

STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL  
IN QUEBEC ENGLISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

A study by Chase (1982) indicated that United States high school students held a generally positive attitude toward their schools. As the Quebec education scene has been going through a period of turmoil and change between 1976 and the present with much negative commentary, especially in the media, it was felt that a survey of Quebec Anglophone high school students' attitude towards school would be valuable. The purpose of the study was to analyze the attitudes of Quebec secondary students to their schools, to see how their attitudes were related to the public perception of these schools as reported in the media, and to see how their attitudes compared with other groups of students.

The study, based on a survey sample from Quebec Anglophone high school students, found that, with few exceptions, Quebec Anglophone and U.S. high school students (as reported by Chase) held similar, generally positive, attitudes toward school. The study found that student opinion of secondary schools was more positive than newspaper opinion. The study also found no significant difference between male and female students and that, by and large, student attitude towards school was not related to school size.

## Résumé

Une étude de Chase (1982) nous a révélé que les étudiants des écoles secondaires aux Etats-Unis ont une attitude généralement positive envers leurs écoles. L'éducation québécoise vient de passer à travers une période d'agitation et de changement entre 1976 et maintenant, et ceci a généré beaucoup de commentaires négatifs, surtout dans les médias; un sondage parmi les étudiants des écoles secondaires anglophones du Québec pourrait donc s'avérer valable. Le but de cette étude était d'analyser les attitudes des étudiants québécois au secondaire vis-à-vis leurs écoles pour voir la relation entre leurs attitudes et la perception du public décelée à travers les médias et pour comparer leurs attitudes avec d'autres groupes d'étudiants.

L'étude basée sur un échantillonnage d'étudiants des écoles secondaires anglophones du Québec a révélé que, à peu d'exceptions près, les étudiants anglophones québécois et les étudiants américains (selon Chase) avaient des attitudes similaires, généralement positives. L'étude a démontré que l'opinion des étudiants des écoles secondaires était plus positive que celle exprimée dans les journaux. L'étude a aussi démontré qu'il n'existe aucune différence significative entre les garçons et les filles et que, plus encore, l'attitude des étudiants vis-à-vis l'école n'était pas reliée à la grandeur de l'école.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction, Problem Statement and Limitations

#### 1.1 Introduction

Since 1960, the Quebec educational system has been in a state of change and turmoil. The change began in the 1960s as part of Jean Lesage's "Quiet Revolution". Paul Gerin-Lajoie created a non-denominational Ministry of Education, and authorized the Parent Commission to study Quebec education and make recommendations. This was followed by many changes, including the introduction of "comprehensive high schools"; two cycles of primary and two cycles of secondary education, and the CEGEP system. One effect all this change had on education was to give the Ministry of Education more influence and allow it to impose more uniformity of curricula and centralization of decision-making on Quebec's previously relatively independant confessional school boards.

Immediately after these structural changes came the political and linguistic turmoil of the "national question", which started in the late 1960s and have continued up until the present. The election of the Parti-Québécois in 1976 and the passage of the language law Bill 101 in 1977 started a trend to a decline in the English-speaking population of Quebec, including a decline in the English school population.

During this period of time, a general questioning and rethinking of education was sweeping North America. Increasing militant unionism among Quebec teachers led to strikes in 1967, 1972, 1976, and 1983; and, in turn, led to more negative public and government attitudes towards syndical actions. This culminated in the wage rollbacks, strikes and a decreed contract of 1983, which seemed to have affected negatively teacher morale. As well, the teaching population was becoming more aged.



In the late 1970s, the Ministry of Education introduced its Régime Pedagogique, which imposed even more central control and uniformity of curricula on Quebec schools. Finally, the government has recently reintroduced a plan to replace confessional school boards with linguistic ones.

This period of change, conflict and turmoil in the Quebec education scene has been reflected, as in the rest of North America, by a fairly negative image in the popular media, and by inference, in the eye of the public.

A survey of the then only provincial-level Anglophone newspaper, the *Montreal Gazette*, revealed a preponderance of negative articles; for example, "Do Costly Schools Provide a Second-Rate Education?" (November 1, 1986). Many similar articles using similar tones appeared in both the popular media in Quebec, Canada and the United States, and even in the educational journals, for example, OISE surveys and *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine's annual rating of the American system.

However, a number of American researchers working on attitude to school in the U.S. found that students, on the whole, had positive attitudes toward their schools. In particular, Chase (1982) and Thornburg (1985) found that student attitudes toward their schools were more positive than negative. An Australian researcher, Poole (1984) also indicated that students were happy with the status quo in their schools.

Since the students themselves are the "clients" of the educational system, it was considered that their attitudes toward those school systems must be considered significant for the following reasons: It might be assumed, among other things, that positive student attitude is related to better grades in school. Also, positive attitude towards school might be linked to greater participation in school activities. A more tentative assumption might link positive attitude towards school to a "transference" of this positive attitude to work and/or family later in life. Finally, it may be seen that positive attitudes are a reflection of students liking and enjoying school. Research into "effective schools" indicates the importance of a positive school climate, which might be revealed by the collective positive attitudes of a school's students.

If student attitude to school in Quebec were shown to be more positive than negative, this would have significant implications for educational administrators, counsellors and teachers, particularly in the face of negative publicity in the media. Therefore, it was considered important to make a survey to see what opinion regarding Quebec Anglophone high school students would be. An instrument similar to that used by Chase was administered to a sample of the English high school population.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to survey the attitude of Quebec Anglophone high school students to their schools, to analyze these attitudes, to see if their attitudes were different than the attitudes revealed in the media, and to see how their attitudes compared with other groups of students.

## 1.3 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to surveying the attitudes of Quebec Anglophone high school students, due to the constraints of time and resources. As Chase's study had provided an instrument consisting of 34 attitude measures on various aspects of school life, it was decided to modify this instrument and apply it to Quebec Anglophone high school students. As indicated in Chapter III, it was considered to be a valid instrument for Quebec Anglophone high schools.

The *Montreal Gazette* newspaper was, at the time of this study, the only provincial-level Anglophone daily newspaper, and was considered to be of some influence in the Quebec Anglophone community, so analysis of media attitude to education was largely confined to this source.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

#### 2.1 An Overview of the Chapter

This chapter contains a review of the literature pertinent to both student attitude to school and the Quebec English media's attitude to education. It consists firstly of some definitions of "attitude" and of "student attitudes"; then a review of theoretical writings on student attitudes follows, as well as research and journal articles on the same subject. Finally, the media view of education in Quebec, as expressed by the Montreal Gazette, is presented. The chapter concludes with the development of two hypotheses and four research questions to further define the problem statement presented in the first chapter.

#### 2.2 Limitations and Scope of the Literature Review

A thorough search was conducted of the research literature on student attitudes toward secondary schools dating back to 1966. This involved not only an ERIC search and a search of Dissertations Abstract International, but also an independant search of relevant journals including: the High School Journal, Adolescence, the Journal of Educational Research, and the Phi Delta Kappan. As the instrument to be used in this study was based on that used by Chase, the search tended to focus on literature about survey studies of student attitude.

The review of the popular media in Quebec was limited mainly to the Montreal Gazette, which at the time could be considered the most influential, province-wide representative of Anglophone print media in Quebec. The review went back as far as 1982 to cover the start of the present turbulent period of education in Quebec.

### 2.3 Definitions

An attitude is an emotional predisposition for a person to act in some way towards another person, object or ideal; "[although] a predisposition to act does not... imply that a person behaves in correspondance to his measured attitude" (Thornburg, 1980). Environmental stimuli coupled with one's attitudes and beliefs shape behaviour. A survey of a large group's attitudes would give indicators of that group's possible behaviour, but would not be able to predict behaviour of individuals within that large group.

Attitudes can be classified as either negative or positive.

Attitudes to school therefore, would be predispositions to act negatively or positively toward either the school itself (including the physical plant, the organization and the staff) and/or to concepts of school, education and learning. "Attitude towards school" may be a global concept that contains a number of separate dimensions, or it may be multifaceted.

### 2.4 Theory on Student Attitudes

This section first looks at some research on general theory on attitude which has some relevance to student attitude towards school, and then it looks at educational theory on student attitudes.

Porter and Lawler (1965) studied attitudes in the context of organizational theory. They found that organization size - particularly the size of the organizational subunit - was related to member attitude. Subunit size was found to be associated strongly with job satisfaction attitudes.

In education, class size and/or school size may be related to student attitude. Isherwood and Hammah (1981) found an inverse relationship between attitude and school size in Quebec high schools. Students in lower grades had a more positive attitude than students in higher grades. It would appear that smaller schools (i.e. subunits) are related to more positive attitudes.

