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Cognitive Origins of the "BIMBY" Effect: A Mixed Methods Exploration of Survey Ratings Regarding the Quality of Public Schools

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Cognitive Origins of the "BIMBY" Effect: A Mixed Methods Exploration of Survey Ratings Regarding the Quality of Public Schools

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

COGNITIVE ORIGINS OF THE "BIMBY" EFFECT: A MIXED METHODS EXPLORATION OF SURVEY RATINGS REGARDING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By James M. Ellis, Jr., Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011.

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Public education and public opinion are pillars of democracy. In surveys about education, respondents in aggregate almost always rate schools attended by their children highest, schools in their communities moderately, and schools in the nation poorly. This phenomenon holds for many other survey topics. Some call it "BIMBY" for "better in my back yard."

This dissertation used mixed methods to investigate BIMBY. Eight qualitative interviews with nine participants used grounded theory to generate hypotheses about BIMBY's causes. This research revealed a qualitative "insider" view of school quality used by participants for schools familiar to them, and a more quantitative "outsider" view used for unfamiliar schools. The qualitative research generated four main hypotheses tested in a quantitative survey:

1. An empathy hypothesis, tested by framing "nurturant" and "strict" sets of propositions about public schools.
2. A hypothesis about lack of information, tested by sometimes offering explicit don't know options for school ratings.
3. A community attachment hypothesis, tested by sometimes offering questions about community activities and the like.
4. A hypothesis about a sense of the "here and now," tested by sometimes asking respondents the number of times they changed schools.

This was a full factorial design using sixteen forms of a brief mail survey. A truncated Dillman protocol was used with a randomly selected sample of 960 residences in the Richmond and Charlottesville areas. There were 208 completed surveys.

The empathy experiment increased ratings for schools at all levels. Additional analyses indicated that ratings for both local and national schools were influenced by the empathy experiment and the respondent's world view (nurturant or strict). Ratings for local schools were also influenced by the type of area in which respondents lived (urban, suburban, etc.) and opinions about their communities. Ratings for schools nationally were also influenced by the experiments regarding explicit don't know responses and community attachment.

Thus, respondents draw on different domains of opinion when rating different schools. Ratings for local schools relate to opinions about the community. Ratings for schools nationally may relate to a general world view and the respondent's identities within the community and the nation.

Chapter 1: Background and Overview

Introduction to the study

Public opinion and democracy are closely related. Over the last century, scientific methods have been developed for conducting sample surveys, program evaluation and other types of inquiry. A vast range of research projects today make public opinion ubiquitous in public policy discussions. There seems to be little doubt that in a democracy, public opinion should and does influence public policy decisions.

One of the most expensive, complex and contentious public policy issues in the United States is public education. The education system is constantly judged, frequently criticized, and periodically "reformed." Much of the research and evaluation literature in education concerns the effects of different curricula and interventions on student achievement. But the perceptions and opinions about education that are held by the general public and various stakeholder groups are also important to understanding and evaluating our educational system. Exactly when, how and why public opinion influences policymaking is not fully understood, but the importance of surveys about education is taken as a given in the United States.

Public opinion surveys about schools and school quality – particularly the public schools – have a long history in the U.S. For one important example, the Gallup company and the Kettering Foundation conducted annual national surveys of education issues from 1969-1980. Gallup and the Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) Society have continued to execute annual national

surveys of education issues from 1981 to the present. This continuing series of PDK/Gallup polls running from 1969 to the present is often consulted in reviews of public opinion regarding education.

One of the most striking findings in the PDK/Gallup survey data is the persistent difference in ratings of schools attended by respondents' children, and at the local and national levels from 1985 through 2011, the years in which all three questions were asked in each survey. When asked to give a grade to the nation's schools, between 16% and 28% of the public awarded grades of A or B. When asked about their community's schools, between 31% and 51% of the public awarded grades of A or B. When asked about the school their oldest children attend, between 62% and 79% of parents of school-aged children awarded grades of A or B. The difference between each "level" of question is about 20 percentage points. It seems likely that this pattern would have held if the questions about schools nationally and schools attended by children had been asked in earlier years.

This sort of "better in my back yard" – or BIMBY[1] – phenomenon is also found in relation to many other survey topics including Congress, crime, school violence, racial tensions, drug abuse, moral standards, poverty, white racism, black racism, unemployment, violence in general, churches, the economic situation, ethics and moral conditions, family life, non-public schools and environmental problems. The differences across local and national ratings of these problems generally range from 10 to 40 percentage points (Smith, 1998), sometimes more, with

[1] I am grateful to Mr. David Moore of the Gallup Organization, who shared this acronym with me (e-mail communication, 10/15/04). It is a play on the better-known NIMBY (not in my backyard, signifying opposition to something such as a prison or landfill when it is to be located nearby, when support would otherwise be offered if it were to be placed farther away).

the local area always having the more favorable rating. The differences are consistent across different surveys and they persist in different questionnaire contexts regardless of whether the national or local dimension is asked first (Smith 1998). Surprisingly, for such a widespread and well-documented phenomenon, there seems to be little research about its root causes.

Overview of the study

This study addresses several broad questions. What might account for this BIMBY effect? What does it mean for our interpretations of public opinion about public school quality? Can we generalize the causes we might find for BIMBY in ratings of public education to help explain BIMBY in other survey topics?

To address these issues the study used mixed methods, first using qualitative inquiry to inform hypothesis-building and the design of a survey questionnaire, then quantitative survey work to test the most promising hypotheses derived from the qualitative research. The debate over qualitative and quantitative methods in educational research has seemed to reach a compromise stage that recognizes several ways of conceptualizing when, how and why researchers might select methods to best fit the demands of the inquiry. This study took a pragmatic approach to mixed-methods research, using a well-traveled path familiar to survey researchers who use qualitative methods to inform the design of quantitative surveys.

On the pragmatic level, the scope of this study is broad. It focuses on rating the quality of schools in response to survey questions. This is a complex and multi-dimensional cognitive activity involving numerous "systems" (the classroom, the school, the community, the nation, and so forth) and sources of information (first-hand experience, interpersonal communication,

information from the media, etc.). And in the survey context, the response is often formulated in just a couple of seconds, implying a host of cognitive phenomena that complicate the picture. Understanding the issues and contexts relevant to the research questions requires qualitative research to gain an initial understanding. But testing that understanding requires gathering data from the quantitative survey context. These concerns argued for a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, the rationale for using a mixed methods approach was a pragmatic one – using what methods work best to obtain the necessary information, and using an overarching interpretive process to judge, connect and integrate the findings across methods.

The quantitative research was based on a cognitive model of the survey response process that has been used in survey methodology since the early 1980s. The results may not only allow us to better understand survey-based ratings of school quality, they may also generalize to other survey topics and the BIMBY effect in general, as well as to the cognitive model of survey response itself.

Rationale for the study

Surveys will almost certainly remain integral to education policymaking. But if we are going to use surveys to inform discussions of school quality and school policy, improving our general understanding of how people form opinions about those issues would be useful. Focusing on the BIMBY effect provides an additional opportunity to investigate different dimensions of opinion formation regarding school quality and to test related hypotheses in subsequent quantitative research. Many theories have been suggested to explain BIMBY, but there seems to be little or no literature describing attempts to measure the impacts of these possible

explanations, or to discover others. Because of the broad range of information and concepts that are involved, it seemed necessary to conduct some qualitative, formative research to narrow the focus and provide some working hypotheses. These hypotheses were then tested in a quantitative setting. This mixed-method approach in which qualitative research informs quantitative questionnaire design is not uncommon.

Although it might have been preferable to conduct a "full-blown" telephone survey in the quantitative portion of this study along the lines of the PDK/Gallup survey, practical and financial limitations required a relatively small scale survey instead. This approach is often used to test new concepts, establish precedence in a particular area, and provide tentative data to support funding requests for more robust research designs.

Overview of the literature

The importance of public opinion regarding education

Public opinion about education would seem to be important to study. After all, education is a fundamental aspect of the American experience, a very large public expense, increasingly a source of private profit-making, and a critical driver of the economy. In addition, public opinion research is assumed to be an important part of a democratic society. Yet there does not seem to be an established literature describing opinion research about education in a scholarly way.

Five different bodies of literature inform this study. They can be grouped broadly into two areas: topic and methods. Two bodies of literature address what is known about the topic at hand – ratings of public education. They relate to the structure of public opinion regarding public education in the U.S., and the criteria used by people to rate public education, including

expectations for education, emotional reactions to education, and assumptions about the purposes of education.

Within the area of methods, three bodies of literature apply to this study. They cover the cognitive model of the survey response process, cognitive theory describing how survey respondents provide answers to ratings questions, and the BIMBY effect.

The structure of public opinion regarding public education in the U.S.

The literature on the structure of public opinion regarding public education in the U.S. indicates five main structural themes. First, education is an expression of, embedded in, and truly an inseparable facet of our changing culture. One indication of this is the simple fact that some topics (such as busing students to desegregate schools) are included in surveys about education in some years and not in other years as cultural issues change over time. It is also indicated by the substantive responses to some of those survey questions (such as public perceptions of drug use in schools).

A second theme is that since the 1970s the rises and declines in public opinion regarding education closely parallel opinions about other institutions. This parallel course does not seem to have a satisfactory explanation in the literature. This indicates some force being exerted on public confidence in education that is beyond the direct control of schools. (While these absolute changes are evident for school quality ratings, the BIMBY effect – a relative difference – remains fairly constant.)

Third, the relationship between public education and industry has a long history that consists mainly of calls from industry for education reform based on alarmist accusations that

school failures hurt America's global competitiveness. These accusations presuppose certain purposes of public education. They also appear to be largely unsubstantiated by the facts and unhealthy for public education, but they tend to be both drivers and products of public opinion about education.

Fourth, public education seemingly has been under heavy criticism for generations and the public gives low marks to schools nationally. But the public has given stable, high marks to their local public schools over the years and also exhibits behaviors that would indicate confidence in the public schools. And for all the alarms about the imminent collapse of American society due to school failures, America has retained its leadership on the world stage. These apparent contradictions do not seem to be well explained in the literature.

And fifth, as noted already and most importantly for this study, there is the BIMBY phenomenon. There are large differences in the quality ratings offered by the public for local schools versus schools nationally, but this phenomenon extends to a wide range of topics beyond education. Numerous hypotheses have been suggested to explain this robust survey finding, but there does not seem to be any survey methods literature testing its underlying mechanisms. These five structural themes set the context for this study. Each one is described in more detail in Chapter 2.

Ratings criteria for public education

When people are asked to rate the quality of public schools, what criteria do they use to formulate their answers? There are numerous schemes for defining and measuring dimensions of school performance. With the advent of widespread high-stakes testing in public schools, those

test scores are sometimes used as the sole measure of school quality. There are also multidimensional approaches often labeled “school report cards” (report cards on the quality of schools). Generally, three dimensions are found in school report cards: inputs and school contextual factors, process indicators, and outcome indicators. Standardized test scores have been replacing other outcome indicators as the primary data sources for school comparisons.

Another school of thought that needs to be considered is literature related to market research and customer satisfaction. This topic is heavily researched in the business world and, although public schools are not businesses *per se* (a proposition that some say is contested these days), this literature has something to offer in terms of conceptualizing how people rate the quality of public schools. Much of this literature focuses on two paradigms: affective or emotional reactions to services and products, and the differences between expectations and actual experiences.

Finally, and related somewhat to the expectations/experience approach, it seems plausible that ratings of the quality of public schools must ultimately rest on some belief system about the meaning and purposes of schools and education, even if these belief systems are so deeply held that they are not immediately apparent to or easily articulated by respondents.

The cognitive model of the survey response process

In the survey setting, respondents must use various pieces of information and impressions to provide answers. Survey methodologists traditionally have described a delicate balance of science and art in constructing a good telephone survey questionnaire. The earliest theoretical models of the survey response process mimicked the stimulus-response model popularized by

behaviorists such as Skinner. In this model, the stimulus was the survey question and the response was the survey answer. If the question was always asked using the same words in the same manner, the only source of variation in the data should be the respondent's attitudes or factual circumstances driving his answers to the questions (Fowler, 1993, p. 107).

Over time, practical survey research experience revealed many instances of unexpected anomalies in survey data that could not be attributed to departures from the standardized approach to interviewing. Sometimes the identical question wording in two different surveys yielded sharply different response distributions even after controlling for characteristics of the interviewers. Sometimes survey estimates varied among subgroups in the data in ways that were unexpected or could not be explained by existing theories. Through the early 1980s, research in this area amounted to little more than a catalog of these so-called response effects. Survey methodologists were focusing on interviewer effects and various types of sampling errors, which did not address these observations about response effects. More problematically, the response effects being cataloged did not appear to be consistent.

The mechanism underlying these effects was not understood until cognitive models of information processing were borrowed from cognitive psychology and applied to the survey response process beginning in the early 1980s (although there were precursors to this approach). The two main themes brought out by the application of cognitive psychology to the survey response process are that responding to survey questions involves cognitive processes, and that a survey is a socially constructed experience – and this construction process can create response effects.

Tourangeau *et al*. (2000) described a four-step cognitive model of the survey response process that is based on some of their earlier work, plus the work of Cannell *et al.* (1977). This model is now a fixture in survey methodology. The impact of the application of cognitive psychology and closely related work from the fields of linguistics, memory and judgment has allowed survey methodologists to replicate and predict certain survey response phenomena. The cognitive model of the survey response process underlies this dissertation.

Cognitive theory describing how survey respondents provide answers to ratings questions

Each step in the four-step cognitive model of survey response represents whole literatures of more detailed research on how respondents answer survey questions. But in general, when presented with a survey question, respondents must:

(1) ascertain the literal and intended meanings of the question (this involves linguistics and conversational norms);

(2) retrieve and sort through relevant information using a variety of cognitive processes and strategies (this involves memory, estimation, mental shortcuts known as heuristics, and other cognitive processes);

(3) arrive at a judgment about what the response should be, based on self-assessments of how complete and representative the retrieval process has been (this involves contextual clues such as accessibility of memories and interactions in the interview that may encourage or inhibit the respondent's desire to expend additional cognitive effort); and

(4) edit the final judgment to fit the given response categories and the social situation (this involves the construction of questions and answers in the survey, the social desirability attached to the questions and answers, and other contexts perceived by the respondent).

In a telephone interview, more than a couple of seconds of dead air is awkward. Therefore, all of this cognitive activity happens very quickly. Is there something in this process that leads to the BIMBY effect?

Literature about the possible causes of the BIMBY effect

Smith (1998) compiled what is probably the most comprehensive catalog of BIMBY effects, collecting them from fifty-nine different surveys, and he suggested several hypotheses for this phenomenon. Loveless (1997) specifically noted the BIMBY effect in relation to school ratings and equated them to ratings of schools at the local level, and ratings of systems at the national level. He asserted that the public judges school and school systems differently because they are different.

Cannon and Barham (1992) asserted that negative portrayals in the news media provide biased information to a public that is largely uninformed about the schools beyond those in their local communities and noted that "[i]n the [PDK/Gallup] survey conducted in 1983, shortly after the National Commission on Excellence released its report *A Nation at Risk,* A or B ratings of local schools hit an all-time low of 31 percent" (p. 41).

Numerous authors have discussed BIMBY in other substantive areas such as ratings of the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Congress, and other political figures. Dozens of other authors have simply noted the BIMBY effect, sometimes in passing, sometimes in more detail. One can

find in the literature a fair amount of speculation about its sources. But what is most noteworthy is the lack of investigation into the actual causes of this seemingly widespread phenomenon. This dissertation seeks to provide a little more stuffing for that gap.

Research questions

Generally speaking, the research questions in this study are:

(1) What criteria seem to be used by survey respondents when rating schools?

(2) What sources of information seem to be used by survey respondents when rating schools?

(3) Do ratings criteria vary when respondents rate local schools as opposed to schools nationally?

(4) Do sources of information vary when respondents rate local schools as opposed to schools nationally?

(5) Are there other cognitive aspects of the process of rating school quality that vary for local schools and schools nationally? What are they?

(6) Do some of these variations, selected for experimentation in quantitative surveys, appear to explain some portion of the BIMBY effect?

More operationally, the qualitative research questions needed to be flexible so they could change as new information emerged from the interviews. The initial framework focused on the following three areas. More detail is presented in Chapter 3.

(1) When you think about public schools, what comes to mind? What are your impressions made up of?

(2) When you think about the "quality" of a public school, what comes to mind? What do you look for in determining quality?

(3) What quality rating would you give to your local public schools? What quality rating would you give to public schools nationally?

The quantitative research questions were operationalized into four question-wording experiments based on the cognitive model of survey response. The design was a full factorial design. These experiments tested the impact of several hypotheses for why the BIMBY effect exists between ratings of local public schools and public schools nationally. The quantitative research questions emerged from the qualitative phase of the study. The four factorial manipulations were:

1. Whether or not several questions about the respondent's community attachment were asked.
2. Whether or not the respondent was asked to recall the number of schools he or she attended.
3. Whether the respondent was asked to rate five propositions about public schools from a "nurturant" set of propositions or a "strict" set.
4. Whether or not the respondent was given an explicit "don't know" option when asked to rate public schools.

Design and methods

This was a mixed methods research project. The purpose of the qualitative phase of this study was to determine which theories might emerge for consideration when designing the

quantitative phase of the study. There are several approaches to conducting qualitative data collection. This project used a grounded theory philosophy, which allows findings to emerge from the interactions with participants in the qualitative stage. The qualitative methodology blended features of constructivist inquiry, symbolic interactionism, concept mapping and cognitive interviewing. The interviews were semi-structured. Emerging theories were allowed to modify the interview materials as needed, but very little modification was needed. The participants were asked if follow-up questions were permissible after the interviews were conducted, but a full "hermeneutic circle" as required in constructivist interviewing was not a goal. The researcher alone created the concept maps. The concept maps and related theory drove the design of the quantitative survey questions.

The recruitment of participants for the qualitative research was done to maximize variation in the participants on demographic and geographic dimensions, given that they were selected from the metropolitan Richmond and Charlottesville areas for convenience. Recruitment was done by word of mouth through education communities and personal contacts.

The quantitative research followed well established procedures for conducting survey research by self-administered questionnaire. To accommodate the 2x2x2x2 factorial design, there were sixteen different paper versions of the questionnaire. The qualitative and quantitative research protocols were submitted separately to the VCU Institutional Review Board.

Delimitations

The qualitative portion of this research describes the attitudes of nine adults regarding the quality of public schools in their localities as well as schools nationally. The participants were

recruited for convenience in the Richmond and Charlottesville areas of Virginia. The data were collected in qualitative semi-structured interviews. The hypotheses generated from these data were tested in a fairly small-scale self-administered survey conducted by mail with a random sample of mailable addresses in the Richmond and Charlottesville areas of Virginia.

Definitions of terms

BIMBY: A play on the better-known NIMBY ("not in my backyard," signifying opposition to something such as a prison or landfill when it is to be located nearby, when support would otherwise be offered if it were to be placed farther away). BIMBY stands for "better in my back yard," and refers to the phenomenon that local, more concrete objects are almost invariably rated more favorably by survey respondents than are more distant or abstract objects. (David Moore, Gallup Organization, personal communication, 10/15/04.)

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The literature review presented in this chapter provides the starting foundation for the research project. The qualitative stage of the project provided hypotheses to be investigated in the quantitative stage. An additional literature review and methodological discussion was required once those hypotheses were in development in order to describe and justify the specific approaches used in the quantitative stage. The additional literature review is found in Chapter 3.

The importance of public opinion regarding education

Why is it important to look at the structure of public opinion regarding education? The answers are almost certainly obvious, but a brief review is worthwhile. Education is a pervasive and central experience in American society. Almost everyone attends school as a child. Education's influence is seen in many positive ways – a way to socialize diverse elements of the American melting pot, prepare young people to be productive citizens in a democratic society, instill a lifelong love of learning, increase the student's standard of living as a result of better career opportunities, drive business and industry, contribute to the national defense, reduce social ills, etc. Many of these perceived benefits of education are closely tied to basic assumptions about our American culture, what we want that culture to be, and how we want to indoctrinate children into that cultural ideal (Frase & Streshly, 2000, pp. 2-7).

Education is also an enormous public expense. For example, as far back as 2004-2005, total Federal expenditures for public education (including school construction, debt financing,

community services and adult education programs) came to $536 billion. Average annual per-pupil costs were close to $9,000[2].

Taken alone, the intersection of its pervasive place in American society and its large publicly funded costs could explain why most people have opinions about public education and why those opinions matter. But more recently, governments have adopted corporate management strategies such as total quality management, market-driven and customer-focused concepts, and measurement of costs and benefits. These strategies often involve feedback from "customers." Quality of education is also widely accepted as a key factor in economic development efforts, quality of life assessments, and housing values (Wayson *et al.*, 1988). As the Richmond Times-Dispatch editorialized on April 7, 2009:

> For families with children, attendance zones may be the determining factor in choosing where to live. Parents typically ask real-estate agents, "Which schools will our children attend?" Prospective home-buyers consult assessments – and neighborhood test scores and college-acceptance rates. Some years ago one of the region's superintendents (who since has retired) explained that although almost all citizens will profess support for education, for households with students the schools often rate as the No. 1 concern. Nothing else comes close. (Richmond Times-Dispatch, April 7, 2009)

Figure 1, taken from the Richmond Times-Dispatch published November 25, 2006, illustrates these principles in action.

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[2] http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/10facts/index.html.

Figure 1: School quality as a selling point

Talking all of these factors into account, the interest in collecting opinions about education from its primary funders and users – the public – is quite understandable. Education is also a political undertaking. Perhaps more cynically, some would note that the intersection of cultural indoctrination, vast public treasuries, marketing, and private business interests spells "Politics" with a capital P. Writers such as Berliner and Biddle (1995) would describe the politics of education along the lines of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary:

"Competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership in a government or other group…characterized by artful and often dishonest practices" (p. 890). But this dissertation seeks to restrict this observation to politics in a more neutral sense – that is, "the process by which a community's decisions are made, rules for group behavior are established, competition for positions of leadership is regulated, and the disruptive effects of disputes are minimized" [3]. These community decisions clearly involve the direct allocations of large amounts of money, personnel time, and physical resources. There are also very large indirect effects of these decisions. Whether or not the more cynical definition of politics applies, managing these decisions certainly seems to be "politics" in the more neutral sense of the word.

Given such large stakes, it is surprising that two recent reviews remark on the rarity of research about public opinion regarding education. Hochschild and Scott (1998) made a comprehensive review of numerous survey questions regarding governance and reform of public schools and noted, "In contrast to this plethora of survey questions, we found very few scholarly analyses of public opinion about schooling" (p. 79). Loveless (1997) – one of the few scholarly analyses that Hochschild and Scott (1998) did find – noted that, "Despite the endless rhetorical wars waged by critics and defenders of public schools, wars presumably fought for the heart and soul of the American public, research on public attitudes toward education is confined to a handful of texts and articles" (p. 128). And Hochschild and Scott (1998) conclude that surveys yield "fascinating but incomplete evidence" about major education issues and the authors "have

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[3] http://www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/politics.

confidence only in the prediction that school politics will become increasingly important and controversial over the next decade or two" (p. 89).

The relationship of public opinion to policymaking

Collecting the public's opinions about education – or any issue – would not mean very much if those opinions had no effect on policy. However, the interplay of public opinion and public policymaking is not clear. The traditional idea is that, in a representative democracy, policymakers are supposed to be responsive to the will of their well-informed constituents (perhaps within some limits shaped by policymakers' greater access to information). As stated by Tucker and Zeigler (1980), "No matter how decisions are made, Americans believe that the content of government decisions should not be at variance with public sentiment, however one chooses to measure this sentiment" (p. 4). One common method of measuring this sentiment is, of course, the public opinion survey.

Unfortunately, some research suggests that the relationship of public opinion to public policy is complicated. The public seems not to be knowledgeable about many policy issues (Delli Carpini, 1999; Erskine, 1963). Along these lines, Tucker and Zeigler (1980) noted:

> …the implementation of information systems and management science techniques [are] causing a fundamental change in the governing process. Problems and policy alternatives are now seen as too complex for the public and its representatives to evaluate. Legislators solicit and follow the recommendations of professional administrators. The major source of power is information, and the new norm of policy decision-making is deference to expertise. (p. 2)

Also, politics is often a messy business. The American public's desire to avoid political discord is apparently well known among political scientists, and may play some role in understanding public opinion about education. Sears and Whitney (1973) cite research that indicates early socialization in school, ironically enough, may instill unfavorable attitudes towards political conflict (pp. 275, 277), creating a citizenry that finds political conflict to be distasteful. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) suggest that the public actually prefers to avoid political participation based on the *content* of policy issues because such content is often contentious or esoteric. Instead, the public prefers to be able to monitor the *processes* performed by policymakers so that abuses of power do not occur.

In perhaps a similar vein, Durr, Gilmour, and Wolbrecht (1977) hypothesized that public opinion of the U.S. Congress declined when Congress did its job, because doing the job created "contentiousness [that] can permeate Congressional activity, frustrating those who look to Congress for decisive action and making the process appear overly political and petty" (p. 176).

Lack of knowledge and distaste for conflict can create distance between citizens and the content of policy discussions. These factors are cited here simply to indicate in a crude way some of the complexities that arise when we try to explain how and why public perceptions are important to policymaking.

Public opinion is also held to be important for local administrators of schools. In a book about public relations for schools that emphasizes the local level of control over schools and the need for cultivating community-level interactions, Kowalski (2000) describes good school-level public relations as (a) understanding the current status of public opinion towards education, (b)

defining the local community through a variety of data-gathering activities including surveys, (c) benchmarking the organization against other similar organizations, and (d) maintaining contact with stakeholders through surveys and other mechanisms.

It seems clear that public opinion surveys are believed to be central to the process of policy making in general and in education specifically, regardless of the mysteries we encounter in explaining the exact processes by which they may influence policymaking.

