

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE
AND THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

by

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to determine the opinions of local school board members in Maryland regarding community participation in educational decision-making. These opinions were analyzed in relationship to board members' preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community and other factors of the socio-political environment of the school board.

A questionnaire was mailed to all public school board of education members in Maryland. A return rate of 83.7 percent was obtained. Data gathered was used to determine: 1) what community groups were most involved in educational decision-making, 2) what issues school boards sought community advisory group input on, and 3) what groups had the greatest influence on board decisions.

School boards were also classified by their method of selection, extent of intraboard consensus, and the metropolitanism of the district. Chi-square and regression analysis was utilized to test the consistency of influence of these elements of the socio-political

environment on opinions regarding community participation in decision-making.

Respondents reported the greatest involvement in educational decisions by internal groups such as parent groups, teachers' unions, and advisory groups. Board members indicated greatest receptivity to input on decisions relating to school construction and closings, curriculum and instruction, and budget.

An analysis of the relative influence various groups had on school board decisions revealed that the school administration had the greatest influence on board decisions in all decision areas studied.

The analysis of the influence of the socio-political environmental variables revealed the following: 1) board members' preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community was not affected by method of selection to the board, and 2) metropolitanism of the district and intraboard consensus were not found to be consistent indicators of the socio-political environment of the school board as expressed through opinions regarding community participation.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my wife, _____, and my children, _____, for their love, support, and encouragement through all my educational efforts.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

America has experienced a general decline in public confidence in its major institutions (U.S. Congress, 1974, p.7), and education, because of its importance to society and vulnerability to public view, has received particularly close scrutiny (Lutz & Garnon, 1979). As a result, the theme of citizen participation in school governance has received considerable attention in recent years (e.g., Davies, Clasby, Zerchykov, & Powers, undated; Davies, Stanton, Clasby, Zerchykov, & Powers, 1977; Lutz & Garnon, 1979; Lutz & Iannaccone, 1978; Meyer, 1982; Sinclair, 1980). Scholars and lay persons alike have indicated that schools are unresponsive and are not meeting the pluralistic demands of a heterogenous society. (Lutz & Garnon, 1979, p. 108) It has even been asserted that, "malrepresentation is a persistent and pervasive feature of educational governance" (Cistone, 1977a, p. 94).

A network of complicated divisions of power has formed the framework that characterizes educational

governance. These powers have originated among the legislative, executive, and judicial systems which cross-cut the national, state, and local levels of general government and give the structure its distinctly American character (Mosher, 1975, p. 79). Within this structure, local school boards have "largely retained the effective control of education" making them the "fundamental grass-roots unit of democracy in the United States" (Lutz, 1980, p. 452).

Attempts to bring into focus the role of school boards in this complicated web of governance have included studies of their decision-making processes, and numerous attempts to document the role, responsibilities, and representativeness of local school boards (Baron, 1981; Campbell, Cunningham, & McPhee, 1965; Gross, 1958; Lutz & Iannacone, 1978; Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974). These studies have examined the role of school boards in governing schools from a variety of perspectives. For example, Zeigler et al. (1974) emphasized the representation role; "the school board, whether appointed or elected, is the representative body through which local control is exercised" (p.13). Campbell (1965) emphasised the product of board decision-making, calling board decisions "the fiber of local school government" (p. 164). Regardless of perspective, school boards have

remained the central focus of studies linking them with their communities through a complex of socio-political relationships.

Goldhammer (1964) recognized the dilemma presented by the complexity of school board-community relationships and the resulting political friction.

Board members are expected to be promoters of public interest in education, and they are expected to be defenders and upholders of the basically accepted values of the community.... friction (between boards and community interests) is inevitable, and sometimes conflict results. (p. v)

In addition to role ambiguity, school board/community relationships have been subject to social and legal ambiguity as well. Koerner (1968) described the post of school board member as "perhaps the most ill-defined in local government" (p. 122). With their rights and responsibilities rarely spelled out by the state except in the most general terms, board members find themselves in a situation where, "the board's entire role and that of its individual members was simply an accretion of customs, attitudes, and extralegal precedents without much specificity" (Koerner, 1968, p. 122).

In the last thirty years, this lack of specificity has become a vexing problem because of the rapid and profound transformation of the external environment in which school boards must act (Cistone, 1977a).

Consequently, "the insularity, the selective responsiveness, that once characterized school board decision making and policy making has been eroded under the impact of social, economic, cultural, and political pressures" (p. 99).

Kerr (1969) contributed to an understanding of this changing environment by identifying three classes of forces that act on school board members to affect their attitude and performance; 1) school board politics, 2) pressure for conformity through the socialization process on the board, and 3) community pressure. This research study developed measures of these three socio-political forces and examined their relationship to school board members' opinions regarding community participation in educational governance.

Statement of Need

A major area of contention in the governance of public education has been the relationship between school boards and their communities (Lutz and Garnon, 1979).

"Apparent inability or unwillingness of schools to function in a political environment, so as to permit public input for education policy, has created adverse publicity for the schools" (p. 109). In order to counteract this condition, school officials need to

demonstrate a consistent preference for sharing decision-making responsibility with the public. Before this goal can be achieved, a greater understanding of the present state of commitment to the concept must be developed.

This research study provided current data on the way school board members relate to the communities they serve and demonstrated how that relationship varied among the school boards and communities found in Maryland. The study also provided the Maryland Association of Boards of Education with information for making policy recommendations regarding the sharing of decision-making responsibility with communities. In addition, the study added to the research literature on how and to what extent community interests are consulted in the board of education decision-making process.

Problem Statement

The major purpose of this study was to determine the opinions of local school board members in Maryland regarding community participation in educational decision-making, board members' preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community, and how these related to three factors of the socio-political environment of the school system.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. How did school board members assess the degree of involvement of selected community groups?
2. For areas of potential involvement, did school board members believe that representatives of one or more community advisory groups should be involved in decision making?
3. For areas of potential involvement, which types of community groups did school board members rely upon most heavily?
4. Did school board members differ in their preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community as a function of their method of selection to the school board?
5. Were metropolitanism and intraboard consensus consistent indicators of the socio-political environment of school boards as measured by opinions regarding community participation in decision making?

Definitions

The following terms were defined in order to assure their consistent use and to aid readers of this study.

Community Participation - Community participation was defined as any form of citizen involvement, including district residents' control over program planning and administrative decision-making, the establishment of lay advisory groups, parental choice among program offerings, and increased participation in parent/teacher councils (Fantini, 1981).

Role Relationship to the Community - Role relationship to the community was defined in order to allow its use as a politically oriented indicator of the extent to which board members act on the basis of the expressed preferences of constituents. Each board members' perception of his/her role relationship was classified as delegate or trustee. The terms were defined by Lutz and Garnon (1979): "trustee, the representative who acts in the public's interest as he or she sees that interest as opposed to the delegate who seeks the public's opinion and acts upon it" (p. 114).

Socio-political environment - This term was defined to include the forces that act to shape school board members' attitudes and performance. Kerr (1969) classified the three main types of forces as: 1) school board politics, 2) pressure for conformity throughout the process of socialization on the board, and 3) community pressures.

Metropolitanism - Metropolitanism utilized the classification of school districts on the basis of their inclusion in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) as designated by the United States Bureau of the Census (Zeigler et al., 1974).

Intraboard Consensus - Intraboard consensus was used as a measure of how board members relate to one another. It indicated the internal conflict or polarization of a school board when functioning as a decision-making body and allowed for the classification of boards as consensus, factional, or pluralistic (Zeigler et al., 1974).

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were:

1. The responses to the questionnaires were assumed to represent the true opinions of the respondents.
2. The population of this study was composed only of school board members in Maryland.

Justification for the Study

There has been a growing, yet incomplete, body of research on the role and function of school boards in the United States. School boards are human institutions and

the interaction between boards and communities is a dynamic process. Interaction patterns are in a constant state of evolution, therefore an understanding of them can only be gained through continual reexamination of the process and the actors involved. Insight into the function of school boards as corporate and political bodies has been gained through the study of individual members and the attitudes and role preferences they hold. With this understanding of school boards and their members, public officials, education professionals, and citizens who work with school boards become more effective in establishing new directions for public education.

Dror (1968) pointed out a widening gap between what is known about public policymaking and how policy is actually made. He recognized that corporations, private institutions and governmental organizations, "all need to have their decision-making tools continually improved" (p. 3).

Cistone (1977a) pointed out progress in this area with a "steady accretion of new knowledge" (p. 89). However, progress has been frustrated because, "contemporary public policy making takes place within a social, cultural, economic, and political environment whose complexities, cleavages, and conflicts defy wholly

subjective assessments, on the one hand, and frustrate purely rational analyses, on the other" (p.89).

More information was needed about how policy decisions are made in educational organizations, particularly, the role of community input and role preference of board members in the process. For example, Goldhammer (1964) emphasized the need for better understanding of the social and political aspects of educational decision-making.

The human element cannot be eliminated from official actions or relationships.... it is necessary to study the informal as well as the formal relationships of school board members in order to understand fully the manner in which school board members perform their responsibilities. (p. 62)

Understanding these relationships has particular importance to superintendents of schools, school administrators, and community leaders who must work with school boards to govern the schools.

School board members have also needed to expand their understanding of the dynamics of the decision-making process in which they are central figures. Better understanding by these policymakers, of their own role perceptions, remains critical. In their assessment of the politics, power and policy of school systems, Iannacone and Lutz (1970) recognized the importance of understanding perceptions in order to understand the decision-making process.

The government of school districts rests on more than force and the sanctions of law. Beyond these, there is the power of emotional ties and beliefs. Here indeed, error believed becomes truth in effect. People behave on the basis of their political beliefs and emotions. (p. 13)

Research by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) also emphasized the interaction of social and political forces that shape educational decisions. They observed that educational decisions are made in a "political arena with varying forces competing for advantage and public interest as each sees it" (p. 16). Therefore, examinations of board decision-making processes, particularly the social aspects of decision-making in the form of community participation, must be couched in terms of the political interaction between policy-makers and their communities. Examination of these and other factors of the socio-political environment of the local school system has contributed to an improved understanding of the educational governance process.

In a more provincial context, Maryland public school communities have experienced more than their share of debate over school governance because of the mixture of elected and appointed boards of education throughout the state and the lack of school board fiscal autonomy. As a result of this debate, board members have continued to attempt to redefine their role in school governance vis-a-vis local funding authorities, local community

groups, and professional educational staff. The Maryland Association of Boards of Education sponsored this study as part of a continuing effort to clarify these issues.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I contains an introduction, statement of need, statement of the problem, research questions, limitations of the study, and definitions.

In Chapter II a summary of a review of relevant literature on school boards and relationships with the communities they serve is presented. Topics examined in the review of literature included: 1) the historical development of the American school board, 2) constitutional and legal provisions for school boards in Maryland, and 3) socio-political models of community participation in school board decision-making.

Chapter III includes a description of methodology, development of the survey instrument, collection of data, and method of analysis.

Chapter IV consists of the data produced by the questionnaire and an analysis of the data concerning the research questions.

Chapter V contains the summary and conclusions of the research as well as implications for further study of the topic.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine community participation in educational decision-making in Maryland. As a descriptive study it proposed to determine the opinions of local school board members regarding community participation in educational decision-making, board member's preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community, and how these relate to three factors of the socio-political environment of the school system.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature pertinent to community participation in the governance of school systems in an attempt to provide clues to answering the five research questions which are the foci of this study. This chapter is divided into sections, namely: the historical perspectives of school board authority and community control; legal status of school boards, particularly in Maryland; factors influencing school board decision-making; conclusions; and implications for the current study.

The sources reviewed included books, periodicals, journals, and dissertations. A computer assisted ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) search yielded 148 references current through January 1985. Of these, 46 were selected for review because they dealt directly with the subject of this study. The findings of the review were utilized in the development of the questionnaire for this study.

Historical Perspectives

Early in the history of education in the United States parents held nearly absolute power over the education of their children. Viewed from this historical starting point, there have been unmistakable shifts in the patterns of control of American schools. However, many Americans still believe that the primary responsibility for control of education should be at the local level, in the hands of parents and lay school board members. Thus, as the agent of local control, the role, power, and authority of the school board developed as an issue at the very center of ongoing debates over control of the schools.

Following the Massachusetts prototype established in the seventeenth century, schools were under the direction of the town meeting and later the town selectmen or a

committee of the selectmen. This system made school government an integral part of local government during the colonial period.

An erosion of this system of control began to occur in the early part of the eighteenth century when religious dissenters in rural areas established local schools separate from town schools. With this movement the local school district was established with its own right to elect school trustees, to levy taxes, and to select teachers (Cremin, 1970).

The school committee or school board had its official beginning when, "in 1826 and 1827 the Massachusetts General Court (legislature) established the town school committee (school board) as a separate governmental body" (Campbell et al., 1975, p.7). This movement continued as additional states separated the control of the schools from other government at the local level. Campbell et al. (1975) and other authors identified several milestones which, over the next one hundred years, influenced the establishment of local schools and school boards in their uniquely American role.

o Public education was established as a fundamental government service by state constitution or statute. Thus the school board became a creature

of the state and subject to its law (Reeves, 1954, p. 19).

- o Provision for compulsory attendance and tax support for schools was provided in all states by 1918. Cubberly (1929) noted that, "the battle for the establishment of tax supported schools was a bitter one, but after 1850 it had been won in the northern states" (p. 10).
- o With the growth of cities and the merger of school districts, the problems of school administration became too demanding for part-time, lay school board members. This led to the creation of the office of superintendent of schools as a professional position and the chief administrative officer of the school system.

In the 1890's a new educational reform movement was beginning (Just, 1980, p. 421). This Progressive Reform Movement proposed to clean up the excesses of Jacksonian democracy by purging education of patronage and political machines. Its main intent was to take the politics out of education, thereby putting school governance on a more rational foundation, with principles of sound management, honesty, efficiency, and professionalism (Zerchykov, 1984, p. 10). The Progressive Reform Movement generally improved the stability of school governance, particularly

in the urban areas. Structural changes which resulted from the reform movement included:

- 1) reducing the size of school boards;
- 2) replacing neighborhood election districts with at-large elections;
- 3) making school board elections non-partisan; and
- 4) occasionally, redrawing district lines to overlap political boundaries.

By the twentieth century, school boards had clearly become separate governing bodies responsible, within provision of state law, directly to the people of the separate school districts (Reeves, 1954, p. 21).

Legally, the school board was recognized by the courts as "a quasi-corporation, functioning with general characteristics of an incorporated local governmental body" (Goldhammer, 1964, p.5). The school board became "whether appointed or elected, the representative body through which local control is exercised" (Zeigler et al., 1974, p. 13).

