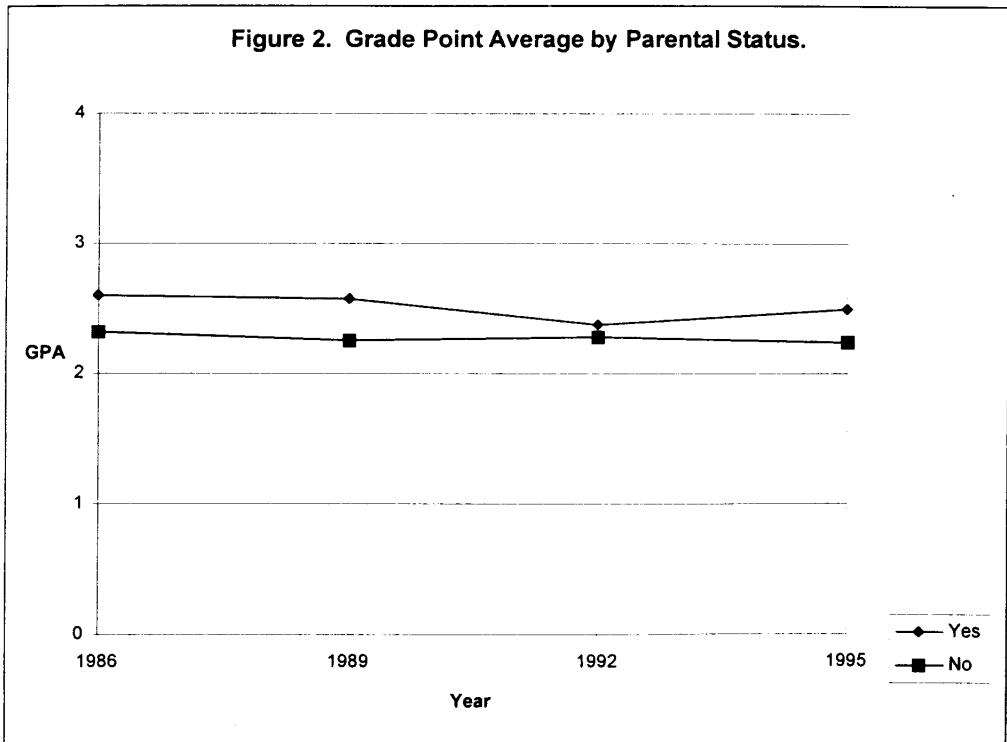
### Analysis of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's parental status and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, parental status, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a

statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by parents and non-parents.

Figure 2 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for both of the parental status categories.



**1986**

The relationship between parental status and the grades given to the public schools was significant at the .006 level. Parents were significantly more likely to give the public schools high grades than were non-parents. The grade point average for parents was 2.60 while non-parents had a 2.32 average. The grade point average for parents also exceeded the grade point average for the entire population.

An interaction at the .029 level of significance existed between parental status and gender. In the parent group, males (2.67 g.p.a.) gave higher grades than females (2.51 g.p.a.). However, in the non-parent group, females (2.37 g.p.a.) gave higher grades than males (2.26 g.p.a.).

**1989**

A .031 level of significance was found between parental status and the grades given to the public schools. The grade point average for both parents and non-parents declined slightly from 1986. Parents, whose grade point average was 2.58, were more likely to give high grades than were non-parents whose grade point average was 2.26.

An interaction at the .018 level of significance existed between parental status and those people who

believed that schools had social problems. In the parent group, those people who thought no social problems existed in the schools, gave higher grades (2.62 g.p.a.) than those parents who believed social problems occur in the schools (2.52 g.p.a.). However, in the non-parent group, those people who believed there were no social problems in the schools gave lower grades (2.18 g.p.a.) than those who thought there were social problems (2.34 g.p.a.).

### 1992

No significant relationship was found between parental status and the grades given to the public schools in 1992. The level of significance was .151 for the relationship. However, the parents' grade point average of 2.37 declined from that of 1989 and the non-parent grade point average increased slightly to 2.28.

There was a significant relationship between parental status and religious preference at the .024 level. Parents who are Catholic grade the schools higher (2.51 g.p.a.) than those who are not Catholic (2.30 g.p.a.). However, non-parents who are Catholic gave the schools lower grades (2.22 g.p.a.) than did their non-Catholic counterparts (2.31 g.p.a.).

**1995**

In 1995, there was a significant relationship found between parental status and the grades given to the public schools. The level of significance was at the .000 level. The grade point average for parents increased to 2.49, while the non-parent grade point average declined slightly to 2.24.

An interaction at the .042 level of significance existed between parental status and geographical region. Non-parents living in the South gave significantly lower grades (1.96 g.p.a.) than those living in other geographical regions (2.25 g.p.a.). However, parents living in the South gave significantly higher grades (2.72 g.p.a.) than those parents living in other geographical regions (2.48 g.p.a.).

**Summary of Hypothesis 2**

The null hypothesis could be rejected in 1986, 1989, and 1995 because a level of significance of less than .05 was found in each of these years. However, the null hypothesis could not be rejected in 1992 because the level of significance was not reached. The relationship showed that parents were more likely to give high grades to the public schools than were non-parents. The average grade



point for parents was 2.51, whereas non-parents averaged 2.28. In each of the four years, the grade point average for parents exceeded that of the total population. The grade point averages for parents declined between 1986-1992 and increased in 1995.

As reported in 1986, a significant relationship was found between parental status and gender. Parents who were male gave higher grades than female parents. However, male non-parents gave lower grades than female non-parents.

In 1989 there was a significant interaction between parental status and social problems. Parents who believed no social problems exist in the schools gave higher grades than parents who believed there were social problems. However, in the non-parent group, those people who believed there were no social problems in the schools gave lower grades than those who thought there were social problems.

Lastly, in 1995, a significant interaction was found between parental status and geographical region. Non-parents living in the South gave lower grades than non-parents living in other geographical regions. However, parents living in the South gave significantly higher grades than those living in other geographical regions.

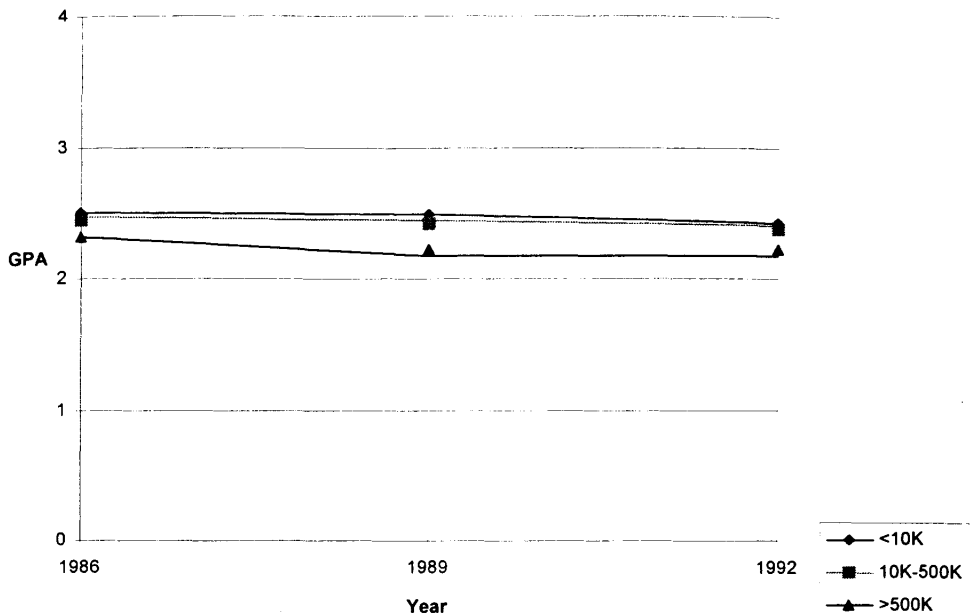
### Analysis of Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between the city size (small towns and rural areas, mid-sized, urban) where a person lives and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, city size, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by people who lived in three city size categories: small towns and rural areas under 10,000; mid-sized cities between 10,000 and 500,000; and urban cities larger than 500,000.

Figure 3 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for each of the city size categories.

Figure 3. Grade Point Average by City Size.

1986

The relationship between city size and the grades given to the public schools was significant at the .021 level. The grade point averages for each of the city size groups were: (1) a 2.50 g.p.a. for small towns and rural areas (under 10,000), (2) a 2.45 g.p.a. for mid-sized cities (10,000-500,000), and (3) a 2.32 g.p.a. for urban cities (over 500,000). People who live in a small town and rural area or a mid-sized city tended to grade the schools higher than those living in an urban city. This relationship also showed that people living in small towns and rural areas and

mid-sized cities were more likely to give higher grades than the total population (2.42 g.p.a.).

### 1989

A .000 level of significance indicated that there was a significant relationship between city size and the grades given to the public schools. Grade point averages declined in all categories of city size: small towns and rural areas had a 2.49 g.p.a.; mid-sized cities had a 2.43 g.p.a.; and urban cities had a 2.22 g.p.a. Both small towns and rural areas and mid-sized cities had grade point averages that were greater than the 2.38 given by the total population. In addition, those people living in an urban city had a lower grade point average than that of the total population.

A significant two-way interaction was found between city size and political affiliation at the .005 level. People living in urban cities with an Independent affiliation gave the schools higher grades than the Democratic affiliated people and the same grades as Republicans living in the same city size.

**1992**

The relationship between city size and the grades given to public schools continued to be significant. The relationship was significant at the .003 level. The grade point averages continued to decline in the small towns and rural areas, as well as in the mid-sized cities, however, the urban cities' grade point average remained the same (2.22 g.p.a.). Once again, the small towns and rural areas, along with the mid-sized cities had grade point averages that were greater than the 2.35 given by the total population. In addition, those people living in an urban city had a lower grade point average than that of the total population.

A two-way interaction for the relationship between city size and political affiliation was found to have a .015 level of significance. People who lived in small towns and rural areas and who were Democratic, were more likely to give the schools higher grades than were the other people. People who lived in mid-sized cities who were affiliated with the Independent Party, were more likely to give higher grades to the schools than other people. Finally, those people who were Republican and lived in urban cities, were

more likely to give higher grades to the schools than other people.