Rigby (1985) confirmed earlier research that there is a weak relationship between attitudes to authority and behaviour, but indicated the need for further research. However, he did indicate that students were significantly less pro-authority than non-students on each of the three measures he had used to examine the relationship between attitudes to authority and behaviour.

Thornburg (1980) studied theoretical aspects of student attitudes. He indicated that systematic attitudinal research in education is lacking, and that scales designed to measure student attitudes must consider what is being assessed, and whether this is primarily an outcome of the cognitive, affective or behavioural domain.

Thornburg (1985) also looked at the results of three different studies of student attitudes in American middle (i.e. junior high) schools, done in different schools at different times, and he found that student attitudes were more positive than negative.

Finally, Isherwood and Ahola (1981) stated that it is not clear how a student's attitude relates to behaviour at school. They indicate the need for further research on the topic of student attitudes and quality of school life.

To summarize, the literature indicates that the size of the subunit might have an effect on attitude, that smaller schools are related to more positive student attitude, and that students have more positive than negative attitudes to school. However, both the general theory and the educational theory on the topic of attitudes and student attitudes is relatively sparse.

#### 2.5 Research on Student Attitudes as Reported in the Journals

This segment looks more particularly at research that specifically studies the topic of student attitudes toward school. Both research reported in the journals and articles critical of schools are reviewed.

Chase (1982) conducted research through an attitude survey which was administered to 10,000 secondary school students throughout the United States. His study found that students had more positive than negative attitudes toward their schools. But he also found that the students did have negative attitudes toward some aspect of school life, such as administration and counselling.

In a previous article (1981), Chase's conclusions were also positive, but with some reservations: " [Students] tend to be less happy with everything than either teachers or parents believe them to be...Moreover...A sometimes sizable subgroup of students is displeased, unhappy, disappointed with schools." (p 5)

In an earlier study, Esther Bass (1981) applied a student-attitude measure (SAM) to 234 students in a high school of all grades in a single school setting. The SAM measured student attitudes under five categories: motivation; affective, academic self-concept; cognitive, academic self-concept; student sense of control over performance; and instructional mastery.

She found no significant relationship between attitude to school and student achievement among grade 11 students, and no significant relationship between students' attitudes and attendance for students from grade 9 to grade 12. No difference existed between the means for student attitude in each grade when compared with the means of other grades covered by the study.

Finally, no difference existed between male and female attitudes on most measures. But there was a significant difference on motivation for schooling and sense of control over performance, with females being more highly motivated than males, and females having a greater sense of control over performance.

Colton and White (1985) studied satisfaction of high school students, and found that if students perceived a high availability of rewarding aspects in the school environment, they reported higher levels of satisfaction with school. Factors of "rewarding aspects" included dedicated and interesting teachers, rewarding classes, administration treating students like adults, and teacher interest in students.



Poole (1984) described "the school adolescents would like". Studying responses from 1,596 Australian adolescents in thirty-two secondary schools, he found that the majority of the students were happy with the status quo in their schools.

Neale, Gill and Tismer (1970) looked at the relationship between attitudes toward school subjects and student achievement among primary school students. Like Bass, they found no statistically significant relationship between attitudes to school and school achievement. They also found that children's attitudes to school subjects became increasingly less positive as they progressed through school. Richards, Gaver and Golicz (1984) researched the attitudes of academically unpredictable primary school children to school subjects. They found that **overachievers** had the least positive attitudes toward school subjects, while students in the "middle" range (neither under nor overachievers) had the most positive attitude toward their school subjects.

Finally, Traugh and Duell (1980) looked at secondary student attitudes towards the idea of evaluating their teachers. They found that secondary students had less positive attitudes toward evaluating their teachers, but felt that their evaluations would have no effect on how their teachers taught.

These studies, while dealing with student attitude, do not directly address the question of high school students' attitudes toward their schools, but tend to support the generally positive findings by Chase, Thornburg and Bass.

## 2.6 General Criticisms of Education and Schools

Each year, Phi Delta Kappan magazine publishes a "report card", whereby American education is graded on a scale from "A" to "F", based on a survey of parents of both public and non-public school students. In 1986 over 50% rated their schools "B" or "C", with "C" getting 41%. Although considered to be higher than previous years, this was not an overwhelming vote of confidence. A comparable Canadian study by OISE (1982) provided similar results. Galbo (1983) indicated one reason for these low "grades" may be that public schools are simply handy scapegoats for a general public and social malaise.

Finally, *Life in Secondary School* (1982), based on interviews with Francophone secondary school students in Quebec, found a fair amount of disenchantment with their schools among this group of students. In a number of direct quotes from the students, who used strong language, criticism was directed mainly to the physical conditions of the schools ("La cafetière est un lieu pourri [sic]"). No strong criticism of teachers or education was offered, however, a general thrust of the study was the students' disenchantment with the dehumanization of the schools. It could indicate that a tendency for similar disenchantment might appear among English high school students. However, the findings of the study are from Francophone students, and seem to be directed at physical conditions. The reader should take this into account when considering this article.

To summarize, Chase, Thornburg, Bass and Poole seemed to indicate that student attitude towards school was more positive than negative. Other studies supported this finding, but with some reservations.

The last segment indicates that surveys of parent and public opinion as reported by Phi Delta Kappan and OISE have less positive attitudes to education and school, while Life in Secondary School reports strongly negative attitudes among Quebec Francophone students.

#### 2.6.1 Criticism of Research on Student Attitudes

This section presents a critical overview of the research reviewed so far.

Porter and Lawler's study dealt with attitude in general only in the context of organizational theory, but they indicate that a relationship between subunit size and member attitude existed. This appeared to be supported by Isherwood and Hammah's survey research which indicated that smaller schools are related to more positive attitudes. Thornburg (1985), reporting the results of three different studies of American middle schools found that student attitudes were more positive than negative, while Isherwood and Ahola, in an ethnographic investigation, found that it was not clear how a student's attitude related to behaviour at school. Despite the fact that these studies gave a strong positive indication of student attitude, none of the research was specifically focused on the question of student attitude towards school. Thornburg's findings were

reported as a summary without strong empirical, statistical or methodological background. A number of the studies indicated what became obvious to this author, namely the relative sparseness of theory on student attitude towards school and the requirement for further research.

As for journal research, Chase found through an attitude survey administered to 10,000 secondary school students that students had more positive than negative attitudes toward their schools. However, in reporting his study, Chase gave few details of methodology, including the sample selection and the actual details of administering the survey. This could give doubts as to how representative his sample was with its implications for generalization to the student population.

Bass' study, on the other hand, was administered to 234 students in a single school setting. Therefore this also causes problems in generalization to the whole population. Colton and White studied student satisfaction, which could be related to student attitude, but their study does not directly touch on student attitude.

Poole's study used content analysis of written replies from 1,596 Australian adolescents in thirty-two secondary schools to find that the majority of the students were happy with the status quo in their schools. This could be interpreted to mean that they had a positive attitude towards their schools. However, this study was conducted in Australia, so it cannot be concluded that its findings could apply to the student

population in Quebec. On the other hand, there are some similarities in culture and public institutions between Australia and Canada. Therefore positive attitude in Australia could be an indicator of positive attitude in Canada.

The other studies reviewed touched on student attitude to school, but Neale, Gill and Tismer and Richards, Gaver and Golicz restricted their studies to attitudes among elementary schools, while Traugh and Duell were concerned with student attitude towards the idea of evaluating their teachers.

Finally, Phi Delta Kappan's report card and the OISE 1982 study used popular polling to "grade" schools, a method which seems closer to popular media polling than to scientific study. Only *Life in Secondary Schools* found Francophone disenchantment with their schools, but seems to have used interviews and quotations rather than quantifiable measures to report their findings, which focus mainly on student attitude towards the physical aspect of their schools.

## 2.7 The Popular View of Education in Quebec

Research was conducted at the archives of the Montreal Gazette in the education file, which contained relevant clippings from other Quebec newspapers, French and English, back to May 1982. There were 131 articles and editorials of significant (i.e. more than fifty words) length. Of these, 83 were judged by this writer to be "negative". However, of these 83 "negative" articles, 50 were concerned with the proposed restructuring of Quebec school boards from a confessional to a linguistic basis - variously titled Bill 40, Bill 3 and Bill 59. It was felt that this subject was not relevant to the topic of this thesis.