One theme common throughout the development of the American schooling system was lay control. Viewed from a historical perspective, public education in America gained much of its unique character as it developed through its formative period because of its growth as a governmental service exercised under control of local

citizens. Cremin (1970) noted that "the laicizing of the sponsorship and control of education was paralleled by a significant broadening of clientele" (p. 170). School boards thus became a "fundamental grass-roots unit of democracy in the United States" (Lutz, 1980, p. 452). In this system of free public education, lay participation was deemed essential at its origin, and remains a critical part of the "ideal" of American public education.

Legal Status of School Boards

Legally, "school boards are corporate bodies and can act only as such" (Reeves, 1954, p.72). School boards have authority to transact business only within the limits authorized by law and to perform actions necessary to make the laws effective. They have no other legal function than to act for the state in providing the kind of education required or permitted by the state (Reeves, 1954, p. 65).

All states have provided constitutionally for public education. For example, in Article VIII Section 1 of the Constitution of Maryland, provision was made for a public school system:

The General Assembly, at its First Session after the adoption of this Constitution, shall by Law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall

provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance. (Maryland State Department of Education, 1978, p. 11)

In addition, statutory provision was made for local corporate bodies, Boards of Education, for each county with the following general powers:

- o Perpetual existence;
- o May sue and be sued; and
- o May have, use, alter, or abandon a common seal. (Maryland State Department of Education, 1978, p. 46)

Maryland statutes further charged each board with the following duties:

- o To the best of its ability carry out the applicable provisions of this article and the bylaws, rules, regulations, and policies of the State Board;
- o Maintain throughout its county a reasonably uniform system of public schools that is designed to provide quality education and equal educational opportunity for all children;
- o Subject to this article and to the applicable bylaws, rules, and regulations of the State Board, determine, with the advice of the county superintendent, the educational policies of the county school system; and
- o Adopt, codify, and make available to the public bylaws, rules, and regulations not inconsistent with State law, for the conduct and management of the county public schools. (Maryland State Department of Education, 1978, p. 78)

Such statutes made it clear that board members owe their allegiance to the state and must abide by and carry out the state's mandates. Yet as Campbell et al. (1975) pointed out "practically, board members are either

elected or appointed locally and need to be responsive to their constituencies. Thus they perform a dual role" (p. 160). According to Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) this created a "belief that the local school district 'belonged' to its citizens, ignoring, in effect the fact that the local school district was legally an agency of the state" (p. 15). This contrast between legal and practical roles created a dilemma in the relationships between school boards and the communities they serve.

This situation has been further complicated in Maryland by the existence of an inconsistent system for the selection of school board members. Of the 24 school districts in the state, the members of 13 are appointed by the Governor, 1 has members appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore City, and 10 have members elected in the county where they serve. In Table 1 is listed the size and method of selection of the school boards in this study.

Factors Influencing School Board Decision-Making

It has been pointed out that there are four classes of individuals centrally involved in formulating educational policies at the local level. They are: 1) boards of education, 2) education professionals, 3) parents/voters, and 4) local civic officials (Campbell & Layton, 1969, p. 18). The interactions and sharing of

TABLE 1
 MARYLAND BOARDS OF EDUCATION -
 SIZE AND METHOD OF SELECTION TO MEMBERSHIP

County	Number of Voting Members	Method of Selection
Allegany	5	Elected
Anne Arundel	7	Appointed
Baltimore City	9	Appointed
Baltimore County	9	Appointed
Calvert	5	Appointed
Caroline	5	Appointed
Carroll	5	Elected
Cecil	5	Appointed
Charles	7	Elected
Dorchester	6	Appointed
Frederick	7	Appointed
Garrett	5	Elected
Harford	7	Appointed
Howard	5	Elected
Kent	5	Elected
Montgomery	7	Elected
Prince George's	9	Elected
Queen Anne's	5	Appointed
St. Mary's	5	Appointed
Somerset	5	Elected
Talbot	7	Appointed
Washington	5	Elected
Wicomico	5	Appointed
Worcester	7	Appointed
Total	147	

power among these groups has resulted in policy making for American education becoming so complex it appears "to be structureless and elusive" (Campbell & Layton, 1969, p. 18).

Sociologist Talcott Parsons argued that individual actions form a sensible pattern only when we understand something of the system of expectations which provides each person with an overall framework for interpreting the meanings, purposes, and possibilities inherent within a social situation. The aim of this section of the review of literature was to examine investigations that offered some explanation of generalizable patterns of behavior of local school boards in district governance vis-a-vis other groups.

There were two central questions which the researcher formulated to guide this section of the review of literature. They were:

- 1) To what extent are school boards responsive to community preferences?
- 2) What factors are associated with the influence of community participation on school board decision-making?

This review was then organized around seven related questions which researchers have attempted to answer in isolation or combination with one another. The seven

questions were:

- 1) Do social status characteristics of board members influence board decisions?
- 2) Do board socialization and culture influence board decisions?
- 3) Do community structures influence board decisions?
- 4) Do elective processes influence board decisions?
- 5) Do administrators influence board decisions?
- 6) Do boards respond equally to all groups?
- 7) Do boards respond equally on all issues?

The insights provided by the research literature relevant to these questions guided this research study.

Do social status characteristics of board members influence board decisions?

A number of studies have attempted to describe the social status characteristics of school board members or relate these to their role performance or position on issues (e.g., Campbell, 1942; Gross, 1958; Kerr, 1969; Umberger, 1982). Characteristics most often examined by these studies included: sex, race, age, education, income, occupation, marital status, and motivation for serving on the board. These studies produced interesting descriptive data on the characteristics of board members but contributed very little to understanding the behavior

of board members.

Several studies of social characteristics documented the "cleavage that exists between the school board member and the respective public" (Wirth, 1979, p. 765). This disparity was revealed in studies by Awender (1983), Gross (1958), Umberger (1982), and Zeigler, Jennings, and Peak (1974). Generally board membership was found to be demographically unrepresentative, and skewed toward males, whites, and high status groups.

Gross's (1958) study in Massachusetts revealed that the only characteristic which was clearly related to "Educational Progressivism" was the members' amount of education. In essence Gross was unable to find a relationship between either economic or educational homogeneity of school boards and consensus among the members.

Two recent studies, Daniel (1983) and Wirth (1979), have concentrated on the socioeconomic characteristics of black school board members. Although they documented the differences between the socioeconomic background of black and white board members, they revealed little about whether these differences effected performance on the board.

The 1960's, with the civil rights movement and rising community control activism, brought with it a

reexamination of the demographic fit between the socio-economic background of board members and those they represented. Several studies clearly demonstrated a "social distance" to exist between the governors and the governed (e.g., Carver, 1968; Gittell & Hollander, 1968). Yet, Gittell et al. (1979) found demographically more representative boards were no more responsive to community input than unrepresentative boards.

Unfortunately, studies of social characteristics generally focused on a static perspective. This left a need for a more dynamic approach which focused on the interaction between the significant actors in the arena of school politics.

After reviewing the studies attempting to relate social status characteristics to board member role performance, Kerr (1969) observed that there was so small a relationship that there must be other influences overpowering the social factors. He concluded "the social structure in which local school boards are imbedded in some way screens out or otherwise nullifies the usual effects of social background and attitudes" (p. 139).

In summary, the literature revealed little evidence that social characteristics of board members exert a strong and consistent influence on board decisions.

Do board socialization and culture influence
board decisions?

The socialization model held that the process of socialization onto the board overpowered any influence social characteristics had on the behavior of board members. Socialization was described as the process by which individuals selectively acquire the values and attitudes, interests and dispositions, skills and knowledge current in the group of which they are members (Cistone, 1977b, p. 19). Like any social system, school boards developed and operated on the basis of a set of shared beliefs, behaviors, and actions. To explain school board member behavior, the socialization model maintained that a novice board member was only a nominal member until such time as s/he developed an established involvement in the work and life of the board. Such involvement was not complete until the new member had acquired the role expectations and orientations common on the board.

Goldhammer (1964) observed that as new members gain experience "they tend to become increasingly concerned about the educational programs; they adopt the public schools as a reference group superior to others with which they are involved" (p. 16). Zerchykov's (1984) research showed that new members were more likely to have

a delegate orientation, and the longer they served the more likely it is that they would be socialized into the culture of trustee representation, typical of long-time incumbents (p.68).

School Board Culture as a Socializing Factor

In order to explain the powerful influence of socialization, a new concept appeared in the literature - school boards are unique cultures. Lutz (1980) observed that "boards operate in their decision-making process within a cultural context, and have over several centuries of their existence, developed a culture of their own" (p. 452).

Ramsey (1978) also described school boards in a cultural context. She defined culture as "a kind of cognitive map by which individuals and groups interpret their world and which enables them to act purposely within it. Culture should not be thought of as behavior itself but rather the rules that underlay and provide the basis for behavior" (p.6).

Using a similar approach, the studies of Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) found that:

the government of school districts rests on more than force and the sanctions of law. Beyond these there is the power of emotional ties and beliefs. Here, indeed, error believed becomes truth in effect. People behave on the basis of their beliefs and emotions. (p. 13)

In their research Iannaccone and Lutz found a "civic

cocoon" which surrounded the board and influenced the values and beliefs of the board members to such an extent as to control their behavior. Lutz (1980) found "school board behavior shaped by a set of significant symbols called a culture of school boards that includes norms and values shared by the majority of the 15,000 local school boards" (p. 464).

Trustee vs. Delegate Role Preference

Another aspect of the culture of school boards documented in the literature was the development of a preferred role relationship to the community (Zerchykov, 1984, p. 68).

One aspect of the Progressive Reform movement of the early twentieth century was the development of the corporate role model for the conduct of school board affairs. Perhaps the foremost exponent of this approach was Ellwood P. Cubberly. Writing on the subject Cubberly (1929) suggested "there is no more need for speeches or oratory in the conduct of a school system than there would be in the conduct of a national bank" (p. 92). What emerged from the shift by boards to the corporate model was a tendency for board members to act as the guardians, the trustees, of the public interest, rather than delegates or representatives of community interests.

As defined by Lutz and Garnon (1979) a trustee is a

"representative who acts in the public's interest as he or she sees that interest," as opposed to the delegate who "seeks the public's opinion and acts upon it" (p. 114). Neither the delegate nor the trustee challenged the assertion that the first consideration of the representative should be the welfare of his constituents. They differed only on how best to achieve this goal (Zeigler et al., 1974, p. 166).

Kerr (1969) found two factors which tend to encourage board members to move toward a trustee role preference:

- o absence of a visible constituency which support their candidacy, ensure their election, and watch the behavior of their representatives (p. 143), and
- o the motive of "civic duty" for running for the school board (p. 147).

The consequence was a subsequent conformity with the expectations of the superintendent.

This is consistent with the findings of Zeigler et al. (1974).

Since a school board composed of delegates will tend to base its decisions on the wishes of its lay constituents more than on the professional standards of the superintendent, it is a difficult board for the superintendent to control. A trustee-oriented school board, on the other hand, is more susceptible to superintendent leadership because it does not feel obliged to adhere to every demand expressed by

the public. It sees itself as serving the public best by acting in accordance with its own judgment. (p. 121)

Zeigler et al. (1974) found this situation further complicated by the difficulty board members had discriminating between public responsibility and allegiance to the superintendent. In essence then, board members by acquiring a role preference, whether by choice or aculturation, determine their relationship to the community and establish their response patterns to community input.

Elite vs. Arena Behavior

Lutz and Gresson (1980) adapted the work of Bailey (1965), a political-anthropologist, to study the behavior of school boards on an elite to arena continuum. They used Bailey's definitions of the two types of councils.

Elite councils are those which are, or consider themselves to be (whether they admit it openly or not), a ruling oligarchy. The dominant cleavage in such a group is between the elite council ... and the public need.... The opposite kind of council is the arena council. These exist in groups in which the dominant cleavages are vertical. The council is not so much a corporate body with interests against its public, but an arena in which the representatives of segments in the public come into conflict with one another. (Bailey, 1965, p. 10)

Their studies revealed the majority of local school boards could generally be classified as elite councils (Lutz, 1980, p. 460). As such, they come to public forums armed with a previously agreed consensus to enact a

decision by unanimous vote. The superintendent who has usually participated in the formulation of the decision then carries out the decision.

This situation created an antagonistic framework including the generation of hostility and mistrust if there is community dissent on an issue (Lutz, 1980, p. 461). Unlike many political forums, the school board provided no place for a loyal opposition. Positions on issues tended to place individuals in dichotomous roles: either for or against the issue.

Internal Board Cohesion

Another factor of board culture is internal pressure for consensus decision-making. Both McCarty and Ramsey (1971), and Zeigler et al. (1974) developed methodologies to assess the level of unity on a board and the patterns of disagreement.

McCarty and Ramsey utilized a four way typology which classified boards as either:

- o dominated boards which exhibit an ideology shared with the dominant community power structure,
- o factional boards on which board members represent the views of one of the power factions in the community and vote accordingly,
- o status congruent boards which are composed of members of equal status from a pluralistic

community who generally reach consensus through full and open discussion, or

- o sanctioning boards which are found in inert communities and tend to perform a perfunctory role of supporting the professional staff.

After studying 51 communities in seven states, they found that the type of board decision-making pattern reflected the particular type of community power structure of which they were a part (p. 18).

Zeigler et al. developed a three way typology of internal board cohesion based on the process by which the board reached decisions. The three types of boards they identified are:

- o consensus where there is easy agreement among board members and the norm of unity and cooperation prevails,
- o factional where the same two or three subgroups frequently disagree on a variety of issues, and
- o pluralistic where patterns of agreement and disagreement shift depending on the issue.

After studying 82 school districts, they found 54% of the boards to be pluralistic, 24% factional, and 22% consensus (p. 198).

In both studies, they found the type of board, in terms of internal cohesion, impacted the interaction

between the board and the community and superintendent. While McCarty and Ramsey (1971) found the board a reflection of the community structure, Zeigler et al. (1974) found the relationship more complex. The latter study concluded, "the internal consensus of the school board may have a direct bearing on its ability to exert leadership" (p. 197). More specifically:

consensus and factional boards are associated with stronger superintendent leadership; they display a concomitantly weak ability to distinguish between their responsibility to the public and to the administration; and that pluralistic boards are both more likely to draw this distinction and more likely to dominate in making public educational policy. (p. 200)

In the case of both studies they found consensus boards the least accessible to community groups and most likely to be deferential to the superintendent.

The research literature has utilized several models for describing the behavior of school board members and the effect school board culture has on its members. The acquisition of a role preference, preferred decision style, and patterns of internal cohesion have each been shown to affect the relationships that exist between the board and other actors in the educational governance process. In summary, the literature provided abundant evidence and models describing a strong influence of socialization and board culture on board decision making.

Do community structures influence
board decisions?

Kerr (1969) characterized three types of forces in the environment of school board members which effect their attitude and performance. They are: 1) school board politics, 2) pressure for conformity through the socialization process on the board, and 3) community pressure. The impact of socialization was discussed above and the other two factors are components of the studies of community structures considered in this section.