### 1995

City size data was not available for 1995.

### Summary of Hypothesis 3

The null hypothesis could be rejected for 1986, 1989, and 1992. Since city size data was not available for 1995, the null hypothesis for that year could not be rejected. For all three years where data was available, there was a decline in the grade point averages of small towns and rural areas, as well as in the mid-sized cities. The grade point averages in the urban cities, declined from 1986 to 1989, and then remained the same in 1992. The four-year average of the grade point averages for each of the subcategories of city size was: 2.47 g.p.a. for small towns and rural areas, 2.42 g.p.a. for mid-sized cities, and 2.25 g.p.a. for urban cities. Throughout the three years the relationship showed that people who lived in small towns and rural areas or mid-sized cities were more likely to give higher grades to the public schools than those who lived in urban cities. In addition, people who lived in urban cities tended to give lower grades than the total population.

A significant two-way interaction was found in 1989 and 1992 between city size and political affiliation. In 1989, in small towns and rural areas, as well as mid-sized cities, Republicans were more likely to give higher grades to the schools than were Democrats. Democrats were more likely to give higher grades than Independents. However, in urban cities Republicans (2.34 g.p.a.) and Independents (2.34 g.p.a.) gave higher grades than the Democrats (2.06 g.p.a.).

In 1992, each city size showed a different political party grading the schools higher. In small towns and rural areas, Democrats gave the highest grades. In mid-sized cities, Independents gave the highest grades and in urban cities, Republicans gave the highest grades.

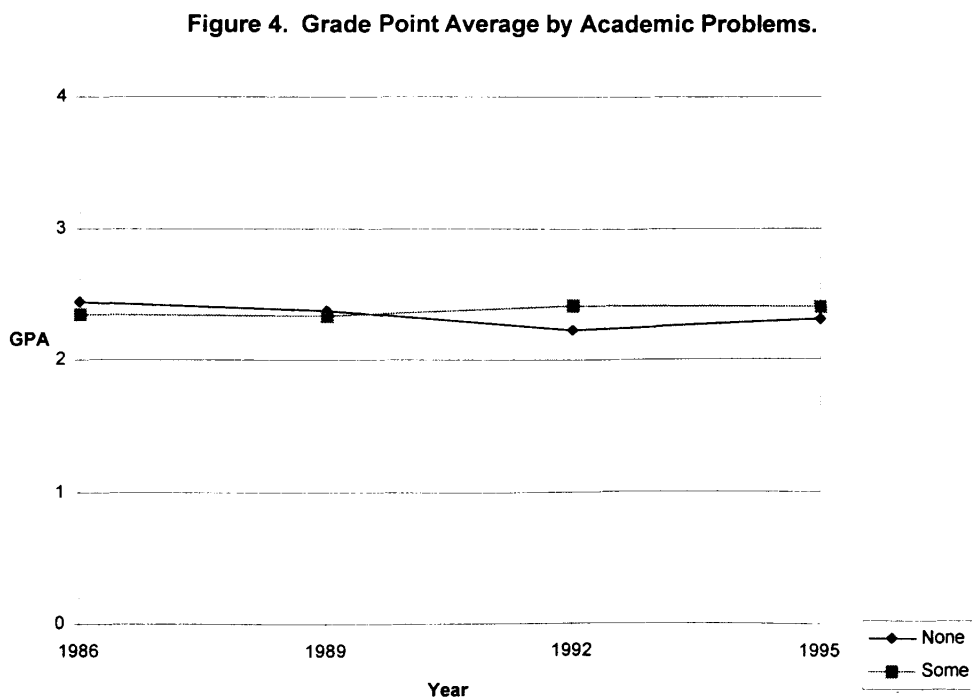
#### Analysis of Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of academic problems in the public schools and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, academic problems, and the dependent variable,

grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by people who believed that the public schools had academic problems and the grades given by people who did not believe that the public schools had academic problems.

Figure 4 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for each of the academic problem categories.





**1986**

The relationship between academic problems and the grades given to the public schools was not significant. The grade point average of those people who believed that the public schools had academic problems was 2.34. Those who believed the schools did not have academic problems had a grade point average of 2.44. The four most frequently selected academic problems were lack of proper financial support, difficulty getting good teachers, teachers' lack of interest and poor curriculum/concern about standards.

**1989**

The relationship between academic problems and the grades given to the public schools was not significant. The relationship showed the people who believed that the schools had no academic problems were more likely to give higher grades to the schools than those people who did believe the schools had academic problems. This comparison was seen in a comparison of the grade point averages. People who felt the schools did not have academic problems had a grade point average of 2.37. Those who believed the schools do have academic problems had a grade point average of 2.33. There was a decline in grade point averages for both categories

from 1986 to 1989. The four most frequently selected academic problems were lack of proper financial support, difficulty getting good teachers, lack of proper facilities and poor curriculum.

A significant relationship at the .035 level of significance was found between academic problems and level of education. The relationship indicated that non-college-educated people, regardless of whether or not they believed the schools to have academic problems, gave the schools lower grades than did those people who were college-educated.

### 1992

A .001 level of significance was found for the relationship between academic problems and the grades given to the public schools. The grade point average for those people who thought the public schools did not have academic problems was 2.23. Oddly, those people who felt that the public schools did have academic problems graded the schools with a 2.41 grade point average. The grade point average for the total population was 2.32. The perceived presence of academic problems did not appear to affect the grades given to the public schools when compared with those people

who felt no academic problems existed. In comparing the grade point averages in both categories from 1989 to 1992, the grade point averages of those people who believed the schools had no academic problems had a significant decline. In 1989, their grade point average was at 2.37 versus 2.23 in 1992. The opposite showed true in the group who believed there were academic problems. In 1989, their grade point average was 2.33 as opposed to 2.41 in 1992. There was a significant increase in this group's grade point average between the two years. The four most frequently selected academic problems were lack of financial support, difficulty getting good teachers, lack of proper facilities and poor curriculum/concern about standards.

A significant two-way interaction was found between academic problems and gender at the .005 level. When people believed that academic problems existed in the schools, males gave the schools higher grades than females. However, when they believed that no academic problems existed, females gave higher grades than males.

In addition, a significant interaction at the level of .026 was found between academic problems and religious preference. Catholics who believed there were academic

problems in the schools, gave higher grades than non-Catholics. However, Catholics who believed there were no academic problems in the schools, gave lower grades than the non-Catholics.

### 1995

The relationship between academic problems and the grades given to the public schools was found to have a .159 level of significance. Therefore, the relationship was not found to be significant. The comparison between the grade point averages of the two categories, showed that a perception of no academic problems yielded a 2.31 g.p.a., while a perception of academic problems existing resulted in a 2.40 g.p.a. The grade point average of the first group, those with a perception of no academic problems, was below the 2.36 g.p.a. given to the schools by the total population. The four most frequently selected academic problems were lack of proper financial support, difficulty getting good teachers, lack of proper facilities and poor curriculum/concern about standards.

#### Summary of Hypothesis 4

The null hypothesis was not rejected for the years of 1986, 1989 and 1995. All of those years showed a significance level greater than .05. However, the null hypothesis could be rejected for 1992. People who thought there were no academic problems in the schools were not necessarily more likely to give higher grades than those who thought there were academic problems in the schools. In both 1986 and 1989, people who perceived that there were no academic problems in the school had a higher grade point average (2.41) than those in 1992 and 1995 (2.27). A composite four-year grade point average for the group who perceived there were no academic problems was calculated at 2.34, while the latter had a 2.37.

The four most frequently selected academic problems were lack of proper financial support, difficulty getting good teachers, lack of proper facilities and poor curriculum/concern about standards in all but one year. In 1986, teachers' lack of interest replaced lack of poor facilities.

In 1989, there was a significant interaction between academic problems and level of education. College-educated

people gave the schools higher grades regardless of whether or not they believed academic problems existed in the schools.

In 1992, there were two significant interactions found. One interaction was between academic problems and gender. When people believed that academic problems existed in the schools, males gave the schools higher grades than females. However, when they believed that no academic problems existed, females gave higher grades than males. The other interaction was between academic problems and religious preference. Catholics gave higher grades when they believed academic problems existed in schools and gave lower grades when they believed no academic problems existed.

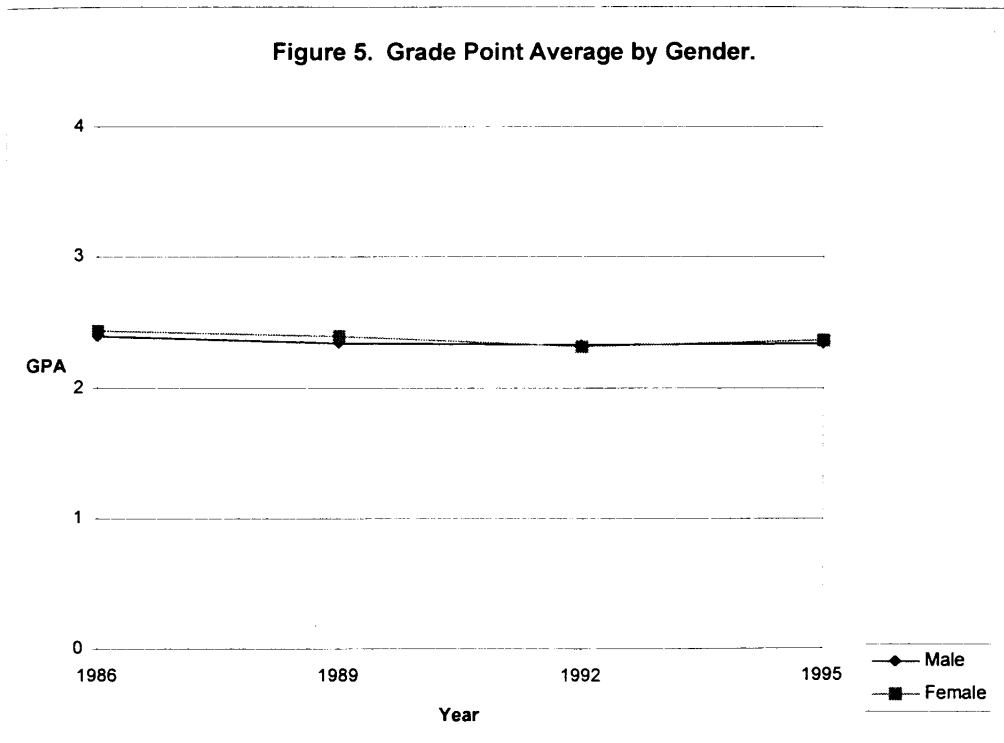
#### Analysis of Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's gender and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, gender, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically

significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by males and females.