Historical review of public opinion regarding education

Whether as a monitor of sentiment about the status of education, a means of involving various stakeholders in education issues, a tool to measure attitudes of teachers or staff, or a channel of communication between the public and policymakers, the public opinion survey has been ubiquitous in education policymaking for a very long time. Harper (1927) conducted a survey of the social attitudes of 3,000 teachers in 1922 using a scale of seventy-one items based on Dewey's conservative/liberal/radical construct[4]. Rope (1941) gives a helpful review of school-related surveys from the 1920s and 1930s, citing Harper (1927) among others and adding:

> Comparable in general design to Harper's test of social beliefs and attitudes is the Mort-Connell-Hinton questionnaire-test, *What Should Our Schools Do?* (Mort *et al.*, 1938). The instrument, designated as a study of public opinion, was planned to determine the

[4] Some of the findings may be of greater interest than others to 21st century scholars: 87% of teachers who responded to the survey agreed that "Reproduction should be made physically impossible for all those below certain low standards of physical and mental fitness," 88% agreed that "Without directly teaching religion a teacher's influence in the public schools should always be definitely and positively favorable to the purposes and activities of the Christian churches," and 55% agreed that "No school, college, or university should teach anything that is found to cause its students to doubt or question the Bible as containing the word of God."

> degree of public acceptance of the 'adaptability principle,' which stresses the necessity of a school's being able (1) to slough off outworn procedures, (2) to shift emphasis in line with important educational trends, and (3) to add new services. (p. 49)

It is striking how these three "themes" continue to be central to education policy and education research.

Rope's (1941) review of public opinion research is heavily influenced by now outmoded beliefs about the efficacy of propaganda married with then-new technologies for mass communication, such as radio and newsreels. These overstated properties of mass communications and public opinion aside, Rope (1941) believed that applying the techniques of cross-sectional public opinion polling to an exploration of school-community tensions was important:

> [I]t was felt desirable to adapt to an educational situation a technique hitherto largely neglected by educators, for if, as their supporters claim, opinion polls are a significant new tool for democracy, then opinion polling procedures might well be employed to guide democracy's schools. (p. 71)

Rope (1941) foreshadows Kowalski (2002) by sixty years in his concluding remarks:

> To what extent techniques of opinion research should be employed in a public school system is a problem for educational leadership to decide…Aside from providing increased opportunity for public participation in policy formation, the methods of opinion study offer direct information concerning the comparative influence of groups opposing

> and groups supporting the general work of the schools. In a sense, research in community attitudes serves the purpose of reconnoitering unknown territory. (p. 142-3)

Much of the survey research about education through the 1940s (and beyond) seems to be limited to specific geographic locations – individual towns, cities, or school districts. Good examples include Rope (1941), Terrien (1954), and Gish (1970). But Rope (1941) also devotes space to the newly emerging practitioners of survey research based on national probability samples, among them George Gallup's American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO)[5]. Education questions from national AIPO polls are reported by Strunk (1948, 1949) and Erskine (1963). Gish (1970) includes an extensive literature review in support of active cultivation of two-way relations between schools and their communities, including several references from the 1950s and 1960s to formal studies of public relations for schools. Gish (1970) also cites the 1969 Gallup/Kettering Foundation national survey, *How the Nation Views the Public Schools*.

Gallup and the Kettering Foundation conducted annual national surveys of education issues from 1969-1980. Gallup and the Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) Society have continued to execute annual national surveys of education issues from 1981 to the present. These continuing PDK/Gallup polls are included in the comprehensive review of education reform poll results by Hochschild and Scott (1998) and the review of the structure of public confidence in education by Loveless (1997). They are often used in reviews of public opinion regarding education. The PDK/Gallup polls bring us up to date in this review of some of the more typical or prominent

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[5] Gallup's samples were really more like multistage quota samples at the time they were introduced, but they still changed the face of survey research, yielding more accurate estimates of public opinion from astonishingly small numbers of interviews. See Moore (1992) for additional information about these early days of survey research.

public opinion research efforts about education through the last eighty years. The review is, of necessity, incomplete. A Google search on the term "education opinion survey results" requested on February 21, 2009, yielded more than fifty million hits.

The structure of public opinion regarding public education in the U.S.

What does a review of the structure of public education look like? While certainly not an exhaustive set of such literature, Dunbar (2003), Gish (1970), Loveless (1997) all contain the following similarities: overviews of substantive findings from various surveys; description of key patterns in the findings; reviews of the pertinent historical and theoretical literatures covering the substantive topic and public opinion methods; and observations about the strengths and weaknesses of the methods employed in the surveys that are reported. In the end, a series of factors that interact with each other were described in these reviews. Conclusions about these factors and their interactions may be used to explain the observations in the reviews, to predict future events, to advocate for various causes, and so on. They may be descriptive, take the form of statistical models, or be expressed in other ways. The factors themselves, and the nature of their interactions, comprise "the structure of public opinion" about the issue at hand. This section of the dissertation will follow a similar strategy.

Understanding the structure of public opinion in the U.S. regarding education requires us to understand some of the substantive findings of research efforts in this area. To do so, findings and observations from Elam and Rose (1995), Elam *et al.* (1996), Erskine (1963), Hochschild and Scott (1998), Loveless (1997), Reed (1977), Rose and Gallup (2001; 2002; 2003) and Strunk (1948; 1949) were reviewed. There are certainly many thousands of other surveys not covered

here. Many of them would be focused on a particular locality. There are also many other sources of data related to public opinion or to the education system in general. The selection reviewed in this study is limited as a matter of practicality, with the consolation that the PDK/Gallup survey is one of the most widely known surveys available on the topic. Although this review is necessarily incomplete, there seem to be five key features in the data that deserve discussion as structural features.

First, education is an expression of, and embedded in, our changing culture. One manifestation of this view is the simple fact that some topics are included in surveys in some years and not in others, as well as by the substantive responses to some survey questions, all in accordance with the changing social and political issues of the day.

Second, since the 1970s the rises and declines in public opinion regarding education closely parallel opinions about other institutions and do not seem to have a satisfactory explanation in the literature. They indicate some force being exerted on public confidence in education that is beyond the direct control of schools.

Third, the relationship between public education and industry has a long history. It consists mainly of alarmist accusations that school failures hurt America's global competitiveness, with concomitant calls for school reform. These accusations appear to be unsubstantiated by the facts and unhealthy for public education.

Fourth, public education seemingly has been under heavy criticism for generations and the public gives declining marks to schools nationally. But the public has given stable, high marks to their local public schools over the years and also exhibits behaviors that would indicate

confidence in the public schools. And for all the alarms about the imminent collapse of American society due to school failures, America has retained leadership on the world stage. These apparent contradictions do not seem to be explained well in the literature, but a simple explanation is proposed here based partly on Loveless (1997).

Fifth, there are large differences in the quality ratings offered by the public for local schools versus schools nationally, but this phenomenon extends to a wide range of topics beyond education. Various authors, particularly Loveless (1997) and Smith (1998) have proposed numerous, apparently reasonable, explanations drawn from a few different literatures for this so-called "BIMBY" effect, but there are apparently no experiments in the literature designed to shed more light on these theories.

Each of these five features will be discussed briefly. The last feature, the BIMBY effect, is the subject of this dissertation.

Survey topics and cultural context

> Schools are the genes of culture. They teach not only the skills and information necessary to function in the world but also the customs, values, mores and habits that keep the cultural fabric intact. Without socialization, the preservation of any culture cannot be insured for it is the process that nourishes the cultural core values. (Pulliam, 1991, in van Patten [ed.], p. 9)

A brief study of the topics covered in education surveys would have its own intrinsic interest. More importantly for the purpose of this dissertation, it also clearly shows that education survey questions are driven by current social concerns, illustrating the fact that education

operates within a broader societal context. It also shows the longevity of some issues in education. And it may lend weight to the idea that education is a manifestation of the society in which it operates.

Regarding the issue of societal context and the education system, Shavelson and Towne (2002) noted:

> Education is multilayered, constantly shifting, and occurs within an interaction among institutions (e.g., schools and universities), communities, and families. It is highly value-laden and involves a diverse array of people and political forces that significantly shapes its character. These factors require attention to be paid to the physical, social, cultural, economic, and historical environment… (p. 5)

Three topics may suffice to illustrate how education survey topics themselves, or the wording used to address them in surveys, can change as society changes. The first topic is busing students to help to racially desegregate schools, the second is the rise and decline of drug use by students as a commonly mentioned problem in education surveys, and the third is the evolving conceptualization of Federal funding for private schools.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine from the U.S. Supreme Court's 1896 ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that had made racially segregated schools legal. Actual desegregation of public schools after *Brown* was quite slow. After years of local resistance, the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave new impetus to desegregation efforts. But in the early 1970s, many public schools were still in a state of *de facto* segregation. Busing students to different schools outside of their regular attendance zones was

proposed as a way to further desegregate the schools. A 1971 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, cleared the way for busing to desegregate schools[6].

Not surprisingly, questions about busing started to appear in surveys just prior to that court case. Hochschild and Scott (1998) report numerous surveys asking about busing from 1970 through 1996. Overall support for busing started at just 14% in March 1970, crept into the twenty-percent range by the mid-1980s, and seemed to reach about 35% by the mid-1990s. So, busing appeared as a topic on surveys because the changing social context generated a national policy discussion that seemed to demand public opinion as an input. Perhaps it has persisted on surveys because it is used to reflect broader attitudes about race, or because poll takers were following the trend toward resegregation of schools by race in the 1990s.

An example of a topic for which the survey responses themselves seem to have been driven by social context is the issue of drug use by students. From 1970 to 1981, between 11% and 15% of national samples in the annual PDK/Gallup survey viewed drug use by students as an important problem in the schools. From 1982 to April 1985, 18% to 20% did so. In April 1985, First Lady Nancy Reagan hosted an international conference of first ladies about children and drug abuse. Later in 1985, Mrs. Reagan hosted a second international conference of first ladies about the issue and adopted it as her cause, which included the famous "Just Say No" campaign[7].

From 1986 to 1989 the PDK/Gallup percentage of respondents who identified drug use as a problem for schools rose from 28% to 34%. It then dropped to 22% in 1991 (no results are

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[6] http://www.civilrights.org/research_center/civilrights101/desegregation.html
[7] http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/ref/nrbio.html and http://www.caadaa.org/caadaaBirth_JustSayNo.html

reported for 1990), 16% in 1993, 11% in 1994, 7% in 1995, and rose back to 16% in 1996 (Hochschild & Scott, 1998). Results from 2000-2003 – 9%, 9%, 13% and 9% respectively – indicate that this concern has declined to levels similar to those in the early 1970s (Rose & Gallup, 2001; 2003). Whether or not drug use was more or less of a problem during some of these years, it seems likely that Mrs. Reagan's campaign changed the context in which the surveys operated, perhaps creating the large spike in the percentage saying drug use was a problem for schools. The current existence of "zero tolerance" drug policies[8] may be a real policy legacy of both this campaign and the spike in public opinion about the issue.

Some survey topics have surprisingly long histories, and illustrate the difficulties in tracing core issues as they are expressed in different terms through different periods of societal change. For example, whether the Federal government should fund schools, and whether a portion of such funding should go to non-public schools, have been survey issues since at least the 1940s (Hochschild & Scott, 1998; Strunk, 1948, 1949; Terrien, 1954) but the survey vocabulary and social context for this fundamental issue vary over the years.

Strunk (1949) reports a 1949 AIPO poll in which 49% said Federal education funds should go only to public schools, 41% said part of those funds should go to parochial (Catholic) schools, and 10% did not know. This question may have been inspired by an earlier court case. The issue of Federal funds being used to pay for transportation costs to parochial (Catholic) schools was the subject of the 1947 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Everson v. Board of Education*. In

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[8] An example of these policies is a 1997 case in Manassas, Virginia, in which a 9-year-old distributed Certs Concentrated Mints to some classmates. A 14-year-old received a 10-day expulsion (later forgiven) and a 13-year-old served nine days of a 10-day expulsion and was allowed to return to school only after agreeing to attend drug awareness classes (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

accordance with state law, Ewing Township, New Jersey, reimbursed parents of school children for the cost of riding public transportation to attend school. The township reimbursed parents of children attending parochial schools as well as those attending public schools. The Supreme Court decision, while affirming the original constitutional intent of "a wall of separation" between church and state, nonetheless allowed the township's reimbursement practice[9].

Surveys have asked about additional issues related to Federal funding of schools, such as the degree of control the Federal government should have over curricula (Terrien, 1954). Hochschild and Scott (1998) report that questions about the provision of Federal funds to support attendance at non-public schools – sometimes posed as financial support for parochial schools, sometimes as vouchers – have been asked since at least the early 1960s, but only from 1987 on could they find questions about school choice as its own concept separate from the issue of vouchers. And Strunk's (1949) report on the 1949 AIPO survey which asked whether part of a $300 million Federal school funding package should be used to support parochial schools represents another way of getting at choice of schooling.

Clearly, it is difficult to say that "vouchers" have been asked about since the 1940s just because surveys asked about the use of Federal funds for non-public education in the 1940s without using the term "vouchers." But has "school choice" been asked about only since 1987? In a strictly literal sense, this seems to be true, but "vouchers," which necessitate school choice, have been asked about since at least 1970 (Hochschild & Scott, 1998). So in a more conceptual sense, one could argue that school choice has been asked about since 1970. And perhaps some

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[9] http://atheism.about.com/library/decisions/religion/bl_l_BoEEverson.htm

would argue that school choice was really what was being asked about in 1949 when Federal funding for private or parochial schools was being asked about (Strunk, 1949). Regardless of these fine distinctions, it seems clear that since the 1940s the central issue of the relationship of Federal funding to how public and private schools operate has been on the table in whatever form was topical at the time of the survey.

To sum up, the issues of busing and drug use demonstrate how societal changes shape the content of survey questionnaires and the answers respondents give to survey questions. The issue of Federal funding for schools (including vouchers and school choice) demonstrates the surprising persistence of some education issues, as well as the influence of the changing societal context on the rhetoric used to discuss these core issues.

Rises and declines in confidence and the national mood

Loveless (1997) showed that survey ratings of confidence in education fell noticeably from about the mid-1960s through the 1970s, and since then have fluctuated up and down but have been consistently low. He briefly examined the possibility that public confidence in the nation's education system was driven by national SAT scores. The relationship between SAT scores and public confidence in the nation's schools held from 1973-1990, but did not hold for 1991-1995. Loveless (1997) speculated that public trust of the SAT as a performance indicator may have changed in the early 1990s, or the way that the SAT scores were presented to the public may have changed (pp. 133-135).

Reed (1977) offered some reason to believe that the public saw SAT scores as a quality indicator, at least during the mid-1970s. He reported that 59% of a national survey sample in

1976 responded "Yes" to the question "Do you believe that a decline in national test scores of students in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining?" When they were then asked for reasons why national test scores might be declining, only 16% said that the tests are not reliable. (Of course, it might be inconsistent to say that declining test scores mean education is declining, and that the reason for declining test scores is that the tests are not reliable.) Sixty-five percent blamed less parental involvement with the children; 52% faulted student motivation; 49% blamed too much television viewing; and 49% said society was becoming too permissive (p. 32).

However, on the local level, Clark (2009) studied public opinion about local schools in Georgia through the 2008 Georgia State Survey and found no statistical relationship between ratings of school quality and test scores. Similarly, Glover (1992) decoupled school ratings and test scores in his description of earlier research on school choice in Great Britain. His findings pointed to the child's happiness and parental ratings of process factors such as in-school discipline, good teaching and overall school reputation as being more important in school choice decisions than were outcome factors such as test scores and job or university placements. Glover (1992) reported results from approximately five hundred surveys of three stakeholder groups for seven schools in Great Britain that looked more closely at the role of perceived reputation of the schools. In addition to echoing the lesser influence of outcomes on school choice, his findings highlighted the importance – and lingering nature – of historical information in respondents' current views of the schools. Glover (1992) concluded that "[r]eputation, as the basis of judgment and choice, appears to lag behind the actual developments within the schools by many

years" (p. 230). This finding not only decouples perceptions of schools from test scores, but also from the flow of time.

Loveless (1997) eventually discounted the SATs as having "dubious validity as an indicator of institutional performance" (p. 135) and then noted the extensive literature that clearly describes a general decline in public trust in large institutions that was widely attributed to Watergate and the Vietnam War in the early 1970s.

Lipset and Schneider (1983) actually trace public confidence in three institutions from a low point in the 1930s as Depression racked the country, to a high point in the mid-1960s, after which the more recent general decline started.

> The evidence examined so far reveals a sharp decline of public faith in government, business, and labor since the mid-1960s. The marked parallelism of the confidence trends indicates that the loss of faith occurred most rapidly between 1964 and 1975 and that it applied very broadly to all three institutions and their leaders. Nor has the situation improved significantly since 1975…National surveys conducted between 1981 and 1983 measuring confidence in institutions have produced contradictory results, although they all agree that confidence has remained low. (Lipset & Schneider, 1983, pp. 399-400)

This pattern exists in any serial survey covering this sort of question series during these years, including The Gallup Poll (Loveless, 1997), The Harris Survey (Ladd, 1977), The American National Election Study (Lipset & Schneider, 1983), the Center for Political Studies trust in government questions (Lipset & Schneider, 1983), and the Opinion Research Corporation surveys on large companies (Lipset & Schneider, 1983).

Loveless (1997) is more interested in the similar changes in confidence ratings among education and other institutions rather than the description or causes of the general decline in confidence ratings. After discounting national SAT scores as the most likely driver of public confidence in education, Loveless (1997) reviews data from the Gallup Polls in 1973-1995. He shows that declining confidence levels in education parallel declining confidence levels in most other major institutions that were asked about (organized religion, Congress, big business, banks, television/TV news, newspapers and organized labor). Pearson correlation coefficients calculated by Loveless (1997) indicate that only the Supreme Court and the military had confidence ratings in these surveys that were not correlated to those of education at or above +.23. He concludes:

> The simultaneous rise and fall of confidence in vastly dissimilar organizations suggests the existence of suprainstitutional influences on the public mood. Forces beyond the institutions themselves – transcendent to their individual leaders, records of performance, or modes of organization – may be affecting how they are viewed by the public. (p. 138)

The "public mood" may be thought of as merely another example of the influence of societal context on public opinion regarding education. In some sense, that would be correct. But it is useful to distinguish public opinion regarding education from societal context in general because looking at it separately leads to two interesting contradictions – the differences between ratings for local schools and national schools, and the differences between what people say and what they do about education.

The relationship between education and industry

Many of the things that people say about education are negative, and many of those criticisms come from America's business and industrial leaders. The idea that education must meet the needs of American industry is persistent and powerful. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) in *A Nation at Risk* expressed education's relationship to economic competitiveness this way:

> Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all – old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the 'information age' we are entering. (p. 5)

To put *A Nation at Risk* in some cultural and temporal context, a primary issue for the National Commission was the decline of American economic and heavy manufacturing competitiveness in the face of pressure from Japan, South Korea and Germany. After the social upheaval of the 1960s and the economic and social malaise of the 1970s, these pressures may have seemed critical. Twenty years later, it is clear that the U.S. has retained its competitive standing in the global economy, due largely to factors utterly beyond public education's direct control or influence (Bracey, 2003).

A cause and effect relationship between the education system and indicators of economic success is difficult or impossible to establish in a scientific manner. This is not only because of the difficulties in establishing causality in general; Cremin (1989) says this is because positing any such causality is essentially a lie:

> [T]o conclude that problems of international competitiveness can be solved by educational reform, especially educational reform defined solely as school reform, is not merely utopian and millenialist, it is at best foolish and at worst a crass effort to direct attention away from those truly responsible for doing something about competitiveness and to lay the burden instead on the schools. It is a device that has been used repeatedly in the history of American education. (pp. 102-3)

Manifestations of the relationship between industry and public education have long historical roots that go well beyond the scope of this review. Briefly though, from colonial days to the present, education in the United States has changed from a privilege reserved for the children of the elite class to a public institution to which nearly everyone has access. Along the way, several key reform movements created and changed the institution of public education. The needs of business and industry were often explicitly cited in these reform movements, and were sometimes subtly but powerfully expressed in the structures that were advocated and realized through these reform movements.

Traditionally, schooling had the more classical purposes of realizing one's mental potential; training the mind; developing an appreciation for truth, beauty and goodness; nurturing intellectual growth and discipline largely for their own sake; and developing the moral and

religious training the children of the elite class would need to assume their rightful positions of leadership in society.

The modern public education system in the U.S. was essentially established as a system of inclusive mass schooling in the mid-19th century. The focus came first on grades 1 through 8, which experienced substantial increases in enrollment through the late 1800s into the early 1900s. By the middle of the 20th century, enrollments in high school had increased dramatically as it became a central aspect of the transition to adulthood. For example, in 1900 only about 6.3% of each age cohort completed high school, but by 1969 this figure was 79.1% (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). During this time, the purpose of public schooling became multifaceted. By the early 1900s, mass public schooling had four main purposes: traditional intellectual development, social development, vocational development, and individual development (Fenske, 1997).

Grubb and Lazerson (2004) argue that vocationalism has dominated secondary and postsecondary education through the 20th century, driven by an "education coalition" including economic reformers, parents, social reformers, educators and business interests. As a result of formal education becoming the main pathway to jobs, enrollments have increased dramatically at all levels, second-tier comprehensive universities have grown, community colleges have grown, and the goal of "high school for all" is now "college for all."

Cohen (1968) described the close connection between industry and education in terms of laws regarding child labor and compulsory education. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, child labor was viewed positively because it occurred in an apprenticeship system focused on skilled trades. But child labor in the Industrial Revolution was dangerous, physically and mentally

grueling, and interchangeable. It also could be used to lower the wages paid to adult workers. The Progressive movement targeted child labor as a major reform effort, and the most effective means of keeping children out of the labor force was to require them to be in school. So, initially, mass schooling was designed to separate children from the labor force, not to prepare them for entry into it.

In a similar vein, Musgrove (1979) notes that in England in the mid- to late 1800s, survey data show that a majority of children were neither in school nor in the labor force, but were instead idling their days away unsupervised in the streets. "Compulsory mass schooling, when it came, was not to provide a disciplined work force; it was a gigantic device for cleaning the streets" (p. 76).

There are many other examples of this relationship between industry and public education. The assumptions of this relationship are perhaps only indirect or unintentional drivers of public opinion or survey content, but they underlie much of the negative publicity directed at schools and they directly shape the public policy agenda for education. This relationship should be kept in mind when we discuss the structure of public opinion regarding education.

The apparent contradictions of criticism and confidence

Despite the long histories of criticism and poor opinion ratings directed at public education, there are many successes experienced by graduates of that system and people exhibit behaviors that indicate confidence in the public system rather than lack of confidence. These behaviors include continuing to send their children to public schools, and consistently supporting education expenditures. What can be made of these apparent contradictions?

Reform movements in education date from the 19th century and continue to the present day[10]. Some of the major changes in U.S. education include Horace Mann's common school reforms; the development of Catholic parochial schools as alternatives to public schooling; compulsory attendance laws; the development of kindergarten; Progressive reforms in education; the life adjustment curriculum; the emphasis on science and mathematics in response to Sputnik; Federal funding of new programs and related evaluation research during the Great Society of the 1960s; New Math; the growth of teacher unions; "back to basics;" the rise of accountability, outcomes standards and high-stakes testing; and the development of home schooling and fundamentalist Christian schools as alternatives to public schooling (Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

The mere existence of reform movements might be taken as an indication of dissatisfaction with education. After all, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." But as we have seen, education is part of, and an expression of, its times and its culture. Therefore, I suggest that there has been so much change in education through the decades because there has been so much change in life and society. In fact, if education is not just an expression of its societal context but rather is itself society, then change in education should be inevitable in a dynamic society. Moreover, school reforms should be driven mainly by factors *extrinsic* to the education system – demographic changes, political changes, economic or social changes. In this light, change in education is not necessarily synonymous with large-scale dissatisfaction with specific *intrinsic* features of education. This distinction may allow survey respondents to rate schools highly even as educational reforms have occurred regularly throughout history.

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[10] There is some indication that school reform efforts track with social and economic upheavals that occur at transition points in global industrial cycles described by Chirot (1994). See Ellis (2005, unpublished).

However, history is also full of specific complaints about intrinsic features of public education, and these complaints have been used to mobilize support for education reforms. One such concern, that schools do not prepare students to be successful in America's economy, was briefly touched on earlier. Another common criticism of public education is that students graduate without being able to answer questions about factual knowledge well enough.

Perhaps the most forceful criticism of this type involves civic knowledge, presumed to be critical to sustaining a healthy democracy. For example, Morin and Balz (1996) report a survey about American politics conducted by The Washington Post, the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University. Only about one-third of the respondents could name their Congressional representative.

> Overall, surveys indicate that Americans know about as much about politics and government today as they did during the 1940s. But these results hide a more distressing trend: In the past 50 years, the average number of years an American spends in school has increased from less than nine to more than 12, yet political knowledge has not grown. (Morin & Balz, 1996)

Delli Carpini (1999) describes a more comprehensive indictment.

> Public opinion polling since the 1930s has consistently documented low levels of political knowledge among the American public, leading Philip Converse to write that "the most familiar fact to arise from sample surveys is that popular levels of information about public affairs are, from the point of view of an informed observer, astonishingly low." (p. 4)

Indeed, Erskine (1963) cites AIPO surveys in which only 38% of respondents could correctly name their Congressman (1947a), only 19% could correctly name the three branches of U.S. government (1952), only 33% could identify the American economic or business system as "capitalism" (1947b), etc. These complaints about public education's lack of success in educating enough students about civics have a long history and typify complaints that target intrinsic aspects of the schools. But the outcomes, unchanged for decades, seem to resist any reforms that have been implemented. Maybe something beyond the control of the schools is at play. If so, complaints about intrinsic aspects of schools may be misguided. (See, for example, Berliner and Biddle (1995), Bracey (2003) and Cremin (1989) for strong refutations of claims about intrinsic aspects of schools found in *A Nation At Risk*.)

An example of apparent public support for schools, despite claims that the schools are failing, is that public support for spending on education is consistently strong. Majorities support spending more on education, increasingly larger majorities find spending on education to be insufficient, and majorities would support more spending on education even if it required a tax increase (Hochschild & Scott, 1998).

Loveless (1997) points out that it may be consistent to lack confidence in education and support increased spending because only more money will solve education's problems, but that logic seems to run counter to his use of favorable dropout statistics to illustrate that people are not abandoning the system due to poor quality.

It may be that American schools can do little directly to change indicators of their "success" if these indicators are taken to be standardized test scores, international economic

power rankings, or the rise and fall of social indicators such as crime, births to young mothers, and so forth. This is because these indicators are driven largely or wholly by factors extrinsic to the schools. At the same time, the historical record appears to contain common complaints brought up repeatedly through the decades that relate to issues that are intrinsic to the schools (e.g., curriculum content, attitudes of teachers, discipline).