Sacred Versus Secular Communities

One model which described community impact on school board member behavior was developed in the case study work of Iannaccone and Lutz (1970). Their model attempted to classify observed school board behavior on a sacred to secular continuum of community types. One assumption of this approach was detachment of the school district's power system from other local power systems (p. 30). When viewed from this perspective most school boards behaved as if they were in sacred communities.

Sacred communities were described as having a fairly monolithic power structure, favoring consensus politics, and resisting change. The sacred community typically displayed the tendency to avoid or resist change as its

central characteristic. Interaction in the sacred community took place among clearly delineated groups, and relationships among these groups tended to be well established (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970, p. 33). The role of the superintendent and his/her political influence depended to a large degree on his/her ability to be viewed by the board as a technical expert.

Iannaccone and Lutz found the sacred community type the most common pattern of community influence on local school board behavior. The result was a tendency to "maximize the search for consensus and avoid open conflict." This "creating opportunities for the manipulation and control of school boards and educational policies by relatively small and narrowly based cliques" (p. 29).

Community Power Studies

Community power studies, from the 1930's to the 1970's, viewed board members and superintendents and their behavior in the context of the community in which they worked. Rather than attempt to understand behavior based on the elite vs. arena behavior model which only described board behavior, community power models attempted to describe board behavior by understanding the dominant power structure in the community at large. These studies documented three themes: 1) the Progressive

Reform Movement did not rescue school boards from the clutches of special political interests; 2) there existed a considerable "social distance" between school board members and the majority of the community; and 3) there were identifiable sources of the real power behind the apparent power of the board (Zerchykov, 1984, p. 11).

Typical of the community power studies, was the work of McCarty and Ramsey (1971) who developed a typology of power structures and reported on the study of fifty-one communities in the Midwest and Northeast in which the typology was tested. The McCarty and Ramsey typology was used to describe observed community power structures with the following characteristics.

The Dominated Community A dominant group exercised power over the board and superintendent. The board members were members of the dominant community group. Decision making was private and consensual. The superintendent implemented the board policy with very little input in its development.

The Factional Community Two opposing groups exercised power in board elections, policy making, and decisions. Factions were fairly permanent and often political, religious or cultural. Board activities were public, full of conflict, and

consensus was rare. The superintendent avoided factional loyalties.

The Pluralistic Community A variety of groups had an influence and none had decision power. Coalitions were formed to reach decisions. The board paid close attention to community feelings. Debate often influenced decision-making. The superintendent was an active participant in long term planning and policy-making.

The Inert Community There was no community interest or influence. The board freely accepted professional leadership. Decisions generally were unanimous. The superintendent was frequently perceived as the real decision-maker.

McCarty and Ramsey (1971) provided an analytically useful model which promoted understanding of the power and authority at the local community level. The issues they raised were complex and problematic. In the communities they observed, the power structures were often fluid and ever shifting, sometimes imperceptibly. They concluded that because of increasingly knowledgeable community action groups, the control exercised by power structures was sometimes "tenuous, temporary, and limited in application" (p. 210).

Metropolitanism

A descriptor of community structure developed by Zeigler et al. (1974) simulated community pressure as described by Kerr (1969). In their study of board member responsiveness, they used three factors to describe "the social and cultural pluralism extant in the school district's population" (p.80). They initially used: "metropolitanism" which divided districts between those not located in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) and those located within SMSAs; "district population" which included the total adult population within the school district boundaries; and "percent urban" which was the percentage of pupils residing in urban places as estimated by district officials. Of the three measures, metropolitanism emerged as the most powerful predictor of responsiveness of the school board. They concluded "metropolitanism seems to capture political life styles much more readily than population or urbanism does" (p. 81).

Based on their survey of 82 school boards and comparison of measures of board responsiveness for metropolitan and non-metropolitan communities Zeigler et al. (1974) concluded the more complex (more metropolitan) the school district, the more responsive the board is to group demands. "Pluralism and complexity enhance rather

than impede responsiveness" (p. 80). In essence, responsiveness to constituents raised in direct proportion to the socio-political complexity (metropolitanism) of a school district.

Community structure models, whether descriptive (e.g. Iannaccone, & Lutz, 1970; McCarty, & Ramsey, 1971) or analytical (e.g. Zeigler et al., 1974), contributed to an understanding of the relationship between boards and community participation. They provided yet another vehicle for understanding the board decision making process and a body of research which indicated that community structures do influence board decisions.

Do elective processes influence board decisions?

Community conflict studies (e.g., Danis, 1984; Just, 1980; Lutz & Garberina, 1977; Taebel, 1977) have tended to concentrate on the impact of school board elections on school board actions. These studies have documented several characteristics of school board elections.

- o There is little evidence that candidates seek the support of community interest groups.
- o Frequently there is low voter turnout.
- o There is normally little debate of substantive issues.
- o Often only token opposition to the incumbent is encountered.

- o They generally support a self-perpetuating or educational establishment generated selection process.

In his case study of school board elections, Taebel (1977) identified two types of voters, constituency voters and clientele voter. Constituency voters were "citizens who had a real or perceived stake in a particular governmental entity" (p. 156). In the case of school boards these were school employees. Clientele voters, on the other hand, were "voters whose stake in the particular governmental unit was less direct" (p.156). In the case of school boards these are typically parents and taxpayers.

Taebel also identified the differences in the voting patterns between the two types of voters. Of particular note was his conclusion that constituent voters consistently participated in the election of officials to the governmental unit in which their stakes were highest. These same voters tended to favor the status quo, and thus voted for the incumbents.

In most cases routine elections did not change educational policy or decision making. The exception was a pattern identified by Iannacone and Lutz (1970). Their study of cataclysmic elections demonstrated that elections had a significant effect on school policy when

there was sufficient board turnover to prompt the replacement of the superintendent.

Danis (1984) followed this theme and utilized an extensive case study to document the impact of incumbent defeat on board policy change. She concluded, "data indicate that extensive policymaker turnover is required before shifts in organizational priorities can take place" (p. 142). In essence all officials supportive of the old regime who are in opposition to new priorities have to be replaced.

Studying another aspect of board elections, Lutz and Garberina (1977) reanalyzed data obtained earlier by Iannaccone and Lutz from 77 Massachusetts school districts. They attempted to relate trends in the socio-economic fortunes of a district to the outcomes of school board elections. Their model was able to predict incumbent defeat in districts experiencing long term economic downturns.

Elected Versus Appointed School Boards

Another manifestation of the political debate over the responsiveness of school boards dealt with the choice of elected versus appointed school boards. In the United States approximately 95% of the school boards are elected. Yet, because some very large school districts, such as Chicago, have appointed school boards, about 15%

of the persons in one poll lived in districts with appointed boards (National School Boards Association, 1975, p. 19).

One study that examined community response to elected versus appointed boards was conducted by the National Association of School Boards (1975). The researchers found the public had little knowledge and few contacts with their local boards of education and in many cases were not even sure what the board did. One significant finding of the study was that citizens in districts with elected school boards were more aware of the actions taken by their school board than were citizens in districts with appointed boards (p. 37).

Electoral conflict in school board elections was found to be rare. For example Zeigler et al. (1974) found that more than 34% of the board members in their study gained their seat by either appointment or uncontested election. Of the 66% who did have competition, 44% could not list any substantive difference between themselves and their opponent.

When compared to the other literature reviewed by the researcher, the research on the impact of election processes on board decisions seemed to yield less conclusive results. There was little evidence of election processes having consistent effects on board

decisions.

Do administrators influence board decisions?

The competition between the board and the superintendent has been characterized as having all the earmarks of the classic jostling between representatives and bureaucrats. In reality, there is often little competition, with the superintendent exerting considerable influence over the board.

One of the earliest studies of educational government was undertaken by Gross (1958) and his colleagues during the mid-1950's. They administered a questionnaire to a selected sample of school superintendents and their boards in Massachusetts in order to explore their attitudes, perceptions, and role orientations. Among the findings of the study was the indication by superintendents that the school board was a frequent obstacle to their getting the job done. In addition, the study found an unwillingness of boards to accept the superintendent as an educational expert.

Three other studies provide a bulk of the research in the area of board/superintendent relations. They are: Zeigler et al. (1974), Zeigler and Tucker (1978), and McCarty and Ramsey (1970). These studies generally examined two aspects of the relationship; superintendent influence in shaping policy, and superintendent power.

McCarty and Ramsey (1970) found four possible roles of the superintendent vis-a-vis the board. These were described above as part of the presentation of their community power analysis. They observed a rough correlation among: types of community power structure; how boards expressed conflict; and types of superintendent role, in terms of degree of dominance.

The conclusions of the other studies are listed below.

- o The board often left control over the actual educational program largely in the hands of the superintendent (Zeigler et al., 1974, p. 154).
- o The superintendent exerted control over the kind of information to which the board was privy (Zeigler et al., 1974, p. 154).
- o The superintendent and staff initiated nearly half of all policy proposals which got discussed by the board (Tucker & Zeigler, 1980, p. 19).
- o The formal agenda of meetings was, by and large, set by the superintendent (Tucker & Zeigler, 1980, p. 9).

Kerr (1969) found a similar situation in his study of the distribution of control over policy making. He placed the superintendent in a crucial, perhaps dominant role. The domination was so strong that he described a

reversal of board roles vis-a-vis the community.

School boards chiefly perform the function of legitimizing the policies of the school system to the community rather than representing the various segments of the community to the school administration, especially with regard to the educational program. (p. 139)

While most observers saw a danger in the domination of the board by the superintendent, some considered the control exerted by the superintendent a vehicle for reflecting the public will in policy.

School administrators and teachers (often selected by the administration), working in cooperation with citizen groups, provide one kind of machinery for building partial consensus around specific educational policy issues. (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970, p. 7)

While educators tend to dominate local educational policy making, they usually operate within significant, and generally neglected or underestimated, constraint imposed by the local community and school board. (Boyd, 1976, p. 572)

The research literature has provided a steadily accumulating body of evidence that it is the professionals, not the public, who really govern the public schools (Zerchykov, 1984, p. 7). As a result of a preference for a trustee role relationship, exercised in a sacred-elite decision culture, school boards often serve as agents of legitimation of superintendent initiated programs and policies.

The exception to this conclusion was expressed by Zeigler et al. (1974). They found higher levels of

citizen activity appeared to make boards try to exercise more legislative supremacy, but the complexity of the community confounded the situation. Specifically:

- o In non-metropolitan communities, conflict strengthened the board's ability to exercise control, but on the other hand conflict was less likely to occur.
- o In metropolitan areas, conflict was more likely to occur and did lead to more board opposition to the superintendent, but with less likelihood of success.

In summary, once again the research literature seems clear. School administrators, particularly superintendents, have exerted a profound effect on board decisions. In the words of Zeigler et al. (1974) "members of boards cluster toward the 'professional' role, one of deference to the superintendent" (p. 249), so much so, that one researcher responded to the question -- who governs the schools -- with "the superintendent governs" (Zerchykov, 1984, p. 19).

Do boards respond equally to all groups?

A number of major initiatives in the last thirty years caused considerable unrest in education and focused attention on the extent of community participation in school board decision-making. They were: desegregation,

the increasing role of the federal government in education, teacher and student militancy, demands for school accountability, escalating school costs, and growing criticism of school effectiveness (Just, 1980, p. 422).

These forces resulted in greater community group involvement in educational governance. Studies to document and understand the extent and impact of this community involvement took several forms:

- o studies of citizen attitudes toward community participation in educational governance and their preference for a particular level and style of governance (Lutz & Garnon, 1979);
- o studies of patterns of community participation in educational decision-making (Davies et al., undated);
- o documentation of the ways in which parents and other community members, especially urban minorities and the poor, participated in decisions that bear on the education of their children (Davies et al., 1979);
- o examination of the influence of parent involvement on academic achievement (Fantini, 1980); and
- o study of the persistent political issues

associated with family and school collaboration (Lightfoot, 1980).

The theme repeated through these studies was:

the external environment of the school board, as virtually all social organizations, has been undergoing rapid and profound transformation.... Consequently, the insularity, the selective responsiveness, that once characterized school board decision making and policy making is being eroded under the impact of social, economic, cultural, and political pressures. (Cistone, 1977a, p.99)

In documenting the increasing extent of community group participation Zeigler et al. (1974) classified groups as either "internal" (e.g., PTA's) or "external" (e.g., a Chamber of Commerce). External groups were further typed as either "non-ideological" (a League of Women Voters) or "ideological", such as a civil rights group.

They found that internal groups had greater access than external groups; PTA's were the most active, followed by teacher organizations. These findings were corroborated by Meyer (1982). Zeigler et al. also found that, among external groups, ideological groups were more active than non-ideological groups. In addition, they found all group activity greater in metropolitan districts than in non-metropolitan districts.

The research on school board responsiveness to various community groups indicated a bias toward greater responsiveness to internal groups. Some research

described community factors which confound this bias.

Do boards respond equally on all issues?

The major sources of research clues about the varying responsiveness of boards on different issues were: Meyer, (1982); Zeigler et al. (1974); Zeigler and Tucker (1978); and Gittell, et al. (1979). These studies used several different typologies to focus on the issues on which boards are most responsive.

Meyer (1982) presented a national sample of board members a list of educational issues and asked them to determine which should have involved community group input and which did produce community group input. Meyer found:

the community should be involved, is involved, and should receive delegated decision-making responsibility in the following areas: educational objectives; construction, renovation, or closing of schools; curriculum evaluation; determination of local tax rates; student discipline; and expenditures for school operation. (p. 189)

Yet, he concluded, "even in areas where they express desired community control, delegation appears to be made with extreme caution" (p. 195).

Zeigler et al. (1974) tested the level of agreement between boards and constituents on four issues: finance, race, educational issues, and governance. They found strongest constituent/board congruence on the issues of race, governance, and finance. Interestingly enough,

they found very little agreement between boards and the publics they served on the issues of educational programs and teaching. They concluded "this negligible association is perhaps the most remarkable finding we encountered when looking at a variety of mass-elite comparisons" (p. 129).

There were several relevant conclusions which could be drawn from the literature on the question of issue responsiveness:

- o External issues (e.g., finance, construction) were more likely to cause boards to assert their legislative supremacy.
- o On internal issues (e.g., instructional programs, materials, and methods) boards were least likely to oppose the superintendent.
- o External issues which gain high visibility and thus raise community tension produced higher levels of board responsiveness.
- o There was more citizen/board agreement on policy issues than on governance, how policy is made.

Zeigler et al. (1974) also found a higher level of congruence on policy issues in non-metropolitan districts than in metropolitan. They observed:

Communications flow more freely, issues are more visible, and the schools are more often the center of community attention. The friends and neighbors atmosphere more often found in the non-metropolitan

areas seems conducive to a greater sharing of perspectives between the leaders and the led. (p. 132)

In conclusion, the literature reviewed revealed that boards respond differently on different issues. However, the responsiveness to community input was a product of more complex dynamics than just the nature of the issue. Clearly issues did make a difference, but, they must be considered in the context of the larger governance environment.