Figure 5 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for both of the gender categories.



### 1986

No significant relationship was found between gender and the grades given to the public schools. The level of significance was .560 for the relationship. Males gave the public schools a 2.39 g.p.a., while females rated the

schools with a 2.43 g.p.a. There was no significant difference between the high or low grades given to the public schools by males and females.

Gender was part of two interactions. Gender and parental status were previously shown to have a relationship which was significant at the .029 level. A description of this relationship is detailed in Hypothesis 2.

In addition, another significant relationship was found between gender and political affiliation at the .009 level. In the male group, Republicans gave higher grades than the other two political parties. Male Independents gave the lowest grades to the public schools. In the female group, Independents gave higher grades than the other two parties. Female Democrats gave the lowest grades to the public schools.

### 1989

Gender did not have a significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools. A .323 significance was found. The grade point average for males was 2.34 and the grade point average for females was 2.39. This relationship showed no significant statistical difference. The grade point average for each gender declined slightly from 1986 to



1989.

**1992**

The relationship between gender and the grades given to education continued to show no significant relationship.

Males had a 2.33 g.p.a. and females had a 2.31 g.p.a. No significant difference existed between the two groups. The grade point average of females slightly declined from 1989.

A significant relationship was found between gender and social problems at the .025 level. Both males (2.50 g.p.a.) and females (2.34 g.p.a.) gave the public schools higher grades when they believed no social problems existed.

However, females gave significantly lower grades (2.19 g.p.a.) when they believed some social problems existed. Males gave slightly lower grades (2.47 g.p.a.) when they believed some social problems existed.

**1995**

Again, no significant relationship was found involving gender. Males (2.34 g.p.a.) and females (2.37 g.p.a.) gave essentially the same grades to the public schools.

A two-way interaction between gender and political affiliation was found at the .024 level. In the group of males, Independents gave the highest grades to schools and

Republicans gave the lowest. However, in the female group, Republicans gave the highest grades to the public schools and Independents gave the lowest.

#### Summary of Hypothesis 5

The null hypothesis could not be rejected. For each of the four years the relationship between gender and the grades given to the public schools was not found to be significant. No significant difference between the grades given by males and females was identified.

A few two-way interactions were found to be significant between gender and other variables. The first was between gender and political affiliation. This occurred in both 1986 and 1995. In 1986, in the male group, Republicans gave the highest grades to the public schools. Independents gave the lowest grade in the male group. In the female group, Independents gave the highest grades and Democrats gave the lowest. In 1995, the opposite was found for males. In the male group, Independents gave the highest grades, while Republicans gave the lowest. For the female group, Republicans gave the highest grades and Independents gave the lowest.

The other two-way interaction was between gender and

social problems. Both males and females who believed that no social problems existed in the public schools graded the schools higher than those people who believed social problems existed. However, females who believed social problems existed gave significantly lower grades than the males in that same group.

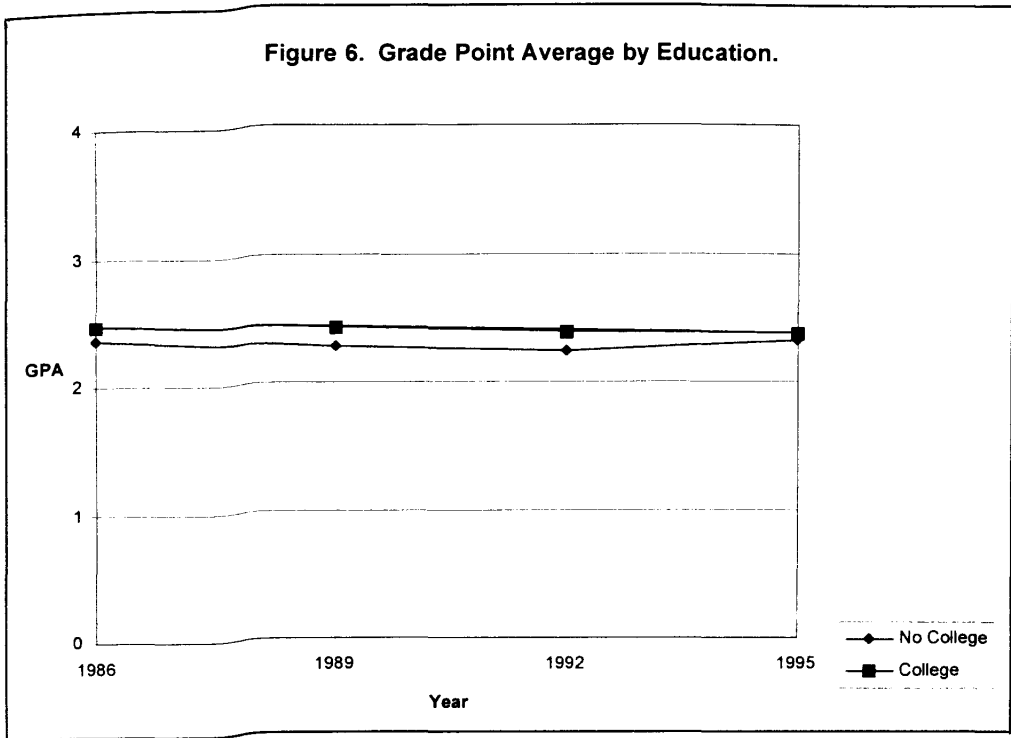
### Analysis of Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's level of education and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, education, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by college-educated people and by non-college-educated people.

Figure 6 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for college and

non-college-educated people.



### 1986

A significant relationship was not found between education and the grades given to the public schools. A .093 level of significance was determined. People who had not gone to college totaled a 2.36 g.p.a., while those who had attended college accumulated a 2.46 g.p.a. The college-educated group had a slightly higher grade point average.

**1989**

In 1989, a significant relationship was found between education and the grades given to the public schools. The level of significance was at the .004 level. The relationship showed college-educated people were more likely to give higher grades than non-college-educated people. This relationship is reflected in the 2.43 g.p.a. given by college-educated people and the 2.28 g.p.a. given by non-college-educated people.

The first two-way interaction between education and academic problems was found to be significant at the .035 level. The interaction was described in Hypothesis 4. The second and final two-way interaction was significant at the .041 level. It was between education and political affiliation. People who attended college and who were Republican gave the schools the highest grades. College-educated Independents gave the lowest grades. Non-college-educated Independents gave the highest grades in this group. While non-college-educated Democrats gave the lowest.

**1992**

The relationship between education and grades was again determined to be significant. This time a .017 level of significance was found between the two variables.

College-educated people were more likely to give high grades than were non-college-educated people. A 2.38 g.p.a. was given by college educated people and a 2.24 g.p.a. was given by non-college-educated people.

**1995**

The relationship between education and grades indicated no statistical relationship was present. College-educated and non-college-educated people had a 2.37 g.p.a. and a 2.32 g.p.a., respectively. The level of significance was at the .093 level.

**Summary of Hypothesis 6**

The null hypothesis was not rejected for 1986 and 1995 because the relationship between education and the grades given to the public schools was not significant. However, in 1989 and 1992, the null hypothesis was rejected because the relationship was found to be significant. It was determined that college-educated people were more likely to give higher grades to the schools than were non-college-

educated people. It should also be noted that the grade point averages of the college-educated group declined slightly during each of the four years.

There were two interactions occurring in 1989 which were found to be significant. One was between education and academic problems, which was described in Hypothesis 4. In addition, the other was between education and political affiliation. College-educated people who were Republican gave the highest grades to schools, while Independents in this same group gave the lowest. Non-college-educated people who were Independents gave the highest grades, while Democrats in this same group gave the lowest.

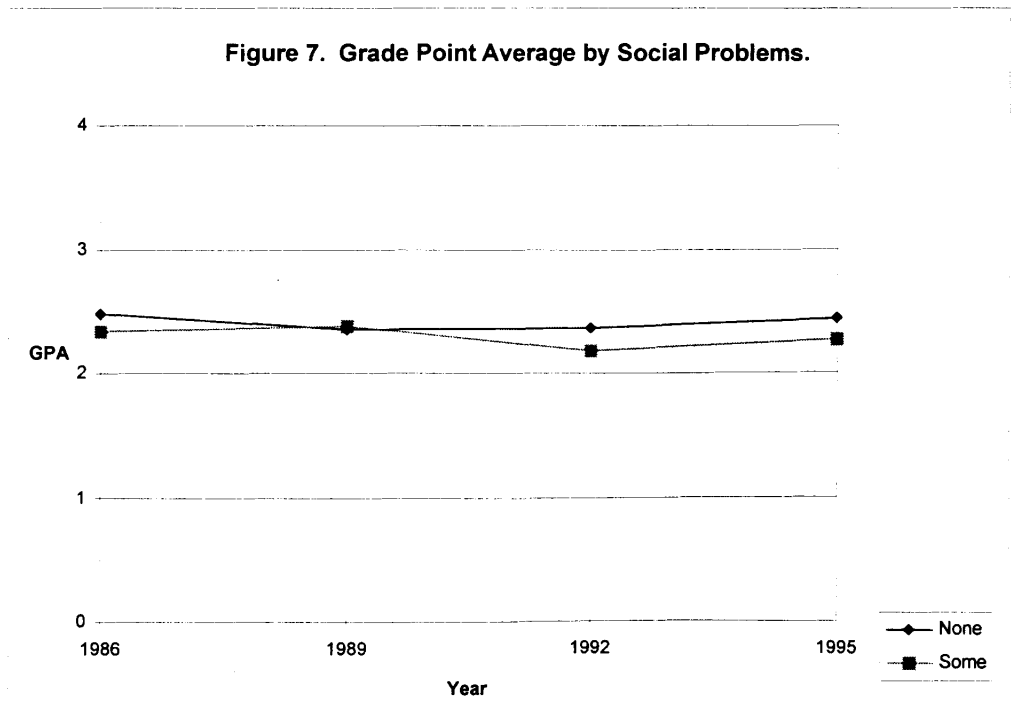
#### Analysis of Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of social problems (discipline, use of drugs, etc.) in the public schools and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, social problems, and the dependent variable,

grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by people who believe that the public schools had social problems and the grades by people who did not believe that the public schools had social problems.