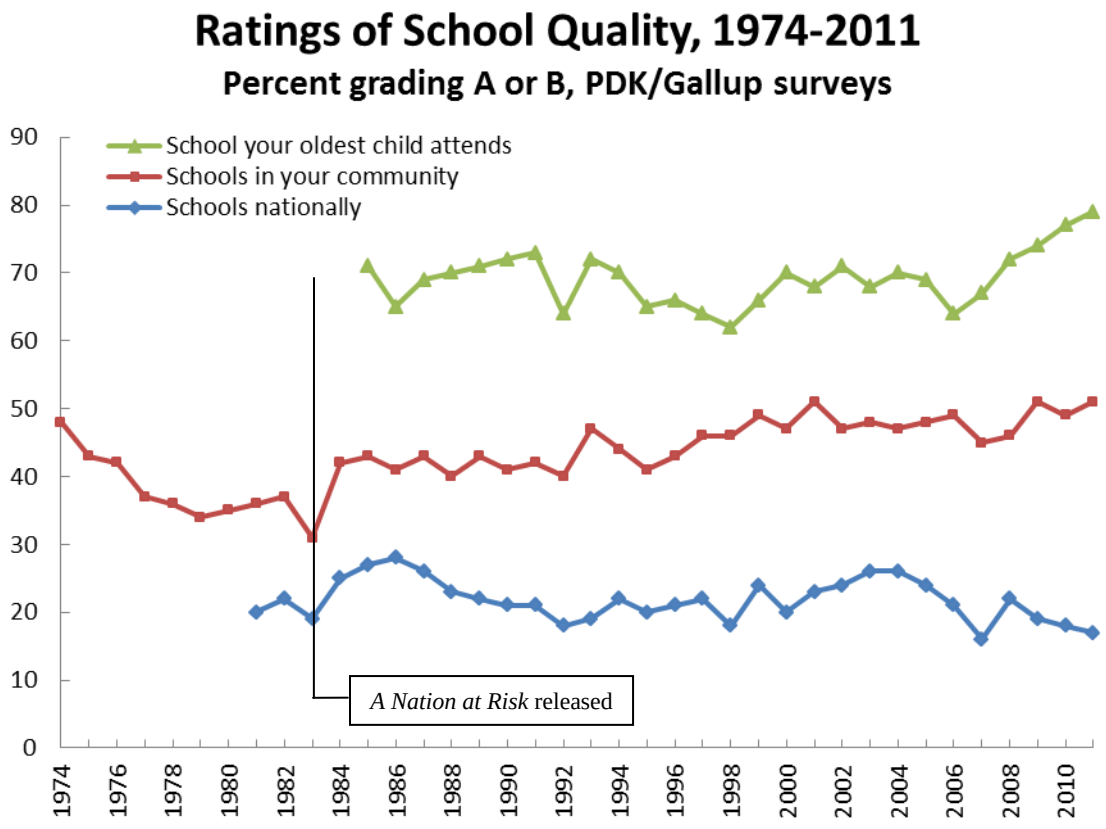
But if the public explicitly or intuitively understands the distinction between these extrinsic and intrinsic factors, then it may not be paradoxical to observe that the public expresses confidence in the schools they know best even while reforms are constantly called for or undertaken on a systemic level. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) would say that the public distrusts *processes* that look bad while preferring not to get involved in *content*. Processes may imply the large national view, while content may imply the local practices at school. And if extrinsic factors have any influence on satisfaction with other institutions besides education, it may be expected that public confidence in schools would parallel public confidence in those other institutions, which it does.

The BIMBY effect

As Figure 2 shows, one of the most striking findings in the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup (PDK) surveys on education is the persistent difference in ratings of schools at the local and national levels from 1985 through 2011, the years in which all three questions were asked in each survey. For a generation, when asked to grade the nation's schools only between 16% and 28% of the public have awarded grades of A or B, but when asked about their community's schools, between 31% and 51% of the public have awarded grades of A or B. And

when asked about the schools their oldest children attended, between 62% and 79% of parents of school-aged children have awarded grades of A or B. The difference in the ratings between each "level" of education is about 20 percentage points. It seems likely that this pattern would have held if the questions about schools nationally and schools attended by children had been asked in earlier years.

Figure 2: Trends in school ratings in the PDK/Gallup surveys, 1974-2011



The BIMBY effect is found in other surveys of school quality conducted around the world. Smith (1998) reports on several U.S. surveys in addition to the PDK/Gallup survey, and

Churchill, Kelly and Mulford (1999) cite similar results from surveys in Canada and Australia dating to the late 1970s.

One might argue that these differences demonstrate increasing respect for schools the closer one is to the schools (Elam *et al.*, 1996). But Hochschild and Scott (1998) report that this "phenomenon of deep concern about an issue at the national level but substantial satisfaction on the same issue at a local level is part of a more general pattern" (p. 81). They cite research results from teachers in all Chicago schools – teachers should be "closer" to schools as a result of their work – who saw their own schools' students as "the good kids" but express concern about gangs and tough kids in other schools, and survey results showing that educators also rate their community schools higher than they do schools nationally.

Moreover, the BIMBY phenomenon is found in relation to other survey topics. One of the best-known examples is ratings of individual Congressional representatives versus ratings of Congress as an institution. Parker and Davidson (1979) analyzed two national opinion surveys from 1968 and 1977. They determined that citizens rated Congress as an institution based on domestic policy, relations between the executive and legislative branches of government, and the style and pace of the legislative process. These evaluative criteria generally produced negative ratings of Congress. The evaluative criteria for rating Congressional representatives were quite different, however. They tended to rely on constituency service provided to the home district, and personal attributes of the legislator. Policy actions were only infrequently cited. Parker and Davidson (1979) concluded that "evaluations of Congress and of individual members are apt to differ in valence because of the disparate criteria that are applied to each" (p. 58).

Durr *et al.* (1997) say that "[s]cholars have long noted the tendency of the electorate to give relatively high marks to their own representatives and senators, while being less satisfied with Congress as a whole" (p. 176). But they qualify this description by noting that opinions about Congress as a whole seem to influence, albeit slightly, opinions about individual legislators and vice versa. They conclude that Congressional approval ratings decline when Congress is actually doing its job, because the job of Congress is messy and apparently rife with conflict and confusion. This finding harkens back to Sears and Whitney (1973).

Hoekstra (2000) reviewed localized public opinion about the U.S. Supreme Court in relation to decisions with local impacts. She concluded that prior non-specific opinions about the Court "spilled over" into ratings offered by local citizens after decisions were handed down that impacted local issues, but prior opinions could not explain all the change in ratings of the Court before and after the locally relevant decisions, leaving reactions to the decisions themselves to explain that rest of the changes in ratings of the Court (p. 97).

This spilling over of existing opinions into the ratings of other survey questions can also occur because of content within the survey itself. Sudman, Bradburn, and Schwarz (1996, pp. 113-115) reported a survey experiment about respondent ratings of the German Christian Democratic Party. Ratings of the party varied significantly depending on how respondents were primed to conceptualize the political role of the party's long-time and widely beloved icon. Survey respondents were asked ahead of time to evaluate their awareness of this beloved political figure, who at the time was serving as the largely ceremonial president of the Federal Republic of Germany. When respondents were primed to include the president as a member of

the party, ratings of the party as a whole were maximized. When no question at all was asked about the president, ratings of the party were at a moderate level. When respondents were asked about the president and also were asked to exclude him from party politics because his ceremonial office required a neutral political stance, ratings of the party as a whole were at a minimum. Overall, ratings for a different political party, the Social Democrats, did not vary under any of the experimental conditions.

The experiment clearly demonstrated that respondents' opinions of the individual figure had a significant influence on their opinions of the party as a whole. When the beloved president was explicitly mentioned, ratings of the party were highest. When he was not mentioned in any fashion, ratings of the party implicitly included him as a member but were not as high as when he was explicitly brought to mind first. When he was explicitly mentioned and excluded from the party because of the non-political nature of his job, ratings were at the minimum.

So with some of the qualifications from Durr et al. (1997), Hoekstra (2000) and Sudman et al. (1996) in mind, it seems that ratings of large, distant, abstract governmental institutions are different from ratings of individual, local, specific components of those systems, but the ratings of one can influence the other.

But the BIMBY phenomenon extends beyond government institutions to include ratings about crime, school violence, racial tensions, drug abuse, moral standards, poverty, black racism, white racism, unemployment, violence in general, churches, the economic situation, ethics and moral conditions, family life, non-public schools and environmental problems. The differences across local and national ratings of these problems generally range from ten to forty percentage

points sometimes more, with the local area always having the more favorable rating. The differences are consistent across different surveys and they persist in different questionnaire contexts regardless of whether the national or local dimension is asked first (Smith 1998). See Table 1 below for a review of these data.

Table 1: The BIMBY effect in several national surveys (from Smith, 1998)

Date	Topic	Ratings
[Issue] has increased or worsened		
May 1993	Crime	+15
January 1994	Crime	+13
January 1996	Crime	+13
May 1996	Teenage crime	+26
May 1995	School violence	+31
June 1996	Racial tensions	+35
July 1996	Racial tensions	+32
October 1997	Racial tensions	+16
Current Conditions:		
[Issue] is a big or serious problem		
June 1996	Crime	+63
July 1996	Crime	+65
June 1996	Drug abuse	+56
July 1996	Drug abuse	+55
March 1997	Drug abuse	+47 [a]
June 1996	Moral standards	+44
July 1996	Moral standards	+46
June 1996	Poverty	+46
July 1996	Poverty	+50
June 1996	Black racism	+25
July 1996	Black racism	+27
June 1996	Racism	+41
July 1996	Racism	+42
June 1996	White racism	+24
July 1996	White racism	+24
June 1996	Unemployment	+28
July 1996	Unemployment	+28
June 1996	Violence	+66
July 1996	Violence	+67
[Issues] are good		
April 1996	Public schools	+9
October 1996	Public schools	+9
May 1992	Race relations	+50
December 1996	Race relations	+42
June 1997	Race relations	+34

Table 1: The BIMBY effect in several national surveys (from Smith, 1998) (cont.)

Date	Topic	Ratings
Being pleased with [issue]		
January 1996	Churches	+18
January 1996	Economic Situation	+39
January 1996	Ethics & moral conditions	+36
January 1996	Family life/American family	+43
January 1996	Schools	+18
May 1997	Quality of Education	+12[b]
Give schools a grade of A or B		
May 1996	Non-public schools	+8
May 1981	Public schools	+16
May 1982	Public schools	+15
May 1983	Public schools	+12
May 1984	Public schools	+17
May 1985	Public schools	+16
April 1986	Public schools	+13
April 1987	Public schools	+17
April 1988	Public schools	+17
May 1989	Public schools	+21
May 1991	Public schools	+21
August 1992	Public schools	+22
May 1993	Public schools	+28
May 1994	Public schools	+22
May 1995	Public schools	+21
May 1996	Public schools	+22
March 1997	Public schools	+21
June 1997	Public schools	+24
Rating of Environmental Problems (on a scale of 1 to 10)		
September 1996	1-5	+12
September 1996	1-5	+22
September 1996	1-5	+11

[a] Parents of teens ages 12-17.
[b] Registered voters.
Note: For each item shown, respondents were asked to rate the issue on both the local and national levels. In the "ratings" column a "+" indicates the local community received higher marks for the more socially desirable attribute. Full question wording and complete source citations are available through the Roper Center's POLL Database.

Although these differences seem paradoxical, Smith (1998) suggests several reasons why they might exist. First, if the problem is not distributed across the country proportional to population, the local estimates in a national sample survey will not aggregate to an unbiased national total. Second, if people think of different aspects of the problem or define it differently depending on what level is specified (national or local), there should be no expectation of conformity in ratings. Third, if a national problem has few or no local manifestations anywhere, there should be no expectation of conformity in ratings. But Smith (1998) concludes that non-comparability is not the explanation in most cases.

He suggests that different sources of input exist for information about issues at different levels. Knowledge about neighborhood conditions comes primarily from personal observation and direct communication among friends and family. Knowledge about local community conditions comes from a mix of direct sources and local media. Knowledge about the country as a whole comes primarily from the media and indirect sources. Therefore, media biases in what is covered or how stories are covered could create different sets of perceptions at different levels.

Cannon and Barham (1992) also point to indirect evidence that different information sources may create the BIMBY effect. "What accounts for the different ratings? For one thing, news stories on school failure – especially those that concentrate on large inner-city schools – contribute to the public's overall perception of U.S. education. In the [PDK/Gallup] survey conducted in 1983, shortly after the National Commission on Excellence released its report *A Nation at Risk*, A or B ratings of local schools hit an all-time low of 31 percent…And it seems likely that respondents tend to generalize, assuming that the problems of the worst schools are

the problems of public schools as a whole – except, perhaps, the schools their own children attend" (p. 41). It should be noted, however, that in 1983 when *A Nation at Risk* was released, the PDK/Gallup ratings (Figure 2) show that the BIMBY gap held fairly constant despite the drop in overall ratings that year for schools nationally and in the community. (The question about the school attended by the oldest child was not asked until 1985.)

It seems intuitive to think that different sources of information about schools at different levels must have something to do with the BIMBY effect. Churchill, Kelly and Mulford (1999) described the Public Attitudes to Schools and Education (PATSE) survey, a forty-item telephone survey of 1,213 Australians conducted by the University of Tasmania in 1999. The survey's relatively low response rate of 19.6% may be due to a field period of only five days (June 25-27; and July 11-12, 1999) which would have limited call-back opportunities. The demographic profile of the respondents and the survey results appear to be in line with reasonable benchmarks.

Ratings given in the PATSE for school and teacher quality were moderate. There was strong public support for education funding. Respondents to the PATSE were also asked about the influence of various sources of information about the schools. The most influential sources for information about the schools and school performance were their own or their children's direct personal contacts and experiences. Table 2 shows these data.

Table 2: The influence of various sources of information about schools

Objective	Number and percent saying "very influential"[a]	
Own children's experience of a school[b]	365	74%
Own experience of a school	699	58%
School staff	440	36%
Friends or neighbors	391	32%
Publications from schools	332	28%
School functions	303	25%
Newspaper reports	208	17%
Television reports	171	14%

Source: Public Attitudes to Schools and Education (PATSE) survey; Churchill *et al.* (1999)

[a] – Percentage base excludes item nonresponse (e.g., "Don't know" or "Refused").

[b] – Asked only of those with children in schools.

Churchill *et al.* (1999) note that the stronger influence of direct, interpersonal sources is consistent with earlier research dating to the 1950s. These results also align with Glover's (1992) findings. Different sources of information about local schools and schools nationally, and the different influence those sources carry with survey respondents, seem to be related to the BIMBY phenomenon somehow, but a long history of communications research that rarely shows statistically significant effects of media content argues otherwise.

Smith (1998) also suggests that home-town favoritism, greater weighting by respondents of issues associated with big cities, and perceptions about the heterogeneous nation being less favorable than perceptions about the homogeneous local community might contribute to the BIMBY phenomenon. He concludes that both local and national perspectives are important to measure.

Numerous other examples extend the BIMBY phenomenon even further in its topical and structural reach. Poister and Henry (1994) reported results from the 1992 Georgia State Poll of 805 telephone interview respondents designed to test a truism that the public sector delivers less satisfactory services than does the private sector. This truism was not supported by the data. A secondary finding in this research is more important to this paper – a small but consistent and often statistically significant increase in satisfaction with both public and private services among those who had recently used the service compared to those offering a more general rating without recent contact with the service.

Segovia and DeFever (2010) reviewed trends in U.S. public opinion about immigration issues and confirmed earlier findings that "Americans distinguish between immigrants at the national level and immigrants at the personal level, with more favorable public attitudes associated with individual immigrants' personality characteristics" (Segovia & DeFever, p. 380).

Expanding the topic matter, scope and terminology of BIMBY even further, Gifford and twenty-six co-authors (Gifford *et al.*, 2008) reported a cross-cultural study of 3,232 people regarding perceptions of environmental quality in eighteen countries[11]. They confirmed earlier findings of "spatial optimism" in assessments of environmental quality. They define spatial optimism in parallel with BIMBY, as a phenomenon in which local conditions are viewed more favorably than are conditions at the national level, which are in turn viewed more favorably than conditions at the global level. Sampling methods in this study differed across nations and were primarily non-probability samples (intercept interviews in public places, snowball sampling,

[11] Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden and the United States.

face-to-face interviews in randomly selected households, and returned surveys from randomly selected postal routes). Samples were often limited to one or two local geographies within nations.

Despite the weaknesses in sampling methods and the relatively low average sample size of 179 per nation, Gifford *et al.* (2008) obtained fairly robust results in fifteen countries showing that local environmental conditions were rated more favorably than were national and global conditions. In Russia, Romania and India, local conditions were not rated more favorably. Ratings of national conditions by country also tracked well in direction and magnitude with expert ratings of national environmental conditions, leading the researchers to conclude that "lay evaluations of national environmental condition can be very accurate, especially in aggregate populations. The cognitive biases that operate at an individual level are less-evident when the responses of many individuals are pooled, such that resulting averages are fairly accurate assessments of present national environmental quality" (p. 8).

Additional anecdotal evidence along these lines includes reports that Americans give high ratings to their physicians but low ratings to health care in general (Patashnik, 2009), and polling in 2010 regarding President Obama's health care legislation in which reactions to the package in general were somewhat negative but reactions to specific features of the package were positive.

Overall, while speculation and clues abound, and the various manifestations of BIMBY seem to indicate a cognitive "structure" to this phenomenon, there does not seem to be any

research available that directly addresses the causes of BIMBY as it relates to ratings of school quality.

Formulating ratings criteria for public education – expectations, emotions, and assumptions about the purpose of education

Loveless (1997) suggests that, "[w]hen asked to grade the nation's schools, poll respondents undoubtedly think of the characteristics of an ideal school and assign grades based on the magnitude of deviation from this ideal" (p. 153). This simple sentence contains a wealth of assumptions and implicit questions. What characteristics might be used by respondents? What information about those characteristics will be available for use by the respondent, and how much of it will actually be retrieved to answer the question? How does the social construction of the interview experience affect those processes? Where does the mental picture of the "ideal school" come from? What does it look like? How does a respondent calculate the magnitude of deviation from the ideal? And how does all of this happen in one to two seconds in the middle of a telephone interview? These operations are at the heart of this study, and the assumption in this study is that some systematic aspect of these operations causes the BIMBY effect.

Ratings criteria

There are numerous schemes for defining and measuring dimensions of school performance. The Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) at Virginia Commonwealth University has a useful discussion on their web site[12] about the history of and

[12] See http://www.cepionline.org/policy_issues/saa/public_account.html

general dimensions contained in school-level report cards (that is, report cards about the performance of the schools designed to facilitate comparisons across schools). Generally, three dimensions are found in school report cards: inputs and school contextual factors, process indicators, and outcome indicators. The site notes that outcome indicators in the form of standardized test scores have been replacing other indicators as the primary data sources for school comparisons, although in February 2009 the Commonwealth of Virginia adopted new rules that bring graduation rates into the public school accreditation process.

High-stakes test scores from public schools are sometimes used as the sole measure of school quality (for example, see http://www.psk12.com/rating/index.php). On the other hand, a multidimensional approach can be found at the School Success Profile web site (http://www.schoolsuccessprofile.org/). As noted on the web site, "The School Success Profile is a self-report survey of middle and high school students. The questions examine students' beliefs about themselves, their neighborhoods, schools, families and peer groups. The survey is based on a contextual perspective that suggests the social environment has a powerful effect on a child's development and success in school. The 220 multiple-choice survey questions take about 30 minutes to complete. The questions are divided into 6 modules: About You, Neighborhood, School, Friends, Family, and Health and Well-Being."

Churchill *et al.* (1999) note that the literature shows that "[t]he factors which influence the formation of attitudes towards schools are complex" (p. 16). Perceptions of academic achievement; discipline; crime and violence; racial and ethnic disturbances involving students; and teacher quality all come into play. Churchill *et al.* (1999) cite Webster, Owen and Crome's

(1993) list of key factors in creating school reputations: bad behavior of pupils (named by 30% of participants), views of other parents (18%), school discipline (18%), media reportage (16%) and word of mouth (13%).

The purposes of public schooling

Closely related to a discussion of ratings criteria for school quality is the purpose of schooling. Presumably, ratings of school quality are made in comparison to some implicit or explicit purpose the schools are trying to accomplish. Churchill et al. (1999) showed that there was strong support for five out of six possible objectives of public education posed to their Australian survey respondents, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Level of agreement about six possible objectives of public education

Objective	Number and percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with this objective[a]	
Develop literacy/numeracy skills	1181	98%
Provide a basis for life-long learning	1161	96%
Prepare for roles as citizens	1142	94%
Provide career/work preparation	1100	91%
Teach Australian history/geography	1088	90%
Promote respect for indigenous peoples	954	76%

Source: Public Attitudes to Schools and Education (PATSE) survey; Churchill, Kelly and Mulford (1999)
[a] - Percentage base excludes item nonresponse (e.g., "Don't know" or "Refused").

This list captures many of the purposes of education that implicitly or explicitly underlie discussions of school quality.

Another possible criterion of school quality is the happiness of the children attending the schools, and the likelihood that their school training is preparing them to be happy adults. Glover (1992) notes that the expected happiness of the child is often a more important factor in school

choice than are outcome factors such as test scores or job placement rates. Noddings (2003) explicitly proposes children's happiness as a framework for running the educational system in the U.S. Her underlying questions address why children are generally unhappy to be at school, and how we can raise moral adults. Despite some of the logistical issues raised by her ideas, these questions would seem to be critical. But as she notes, the very fact that proposing happiness as a goal of education seems to be a radical idea illustrates the state of affairs today regarding the aims of education.

Perhaps the most comprehensive view of education's purpose is that it transmits culture (Pulliam, 1991).

Market research and customer satisfaction approaches to school ratings

Another school of thought that needs to be considered is literature related to market research and customer satisfaction. This topic is heavily researched in the business world and, although public schools are not businesses *per se* (a proposition that some say is contested these days), this literature may have something to offer in terms of conceptualizing how people rate the quality of public schools.

Much of this literature focuses on two paradigms: affective or emotional reactions to services and products, and the differences between expectations and actual experiences, often referred to as the SERVQUAL model (Teas, 1993). Without researching these issues directly it is not possible to know which approach might fit better in describing ratings of public school quality – or if one (perhaps the affective approach) fits the local ratings and the other (the SERVQUAL approach) fits the national ratings.

Finally, and related somewhat to the SERVQUAL approach, ratings of the quality of public schools must ultimately rest on some belief system about the meaning of schools and education, even if these belief systems about something so complex, ubiquitous and multi-dimensional are so deeply held that they are not immediately apparent to or easily articulated by respondents.

Summary

As we review a large number of possible explanations for BIMBY, possible models for how ratings of school quality might be constructed and volunteered in a telephone survey, and what dimensions or sources of information might be important in those ratings, we realize that no particular factors leap forward. But there are many intriguing possibilities. We need to learn more about these issues before hypotheses can be developed and tested. But we know that they will be tested in a quantitative setting guided by the cognitive model of the survey response process.

The cognitive model of the survey response process

Earlier paradigms of response and representativeness

Modern survey research can trace its roots to the growth of the non-partisan press in the U.S. near the end of the 19th century and its use of straw polling, but only in the 1980s did cognitive theory begin to impact survey methods. The delay in bringing cognitive theory to bear on survey methodology (aside from the fact that cognitive theory itself was dormant from the 1930s through at least the 1950s) was largely due to survey researchers focusing on two other

problems: interviewer effects on survey responses, and sampling bias. These twin concerns guided work in survey methodology for several decades because of the dominance of the behaviorist stimulus-response paradigm used to conceptualize the interview process and several highly publicized missteps in the practical conduct of survey sampling.

In order to understand public sentiment and – often more importantly – increase circulation, newspapers conducted and tabulated local and regional straw polls about issues of the day. The most systematic among them used quota schemes and a sense of proportional representation, "intuitively employing techniques very similar to those that have ultimately formed the basis of modern 'scientific' polling…The polling directors developed quotas…The few newspapers that were this systematic eventually achieved a degree of precision that would be respected even in today's world of scientific polling" (Moore, 1992, p. 36). But less systematic approaches were the norm.

When polling pioneers such as George Gallup, Elmo Roper and Archibald Crossley began to create modern survey research in the 1930s their work was a direct response to concerns about the representativeness of the survey sample (Moore, 1992; Sudman *et al.*, p. 6). If the participants in the survey did not represent the population of interest, no degree of fidelity in the interviewer-subject interaction could compensate for that problem. The most notorious failure to obtain a good sample in the early decades of large-scale survey research brought problems of representativeness to the fore.

A national magazine, *The Literary Digest*, took straw polls to the national level in 1916 with a mail-out straw poll of its subscribers in five states about their preferences for President.

The *Digest* straw polls grew in size beyond its subscriber list and gained a reputation for accuracy bolstered in large part by the enormous numbers of ballots being sent out. There were twenty million ballots sent out in 1932, based largely on lists of telephone and automobile owners. The *Digest* came within three-quarters of a percentage point of Franklin Roosevelt's winning share, declared itself to have called forty-six of forty-eight states correctly, and claimed for itself a reputation of "uncanny" accuracy bordering on prophecy (Moore, 1992).

Meanwhile, Gallup had been using a quota sampling system to conduct interviews with newspaper readers about their favorite newspaper content. Intrigued by his mother-in-law's unexpected election as Iowa's Secretary of State as part of the Democratic wave of 1932[13], Gallup decided to see if he could predict election outcomes. He used his quota sampling system in the 1934 national Congressional elections and came within one percentage point of the overall returns. But he was unhappy with the response rates to his mail survey method and vowed to use face-to-face interviews in the future. Thus emboldened and at the same time leery of the *Digest's* methods, which some had criticized as being susceptible to class biases because of their reliance on lists of telephone and automobile owners[14], Gallup predicted in writing in July of 1936 that his small-sample, quota-based polling about the Franklin Roosevelt-Alf Landon Presidential election would be more accurate than the massive *Digest* straw poll mailing. He also predicted

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[13] Gallup's mother-in-law, Olga Babcock Miller, was placed on the ballot as a gesture in honor of her late husband. Iowa was heavily Republican, she did not campaign at all, and she was the first woman elected to the office (Moore, 1992, p. 46).

[14] Later research implicated both a biased sampling frame and the interaction of a low response rate with nonresponse biases among Republican and Democratic voters (see Squire, 1988).