The remaining 33 articles covered a wide range of concerns influenced by different dramatic events in Quebec education over the past four-and-a-half years. Initially, back in May 1982, the item of controversy was the Education Ministry's putting the matriculation pass mark up to 60% from 50% as part of the Régime Pédagogique. This massive restructuring of the Quebec

school curriculum started late in the 1970s. The change in the pass mark, implemented in May 1982, provoked a few weeks of student unrest and strikes, mainly in French language high schools. The situation prompted the *Gazette* to state that, in fact, striking students were "...fed up with the depersonalization that characterizes the teaching factories they pass through. They want more power and communication." (May 8, 1982)

The next crisis in Quebec education was the labor unrest of 1982-1983, which stemmed from the Quebec government's attempt to decrease government spending, by first requesting and then decreeing wage rollbacks among most of its employees, including teachers. This, in turn, led to a bitter strike by the teachers for several weeks in January/February 1983; a strike which was ended by government decree - Bill 111.

By and large, the *Gazette* was supportive of the government action, although not the severity of some of its means, and critical of the teachers' strike. However, one editorial, at the height of the strike in February 1983, did state that, although the teachers should get back to work, that "[The Quebec educational system] is being poked, battered, and reshaped so mindlessly and aggressively, it may suffer long-term damage." (February 12, 1983)

A later editorial, written several months after the end of the strike was decreed, continued in a similar vein under the heading "Education in Danger". The editorial stated "...From kindergarten to university, the Quebec education system is in a dangerously unstable condition [stemming from] ...chaotic labor conditions and [Education Minister] Laurin's attempt to radically restructure school systems..." (January 30, 1984)

A Gazette article in April 1985, quoted then Education Minister Bérubé's statement that the hiring of more teachers won't help problems which stem "from a vast impressional school structure" (April 10, 1985).

In April 1986, the holding of the "Estates General" on Quebec education - a series of public meetings involving all elements of Quebec education to comment on and make recommendations on the future of Quebec's education, provoked a flurry of articles, columns and editorial comment.

An editorial on April 9, 1986 was titled "Begin with the Basics". It applauded Claude Ryan's remarks made at the Estates General which called for "the more rigorous training of young Quebecers in the key disciplines of reading, writing and arithmetic..." and further commented..."It is merely a recognition that the system is failing students in the most fundamental way and will go on failing them unless it becomes more intellectually demanding..." (April 9, 1986).

A column by Don MacPherson in the same issue was headed "Quebec Needs a Better Return on Education" and made the point that Quebec already has a higher expenditure per pupil than Ontario, that most of the money is spent on bureaucratic structure, and that there was no provision to reward good teachers in a collective agreement with rigid salary scales (April 9, 1986).

In September of 1986, the Gazette ran the results of a nationwide poll on education conducted August 25 - 30 by Angus Reid Associates under the headline "Quebecers Say Public Education was Better 25 Years Ago". The poll indicated that 59% of people surveyed in Quebec (from a sample of 403) felt



that education was worse twenty-five years ago, as opposed to the total Canadian population (1675 surveyed) where 43% felt that education was better twenty-five years ago.

Finally, in November 1986, the Gazette ran a series entitled "Trouble in Education" which started with an article entitled "Do Costly Schools Provide Second-Rate Education?" This article and the ones following summarized many of the problems enumerated in earlier editorials and articles; overlarge, impersonal high schools with reputations for drugs, violence, etc.; aging, burnt out teachers teaching chaotically planned and implemented courses brought in by the "Régime Pédagogique"; and the increasing popularity of private schools (November 1, 1986). The final word was with La Presse, where an article by André Pratte wondered why principals did not continue the practice of making evaluatory visits to teachers' classes. The article stated that principals had too little control or discipline over teachers (January 17, 1987).

To summarize: In the span of years from May 1982 to January 1987, of 131 articles on education in the "education" file of the Gazette archives, 83 were negative. (Of this number, 50 dealt with school board restructuring.) Of the 33 remaining articles, the recurrent theme was its lack of success, its lack of basics, its overbureaucratization, its large, impersonal high school system, and its lack of discipline and over-unionized teachers. Interestingly, student attitudes were mentioned only in four articles, two dealing with the protests over the 60% rate, and two in the November 1986 series. The students were said to be dissatisfied with the impersonal system.

The media reports reviewed have provided an almost uniformly negative picture of education in Quebec. The main motivation would appear to be the desire to sell newspapers. Negative stories ("yellow" journalism) seem to attract more attention than positive ones. This is particularly so when the headlines also seem to imply wastage of taxpayers' money (through spending on schools that don't seem to teach).

On top of this, the *Gazette* seems to have an axe to grind with Quebec teachers, which through this author's personal recollections, seems to have dated from the early 1970's, when teachers were identified with Yvon Charbonneau (head of the CEQ- the Quebec Francophone teachers' union) and the other members of the "radical" Common Front during the labour difficulties of that time. In numerous articles and editorials, the *Gazette* has implied that Quebec teachers are overpaid, underworked, don't do their jobs properly and certainly have no right to go on strike.

#### 2.8 Commentary

The public view of education in Quebec, as expressed in the English Quebec's main newspaper, the *Gazette*, as well as other papers, indicated a strong public dissatisfaction with schools and an education system that was in turmoil. Little student opinion was reported, but what was reported was student dissatisfaction with a higher passing rate and a generally impersonal system.

Public opinion surveys on education in both Canada and the United States were generally more favourable toward schools, but they were still more negative than positive.

Student attitudes as studied by Chase, Thornburg and others, indicated that students were more positive than negative toward schools. The sole exception was the Quebec Superior Council's *Life in Secondary School* which did indicate strong disenchantment among the Francophone high school student population, particularly with the physical plant and the general dehumanization of Quebec's large comprehensive high schools. There were no comments on Anglophone high schools. This indicated a need to research if a similar attitude was prevalent among Anglophone high school students.

## 2.9 Rationale, Hypotheses and Research Questions

The findings of Chase, Thornburg and other American researchers indicated that American high school students have more positive than negative attitudes toward their schools. The Quebec Anglophone community is part of the larger North American community, and is strongly influenced by the United States. Also, Quebec Anglophone high schools are more similar to U.S. high schools than to secondary schools on other continents. The following hypothesis was thus developed:

### Hypothesis One

There will be no difference between Quebec Anglophone and American high school students' attitudes toward school. Moreover, both groups would have more positive than negative attitudes.

The review of the literature, especially the Gazette, indicated that the media has somewhat negative attitudes toward school and education. Yet the research indicated that students seemed to have positive attitudes toward school. This led to the development of the next hypothesis:

### Hypothesis Two

The media perception of student attitudes toward school in Quebec is different from the student perception of their attitude to school.

Finally, the literature, particularly Bass' study, encouraged the development of four research questions to further define the problem, and to analyze the data collected on student attitude in Quebec; that is, among Anglophone high schools:

### Research Questions

1. Is student attitude towards school related to the sex of the student?
2. Is student attitude towards school related to the grade of the student?
3. Is student attitude towards school related to the size of the school?
4. Is student attitude towards school related to the location (urban, suburban, rural) of the school?

## Chapter III.

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Design

This study employed a sample survey as a basis for its design. The study by Chase which inspired this paper was based on a sample survey of 10,000 students selected from the total high school population of the United States. Chase collected data from twenty-four systems located in twenty-two states across the United States.

The population sampled for this study was the English secondary school population in Quebec. By drawing a random sample from this population, it was considered that the findings would hold for the entire population. The sample survey method yielded a cross-section view of student attitudes among Quebec high school students at one point in time.

#### 3.2 The Sample

At the time of this study, the English secondary school population was estimated to be approximately 100,000 students distributed among some eighty or more institutions across the province. Some of these institutions in rural settings comprised all grades. Others contained grades eight to eleven, while the majority comprised grades seven to eleven. In order to achieve no more than 5.5% error 95% of the time, a sample of 320 students was required, with at least a 50% return rate for the questionnaires. To achieve this figure, at least sixteen schools selected at random from the total population had to return survey questionnaires completed by twenty

students. Twenty-five schools were randomly selected from the population of more than eighty.

The sample was a stratified sample with five questionnaires administered at random to five grade 8 males, five grade 8 females, five grade 10 males and five grade 10 females in each school. This had to be done in the interests of limited time and resources.