Figure 7 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for each of the social problem categories.





1986

A significant relationship was found between social problems and the grades given to the public schools. A .011 level of significance was determined between the two variables. A grade point average of 2.48 g.p.a. was found for people who did not believe the schools had social problems. A 2.33 g.p.a. was given by people who did believe the schools had social problems. Therefore, people who thought there were no social problems in the schools were more likely to give higher grades than those who thought there were social problems in the schools. The four most frequently selected social problems were lack of discipline, use of drugs, drinking/alcoholism, and moral standards.

An interaction at the .041 level of significance existed between social problems and geographic region. People living in the South and Southwest, who believed no social problems existed in the schools, gave higher grades than those living in other geographic regions. However, when the people living in the South and Southwest believed there were some social problems evident in the schools, they gave lower grades to the public schools compared to people from other geographic regions.

**1989**

No significant relationship was found between social problems and the grades given to the public schools. A .585 level of significance was determined. The relationship showed no significant difference between the grades given by people who believed that there were no social problems in the schools (2.35 g.p.a.) and by people who believed that there were social problems in the schools (2.38 g.p.a.). The grade point averages for both groups declined slightly from 1986. In addition, the group believing that no social problems existed gave a lower grade point average than the group who believed social problems existed in the public schools. The four most frequently selected social problems were lack of discipline, use of drugs, pupils lack of interest, and crime/vandalism.

**1992**

The relationship between social problems and the grades given to the public schools was found to be significant at the .004 level. A 2.37 g.p.a. was given by people who thought the schools had no social problems while a lower 2.18 g.p.a. was given by people who believed social problems existed. In addition, there was a slight decline in the

grade point average given for the group who believed social problems existed in the schools from 2.38 in 1989 to 2.18 in 1992. The four most frequently selected social problems were lack of discipline, pupils lack of interest, drinking/ alcoholism and pupils lack of interest.

A two-way interaction between social problems and political affiliation was found to be significant at the .028 level. When the people believed no social problems existed in the schools, Republicans gave the highest grades and Independents gave the lowest. However, when the people believed there were social problems in the schools, the Independents gave the highest grades and the Republicans gave the lowest.

### 1995

Once again, the relationship between social problems and the grades given to the public schools was found to be significant at the .002 level. A 2.44 g.p.a. was given by people who thought the schools did not have social problems, while a 2.26 g.p.a. was given by people who thought the schools had social problems. The four most frequently selected social problems were lack of discipline, pupils lack of interest, use of drugs and moral standards.

### summary of Hypothesis 7

The null hypothesis was rejected in 1986, 1992, and 1995 because a level of significance of less than .05 was found in each of these years. However, the null hypothesis could not be rejected in 1989 because the level of significance was not reached. For the four years, the average grade point average for people who believed that the schools didn't have social problems was 2.41 while an average of 2.29 was found for people who believed that the schools had social problems. The grade point average decreased slightly from 2.48 in 1986 to 2.44 in 1995 for the group who believed no social problems existed. Likewise, for the group who thought social problems existed, the grade point average decreased from 1986 at 2.33 to 2.26 in 1995. In 1989, the group that believed no social problems existed was found to have a lower grade point average than those who believed social problems existed. This anomaly occurred only in 1989. The most frequently selected social problems were lack of discipline (all four years), pupils lack of interest (three years), use of drugs (three years), moral standards (three years), drinking/alcoholism (two years), and crime/vandalism (one year).

There were two significant interactions between social problems and other variables. The first interaction was between social problems and geographic region. When there was the belief that social problems existed in the schools, people from the South and Southwest gave higher grades than people from other geographical regions. However, when the belief was that no social problems existed, people from the South and Southwest gave lower grades than those from other geographical regions.

The second interaction was between social problems and political affiliation. Republicans gave the highest grades and Independents the lowest when they believed no social problems existed in the public schools. However, when people believed there were social problems, the Independents gave the highest grades, while the Republicans gave the lowest.

### **Analysis of Hypothesis 8**

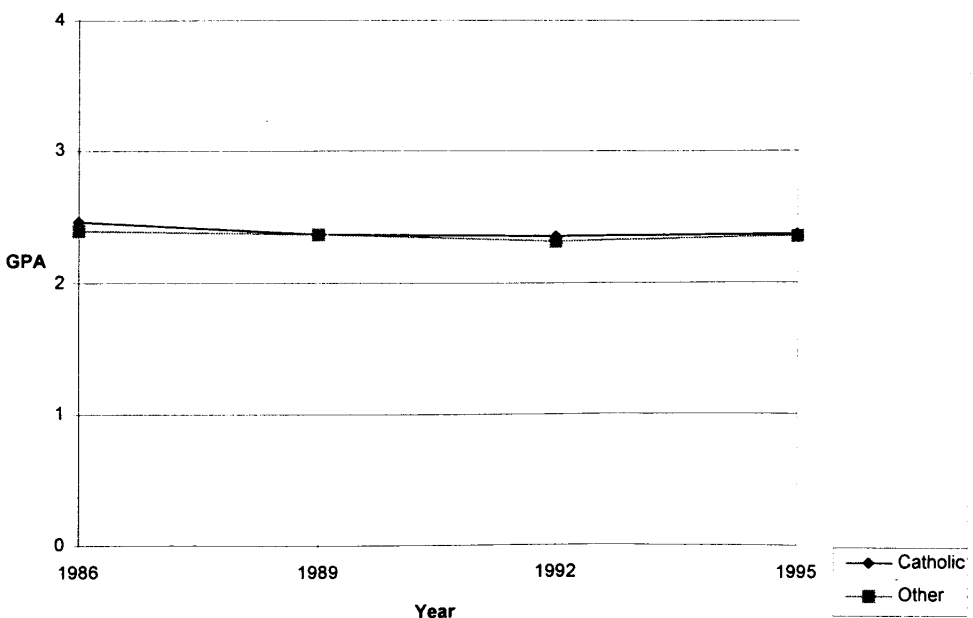
Hypothesis 8 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's religious preference and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986,

1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, religious preference, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by Catholic people and by people expressing other religious preferences.

Figure 8 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for each of the religious preference categories.

Figure 8. Grade Point Average by Religious Preference.



**1986**

No significant relationship was found between religious preferences and the grades given to the public schools. A .303 level of significance was determined. The grade point average for Catholic people was not significantly different from that of people belonging to other religious groups. A significant interaction between religious preference and age was found. This relationship was described in Hypothesis 1.

**1989**

Religious preference was not found to have a significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools. People who were Catholic accumulated a 2.37 g.p.a. and those who expressed other religious preferences had a grade point average of 2.36. There were no significant differences in the means.

**1992**

Religious preference continued to show no significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools. A .522 level of significance was determined. No significant difference was found between the grade point average of Catholic people and the grade point average of people who expressed other religious preferences. Both grade point

averages, however slightly decline from 1986 to 1992. Significant interactions were found between religious preference and parental status, as well as religious preference and academic problems. These relationships were described in Hypotheses 2 and 4 respectively.

### 1995

Religious preference again was found to have no significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools. For the year, the grade point average for Catholics was 2.37 while the grade point average for other religious groups was 2.35. A two-way interaction was found to be significant at the .034 level between religious preference and geographic location. The Catholic people living in the South and Southwest gave the schools higher grades than those who were not Catholic. However, non-Catholic people living in other geographical regions gave higher grades than the Catholic people living in other geographical regions.

### Summary of Hypothesis 8

The null hypothesis could not be rejected. For all four years of the study, religious preference was found not to have a significant relationship with the grades given to



the public schools. The average grade point average for Catholics was 2.39 while members of other religious groups averaged 2.35. There was no significant differences between the two groups.

Religious preference was involved in four significant two-way interactions. In 1986, there was a significant interaction between religious preference and age. In 1992, there were two significant interactions between religious preference and parental status, and religious preference and academic problems. Descriptions of these relationships were detailed in Hypotheses 2 and 4, respectively.

The final significant relationship found was between religious preference and geographic location. Catholic people living in the South and Southwest gave schools higher grades than those living in other geographical regions. Non-Catholic people living in other geographical regions gave higher grades than those living in the South and Southwest.

#### **Analysis of Hypothesis 9**

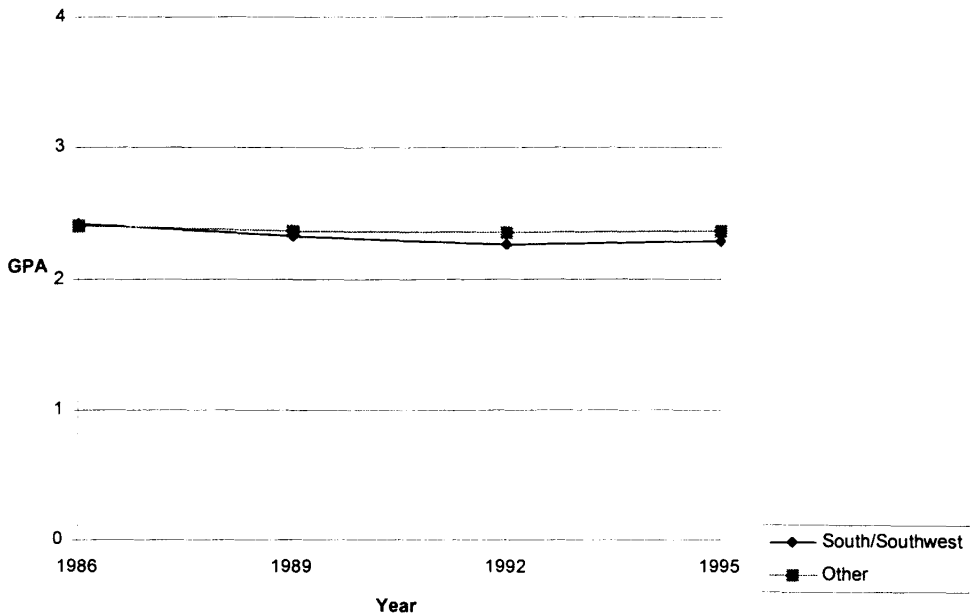
Hypothesis 9 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between people who live in different geographical regions of the country and the grades

given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, geographical region, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by people who lived in the South and Southwest and by people who lived in other geographical regions.