(accurately, as it would turn out) the incorrect figures that the *Digest* poll would eventually yield three and a half months later (Moore, 1992, pp. 46-47).

Through the campaign, Gallup's weekly results consistently pointed to a Roosevelt landslide in the neighborhood of 54% while the *Digest's* accumulating returns – eventually reaching 2.3 million completed ballots out of more than ten million sent (Squire, 1988) – pointed just as strongly to a Landon rout of about 56%. Roosevelt won the election with 61% of the vote. The straw poll debacle is cited as a major factor in the *Digest*'s demise in 1938 (Squire, 1988, p. 127).

Gallup's methods – which had also been developed in parallel by Roper and Crossley and used during the 1936 campaign with similar results – ushered in the era of modern scientific polling. Most of the work on sampling methods through the middle of the twentieth century had to do with refining quota and random sampling methods – taking advantage of new technologies for obtaining and managing lists, incorporating sampling methods from agricultural research, measuring and suppressing sampling error in various sample designs, and developing methods for adjusting or weighting biased samples.

The other main concern of survey methodologists during the first fifty years of modern survey research was the possibility of systematic error introduced by interviewers whose performances departed from the behaviorist assumptions about the survey response process. The process of asking survey questions and recording answers was thought to mimic the stimulus-response model popularized by behaviorists such as B. F. Skinner. In this model, the stimulus was the survey question and the response was the survey answer. In its pure form, this model

implied that if the question was always asked using the same words in the same interviewing manner across all of the interviews (and interviewers) in a survey project, the only source of variation in the data should be the respondents' attitudes or the factual circumstances driving the answers to the questions. This model is still fundamental to training in standardized interviewing methods (Fowler, 1993, p. 107).

The standardized interviewing model meant that the interviewers – ideally – presented a neutral "stimulus" in the form of the survey question, and all of the respondents understood the questions in the same way. Therefore, variation in how different interviewers went about their jobs was of great interest, especially because early survey interviewing was usually conducted face to face in the field in interpersonal situations by independently functioning interviewers – a far more nerve-wracking arrangement for quality control enthusiasts than the centralized, electronically monitored telephone centers often used in more recent times.

A similar "standardized" theory informed early models of communication effects. Driven partly by the success of fascist propaganda before and during World War II, these models assumed that the content of a message would impact different listeners in roughly the same way. Under this so-called "magic bullet" model of communications effects, results should be achieved by creating an effective message and delivering it to as many people as possible. However, as formal research failed to establish behavioral changes resulting from public information campaigns even when people remembered seeing the content of the messages, this idea of the monolithic impact of communications content was abandoned in favor of theories that

emphasized more individualized responses to and uses of mass communication (Lowery & DeFleur, 1983, pp. 91, 105, 175).

Similarly, exhaustive research into interviewer effects on survey responses and concomitant interest in and application of rigorous interviewer training methods tended to rule out interviewer effects as a widespread source of survey response error by the mid-1950s (Sudman *et al.*, 1996, p. 6).

Application of cognitive theory to survey methods

While these issues regarding sampling methods and interviewer effects were being settled, practical survey research experience was revealing – often as accidental findings – many instances of unexpected anomalies in respondents' answers that could not be attributed to departures from the standardized approach to interviewing. Sometimes the identical question wording in two different surveys yielded sharply different response distributions even after controlling for the characteristics of the interviewers. Sometimes survey estimates varied among subgroups in the data in ways that were unexpected or could not be explained by existing theories. Through the early 1980s, research in this area amounted to little more than a catalog of these so-called response effects. More problematically, the effects did not appear to be consistent. Sometimes a change in question order would create a response effect, and sometimes the same change in another apparently similar survey would not create the effect. As Sudman *et al.* (1996) noted:

> Although many researchers explored the impact of question wording and question order on survey responses (for early reviews see the seminal works of Cantril, 1944, and Payne,

> 1951), the work conducted in this domain suffered from a lack of theoretical perspective. Articles appeared that demonstrated particular effects of particular question wordings and question orders, but no consistent body of findings or rules alerted the investigator to the types of situations in which wording or order effects were likely to appear. This resulted in a provocative collection of heterogeneous response effects yet their implications beyond the specific question under study remained uncertain. In the absence of a theoretical framework, it seemed that research on question wording and related factors had to start over with each new question asked (p. 7).

The mechanism underlying these effects was not understood until cognitive models of information processing were borrowed from cognitive psychology and applied to the survey response process beginning in the early 1980s (although there were precursors to this approach).

The two main themes brought out by the application of cognitive psychology to the survey response process are that responding to survey questions involves cognitive processes, and that overall, a completed survey interview is a socially constructed process that can create response effects.

Tourangeau *et al.* (2000) described a four-step cognitive model of the survey response process that is based on some of their earlier work, plus the work of Cannell *et al.* (1977). The model comprises the following steps (from Tourangeau *et al.*, 2000, p. 8):

Table 4: Four-step cognitive model of the survey response process

Comprehension	Attend to questions and instructions Represent the logical form of the question Identify the question focus (the information sought) Link key terms to relevant concepts
Retrieval	Generate retrieval strategy and cues Retrieve specific and generic memories Fill in missing details
Judgment	Assess completeness and relevance of memories Draw inferences based on accessibility of mental content Integrate the material retrieved Make estimates based on partial retrieval
Response	Map the judgment onto the survey response categories Edit the response

Each step in the four-step cognitive model of survey response represents whole literatures of more detailed research on how respondents answer survey questions. But in general, when presented with a survey question, respondents must:

(1) ascertain the literal and intended meanings of the question (this involves linguistics and conversational norms);

(2) retrieve and sort through relevant information using a variety of cognitive processes and strategies (this involves memory, estimation, mental shortcuts known as heuristics, and other cognitive processes);

(3) arrive at a judgment about what the response should be, based on self-assessments of how complete and representative the retrieval process has been (this involves contextual clues such as accessibility of memories as well as interactions in the interview that may encourage or inhibit the respondent's desire to expend additional cognitive effort); and

(4) edit the final judgment to fit the response categories and the social situation (this involves survey question and answer construction, the social desirability attached to the questions and answers, and other contexts perceived by the respondent).

In a telephone interview more than a couple of seconds of dead air is awkward, therefore all of this cognitive activity happens very quickly. Is there something in this process that leads to the BIMBY effect?

The application of this model – drawn from advances in cognitive psychology and closely related work in the fields of linguistics, memory and judgment – has allowed survey methodologists to replicate and predict certain survey response phenomena. As summarized by Schwarz (1997):

> Thus, researchers working on context effects in attitude measurement, for example, can reliably produce assimilation and contrast effects…Unfortunately, this success does not imply that the same researchers can predict the behavior of any given question…(p. 37)

Assimilation and contrast effects are created when preceding information in the survey changes the respondent's mental representation of a current question in the survey (compared to when the information is absent or there is different information preceding the question). "The content of preceding questions determines the information that becomes temporarily accessible in memory" (Sudman *et al.*, 1996, p. 113). The BIMBY effect would seem to go beyond assimilation and contrast effects, but cognitive models of the response process would seem to be useful in learning more about its causes. The cognitive model of the survey response process,

and the concept that the intended meaning of the survey is socially constructed, is the underlying methodological model for this research.

Survey effects also differ depending on the survey topic, data collection methods, and cognitive burden placed on respondents. For example, data are reported differently for sexual behavior depending on whether the information is collected by an interviewer in a face-to-face setting or by computer (Smith, 1992). Response effects in panel and cohort surveys differ from those found in cross-sectional surveys. Response effects for surveys that collect finely detailed reports of income or health insurance status differ from surveys that collect information about the same topics using one or two global questions (Mathiowetz & Wunderlich, 2000, pp. 48-49; Nelson & Mills, 2001; Roman *et al.*, 2002). While an overall cognitive model has helped to explain survey effects and organize thinking about survey methods, the experience of survey practitioners and methodologists shows that each survey topic brings its own challenges and unique conceptual and methodological issues. Therefore, it is important to establish what is known about the process of providing quality ratings of public schools in surveys, and what factors may affect those ratings in the survey setting.

How survey respondents provide answers to ratings questions

Within the four-step model of the cognitive survey response process, what are the mental operations that determine how those four steps are carried out?

There are two main types of questions asked in surveys. Questions about behaviors or other events or "factual" points of knowledge have verifiable and objectively correct answers, at least in theory. Questions about attitudes or judgments, on the other hand, have no objectively

verifiable answers. Because of this important difference, much of what has been learned about cognitive response processes from investigating behavioral or factual reports may seem to be irrelevant to attitudinal reports, but in fact there are many similarities (Tourangeau *et al*., 2000).

Early conceptions of the response process assumed that the information being requested by the survey question already existed in the respondent's mind in a relatively fixed form. Therefore, accurately answering the question was simply a matter of comprehending the meaning of the question and retrieving the appropriate information from some sort of mental filing cabinet. If, for example, the request was for behavioral information such as the number of visits to the doctor in the last two years, the respondent would simply access memories of all visits within the specified time frame and tally them to provide a frequency report. If attitudinal information were being requested, the respondent would consult his or her personal library of longstanding and relatively stable attitudes about the object presented in the survey question (or closely related objects or concepts), and retrieve the appropriate response (Tourangeau *et al*., 2000).

But over time, this traditional view of the response process for both behavioral and attitudinal questions changed. A very large body of interdisciplinary research demonstrated that memory and retrieval processes are dynamic, complex and subject to outside influences. Different respondents will use different cognitive strategies to create answers to survey questions (see, for example, Blair & Burton, 1987 – they identified twelve strategies used by respondents to answer behavioral frequency questions). These findings pertain to attitudinal questions just as they do to behavioral questions. Attitudes are not pre-filed in a mental filing cabinet, they are not

nearly as stable over time as once hypothesized, they can change if respondents are led through more detailed supporting and opposing arguments, and they are subject to survey context effects – usually the wording of preceding questions or the presentation of pre-formed answer categories – that can be surprisingly large (Tourangeau *et al*., 2000).

Delli Carpini (1999) serves as a case in point of how these concepts played out in substantive research on a specific topic. Political scientists and civic-minded scholars started with an idealized "informed citizen" model of democracy in which the general public needed to provide knowledgeable evaluations of public policy issues based on a broad set of facts. But they realized that this was not only a bar set so high that it made democracy impossible, it also did not account for observations of how little factual information people seem to know at any time, and how people actually go about answering public policy questions. Therefore, a "low information" model came into use, in which citizens use information short-cuts to make choices and lessen their cognitive burdens.

The three key features of the low-information model cited by Delli Carpini (1999) are "that beliefs are the mainspring of attitude formation; that beliefs can be based on more or less accurate information; and that attitude formation and expression is an *active* process" (p. 19, original emphasis). The low-information model is based heavily on work by Anthony Downs and the psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. It incorporates their studies of how people use heuristic "short-cut" strategies to organize information and make judgments without having to assemble detailed information. The informed citizen and low-information models

differ in how much weight they give to the role of factual information in attitude formation, but both assume that the foundation of attitudes is beliefs about what is true.

A different approach is the on-line or impression-driven model, which gives emotion and affect a more central role in attitude formation. This model asserts that most people form emotional feelings about things in an interactive way based on facts, but then "forget" the facts that created those emotions. They may still have the facts somewhere in memory, but they are not used in retrieving judgments about the target. Only the emotions are available to them when retrieving judgments in response to a survey question (Delli Carpini, 1999).

Tourangeau *et al*. (2000) describe three alternative paths that survey respondents can take to provide answers to attitudinal questions: impressions or stereotypes, general attitudes or values, and specific beliefs or feelings about the target (p. 172). The impression-based path is the same as the on-line processing path described by Delli Carpini (1999). The path based on general attitudes or values is similar to the low-information model described by Delli Carpini (1999) because it relies in particular on the representativeness and anchoring heuristics described by Kahneman and Tversky. And the path based on specific beliefs or feelings about the target is most like the informed-citizen model described by Delli Carpini (1999). Tourangeau *et al*. (2000) discuss attitude reports as a kind of sampling of existing attitudes that might have been available for retrieval by the same respondents under different circumstances. The authors ultimately propose a situation-based process for reporting attitudes in surveys:

> We see attitudes as a kind of memory structure that contains existing evaluations, vague impressions, general values, and relevant feelings and beliefs. On any given occasion

> when we think about an issue, some subset of these contents will come to mind. Depending on which considerations we retrieve and the exact requirements of the task at hand, we may simply reiterate an existing evaluation, update it, or extend it to cover a new aspect of an issue; or we may make an entirely new judgment about the issue (p. 194).

All of these models of attitude formation include a process by which factual information underlies a survey response. The concerns about lack of factual knowledge described earlier in this chapter are sidestepped to some degree by the heuristic and on-line models of attitude formation.

Overall, as Tourangeau *et al*. (2000) note, attitudes are temporary constructions often created on the spot, often quickly. In addition, they observe that "the judgments called for by attitude questions are rarely absolute but are typically made in relation to some standard, generally an implicit one. It is hardly surprising, then, that attitude judgments turn out to be quite context-dependent" (p. 197). This dynamic process causes difficulties in constructing sound questionnaires, but it provides fertile ground for experimental manipulation of questionnaires.

Possible causes of the BIMBY effect

As described earlier, Smith (1998) suggested many possible explanations for the BIMBY effect. Another possibility he suggested is that the difference in ratings simply reflects more survey respondents actually living in areas with schools that are better than schools in the nation as a whole. Assuming that the race and type of location (urban, suburban, rural, small town) of

the respondent can be used as proxies for the quality of schools in the respondent's community, Smith's idea can be indirectly explored using secondary data.

For this analysis, let us assume that due to a long history of *de jure* and *de facto* segregation by race in the public schools in America, African-American respondents as a group are generally more likely to live in communities with lower quality public schools. Let us also assume that urban schools are more likely to be of lower quality due to a relatively more recent history of "white flight" from cities and the evaporation of manufacturing and labor-intensive employment in cities, both trends having contributed to higher rates of poverty and other social ills in our cities that inhibit school performance. Finally, let us assume that rural schools are more likely to be of lower quality due to a lack of local revenue and human capital in low-population areas, and that suburban schools are more likely to be above average due to higher local revenues and more human capital.

These assumptions are very crude, and there are no doubt many exceptions. But if the BIMBY effect is created simply because surveys include, for example, more white suburban respondents than others, then being able to compare the presence or absence of the BIMBY effect within subgroups should be instructive.

Two secondary data sources are discussed here.[15] First, detailed cross-tabulation tables from the 2009 PDK/Gallup Annual Education Survey were obtained from Phi Delta Kappa, Inc.,

[15] This is a fairly cursory analysis at a high level of abstraction. A more detailed treatment of these issues using secondary data might be an interesting dissertation topic in and of itself.

and are referred to below as PDK/Gallup.[16] The PDK/Gallup survey in 2009 was conducted by telephone with 1,003 respondents in a nationally representative sample of adults in the U.S. The sample was a random-digit dial (RDD) sample that included listed and unlisted landline telephone numbers. The data were weighted "to be representative of U.S. adults nationwide" (the variables used to weight the data were not identified in the survey report). Interviewing was conducted June 2-24, 2009.

The PDK/Gallup tables allow us to compare the ratings of school quality by race of the respondent for schools attended by the respondent's oldest child, schools in the community, and schools in the nation as a whole. As shown earlier in Figure 2, the relevant statistic here is the percentage of respondents giving the schools a grade of A or B. Figure 3 (below) shows that overall ratings of school quality are lower for non-whites, but the BIMBY phenomenon persists within all racial groups. The crude premise that African-Americans as a group should perceive their local schools less positively is borne out, as is the broad sense that their perceptions of schools nationally should be more positive compared to whites. For example, 76.8% of whites give an A or B to the school their oldest child attends, while only 61.9% of African-Americans do so. And African-Americans are a bit more likely to give an A or B to schools nationally than are whites – 22.8% and 17.7%, respectively. But a large BIMBY effect persists among African-Americans.

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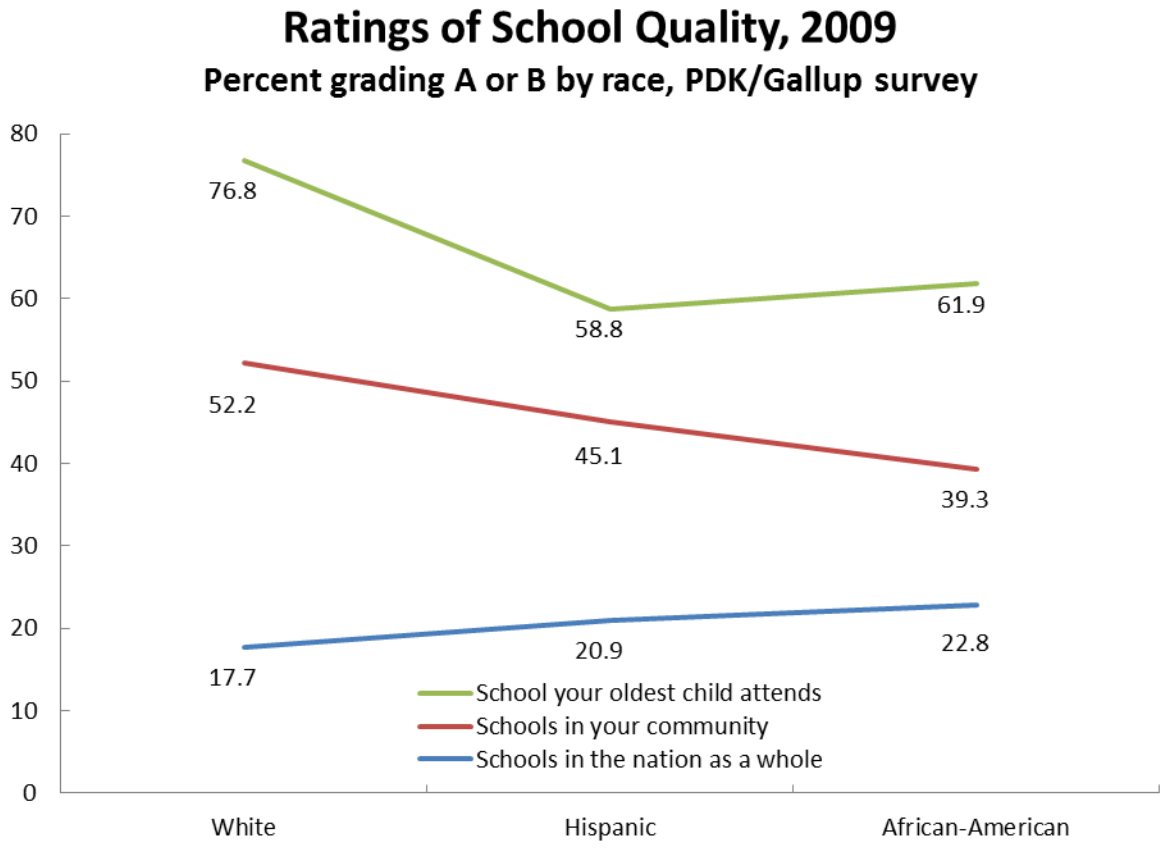
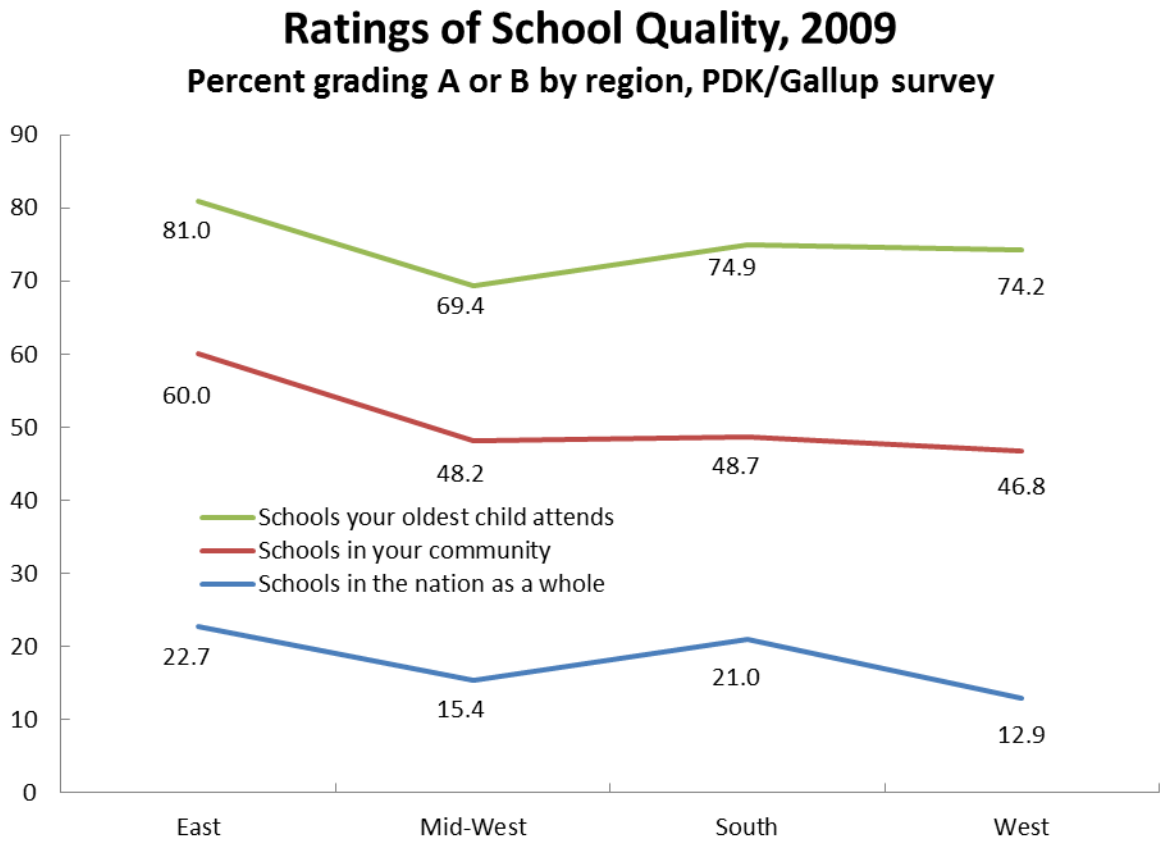
[16] I am grateful to Dr. Bill Bushaw, Executive Director of Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK) for his generous response to this request via e-mail communication (6/15/2010), and to PDK for this valuable support to a PDK member.

Figure 3: School ratings by race, 2009 PDK/Gallup survey



Similarly, ratings given by respondents in different regions of the country vary somewhat, with the highest ratings found in the East and the lowest in the West, but the BIMBY effect is evident within each of the four regions used in PDK/Gallup. See Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: School ratings by region, 2009 PDK/Gallup survey



The second dataset used in this analysis is the February 1990 ABC News Education Poll. This dataset was obtained from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) and is referred to below as ABC News.[17] This survey was conducted with 766 adults using an RDD sample with households in the forty-eight contiguous states. The data were weighted to be more representative of the study population (the variables used to weight the data were not identified in the technical documentation).

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[17] ABC News and ICPSR bear no responsibility for uses of this collection or for interpretations or inferences based upon such uses.

The wording of the questions in ABC News is not directly comparable to the PDK/Gallup questions, but more detailed analyses are possible with ABC News because the case-level electronic dataset was available from ICPSR. The first main rating question in ABC News that is used for this analysis is:

"How would you rate the quality of the education provided by the public schools in this country – would you say it is excellent, good, not-so good or poor?" This question will be used as the ratings of schools in the nation as a whole – the "national rating." The second question is:

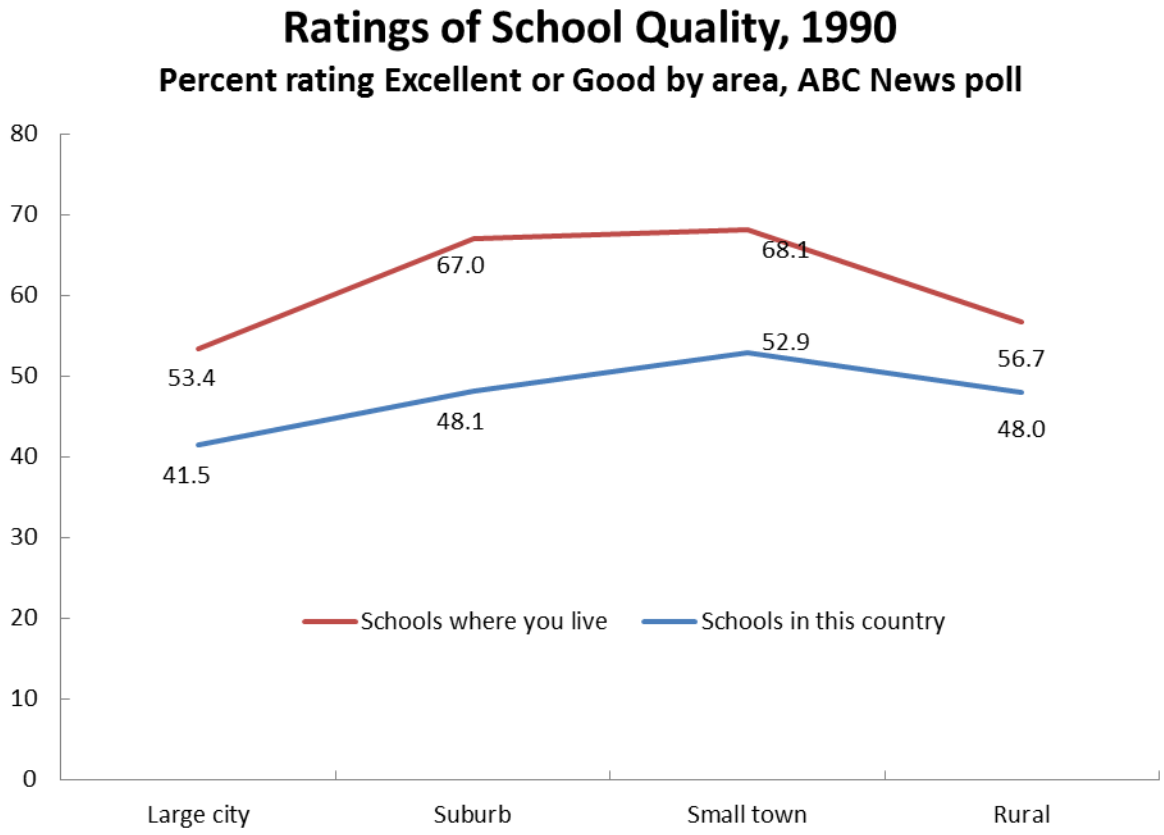
"And what about the public high schools in the area where you live, would you say the quality of the education provided by your local public schools is excellent, good, not-so-good or poor?" Although it asks about "high schools," this question will be used as the rating for all public schools in the community – the "local rating." There is no question in ABC News that asks about the school the respondent's oldest child attends.