### 3.3 Instrumentation

The instrument used was a questionnaire, the **Student Opinion Inventory (SOI)**, based on the one used by Chase (1982). The SOI contained 34 items, using a Likert-type response scaled 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, where 5 was the most positive attitude and 1 was the least positive attitude (See Appendix for the questionnaire). The questionnaire consisted of:

- a. 6 items measuring student attitudes to school administrators
- b. 5 items measuring student attitudes to school counsellors
- c. 3 items measuring student attitudes to learning
- d. 12 items measuring student attitudes to the students' school
- e. 8 items measuring student attitudes to their teachers

There might have been misgivings about the validity of using an American developed instrument to measure attitudes among Anglophone Quebec high school students. Therefore, a detailed content analysis of the number and nature of the attitude measures employed in the Chase inventory was made,

with a particular regard to the wording of the questions. It was felt that there was nothing in the wording of the attitude measures which would not apply to Quebec Anglophone high schools, and therefore, the SOI would be valid as an instrument to measure attitude among Quebec Anglophone high school students. To compare this study's findings to those of Chase, it was necessary to use the same instrument to measure attitude.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Once each target school had been determined by random selection, each principal was mailed twenty questionnaires with an appropriate covering letter. The questionnaires were stratified and classified by grade and sex as described before. Each principal was guaranteed total anonymity for both his school and for the student responses. Each principal was asked to select ten grade 8 and ten grade 10 students; five of each sex, randomly selected by alphabetical order from the school's rolls. The principals were asked to give the questionnaires to all the students in one room at the same time, and all schools were asked to give the test during the same week. Finished questionnaires were mailed back with provided self-addressed, stamped envelopes.

Eighteen schools returned 346 questionnaires. While all twenty-five schools did not respond, the sample of 346 students provided data that could represent English secondary student attitudes to school.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The hypotheses and research questions were analyzed on an IBM P.C., using Walonick's STATPAC program.

Hypothesis one and hypothesis two (where applicable) were tested by analyzing the mean item scores and the distribution of scores obtained on each of the thirty-four attitude measures.

Research questions one and two were tested by using a two-way analysis of variance for the mean item scores of boys and girls in both grades eight and ten.

Research question three was tested using a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between the mean item scores for each attitude measure and the population of each school measured in hundreds.

Research question four, as will be detailed, could not be tested statistically.

Finally, a factor analysis was conducted to see which attitude measures clustered together, and to see how their factor structure compared to that established by Chase.



## Chapter IV

### Results

#### 4.1 Testing the Hypotheses

Hypothesis One (H1): There will be no difference between Quebec and United States high school students' attitude toward school.

This hypothesis was tested by comparing the mean item scores of U.S. students on 34 attitude measures, as reported by Chase (1982), with the mean item scores of Quebec high school students using the same attitude measures. Guilford (1965) noted that if one mean falls outside the confidence limits around another mean, then the former mean is not likely (95% of the time) to have come from a population similar to the latter mean. If the U.S. mean item scores fell within the 95% confidence interval for the Quebec mean item scores on the same item, it was considered that the attitudes of the two groups were the same for that item, whereas if the U.S. mean fell outside the confidence limit, the two groups were considered to hold a different attitude on the item.

On 29 out of the 34 items, there was no difference between U.S. student attitudes and Quebec Anglophone high school student attitudes (See Table 1). It seemed therefore, with few exceptions, Quebec Anglophone and U.S. students held similar attitudes to school, and these attitudes were mainly positive ones.

The Quebec mean item scores were lower than U.S. mean item scores for the following three items:

Item 11: How many of your teachers are willing to give students individual help outside of class time?

Item 14: How much help does your counsellor give you in the selection of courses?

Item 18: If you had a problem or suggestion for the administration, how long would you have to wait to see the administration?

It seemed Quebec students felt that their teachers would give them less individual help outside class than their U.S. counterparts, and they felt that their counsellors were less help in course selection. Also, Quebec students thought they had to wait longer than U.S. students to see their school administration.

The Quebec mean item scores were higher than the U.S. mean item scores for the following measures:

Item 2: In how many of the activities in your school would you feel you would be accepted?

Item 28: All things considered, how much are you learning from your school work?

Quebec students felt they would be accepted in more school activities than their U.S. counterparts. As well, Quebec students thought that they are learning more from their school work than U.S. students.

Table 1

Comparison of Quebec and United States Students' Attitudes

Variable Number	U.S. Mean	Quebec Mean	95% Confidence Interval Quebec Mean
1	2.73	2.799	2.585 - 3.013
2	3.37 <sup>xx</sup>	3.582	3.455 - 3.709
3	2.93	3.141	2.911 - 3.371
4	3.67	3.793	3.596 - 3.991
5	3.37	3.313	3.109 - 3.516
6	3.68	3.800	3.670 - 3.930
7	3.58	3.666	3.557 - 3.776
8	3.54	3.433	3.309 - 3.557
9	3.46	3.559	3.422 - 3.696
10	3.60	3.576	3.476 - 3.676
11	3.40 <sup>xx</sup>	3.196	2.994 - 3.399
12	2.87	2.773	2.580 - 2.965
13	3.14	3.040	2.792 - 3.288
14	3.36 <sup>xx</sup>	3.030	2.780 - 3.280
15	3.50	3.481	3.280 - 3.681
16	2.98	2.864	2.603 - 3.126
17	2.70	2.537	2.232 - 2.843
18	3.29 <sup>xx</sup>	2.782	2.595 - 2.970
19	3.19	3.280	3.061 - 3.499
20	2.87	2.939	2.699 - 3.180
21	2.76	2.874	2.562 - 3.187
22	2.69	2.618	2.341 - 2.895
23	2.54	2.492	2.292 - 2.693
24	3.23	3.316	3.124 - 3.509
25	3.32	3.229	3.098 - 3.361
26	3.54	3.561	3.413 - 3.709
27	3.52	3.550	3.382 - 3.718
28	3.39 <sup>xx</sup>	3.757	3.610 - 3.904
29	3.68	3.632	3.353 - 3.910
30	3.57	3.496	3.171 - 3.821
31	3.52	3.473	3.215 - 3.730
32	3.42	3.293	2.970 - 3.617
33	3.42	3.249	2.917 - 3.580
34	3.42	3.450	3.350 - 3.640

xx =  $\bar{x}$  significantly different than other  $\bar{x}$

Hypothesis Two (H2): The media perception of student attitudes toward school in Quebec is different from the student perception of their attitude to school.

An examination of the mean item scores for Quebec students on the 34 attitude measures showed that students had a positive ( $\bar{x}$ 23.00) response on 25 of these attitude measures. Clearly, this indicates that students hold positive attitudes about Quebec high schools.

The Gazette, as reviewed in the literature, carried 131 education articles, of which 83 were judged to be negative during the period May 1982 - November 1986. Thirty-nine of these articles were relevant to the topic of attitude to schools, and all were negative.

It must be born in mind that the Gazette is not the sole source of public opinion among Quebec's English-speaking population, yet it remained the only English provincial daily newspaper (at the time of this study), and it is influential in articulating public opinion.

The hypothesis cannot be tested statistically, since Gazette opinion was not quantified. But it is clear that student attitudes toward high school in Quebec do not parallel newspaper opinion, as revealed in the Gazette articles. Therefore, hypothesis two is accepted. Furthermore, student opinion of secondary schools is more positive than newspaper opinion.

#### 4.2 Answering the Research Questions

The first two research questions were:

RQ1: Is student attitude towards school related to the sex of the student?

RQ2: Is student attitude towards school related to the grade of the student?

The answers to these two research questions were determined by a two-way analysis of variance. This analysis sought differences by sex, by grade or by the interaction of sex and grade.

For 22 of the 34 measures, there was no significant relationship between student attitude and either the sex or the grade of the student.

There was a significant difference in attitude between male and female students on two items.

There was a significant difference in attitude between grade 8 and grade 10 students on eight items.

There were significant interactions between the sex and grade of students on four items. Those items where significant differences occurred are presented in Table 2.

Females in grade eight were most positive of all groups about belonging in school, while grade eight and grade ten males were equally positive on this item.

Grade eight females felt more positive than other groups about the suitability of sponsors of student activities to be the sponsors of that

activity. Together grade eight females and grade ten males were more positive than grade eight males and grade ten females on this item.

Grade ten students were more positive than grade eight students about: how well teachers explain assignments; how much help teachers are willing to give outside of class time; their treatment by school counsellors; and the amount of help given by school counsellors in the selection of courses, vocations, colleges and vocational or trade schools.

Grade eight students gave school spirit in their schools a higher rating than did grade ten students, although both groups were positive.

Females were more satisfied than males with the way the administration included students in decision-making about student "centered" affairs such as dress codes, dances and assemblies.

In addition to the items discussed above, grade eight females and grade ten males together had more positive responses than grade eight males and grade ten females about the amount of personal encouragement they received from the administration in school work, and about the number of student activities in which they would like to participate.

In summary, most students had similar attitudes to school. Some differences existed for males and females, and between grade 8 and grade 10 students.