Figure 9 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for each of the geographical region categories.

Figure 9. Grade Point Average by Geographical Region.



### 1986

There was no significant relationship found between geographical regions and the grades given to the public schools. The relationship had a .775 level of significance. People who lived in the South and Southwest had a 2.42 g.p.a. while people who lived in other geographical regions had a 2.40 g.p.a. There was no statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Geographical region was part of a two-way interaction. Geographical region and social problems were shown to have a relationship. The description for this relationship was

detailed in Hypothesis 7.

### 1989

Geographical region had no significant relationship with grades given to the public schools. A .502 level of significance was found between the two variables which was greater than the .05 level necessary to be considered significant for this study.

### 1992

Again, no significant relationship was found between geographical region and the grades given to the public schools. People who lived in the South and Southwest had a 2.26 g.p.a. and people from other geographical regions had a 2.35 g.p.a. A .163 level of significance was found between the two variables which indicated that no significant relationship existed.

A significant relationship at the .045 level of significance was found between geographical region and political affiliation. Democratic people who lived in the South and Southwest gave the highest grades to the public schools. Independent people who lived in the South and Southwest gave the lowest grades. However, Republican people living in other geographical regions gave the highest

grades, while Democratic people living in other regions gave the lowest grades.

### 1995

A .608 level of significance was found between geographical region and grades given to the public schools. No significant difference was found between the grade point averages of people who resided in the South and Southwest compared to the grade point averages of people who lived in other regions.

Geographical region was part of three two-way interactions. Geographical region and age were shown to have a relationship which was significant at the .024 level. Another significant relationship was found between geographical region and parental status. The final interaction was between geographical region and religious preference. Descriptions of these relationships were detailed in Hypotheses 1,2, and 8, respectively.

### Summary of Hypothesis 9

The null hypothesis could not be rejected. For all four years, no significant relationship was found between geographical region and the grades given to the public schools. People who lived in the South and Southwest did

not grade significantly different than the people who lived in other geographical regions.

Several two-way interactions were found with geographical region and other variables. Each interaction occurred only once. The significant interactions were between geographical region and the following other variables: social problems (1986), political affiliation (1992), age (1995), parental status (1995), and religious preference (1995). The political affiliation interaction in 1992 showed that Democratic people who lived in the South gave the highest grades to the public schools. Independent people who lived in the South gave the lowest grades. However, Republican people living in other geographical regions gave the highest grades, while Democratic people living in other regions gave the lowest grades. The other variables' interactions were described in Hypotheses 7, 1, 2, and 8, respectively.

#### Analysis of Hypothesis 10

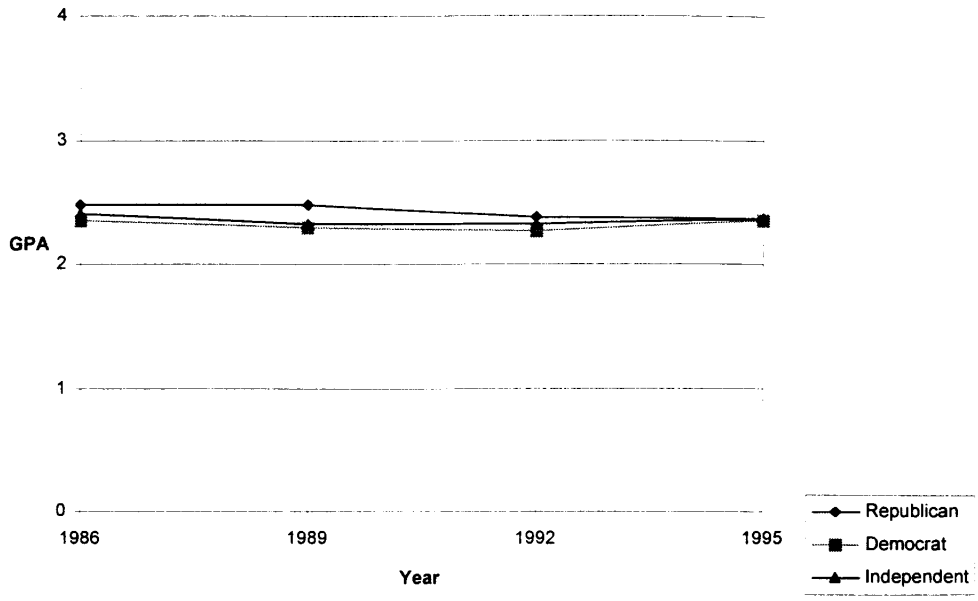
Hypothesis 10 states that there is no statistically significant relationship between a person's political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic

variables. If not, does the relationship change in 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995?

A test of ANOVA was conducted on the independent variable, political affiliation, and the dependent variable, grades given to the public schools, to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed. This particular test determined whether there was a significant difference between the grades given by people who were Republican, Democratic or Independent.

Figure 10 is a graphic representation of a four-year comparison of the grade point averages for each of the political affiliation categories.

Figure 10. Grade Point Average by Political Affiliation.



### 1986

There was no significant relationship found between political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools. The relationship had a .170 level of significance. People who listed Republican as their political affiliation had a 2.48 g.p.a., Democratic affiliation had a 2.35 g.p.a. and Independent affiliation had a 2.41 g.p.a.

A significant relationship at the .009 level of significance was found between political affiliation and gender. This relationship was described in Hypothesis 5.



**1989**

A significant relationship was found between political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools. A .012 level of significance was determined between the two variables. A grade point average of 2.47 was found for Republicans, 2.29 for Democrats and 2.32 for Independents. Thus far, it appears that the Republican affiliation has a slightly higher grade point average than the Democrats and Independents.

A significant two-way relationship was found between political affiliation and city size. The description of this interaction was discussed in Hypothesis 3.

**1992**

No significant relationship was found between political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools. The relationship had a .282 level of significance. The people who are affiliated with the Republican party continue to have a slightly higher grade point average than the Democratic and Independent party groups.

There were three two-way interactions found to be significant. City size, social problems, geographic regions, and political affiliation were discovered to have a

significant relationship. These relationships were described in Hypotheses 3, 7, and 9, respectively.

### 1995

Once again, political affiliation had no significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools. Republicans and Independents had grade point averages of 2.36, while Democrats had 2.35. No significant differences were found between the grade point averages in any of these groups.

A significant two-way interaction occurred between political affiliation and gender was found. This relationship was described in Hypothesis 5.

### Summary of Hypothesis 10

The null hypothesis could only be rejected in 1989 because a level of significance of less than .05 was found. However, the null hypothesis could not be rejected for 1986, 1992, and 1995. Even though the hypothesis could not be rejected for three of the four years, some slight differences existed among the three parties. For the ten year period, the average grade point average for people affiliated with the Republican party was 2.42, the Democratic party was 2.32 and the Independent party was

2.35. The Republican party was the only group whose grade point average slightly declined over the ten year period.

Political affiliation was found to have the highest number of interactions compared to all other variables. Two of the two-way interactions occurred between political affiliation and city size (1989, 1992). Two other two-way interactions were found between political affiliation and gender (1986, 1995). The remaining interactions were found between political affiliation and social problems, as well as with geographic region. These interactions were described in Hypotheses 3, 5, 7, and 9, respectively.

#### Analysis of Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis 11 states that there is no significant shift in the grades given to the public schools when comparing the grade point averages of results from 1974-1985 and those from 1986-1995.

A comparison of the average grade point average of the total population, from the first ten year period including years 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983 and from the second ten year period 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995 showed no significant difference between the two averages. The grade point average figured from 1974-1983 was 2.35, while the grade

point average figured from 1986-1995 was 2.36.

However, in reviewing the grade point averages year to year, a decline of grade point averages was found from 1974 through 1983, as Gustafson noted in his study. In the 1986-1995 time period, the grade point averages declined slightly from 1986 to 1992, but then appears to increase in 1995.

Tables 5 and 6 show a comparison between the ten year period of study in Dr. Gustafson's dissertation and the 1986-1995 ten year period in this study. Gustafson described a decline in the percentage of A and B grades given to the public schools from 1974-1983. He also noticed an increase in that number in 1984 and 1985.

Table 6 represents the years 1986-1996. The percentage of A and B grades given to the public schools fluctuate slightly from year to year. However, the percentage consistently remains above 40% for the ten year period, whereas, during the 1974-1983 ten year period, seven out of the ten years were below 37%.

It was also noted that the percentage of people responding with a "Don't Know" response, was almost one-third as high during many of the years throughout the

1974-1984 time period. From 1974-1983, on average, approximately 16% of the respondents answered "Don't Know", while during 1986-1995, that average percentage dropped to 9.5%.

### Summary of Hypothesis 11

During the ten year period of 1974-1983 compared to that of 1986-1995, the grade point averages of the total population were not significantly different.

However, slight differences in percentages of people who gave A and B grades and people responding with a "Don't Know" response were noted.

### Summary

Results of the research study were presented in this chapter. The current data from the *Gallup Polls of the Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* were analyzed, evaluated, and the final hypothesis (#11) results were briefly compared to the trends found in the Gustafson study.

Of the eleven null hypotheses that were tested in this investigation, selected years from each hypothesis revealed statistically significant results at the .05 alpha level. Based upon these findings, null hypothesis one in 1986 and 1989, null hypothesis two in 1986, 1989, and 1995, null

hypothesis three in 1986, 1989, and 1992, null hypothesis four in 1992, null hypothesis six in 1989 and 1992, null hypothesis seven in 1986, 1992, and 1995, and null hypothesis ten in 1989 were rejected.

In Chapter V, the study results are summarized, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations for further study are suggested.