Conclusions

A civics textbook ideal of school governance might be:

the public elects a school board to make policy. The board appoints a superintendent to administer policy. Thus administrators follow the mandates of legislators who follow the instructions of their constituents. The major source of power is electoral support and preferences. (Tucker & Zeigler, 1980, p. 11)

If this democratic ideal was the standard by which we judged, then educational governance would receive a mixed report card.

In this review of literature the researcher attempted to illuminate the complex of relationships formed by community involvement in school governance. Historically, schools grew into a unique place in the American system, providing an expert service, and on the

other hand, being legally established to provide the expectation of responsive and responsible governance.

School boards as active legislative bodies were described as the products of the interaction of three components. First there was the selection process of members. Second, there were ongoing linkage relationships between the board and the public. Finally, there was the interaction between the board and the superintendent (Zeigler et al. 1974, p. 242).

Viewed as an ideal, boards were selected in accordance with constituent preference; policy was enacted in response to community demands and needs; and the superintendent administered the policy with the board performing an oversight function. Educational policy was then congruent with constituent needs and demands. The body of literature reviewed here did not indicate that this ideal of community participation in governance is fully realized in most school districts.

Implications for current study

The researcher sought a research methodology for the current study which would allow an analysis of community participation as it was influenced by the socio-political environment of the school boards in Maryland. Kerr's (1969) three forces that act to shape school board

members' attitudes and performance were chosen as a starting point. The three were: 1) school board politics, 2) pressure for conformity throughout the process of socialization on the board, and 3) community pressure.

Subsequent research was located to support the use of Kerr's model in the contemporary setting. Cistone (1977b) found it to be useful as a graphic device to depict the features of school boards which have caused them to become agencies of legitimation. In addition, in their study of the socio-economic environment of school boards Lutz and Garberina (1977) utilized a similar model to describe factors which influence board actions, particularly in the area of community pressure.

For this study, appropriate measures of the three variables described by Kerr (1969) were sought for use in analyzing influences on board members opinions regarding community participation in decision-making.

As noted in the Maryland School Board Manual (1979), "the appointment or election of citizens to boards of education ... is done in a variety of ways" (p. 8). The members of 10 boards of education are elected to office. The members of 13 boards are appointed on a nonpartisan basis by the Governor. The members of the board in Baltimore City are appointed by the Mayor. This variety

of selection methods allowed the use of method of selection to board membership as a measure of the political climate suggested by Kerr's first factor, board politics.

The studies of Zeigler et al. (1974), and McCarty and Ramsey (1971) produced evidence that the extent of internal cohesion evidenced in the board decision-making process impacted the interaction between the board and the community. Zeigler et al. (1974) developed a typology for classifying board cohesion as either consensus, factional, or pluralistic. This classification provided a variable comparable to Kerr's second factor, pressure for conformity throughout the process of socialization on the board.

Of the measures of community pressure, the most thoroughly documented was the metropolitanism variable first used by Zeigler et al. (1974). Metropolitanism, easily determined from Bureau of the Census documents, provided a consistent descriptor of "the social and cultural pluralism extant in the school district's population" (p. 80). It was utilized by Zeigler et al. as a measure of the socio-political pressure on the board, and was thus comparable to Kerr's third factor, community pressure.

Meyer (1982) provided a methodology for analyzing

school board members' opinions regarding community participation in decision making. His research model allowed the assessment of: 1) the extent of involvement by various types of groups, 2) the educational issues on which school boards would delegate decision making to community groups, and 3) the extent to which board members rely on various groups for input on selected issues. In his recommendations for further study, Meyer points out one shortcoming of his research. By failing to provide "administration" as one of the categories for respondents to choose as a source of major input to their decisions, Meyer may have influenced the results. He suggested "since this study did not investigate the assessment of delegation of responsibility to the administration, a follow-up study should investigate this aspect" (p. 193).

The purpose of this chapter was to present a summary of the relevant literature on the role of community participation in educational decision-making. The methodology and findings of previous research studies were utilized in the development of the methodology for the current study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology of this study, data collection technique, development of the data gathering instrument, administration of the questionnaire, and provide an explanation of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are (Gay, 1976, p. 123). This methodology quite adequately serves the central thrust of this study; that is, to provide evidence concerning the existing situation regarding school board members in Maryland and their relationships to the communities they serve.

As suggested by Kerlinger (1973), survey research focuses on people, the vital facts of people, and their

beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. Gay (1976) defined a survey as, "an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables" (p. 124).

Survey methodology has several inherent advantages over other methods of collection of descriptive data, namely: 1) wide coverage at a minimum expense both in money and effort, 2) ability to reach persons who are difficult to contact, 3) more candid and objective replies elicited because of the method's impersonality, and 4) greater uniformity in the manner in which questions are posed (Mouly, 1970). All four of these advantages contribute to "greater validity in the results through promoting the selection of a larger and more representative sample" (Mouly, 1970, p. 242). For these reasons, descriptive-survey procedures were selected for this study of the relationships between Maryland school board members' opinions regarding community participation in decision-making and selected aspects of the socio-political environment of school boards.

Population

This study surveyed all members of public school boards of education in the state of Maryland by means of a mailed questionnaire. The study was sponsored by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), the key professional organization for school board members in the state. Follow-up efforts were made by the researcher and MABE in order to ensure a high rate of return.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument (Appendix A) for this study was designed to accomplish three purposes. It collected 1) selected opinions and personal information about school board members, 2) school board members' preference regarding their relationship to their community and their board's decision-making style, and 3) data desired by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education but not utilized in this study.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part I (Questions 1-3) gathered information about community participation in the educational decision-making process. Part II (Questions 4-12) collected information about board decision-making. Part III (Questions 13-25) requested personal information about individual school board members.

Questions one, two, and three were adapted from a national study of school board members' attitude toward community participation (Meyer, 1982). Question one measured, "the extent of community groups' involvement in educational issues" (Meyer, 1982, p. 74), in the respondent's school district. Question two measured, "the attitude of local school board members toward community advisory group involvement in decision-making in the areas of curriculum, finance, personnel, and student affairs" (Meyer, 1982, p. 74). Question three, again adapted from Meyer (1982), measured the relative level of influence of community representatives as compared to other major actors in the socio-political environment of school board decision-making. This question made a notable departure from Meyer (1982) because of the addition of "administration" as a response category. Meyer (1982) recommended this change for future studies (p. 193). The responses to individual items within questions one, two, and three were analyzed separately to yield answers to the research questions.

Question five measured the disposition of each board member toward a trustee versus delegate role relationship with the community at large. Response choices were adapted from the work of Zeigler, Jennings, and Peak (1974).

Questions six and eight provided the data for a three way typology designed to assess the extent of intraboard consensus exhibited during the decision-making process. This methodology was also adapted from the research of Zeigler et al. (1974) and allowed each of the 24 boards of education involved in the study to be classified as either consensus, factional, or pluralistic.

Field Testing

In order to validate the questionnaire it was field tested with two different groups, 1) graduate students in educational administration at Virginia Tech, and 2) former members of school boards in Maryland. Each group was asked to complete the questionnaire, record the time needed for completion, comment on any unclear wording, and correct any typographical or reproduction errors. In addition, each group was asked to evaluate the questionnaire with particular emphasis on the following areas.

1. Were the directions to the questionnaire stated and explained clearly?
2. Were the questions of sufficient interest and appeal to insure the respondent would be inclined to respond and complete the questionnaire?

3. Were the questions relevant to current educational concerns so as to elicit an accurate and realistic response?
4. Were the questions asked in a way that would avoid embarrassment to respondents?
5. Were the questions too restrictive, limited, or narrow in scope?
6. Were the questions designed in a manner which would, when taken as a whole, answer the basic philosophic questions of the survey?

Responses from field test subjects were analyzed for possible misinterpretation of individual items and appropriate revisions made. The questionnaire was also reviewed by the Executive Director of MABE prior to administration.

Collection of Data

The survey instrument was mailed to all voting members of public school boards of education in the state of Maryland who were on the mailing list of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education as of November 19, 1985, the administration date of the survey. A total of 147 individuals were sent questionnaires. An envelope which contained the survey instrument, a cover letter from the president of the Maryland Association of Boards

of Education, and a post paid return envelope were mailed to each of the 147 members of the study population. Each questionnaire was coded with a unique control number to facilitate follow-up efforts.

Babbie (1973) suggested that follow-up mailings are, "an effective method for increasing return rates in mail surveys." (p.163) In an attempt to secure an acceptable response rate, two follow-up mailings were used. A first follow-up was mailed to subjects who had not responded by December 6, 1985. A second follow-up was mailed to subjects who had not responded by December 31, 1985. Each follow-up mailing included an appropriate cover letter from the president of MABE, a new copy of the survey, and a stamped return envelope.

A total of 123 questionnaires were returned. This represented an 83.7% response rate.

As returned questionnaires were received they were logged and assigned a sequential identification number. A daily return rate graph was maintained in order to monitor response to the survey. As part of the analysis of the data, questionnaires received at different times during the data collection process were compared in order to estimate potential nonresponse bias. None was detected.

Method of Analysis

All data from the surveys was coded for computer analysis. The data was then analyzed through the use of the statistical analysis program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSx). Individual survey items were analyzed by using the frequency distribution procedures. Relationships between survey items and other variables were analyzed by using crosstabulation procedures with the calculation of a chi-square test, and regression analysis.

Responses to survey questions one, two, and three were analyzed, by subitem, with the use of frequency distributions to provide the answers to research questions one, two, and three.

Responses to survey question five were analyzed for differences in school board member role relationship to the community as a function of the method of selection to membership on the school board. This analysis was utilized to answer research question four. The crosstabulation procedure and chi-square test were used to test for statistical significance.

The socio-political environment variables used in data analysis included: method of selection to board membership, the level of intraboard consensus as described above, and metropolitanism of the district.

Responses to question 13 indicated the district in which each board member served. Since the method of selection to board membership (elected or appointed) in each district is established by state statute, values for this variable were determined by statute search and coded along with the questionnaire responses.

Metropolitanism divided the school districts between those not located in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) as defined by the Census Bureau and those located within SMSAs. Even though SMSAs contained some non-urban counties, the area within each SMSA was judged to be a similar socio-political environment because even the non-urban areas in a SMSA, "absorb and are affected by the modes of group life found in the larger environment" (Zeigler et al., 1974, p. 81). This led Zeigler et al. (1974) to conclude that, "metropolitanism seems to capture political life styles much more readily than sheer population or urbanism does" (p. 81). Once again the response to question 13 was used to determine the county in which each school board member served and thus the metropolitanism of the district.

The extent of intraboard consensus was determined by pooling survey responses for all the members of each board. A board was classified as a consensus board if the largest group of the members responding from that

board responded "YES" on question six. The remaining boards, having reported relatively frequent disagreements among board members, were classified as factional if the the largest group of respondents indicated a "YES" response to question eight. If no consistent voting patterns were reported by a majority of members of a board, that board was classified as pluralistic.

A final analysis completed to answer research question five, examined the consistency of the relationship between the opinions of board members concerning community involvement when compared for members in metropolitan versus non-metropolitan districts and for members of consensus, factional, and pluralistic boards. Once again crosstabulation procedures and the chi-square test were used. These results were further verified through the use of regression analysis.

In evaluating the significance of results from the data analysis, a level of significance of 0.05 was utilized as a basis for reporting on relationships between and among variables. Summary findings for each research question were prepared in tabular as well as narrative form for Chapter 4.

The computer facility at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University was utilized to process the data for this study.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methodology of this study, the development of the instrument, the data collection procedures, and the statistical methods of analysis.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine community participation in educational decision-making in Maryland. As a descriptive study it proposed to determine the opinions of local school board members regarding community participation in educational decision-making, board member's preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community, and how these related to three factors of the socio-political environment of the school system.

This chapter contains a description of the data produced by a survey developed by the researcher. This presentation includes; a description of the population in the study, data as it relates to the research questions, and a summary of the findings.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. How did school board members assess the degree of involvement of selected community groups?
2. For areas of potential involvement, did school

board members believe that representatives of one or more community advisory groups should be involved in decision making?

3. For areas of potential involvement, which types of community groups did school board members rely upon most heavily?
4. Did school board members differ in their preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community as a function of their method of selection to the school board?
5. Were metropolitanism and intraboard consensus consistent indicators of the socio-political environment of school boards as measured by opinions regarding community participation in decision making?

Description of the Population

The population for this study consisted of the members of the public school boards of education in Maryland. All members of the population were surveyed as part of the research study, and one hundred forty seven questionnaires were distributed by the researcher. After nine weeks and two follow-up mailings, 123 or 83.7 percent of the surveys were returned. The distribution of returned surveys by school district is reported in

Table 2, with a range of 60.0 percent in Allegany County to 100.0 percent in eight other districts. From this data it was determined that an acceptable rate of return was received from all of the districts involved in the study.

Personal Data Relative to Respondents

The distribution of respondents by various personal characteristics is presented in Tables 3 through 8.

Sex of Respondents

The frequency and percent of respondents by sex is reported in Table 3. Of the respondents, 55.3 percent were male and 43.1 percent were female.

Race of Respondents

The frequency and percent of respondents by race is reported in Table 4. Most of the respondents, 97 or 78.9 percent reported themselves as white. The only other racial category reported was Black, accounting for 20 or 16.3 percent of the respondents.

Age of Respondents

The age of respondents by categories is presented in Table 5. The range of ages reported by respondents was from 35 to 74 years of age. The mean age of respondents was 51 years.

Education Level of Respondents

The frequency and percent of respondents by

TABLE 2
 DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNED SURVEYS
 BY DISTRICT

District	Number Mailed	Number Ret'd	Percent Ret'd	Percent/Total
Allegany	5	3	60.0	2.4
Anne Arundel	8	5	62.5	4.0
Baltimore City	9	7	77.7	5.7
Baltimore County	9	7	77.7	5.7
Calvert	5	5	100.0	4.0
Caroline	5	4	80.0	3.3
Carroll	5	4	80.0	3.3
Cecil	5	5	100.0	4.0
Charles	7	7	100.0	5.7
Dorchester	6	4	66.7	3.3
Frederick	7	5	71.4	4.0
Garrett	5	4	80.0	3.3
Harford	7	7	100.0	5.7
Howard	5	4	80.0	3.3
Kent	5	5	100.0	4.0
Montgomery	7	6	85.7	4.9
Prince George's	9	6	66.7	4.9
Queen Anne's	5	5	100.0	4.0
St. Mary's	5	5	100.0	4.0
Somerset	5	4	80.0	3.3
Talbot	7	7	100.0	5.7
Washington	5	4	80.0	3.3
Wicomico	5	4	80.0	3.3
Worcester	7	6	85.7	4.9
TOTALS	147	123	83.7	100.0

TABLE 3
SEX OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	68	55.3
Female	53	43.1
No Response	2	1.6
TOTAL	123	100.0

TABLE 4
RACE OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Frequency	Percentage
White	97	78.9
Black	20	16.3
Hispanic	0	0.0
American Indian	0	0.0
Oriental	0	0.0
No Response	6	4.8
TOTAL	123	100.0

TABLE 5
AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Under 36	1	0.8
36-40	15	12.2
41-50	48	39.0
51-60	27	22.0
Over 60	26	21.1
No Response	6	4.9
TOTAL	123	100.0

education level is summarized in Table 6. Of the respondents, 105 or 85.4 percent indicated completion of some education beyond high school, with 64.2 percent indicating completion of a college or advanced degree.