Table 2

## Two-Way Analysis of Variance for Attitude to School

by Grade and Sex Where a Significant Difference

was Found

Item No.	Description	Sex			Grade			Interaction F
		$\bar{X}$ Male	$\bar{X}$ Female	F	$\bar{X}_8$	$\bar{X}_{10}$	F	
3	In how many student activities would you like to participate, do you participate?	3.09	3.23	1.348	3.20	3.13	0.232	<u>5.236</u>
4	How often do you feel you "belong" in school?	3.86	3.75	0.675	3.93	3.69	<u>3.829</u>	<u>4.102</u>
5	How many of the sponsors of activities do you feel are suited to the activity?	3.19	3.43	<u>4.296</u>	3.38	3.24	1.231	<u>6.713</u>
7	How often do your teachers explain what to do in assignments?	3.74	3.58	3.054	3.55	3.77	<u>5.565</u>	0.135
11	How many of your teachers are willing to help outside of class time?	3.11	3.23	1.180	2.96	3.37	<u>11.862</u>	0.665
13	How much help does your counsellor give you in selection of a college etc.?	3.10	3.01	0.226	2.71	3.37	<u>17.851</u>	2.740
14	How much help does your counsellor give you in selection of courses?	3.02	3.10	0.375	2.77	3.33	<u>13.533</u>	1.018
15	In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with way you are treated by counsellors?	3.48	3.48	0.001	3.28	3.66	<u>7.570</u>	1.128
16	How much help does a counsellor give you in selection of a vocation?	2.85	2.94	0.571	2.57	3.19	<u>17.143</u>	1.139
21	Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with way administration includes students in making decisions about student activities?	2.71	2.99	<u>3.742</u>	2.91	2.80	0.520	1.139
22	How much personal encouragement does administration give you regarding school work?	2.70	2.59	0.589	2.66	2.63	0.018	<u>9.250</u>
30	How would you rate "school spirit" at your school?	3.51	3.52	0.073	3.72	3.33	<u>8.488</u>	0.000

The third research question was:

RQ3: Is student attitude towards school related to the size of the school?

To answer this question, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was calculated between school size in terms of hundreds of students and thirty-three attitude measures.

For thirty of the attitude measures, there was no significant relationship between school size and student attitude ( $p \geq .050$ ,  $r \leq .500$ ). Therefore, by and large, attitude is **not** related to school size.

For the following items, a significant relationship was observed:

Item no. 3: "In how many of the activities you would like to participate in, do you participate?"

The correlation was  $-.617$ , with  $p = .01$ . This indicated an inverse relationship between school size and participation in school activities. It seemed that in larger schools, students did not feel they could participate in activities they wanted to to the same extent as did students in smaller schools.

Item no. 13: "How much help does your counsellor give you in the selection of a college, vocational or trade school?"

The correlation was  $-.542$  with  $p = .03$ . This indicated an inverse relationship between school size and student perception of the amount of help given by counsellors in selecting post-high school educational facilities. It



seemed that counsellors in smaller schools were seen to be more of a help to students in selecting post-secondary schools than counsellors in larger schools.

Item no. 22: "How much personal encouragement does the administration give you with your school work?"

The correlation was  $-.584$  with  $p = .02$ . This indicated an inverse relationship between school size and student perception of the amount of personal encouragement given by the administration concerning school work. It seemed students in smaller schools felt they got more personal encouragement in their school work by administrators than their counterparts in larger schools (See Table 3 for a complete listing of "r" for all attitude measure items.).

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Between School Size  
in Hundreds of Students and 33 Attitude Measure Items

Variable Number	"r"
1	-0.103
2	-0.427
3	-0.617*
4	0.110
5	0.142
6	0.042
7	-0.214
8	-0.430
9	0.019
10	-0.339
11	-0.159
12	-0.231
13	-0.542*
14	0.479
15	-0.206
16	-0.257
17	-0.372
18	0.169
19	-0.250
20	-0.481
21	-0.156
22	-0.584*
23	-0.306
24	0.314
25	0.178
26	0.043
27	0.155
28	0.038
29	-0.051
30	-0.234
31	0.142
32	0.231
33	0.113

Table      Correlation and linear regression  
results for variables 1-33 versus  
school population range.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ,  $r \geq .50$

The fourth research question was:

RQ4: Is student attitude towards school related to the location (urban, suburban or rural) of the school?

The number of schools sampled was twenty-five, of which eighteen sent back replies. These included rural, urban and suburban schools. This made the size of the subgroups to be tested too small to be statistically valid enough for any generalization to be made. Therefore, research question four could not be answered.

#### 4.3 Additional Findings

##### 4.3.1 Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was done as both an added dimension of attitude analysis, as well as a basis of comparison to the factor analysis done by Chase in the original study. Using STATPAC only permits thirty items to enter a factor analysis at a time. As the study involved 34 attitude measures, the following was done: "Attitude to Administrators" reoccurred as a factor in a number of factor analyses of thirty items, therefore these six items (variables 18 - 23) were removed from the set of thirty-four and another factor analysis was done. With a rule of thumb for assigning an item to a factor of an item - factor correlation  $> .45$  on one factor, and  $< .36$  on all other factors, the following analysis emerged. Twenty-nine items were

assigned to factors. The factors were:

1. Pride/Satisfaction with School - 6 items - variables 29 - 34
2. Attitude to Teachers - 7 items - variables 6 - 12
3. Attitude to Counsellors - 5 items - variables 13 - 17
4. Attitude to Learning - 5 items - variables 24 - 28
5. Attitude to Administration - 3 items - variables 20, 22, 23
6. Attitude to Extra-Curricular - 3 items - variables 1 - 3

#### Activities

See Appendix B for tables of factor analyses.

Factor 1 - Pride in school was the strongest factor with 24% of the variance.

Factor 2 - Attitude to teachers was next at 23% of the variance.

Factor 3 - Attitude to counsellors was next at 22% of the variance.

Factors 4 and 5 - Attitude to learning and attitude to administration were both at 16% of the variance.

Factor 6 - Attitude to extra-curricular activities was last with 12% of the variance.

As these six discreet factors continuously appeared in a series of factor analyses, it was accepted that 29 of the 34 attitude measures could be assigned to the six discreet factors described above.

#### 4.3.2 Aggregated Data Analysis

With the identification of the discreet factors as described before, STATPAC was used to aggregate the data received for 34 attitude measures into six new aggregated attitude measures, corresponding to the six factors identified before. The aggregated measures with their mean item scores were:

Table 4  
Aggregated Attitude Measures with Mean Item Scores

Number	Measure	$\bar{x}$
1	Attitude to ECA	3.173
2	Attitude to Teachers	3.428
3	Attitude to Counsellors	2.989
4	Attitude to Administration	2.832
5	Attitude to Learning	3.482
6	Pride in School	3.429

Four out of six of the aggregated mean item scores were positive (>3.0), and the other two were close to positive, confirming the finding that student attitude towards school was more positive than negative. In particular, aggregate measure number six "Pride in School", with measure number five "Attitude to Learning" was most positive, while "Attitude to Counsellors" and "Attitude to Administration" were slightly negative, reflecting earlier findings.

Data for each of these six aggregated attitude measures was then produced for the eighteen schools which responded to the survey. This enabled the production of tabular and graphic school "profiles" for these aggregated attitude measures, as presented in Table 5 and Figure 1.

It is clear that student attitudes to school, when aggregated, enable the development of school level attitude profiles. Some schools have students who are more positive about their school than do other schools. For example, students in school 17 have very positive attitudes to all aspects (the six factors) of their school.