Table 1

ANOVA Results, 1986

Variable	Group	N	GPA	df	F	Sig.
Age	18-30	301	2.24	2	5.16	.006
	31-49	505	2.46			
	50 and over	486	2.46			
Parental Status	Yes	411	2.60	1	21.98	.000
	No	881	2.32			
City Size	Under 10000	420	2.50	2	3.89	.021
	10000-500000	318	2.45			
	Over 500000	554	2.32			
Academic Problems	None	935	2.44	1	2.46	.117
	Some	357	2.34			
Gender	Male	665	2.39	1	.34	.560
	Female	627	2.43			
Education	No College	702	2.36	1	2.82	.093
	College	590	2.46			
Social Problems	None	659	2.48	1	6.42	.011
	Some	633	2.33			
Religious Preferences	Catholic	336	2.46	1	1.06	.303
Geographical Region	Other	956	2.39	1	.082	.775
	South/Southwest	387	2.42			
	Other	905	2.40			
Political Affiliation	Republican	461	2.48	2	1.78	.170
	Democrat	521	2.35			
	Independent	310	2.41			
Total Population		1292	2.41			

Legend: N: Number of respondents; GPA: Grade point average; df: Degrees of freedom; F: F statistic; Sig: Significance of F.

Table 2

ANOVA Results, 1989

Variable	Group	N	GPA	df	F	Sig.
Age	18-30	291	2.23	2	3.48	.031
	31-49	589	2.41			
	50 and over	489	2.37			
Parental Status	Yes	427	2.58	1	31.70	.000
	No	942	2.26			
City Size	Under 10000	562	2.49	2	12.30	.000
	10000-500000	195	2.43			
	Over 500000	612	2.22			
Academic Problems	None	945	2.37	1	.49	.484
	Some	424	2.33			
Gender	Male	716	2.34	1	.98	.323
	Female	653	2.39			
Education	No College	657	2.28	1	8.53	.004
	College	712	2.43			
Social Problems	None	705	2.35	1	.30	.585
	Some	664	2.38			
Religious Preferences	Catholic	391	2.37	1	.07	.800
Geographical Region	Other	978	2.36	1	.45	.502
	South/Southwest	400	2.33			
	Other	969	2.37			
Political Affiliation	Republican	458	2.47	2	4.40	.012
	Democrat	526	2.29			
	Independent	385	2.32			
Total Population		1369	2.36			

Legend: N: Number of respondents; GPA: Grade point average; df: Degrees of freedom; F: F statistic; Sig: Significance of F.



Table 3

ANOVA Results, 1992

Variable	Group	N	GPA	df	F	Sig.
Age	18-30	203	2.22	2	2.37	.094
	31-49	556	2.31			
	50 and over	361	2.40			
Parental Status	Yes	497	2.37	1	2.07	.151
	No	623	2.28			
City Size	Under 10000	320	2.43	2	5.86	.003
	10000-500000	282	2.39			
	Over 500000	518	2.22			
Academic Problems	None	563	2.23	1	10.26	.001
	Some	557	2.41			
Gender	Male	543	2.33	1	.16	.692
	Female	577	2.31			
Education	No College	497	2.24	1	5.76	.017
	College	623	2.38			
Social Problems	None	822	2.37	1	8.48	.004
	Some	298	2.18			
Religious Preferences	Catholic	304	2.35	1	.41	.522
Geographical Region	Other	816	2.31	1	1.95	.163
	South/Southwest	365	2.26			
	Other	755	2.35			
Political Affiliation	Republican	354	2.38	2	1.27	.282
	Democrat	408	2.27			
	Independent	358	2.32			
Total Population		1120	2.32			

Legend: N: Number of respondents; GPA: Grade point average; df: Degrees of freedom; F: F statistic; Sig: Significance of F.

Table 4

ANOVA Results, 1995

Variable	Group	N	GPA	df	F	Sig.
Age	18-30	190	2.31	2	.59	.557
	31-49	603	2.38			
	50 and over	310	2.33			
Parental Status	Yes	508	2.24	1	18.40	.000
	No	595	2.24			
City Size*	Under 10000			2		
	10000-					
	500000					
	Over 500000					
Academic Problems	None	531	2.31	1	1.99	.159
	Some	572	2.40			
Gender	Male	443	2.34	1	.22	.638
	Female	660	2.37			
Education	No College	352	2.32	1	.65	.422
	College	751	2.37			
Social Problems	None	606	2.44	1	9.24	.002
	Some	497	2.26			
Religious Preferences	Catholic	286	2.37	1	.06	.813
Geographical Region	Other	817	2.35			
	South/ Southwest	49	2.29	1	.263	.608
	Other	1054	2.36			
Political Affiliation	Republican	370	2.36	2	.02	.984
	Democrat	342	2.35			
	Independent	391	2.36			
Total Population		1103	2.36			

Legend: N: Number of respondents; GPA: Grade point average; df: Degrees of freedom; F: F statistic; Sig: Significance of F.

\*City size data not available for 1995.

Table 5

Grades Given to the Public Schools on the Gallup Polls of  
the Public's Attitudes Toward Education, 1974-1985

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Year	Grades % A and B	Grades % C, D, and F	% Don't Know
1974	48	32	20
1975	43	44	13
1976	42	44	14
1977	37	44	19
1978	36	49	15
1979	34	48	18
1980	35	47	18
1981	36	54	10
1982	37	52	11
1983	31	52	17
1984	42	50	8
1985	43	44	13

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Table 6

Grades Given to the Public Schools on the Gallup Polls of  
the Public's Attitudes Toward Education, 1986-1996

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Year	Grades % A and B	Grades % C, D, and F	% Don't Know
1986	41	44	15
1987	43	43	14
1988	40	48	12
1989	43	48	9
1990	41	51	8
1991	42	48	10
1992	40	50	10
1993	47	46	7
1994	44	51	5
1995	41	54	5
1996	43	51	6

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## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In this last chapter, there is a discussion of results, the conclusions are developed from the data presented in Chapter IV, and recommendations for further study are made.

This dissertation examined whether there was a statistically significant relationship between specific demographic variables and grades given to the public schools. The variables in the study were age, parental status, city size, assessment of academic problems, gender, level of education, assessment of social problems, religious preference, geographical region, and political affiliation.

The study was also conducted to compare the current findings with the results of a similar study that was done in 1986 by Glenn Gustafson. In both studies, the *Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* provided the conceptual framework for the investigations. Data were retrieved every third year from this annual poll

to analyze trends over a ten year period. The Gallup Poll's research procedure included a sample of citizens in the United States who were eighteen years of age and older. The information was gathered via a personal interview or by telephone using questions from the annual poll.

The data in this study were collected from Gallup Polls that were given in the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995. To analyze the data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Nie, 1988) was used. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) method was chosen to measure the differences on variables between two or more groups. A significance value was computed for each variable using the F statistic. If the value was less than the standard  $\alpha = .05$ , then it was concluded that the result was statistically significant.

The findings of the study were reported by individual variables stated in the hypotheses. As was the case in the Gustafson study, the null hypothesis was rejected if any single result achieved significance at the .05 alpha level or better.

A summary of the results were as follows:

**Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's age and the grades given to**

the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.

The null hypothesis was rejected in both 1986 and 1989. The results showed that there was a statistically significant relationship at the .05 alpha level for the variable age and the grades given to the public schools. In 1986, people over age 30 were significantly more likely to give a high grade to the public schools than were people under 30. In 1989, people who were between the ages of 31-49 were more likely to give higher grades than people under 30 and those older than 50.

**Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant relationship between parental status and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.**

The null hypothesis was rejected in 1986, 1989, and 1995. The results showed that there was a statistically significant relationship of less than .05 alpha level for the variable parental status and the grades given to the public schools. In every year except 1992, parents were

significantly more likely to grade the schools higher than non-parents. The average grade given by parents was 2.51, whereas for non-parents, it was 2.28.

**Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant relationship between the city size (small-towns and rural areas, mid-sized areas, and urban areas) where a person lives and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables for the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995.**

The null hypothesis was rejected in 1986, 1989, and 1992. Since city size data was not available for 1995, the null hypothesis for that year could not be rejected.

Throughout the three years the relationship showed that people who lived in small towns and rural areas or mid-sized cities were more likely to give higher grades to the public schools than those who lived in urban cities.

**Hypothesis 4: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of academic problems in the public school, and the grades given to the public school, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.**



The null hypothesis was rejected for 1992. People who thought there were academic problems in the public schools graded the schools higher than those who believed there were no academic problems.

**Hypothesis 5: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's gender and the grades given to the public school, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.**

The null hypothesis was not rejected. A person's gender was not found to have a statistically significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools.

**Hypothesis 6: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's level of education and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.**

The null hypothesis was rejected for 1989 and 1992 because the relationship was found to be statistically significant. The results for these years showed that college-educated people were more likely to give higher grades to the schools than were non-college-educated people.

**Hypothesis 7: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's assessment of social problems (discipline, use of drugs, etc.) in the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.**

The null hypothesis was rejected for 1986, 1992, and 1995. The results indicated that people who believed there were no social problems in the public schools gave higher grades than those who believed social problems existed.

**Hypothesis 8: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's religious preference and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.**

The null hypothesis was not rejected. Religious preference was not found to have a statistically significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools.

**Hypothesis 9: There is no statistically significant relationship between people who live in different geographical regions of the country, and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and**

demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.

The null hypothesis was not rejected. Geographical region was not found to have a statistically significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools.

**Hypothesis 10: There is no statistically significant relationship between a person's political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools, holding constant other socioeconomic and demographic variables during the years of 1986, 1989, 1992, or 1995.**

The null hypothesis was rejected in 1989 only.

Republicans gave higher grades than Independents.

Independents gave slightly higher grades than Democrats.

**Hypothesis 11: There is no significant shift in the grades given to the public schools when comparing the grade point averages of results from 1974-1985 and those from 1986-1995.**

During the ten year period of 1974-1983 compared to that of 1986-1995, the grade point averages of the total population were not significantly different. However, slight differences in percentages of people who gave A and B grades and people responding with a "Don't Know" response

were noted.