The analysis of ABC News was performed using SPSS software with the weighting variable in effect. A "gap" variable for each case was computed by subtracting the value of the national rating from the value of the local rating. Numeric values were reverse-scored so that "Excellent" had a value of 4, "Good" a value of 3, "Not so good" a value of 2, and "Poor" a value of 1. The two ratings themselves and the individual-level gap scores were averaged and compared across various demographic subgroups. Positive means for the gap scores indicate that local schools were rated higher than were schools nationally, consistent with the BIMBY effect. Negative means for the gap scores indicate that schools nationally were rated higher than were local schools, in contradiction to the BIMBY effect.

Demographic variables used for the analysis were the type of area where the respondent lived (large city, suburban, rural, small town), race (white, African-American, Hispanic/refused/other) and region of the U.S. (East, Midwest, South and West).

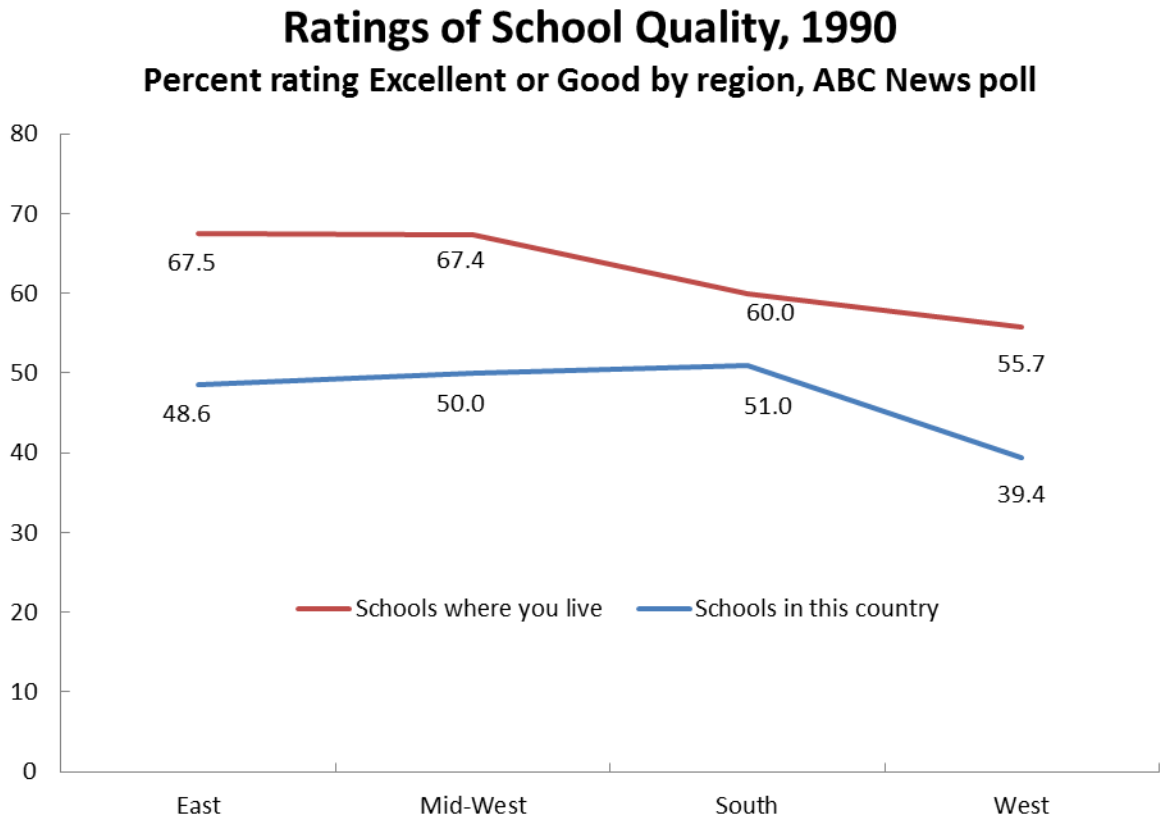
The ratings for school quality by type of area conform to the crude assumptions that urban and rural schools are likely to be of lower quality. For example, ratings of "excellent" or "good" are given to local schools by a little more than half of respondents in urban (53.4%) or rural (56.7%) areas, while respondents in suburbs (67.0%) or small towns (68.1%) are more likely to give those higher ratings to their local schools. But respondents in each of these areas still display the BIMBY effect, with the ratings gap between local and national schools ranging from 8.7 percentage points in rural areas to 18.9 percentage points in suburban areas. These differences in ratings by type of area flatten somewhat when the country's schools are being rated (as compared to the local schools), but are still statistically significant in a chi-square analysis (χ^2=19.426, p=0.022). See Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Ratings of school quality by type of area in which the respondent lives, 1990



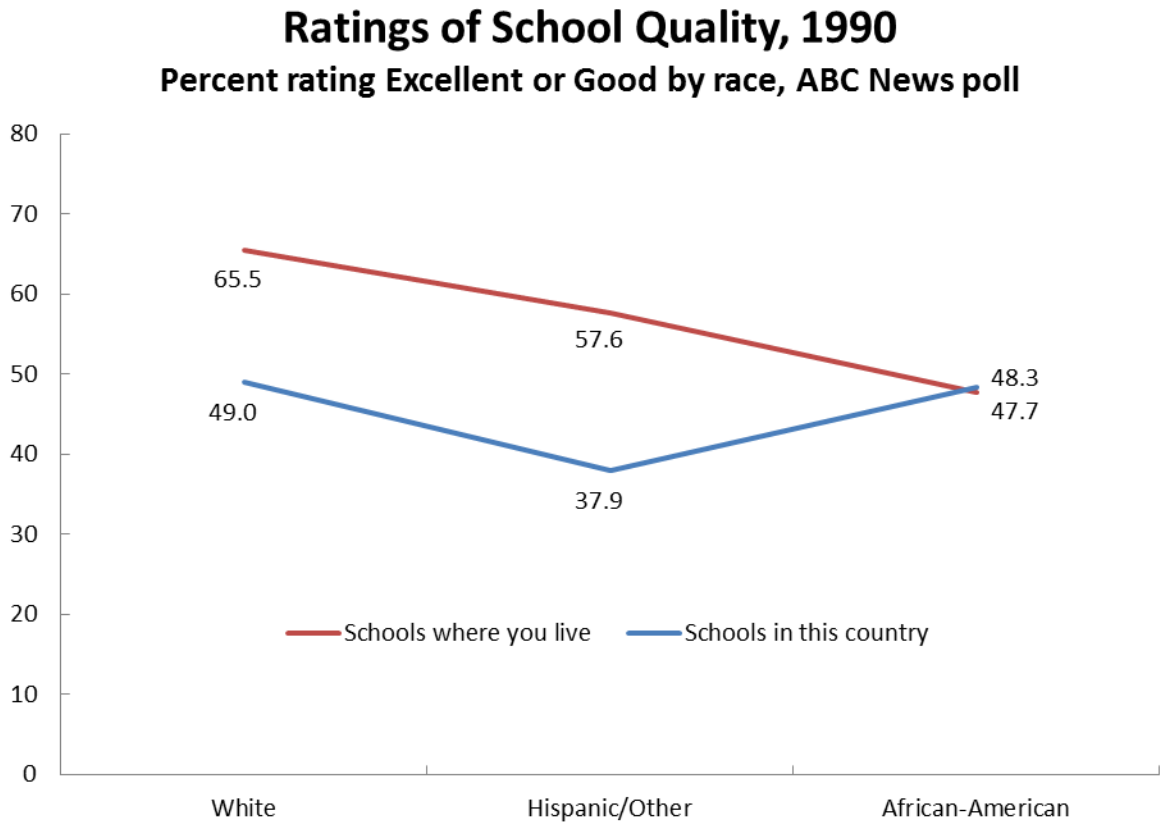
Similarly, the ratings for region of the country show some differences, with the highest ratings given by respondents in the East and the lowest by respondents in the West, as in the PDK/Gallup survey. But a BIMBY effect seems evident within each region. See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Ratings of school quality by region of the country, ABC News 1990



But with the rating scale in ABC News being compressed to four categories from PDK/Gallup's five, and absent ratings of the school attended by the oldest child, the BIMBY effect for African-Americans disappears (see Figure 7) even though African-Americans are more willing to rate their local schools as "excellent" than are other racial groups.

Figure 7: Ratings of school quality by race, ABC News 1990



An analysis of the gap scores by race and area shows that the answer to BIMBY does not seem to be race by itself. The overall mean gap scores were positive for whites (0.286) and Hispanics/Others (0.245) but negative for African-Americans (-.068), consistent with the percentage ratings described earlier. But African-Americans living in suburban areas had strongly positive gap scores, consistent with the BIMBY effect. It was only African-Americans living in non-suburban areas who had negative gap scores – rating schools where they live below schools in this country generally. For example, in Table 5 below, among African-Americans, those in large cities rate their local schools below schools nationally (-.0142). Those in rural

areas are the most negative about their local schools compared to schools nationally (-.7119) although those in small towns are also quite negative (-.3369). Those living in suburban areas are the most positive (.4505). Note that the small cell sizes call for strong caution in interpreting these results, but the pattern is intriguing and not unexpected.

Table 5: Analysis of mean gap scores (local rating minus national rating), 1990

Area you live in	Race	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Large city	White	.2578	140	.87475
	African-American	-.0142	35	1.06211
	Hispanic/Other/Refused	.0667	14	.25923
	Total	.1934	189	.88835
Suburb	White	.3425	193	.81776
	African-American	.4505	18	.78893
	Hispanic/Other/Refused	.3482	22	.98313
	Total	.3515	233	.82934
Small town	White	.2550	242	.79036
	African-American	-.3369	28	.98375
	Hispanic/Other/Refused	.1909	22	1.13805
	Total	.1935	292	.85485
Rural area	White	.2921	87	.80447
	African-American	-.7119	6	.49696
	Hispanic/Other/Refused	.6897	3	.57156
	Total	.2425	96	.81939
Total	White	.2860	662	.81770
	African-American	-.0676	87	.99885
	Hispanic/Other/Refused	.2451	61	.92031
	Total	.2448	810	.85275

These analyses are limited in their comparability to the PDK/Gallup “gold standard” questions because of the compressed four-point rating scale. They also do not include a rating for

the school attended by the oldest child of the respondent[18]. The rating question for schools nationally asked about "the public schools," but the rating question for schools locally asked about "the public high schools." There does not seem to be a clear explanation for the BIMBY effect in these admittedly cursory analyses. The results among African-Americans are interesting, but without ratings of the schools attended by the oldest children of African-American respondents, a fuller analysis of BIMBY cannot be performed. Even if there were more conclusive results from these analyses, they would not necessarily explain why BIMBY is seen for many other survey topics. At the same time, the expected differences in ratings given by people living in urban areas and by African-Americans may help skeptics believe that survey respondents do in some way incorporate "objective" data into these evaluations of school quality.

If BIMBY is not a simple problem in mathematics and proportions, what is it? Loveless (1997) studied the differences in quality ratings for local and national schools and concluded, similarly to Davidson (1979), that the ratings were different because the objects being rated were different. Rating the national schools implied rating a large system, while rating the local schools implied rating a relatively well-known group of individuals. "The public judges schools and systems differently because they *are* different" (p. 142). He suggests that survey respondents may be capable of the "sophisticated opinion formation" that would allow them to be logically consistent when rating the national system quite differently from the local schools (p. 142).

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[18] There was a demographic question on the survey that asked "Are you the parent or guardian of a child who is currently in elementary school, middle school or high school?" But this question did not specify whether the school would be a public school or a private school. Ratings of schools in the area where the respondent lived were not appreciably different between respondents with school-aged children and those without.

Loveless (1997) also observed the paradox discussed above – people say they lack confidence in schools generally, but behave as if they do have confidence in them. For example, parents have chosen to use private schools at about the same rates since the 1930s, and students themselves chose not to drop out at the same or better rates in the mid-1990s compared to the 1960s and 1970s. Also, public support for funding education is consistently strong in polls, and government funding of education has increased over time as measured in constant dollars. Despite alternative explanations for funding increases such as the expansion of special services and additional obligations assigned to schools, Loveless (1997) notes that "political leaders financially support education with unprecedented fidelity" (p. 150).

He ultimately separates his findings into the perceptual dimension (survey-based ratings of schools and measures of confidence in education) and the behavioral dimension (indicators of actual behaviors such as dropout statistics, private school enrollment and government financing of education). He goes on to describe, but does not resolve, four issues related to the bifurcation of perception and behavior.

(1) Despite the "gloom and doom of public rhetoric," public education survives (p. 153).
(2) Perceptions of national schools may be based on a mentally constructed ideal school, but behaviors are choices that are made from a bounded set of real options with real weaknesses. Therefore, the "threshold of support is lower for the actor than for the poll respondent; the poll respondent chooses between an imperfect reality and an ideal" (p. 153).

(3) The different opinions may actually be consistent. "The public's relationship with the educational system writ large consists primarily of voting in elections and paying taxes. Local schools forge more intimate ties…It appears the public may blame 'the system' for local school problems." (pp. 153-154)

(4) Perceptions of social institutions seem to be inherently less optimistic than perceptions of personal or local circumstances or interactions. Institutions "that serve as society's incarnation of these personal interactions become the vessels into which every disappointment, doubt, and complaint are poured." (pp. 154-155)

There are many possible explanations for these two important structural puzzles in public opinion regarding education, both of which seem to reveal distinctions in how survey respondents think about "their" schools and "other" schools. The second puzzle – the apparent bifurcation of opinion and behavior – would seem to be a promising avenue for further research to understand in detail what people think about when they are asked about "education." The first puzzle – the BIMBY effect – is the focus of this study.

Summary

Exactly when, how and why public opinion influences policymaking is not fully understood,[19] but the importance of surveys about education is taken as a given in the U.S. Surveys will almost certainly remain integral to education policymaking. Some might be tempted

[19] AAPOR, the American Association for Public Opinion Research, recently initiated a discussion about this complex topic under the auspices of its Public Opinion and Leadership Task Force.

to discount much of the apparent dissatisfaction with public education as political rhetoric, misplaced blame, an inevitable manifestation of broader societal change, or artifacts of mental processes used to answer survey questions. Regardless, schools must be prepared to respond to those opinions, constantly meet new challenges and legitimize their role in a changing society.

Education is a manifestation of culture and society. Therefore, surveys and public opinion about education are driven by cultural context, which affects the questions that are asked, the answers that are given, and the meanings that are assigned to the data. Cultural changes also appear to drive education reform, and because cultural changes are constant, education "reform" is constant.

Within this cultural context, some education issues have surprisingly long histories as topics in or drivers of public opinion surveys regarding education. Examples include Federal funds for non-public schools (including vouchers and school choice), the relationship of education to business, and various school reform efforts themselves.

The BIMBY phenomenon is a well-known methodological issue in surveys and may be one of the most robust structural features in survey research. It is important to keep in mind when interpreting survey results, and may be useful in detailed investigations of how survey respondents conceptualize "education" when answering survey questions. The relatively new application of cognitive psychology in the early 1980s to the study of survey methodology has increased understanding of how survey respondents construct their interpretations of survey questions as well as their answers to those questions. Cognitive approaches should be useful in understanding how the BIMBY phenomenon works in relation to education.

Finally, studying the structure of public opinion about education, and specifically the BIMBY effect in education research, is important. As Loveless (1997) notes:

> Anticipating the impact of reform proposals on the public's confidence in education falls under the analyst's obligations to institutional stewardship. Any thorough analysis of education policy should take into account the structure of public confidence in education's institutional forms. Much work remains in mapping what that structure entails and the consequences for public education's future. (p. 155)

Chapter 3: Qualitative Methods and Results

Overview

To design a good research project to understand the BIMBY effect, theory and methods must be applied together. Because one of the most authoritative and longest running examples of BIMBY in school ratings is found in the annual PDK/Gallup surveys, they will be used as the touchstone for this research. These surveys have been conducted by telephone with a national sample continuously since 1974. Surveys by telephone were not widely conducted until the 1970s because the telephone was not ubiquitous in households much before then, but more importantly, efficient methods of sampling telephone numbers did not exist.

The introduction of the Mitofsky-Waksberg sampling method provided an efficient way of sampling portions of the telephone system that were known to be in operation. Later advances in electronically listing telephone numbers allowed for improvements such as list-assisted sampling. The recent PDK/Gallup polls have used a list-assisted random digit dial telephone sample to represent all telephone households in the continental U.S. The PDK/Gallup survey questions of interest for this study are:

1. Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?
2. How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

3. Using the A, B, C, D, or FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

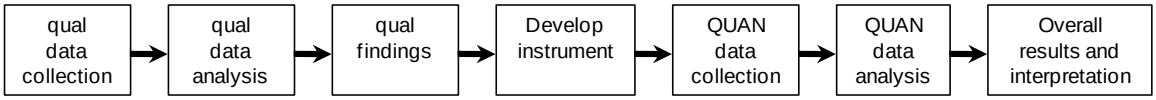
The relatively new application in the early 1980s of cognitive psychology to the study of survey methodology has increased understanding of how survey respondents construct their interpretations of, and answers to, survey questions. It provided more explanatory power to many survey question-wording phenomena which previously had been essentially just catalogued. Cognitive approaches should be useful in understanding how BIMBY works in relation to education ratings.

BIMBY is not well understood and numerous plausible hypotheses exist. One widely accepted technique when confronted with a situation like this is to engage in qualitative research from a grounded theory perspective to ascertain the dimensions of the research topic and learn how survey respondents conceptualize and express various aspects of the topic. This rich information can be used to formulate theory that is "grounded" in the experiences described by the participants in the qualitative research and, ultimately, to develop standardized survey questions that align with the cognitive "maps" respondents seem to have regarding the survey topic. The standardized survey then achieves better measurement and more relevance as a result of being informed by the qualitative research.

This sort of two-stage design is well established in the extensive literature about survey questionnaire design and survey pre-testing (see, for example, Forsyth & Lessler, 1991; Presser & Blair, 1994; Willis *et al.*, 1999; Presser *et al.*, 2004; Nock and Guterbock, 2010) as well as the maturing literature about mixed methods research (e.g., Cresswell & Clark, 2007). This research

followed a two-stage approach. In the terminology of Cresswell and Clark (2007), this project design can be summarized as qual → QUAN and diagrammed as shown in Figure 8, where "qual" means "qualitative" and "quan" means "quantitative." "QUAN" is capitalized because it has more weight in the design, with the qualitative inquiry in the study mainly serving the interests of the quantitative inquiry. The first three steps in the diagram, from "qual data collection" to "qual findings" are covered in this chapter.

Figure 8: Diagram of this project's mixed methods design



First, a qualitative inquiry was conducted to learn more about how people conceptualize and express their thoughts about ratings of public schools. The data were analyzed within a grounded theory framework. The analysis blended features of constructivist inquiry, symbolic interactionism, concept mapping and cognitive interviewing. The interviews were semi-structured, but emerging theories were incorporated in subsequent interviews. The strongest factors that emerged from the analysis were checked against existing theories from various disciplines to construct hypotheses about the causes of BIMBY as it pertains to ratings of public schools.

The qualitative findings served as inputs to the development of a quantitative survey instrument that was fielded to evaluate the most promising hypotheses about BIMBY. Cognitive theory was used to create questionnaire wording experiments in a factorial design. The quantitative instrument was administered in a mail survey to two random address-based samples

from the Richmond and Charlottesville metropolitan areas in Virginia. The design, execution and results of that portion of the study are discussed in Chapter 4.

Justification for using mixed methods

The "paradigm wars" regarding the roles of quantitative and qualitative methods in educational research and evaluation have been carried on for fifty years or more (Kennedy, 1999). For now, a compromise seems to exist that recognizes the value of both approaches. Greene and Caracelli (1997) lay out three approaches to conceptualizing the use of mixed methods:

1. The purist approach, represented by Guba and Lincoln (1989), does not support mixed methods because the different paradigms behind the different methods represent such different ways of knowing that they produce incompatible information.
2. The pragmatic approach, represented by Patton (1988), allows for mixed methods to inform one another but primarily as a practical decision because different information and evaluation needs would be best served by different methods.
3. The dialectical approach, represented in practice by Phelan's (1987) study of incest in the U.S., goes beyond the pragmatic acceptance of different approaches to knowing. It uses the different information obtained from the different methods to stretch the interpretation. It forces the analysis to address tensions between findings from the micro and macro levels.

On the pragmatic level, this study of BIMBY required the generation of theory for quantitative testing. This practical need fit ideally into the grounded theory approach described

by Patton (2002), Cresswell and Clark (2007) and many others. This project took the pragmatic approach and used grounded theory in the qualitative phase.

Design of the qualitative research

Overview of different methods for qualitative research

Cognitive laboratory assessment techniques for surveys described by Forsyth and Lessler (1991) include some key aspects of what was needed for this research – most notably, they are based on cognitive explanations for question-answering behaviors in surveys. But they focus on reducing survey errors once the questionnaire has been drafted rather than informing the initial conceptualization and drafts of the survey.

Hox (1997) reviewed several data-driven techniques that can be used to conceptualize survey questions, including content sampling, content mapping, and techniques based on symbolic interactionism. These techniques acknowledge the social construction of reality that is constantly negotiated and interpreted by people, like the social construction processes captured in the cognitive model of the survey response process.

More generally, Patton (2002) reviewed several qualitative research traditions ranging from classical ethnography to post-experimental performance and creative action. Certain traditions in that range such as constructivist inquiry and the transcendental realism of Huberman and Miles are appealing to many because they allow for the construction of reality by the survey respondent but also seek thoroughly documented results that can be generalized to broader populations or structures beyond the research participants themselves.

Huberman and Miles (1994) describe themselves as transcendental realists, re-stating some of their earlier arguments by saying "[f]undamentally, we think that social phenomena exist not only in the mind, but in the objective world as well, and that there are some lawful, reasonably stable relationships to be found among them…This stance acknowledges the historical and social nature of knowledge, along with the meaning making at the center of phenomenological experience…Our aim is to 'transcend' these processes by carefully constructing explanations that can account for them in plausible ways. Thus transcendental realism calls both for causal explanation and for the evidence to show that each entity or event is an instance of that explanation." (p. 429)

This attempt to blend meaning-making at the individual level, the influences of systemic structures at a higher level, and a sense of the existence of some objective reality is appealing to the dissertation researcher.

Rodwell (1998) describes constructivist inquiry in more detail. This orientation is also appealing because the participants generate the results in their own language and their construction of knowledge in this theoretical system seems to parallel the social construction of the survey process. But the extremely rigorous requirements for extensive record-keeping, journaling, auditing and data processing go beyond what seems to be necessary to inform the design of the quantitative questionnaire. In addition, and more importantly, the dissertation

researcher seems incapable of making the leap from the transcendental realism of Huberman and Miles (1994) to the multiple realities of constructivism.[20]

The most important tradition for this project's needs, described by Patton (2002), Cresswell and Clark (2007) and others, is grounded theory, in which findings from the qualitative research are grounded in the experiences of the participants. This approach allows findings to emerge from the conduct of the research.

Researcher biases

The subjective nature of recording and interpreting qualitative data leads to the idea that the researcher is an instrument of the research with some inseparable biases and predilections that will color the raw data collected for analysis, as well as the analysis itself. Part of the qualitative research process is to explore and declare those biases as honestly as possible.

My approach to qualitative research is strongly oriented to language and vocabulary. This plays to my preference for more abstract ideas as well as my interest in trying to place people by their accents, unique vocabularies and explicit or implied worldviews. Two years of architecture school expanded my concept of what a language can be (we studied "the language of design"). Working at writing short stories and poetry focused me on word choice and the structure of the English language.

My work experience as a telephone survey interviewer and later a survey methodologist has kept me aware of the inconsistencies and stochastic aspects of people's words and decisions

[20] It may be that the systemic approach of Huberman and Miles operates at the aggregate level, and constructivism operates at the individual level, and the aggregated whole is different from the sum of the individual parts.

– one's choice to participate in a survey may be different depending on the time of day, one's mood at the time of the survey request, etc. Answers to the same survey questions by the same respondents will differ at times, even answers to "factual" questions such as what happened on the last visit to the physician.

I believe there are objective phenomena that we perceive, and our individual perceptions and contexts can create different and simultaneous realities. However, I believe that we share large overlapping pieces of reality as demonstrated by successful communication and cooperation throughout human societies. And I believe the researcher can be trained to minimize bias in qualitative observations. In this way I would categorize myself as a "transcendental realist" (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 429).

In reviewing the literature for this project and thinking about the BIMBY phenomenon, a couple of "likely suspect" hypotheses emerged. It was critical to avoid giving too much weight to these theories lest other information contributed by the participants, possibly better information, be overshadowed or lost.

The research plan did not include the full range of qualitative techniques, such as having an auditor. Some journaling was included to track methodological choices as well as the evolution of the project and my thinking about the results. Formal member checking was not used, but ideas from prior interviews were discussed with later participants. The conclusions generated from the qualitative research are the researcher's alone and are subject to my biases and limitations.

Operationalization of the qualitative research

Participants in the qualitative research were selected from the metropolitan Richmond and Charlottesville (Virginia) areas for convenience. Recruitment of participants was done through personal contacts with an effort to maximize variation in the participants on demographic and geographic dimensions. The key characteristics of interest were: race of the participant (white or African-American), the participant's local school system status according to No Child Left Behind criteria (Average Yearly Progress met or not met), whether the participant had children in the local public school system or not, and the metropolitan area in which the participant lived (Richmond or Charlottesville). People who were not white and also not African-American were not targeted to avoid additional cultural complexities in the qualitative research.

These key respondent characteristics imply a matrix of sixteen cells. Nine participants covering about half of those sixteen cells seemed to provide sufficient qualitative data for this stage of the project, as the interview content started to overlap substantially with the last couple of interviews.

Two other characteristics on which variation was sought were the participant's local school system type (urban or non-urban) and the participant's gender, but these characteristics had less impact on recruitment choices.