Occupational Categories of Respondents

The classification of respondents by occupation is reported in Table 7. The largest number of respondents, 30, reported belonging to the professional and technical category (24.4 percent). The managerial/administrative category accounted for 28 or 22.8 percent of the respondents, an additional 12 or 9.8 percent reported work in the home and 27 or 22.0 percent reported miscellaneous occupations or being retired.

Length of Board Service of Respondents

The frequency and percent of respondents by length of board service is reported in Table 8. The range of responses was from less than 1 year to 15 years service. Most respondents, 82 or 66.6 percent reported five or less years of service on the board.

Characteristics of Respondents' School Districts

The distribution of respondents by characteristics of the school districts in which they serve is summarized for Tables 9 and 10.

Metropolitanism of the District

For the purposes of the study, districts were

TABLE 6
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Less than High School	0	0.0
High School Graduate	14	11.4
Post-High School Training	26	21.1
Four-Year College Degree	29	23.6
Advanced college Degree	50	40.7
No Response	4	3.2
TOTAL	123	100.0

TABLE 7
 OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Professional / Technical	30	24.4
Management / Administration	28	22.8
Clerical / Sales	6	4.9
Skilled Craftspersons	5	4.1
Semi-skilled / Transportation	3	2.4
Agriculture	3	2.4
Homemaker	12	9.8
Misc. / Retired	27	22.0
No Response	9	7.4
TOTAL	123	100.0

TABLE 8
LENGTH OF BOARD SERVICE OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	9	7.3
1 - 5 years	73	59.3
6 - 10 years	29	23.6
Over 10 years	7	5.6
No Response	5	4.2
TOTAL	123	100.0

classified on the basis of whether they were included in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Eighty seven or 59.1 percent of the school board members in the state serve in districts located in SMSA's. As can be seen from Table 9 the response rates for metropolitan and non-metropolitan districts showed only a slightly variance.

Method of Selection to the Board

Table 10 is used to present the response rates for elected and appointed school boards. As can be seen from the table, 89 or 60.5 percent of the board members in the state were appointed, while 58 or 39.5 percent were elected. The response rates for the two groups were quite similar, with 85.9 percent of the appointed board members responding, as compared to 81.0 percent of the elected members.

Data Related to Research Questions

Research Question 1

How did school board members assess the degree of involvement of selected community groups?

Item responses to survey question one were utilized to determine the perception of each respondent regarding the extent of involvement in educational decisions by each of eight different classifications of community

TABLE 9
DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNED SURVEYS
BY METROPOLITANISM OF THE DISTRICT

Category	Number Mailed	Number Ret'd	Percent Ret'd	Percent/ Total
Metropolitan (within SMSA)	87	73	83.9	59.3
Nonmetropolitan	60	50	83.3	40.7
TOTAL	147	123	83.6	100.0

TABLE 10
DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNED SURVEYS
BY METHOD OF SELECTION TO THE BOARD

Category	Number Mailed	Number Ret'd	Percent Ret'd	Percent/Total
Elected	58	47	81.0	38.2
Appointed	89	76	85.4	61.8
TOTAL	147	123	83.6	100.0

groups.

Parent groups

A majority of the respondents, 66 or 53.7 percent, reported that parent groups were heavily involved in educational issues in their district. An additional 53 or 43.1 percent reported moderate involvement. Only 1 respondent (0.8 percent) reported no involvement (see Table 11).

Business leaders

The largest group of respondents, 75 or 61.0 percent, reported business leader involvement in educational issues to be moderate. Only 17 or 13.8 percent reported heavy business leader involvement, and 28 or 22.8 percent reported no involvement (see Table 11).

Community leaders

The majority of respondents, 75 or 74.8 percent, reported that community leaders including elected officials were moderately involved in educational issues. In addition, 23 or 18.7 percent reported heavy involvement. A small segment, 5 or 4.1 percent reported no involvement by community leaders (see Table 11).

Civic groups

Civic groups, along with religious groups, were reported to be the two least involved in educational

TABLE 11

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING
 EXTENT OF COMMUNITY GROUP INVOLVEMENT
 IN EDUCATIONAL ISSUES *

N = 123

Category/ Response	Heavy Frequency/Percent	Moderate Frequency/Percent	None Frequency/Percent
Parent Groups	66 (53.7)	53 (43.1)	1 (0.8)
Business Leaders	17 (13.8)	75 (61.0)	28 (22.8)
Community Leaders	23 (18.7)	92 (74.8)	5 (4.1)
Civic Groups	6 (4.9)	61 (49.6)	50 (40.7)
Labor Groups	57 (46.3)	52 (42.3)	9 (7.3)
Religious Groups	6 (4.9)	59 (48.0)	54 (43.9)
Advocacy Groups	21 (17.1)	69 (56.1)	29 (23.6)
Advisory Groups	51 (41.5)	59 (48.0)	8 (6.5)

* percentages do not total 100% because of nonresponses

issues of all the groups considered. Only 6 or 4.9 percent of the respondents reported heavy involvement by civic groups. Another 61 or 49.6 percent reported moderate involvement, and 50 or 40.7 percent reported no involvement by civic groups (see Table 11).

Labor groups

Labor groups, including teacher's unions, were reported to have a level of involvement in educational issues second only to parent groups. Almost half of the respondents, 57 or 46.3 percent, reported heavy involvement by labor groups. In addition, 52 respondents or 42.3 percent reported moderate involvement, while only 9 or 7.3 percent reported no involvement (see Table 11).

Religious groups

Of the groups considered by the respondents, religious groups were reported to be involved the least. Only 6 respondents or 4.9 percent reported heavy involvement, and another 59 or 48.0 percent reported moderate involvement. A large group of respondents, 54 or 43.9 percent, reported no involvement in educational issues by religious groups (see Table 11).

Advocacy groups

The level of involvement by advocacy groups was reported to be quite similar to that by business leaders. Most respondents, 69 or 56.1 percent reported only

moderate involvement in educational issues. Similarly, 21 respondents or 17.1 percent reported heavy involvement, and 29 or 23.6 percent reported no involvement (see Table 11).

Advisory groups

Advisory group involvement was reported by respondents to be approximately equal to the level of involvement by labor groups. Of the respondents, 51 or 41.5 percent reported heavy involvement by advisory groups, another 59 or 48.0 percent reported moderate involvement, and 8 or 6.5 percent reported no involvement (see Table 11).

Research Question 2

For areas of potential involvement, did school board members believe that representatives of one or more community advisory groups should be involved in decision making?

Item responses to survey question two were utilized to determine the opinion of each respondent regarding whether community advisory groups should be involved in each of 17 areas of educational decision-making.

Over 50% of the respondents held the opinion that community advisory groups should be involved in making decisions for the schools in the following areas:
Construction, Renovation, and Closing of Schools, 105 or

85.4 percent; Development of the Schools' Educational Objectives, 102 or 82.9 percent; Curriculum Evaluation, 100 or 81.3 percent; Student Discipline Policy, 98 or 79.7 percent; Budgeting Expenditures for School Operations, 91 or 74.0 percent; Selection of Textbooks, 80 or 65.0 percent; Initiation and Approval of New Courses, 77 or 62.6 percent; Organization of Instructional Programs, 72 or 58.5 percent (see Table 12).

Areas where a majority of respondents held the opinion that there should not be community advisory group involvement included: Tenure and Promotion of School Personnel, 107 or 87.0 percent; Hiring of Teachers, 106 or 86.2 percent; Resolving Disputes Between Students and School Personnel, 103 or 83.7 percent; Evaluation of Teachers, 101 or 82.1 percent; Collective Bargaining, 101 or 82.1 percent; Hiring of School Administrators, 93 or 75.6 percent; Evaluation of School Administrators, 90 or 73.2 percent; Initiation and Approval of Student Testing Programs, 80 or 65.0 percent; Preparation of State and Federal Grant Proposals, 70 or 64.2 percent (see Table 12).

Research Question 3

For areas of potential involvement, which types of community groups did school board members rely upon most

TABLE 12

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVING COMMUNITY ADVISORY
GROUPS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKING
FOR SELECTED DECISION AREAS *

N= 123

Area	"Yes" Frequency/Percent	"No" Frequency/Percent
Curriculum Evaluation	100 (81.3)	21 (17.1)
Student Discipline	98 (79.7)	22 (17.9)
Budgeting	91 (74.0)	29 (23.6)
Grant Proposals	42 (34.1)	79 (64.2)
Hiring Teachers	15 (12.2)	106 (86.2)
Education Objectives	102 (82.9)	19 (15.4)
Student-School Personnel Disputes	16 (13.0)	103 (83.7)
Initiation of New Courses	77 (62.6)	43 (35.0)
Testing Programs	40 (32.5)	80 (65.0)
Evaluation of Administrators	28 (22.8)	90 (73.2)
Selection of Textbooks	80 (65.0)	41 (33.3)
Hiring of Administrators	27 (22.0)	93 (75.6)
Organization of Instructional Program	72 (58.5)	47 (38.2)
Evaluation of Teachers	18 (14.6)	101 (82.1)
Construction, Renovation, or Closing Schools	105 (85.4)	15 (12.2)
Tenure/Promotion of Personnel	11 (8.9)	107 (87.0)
Collective Bargaining	17 (13.8)	101 (82.1)
* percentages do not total 100% because of nonresponses		

heavily?

Item responses to survey question three were utilized to determine the opinion of each respondent regarding what group's input was relied upon most in a particular area of educational decision-making.

Curriculum evaluation

In the area of curriculum evaluation, 80 or 65.0 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 26 or 21.1 percent on teachers, 5 or 4.1 percent on the community at large, and 5 or 4.1 percent on community advisory groups (see Table 13 & Figure 1).

Student disciplinary policy

When they developed student disciplinary policy, 87 or 70.7 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 10 or 8.1 percent on teachers, 8 or 6.5 percent on the community at large, 6 or 4.9 percent on no one, and 5 or 4.1 percent on community advisory groups.

Budgeting expenditures

In the area of budgeting expenditures for school operations, 91 or 74.0 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 20 or 16.3 percent on the community at large, 4 or 3.3 percent on community advisory groups, and

TABLE 13

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING WHICH GROUP'S ADVICE IS RELIED ON MOST *

N = 123

Area	Community at Large Frequency/Percent	Community Advisory Group Frequency/Percent	Administrators Frequency/Percent	Teachers Frequency/Percent	No One Frequency/Percent
Curriculum Evaluation	5 (4.1)	5 (4.1)	80 (65.0)	26 (21.1)	0 (0.0)
Student Discipline	8 (6.5)	5 (4.1)	87 (70.7)	10 (8.1)	6 (4.9)
Budgeting	20 (16.3)	4 (3.3)	91 (74.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.6)
Grant Proposals	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	115 (93.5)	1 (0.8)	0 (0.0)
Hiring Teachers	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	117 (95.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.6)
Education Objectives	21 (17.1)	10 (8.1)	72 (58.5)	7 (5.7)	7 (5.7)
Student-School Personnel Disputes	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	106 (86.2)	1 (0.8)	12 (9.8)
Initiation of New Courses	5 (4.1)	10 (8.1)	88 (71.5)	15 (12.2)	0 (0.0)
Testing Programs	2 (1.6)	3 (2.4)	108 (87.8)	6 (4.9)	1 (0.8)
Evaluation of Administrators	7 (5.7)	2 (1.6)	78 (63.4)	5 (4.1)	27 (22.0)
Selection of Textbooks	4 (3.3)	8 (6.5)	63 (51.2)	39 (31.7)	3 (2.4)
Hiring of Administrators	7 (5.7)	5 (4.1)	83 (67.5)	1 (0.8)	21 (17.1)
Organization of Instructional Program	15 (12.2)	7 (5.7)	79 (64.2)	14 (11.4)	3 (2.4)
Evaluation of Teachers	2 (1.6)	2 (1.6)	107 (87.0)	5 (4.1)	4 (3.3)
Construction, Renovation, or Closing Schools	37 (30.1)	18 (14.6)	59 (48.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.6)
Tenure/Promotion of Personnel	1 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	117 (95.1)	0 (0.0)	4 (3.3)
Collective Bargaining	2 (1.6)	2 (1.6)	107 (87.0)	2 (1.6)	8 (6.5)

* percentages do not total 100% because of nonresponses

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING WHICH GROUP'S ADVICE IS RELIED ON MOST

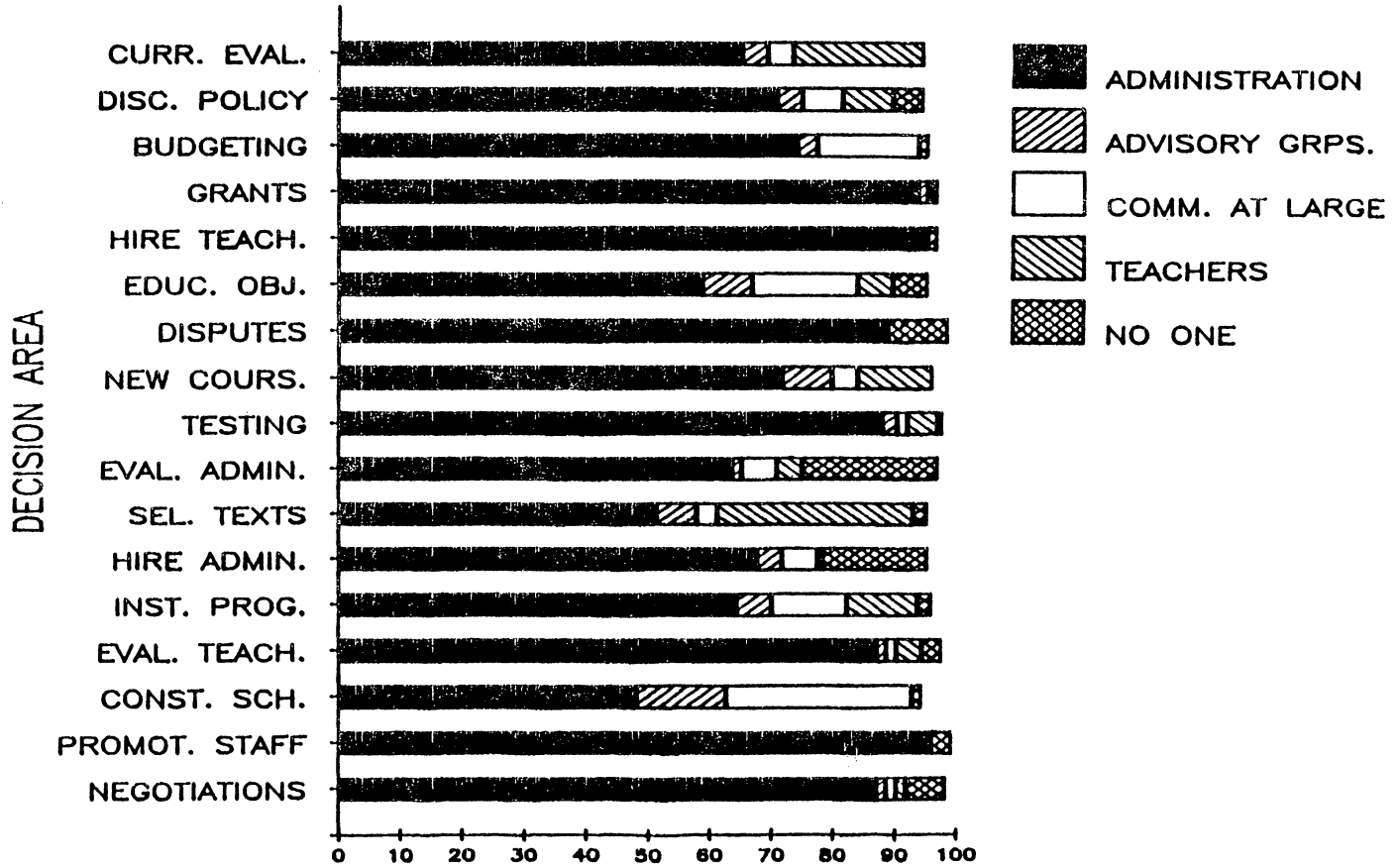


FIGURE 1 PERCENT BY GROUP

2 or 1.6 percent on no one.