Table 5

School Size		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
1	1050	2.65	3.12	2.75	2.48	3.38	3.44
2	730	3.38	3.91	2.79	3.13	3.87	4.09
3	1225	3.02	3.65	3.10	2.68	3.29	3.15
4	1300	3.35	3.66	3.06	2.75	3.78	3.76
5	Not Given	3.10	3.79	2.80	3.44	3.84	3.07
6	1031	2.59	3.17	2.40	2.61	3.31	3.17
7	325	3.33	3.40	3.31	2.50	3.32	3.28
8	620	3.43	3.53	3.48	3.26	3.56	4.33
9	1175	2.79	3.34	2.30	2.67	3.52	2.48
10	1550	2.65	3.09	2.89	2.43	3.26	3.35
11	450	3.63	3.55	3.62	3.13	4.01	4.00
12	80	3.07	3.44	3.21	2.88	3.56	2.83
13	170	3.28	3.36	2.81	2.92	3.38	2.55
14	800	3.41	3.06	2.54	2.49	3.20	3.53
15	1250	3.33	3.26	3.35	2.56	3.55	3.56
16	435	3.07	3.34	2.65	2.79	3.27	3.43
17	420	3.79	3.61	3.79	3.66	3.77	4.68
18	62	3.25	3.41	2.96	2.59	2.81	3.02

This accompanies Fig. 1: Factor Scores by School for Six Attitude Factors

Factor I = Attitude to ECA

Factor II = Attitude to Teachers

Factor III = Attitude to Counsellors

Factor IV = Attitude to Administrators

Factor V = Attitude to Learning

Factor VI = Attitude to Pride in School

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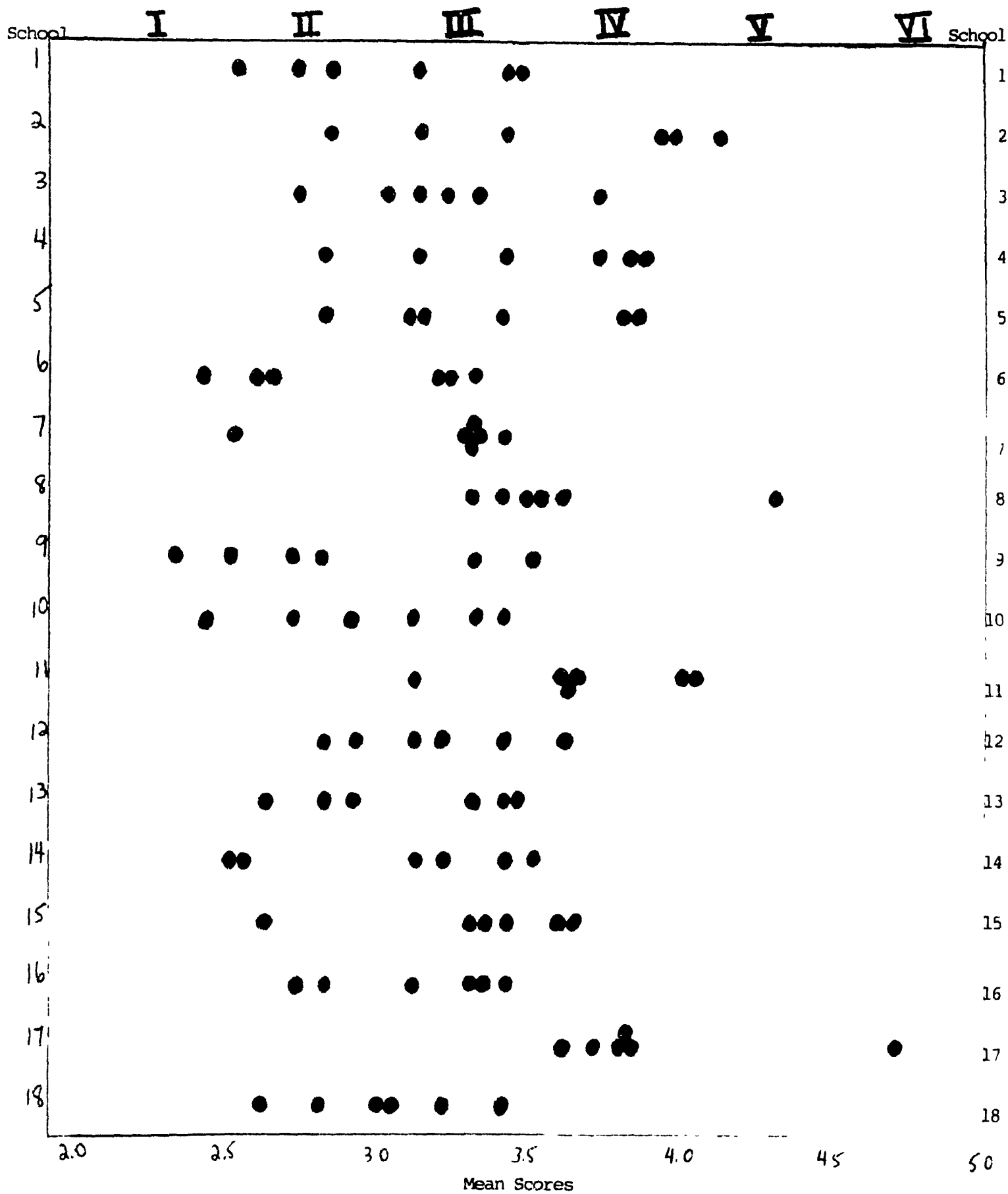
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Figure 1. Mean Scores for Factors by School



## Chapter V

### Discussion

#### 5.0 Summary, Discussion and Findings

In this final chapter, the findings of the present study will be summarized: Then a discussion and the implications of the findings will be presented.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Findings

##### 5.1.1 Two Hypotheses

The two hypotheses of the study are presented below, along with the findings related to each.

Hypothesis One: There is no difference between Quebec English and American high school students' attitudes toward school.

There was one test of hypothesis one - a comparison of the mean item scores for Quebec and U.S. students using the same attitude measures. By and large, Quebec and U.S. student attitudes were statistically the same, so hypothesis one was accepted.

Hypothesis Two: The media perception of student attitudes toward schools [as reported in the *Montreal Gazette*] is different from the student perception of their attitude to school.

This hypothesis was tested for students by examining the mean item scores for 34 attitude measures and, by and large, finding that students had a positive attitude toward school.

This hypothesis was tested for media - the *Gazette* - attitude by a review of the content of *Gazette* articles on education over a four-year span. By and large, the *Gazette* had a negative attitude towards schools and education. Therefore, hypothesis two was accepted.

#### 5.1.2 Four Research Questions

This study was guided, in part, by the following research questions:

- RQ1: Is student attitude towards school related to the sex of the student?
- RQ2: Is student attitude towards school related to the grade of the student?
- RQ3: Is student attitude towards school related to the size of the school?
- RQ4: Is student attitude towards school related to the location (urban, suburban, rural) of the school?

For RQ1 and RQ2, an analysis of variance for 34 attitude items using the sex and the grade of the students, along with the interaction of the sex and grade of the students, showed that, by and large, student attitude was not related to either the grade or the sex of the students.

The exceptions were:

Females were more satisfied than males in the way the administration included students in decision-making about student-centered affairs, as well as the suitability of sponsors to run extra-curricular activities.

Grade ten students were more positive than grade eight students on such teacher and counsellor-related help, including choosing of higher education courses and vocations, as well as their general treatment by counsellors. On the other hand, grade eight students rated school spirit at their schools higher than their grade ten counterparts.

Finally, interactions showed that grade eight females were most positive about belonging in school and about the suitability of sponsors for activities, while grade eight females and grade ten males together were more positive about administration encouragement and the activities in which they would like to participate.

For RQ3, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of school sizes in hundreds for seventeen schools with 34 attitude measures showed that, by and large, student attitude was not affected by the size of the school.

The exceptions were:

It seemed students in smaller schools participated in more activities, received better help in post-high school education counselling and more personal encouragement from their administration in school work than their counterparts in larger high schools.

The size of the survey sample meant that no significant answer could be given to RQ4.

#### 5.1.3 Additional Findings

Additional findings included a factor analysis which enabled the assignment of 29 out of 34 of the attitude measures to become six discreet

- factors:
1. Pride/Satisfaction
  2. Attitude to Teachers
  3. Attitude to Counsellors
  4. Attitude to Administration
  5. Attitude to Learning
  6. Attitude to ECA

This factor structure enabled the development and analysis of six aggregated attitude measures, whose mean item scores paralleled and confirmed the fact that Anglophone high school students have more positive than negative attitudes to schools, with only attitude to counsellors and attitude to administrators being slightly negative.

Finally, a graphic profile of each of the eighteen responding schools for the aggregated attitude measures was produced. Further analysis and commentary on these school profiles would be a subject for a future study.

## 5.2 Discussion

By and large, this study indicated that Anglophone high school students in Quebec in 1985 had at least as positive an attitude toward their schools as did the American high school students toward their schools, as reported by Chase in 1982. Furthermore, these students appeared to have a much more positive attitude toward school than had the Gazette newspaper, an articulate element of Anglophone Quebec media opinion. This generally positive student opinion was, for the most part, affected by neither the grade nor the sex of the student, nor the size of the school.

Those items where the students had negative attitude responses ( $\bar{x} < 3.00$ ) included, in isolation, participation in school activities - Item 1 (See Table 1) and personal encouragement given in school work - Item 12. The other negative items paralleled the U.S. students, reported in the Chase study, in clustering around attitudes toward help given by high school counsellors

(items 16 and 17) and encouragement by, and treatment, from the school administrators (item 18, 20, 21, 22, 23). This is confirmed by the aggregated data analysis based on the factor analysis.