Recruitment was carried out by word of mouth through education communities and personal contacts. A $10 cash gift was offered as a token of appreciation for the participants' time.

The initial conversational outline for the qualitative interviews was as follows.

1. When you think about public schools, what comes to mind? What are your impressions made up of?
    1.1. (If visual images are not mentioned) Are there any pictures in your head that go by? (Watch out – go to listen-for list?) What about locally? Nationally?
    1.2. Is there a difference when you think locally? Nationally?
2. When you think about the "quality" of a public school, what comes to mind? What do you look for in determining quality?
    2.1. What helps you determine quality? What would be some clues or some information that would help you guess that one public school is probably of higher quality than another public school?
    2.2. Where do your ideas of quality come from? Is there a difference when you think locally as opposed to nationally?
3. What quality rating would you give to your local public schools? What quality rating would you give to public schools nationally?
    3.1. (In the rating that you just gave) What information or impressions were most important to you in rating the local schools? Where did this information come from?
    3.2. (In the rating that you just gave) What information or impressions were most important to you in rating the national schools? Where did this information come from?

The qualitative research portion of the project was submitted to the VCU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved as exempt on January 27, 2010 as HM12607. Signed consent

was obtained from all participants. The consent form can be found in Appendix A. Table 6 shows the timeline for the qualitative portion of the project.

Table 6: Timeline for the Qualitative Research

Dates	Task
October 2009	Prospectus defended
November 2009	IRB packet including recruitment materials submitted
January 2010	IRB approval received
March-April 2010	First four participants recruited and interviewed
April-October 2010	Reviewed recordings, tentative hypotheses, discussed preliminary results w/chair, interviews transcribed
November 2010-January 2011	Last five participants recruited and interviewed
January-February 2011	Updated journaling, summary of results, discuss w/chair
March 2011	Shared results with committee, generated hypotheses
March 2011	Conducted additional literature review, designed quantitative survey content and analysis plan

Data collection

Eight semi-structured interviews with nine participants were conducted. Four interviews were done between March and April 2010. The remaining four were done between October 2010 and February 2011. Three participants were recruited from the Charlottesville area and six from the Richmond area. Despite the convenience nature of the sample, the participants represented a fairly wide range of characteristics, experiences and ideas. The final sampling matrix is shown below.

Table 7: Sampling matrix for the qualitative interviews

		Richmond metro area		Charlottesville metro area	
		Made AYP (Hanover, Henrico, Chesterfield)	Did not make AYP (Richmond)	Made AYP (Albemarle)	Did not make AYP (Charlottesville)
Have child in local public school	White	M&F, F			F
	African-American		F		F
Do not have child in local public school	White	F			
	African-American		M	M	

F=female case, M=male case, M&F=married couple interviewed together
AYP=Virginia Annual Yearly Progress Status for 2009-2010 based on achievement results from 2008-2009 (source: https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/ayp_report.do?link=5&year=2010, Virginia Department of Education)

The interviews were recorded on analog tape for transcription. A back-up recording was made on a digital voice recorder. The researcher also made written notes at points in the conversations. At the end of the interviews the researcher displayed Figure 2 from this paper and solicited ideas and discussion about possible causes of the BIMBY effect.

The researcher listened to the digital recordings several times each during a seventy-five minute one-way commute to and from work, and retrospectively created a written summary of key themes in the interviews using recollections of the recordings and the handwritten notes from the interviews. The researcher also made detailed notes from the digitized recordings and tallied mentions of key themes or ideas from the interviews to corroborate and update the retrospective notes and journaling. Once each transcript was verified, the digital recordings were deleted and the analog tapes were destroyed.

The qualitative methods for this project blended features of constructivist inquiry, symbolic interactionism, concept mapping and cognitive interviewing. The interviews were semi-structured. The process allowed for emerging theories to modify the interview materials as needed, but this turned out to be largely unnecessary. Not all key areas of the outline were covered explicitly in all interviews. The participants were asked if they would allow follow-up questions, but a full "hermeneutic circle" as required in constructivist interviewing was not a goal. The researcher alone created the concept map, which drove the design of the quantitative questions. The results of the qualitative exploration also led to a supplemental review of the literature to buttress understanding and inform manipulation of the most promising hypotheses.

Results

Eight important themes about perceptions of public school quality emerged from the conversations. These themes are described below. Verbatim excerpts from the interviews are used to illustrate each theme and are set off in italic font.

Resource disparities and the role of money

Perceptions of money and disparities in funding or resources played a significant part in the discussions about school quality. Most participants mentioned that public schools face disparities by locality, and those systemic or social contexts impact the quality of public education. Overcrowding, a symptom of a lack of financial resources, was also mentioned frequently as being associated with perceptions of public schools in general. Excerpts from several different interviews are presented below.

Researcher: What comes to mind when you think about public schools?

Participant 1: Lots of children. Funding issues. That's probably the two more general things that come to mind...Probably school buses. When I think lots of kids, I'm probably thinking overcrowding.

Participant 2: Disadvantaged, I think. Underserved. Underserved. I think public schools are full of potential with very bright students. But part of the problem with a public school is that the resources are just not there, just for the public schools that I've been in contact with, to allow a student within that public school an opportunity to blossom or to go on and achieve greater things.

Participant 5B: I think it's large numbers in classes, and children from all walks of life meshing together. I think of it in the counties where we live and north of here, I think they have a lot of money. A lot of money. In a wealthy area there's a lot of money.

Researcher: What about when you think about public schools on a larger scale, like kind of clicking out a few levels from [locality]. And when you think about either statewide or nationally, what are the kinds of thoughts that come to mind when you think of public schools at those levels?

Participant 1: Still the same type of things. A lot of the ratio of teachers to students is still pretty high. Still a lot of funding issues. To tell you the truth when I think on a more global scale, I have a lot of friends that are educators, and so I begin to think about some of the challenges that they've shared with me as educators. Parent involvement, trying to get students motivated, limited resources.

Researcher: What quality rating, what grade A through F, would you give to your local public schools?

Participant 2: …I guess, I mean if I have to give a grade, I would say a C. But, I think that C is based on the fact that, like I spoke of before, you've got a public school in an affluent neighborhood who is much better equipped and served than a public school that is not in that area. I think because of that, I just think that that's a very, it's very damaging to my outlook on public schools, being very honest about that, it's just very damaging. If I felt like these public schools were all treated the same or provided the same as some of those affluent school areas, I would say oh, let's give it an A. But, that's just not the case. I think it would be right around the C, C minus area because of that…

Researcher: What information or impressions were most important to you when you were thinking about the grade for the local schools, the local public schools?

Participant 2: I think for me, the information that was most important about the grade was, simply put, just the disparities between two areas of one public school having a principal who has a doctorate in educational leadership, or special education or school administration. And the other one having a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree in educational administration or supervision. Here you have teachers, 95% of all who are certified to teach whatever class they are supposed to be teaching which makes a hell of a lot of difference in terms of quality. Here you have teachers who may not be certified but work very hard to teach the information regardless. They care a great deal about the population of students. Here you have a ratio of a class with one teacher and sixteen students. Here you have one teacher and 32 students. Here you don't have textbooks, here you have textbooks. Here you have a student receiving a laptop to take home, there's no way in hell you're getting a laptop here…So, I don't like that gap. I don't like that gap. And if both are considered public schools, I don't think that gap should be that large.

Participant 3: Probably the thing that first comes to mind is funding, budget issues for public schools across the states, I guess. That seems to affect everyone… Probably,

funding for certain programs that they may offer, because I know that probably the [locality] schools are going to probably have to cut their budgets and may or may not be able to offer certain things. So I imagine that's probably widespread nationally.

Researcher: When you think about public schools locally – and you've used the [local name] schools as an example – is it different than when you think about public schools in the nation as a whole, or is it pretty much the same?

Participant 7: I think that they [local schools] have some symptoms of the problems of public schools in the nation as a whole but I think the manifestation is not as severe or goes in the same direction. So, for example, a school system in Detroit or St. Louis, Missouri, they may have the same kinds of – you know – I don't know that they can get as hyper over curriculum as say [Virginia county] can because they have funding issues. [Virginia county] has funding issues, but the funding issues of Kansas City, Missouri are escalated substantially, they're an exponent of ours. Or Detroit, Michigan, or Allentown, Pennsylvania, or – you know, fill in the blank. We're just – in my mind, we're wealthier. We can pad the economic depression regionally. Not that we don't have it, but not to the extent of those places. We're a priority, in terms of financing, in this state, whereas in Kansas City, they're not a priority. In Missouri. Sorry, Missouri. They're not.

Researcher: What do you think about when you are asked to think about public schools in the nation as a whole? What comes to mind?

Participant 8: I start thinking about – just even in the City of [name], I start thinking about places that are not as well-funded as our school system. And I actually think [Virginia county] is a great school system despite my complaints…I guess my overall thoughts on national – what I've always thought, and I think I still believe this, is I think there needs to be a better way to fund school systems other than property taxes. It's just

so uneven the way that schools get funded. I am a very big believer in public education, I don't believe in privatizing public education at all.

The community context and its effect on quality

Closely related to the issue of funding and resource disparities was the impact of the community context on school quality. Usually this issue was brought out in terms of comparisons of local areas based on income and poverty status, but also in terms of personal safety, drug use and antisocial behaviors. The assumption was that lower-income communities are probably less supportive of their schools or less able to carry out the education mission. The following conversation illustrates some of these themes.

Researcher: You kind of indicated some of this already, but when you think about the quality of a public school, what comes to mind? And there may be other things that come to mind at this point.

Participant 7: I have a pretty low threshold, I'm going to warn you.

Researcher: That's all right.

Paritcinapt 7: Do the kids feel safe? Um – OK, this sounds really terrible but you're protecting me, so –

Researcher: I am. And I'm not making any judgments about people. And I have no dog in this fight and I'm pretty good at generalizing.

Participant 7: And like I said up front, I support public schools.

Researcher: Right.

Participant 7: But – safety and then a supportive environment for not just the students but the faculty and administration versus all of them being paranoid over each other.

Researcher: So like a team atmosphere?

Participant 7: Yeah, yeah, versus – I don't know that that's what we have right now. Um – community support. Academic successes are strategic and supported…

Researcher: So safety, supportive environment, community support, strategy for academic success and support for that. Other things that you think about when you think what determines quality in a public school?

Participant 7: Oh yeah, OK. There's the ugly things, like how many lower-income kids they have, and how many kids from subsidized housing, and, um…

Researcher: Free lunch or reduced price lunch, those kinds of measures?

Participant 7: Absolutely, all those things. And I just mention those not because I feel one way or the other about them but because whenever I look at research that's always the things bringing schools down. So maybe I'm just parroting that. When I was a kid going to school…they were dealing with integration then…They closed the schools in [locality] so a lot of people like my parents moved to [locality] because they didn't close the schools [there]…But even when we moved there and I was first going to school, there was still "this is the black school, and this is the white school." But as opposed to you will go to this or you will go that, it was after, obviously, the Topeka, Kansas decision, Brown, so we could actually go to the closest school and that's what we did. But I didn't find out 'til years later that not all the black kids did that…If I were jimmying a district and jimmying a school so that it would perform the best I would have low numbers on the economically challenged and obviously no gangs or anything like that in my school, and I would be strategic about what I was doing in the classroom and trying to have my faculty and staff as a team.

The issues related to community context are represented further in the conversations shown below.

Researcher: So if you had to give a grade to public schools nationally, what grade would you give?

Participant 5A: I would say a C, because I believe you have the good and then you have the bad. And they're going to average out.

Participant 5B: I think that nationally we have some issues, we definitely have some issues.

Researcher: And what are those issues?

Participant 5A: ZIP codes.ZIP codes. It's all a ZIP code.

Participant 5B: Drugs, bullying, being able to accommodate the poorer areas and being able to bring those people up. Bring up the poor, the needy people, we need to become more socially responsible and socially conscious in this country. This whole thing of, you know, the moment you've said "social," it's a bad word, you know, Glenn Beck's going to start crying.

Researcher: What are some of the other kinds of things that go into how you create those letter grade ratings?

Participant 7: For the state or for…?

Researcher: For the local public schools, and then for the public schools in the nation as a whole. What's going into those letter grades do you think?

Participant 7: The local one, Crozet in particular, I had the opportunity to be in that place quite a few times. And so with Crozet elementary I feel that we have community support. I think that they are strategic in what they're doing. I don't think they have too many kids that are in a lower economic situation. I mean, they definitely do, just not an overwhelming amount…So they just kind of meet a lot of the criteria. I mean, that's why I moved there was for that school.

Researcher: So then if you had to give a grade to the public schools in the nation as a whole, what grade would you give in that situation?

Participant 8: That's tough. Because I think I would rate different types of community schools differently. Like, I would imagine that urban schools are really pretty much like D. And I would say in affluent suburban communities, they're probably more like B. And then in rural, less urban communities, I don't really have a lot of experience with those types of schools, so I don't really know how I could grade. I don't know if they're old-fashioned. I don't know if they have reading, writing and arithmetic or I really don't know how the schools would measure up. And again I think a lot of it has to do with the degree of involvement on the part of the parents. I think that's such an important thing. So if you have a poor rural area, you know you really don't have parents that value an education as much as the affluent suburban community. They probably, their schools would probably not be as strong as ours.

But there was a powerful rebuttal to assumptions about the impact of community context offered by one participant, based on personal experiences.

Researcher: What makes it a good quality school? Or how do you know it's a bad quality school or a good quality public school?

Participant 6: It's the teaching. It doesn't matter how many degrees, it's the children itself. I mean, I had 230 in my class, and only 130 of us graduated.

Researcher: From high school?

Participant 6: From high school.

Researcher: Wow.

Participant 6: Exactly. Only 130.

Researcher: So almost half didn't make it all the way through.

Participant 6: Exactly. And it was the quality of teaching that helped me.

Researcher: The quality of teaching helped you get through?

Participant 6: The quality of teaching helped me get through.

Researcher: What do you think happened to those other hundred or so who didn't get through?

Participant 6: They either got pregnant or they just dropped out. And it wasn't the building because the property is nice. It wasn't the discipline. It was the teaching.

Researcher: Do you think that they didn't get the good teachers, or they were exposed to the same good teaching that you were exposed to…

Participant 6: Yeah, and they just didn't care. They just didn't care.

Researcher: Do you think, would there be ways, if the school was different somehow, do you think there was something the school could have done to keep some of those hundred or so classmates?

Participant 6: No.

Researcher: It was outside the power of the school?

Participant 6: Outside. Either you make it or you don't.

Researcher: You can have the resources there but you either take advantage of it or you don't.

Participant 6: Exactly. You reach for it or you don't.

Researcher: Okay. So it sounds like you don't have a lot of, I guess, you don't have a lot of faith in those ways that people try to talk about one school being higher quality.

Participant 6: No. It's not. I don't. Because they fought at my school, they did everything, I made it. You can make it. The grading scale, I mean it's only five points, in [name of county] it's higher than in [name of city school]. I made it. It was bad when I went to school. I mean terrible. Teen pregnancies but I didn't have any kids. You can make it. If you want to make it you can make it.

Researcher: Yeah, I mean, I've told people in thinking about different colleges and how some have a better reputation than others, I told people you can get a bad education at a good school or you can get a good education at what's supposed to be a bad school. You don't receive an education, you take an education.

Participant 6: Right. I tell the kids all the time, I'm like, everybody says [name of city school] is bad. I'm like no it's not. Life is what you make it. You go to school to learn.

Researcher: There are some schools that have much higher rates of teen pregnancies than others. Is that a distraction?

Participant 6: Nope. My sister had her first child at 16, my sister had four kids, I think she was 21 and she had four. I had my first child when I was 24, getting ready to turn 25.

Researcher: Did your sister graduate from high school?

Participant 6: Nope. My brother, nope. Second brother, nope. I was the first one in my family.

Researcher: Really?

Participant 6: And I have an Associate's. First one in my family. The only one of four.

Researcher: Wow.

R: The only one. I made it. Out of four kids, I was the only one. If I can make it out of four, we were born and raised in the projects. Because if I can make it, I tell everybody, if I can make it anyone can.

Politics and public education

Several participants mentioned the negative impact of politics on public education. Some viewed local political movers and shakers as possibly well-intentioned, but ultimately disruptive and meddlesome to the mission of the public schools, to the detriment of school operations and educational quality. One expressed concern about the public schools being a political football

and the influence of people opposed to the goals of public education. Others saw differences in local political decisions as playing into differences in school quality, reinforcing the view that the quality of public education all depends on where one lives. This could be a positive view of the influence of politics on public education in a well-functioning locality, but overall most of the views expressed about the influence of politics on public education were negative.

Researcher: Is there a difference when you think about schools locally versus schools nationally or schools at the state level?

Participant 1: Locally, I think that they're much more bogged down in the minutiae of politics. I don't necessarily think that about a state and national level. I think that's germane maybe to [locality]. Even [locality] I think is different than the surrounding areas. [locality] and [locality], I have friends with children in those schools that have kind of had to deal with them in some of those settings. So when I say the politics at a local level, I mean specific to [locality]. Bad politics… Everything is very political. Very politically-driven decisions that include sometimes the…school board. And [locality] government. More so the school board. But a lot of the decisions that are made that might not even be directly made by those school board members are very politically driven. I don't necessarily, that's not necessarily my opinion of schools in surrounding [localities], on a state level or on a national level.

Participant 5A: I think it's sad that one of the things that I find objectionable about public school systems is that politics can hijack the system. Like for example in some of the school districts nationally where a school board is insisting on trying to teach religious-based creationism in place of evolution, which is a scientific fact. And I think that that's one of the big dangers of a public school system nationally is actually keeping the school boards under control. There needs to be much more firm legislation that prevents them from doing things like that. Because they're doing a severe disservice to the future of the country with these children being taught incorrectly.

Researcher: What comes to mind when you think of public schools?

Participant 7: I think that if I had to describe them in one word it would be political. They tend to be adversely affected by the politics of our society. They've become a political football as a means to financing things, who does the financing. And in my mind it's just the latest background of an old war over education, and in particular education in the South…So the question in terms of financing the schools doesn't seem to be, how they're doing it, everything seems to come down to what kind of a tax equation are we going to use to fund them. And then we have a management process where you have a school board making, I'm just speaking locally, that's where you have a school board making decisions, but then you have the political entity, the elected supervisors making decisions, yeah, making decisions for that school board, and those things aren't related specifically to education. So that any kind of, it's not an equation of what kind of education you will get for this money, what kind of education do we get for this money. The way it's being figured out, its political. And I have, I don't have an appetite for that. I don't mind having this conversation in theory, but this is my kids. That's just not going to fly.

Researcher: Okay. We've talked about kind of how you see quality or how you spot quality in schools, and again we've talked a lot about local examples for obvious reasons. Would you be looking for different indicators of quality if you were thinking about schools in the nation as a whole?

Participant 7: You can see I keep running away from the broad stuff. Wow, I am totally intimidated by that. Because I mean, this is really, when I was in graduate school, this was what I was planning on doing, and by the end of grad school, I was running away from this as fast as I could. It's just a screwed up situation, there's no way to win. Nobody is going to, I would hate to, I mean, I'm trained to do that, but I would hate to be doing it.

Researcher: Trying to talk about schools as a whole, across the whole nation? Is that what you're referring to?

Participant 7: Yeah. Because, by definition, there's other people who just, I mean, that's what I mean by fighting old wars. They hate public education. They are going to hate and it's not going to be logical, they're just going to hate it… It's just too political… Looking around at school systems going through searches for superintendents and it just is a real, it's a vitriolic process, it is just very ugly. So it makes me think that people don't care about the schools. They don't care about the schools in the nation. I mean, people will say that in general, especially if you start comparing us to industrialized world or other western countries in terms of how far we are dangling in terms of our performance. We are fine at the colleges. But high schools going down, we're getting our lunch handed to us. I mean, I would think it would be a big deal. I don't see anybody really acting like they care. It's like the people who can have an influence are just saying oh well, I'll just pull my kids out and stick them in private school. I mean, when I went to [city school], when I went to school in [city], private schools, there were only a couple. Because why would you go? I mean, if they were making that much of a difference, my parents would have had me in one. And I knew some kids there, but you could, if you just went to school and you worked hard, I mean, I got into [name of college]. You could get into [name of college]. I mean, I got into everywhere. And now I just am not, I guess you can still do it but, you know, stacking the odds. So for getting back to your question about in general, you have California getting ready to go bankrupt, they're changing how they're supporting their colleges, so I can't even imagine what their local governments are doing in terms of funding their schools. And that scene is being played out across the country and the way some of the school systems have been able to make it is through stimulus money. But then you have these people saying, Oh, well, we're not taking any stimulus money. What's going on with their schools? I mean it's great that the dude from South Carolina can say that, but South Carolina schools suck. So, I don't give him points for being conservative or whatever it is he's trying to prove. I just don't see it, a perspective

> *where people say we've got to get our schools together…You can say "No Child Left Behind," but what's more political than that?...I am running from anything political. I have no interest in that…I'm trying to give you my perspective on the national schools. It doesn't seem like we value them. We like to say that we do but we don't.*

Emotional attachments to public education

This research also revealed the importance of emotional attachments to public education. The discussions quickly tapped into deeply ingrained notions of equality and inequality, Americanism, morality and caring. These emotions came from personal experiences as schoolchildren and parents of schoolchildren, the experiences of the participants' children, and personal experiences of friends and family members who had shared them with the participants. When the conversations dealt with large issues such as social problems, changes in school performance over time and the meaning of public schools in America, the participants sometimes referred to data about test scores or funding amounts, but more often they backed up their opinions with specific anecdotes and experiences, both positive and negative. What is critical for this research is that these emotional attachments do not seem to apply to the concept of "public schools nationally." By their nature, they seem to exist only for schools with which the participants had some kind of personal, experiential connection. Some recollections are more vivid and personal.

> *Participant 4: I wanted to be a teacher for my entire life. I'd line the little dolls up and say I'm teaching. Captive audience. So there was a very long time that I would sit there and say Wow, that's why I became a teacher, because I would sit there and say this could be done a different way. And I would sit there and analyze the teaching style. And I'd analyze what was being done…*

Researcher: When were you doing that?

Participant 4: My entire scholastic career. When I was a student.

Researcher: So you were taking apart your teacher's techniques…

Participant 4: Absolutely. And I can tell you stories and you would say, "And that person is still teaching?" Well, that person hopefully is long dead. Because they did nothing to further my education. I had a horrible education until college. And I knew it was horrible. And it was terrible. Because I would go back, and to give you a horrible example, the chairman of the English department in the high school that I attended in [state], and I was a freshman in all advanced classes because my grades were good. Obviously I was meant to be an English teacher. And I was a freshman in a junior advanced English class, and the guy's technique was to put your paper on the overhead projector and throw a box of tissues on your desk, and if he could make you cry you made his day. Truth.

Researcher: He was an English teacher?

Participant 4: If he could make you cry…he would call you stupid, he would hit you. One of the phrases that I used…

Researcher: This was in high school?

Participant 4: In high school. One of the phrases – and he wasn't a nun either – I used the word that something was hard, meaning it was difficult, it was very hard to do blah, blah, blah. And he said put your hands on the table. And of course I wasn't going to disobey him. I put my hands on the table. And he smacked my hands. He said "This is hard. You mean difficult." And to this day I can't say the word "hard" meaning "difficult" without thinking about that lovely man. So, and I tell my students this story. I had horrible teachers. I had maybe three good teachers in my entire life…[M]y husband's stories were equally horrific. I mean, he had a kindergarten teacher named [name] who locked him in the closet and his parent happened to come by to see the

teacher for something and stop in. And the teacher couldn't remember where he was, or didn't want to tell where he was. And the kids said, "Don't you remember? You put him in the closet." I mean, my book is coming out at some point.

Others were more comparative or process-oriented.

Researcher: What else comes to mind when you think about public schools?

Participant 6: Public school is just different from when I was in school. They have changed.

Researcher: OK, like what has changed?

Participant 6: The teaching method is different. We studied every day even on the weekends. There's no homework on the weekends. My daughter never has homework. And when I'm teaching her in math, they've changed math. I can't teach her the old style math. And she's looking at me like what? We're not learning that. And I'm like the numbers are still the same...And she's like you can't teach me that because my teacher says it's wrong. And I'm like no. The numbers are still the same, the answers are still the same.

Quality of teachers and teaching

One issue that did seem to apply at both the local and national level is quality of teachers and teaching. This was a frequently mentioned way of measuring quality and distinguishing between good schools and unsuccessful schools. However, while some participants were willing to name some quantitative ways of measuring teacher quality such as degrees held or continuing professional development, participants seemed reluctant to put a lot of faith in these quantitative ways of measuring teacher quality. The most important measures of teacher quality came back to

specific examples of outcomes for children often described in qualitative terms such as the engagement shown by the children, the development of the full potential of the children, and fostering critical thinking skills in the children.

Researcher: When you think of the quality of a public school, what comes to mind? How do you know the quality of a public school?

Participant 4: Generically, it depends on the teachers, and the administrator. If you have teachers who are doing it for the right reasons, you're going to get fabulous quality no matter if it's public or private. And I think nowadays you're getting more teachers who go into teaching for the right reason. Because why else would you do it? It's not the big bucks, it's not the plush surroundings…it's not long vacations because I don't know of a teacher who sits around all summer long who doesn't take classes and doesn't teach and doesn't supplement their income by doing something. So people are going into teaching for the right reasons I think now.

Researcher: Are there other things, any other things that you might look for in determining the quality of a public school?

Participant 4: You know, you can say things. But I hate to tell you. I've taught in two totally different summer situations this past summer. And one didn't have things at all. And you know what? The feeling there, the enthusiasm of the kids, the enthusiasm of the parents and the other teachers who taught there truly was infectious.

Researcher: Feel free to substitute the word clues for things. Maybe that would be a little better. Because then it wouldn't sound so literally like a fancy building and whatever.

Participant 4: Oh yeah. I mean, everything was old and they had chalk boards. We didn't have equipment and stuff like that. And you know what? You don't need it…And then the other place where I was this summer had you name it. I could have asked for anything and I could have had it. And I chose not to use it on purpose. And it distracted. I had some of the things, computers and equipment and stuff like that, and it distracted the

students. And I thought, and that's why I'm recreating what I did this summer. And I said no, don't put me in a room with any computers, I don't want this, I don't want a smart board, I don't want any of that. I want desks. But I'm an English teacher. That's different.

Participant 6: It's the teaching. It doesn't matter how many degrees, it's the children itself. I mean, I had 230 in my class, and only 130 of us graduated.