Grant proposals

When they considered state and federal grant proposals, 115 or 93.5 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 2 or 1.6 percent on community advisory groups, 1 or 0.8 percent on the community at large, and 1 or 0.8 percent on teachers.

Hiring of teachers

The teacher hiring decision was the area most dominated by the administration. Almost all respondents, 117 or 95.1 percent indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, and 1 or 1.6 percent on no one.

Educational objectives

In the development of the schools' education objectives, 72 or 58.5 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 21 or 17.1 percent on the community at large, 10 or 8.1 percent on community advisory groups, 7 or 5.7 percent on teachers, and 7 or 5.7 percent on no one.

Student disputes

When board members dealt with disputes between students and school personnel, 106 or 86.2 percent

indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 12 or 9.8 percent on no one, and 1 or 0.8 percent on the community at large, community advisory groups and teachers.

Initiation of new courses

In the area of decision making involving initiation and approval of new courses, 88 or 71.5 percent indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 15 or 12.2 percent on teachers, 10 or 8.1 percent on community advisory groups, and 5 or 4.1 percent on the community at large.

Student testing programs

When school boards made decisions regarding initiation and approval of student testing programs, 108 or 87.8 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 6 or 4.9 percent on teachers, 3 or 2.4 percent on community advisory groups, 2 or 1.6 percent on the community at large, and 1 or 0.8 percent on no one.

Evaluation of administrators

For evaluation of school administrators, 78 or 63.4 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 27 or 22.0 percent on no one, 7 or 5.7 percent on the community at large, 5 or 4.1 percent on teachers, and 2 or 1.6 percent

on community advisory groups.

Selection of textbooks

For textbook selection decisions, 63 or 51.2 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 39 or 31.7 percent on teachers, 8 or 6.5 percent on community advisory groups, 4 or 3.3 percent on the community at large, and 3 or 2.4 percent on no one.

Hiring administrators

In the area of hiring school administrators, 83 or 67.5 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 21 or 17.1 percent on no one, 7 or 5.7 percent on the community at large, 5 or 4.1 percent on community advisory groups, and 1 or 0.8 percent on teachers.

Organization of instructional programs

For decisions regarding the organization of instructional programs, 79 or 64.2 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 15 or 12.2 percent on the community at large, 14 or 11.4 on teachers, 7 or 5.7 percent on community advisory groups, and 3 or 2.4 percent on no one.

Evaluation of teachers

When asked about teacher evaluation decisions, 107

or 87.0 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 5 or 4.1 percent on teachers, 4 or 3.3 percent on no one, 2 or 1.6 percent on the community at large and community advisory groups.

Construction, renovation, and closing schools

When making decisions about construction, renovation, and closing of schools, 59 or 48.0 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 37 or 30.1 percent on the community at large, 18 or 14.6 percent on community advisory groups, and 2 or 1.6 percent on no one.

Tenure and promotion of personnel

For decisions on the tenure and promotion of school personnel, 117 or 95.1 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the input of the administration, 4 or 3.3 percent on no one, and 1 or 0.8 percent on the community at large.

Collective bargaining

In the areas of negotiations and collective bargaining, 107 or 87 percent of the respondents indicated they relied most heavily on the administration, 8 or 6.5 percent on no one, 2 or 1.6 percent on each of the groups, community at large, community advisory groups, and teachers.

Research Question 4

Did school board members differ in their preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community as a function of their method of selection to the school board?

Responses to survey question five were utilized to classify each respondent according to his/her role relationship to the community. Individuals who chose the response "I should do what the public wants me to do even if it isn't my own personal preference," were classified as "delegates." Respondents who chose the response "I should use my own judgment regardless of what others want me to do," were classified as "trustees." A majority, 91 or 82.7 percent, of the respondents indicated a trustee role preference, and 19 or 17.3 percent indicated a delegate role preference.

The crosstabulation procedure with the calculation of a chi-square value and level of significance was used to determine whether the frequency of delegate and trustee responses differed between elected and appointed school board members. Results are presented in Table 14. The obtained $\chi^2 = 0.829$ (df = 1) was not significant at the .05 level. It was therefore concluded that the preference for role relationship to the community did not

TABLE 14
 RESPONDENTS' ROLE PREFERENCE
 BY METHOD OF SELECTION

N = 110

Method of Selection	Delegate		Trustee		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Elected	5	(4.5)	37	(33.6)	42
Appointed	14	(12.7)	54	(49.1)	68
Total	19		91		110

$\chi^2 = 0.829$ (degree of freedom = 1) Significance = 0.3623

vary significantly for elected and appointed board members.

Results which were observed but not statistically significant included greater than expected numbers of appointed board members who expressed a delegate preference and greater than expected numbers of elected board members who expressed a trustee preference.

Research Question 5

Were metropolitanism and intraboard consensus consistent indicators of the socio-political environment of school boards as measured by opinions regarding community participation in decision making?

This research question was analyzed through the use of the crosstabulation procedure with the calculation of a chi-square value and level of significance, and regression analysis with the calculation of an F value and level of significance. Metropolitanism and intraboard consensus were used as variables to be crossed with item responses to survey questions one, two, and three. To support the chi-square test, results were further analyzed with the use of regression analysis in which metropolitanism and intraboard consensus were used separately as independent variables, and item responses to questions one and three as dependent variables.

Metropolitanism

Metropolitanism of the district in which each respondent served was determined from U.S. Bureau of the Census classifications. Districts located within Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's) were classified as metropolitan and districts located outside SMSA's were classified as non-metropolitan. Of the districts in the study, 13 were determined to be metropolitan, and 11 were determined to be non-metropolitan. Of the respondents, 73 were from metropolitan districts, and 50 were from non-metropolitan districts. The response rate for the two groups was approximately 83%.

The responses to survey questions one, two, and three were first utilized in a crosstabulation procedure to test the consistency of responses against metropolitanism of a respondent's district. Summary results of the analysis are presented in Tables 15, 17, and 18.

Analysis of responses to survey question one produced only two items with a significant ($p < .05$) chi-square (Table 15). Crosstabulation of the perceived extent of community leader involvement by metropolitanism of the district yielded a $\chi^2 = 10.882$ which was significant at the 0.004 level ($df = 2$). This was a

TABLE 15
 SUMMARY OF CROSSTABULATIONS OF
 RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING EXTENT OF GROUP
 INVOLVEMENT BY SOCIO-POLITICAL VARIABLE *

Type of Group	Socio-Political Variables			
	Metropolitanism		Intraboard Consensus	
	χ^2	/ S	χ^2	/ S
Parent Groups	2.669	N.S.	10.386	0.034
Business Leaders	2.730	N.S.	5.508	N.S.
Community Leaders	10.882	0.004	6.004	N.S.
Civic Groups	0.340	N.S.	4.274	N.S.
Labor Groups	2.494	N.S.	2.741	N.S.
Religious Groups	1.560	N.S.	1.830	N.S.
Advocacy Groups	16.494	0.000	11.842	0.019
Advisory Groups	0.777	N.S.	6.633	N.S.

S - indicates column showing level of significance
 N.S. = Not Significant at $p = 0.05$

* Missing cases ranged from 3 to 6

result of community leader involvement in metropolitan districts which was slightly higher than expected. The second item where a significant chi-square was observed was advocacy group involvement. Crosstabulation of advocacy group involvement by metropolitanism of the district yielded a $\chi^2 = 16.494$ which was significant at the 0.000 level (df = 2). This level of significance was a result of higher than expected perceived advocacy group activity in metropolitan districts and lower than expected involvement in non-metropolitan districts.

These results were supported by regression analysis of the same data. The perceived extent of involvement of the same two group types was found to be significantly related to metropolitanism of the district (Table 16). Analysis for the community leader group produced an $F = 6.589$ which was significant at the 0.012 level and a multiple R of 0.24. For advocacy groups the analysis produced an $F = 15.110$ which was significant at the 0.000 level with a multiple R computed to be 0.35.

Analysis of responses to survey question 2 yielded only one item with a significant chi-square (Table 17). Crosstabulation of opinions regarding whether advisory groups should be involved in decision-making indicated a statistically significant relationship only in the case of student discipline policy. The calculated $\chi^2 = 4.300$

TABLE 16
 SUMMARY OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF
 RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING EXTENT OF GROUP
 INVOLVEMENT BY SOCIO-POLITICAL VARIABLE *

Dependent Variables Type of Group	Socio-Political Independent Variables				
	Metropolitanism		Intraboard Consensus		
	F	/ S	F	/ S	S
Parent Groups	1.478	N.S.	2.741		N.S.
Business Leaders	2.158	N.S.	0.002		N.S.
Community Leaders	6.589	0.012	0.198		N.S.
Civic Groups	0.056	N.S.	1.742		N.S.
Labor Groups	1.575	N.S.	1.328		N.S.
Religious Groups	1.913	N.S.	0.229		N.S.
Advocacy Groups	15.110	0.000	4.812		0.030
Advisory Groups	1.460	N.S.	0.190		N.S.

S - indicates column showing level of significance
 N.S. = Not Significant at $p = 0.05$

* Missing cases ranged from 3 to 6

TABLE 17

SUMMARY OF CROSSTABULATIONS OF RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS
REGARDING COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP DECISION-MAKING
BY SOCIO-POLITICAL VARIABLE *

Decision Area	Socio-Political Variables			
	Metropolitanism		Intraboard Consensus	
	χ^2	/ S	χ^2	/ S
Curriculum Eval.	1.127	N.S.	5.205	N.S.
Student Discipline	4.300	0.038	3.083	N.S.
Budgeting	0.375	N.S.	3.259	N.S.
Grant Proposals	0.110	N.S.	3.375	N.S.
Hiring Teachers	0.000	N.S.	2.255	N.S.
Educational Objectives	0.000	N.S.	2.255	N.S.
Student-Personnel Disputes	0.000	N.S.	1.214	N.S.
New Courses	1.741	N.S.	7.970	0.019
Testing Programs	0.000	N.S.	3.370	N.S.
Evaluation of Administrators	0.003	N.S.	0.627	N.S.
Selection of Texts	0.907	N.S.	5.568	N.S.
Hiring of Admin.	0.111	N.S.	3.152	N.S.
Instructional Prog.	0.191	N.S.	8.607	0.014
Eval. of Teachers	0.000	N.S.	2.096	N.S.
Const. / Closing of Schools	0.123	N.S.	4.227	N.S.
Tenure/Promotion of Personnel	0.000	N.S.	1.935	N.S.
Collective Bargaining	0.587	N.S.	3.861	N.S.

S - indicates column showing level of significance
N.S. = Not Significant at $p = 0.05$

* Missing cases ranged from 2 to 5

which was significant at the 0.038 level (df = 1). This result was the product of a higher than expected desire for advisory group input in metropolitan areas, and a lower than expected desire for input in non-metropolitan districts.

Responses to survey question three were subjected to the same analysis as question one. Only two items produced significant chi-square values (Table 18). Hiring of administrators produced a $\chi^2 = 16.591$ with a level of significance of 0.002 (df = 4), and collective bargaining produced a $\chi^2 = 11.919$ with a level of significance of 0.018 (df = 4). In the case of both items, the significance was a product of less reliance on administrative input and greater than expected reliance on board members' own input in non-metropolitan districts.

Regression analysis, once again used to verify chi-square results, supported the general lack of a relationship between the variables, with a significant relationship detected in the case of two areas of decision making (Table 19). Only one of the two significant items (hiring of administrators) coincided with the chi-square test. In the case of the evaluation of administrators, the calculated $F = 4.397$ which was significant at the 0.039 level and produced a multiple R

TABLE 18

SUMMARY OF CROSSTABULATIONS OF RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS
REGARDING GROUP INFLUENCE ON DECISION-MAKING
BY SOCIO-POLITICAL VARIABLE *

Decision Area	Socio-Political Variables			
	Metropolitanism		Intraboard Consensus	
	χ^2	S	χ^2	S
Curriculum Eval.	5.522	N.S.	14.230	0.027
Student Discipline	4.059	N.S.	11.988	N.S.
Budgeting	3.668	N.S.	3.400	N.S.
Grant Proposals	4.927	N.S.	1.785	N.S.
Hiring Teachers	0.220	N.S.	6.447	0.040
Educational Objectives	8.630	N.S.	7.260	N.S.
Student-Personnel Disputes	3.226	N.S.	6.411	N.S.
New Courses	3.661	N.S.	3.705	N.S.
Testing Programs	3.603	N.S.	3.298	N.S.
Evaluation of Administrators	8.992	N.S.	13.855	N.S.
Selection of Texts	7.127	N.S.	5.410	N.S.
Hiring of Admin.	16.591	0.002	11.534	N.S.
Instructional Prog.	0.919	N.S.	4.250	N.S.
Eval. of Teachers	1.594	N.S.	5.165	N.S.
Const. / Closing of Schools	2.092	N.S.	2.632	N.S.
Tenure/Promotion of Personnel	3.488	N.S.	4.039	N.S.
Collective Bargaining	11.919	0.018	5.895	N.S.