Interestingly, both American and Quebec students give a positive response to item 19 - overall satisfaction with treatment by the administration. Also, one item on which the Quebec mean item score was both significantly lower than, and negative - as opposed to U.S. positive - was item 18, which indicated that Quebec students felt they had to wait a longer time to talk to a member of the administration than their U.S. counterparts.

Another point is a discrepancy in attitudes toward counsellors. Students responded positively to items concerning treatment by counsellors (item 15), as well as help in selecting post-secondary education (item 13) and selection of courses (item 14). Yet students responded negatively to items concerning help given by counsellors in choosing a vocation (item 16), and help given by counsellors in solving personal problems (item 17).

In regards to student attitude versus Gazette attitude, it appears clear that students hold more positive attitudes toward their schools, than the Gazette holds towards schools and education. The negative impression of education given by the Anglophone Quebec media was underscored by a series in March 1988, produced by Montreal-based CFCF-TV entitled "The Class of '88". The television news series reported a pathetic inability of Montreal Anglophone high school students to compete with their counterparts across

Canada on basic social studies questions. Although the series provided the disclaimer in the last program that the study could not be considered scientifically or statistically valid, it certainly gave a negative view of Anglophone Quebec students and schools to the viewer. This contrasts sharply with this study, where positive scores were recorded on items dealing with the usefulness of the subject material learned (item 24), teaching methods (item 25), the amount learned in school subjects (item 26), the appropriateness of the things being taught (item 27), and the amount being learned from school work (item 28).

In discussing the results of answers to the research questions, the exceptions were also of interest. For example, the analysis of variance between the grade and sex of students for item 3: In how many school activities which you could participate in, would you participate?, grade 8 girls were significantly more positive than the whole population which answered this question. Grade 10 boys were the next positive group, followed by grade 10 girls, and then grade 8 boys. Why were grade 8 girls significantly more positive than other students on their participation in activities, and especially more positive than their grade 8 male counterparts? This seems to fit with the research that indicates girls at this age are more aggressive and mature than boys.

Females were more satisfied than males in the way the administration included students in making decisions about items which directly affect

students (item 21), although the whole population was slightly negative ( $\bar{x} = 2.87$ ) on this item.

On the other hand, grade ten students were more positive than grade eight students on such teacher-related items such as: how often teachers explained what to do in assignments (item 7), and how many of their teachers were willing to give individual help outside of class time (item 11). This may be explained by the timidity of grade eight students who are relatively new to high school and who are hesitant to ask for such extra help from teachers. This was also seen in grade ten students who had a tendency, when facing provincial examinations and nearing graduation, to consider such help as being important.

Grade ten students were also more positive than grade eight students on four out of five items dealing with school counsellors, including counsellor help in selecting courses, vocations, and post-secondary education, and in overall treatment by counsellors. Grade ten students have to make course options that will affect their CEGEP and university careers, and/or their vocational and technical training. It would be only natural that this group would regard course and vocation counselling as more important than the grade eight students. Interestingly enough, there is no significant difference between the grades for item 17; How much help does your counsellor give you in solving personal problems?, but all groups are negative on this question ( $\bar{x} = 2.54$ ).



Grade eight students were more positive than grade ten students in rating school spirit at their schools (item 30) and belonging in their schools (item 4) higher than their counterparts, although all groups were quite positive about these items. Personal experience by the author shows that "juniors" usually outnumber "seniors" in attending such things as rallies, dances and games.

Finally, grade ten boys (who were most positive) and grade eight girls were more positive than grade ten girls and grade eight boys on item 22, the amount of personal encouragement given by the administration in their school work. No particular explanation for this response lends itself to mind.

In regards to RQ3, the effect of school size on student attitude, only three items showed a relationship between school size and student attitude. In all three cases, as might be expected, especially by those who decree large, impersonal comprehensive high schools; the smaller the school, the more positive the response on these items. It is significant to note that the relationship showed on only these three items, out of an attitude inventory of 34 measures. It does tenuously confirm research by Isherwood and Hammah, who found that there is an inverse relationship between positive attitude and school size.

Students in smaller schools seemed to indicate that they would participate in school activities more than their counterparts in larger schools (item 3). Since the organizers of such activities such as sports teams, drama etc. would have fewer students to draw upon, students in smaller schools may feel that they have a greater chance to "make the team" (play etc.).

Students in smaller schools felt that they received more help in selecting post-secondary education (item 13) and more personal encouragement from their administration (item 22). Counsellors in smaller schools would have more time to give help to the smaller population in post-high school educational selection, while the administration could be more "visible" and helpful in a smaller school. However, there was no significant relationship between school size and student attitude on any of the other counsellor or administration-related attitude measures.

The factor analysis provided a factor structure with six discreet factors, Of these, F1 - pride in school was the strongest factor with six items loading with 24% variance; F2 - attitude to teachers with seven items loading with 23% variance followed; F3 - attitude to counsellors was next with five items loading with 22% variance; F4 - attitude to learning, five items loading with 16% variance continued; F5 - attitude to administration, three items loading with 16% variance was next; and finally, F6 - attitude to ECA with three items loading with 12% variance was last.

Chase also identified six factors. Factor one was a general positive school effect with all 34 items loading positively. The second factor tied to counsellors: Items 13 - 17, all dealing with counsellors, loaded well on this factor. The third factor appeared to be a student culture factor. Factor four appeared to be an anti-administration factor. The only interesting loadings on this factor were negative and dealt with administrators. The fifth factor might have been identified as personal academic achievement. The items that loaded here dealt with the amount and relevance of learning the students felt they were requiring, while teacher-oriented items loaded near zero. The last factor appeared to be [extra-curricular] activities (Chase 1982).

Although this study parallels Chase in developing a six factor structure, the factor analysis conducted on the data provided by Quebec Anglophone high schools appears to create a much stronger factor structure with six discreet factors, which consistently appeared through several factor analyses.

In summary, this study confirmed other research done on student attitude including that by Thornburg, Hammah and Isherwood, Poole, as well as Chase. This indicated that student attitude towards school is more positive than negative. The study found an inverse relationship between school size and student attitude on a few of the attitude measures, representing a **very** tenuous affirmation of studies done by Hammah and Isherwood, as well as attitude in the context of organizational theory researched by Porter and Lawler.

The study indicated that student opinion was more positive than that found in OISE and Phi Delta Kappan opinion surveys, as well as educational articles published in the *Gazette*. However, the study, in answering the research questions, indicated that negative opinions did exist mainly in the area of counsellors and administrators. The factor analysis and development and analysis of aggregated attitude measures reinforced these areas of negative attitudes.

Finally, the study concentrated on Chase's findings because Chase provided a valid instrument for doing an attitude survey, and the purpose of the study was to evaluate student attitude in Quebec and compare it to U.S. attitudes. It must be remembered that the results of a sample survey measure collective attitudes and central tendencies. They show how attitudes cluster in related factors, but cannot be considered valid as measures of individual attitudes and actions.

### 5.3 Implications for Practice

It should be comforting to Anglophone high school educators throughout Quebec that their students, by and large, hold generally positive attitudes toward their schools, despite a trend towards negative presentation of schools by the media. However, questions about school administration and high school counsellors received more negative responses, although no attitude measure had a mean response below 2.3 on a 5-point attitude scale.

The lowest mean item responses were for the amount of help given by counsellors in solving personal problems ( $\bar{x} = 2.53$ ); the amount of personal encouragement given by administration concerning school work ( $\bar{x} = 2.62$ ); and how much the administration talked to students as individuals ( $\bar{x} = 2.49$ ). This would seem to indicate that both counsellors and administrators should work on improving student attitudes toward them. Also, significant are the negative responses on items regarding counsellor help to students in choosing courses, vocations and/or post-secondary education, although negative responses here might be caused by grade eight students not considering these functions significant, and therefore, were responding negatively. Still, since these items represent the core of the function of school counsellors, perhaps more advertising of their services and facilities among junior students is necessary. An examination of the school profiles shown in Figure 1 would also be instructive for all participants in Anglophone Quebec high school educational communities.

To conclude, the areas reporting the most negative student opinion are those involving the functions of school counsellors and administration, particularly among junior students. More work in correcting these negative attitudes, starting with junior high school students, might well be advised.

#### 5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The constraints of time and resources prevented this study from examining two areas for related attitude research: public attitude towards schools and/or education; and, the attitude of Quebec Francophone high school students toward their schools. Both of these studies would require fairly large scale sample surveys, but might provide important information.