Researcher: From high school?

Participant 6: From high school.

Researcher: Wow.

Public education in the U.S. takes all comers

Another important theme was that public schools take all children. That open path to opportunity and the diversity of the public school student body was seen as a part of what makes public schools special. This was generally seen as a positive aspect of public education. It seems inescapable that there are some who would be uncomfortable if the amount of diversity in a school system reached certain thresholds. When diversity was discussed as a positive feature it was because public schools prepared children for a diverse society, they included children with special needs, and they allowed children to experience learning materials about different cultures or religions by having a personal connection to classmates from those different contexts.

Diversity was not mentioned explicitly as a negative aspect of public schools, but it may be implicit in several discussions that compared the favorable social conditions in the

participants' schools with more difficult social conditions found in other parts of the country. For one participant with direct experiences in more difficult social environments, the most important thing was how the individual chose to handle those environments and what choices the individual made to create a path to success, rather than how the environment created systemic inhibitors to success.

The following comments illustrate these themes.

Researcher: So when you think about public schools, what comes to mind? Very broad.

Participant 3: Very broad. Probably the first thing that comes to mind is we pay taxes for public schools. Everyone pays taxes to send their kids to public schools, and I'm not sure I really am into folks, I know there are private schools out there and people send their kids for various reasons, but I don't know. I pay taxes, so I want to get something for my money. And I've had no real qualms with our public schools here.

Researcher: So, what I want to do is just start very broadly and ask you when you think about public schools, what comes to mind?

Participant 4: …People are allowed to come, no matter what, even without regard to what boundaries, because people get, what do you call it, I can't even think of the word now, the things that they get that allow them to come even if they're not in that area, particularly around here.

Researcher: Oh, waivers. So they can attend from out of zone, is that it?

Participant 4: They can, and they usually have to pay tuition and so forth. So we've quite a few students who do that.

Researcher:…So what I want to start out with basically is very broadly, to ask you when you think about public schools, what comes to mind? And what are your impressions made up of? It's very wide open.

Participant 5A:…I would say that it is a right for every single child to have an education, and that the public school system is what actually provides that. And in my opinion provides it very effectively and very well. Because I try to think about what the consequences would be if we didn't have a public school system.

Participant 5B: I think it's large numbers in classes, and children from all walks of life meshing together…And also, they have to educate everyone, meaning with an IEP, or if they're in a wheelchair, and I think it is a really good cross-gradient of society and what they're going to see in the world. But they're also catering to everyone. And since we have a child that has an IEP, we've gotten a lot of good out of it.

Lack of information about schools nationally

Several participants noted that they did not have enough information to rate public schools nationally and so gave fairly tentative ratings. Others noted that negative information predominated in what one heard about public schools nationally. However, participants who had lived in other parts of the country and who had had direct personal experiences with schools there seemed unwilling or unable to use that information as a proxy for "public schools nationally." That information seemed to be used instead as a way to substantiate the perception that school quality varies significantly by locality. Rather than serve as a platform from which to extrapolate to schools nationally, it seemed to reinforce an "us versus them" way of looking at school quality.

It may be that personal experiences with any school tend to be filed in the minds of participants under the rubric of "local schools," and the term "public schools nationally" therefore means "any schools with which you have not had any contact or personal experience." This is speculative, but certainly the relationship between lack of personal contact and the concept of "public schools nationally" needed to be considered in developing the quantitative survey.

The following conversations illustrate this issue.

Researcher: So if I ask you to think about pictures about schools, about your local schools, and pictures about if I say schools nationally, are there differences there?

Participant 2: Between local schools and national schools? What would be considered a national school? What are you talking about?

Researcher: So your rating for schools nationally was a little bit lower.

Participant 7: Absolutely. And that's because I don't have the confidence of having walked in those schools.

[Researcher showed and discussed the graph of PDK/Gallup BIMBY gaps.]

Participant 7: See, I'm kind of actually blown away…Because this is matching up exactly how you said. So that when I think back over my interview, I'm saying exactly the same thing, I'm fitting exactly into the profile…So in explaining mine, I want to give you a disclaimer. In that when I don't have data, I am extremely conservative in my forecast.

Researcher: So, now let's think about public schools nationally. What quality rating would you give to public schools nationally on that same scale from A to F.

Participant 3: I don't know much about, I haven't thought much about public schools nationally. I guess I just stay in my own world here.

Researcher: You know, I don't think that's unusual.

Participant 3: Well, if I hear something on the news, like some violence or something somewhere, which like I said can be anywhere. I'd probably just say a C because I'm not, I don't have a whole lot of information or really thought about public schools nationally…

Researcher: [W]hat information or impressions were most important to you when you were grading the national schools? The public schools nationally?

Participant 3: I'm not really sure. Only because I didn't want to give them the same grade as my local public school.

Researcher: Why not?

Participant 3: I don't know. Because I would hope that my local public school would be a little bit more on task. I think lack of information of the national schools I'm not sure about.

The "outsider" and "insider" views of quality

In at least two interviews there was explicit confirmation of a very important theme that could be found implicitly in others: There are two perspectives that were used when assessing school quality – the "outsider" view and the "insider" view. The factors that participants used to determine school quality from the "outsider" view are quantitative, while those used from the "insider" view are primarily qualitative. The insider view is one in which the rater just has to be there to understand the quality of the school. The following discussions capture this very well:

Researcher: When you think about the quality of a public school, what comes to mind? What would you look for to help determine the quality of a public school?

Participant 8: Well, I guess what most people look at is if they have good scores, good test scores, and that sort of thing, by whatever measure they have…Any kind of ranking that's out there and available…How many kids actually go on to college and that sort of thing. That's probably how I would look at it. How many kids per classroom? What kind of subjects do they offer? Do they have advanced classes? That sort of thing.

Researcher: OK. Any other things you would look for or think about in terms of what would go into the quality of a public school? That's a little different way to ask the question.

Participant 8: Well I think just [the] quality of the facility itself – is it rundown? Are there holes in the floor? I have a brother-in-law who teaches in [state] and there actually were holes in the floor in the classroom where he taught. He brought his hammers and nails and some plywood in and patched the floor because there was a hole in the floor. Windows that didn't shut, didn't have panes in them. And obviously [state] is one of the poorest states…

Researcher: OK. Any other – any other ways that you would determine the quality of a public school?

Participant 8: Well, you know, if you're – are you talking about like an outsider's view in, or are you talking about a day-to-day, like, once you're in there and determining the quality?

Researcher: Well, we can talk about that too if you want. I think what you've – I guess you've had the perspective for the last couple of minutes of from the outside looking in, how would you, you know, what measures would you use or how would you determine. But – so now, maybe from the perspective of being inside, what tells you about quality?

Participant 8: For me it's are the kids interested, are they enjoying it, are they learning something? When you ask your kid what's your favorite subject and they say lunch, um – you know, who's your favorite teacher [and they say] Oh, I don't know – Do you have a favorite teacher – Oh, I don't know. Things like that. I think if you – you know, you can tell when a kid is getting something out of their experience every day coming home engaged and excited. And, you know, when they can actually share with you what it is that they're learning. I have definitely seen that at various points with my kids – both my kids like science a lot so they're usually pretty excited about stuff that they're learning in science and talking about that. Just able to kind of rattle off stuff that I never even knew about…

Researcher: Any other things from that inside perspective that would tell you about the quality of a public school?

Participant 8: For me, it's how much interaction do I as a parent get with my kid's teachers and how much effort is it for me to get in there?

Another conversation also captured the qualitative "insider" view as well as a similar description of an engaged student from a parent's perspective.

Researcher: What are some clues you would use to tell that one public school or one public school system was better than another one?

Participant 4: I don't know. If I was an administrator I'd walk down the hall and I would eavesdrop. And…

Researcher: Suppose you were a parent trying to make a decision.

Participant 4: Same thing. I actually, when I was deciding where my son would go, I actually asked if I could go and observe the kindergarten teachers in a public school. And the principal, and this was what made me feel like it was a good place, the principal said not a problem. And we went from place to place to place to place and I observed. And I literally said I like this teacher the best, I think she'll fit my son's learning style...

Researcher: And on this visit did the principal know at that time that you were a teacher?

Participant 4: Oh yeah, absolutely. And so did the teachers. Hi, I'm one of those parents. Just put me to work and let me eavesdrop. And you know, that's the whole idea. You have to put up a cooperative situation and not a vindictive "I'm here because you're beneath me…" I'm here to help your kid. And so are you. So let's do this thing together…I mean, what are we doing? We're working on this kid together to create a product: An intelligent kid who can go out in the world and keep you in your old age…So yeah, I mean the whole idea is that you know, you should be able to go door to door and see excitement and that type of thing. Kids should be happy. That's huge.

Researcher: So if you can look at it and get the feel for it, you ought to know if you're getting the right feel or the wrong feel.

Participant 4: Absolutely.

Researcher: It should be happy.

Participant 4: And the teachers should be happy, too…

Researcher: So, what about people who want to look at quality in terms of percentage of kids who are going to college, or SOL scores, or they want to use proxies like percent who are getting free or reduced lunches. Or they want to look at funding for people, things like that.

Participant 4: That's all important, too. And the thing is that I always feel for the teachers who want to teach in a school that is struggling. Because it's not always the teachers who cause the SOL scores to go down. Sometimes you do everything you can do, and if you don't have parental support, it's not going to happen. It's a joint effort. And I feel sorry for those teachers because there are some darn good teachers that choose to have more difficult students…

Researcher: Where would you say your ideas of quality come from?

Participant 4: From me being a parent. I know what a quality teacher is supposed to be as an educator. But I think true quality comes from my parental eyes.

Researcher: Okay. And is that from – could you expand on that a little bit?

Participant 4: If my kid comes home and he likes your class and he's excited, that's quality. If my kid dreads your class, and it doesn't matter if it's his area…if he had more stuff to say about the subject matter, even if he didn't enjoy it, that's a quality teacher. If he complained about this particular piece of literature because why is this teacher always picking books that have more appeal for girls because it has this, this and this, that's a quality teacher. But if he comes in and says the discipline is horrible and the kids are spending more time torturing the student teacher than they are actually accomplishing something, then that's not quality. So my parental ears are much more acute than my educator ears. If that makes sense. When I became a parent I became a very different teacher. Much less picky about some things and much more picky about others.

The explicit consideration of the qualitative and quantitative ways of knowing about school quality also occurred in this conversation.

Researcher: So [you have mentioned] pedagogy and outcomes in terms of what kids are doing.

Participant 7: And then, you know, I'm a humanist, so I would of course go and sit on the campus for a day and I would just participate sort of and see what's going on. And ordinarily I would not suggest that as a way of doing assessment but I mean, you have a degree in assessment, so that's what I would do. But I wouldn't advise that for most people.

Researcher: Well, it's interesting because you're not the first person I've talked to who has said that.

Participant 7: Really.

Researcher: Yes. Literally. Go visit the school and just let your instincts tell you. What kind of feeling do you get? You know, sometimes people list out things that they might imagine observing that would tell them Am I feeling good about this, am I not feeling good about this?

Participant 7: I would look at how the kids interact with other kids when adults aren't around. Or certainly their teachers or whatever are around. I think you can get a lot from that kind of context. My brother is a positivist and he swears I'm just some kind of soft one, like that stuff, I mean, you know. I mean he will swear up and down. And these are the arguments we get into but I think that stuff is useful…In my initial assessment of my kids' school, while I wouldn't say I was unhappy, I felt totally all over the place. I felt like, and that's one of the critiques of Montessori is that the kids are all over the place. I felt totally, where's the focus? There is no focus. Kids go on their own. And coming from my experience, my educational experience, that's just not the way to do it. But I also have read enough that I know that what works for me may not work for my kids. And so I don't make that assumption. And go by how they are reacting. And my kids love their school.

Researcher: Is that a quality measure?

Participant 7: For me it is. Because whereas I enjoyed the educational process, I would not say I loved my school. Certainly the fighting and the weapons, I mean there was just a lot of stuff. And I was adamant that my kids were not going to [be in that].

Another interview captured a good list of indicators that seems to match the "outsider" view.

Researcher: When you think about the quality of a public school, what comes to mind, what do you look for in determining the quality of a public school?

Participant 2: Well, for me, I think I look at the graduation rate, of course, where the students are going to college once graduated…I would first look at if they're going to college at all…And that would mean a lot to me. Like if this school is producing students

that are at least going to a community college for one year, I think that's important…The level of courses offered, are there AP courses, are there advanced mathematics and English or science courses being offered there. The level of education of the instructors, are they certified. What percentage of the schools teachers are certified, which percentage of them are on traditional licensure or long-term subs who are maybe second year working on their education degree in the field that they are in. Just level of expertise of the instructors involved. I also look very closely at the mission of the high school, of the public school. I kind of want to get to know well the philosophy of the principal in terms of their vision of educating the students. What kind of team does he or she surround themselves with in terms of vice principals, and what is their background? But one key thing, my daughter goes to an inner-city public school, but one key thing that we had to look at first was the reading level, the average reading level of a student in say, the 11th grade for a student who had been there since 9th grade, and was now in the 11th grade, what was their reading level? We wanted to look at all that because we wanted to make sure that the environment is conducive to learning at all times. So those are the kind of things I look at in terms of quality.

Concept maps

As noted above, it seems that the concept of "public schools nationally" can only be understood from the outsider perspective and that experiences with public schools elsewhere only seem to heighten the outsider perspective when thinking about public schools nationally. It may be that thinking about the quality of public schools nationally can only be done using quantitative or systemic "outsider" measures, while thinking about the quality of local schools can be done using both quantitative and qualitative measures – and it appears that the qualitative measures tend to dominate that thinking. Figure 9 and Figure 10 are simple concept maps that illustrate the differences between the "outsider" and "insider" views of school quality.

Figure 9: The "Outsider" view when thinking about school quality

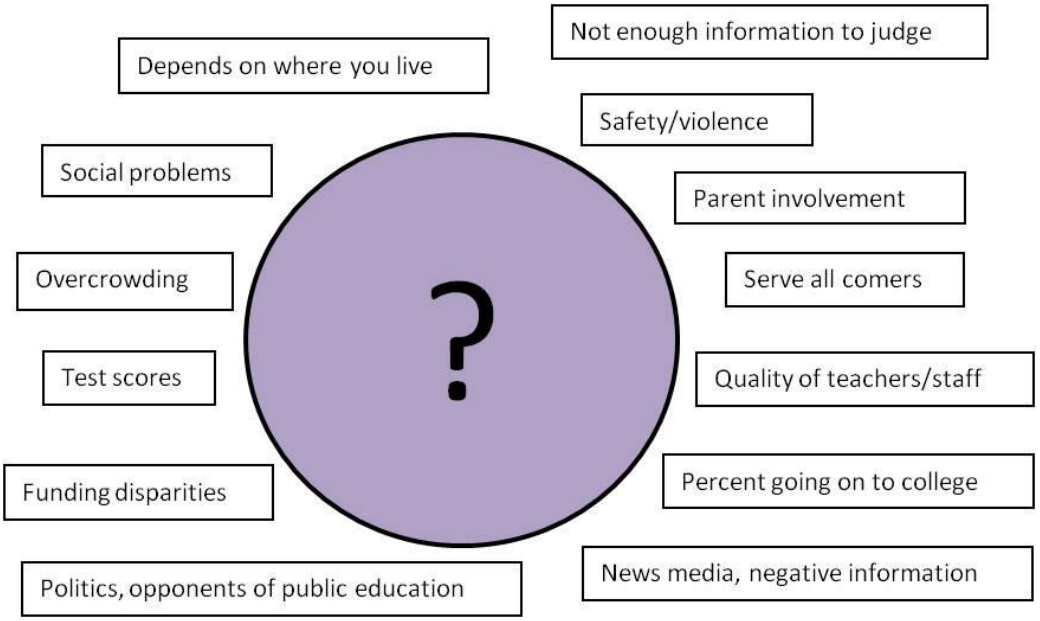
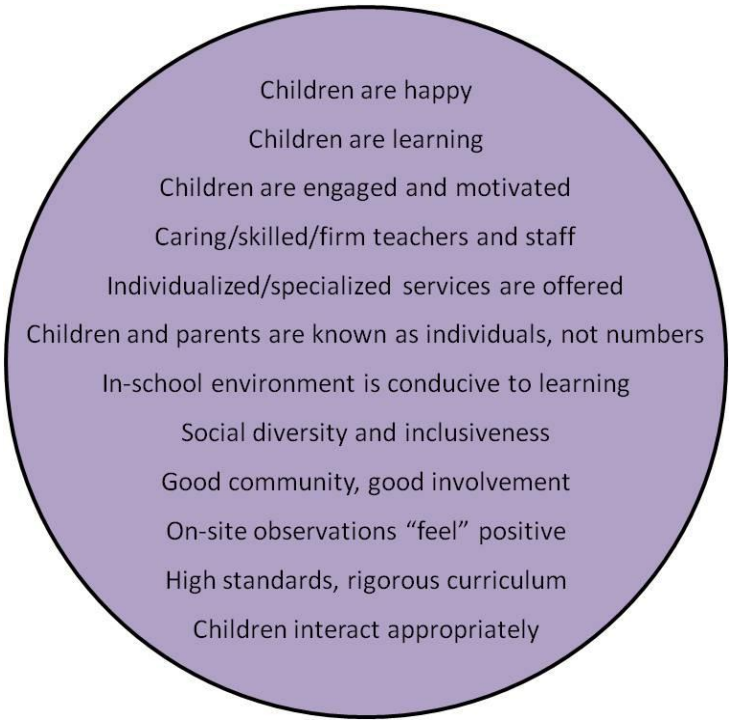


Figure 10: The "Insider" view when thinking about school quality



Tentative hypotheses

The findings from the qualitative phase of the project led to seven tentative hypotheses that are listed below.

Innumeracy

There seemed to be an inability or unwillingness among participants to assume that other communities would be like their current communities, or that other schools would be like their current schools. In some ways this seemed to be a failure to project out to other communities. This could be construed as a form of innumeracy, which is the tendency for individuals to misestimate probabilities or proportions. In this case, perhaps people overestimate the prevalence of poorer schools in the overall picture of school performance in the U.S. After all, if participants cite the caring of their local teachers or the happiness of their children as factors in school ratings, is it true that one's local teachers really love their students more than any other teachers in the U.S. do? Or that local children are happier than any other children in the U.S.? And if this is true in any objective sense, then are people in all other localities in the U.S. wrong when they say their own local schools are best? Innumeracy seemed to be worth investigating further.

Lack of information and the middle category

The tendency toward lower ratings for more distant objects might be as simple as a lack of information leading people to the less committal – lower – middle rating category of "C." One might then hypothesize that people with more information, or those who feel more confident

about the information they have, would have a smaller BIMBY gap. In corollary, people with more weakly held opinions could be more susceptible to question-wording issues. There is a fairly extensive literature on the use of explicit "don't know" options in surveys. The simplicity of this hypothesis makes it interesting to pursue and fairly easy to test.

The context of the here and now

It could be that a broad, abstract rating object such as "public schools nationally" gets rated on an idealized scale or "frame" that is a tougher standard to meet, while local schools get rated on a scale that is constrained by real limitations and "givens." These constraints would presumably be well-known for the local time and place but not well-known for schools nationally. A sense of rooting in time and place locally could be creating the BIMBY gap. If respondents were primed to think more about their experiences and local conditions, it might widen the BIMBY gap.

Insiders and Outsiders

In the last qualitative interview, the participant explicitly separated the "outsider" and "insider" perspectives in describing ways of knowing about school quality. This theme could be seen in several other interviews as well. The "outsider" perspective was built on test scores, the physical condition of the school facility, the percentage of students going on to college and so forth – all fairly typical "report-card" types of measures. When the participant switched to the insider view, the measures were all qualitative and experiential – were the children happy, could one tell they were engaged in learning, did they talk about what happened at school, etc. It may

be that differences between the "outsider" and "insider" ways of knowing about or conceptualizing school quality contribute to BIMBY. This idea could also be extended to how participants perceive themselves as members of in-groups and out-groups.

Community attachment

The interviews hinted at a sense of community attachment or a feeling that the community expressed the participants' own values. Although this idea was not mentioned explicitly, participants talked about visiting and being comfortable with the schools and they also talked in many ways about the different ways that different local areas approached public schooling. Also, given the presence of the "insider" and "outsider" views of assessing school quality, a feeling of being in step or out of step with the local community seemed to have some parallels as a possible issue related to BIMBY. But in the last interview the participant made a point of giving a better rating a school where they felt like social outsiders compared to a school where they felt more in step with the school community. Both schools were in the same school division and only a few miles apart. This hypothesis was quite tentative but ultimately was included under the community homogeneity and attachment framework.

Empathy

Somewhat related to tentative hypotheses 2 and 5 above, it may be that some people just naturally think systemically, empathetically or socially and some people naturally think in terms of individualistic effort in a competitive, socially Darwinist world. Such fundamental differences could be related to BIMBY. Those who think systemically or empathetically may be more

willing to give better ratings to schools nationally, while those who think more individualistically and competitively may be more willing to give poorer ratings to schools nationally.

Related to this idea is the important point that direct personal experiences are more likely to create empathetic views towards other people or things, and by definition, it seems, "local schools" are only those with which people have had direct, personal experiences. If people typically feel greater empathy for local schools, and empathy leads to higher ratings, that would be a possible explanation for the BIMBY effect.

Local homogeneity

Somewhat related to tentative hypotheses 1, 4 and 5 above, it could be that the homogeneity of the local community as compared to the heterogeneity of the nation could contribute to BIMBY. A feeling of cultural closeness to the (likely) more homogeneous local community could result in higher ratings for local schools. This could connect to innumeracy – perhaps those who are minorities in their community and experience a lack of closeness would see school differences one way and those who are majorities see it the other way. This could also connect to feelings of being in the in-group or out-group and assumptions about whether the in-group or out-group has the better schools.

There are two other hypotheses that seem intuitive and important as possible explanations of BIMBY. The first is that the BIMBY gap may simply reflect reality – that more people are interviewed in areas that truly do have better schools, by whatever measure that may be determined. But as noted earlier in this paper, data from the February 1990 ABC News Education Poll indicate that, while school ratings do start to converge for subgroups that are

often thought to have poorer local schools, the BIMBY gap is quite persistent. It only disappears for African-Americans in large cities and reverses for African-Americans in rural areas or small towns (these results are tentative due to small numbers of cases in the dataset). Those numbers do not seem add up to a BIMBY gap based on objective criteria. If survey respondents are judging schools nationally by over-weighting a minority of seriously underperforming schools across the country, that would be a different problem, one perhaps related to innumeracy or the media environment.

Indeed, the second hypothesis that needs to be mentioned here is the potential influence of media content on perceptions of public school quality nationally. Although it did not come up frequently in the qualitative research, it was mentioned in the interviews, and it has currency in discussions about perceptions of public school quality.

Additional literature review based on the qualitative research

Media content

In a sidebar commentary written in his usual direct tone, Bracey (2009) succinctly lays out the hypothesis that media content accounts for the BIMBY effect:

> It's a constant in the PDK/Gallup polls: Respondents say their local schools are OK but the nation's schools are average to awful. The reasons for this disconnect are simple: Americans never hear anything positive about the nation's schools and haven't since the years just before Sputnik in 1957…Negative information flows almost daily from media, politicians, and ideologues…On the other hand, parents use other sources and resources for information about their local schools: teachers, administrators, friends, neighbors,

newsletters, PTAs, and their kids themselves; and they're in a much better position to observe what's actually happening in American schools.

This description of the media environment regarding public school quality may be on target, but it does not seem to be a plausible cause of BIMBY for several reasons.

First, as noted earlier in this paper, the *A Nation at Risk* report in 1983 did affect ratings on the PDK/Gallup poll, but the BIMBY gap held fairly constant despite the drop in overall ratings that year for schools nationally and in the community (the question about the school attended by the oldest child was not asked until 1985). See Figure 2 on page 44.

Second, as noted earlier in this paper (page 64), a "standardized" or "magic bullet" theory of communication effects based on the content delivered through the media has been abandoned in mass communications research in favor of theories that emphasize more individualized responses to and uses of mass communication (Lowery & DeFleur, 1983, pp. 91, 105, 175). Although of course the many millions spent on advertising and public relations campaigns indicate otherwise, it is actually quite difficult to establish causal links between media content and mass behaviors unless changes are tracked over long periods of time. And the trends in the PDK/Gallup data do not show any steady erosion of overall ratings over a period of thirty-five years during which Bracey (2009) observed negative reporting.

But the most important fact is that the BIMBY effect is found in numerous topic areas besides school quality. Some of these topic areas would not seem to be prone to media effects. For example, it is a structural feature of employee surveys that immediate supervisors are generally rated more favorably than middle managers, who are rated more favorably than upper

level leadership[21]. Many organizations do not experience the decades of negative reporting cited by Cannon and Barham (1992) or Bracey (2009), yet BIMBY exists for them. While it seems that the negative media environment regarding public school quality does exist, the connection of media *content* to BIMBY seems to be too tenuous and not powerful enough as a cause of BIMBY to pursue in this research.

Innumeracy

A number of the potential hypotheses for BIMBY that have been discussed in this paper relate to how survey respondents handle factual information when making ratings judgments. But some researchers are also concerned about a related issue, statistical innumeracy, which is an apparent inability for many people to grasp fundamental concepts of proportions, probabilities and key population parameters that often figure into survey judgments.

Two recent publications illustrate this issue. Martinez, Wald and Craig (2008) and Wong (2007) noted some longstanding research demonstrating consistent overestimation by the general public of the percentage of the U.S. population in racial and ethnic minority groups, which may affect how survey respondents formulate judgments and answer survey questions and a number of policy issues.

Wong (2007) used General Social Survey (GSS) and U.S. Census data in a multilevel analysis. She determined that respondents of all races consistently underestimated the percentage of whites nationally and overestimated the percentages of African-Americans, Hispanics and

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[21] Personal observation of the author from experience with about a dozen employee surveys in local and state government organizations.

Native Americans nationally. These national estimates were affected by their *perceptions* of racial profiles in their communities, but not by the actual U.S. Census *data* on racial profiles in their communities[22]. She said "scholars need to start thinking about why whites and non-whites have similar 'big pictures' of the nation, why their 'little pictures' vary a great deal, and why the motivations for over- and underestimation may differ by racial/ethnic group" (p. 392).