S - indicates column showing level of significance
N.S. = Not Significant at $p = 0.05$

* Missing cases ranged from 1 to 7

TABLE 19

SUMMARY OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS
REGARDING GROUP INFLUENCE ON DECISION-MAKING
BY SOCIO-POLITICAL VARIABLE *

Dependent Variables Decision Area	Socio-Political Independent Variables					
	Metropolitanism			Intraboard Consensus		
	F	/	S	F	/	S
Curriculum Eval.	0.381		N.S.	0.006		N.S.
Student Discipline	0.003		N.S.	1.319		N.S.
Budgeting	0.120		N.S.	0.915		N.S.
Grant Proposals	2.085		N.S.	2.164		N.S.
Hiring Teachers	1.353		N.S.	0.269		N.S.
Educational Objectives	0.173		N.S.	0.032		N.S.
Student-Personnel Disputes	1.331		N.S.	1.892		N.S.
New Courses	2.307		N.S.	0.096		N.S.
Testing Programs	0.915		N.S.	0.000		N.S.
Evaluation of Administrators	4.397		0.039	1.125		N.S.
Selection of Texts	0.173		N.S.	0.019		N.S.
Hiring of Admin.	7.625		0.007	0.175		N.S.
Instructional Prog.	0.355		N.S.	0.211		N.S.
Eval. of Teachers	1.089		N.S.	0.096		N.S.
Const. / Closing of Schools	1.168		N.S.	0.223		N.S.
Tenure/Promotion of Personnel	2.134		N.S.	0.047		N.S.
Collective Bargaining	2.158		N.S.	0.074		N.S.

S - indicates column showing level of significance
N.S. = Not Significant at p = 0.05

* Missing cases ranged from 1 to 7

value of 0.21. For hiring of administrators, $F = 7.625$ with a calculated level of significance of 0.007 and a multiple R value of 0.28.

As can be seen in Tables 15 through 19, chi-square analysis of 42 questionnaire items identified only 5 for which responses significantly related to the metropolitanism of the respondent's district. Regression analysis of the same data for questions one and three produced only 4 out of 25 possible items for which a significant relationship was found. Of the twenty-five items subjected to both crosstabulation and regression analysis the results were mutually supportive for only three items. Therefore, metropolitanism was not found to be a consistent indicator of the socio-political environment of the school districts in the study as expressed through board members' opinions on community participation in educational decision-making.

Intraboard consensus

The classification of the district of each respondent by the extent of intraboard consensus was accomplished through the pooling of responses to survey questions six and eight for each board. For each respondent, an affirmative response to question six was interpreted as an indication of the opinion that the respondent's board was a consensus board. A negative

response to question six accompanied by an affirmative response to question eight was considered an indication of the opinion that the respondent's board was a factional board. A negative response to both questions was considered an indication of the opinion that the board was a pluralistic board.

Once the individual respondent's opinions were compiled, the pooled responses for each board were examined for patterns. Each board was then classified as either consensus, factional, or pluralistic based on the opinion shared by the greatest number of members of that board. Following this methodology, the researcher classified 14 boards as consensus boards, 2 as factional boards, and 8 as pluralistic boards. For analysis of research question five, each respondent was then reclassified according to the extent of intraboard consensus of the board on which the respondent served.

The responses to survey questions one, two, and three were then utilized in a chi-square analysis to test the consistency of responses against the classifications of intraboard consensus. Summary results are presented in Tables 15, 17, and 18.

The crosstabulation procedure performed on responses to survey question one produced two items with a significant ($p < .05$) chi-square (Table 15). The

perceived extent of parent group involvement was found to be related to the extent of intraboard consensus with a $\chi^2 = 10.386$, significant at the 0.034 level (df = 2). This was a product of perceived parent group participation being heavier than expected in pluralistic districts and more moderate than expected in consensus districts. The second item for which a significant chi-square was obtained was advocacy groups. Crosstabulation of advocacy group involvement with intraboard consensus yielded a $\chi^2 = 11.842$ which was significant at the 0.019 level (df = 2). This significance was the product of the perception of moderation or lack of advocacy group involvement in pluralistic communities and heavier than expected involvement in consensus communities.

When questionnaire item one data were subjected to regression analysis, somewhat different results were obtained. Only one of the items found significant in the chi-square analysis was found to be significantly related to intraboard consensus (Table 16). The perceived level of advocacy group participation was found to be related to intraboard consensus with an $F = 4.812$ which was significant at the 0.030 level and a multiple R of 0.21.

Crosstabulation of responses to survey question two with intraboard consensus identified two items with a

significant chi-square (Table 17). In the case of opinions regarding advisory group involvement in the development of new courses, the calculated $\chi^2 = 7.970$ which was significant at the 0.019 level (df = 1). This was a result of greater than expected support for advisory group involvement in consensus districts and less than expected support in pluralistic communities. The second item, input on instructional programs, produced a calculated $\chi^2 = 8.607$ with a level of significance of 0.014 (df = 1). This was also attributed to a lower than expected level of support for involvement in pluralistic districts and a greater than expected level in consensus districts.

Chi-square analysis of survey question three in relation to intraboard consensus also produced two items with chi-squares of significance (Table 18). In the area of curriculum evaluation, there was a significant relationship between the groups relied upon for input and the level of intraboard consensus. A $\chi^2 = 14.230$ was calculated with a level of significance of 0.027 (df = 4). This significance was a result of greater than expected reliance upon administrative input in both consensus and pluralistic communities. In the case of the item relating to hiring teachers, a calculated $\chi^2 = 6.447$ was obtained with a level of significance of 0.40

(df = 4). The data were inconclusive in revealing the cause of significance in this case.

When the data produced by survey question three were subjected to regression analysis, no item responses were found to be significantly related to intraboard consensus (Table 19).

As can be seen in Tables 15 through 19, analysis of forty two questionnaire items through the use of the chi-square test produced only six for which responses were significantly related to the level of intraboard consensus of the respondent's district. Regression analysis of the same data for questions one and three identified only 1 out of 25 possible items for which a significant relationship was found. Of the 25 items subjected to both chi-square and regression analysis, the results were mutually supportive for only one item. Therefore, intraboard consensus was not found to be a consistent indicator of the socio-political environment of school districts in Maryland as expressed through board members' opinions on community participation in educational decision-making.

Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis of the data produced by the research study. The population studied

was described. Respondents were classified by personal characteristics including sex, race, age, educational level, occupational category, and length of board of education service. The respondents were described in terms of the metropolitanism of the district in which they served and the method by which they were chosen for board service. In addition, the findings of the study with respect to each of the research questions was presented. The method of data analysis and results were presented for each research question.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the research study, conclusions based on the findings, and recommendations and implications for further study.

Purpose of the Study

Relationships and interactions between school boards and the communities they serve are the product of a dynamic process. Legally, school boards are legislative bodies empowered by the state to govern local school systems. However, in practice, school boards have assumed a broader role. They also serve as the primary vehicles for reaching consensus on educational issues among individuals and groups within the local community. In order to effectively achieve consensus, school boards and communities must be sensitive to the role of community participation in the educational decision-making process.

This study was designed to investigate the relationships between school boards and the communities they serve. Its central purpose was to determine the

opinions of Maryland school board members regarding community participation in educational decision-making, board members' preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community, and how these relate to three factors of the socio-political environment of the school system. At issue was the role played by community groups in educational decision-making and the impact of environmental factors on that role.

Summary of Findings

Five research questions guided this study. Each is addressed in turn, summarizing the findings of the study.

1. How do school board members assess the degree of involvement of selected community groups?

School board members were asked to indicate the extent of involvement in educational issues by each of eight types of groups: parent groups, business leaders, community leaders, civic groups, labor groups, religious groups, advocacy groups, and community advisory groups. The data produced by the study indicated that respondents perceive parent groups, labor groups including teachers' unions, and advisory groups to be most extensively involved in educational issues. Perceived as least involved are religious and civic groups.

Clearly, the extent of involvement of various

community groups is not uniform. For the purpose of comparison, it is helpful to differentiate between groups that are internal and external to the school system. Internal groups are those which have school sponsorship or are formed around educational issues. External groups form around sponsors or primary interests outside of education yet sometimes have educational interests. The results of this study indicate the groups most actively involved in educational issues are internal groups sponsored by or having close ties to the schools. These groups often have a vested interest in the outcome of school board decisions. Their high interest is coupled with easier access to and more frequent contact with the decision makers.

Respondents perceived lower levels of involvement by external groups. Among the external groups studied, respondents indicated the greatest involvement by community leaders, business leaders, and advocacy groups. In Maryland the perception of involvement by community leaders may be a product of the fiscal dependency of school systems. Since school boards do not have taxing authority, local elected officials are actively involved in educational issues because of the ultimate responsibility they have for providing financial support for the schools. The extent of involvement of the other

two groups, business leaders, and advocacy groups, is typical of external groups with strong ideological positions. Although not formed around educational issues, they frequently represent points of view to which they feel schools should respond. For example, proponents of civil rights or handicapped citizens' rights are frequently more actively involved in educational decisions than non-ideological groups such as civic or fraternal organizations.

In relation to the extent and the relative level of perceived involvement of the various groups, the results of this study were quite consistent with previous research (e.g., Gittell et al., 1979; Meyer, 1982; Zeigler et al., 1974).

When levels of group involvement were compared according to the community factors considered in this study, community leader and advocacy group involvement were perceived to be greater in metropolitan than non-metropolitan areas. These results can be attributed to a higher level of political activity on the part of these groups in the more pluralistic metropolitan communities.

When the perceived extent of involvement was analyzed in relation to the extent of intraboard consensus, involvement by parent groups and advocacy

groups were found to relate to the extent of intraboard consensus. Members of boards which found difficulty reaching consensus perceived higher levels of involvement by parent groups. These pluralistic boards often disagreed on issues and this lack of clear direction from the board would be a factor in encouraging parent groups to become more involved in the decision-making process.

In the case of advocacy group involvement, the results were quite different. Advocacy groups were perceived to be most involved in districts with consensus boards. These results could be a product of either of two factors: 1) consensus boards feel challenged by advocacy groups and thus perceive them as more active than they actually are, or 2) actual levels of activity are greater because of a perception by the advocacy groups that the consensus board fails to represent the interests of their constituents.

Board members' perceptions of the level of community group involvement indicate considerable variability in the level of involvement among various community groups. However, the community variables examined in this study seemed to account for only a limited amount of the observer variance.

2. For areas of potential involvement, do school board members believe that representatives of one or more community advisory groups should be involved in decision making?

Respondents' opinions regarding whether community advisory groups should be involved in educational decision-making varied appreciably over the 17 decision-making areas studied. The decision-making areas in which board members favored advisory group involvement included: 1) construction, renovation, and closing schools; 2) curriculum issues including, curriculum evaluation, educational objectives, selection of textbooks, and initiation of new courses; and 3) budgeting of expenditures.

Respondents strongly indicated that there should not be advisory group involvement in areas relating to personnel management. Specific issues included: tenure and promotion of personnel, hiring teachers, student-personnel disputes, evaluation of teachers, and collective bargaining.

The study identified a number of issues on which school board members desire community advisory group involvement. These results were consistent with the findings of Meyer (1982) and Zeigler and Tucker (1978). When comparing the current results with Meyer's study,

the relative strength of support for involvement among the various issues resulted in the same rank ordering of the issues. For example, both studies agreed on the five decision areas for which support of community advisory group input was greatest. They included: construction, renovation, and closing of schools; educational objectives; curriculum evaluation; student discipline policy; and budgeting expenditures.

When comparing the strength of support for advisory group involvement between the studies, the current study differed from Meyer's research. Maryland board members consistently expressed higher levels of support for the involvement of advisory groups. In all response categories, a higher percentage of respondents indicated support for advisory group involvement than reported in Meyer's national study. The data strongly suggest that, from the school board perspective, the environment of school board/community relations in Maryland is more supportive of community advisory group involvement than the environment found in the United States as a whole. Clearly, community input is desired on a wide variety of issues.

3. For areas of potential involvement, which types of community groups do school board members rely upon most heavily?

When asked whose advice (input) they rely on most when making decisions on various topics, respondents indicated an overwhelming reliance on the administration. In all but 1 of the 17 decision areas presented, more than 50 percent of the respondents indicated greatest reliance on the administration. In the case of the only exception, construction, renovation, and closing of schools, slightly less than half of the respondents were most reliant on the administration.

At first sight, these results seem to support the conclusions of researchers such as Zeigler et al. (1974), Zeigler and Tucker (1978), and Zerchykov (1984) that the administration, particularly the superintendent, dominates the board decision-making process.

Clearly the findings show the administration exerts an extremely strong influence over the decisions made by the board, however, an apparent inconsistency exists between the results of research questions two and three. When asked, "should community advisory groups be involved in making decisions for schools," the results of research question two reveal a high degree of preference for community involvement on a variety of issues. When the

same issues were presented with the question, "whose advise do you rely on most heavily," the results show heaviest reliance on the administration. Input of the community at large or advisory groups is relied on "most heavily" far less often.

When these results are considered along with the indicated preference for a trustee role relationship to the community (see research question four), a portrait emerges of school board members who express a strong desire for community input, yet rely heavily on input from the school administration. Board members seem to bring balance to these sometimes conflicting inputs by showing a strong preference for exercising their own judgment when making decisions.

4. Do school board members differ in their preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community as a function of their method of selection to the school board?

When asked to characterize their role relationship to the community, 82 percent of the respondents indicated a trustee role preference in which they exercise their own judgment regardless of what others want them to do. Less than 20 percent indicated a delegate role preference in which they do what the public wants even if it is not their own personal preference. When confronted with the

alternative of representing the interest or the will of the people, school board members clearly lean toward representing the interest. The data strongly suggest that board members see themselves as best serving the public by acting in accordance with their own judgment.

When board members trustee versus delegate role preference was compared by method of selection to the school board, no relationship was found. Elected and appointed board members were both very likely to adopt a trustee role preference when dealing with the community. On this issue, results were consistent with the conclusions of previous research. For example, Zeigler et al. (1974) concluded their results were "not encouraging for those placing their bets on elected boards as being more responsive" (p. 87).

Even though most school board members in the United States are elected, the question of election or appointment to school boards is of concern in several states. Debate of the merits of elected versus appointed boards is ongoing in Maryland, where 60 percent of the board members are appointed. The results of this study indicate that board members' opinions regarding community participation in decision-making, as expressed by preference for a trustee versus delegate role relationship to the community, are not affected by the

method by which they are chosen. In fact, by this measure, the data indicate that appointed boards are more responsive than elected boards.

5. Are metropolitanism and intraboard consensus consistent indicators of the socio-political environment of school boards as measured by opinions regarding community participation in decision making?

When board members' opinions regarding community participation were analyzed for relationships to two characteristics of the socio-political environment, namely metropolitanism and intraboard consensus, no consistent results are obtained. Therefore, the observed patterns of opinion regarding community participation were determined to be unrelated to both environmental characteristics.

Results of previous research have indicated that factors of the socio-political environment of school districts consistently mold the opinion and behavior of school board members. Two such factors given credit for having such an impact are metropolitanism of the district and intraboard consensus (Zeigler et al., 1974). In this study neither was found to have a consistent impact on school board/community relations. The high degree of consistency of responses on the examined issues indicates the presence of other factors which exert stronger

influence than metropolitanism and intraboard consensus on the board/community relationship.