Of the 11 null hypotheses that were tested in this investigation, certain years revealed statistically significant results at the .05 alpha level. Based upon these findings, null hypothesis one in 1986 and 1989, null hypothesis two in 1986, 1989, and 1995, null hypothesis three in 1986, 1989, and 1992, null hypothesis four in 1992, null hypothesis six in 1989 and 1992, null hypothesis seven in 1986, 1992, and 1995 and null hypothesis ten in 1989 were rejected.

### Discussion of Results

Because the current investigation (1986-1995) used many of the same hypotheses as Gustafson's study (1974-1983), a comparison of the results is warranted. From the 11 previously stated hypotheses, the 1986 results revealed statistically significant findings for hypotheses one, two, three, four, six (for two years), and seven (for two years). In the 1998 study, there were statistically significant results for hypotheses one (for two years), two (for three years), three (for three years), four (for one year), six (for two years), seven (for three years) and nine (for one year); thus, both studies found statistically significant

relationships between age, parental status, city size, academic problems, level of education, social problems and the grades given to the public schools (see Table 7). Gustafson did not include the variable of political affiliation in his study, however, it was included in the current study. A statistically significant relationship was found in 1989 between political affiliation and grades given to the public schools.

Table 7

A Comparison of Results, 1974-1983 and 1986-1995

Hypothesis	Variable	74	77	80	83	86	89	92	95
1	Age	X	X	X	X	X	X		
2	Parental Status	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
3	City Size	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	NA
4	Academic	X	X	X	X			X	
5	Gender								
6	Education								
7	Social	X	X			X		X	X
8	Religious								
9	Geographic								
10	Political	NI	NI	NI	NI		X		

X = Significant Relationship Found

NA = Data Not Available

NI = Variable Not Investigated

### Age Variable

The relationship between a person's age and the grades given to the public schools was found to be statistically significant in 1986 and 1989. It was also statistically significant in all four years of the Gustafson study. In both studies people under 30 graded schools lower than those older than 30. This could be attributed to the fact that many people in the younger than 30 group have more recently completed their education and may be grading the schools according to their perception as a former student. The age group of 31-49 graded the schools the highest. This age group usually consists of many people who are parents. Parents tend to have more information about their children's schools than do those who are younger than 30 and those who are older than 49. The information available to parents could impact the grades they give to the public schools. The 50 and over age group also tended to give the schools higher grades than the 30 and younger group. This could possibly be because their grades reflect their memory of school, or their findings from their grandchildren.

### Parental Status Variable

The relationship between a person's parental status and the grades given to the public schools was found to be statistically significant in 1986, 1989 and 1995. It was also statistically significant in all four years of the Gustafson study. In both studies, parents graded the schools higher than non-parents. It can be concluded that parents are significantly more positive about the public schools than are non-parents. As was suggested in the discussion of the age variable, parents are much more in tuned to what is happening at school. They are more attentive to the schools through their child's educational experience. Parents tend to acquire school-related information directly from the schools, whereas, non-parents get their information from other sources such as the media.

It is interesting to note that the average grade point average for parents in 1974-1983 was 2.53 and in 1986-1995 it was 2.51. That is not very impressive for the group of people who are the primary audience of the schools. School officials should consider increasing their communication efforts to parents. Additionally, parents should be included more often in the decision making process for

school programming. It is easier to change the attitudes of a group who is more attentive to the schools than it is to the group who has little or no involvement in the schools.

### City Size Variable

The relationship between the city size where a person lives and the grades given to the public schools was found to be statistically significant in 1986, 1989, and 1992. It was also statistically significant in all four years of the Gustafson study. In both studies, the people living in urban cities with a population greater than 500,000 were more likely to be less positive about the public schools. One difference between the 1986 study and the 1998 study was that for three of the years in the most recent study, people from small towns and rural areas gave schools the highest grades as compared to the other two city sizes. However, in the 1986 study, in three of the four years, people from the mid-sized cities gave the highest grades to the public schools as opposed to the other two city sizes.

The larger the city size, the greater the chance of its having a large school district. In a large school district, the perception is that it is generally more difficult to have direct contact with the school and the school



officials. The public perceives that big school systems are bureaucratic and limit personal contact. Therefore, the less contact and involvement a person would have in the school system, the less likely they are to give high grades to the schools.

The implication for school officials regarding city size and the grades given to the public schools is that the public schools in urban cities have a lower assessment by their public being less positive about their performance. In this case, it would seem appropriate for school officials to assess what the public is most dissatisfied with and target interventions to those areas.

#### **Academic Problems Variable**

The relationship between a person's assessment of academic problems in the public schools and the grades given to the public schools was found to be statistically significant in 1992. However, in Gustafson's study it was statistically significant in all four years. Gustafson found that the people who perceived there were no academic problems in the schools were more likely to give higher grades to the public schools. In the 1998 study, just the opposite was found to be true. A composite four-year grade

point average for the group who perceived there were no academic problems was calculated at 2.34. The grade point average for the other group was actually higher at 2.37.

A possible reason for this difference may be attributed to the other issues people have with the schools. Maybe a school having some academic problems is the least of the people's concerns. If the school was a safe learning environment, but didn't have good facilities or had little financial support, maybe the people still had a positive attitude toward other areas in the public school.

The four most frequently selected academic problems in the Gustafson study were difficulty getting good teachers, poor curriculum/concern about standards, teachers' lack of interest, and lack of proper facilities. Similarly, in the 1998 study, difficulty getting good teachers, poor curriculum/concern about standards, lack of proper facilities, and in one year, teachers' lack of interest were all most frequently selected academic problems. In addition, in the 1998 study, lack of proper financial support was an area of concern. One can conclude that the academic problems that were of major concern 20 years ago, continue to be the same problems today. The lack of

financial support has been a concern that has evolved over the past ten years.

School officials need to be careful of not only involving the community and public in decisions that relate to problems the schools are experiencing. The public needs to be informed of the successes of the schools, especially in the areas where the public tends to perceive there are problems. School officials should poll their communities periodically to determine how the public believes their academic programs are progressing. If an inadequacy occurs in the polls, the officials need to address those specific areas and report positive progress and/or changes to the community.

### Gender Variable

In both studies, a person's gender was found to have no statistically significant effect on the grades given to the public schools. Even though a significant relationship was not found between gender and the grades given to the public schools, practitioners should take these findings into consideration. Often times, educators believe that since women tend to be more involved in the schools (room mothers, volunteers, etc.), they are the group who would most likely

be grading the schools higher. Assumptions should not be made that differences exist between males' and females' attitudes toward the public schools, since the results of both studies have found this not to be true. Efforts to communicate equally with both groups should be implemented.

### Education Variable

The relationship between a person's level of education and the grades given to the public schools was found to be statistically significant in 1989 and 1992. The Gustafson study also showed statistical significance for two years (1980, 1983). There were some differences in the results found between the study in 1986 as compared to the 1998 study. In the 1998 study, college-educated people were more likely to give higher grades to the schools than were non-college-educated people for all four years. However, in the 1986 study, the first two years (1974 and 1977) showed the opposite to be true. During these years, non-college-educated people gave higher grades to the public schools.

An interesting trend change was found in the number of college-educated people over the past two decades. In the Gustafson study, the non-college-educated people greatly outnumbered the college-educated people. The non-college-

educated group number more than doubled that of the college-educated group. By 1986, the college-educated group number had risen to 590 compared to 702 in the non-college-educated group. Moreover, in 1989, the college-educated group (712) had increased over than that of the non-college-educated group (657) for the first time. This trend continued throughout 1992 and 1995.

Even though it appears as though the college-educated group is increasing in size, school officials still need to continue to find ways to inform and involve the non-college-educated group of people. As of 1995, the non-college-educated group still accounts for approximately half of the population polled.

### Social Problems Variable

The relationship between a person's assessment of social problems in the public schools and the grades given to the public schools was found to be statistically significant in 1986, 1992, and 1995. Gustafson found similar results in his study, however, only two of the years (1980 and 1983) showed a significant relationship. People who believed that the schools had no social problems gave higher grades to the public schools in every year except for

one in each study.

In the 1998 study, the most frequently selected social problems were lack of discipline (all four years), pupils lack of interest (three years), use of drugs (three years), moral standards (three years), drinking/alcoholism (two years) and crime/vandalism (one year). In the Gustafson study, the most frequent responses were lack of discipline, pupils lack of interest, use of drugs, drinking/alcoholism, and crime/vandalism. Obviously, not much has changed in regards to the social problems people perceive exist in the schools over the past two decades.

Public school officials should realize that the perception of social problems in the schools can affect the attitudes of the public toward the schools. Gustafson noted that social problems did not cause a consistent significant low assessment of the schools by the public and that more effort should be focused in the academic problem area. He found that the public judged poor academic quality far more harshly than poor social conditions. However, in looking at the next ten years (1986-1995), social problems were identified more often (three years as compared to two years) as having a significant relationship with the grades given

to the public schools. Therefore, this researcher believes school officials need to carefully address the social concerns identified by the public, especially since the identified areas continue to be the same ones for the last 20 years.

### **Religious Preference Variable**

In both studies, a person's religious preference was found to have no statistically significant effect on the grades given to the public schools. Even though a significant relationship was not found between religious preference and the grades given to the public schools, practitioners should consider the fact that members of all religious groups are taxpayers.

It could be reasoned that the Catholic Church operates one of the largest private school systems in the nation and therefore, the assessments of the public schools made by Catholics could be different from the rest of the population. However, the findings of this study and of the Gustafson study, showed that Catholics did not differ in their attitudes toward the public schools as compared to the rest of the population.

### Geographical Region Variable

In both studies, the geographical region in which a person lives was found to have no statistically significant effect on the grades given to the public schools. The geographical region variable was selected to be consistent with the Gustafson study. Glenn Gustafson chose the geographical region variable to determine if people in the South and Southwest had a different assessment of the public schools because of traditionally more conservative attitudes and because of segregation issues. The results in both studies showed that grades given by people living in the South and Southwest regions do not differ significantly from people living in other geographical regions in the United States.

For public school officials, both studies indicate that in terms of a person's place of residence, city size would be a better predictor of a person's assessment of the public schools when compared to a person's geographical region.