Other studies might measure teacher, administrator and non-teaching professional attitudes toward schools and education in Quebec, with a view of relating this research to student attitudes. Do educators view schools in the same way as students?

The factor analysis of student attitude items suggested a six-factor instrument that could be used in future studies. As well, the school profiles based on the aggregated data could lead to in-depth profiles of given schools, as well as empirical comparisons among these schools.

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APPENDIX A  
Student Opinion Inventory (SOI) Questions

**THE ADMINISTRATORS:**

1. If you had a problem or suggestion for the administration, how long would you have to wait to talk to the administration?
2. In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way you are treated by the administration?
3. In general, how often does the administration seem to care about you as an individual?
4. How satisfied are you about the way the administration includes students in making decisions about matters that affect students?
5. How much personal encouragement does the administration give you concerning your school work?
6. Does the administration talk to you as an individual on all occasions?

**THE COUNSELLORS:**

1. How much help does your counsellor give you in the selection of a college, vocation or trade school?
2. How much help does your counsellor give you in the selection of courses?
3. In general, are you satisfied with the way you are treated by your counsellor?
4. How much help does your counsellor give you in the selection of a vocation or career?
5. How much help does your counsellor give you in solving your personal problems?

**LEARNING:**

1. Regardless of what your grades may be, in how many of your school subjects would you say you are "learning a lot"?
2. How many of the things you should be learning right now are being taught in your school?
3. All things considered, how much do you think you are learning from your school work?

**YOUR SCHOOL:**

1. In how many of the student activities that you participate in, are the students involved in the planning of the activity?
2. In how many of the activities of your school would you feel that you would be accepted?
3. In how many of the activities that you would like to participate in, do you participate in?
4. How often do you feel that you "belong" in your school?
5. How many sponsors of the activities that you participate in seem well suited to the activity?
6. How much of what you are presently studying will be of use to you in everyday living?
7. In general, how proud or ashamed are you of your school?
8. How would you rate school spirit at your school?
9. In general, are you satisfied with your school?
10. In general, how well satisfied are you with the variety of **SCHOOL SUBJECTS** your school offers?
11. How satisfied are you with the variety of student activities your school offers?
12. How satisfied are you with the number of student activities your school offers?

**THE TEACHERS:**

1. How many of your teachers seem to care if you learn the subject they teach?
2. How often do your teachers clearly explain what to do on your assignments?
3. How much help do your teachers usually give you with your school work?
4. How many of your teachers make sure you understand what they teach in class?
5. How often do your teachers clearly explain how assignments are to be done?
6. How many of your teachers are willing to give students individual help outside of class time?
7. How many of your teachers give you enough personal encouragement in your school work?
8. In how many of your courses are you satisfied with the methods used to teach courses?

# APPENDIX B

Table 6

Factor Analysis of Student Attitude Items (less variables 1 - 5, ECA)

Variable Number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
1	0.23	0.09	0.53*	0.21
2	0.09	0.14	0.66*	0.16
3	0.01	0.14	0.52*	0.32
4	0.14	0.06	0.66*	0.16
5	0.11	0.16	0.58*	0.11
6	0.06	0.14	0.39	0.37
7	-0.00	0.21	0.48	0.36
8	0.08	0.81*	0.18	0.15
9	0.19	0.74*	0.08	-0.03
10	0.08	0.66*	0.13	0.13
11	0.11	0.83*	0.01	0.11
12	0.05	0.58*	0.14	0.26
13	-0.08	0.02	-0.10	-0.23
14	0.32	0.07	0.24	0.51
15	0.23	0.10	0.17	0.67*
16	0.32	0.10	0.14	0.40
17	0.25	0.20	0.12	0.58*
18	0.09	0.20	0.14	0.48*
19	0.25	-0.06	0.45	0.09
20	0.34	0.05	0.55*	0.13
21	0.44	0.04	0.46	0.09
22	0.41	0.10	0.41	0.06
23	0.52	0.03	0.49	0.02
24	0.67*	0.11	0.13	0.13
25	0.61*	0.06	0.04	0.16
26	0.64*	0.06	0.14	0.26
27	0.63*	0.07	0.18	0.13
28	0.71*	0.18	0.16	0.20
29	0.70*	0.16	0.15	0.22
Factor 1 - 4	Pride in School Counsellors		Teachers	Administration
% Variance	28%	22%	26%	17%

\* significant variables

Item - Factor Correlation  $> .45$  on one factor and  $< .36$  on all other factors

Table 7

Factor Analysis of Student Attitude Items (less variables 18 - 23, Administrators)

Variable Number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1	0.13	0.16	-0.05	0.51*	-0.01
2	0.16	0.10	0.14	0.56*	-0.01
3	0.10	0.01	0.02	0.54*	-0.02
4	0.40	0.00	0.17	0.44	-0.12
5	0.11	0.18	0.08	0.41	-0.22
6	0.22	0.07	0.57*	0.14	-0.18
7	0.10	0.12	0.62*	-0.00	-0.26
8	-0.00	0.09	0.61*	0.22	-0.14
9	0.13	0.01	0.65*	0.05	-0.25
10	0.14	0.12	0.55*	-0.08	-0.22
11	0.12	0.11	0.52*	0.05	-0.05
12	0.05	0.18	0.61*	0.02	-0.07
13	0.05	0.80*	0.19	0.17	-0.04
14	0.15	0.75*	0.03	0.08	-0.07
15	0.07	0.68*	0.14	0.04	-0.09
16	0.12	0.83*	0.06	0.05	0.03
17	0.05	0.56*	0.23	0.13	-0.03
24	0.06	-0.04	0.23	0.04	-0.56*
25	0.20	0.14	0.27	0.03	-0.57*
26	0.26	0.00	0.32	0.22	-0.46*
27	0.29	0.10	0.21	0.02	-0.53*
28	0.33	0.02	0.27	0.12	-0.58*
29	0.74*	0.09	0.19	0.10	-0.04
30	0.59*	0.06	0.09	0.24	-0.12
31	0.70*	0.06	0.20	0.12	-0.09
32	0.55*	0.08	0.07	0.06	-0.37
33	0.64*	0.19	0.10	0.22	-0.28
34	0.64*	0.17	0.09	0.20	-0.31
Factor 1 - 5	Pride in School Counsellors Teachers			ECA	Learning
% Variance	24%	22%	23%	12%	16%

\* significant variables

Item - Correlation &gt; .45 on one factor and &lt; .36 on all other factors

Table 8

Factor Analysis of Student Attitude Items (less variables 24 - 27, Learning)

Variable Number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1	0.12	0.14	0.09	0.21	-0.49*
2	0.16	0.11	-0.13	0.06	-0.57*
3	0.11	0.01	0.02	0.12	-0.52*
4	0.44	-0.00	-0.21	-0.02	-0.43
5	0.17	0.21	-0.15	-0.03	-0.41
6	0.27	0.09	-0.55*	0.15	-0.11
7	0.14	0.11	-0.69*	0.09	-0.04
8	0.04	0.10	-0.59*	0.23	-0.18
9	0.21	0.03	-0.69*	0.09	-0.04
10	0.16	0.13	-0.59*	0.07	0.03
11	0.08	0.12	-0.44	0.33	-0.01
12	0.02	0.20	-0.53*	0.31	0.01
13	0.04	0.79*	-0.20	0.13	-0.19
14	0.17	0.74*	-0.08	-0.04	-0.12
15	0.09	0.66*	-0.13	0.15	-0.04
16	0.09	0.82*	-0.04	0.11	-0.08
17	0.06	0.57*	-0.17	0.25	-0.05
18	-0.12	-0.00	0.11	-0.23	-0.11
19	0.28	0.06	-0.27	0.47	-0.26
20	0.21	0.08	-0.20	0.69*	-0.10
21	0.27	0.10	-0.14	0.40	-0.20
22	0.21	0.17	-0.12	0.59*	-0.17
23	0.06	0.19	-0.17	0.46*	-0.13
28	0.48	0.05	-0.38	0.05	-0.09
29	0.67*	0.10	-0.18	0.05	-0.16
30	0.59*	0.06	-0.04	0.13	-0.28
31	0.65*	0.05	-0.15	0.21	-0.13
32	0.63*	0.06	-0.12	0.16	-0.04
33	0.73*	0.16	-0.12	0.23	-0.13
34	0.70*	0.15	-0.11	0.25	-0.13
Factor 1 - 5	Pride in School Counsellors Teachers Administrators ECA				
% Variance	27%	22%	22%	16%	12%

\* significant variables

Item - Correlation  $>.45$  on one factor and  $<.36$  on all other factors