Conclusions

This study develops a profile of the nature of community participation in educational decision-making in Maryland. The portrait which emerges is the product of examination of the answers to the research questions individually and in combination to understand the relationships involved. Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of this profile is the remarkable consistency of the opinions regarding the school board/community relationship across the diversity of school districts and issues involved in the study.

On the issue of the role relationship which exists between the board member and the community, this study supports much of the previous research. The overwhelming majority of board members, 82 percent, express a preference for relating to the community in a trustee role. When comparing method of selection to the trustee or delegate role, there is no statistically significant relationship found. This result, when considered in conjunction with the finding that 14 or 58.3 percent of the boards demonstrated a high degree of intraboard consensus, leads to the conclusion that boards tend to

behave in ways which value internal unity and cooperation and minimize public debate over educational issues.

These conclusions, along with the evidence of a high degree of administrative influence over board decisions, lead to the impression that the administrative professionals dominate the board decision process. This conclusion is consistent with the research of McCarty and Ramsey (1975), and Ziegler et al. (1974).

Yet, this may be a simplistic conclusion. Careful study of the results reveals a complex set of relationships between school boards, community groups, and the school administration. In this web of relationships, school boards seem to behave in ways which enable them to maximize consensus before making decisions. In this role the board becomes a mediator between the various interests and the actors involved.

The following conclusions from this study contribute to an understanding of the behavior of school boards as mediators in the decision process.

- o Community groups with school sponsorship and interests are the most actively involved in decisions on educational issues.
- o School boards in Maryland are proactive in seeking community input on educational issues and strongly support the involvement of community advisory

groups.

- o School board members rely most heavily on the input of the school district administration when making educational decisions.
- o School board members prefer serving the interest of the public by maintaining a trustee role relationship to the community.
- o Relationships between board members and the community are consistent throughout the state indicating the presence of a combination of factors for conformity which overpower environmental variables such as method of selection to the board, metropolitanism of the community, and extent of intraboard consensus.
- o The internal socio-political climate of school boards differs from the socio-political climate of the communities from which they are selected.

What emerges from these points is the characterization of Maryland school board members as independent thinkers -- decision makers who seek balance and consensus in their decisions. Although administrators and internal groups hold the upper hand in terms of access to and influence over board decisions, board members maintain a strongly independent decision-making posture. In order to balance the input

received from administrators and internal groups, board members are strongly proactive in seeking input from community advisory groups.

Weight is added to this interpretation of the data by the remarkable consistency found throughout the state. The absence of influence by the socio-political variables studied leads to the conclusion that there are other more powerful influences shaping a fairly consistent approach to governance by boards across the state. Some combination of the following factors likely serve as this unifying force.

- o Fiscal dependency - Being fiscally dependent on other governmental bodies places great pressure on school boards to represent a broad community consensus when seeking funding for budgets. Boards therefore attempt to gather broad based input and adopt priorities and programs which will receive the broadest base of support.
- o Shared culture - There exists in the state a strong commitment to community involvement in education to the extent that it is part of the culture of school boards. There is also strong pressure for the socialization of new members into this board culture.
- o Strong professional organization - The Maryland

Association of Boards of Education is a strong professional organization which serves as a significant unifying force among school boards in the state.

- o Interboard communications - Because of the limited number of school districts and small geographic size of the state, there are frequent opportunities for members from different boards to exchange information and ideas.

These four factors combine to form a strong cultural overlay which brings considerable consistency to the school boards' decision-making processes. The end result is a strong commitment to the achievement of consensus on educational issues through a balance of input from a variety of sources, including the superintendent, weighed by board members who maintain a strong sense of independence from group pressures.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the results and conclusions of this study of the opinions of local school board members regarding community participation in educational decision-making, the following recommendations are made for further study:

- o This study was limited to the population of school board members in Maryland. As such it cannot be

assured that the population studied reflects the same opinions as school board members in other areas of the country. A more comprehensive nationwide sample would result in conclusions more easily generalizable to all school boards.

- o No attempt was made in this study to assess the actual extent of community involvement. A follow-up study should utilize techniques which allow the collection of data on actual as well as perceived levels of community group involvement.
- o When this study is considered in comparison to Meyer (1982) questions still exist as to which groups have the greatest influence on board decisions. In the Meyer study respondents were not offered the option of "administration" and this seemed to bias the results. In the case of this study, the administration response category received the overwhelming majority of responses. Further study should attempt to refine the methodology to yield a more accurate understanding of the relative influence of all of the groups seeking to influence board decisions.
- o Consideration should be given to the use of participant observer study of the formal and informal political processes boards follow during

decision making.

Commentary: School Boards as Legislative Bodies

When considering the role of school boards in the governance of local school systems, the question arises, can school boards function simply as legislative bodies? Advocates who promote civics textbook versions of democratic theory would have us answer "yes." They maintain that grass-roots democracy is best served by school boards which consistently attempt to represent the will of the community. Nevertheless, these arguments ignore the need for widely held support for schools, their programs and their personnel -- a level of support that is not necessarily achieved by simple majority rule. The schools must be perceived by the public as responsive to the needs of the community. If confidence in public education is to be restored, school boards must serve their communities by developing broad based consensus on educational issues. As school boards assume this larger role in pulling together divergent community interests to forge a common educational agenda, they will have to walk a fine line between the will of individual interest groups and the interests of the total community. Achieving consensus in this environment will require that school boards demonstrate strength of purpose, finesse, and careful judgment.

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APPENDIX A
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Maryland Association of Boards of Education



November 18, 1985

To: Board Members
From: , President
Subject: Dissertation Research

MABE is sponsoring a research study that will help improve our understanding of the way school boards interact with the communities they serve. The study will also collect demographic information about Maryland school boards and evaluate MABE services and programs. The project is the dissertation research being done at Virginia Polytechnic Institute by Spicer Bell, a member of the Frederick County Board of Education's administrative staff.

We are asking that you take about twenty minutes of your time to give us your candid, honest opinions on these issues using the enclosed questionnaire. Please follow the directions on the questionnaire and return it in the post-paid envelope provided. The control number on the questionnaire is only to assist in follow-up from non-respondents. All responses will be confidential.

I am sure you will be willing to cooperate with Mr. Bell as he gathers this information of mutual interest to all of us. Thank you for your assistance.

WHP:MKS:ehs

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION (MABE)
 QUESTIONNAIRE ON OPINIONS OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

This survey is intended to gain information about the attitudes of school board members in Maryland toward community involvement in educational decision-making. All responses are confidential. The control code on this questionnaire is for follow-up of non-responses only.

INSTRUCTIONS: Completion of this questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes. Please respond to all requested information and return AS SOON AS POSSIBLE in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. Thank you for your cooperation.

PART I - SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

1. To What extent are the following groups involved in educational issues in your school district?

<u>DIRECTIONS:</u> Check only <u>ONE</u> response per item.	Heavy Involvement	Moderate Involvement	No Involvement
A) Parent groups (PTA, athletic boosters, etc.).	_____	_____	_____
B) Business leaders.	_____	_____	_____
C) Community leaders including elected officials.	_____	_____	_____
D) Civic groups (Kiwanis, Jaycees, etc.).	_____	_____	_____
E) Labor groups including teachers' union	_____	_____	_____
F) Religious groups	_____	_____	_____
G) Special interest advocacy groups (NAACP, Child Welfare Advocates, etc.).	_____	_____	_____
H) Community advisory groups **	_____	_____	_____

** Community advisory groups are formally structured groups appointed by the board or required by law (for example Chapter I, vocational education, Citizens Curriculum Advisory Council, etc.).

2. SHOULD community advisory groups be involved (provide input and recommendations) in making decisions for your schools in any of the following areas?

	YES	NO
A) Curriculum evaluation.	_____	_____
B) Student disciplinary policy.	_____	_____
C) Budgeting expenditures for school operations.	_____	_____
D) Preparation of state and federal grant proposals.	_____	_____
E) Hiring of teachers.	_____	_____
F) Development of the schools' education objectives.	_____	_____
G) Resolving disputes between students and school personnel.	_____	_____
H) Initiation and approval of new courses.	_____	_____
I) Initiation and approval of student testing programs.	_____	_____
J) Evaluation of school administrators.	_____	_____
K) Selection of textbooks.	_____	_____

2. (continued)	YES	NO
L) Hiring of school administrators.	_____	_____
M) Organization of instructional programs (open versus self-contained classrooms, class size, etc.).	_____	_____
N) Evaluation of teachers.	_____	_____
O) Construction, renovation or closing of schools.	_____	_____
P) Tenure and promotion of school personnel (teachers, principals, and supervisors).	_____	_____
Q) Negotiations and collective bargaining process.	_____	_____

3. For each area of decision-making listed below, indicate whose advice (input) you rely on most heavily when your board of education must make a decision.

DIRECTIONS: Check only ONE response per item.

	Community At Large *(see footnote)	Community Advisory Group	Administration	Teachers	No One
A) Curriculum evaluation.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
B) Student disciplinary policy.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
C) Budgeting expenditures for school operations.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
D) Preparation of state and federal grant proposals.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
E) Hiring of teachers.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
F) Development of the schools' education objectives.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
G) Resolving disputes between students and school personnel.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
H) Initiation and approval of new courses.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I) Initiation and approval of student testing programs.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
J) Evaluation of school administrators.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
K) Selection of textbooks.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
L) Hiring of school administrators.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
M) Organization of instructional program (open versus self-contained classrooms, class size, etc.).	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
N) Evaluation of teachers.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
O) Construction, renovation or closing of schools.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
P) Tenure and promotion of school personnel (teachers, principals, and supervisors).	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Q) Negotiations and collective bargaining process.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

* via public hearings, petitions, "grapevine", surveys, input from individuals, friends, and neighbors, etc.

PART II - BOARD OF EDUCATION DECISION-MAKING

4. From the following list, please RANK THE FIRST THREE most pressing problems in your school district:

DIRECTIONS: Place 1 next to YOUR MOST PRESSING CONCERN, 2 next to YOUR SECOND MOST PRESSING CONCERN and 3 next to YOUR THIRD MOST PRESSING CONCERN.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Integration/busing | <input type="checkbox"/> Pupils' lack of interest/cruancy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor curriculum/poor standards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Declining enrollment | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty of getting good teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large schools/overcrowding | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' lack of interest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers' lack of interest | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of respect for other students/teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of financial support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crime/vandalism | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____ | |

5. Check the ONE STATEMENT that BEST approximates the point of view from which you most often approach your job as a board of education member.

As a board member "I should do what the public wants me to do even if it isn't my own personal preference."

As a board member "I should use my own judgment regardless of what others want me to do."

6. When a problem first arises, do members of your board often find that they disagree about the best course of action? Yes No

7. After discussion of a problem, does your board often agree about the best course of action?

Yes No

8. When members of your board of education disagree on issues, would you say there is more or less the same division on the board, i.e., do some members seem to stick together from one issue to the next?

Yes No

9. How helpful was the MABE training program for new school board members?

DIRECTIONS: Please circle your response.

1	2	3	4	5
Very	Somewhat	Slightly	Not	Did
Helpful	Helpful	Helpful	Helpful	Not
				Attend

10. How helpful are the annual MABE Fall Conferences?

DIRECTIONS: Please circle your response.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Slightly Helpful	Not Helpful	Have Not Attended

11. How helpful are each of the following MABE publications?

MABE School Board News

1	2	3	4	5
Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Slightly Helpful	Not Helpful	Do Not Read

The Monitor

1	2	3	4	5
Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Slightly Helpful	Not Helpful	Do Not Read

MABE Action Log

1	2	3	4	5
Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Slightly Helpful	Not Helpful	Do Not Read

12. DIRECTIONS: Please consider one column at a time and mark as many responses as apply.

Where do you get your information about...?

your	education
<u>local schools</u>	<u>in Maryland</u>

Source of information:

Own children	_____	_____
Neighbors children	_____	_____
Friends/neighbors	_____	_____
Teachers	_____	_____
School administrators	_____	_____
Other school personnel	_____	_____
Newspapers	_____	_____
Radio/television	_____	_____
School newspapers	_____	_____
Magazines	_____	_____
Maryland State Department of Education	_____	_____
Maryland Association of Boards of Education	_____	_____
Professional publications	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____

PART III - GENERAL AND PERSONAL INFORMATIONDIRECTIONS: PLEASE RESPOND WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

13. Indicate the county in which you serve. _____
14. Are you male, female?
15. Are you Black, White, Hispanic,
 American Indian, Oriental, Other (please specify) _____
16. What is your age? _____
17. What is your highest educational attainment?
 less than high school graduate, four year college degree,
 high school graduate, advanced college degree.
 post-high school training.
18. What is your current occupation? _____
19. Do you have children attending the public (K-12) schools? Yes No
20. Do you have children attending other (K-12) schools? Yes No
21. Have you ever been employed by a public school system? Yes No
 If yes, in what capacity? (Please be specific.) _____
22. As of December 1, 1985, how many years have you served on the board of education? _____
23. Do you currently serve as an officer of your board? Yes No
24. Please estimate the number of hours per week (average) that you spend on board of education business. _____
25. What was the primary reason you sought membership on the board of education?
DIRECTIONS: Check only ONE response.
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement by incumbent board member(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal prestige |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To gain political experience | <input type="checkbox"/> To represent particular community groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disapproval of the operation of the schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire to serve the community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal challenge/satisfaction | <input type="checkbox"/> To gain influence in the community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approval of the operation of the schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement by community members (group) |

Please use the back of this sheet for your comments regarding this questionnaire or specific questions. We welcome your input.

PLEASE PLACE YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND MAIL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING

Maryland Association of Boards of Education



December 5, 1985

To: Board Members
From: President
Subject: Questionnaire Response

All of us are busier these days than we should be. Perhaps that is why we have not received a reply from the questionnaire which reached you, we hope, about three weeks ago. Perhaps you mislaid the questionnaire, or it may have been mishandled in the mail.

In any event, we are enclosing another copy of the questionnaire. We are sure you will try to find twenty minutes somewhere in your busy schedule to complete it and drop it in the nearest postal box. Many of them have been returned. We'd like to get them all back. Will you help us?

Thanks. We appreciate your assistance.

WHP:ehs

Enclosure

Maryland Association of Boards of Education



December 30, 1985

To: Board Members
From: rresident
Subject: Questionnaire Response

Perhaps your schedule has not allowed time for you to respond, but time is running short for us to complete the collection of responses to the opinion questionnaire sent to you previously. We hope that the end of the holiday season will bring a break in your schedule which will allow time for a response.

In order to make responding more convenient, we are enclosing another copy of the questionnaire. Please try to find twenty minutes to complete it and drop it in the nearest postal box. Most school board members in the state have responded to our previous requests by returning their questionnaires. We'd like to have input from everyone. We need your help.

Thanks again. We appreciate your assistance.

WHP:rj

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the scanned document**