### Political Affiliation Variable

The relationship between a person's political affiliation and the grades given to the public schools was found to be statistically significant only in 1989. It was



noted that for the ten year period, the average grade point average for people affiliated with the Republican party was slightly higher than the grade point average of the Independent party which was also slightly higher than people affiliated with the Democratic party.

Gustafson did not use the political affiliation variable in his study. This researcher believed it was an important variable to investigate, since politicians consistently use topics in education as part of their campaigning platform. Since school officials typically do not endorse political candidates, they can communicate to candidates and elected officials to ensure that educational issues are addressed.

#### Comparisons between 1974-1983 and 1986-1995

As was previously stated in Chapter IV, a comparison of the average grade point average of the total population, from the first ten year period including years 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983 and from the second ten year period 1986, 1989, 1992, and 1995 showed no significant difference between the two averages. The grade point average figured from 1974-1983 was 2.35, while the grade point average figured from 1986-1995 was 2.36.

One slight difference was found when reviewing the grade point averages from year to year. A decline of grade point averages was indicated between 1974 and 1983, as Gustafson noted in his study. In the 1986-1995 time period, the grade point averages declined slightly from 1986 to 1992, but then increased in 1995.

It was interesting to note that the percentage of A and B grades given to the public schools from 1974-1983 (Table 5) declined, while in 1984 and 1985 the percentage increased. However, even though the percentage of A and B grades given to the public schools fluctuated slightly between 1986 and 1995 (Table 6), the percentage always remained above 40%. In the Gustafson study, this percentage remained below 37% for seven of the ten years.

### Conclusions

The results of this dissertation lead to several conclusions for public school officials.

1. People between the ages of 31-49 have a higher assessment of the public schools than do people 30 years old and younger. The over 50 age group also had a higher assessment of the schools than did the 30 years old and younger group. Educators should develop communication

strategies that address specific needs of each age group. Communication efforts should be targeted toward the 30 year old and younger group.

2. Parents are significantly more likely to have a positive assessment of the public schools than are non-parents. School officials need to continue their communication efforts with the parent group, as well as with the non-parent group in an effort to raise their assessment of the public schools.

3. People living in small towns and rural areas or mid-sized cities were more likely to give higher grades than those who lived in urban cities. Educators should regularly investigate whether or not the community has the ability to effectively communicate with school officials in the school system. If not, procedures for communication with educators should be shared with the public.

4. A person's educational background was not a consistent predictor of a person's assessment of the public schools. Half of the years showed college-educated people graded higher and the other half showed non-college-educated-people graded the schools higher. Educators should take this situation into consideration and should not assume

that college-educated people grade the schools higher.

5. A person's political affiliation showed a statistically significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools for only one year. Therefore, political affiliation was not a consistent predictor of a person's assessment of the public schools. Since politicians consistently use topics in education as part of their campaigning platform, educators should remain politically informed and address appropriate issues in their communication to the public.

6. A person's gender, religious preference or geographical residence did not significantly affect his or her assessment of the public schools. School officials should not make the assumption that differences exist when developing communication efforts in their communities.

#### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study has attempted to identify and discuss the relationship between specific socioeconomic and demographical characteristics of people and the grades they gave to the public schools. The findings have been summarized, and conclusions drawn from the results of this study. In the process, several recommendations for further

research have been identified.

1. Based on the continued increase of diversity brought about by a multi-cultural society, different variables such as a person's ethnicity compared to the grades given to the public schools, should be investigated. School populations continue to become more culturally diverse. If school officials understand the needs and circumstances of all people, it could assist them in impacting attitudes toward the schools.

2. A similar study should be repeated in ten to 15 years to see if the trends are similar to either study. Since the federal government has been increasing its involvement in the schools, investigating the impact that involvement has had over a ten or 15 year time period would be beneficial to politicians and educators. In addition, a researcher could take the poll data from its inception in the 1960's and investigate differences over time.

3. Since this was the first ten year period that political affiliation was investigated, further research could be done to determine trends identified over time with the political affiliation variable.

4. A comparison could be made in investigating grades

given to the public schools and the state in which a person lives. Even though the geographical region variable did not show a significant relationship with the grades given to the public schools, there is great variance in the per pupil expenditure by state. Therefore, it would be interesting to find out if a relationship existed between the grades given by the people of each state and the cost of per pupil spending in the state.

5. An investigation should be conducted to look at gender and political affiliation over time. Since there have been significant changes in the number of women participating in the political arena, it would be interesting to see if these two variables, when combined, reflect any changes since the 60's when the women's movement was just beginning.

6. This investigation provided information from the public nationwide. It also reported on the findings as they related to the public schools of the nation. Individual districts should consider conducting their own poll. The Phi Delta Kappa Center for Dissemination of Innovative Programs makes available PACE (Polling Attitudes of the Community of Education) materials to enable nonspecialists

to conduct scientific polls of attitudes and opinions in education in their own community. The information gathered from this type of poll could be very valuable to school officials in a given district.

7. An investigation of teachers' attitudes toward the public schools as opposed to the public's attitudes should be done. Gallup has done a yearly poll on teacher's attitudes toward public schools on a couple of occasions. Determining the differences between the results of the two polls could assist educators in identifying areas to address.

8. An examination of individuals and their change in attitude toward the public schools over time should also be done. By examining an individual, data can be gathered about how information the individual receives affects the individual's assessment of the public schools. This could be valuable data to school officials.

9. The age variable should be studied further. This study determined that age and the grades given to the public schools had a significant relationship for two of the four years, and in Gustafson's study, for all of the four years within the ten year period. The findings also showed that

people over 50 years of age have been more positive about the schools than the 18-30 age group. Gustafson cited research that showed the majority of people do not have children in the public schools due to an aging society. Research should be done to determine how this particular group forms its attitudes about the public schools. Knowing what affects the over 50 age group could assist school officials in developing more effective ways to communicate and acquire continued support by this group. Since this large group is a tax paying, voting population, it is critical to maintain and increase its level of support for the schools.



APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM STATEMENTS

## Questionnaire Item Statements

1. As you know, in some communities, there are three kinds of schools - the public schools, the parochial schools or church related schools, and the private schools, sometimes called the "independent" schools. First, I'd like to know if you, yourself, have any children in the local public schools; that is, in kindergarten, elementary, middle, junior or high school?
  
2. What do you think are the biggest problems with which the PUBLIC schools of this community must deal?

Lack of discipline  
 Integration/Segregation problems  
 Lack of financial support  
 Difficulty getting good teachers  
 Lack of proper facilities  
 Poor curriculum/low curriculum standards  
 Parents' lack of support  
 Transportation  
 School board politics  
 Pupils' lack of interest  
 Large school  
 Use of drugs/dope  
 Communication problems  
 Parents involvement in school activities  
 Busing  
 Crime/Vandalism  
 Drinking/Alcoholism  
 Teachers lack of interest  
 Mismanagement of funds  
 Problems with administration  
 Too many schools  
 Non-English speaking students  
 Government interference  
 Teachers' strike  
 Lack of respect  
 Moral standards  
 Fighting/Violence/Gangs  
 More teachers  
 Low pay for teachers  
 Peer pressure

Taxes too high  
 Lack of family structure  
 School more interesting  
 Lack of after school programs  
 There are no problems  
 Don't know

3. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the PUBLIC schools, themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here - A, B, C, D, or Fail?

4. What is your age?

actual age coded

5. Would you please give me the letter of the group which best represents the total annual income, before taxes, of all the members of your immediate family living in you household?

- (a) Under \$2,000 a year
- (b) \$2,000 to \$2,999 a year
- (c) \$3,000 to \$3,999 a year
- (d) \$4,000 to \$4,999 a year
- (e) \$5,000 to \$5,999 a year
- (f) \$6,000 to \$6,999 a year
- (g) \$7,000 to \$7,999 a year
- (h) \$10,000 to \$11,999 a year
- (i) \$12,000 to \$14,999 a year
- (j) \$15,000 to \$19,999 a year
- (k) \$20,000 and more a year
- (l) Don't know

6. Please tell me which of the categories most nearly describes the kind of work the chief wage earner in your immediate family does.

Professional worker  
 Woks at skilled trade or craft  
 Semi-skilled worker  
 Manager, executive or official

Runs own business with two or more employees  
 Farm owner, farm manager  
 Clerical or office worker  
 Sales worker  
 Manufacturer's representative  
 Service worker who performs services  
 Laboring work other than farm  
 Retired  
 Housewife  
 Full-time student  
 Other

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Less than high school graduate  
 High school graduate  
 Some college  
 Trade/Technical/Vocational training  
 College graduate  
 Post -graduate work/Degree  
 Don't know  
 Refused

8. What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, or an Orthodox Church, such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church, or some other?

Other  
 Don't know  
 Refused  
 None  
 Protestant  
 Roman Catholic  
 Jewish  
 Eastern/Greek/Russian Orthodox  
 Latter-day Saints (Mormon)

9. In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Republican  
Democrat  
Independent  
None/Other  
Don't know

10. Race and Sex

white man  
white woman  
black man  
black woman  
other man  
other woman

11. What is your race? Are you white, black, or some other race?

Some other race (list)  
Don't know  
Refused  
White  
African American/Black

12. Sex

Male  
Female

13. City Size

farm resident  
open country  
places under 2,500  
2,500 to 4,999  
5,000 to 9,999  
10,000 to 24,999  
25,000 to 49,000  
50,000 to 99,999  
100,000 to 249,999

250,000 to 499,999

500,000 to 999,999

1 Million +

14. Region

New England  
 Middle Atlantic  
 East Central  
 West Central  
 Southeast  
 Southwest  
 Rocky Mountain  
 Pacific

15. State

Maine	Kansas
New Hampshire	Virginia
Vermont	North Carolina
Massachusetts	South Carolina
Rhode Island	Georgia
Connecticut	Florida
New York	Kentucky
New Jersey	Tennessee
Pennsylvania	Alabama
Maryland	Mississippi
West Virginia	Arkansas
District of Columbia	Louisiana
Ohio	Oklahoma
Michigan	Texas
Indiana	Arizona
Illinois	Colorado
Wisconsin	Idaho
Minnesota	Utah
Iowa	New Mexico
Missouri	California
North Dakota	Oregon
South Dakota	Washington
Nebraska	Hawaii

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## VITA

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