Martinez *et al*. (2008) noted that three factors seem to affect statistical innumeracy: socio-economic factors (people with higher socio-economic status [SES] generally make more accurate estimates), contextual perceptions (the density in one's local community of members of the groups being estimated and the amount of personal contact with the groups), and the perceived threat from different groups (higher perceived threat produces higher estimated percentages of outgroups – groups different from the person providing the estimate).

They tested estimates of the size of the gay and lesbian population in the U.S. in a survey of 601 Florida residents in June 2002. Lower SES respondents and those with personal contacts with gays or lesbians reported higher estimates. Local context at the county level, measured objectively by several indices created by the researchers to estimate the prevalence of gay or lesbian households or the receptiveness of the community to gays and lesbians, did not impact respondents' estimates. As in Wong's (2007) analysis, it was the respondents' perceptions of their local environment rather than the "objective" statistical description of the local community

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[22] A shortcoming of the study is that "community" was not defined in the survey and the GSS data could be broken down geographically only to the primary sampling unit (PSU) level, which is likely to cover a larger area than a survey respondent's concept of their community. This may have been especially true for minority respondents, who may have been picturing a smaller, more homogeneous community inside of the larger PSU. Nevertheless, as Wong points out, respondents perceived themselves as living in very different local communities but still had very similar – and inaccurate – estimates of national percentages.

that had a greater effect on the overall estimates. Respondents with greater self-reported religiosity and fundamentalist beliefs, who might be expected to report higher percentages of gays and lesbians due to the perceived threat factor, actually reported lower percentages. Martinez *et al*. (2008) speculate that "people who have a negative affect towards gays may manifest that orientation by denying gayness as anything other than a (perverse) lifestyle choice – a persistent motif in the rhetoric of the antigay movement" (p. 764).

Taking cues from this research, it seems advisable to include some survey content that could assess the respondents' sense of their identity in their local communities as in-group or out-group members.

Lack of information and the middle category

Survey researchers use various approaches to soliciting opinions. Likert-type rating scales are very commonly used. Because some questions in surveys seem to depend on factual knowledge that may or may not be held by the respondent, survey researchers have been concerned about the impact on survey error of respondents guessing or trying to be helpful to the researcher by providing answers based on little or no knowledge of the issue at hand. Survey researchers have experimented with various approaches to identifying and/or screening out "uninformed" opinion.

Krosnick and Fabrigar (1997) reviewed a number of experiments in this area dating back to the 1940s and concluded that the results are decidedly mixed. Converse (1964) observed weak correlations in survey responses about policy issues obtained from participants in a panel survey in 1956, 1958 and 1960. He proposed that many opinions are essentially offered by survey

respondents at random because the interview process communicates to respondents that it is important to have opinions, respondents are expected to have opinions, and respondents do not want to look foolish or ignorant by admitting lack of knowledge.

If so, then using filter questions to screen out respondents who don't have opinions about the rating object could reduce the number of respondents offering opinions and also improve data quality by eliminating random responses (statistical noise) from the data. Krosnick and Fabrigar (1997) list about a dozen other studies that seem to support this contention, but they also note that other explanations may better fit these observations.

The context of the here and now

As noted earlier, Loveless (1997) and Lakoff (2007) discuss the context that is created by real-world or pragmatic constraints on the range of choices when making public policy or expressing opinions about policy. Loveless (1997) specifically wondered if opinions about local issues are more likely to be bounded by these parameters compared to opinions about national issues.

Doherty (2010) describes a newer interpretation of BIMBY as it relates to the longstanding problem of understanding the public's negative ratings of Congress as a whole compared to relatively more positive ratings of their individual member of Congress ("MC"). The research is based on vignettes in two different web-based surveys. Certain features of the vignettes were randomly varied to test whether respondents preferred MCs who voted in line with the preferences of constituents in their districts or in line with what was good for the nation

as a whole. The experiments also varied whether the MC was from the respondent's own state or from a different state.

The first survey was conducted online with 254 undergraduate students at a large Western state university. This study presented a scenario about a farm subsidy bill being discussed in the House of Representatives, introduced national and state polling results in Iowa about public support for the bill (Iowa is a significant agricultural producer, of course), and randomly manipulated the position of a representative from Iowa.

The second survey was conducted online as part of the Time-sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences program, using a Knowledge Networks web panel sample. The survey was conducted in two waves: 851 respondents participated in the first wave, in which they were asked about how representatives should make decisions about building more nuclear power plants. A follow-up wave to those participants presented a scenario about a bill to fund more nuclear power plants, and 665 people responded in the second wave. As with the farm subsidy study, the scenario was manipulated randomly. The voting intent of the representative in the scenario was randomly varied, the levels of state and national support or opposition to the bill were varied, and the Senator discussed in the scenario was said to be either from the respondent's home state or from Missouri.

He summarizes his findings in a way that reinforces Loveless's (1997) thoughts about the realistic parameters on policymaking.

> The results presented here also improve our understanding of the enduring fact that people tend to like their own representatives but dislike representatives in general and

> Congress as a whole. They suggest that this disjuncture may stem from a dynamic where people apply concrete (realist) standards when evaluating their own specific MC but apply abstract (idealistic) standards when evaluating MCs (or Congress) in general. Within the realm of concrete evaluations, rather than being crudely biased, people adjust their evaluations based on how they think about their position in different representation relationships. Rather than demanding that their representatives focus on serving the district but that other representatives respond to national sentiment, the opposite is true. When evaluating MCs as observers people are particularly concerned with whether MCs respond to their constituents, but when evaluating their own MC, people focus on their role as an individual voter and give greater weight to whether the MC is pursuing their preferred policies. (Doherty, 2010, p. 21.)

Insiders and Outsiders

In addition to citing the differences between abstract and concrete frames of reference for rating MCs, Doherty (2010) also concluded that citizens are conscious of their relationships to MCs in a way that is very similar to the "insider" and "outsider" views of school quality that came from the qualitative interviews in this dissertation project.

> Specifically, when evaluating their own MC people focus on their role as principals in the representation relationship and their own policy preferences loom large. In contrast, when evaluating MCs from other districts as outsiders, they are more inclined to interpret the MC's behavior from an institutional perspective, focusing on the district as the MC's principal constituency. (Doherty, 2010, p. 20.)

The theme of insiders and outsiders is also prevalent in comments from the qualitative interviews about unequal local funding of schools, and social problems and their impacts on school quality. The theme is apparent in the analyses of innumeracy discussed earlier (Martinez *et al*., 2008 and Wong, 2007). It is also apparent in discussions about the possible homogeneity of the local community and the heterogeneity of the nation as a whole. And if the BIMBY effect is strictly a problem of social distance, then the theme of insiders and outsiders would be fundamental to understanding it.

Empathy and framing

Lakoff (2007) described two main worldviews are found in human beings: a nurturant worldview in which empathy is predominant, and strict worldview in which authoritarianism is predominant. He discussed how the use of language and images built from a particular worldview creates a "frame" that bounds discussion. He asserted that using nurturant language and frames activates neural networks built by having had nurturant experiences. Likewise, using strict/authoritarian language and frames activates neural networks built by having had experiences with strictness. These ideas are similar to those found in Tourangeau et al. (2000), in which the contents of our memories often await activation by particular questions on surveys, the wording, structure and sequence of which can influence which memories are activated.

Lakoff's purpose in writing his 2007 book was expressly political, but his ideas about framing and the two worldviews seem to be parallel to the insider and outsider views of public education. Going beyond the idea discussed earlier of constrained (localized) and idealistic (nationalized) parameters on policymaking, it may be that a nurturant frame used to understand

public schools can only be linked to schools at the local and personal level because that frame can only be developed by direct and personal experiences. Therefore, it is absent when asked to evaluate "far away" schools (or other things) with which one has no direct experience. This would not be a failure of innumeracy, or reciprocity, or logic, or information, or anything else. It would be a natural reaction to a lack of an empathetic frame associated with schools nationally, and to the presence of an empathetic frame for local schools. And if the empathetic frame were inherently more positive in its evaluation of school quality, then it might account for a large portion of the BIMBY gap. The fundamentally cognitive and neural nature of this idea makes it an attractive idea to test.

Local homogeneity

Several aspects of the research in this dissertation project suggest that perceptions of local homogeneity and national heterogeneity may figure into the BIMBY phenomenon. These include the work on innumeracy described by Martinez *et al*. (2008) and Wong (2007), Smith's (1998) suggestions, Doherty's (2010) work, and comments from participants in the qualitative portion of this project. The notion of community homogeneity might also be suggested as an influence in school quality ratings if one subscribes to a definition of education that emphasizes the transmission of culture.

Related to this idea, Bushaw and Lopez (2011) reported that the 2011 PDK/Gallup survey included an open-ended question that asked respondents why they rated their local schools better than schools nationally. "Americans overwhelmingly said they based their grades on their knowledge about the immediate community and the local schools, and their pride in the

community. Some believe they assigned low grades for the nation's schools based on negative media information. Interestingly, a large percentage of Americans (15%) either couldn't or wouldn't answer the question" (p. 18).

But perceptions of community homogeneity can be a complicated issue. In the ABC News Education Poll described earlier, the interplay of race and type of community impacts the size and direction of BIMBY gaps when respondents rate schools in their communities and schools nationally. For example, African-Americans in suburban areas show very large BIMBY gaps in favor of local schools while African-Americans in other types of communities show small gaps or negative gaps (ratings of local schools are worse than ratings of schools nationally). The survey did not include measures of community homogeneity, but one might imagine that African-Americans in suburban areas might be in a minority status, while African-Americans in some urban areas might be in a majority status. For those respondents, the minority status may equate with more favorable perceptions of local schools. For white respondents, one might imagine that minority status might equate with less favorable perceptions of local schools. Therefore, community homogeneity may translate to a sense of ingroup or outgroup status, which in turn may need to be understood within more specific contexts. Nevertheless, it seemed useful to include in the dissertation survey some way of measuring community homogeneity and a sense of connection to the local culture.

Personal memories of school

While not the subject of additional literature review, personal memories of school recounted by the participants cropped up in all of the qualitative interviews. These reminiscences

were both positive and negative. They were intriguing because they created a context for the discussion of school quality that sometimes explicitly recognized the passage of time and sometimes seemed to float freely across time. This seemed analogous to the counterpoint of local, concrete and specific contexts versus national, abstract and vague contexts. With the belief that triggering personal memories of school might also enhance empathy, this theme was brought forward by the researcher from the qualitative research.

Final themes included in the experimental survey questionnaire

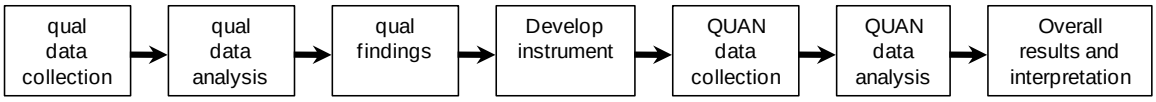
Ultimately, four themes were explored in the experimental survey questionnaire: community homogeneity and involvement, empathy and framing, personal memories of school, and the inclusion of a don't know option for school ratings. These four themes were explored using a full factorial design. The development and execution of the survey is described in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Quantitative Methods and Results

Overview

As noted in Chapter 3, a two-stage mixed-methods approach was used for this study. In the terminology of Cresswell and Clark (2007), this project design can be summarized as qual → QUAN and diagrammed as shown in Figure 8, where "qual" means "qualitative" and "quan" means "quantitative." The fourth through sixth steps in the diagram, from "Develop instrument" to "QUAN data analysis," are covered in this chapter.

Figure 11: Diagram of this project's mixed methods design



Although a full-blown telephone survey methodology would allow for the closest comparison to the PDK/Gallup surveys, the funding to support that approach was beyond the scope of this project. A web-based version of the project did not win funding from the Time-sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences (TESS) program, although the anonymous reviewers' comments were helpful to this project. Therefore, a self-administered paper-and-pencil mail survey method was used. Table 8 shows the timeline for the quantitative research.

Table 8: Timeline for the Quantitative Research

Dates	Task
March 2011	Conducted additional literature review, designed quantitative survey content and analysis plan, submitted application to TESS
April-June 2011	Finalized write-up of additional literature review content generated by the qualitative results
June 2011	Received TESS decision, re-formulated research plan, drafted mail survey materials, submitted VCU IRB packet
July-October 2011	Conducted pilot survey, production survey, entered data, reviewed preliminary results with chair
October 2011	Wrote analysis chapter, shared with committee, revised as necessary
October-November 2011	Finalized dissertation, delivered to committee for review, defended dissertation

Hypotheses to test

The additional literature review helped to refine the seven tentative hypotheses to four main hypotheses to test.

Lack of information

Survey respondents with little knowledge about schools in the nation as a whole may tend to give noncommittal ratings which would tend to cluster toward the middle of a rating scale. This hypothesis is parsimonious and cognitively-based. It will be tested by an experimental manipulation that randomizes the presence or absence of explicit "don't know" options in ratings questions.

H1: Inclusion of explicit don't know options will reduce the BIMBY gaps in ratings of public schools.

Framing, empathy, "outsider" and "insider" perspectives

The qualitative interviews provided two perspectives on how to gauge school quality. The outsider perspective was built on test scores, the physical condition of the facility, the percentage of students going on to attend college and other measures fairly typical of "report cards" about schools. The insider view was qualitative – were the children happy, could one tell they were engaged, did children talk about what happened at school, etc. Lakoff (2007) emphasizes the roles of empathy in a "nurturant" worldview and of authority in a "strict" worldview. He says that using nurturant language and "frames" activates neural networks built by having had nurturant experiences. Likewise, using strict or authoritarian language and frames activates neural networks built by having had experiences with strictness.

It may be that a nurturant frame associated with schooling can only be activated by thinking about local schools because such a frame can only be developed by direct and personal experiences, which by definition involve only local schools. Therefore, it is absent when one is asked to evaluate "far away" things that one has no direct experience with.

This might be the best explanation of BIMBY. It also is likely to underlie what Loveless (1997), Smith (1998) and Doherty (2010) all discuss in terms of local contextualization and perceptions of realistic constraints that affect the ratings process.

This framing hypothesis will be tested with two split-half sets of five attitude statements about public schools – a set designed to activate the nurturant frame and a set designed to activate the strict frame. These two sets of items will also be used to categorize respondent attitudes as nurturant or strict.

H2a: Respondents receiving the nurturant frame will show smaller BIMBY gaps than those receiving the strict frame, overall.

H2b: Respondents classified as nurturant on either frame will show smaller BIMBY gaps than those classified as strict on either frame.

Past experience with public schools

Participants in the qualitative work often brought personal experiences from their own school days into the discussion. There was some evidence that experiences in different school systems remain framed as "local schools," regardless of the number of schools attended in the past. Therefore, they do not bear on ratings of schools nationally. There was also some evidence that ratings of local schools may be more rooted in time and place than ratings of schools nationally. Triggering the respondent to think about past experiences in school may activate the "local" frame so that the ratings process is more rooted in time and location, but it is unclear what effect this might have on the BIMBY gap. Two hypotheses will be tested here.

H3a: The number of schools attended by the respondent will not be related to the BIMBY gap (null hypothesis).

H3b: Respondents who are asked about their past school experiences will not show different BIMBY gaps compared to those who are not asked (null hypothesis).

Attachment to the community

Smith (1998) suggested that local communities may be more homogeneous and therefore better liked by respondents. In that case, things in those communities might be rated more highly

than those in the nation as a whole. The qualitative interviews revealed that participants saw many differences and disparities among localities, leading to a sense of "us versus them." In addition, there was a sense that in-group and out-group status may play a role. Also, more familiar and directly experienced local communities may engender more empathy. All of these aspects of community attachment would tend to increase the BIMBY effect.

To test the effect of attachment to the community, the respondent's connection and sense of belonging in the community will be assessed. This module will be randomly assigned so that it also acts as an experimental trigger for thinking about local context and rooting the ratings process in time and place. Two hypotheses will be tested.

H4a: Respondents with greater community attachment will show larger BIMBY gaps.

H4b: Respondents who receive this module will show no differences from those who do not receive it (null hypothesis).

Design of the quantitative research

Questionnaire

In general, the quantitative research followed well-established procedures for conducting survey research by self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on the information that emerged from the qualitative research and the subsequent literature review. Four themes were explored in the study: community homogeneity and involvement, nurturant and strict framing of issues in public education, personal memories of school, and inclusion of a don't know option for school ratings. These four themes were explored using a 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 full

factorial design. This approach is often used on questionnaire wording experiments, and amounts to a post-test only control-group design (Nock & Guterbock, 2010).

The questionnaire contained four main sections:

A. General information about the community (this section included the factorial manipulation for the theme of community homogeneity and attachment)
B. Statements about public education (this section contained the factorial manipulation for the theme of nurturant and strict framing)
C. School ratings (this section contained the factorial manipulations for personal memories of school and the don't know option for school ratings)
D. Demographics

The researcher drew on more than twenty years of public opinion research experience to create a conceptual outline of the questionnaire and then a draft instrument. The questions about school ratings were modeled on the PDK/Gallup questions[23]. There were sixteen different versions of the questionnaire, labeled in the upper right hand corner of the first page as "Style 1," "Style 2," etc., through "Style 16." A "master" version of the questionnaire is included in the appendices. Table 9 shows the factorial scheme and questionnaire contents.

[23] I am grateful to Dr. Bill Bushaw, Executive Director of PDK International for sharing with me the text of screener questions and the context in which they are presented to the respondents in the annual PDK/Gallup surveys (e-mail communication, 7/7/2011).

Table 9: Factorial Design and Questionnaire Contents

Factor 1 Community attachment	Factor 2 Framing and empathy	Factor 3 Personal memories of school	Factor 4 Explicit don't know option for school ratings	Style number
Ask community attachment module	Nurturant frame	Asked	DK not included	1
			DK included	2
		Not asked	DK not included	3
			DK included	4
	Strict frame	Asked	DK not included	5
			DK included	6
		Not asked	DK not included	7
			DK included	8
Skip community attachment module	Nurturant frame	Asked	DK not included	9
			DK included	10
		Not asked	DK not included	11
			DK included	12
	Strict frame	Asked	DK not included	13
			DK included	14
		Not asked	DK not included	15
			DK included	16

Sample

An address-based sample of one thousand mailing addresses was obtained from Marketing Systems Group – Genesys of Fort Washington, PA, a leader in survey sampling. Address-based sampling (ABS) is a fast-growing alternative to telephone sampling that includes almost all residences in a desired area, allows for precise geographic targeting, and supports the less expensive mail survey method. All of these factors made the ABS sampling method ideal for this exploratory project.

The sample was limited to the Richmond metro area (defined as Richmond City, Henrico County, Chesterfield County and Hanover County) and the Charlottesville metro area (defined as Charlottesville City, Albemarle County, Fluvanna County, Greene County and Nelson County). This limited the sample to the same areas from which the participants were drawn for the qualitative interviews, and allowed the researcher to appeal to knowledge of Virginia Commonwealth University.

The independent cities were oversampled at about 1.75 times their proportion of metro area population to ensure minority participation in the survey. Forty cases were reserved for a pilot survey and the remaining cases were reserved for the production survey. Cases were sorted by metro area, ZIP code and a random number assigned to each case using the SPSS RV.UNIFORM command. Cases were then assigned to each of the sixteen questionnaire styles in sequential order down the list, counting from one through sixteen for the first sixteen records, cycling through one through sixteen again for records seventeen through thirty-two, etc. The

researcher did not purchase a matching service that would match names to the addresses where that information would be available.

The research protocol, letters, and questionnaires were reviewed by the Virginia Commonwealth University Institutional Review Board and approved on June 30, 2011 as HM13766.

Pilot survey

For the pilot survey of forty cases, only questionnaire styles two and six were used, as they included all possible content. The pilot cases were randomly selected from both metropolitan areas. The pilot consisted of only the first survey packet and the thank-you/reminder post card. There were eight completed surveys in response to the pilot mailing. Comments on the questionnaires and patterns in the answers to some of the items indicated some small edits to the questionnaires. No significant changes were indicated.

The changes to the questionnaire were:

1. An arrow was added from item A2 to item A3 in the community attachment module to help respondents navigate the flow of the instrument.
2. Item C5, the rating of the school attended by the oldest child, was changed from the original wording of "(If "Yes" to C2 or "Yes" to C3) Using the A, B, C, D, or FAIL scale again, what grade would you give <u>the school your oldest child attends</u> – or do you not have enough information to say?" The revised question read: "(If "Yes" to C2 or C3 above) Using the A, B, C, D, or FAIL scale again, what grade would you give <u>the elementary, middle, junior or high school your oldest child attends</u> – or do you not

have enough information to say?" This clarified the skip logic and addressed one pilot respondent who said they did not have enough information to give a rating and wrote a note saying that their oldest child was in college and only their youngest child was still in K-12.

Also, a sticker on the outgoing envelopes was eliminated from the full protocol. The sticker read "**Student Research Project Enclosed**/Central Virginia Community/and School Satisfaction Survey/*Please Look Inside – Thank You!*"

Mailing protocol

The mailing protocol followed the recommendations of Dillman, Smyth and Christian (2008), although a truncated protocol was used. The initial mailing consisted of a cover letter explaining the survey and appealing to the helping behavior of the recipient, the survey questionnaire itself, and a business reply envelope. The surveys were sent in an envelope bearing the indicia and return address of the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University. The envelopes were addressed to "Central Virginia Resident." The mailing materials and supplies, mail handling facilities, and project coordination services were provided by the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory and University Mail Services at Virginia Commonwealth University. The researcher and his family members prepared the envelopes for mailing, and tracked and entered the returned surveys for analysis in an MS-Access database. About one week after the initial mailing, a thank-you/reminder post card was sent to all addresses on the list.

Two natural disasters occurred in Virginia during the data collection period. On August 23, a magnitude 5.8 earthquake hit Central Virginia with its epicenter near Mineral, near the eastern edge of the Charlottesville metro area included in the survey sample. Although structural damage was limited mostly to brick and masonry chimneys and cracked foundations, the event was disruptive and was followed by several significant aftershocks over the next several days. On August 26-27, Hurricane Irene caused widespread power outages and tree damage in Central Virginia, particularly in the Richmond area. Many residents were without electrical power for several days afterwards.

Ordinarily, the second mailing in the Dillman protocol would be sent to non-responders about two to three weeks after the thank-you/reminder post card. The researcher decided to allow time for potential respondents to cope with the two natural disasters that occurred in August. The second mailing to non-responders was sent six weeks after the thank-you/reminder post card. Data collection was closed on October 27, 2011.

Table 10: Data collection activities

Date	**Activity**
July 2011	Conduct pilot survey
8/15/11	Mail first packet for production survey
8/19/11	Mail thank-you/reminder post card
9/30/11	Mail second packet
10/27/11	Close data collection

Response

Out of the 960 addresses attempted in the production version of the survey, 208 usable responses were received. One person refused and 60 addresses were undeliverable, almost

always due to vacancies. Assuming that all addresses from which no response was received were not vacant, the response rate for the survey was 23%. Table 11 shows the response information for the survey.

Table 11: Response information for the survey

Disposition	Number
Completed	208
Refused	1
Returned undeliverable	60
No information	691
Total	960
Response rate	23.1%

Response rate = Completed/(Completed + Refused + No information) = 208/(208 + 1 + 691) = 208/900 = .2311

The response rate was somewhat disappointing, although response rates for surveys are generally known to be declining. The original proposal for this project suggested that two hundred completions would probably be adequate to test main effects and two-way interactions in the factorial design. That threshold was reached.

Results

Demographics of the respondents

Overall, the respondents tended to be suburban, female, college-educated, white homeowners of single-family homes. The purpose of the analysis was to gauge the impacts of experiments by analyzing subgroup differences within the dataset rather than to generalize from the data to provide an unbiased description of the overall population characteristics. Therefore, no weighting was applied to the dataset prior to analysis. Table 12 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Full frequency tables can be found in the appendices.

Table 12: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic	Percent	Number
Type of area		
Urban	20.0	41
Suburban	54.6	112
Rural	18.0	37
Small town	7.3	15
Gender		
Male	29.1	59
Female	70.9	144
Age		
18-24	3.9	8
25-34	15.7	32
35-44	12.7	26
45-54	19.1	39
55-64	25.5	52
65-74	12.7	26
75+	10.3	21
Education		
Less than high school	4.3	9
HS diploma or GED	8.7	8
Vocational, tech school	5.8	12
Some college	21.3	44
Bachelor's degree	29.5	61
Grad/prof degree	30.4	63
Employment status		
Working full-time	46.1	95
Working part-time	12.1	25
Looking for work	1.9	4
Homemaker	7.8	16
Retired	24.3	50
Student	6.3	13
Other	1.5	3

Demographic	Percent	Number
Hispanic/Latino		
Yes	2.0	4
No	98.0	199
Race		
Asian	2.0	4
African-American	17.2	35
White	79.3	161
Other or multiple	1.5	3
Marital status		
Married	57.8	118
Separated	2.0	4
Divorced	9.8	20
Widowed	9.8	20
Never married	20.6	42
Type of housing		
Single-family home	77.0	157
Duplex/townhouse	7.8	16
Apartment or condo	11.3	23
Mobile home/trailer	1.0	2
Other	2.9	6
Homeownership		
Own	77.1	158
Rent	22.9	47
Liberal or Conservative		
Extremely liberal	5.9	12
Liberal	25.4	52
Slightly liberal	13.2	27
Moderate	18.0	37
Slightly conservative	13.7	28
Conservative	22.9	47
Extremely conservative	1.0	2

Some may wonder if older respondents who are unlikely to have children in the public schools should be included in the analysis. All respondent age groups were included in the analysis because that is the standard approach for opinion surveys about education. However, it may be worth comparing responses to key questions across age groups. In the 2009 PDK/Gallup

survey, respondents aged 65 and older were less likely to name lack of funding as their first mention of the most important problems affecting schools – 18% of older respondents said so, compared to 28% to 38% of respondents in other age groups. Older respondents were also more likely to say that the quality of education today is not as good as it was for them. But the grades assigned by older respondents to schools in the community and schools nationally were very much in line with the grades assigned by respondents in other age groups, and the proportion of older respondents saying they did not know what grade to give their local schools was only 5.6%.

Along these lines, Loveless (1997) largely discounted a theory that a drop in the proportion of school-aged children in the population helped drive declining confidence in education because there were fewer respondents with a direct stake in public education.

In the survey reported in this dissertation, there were no statistically significant differences across age scores in the mean grades or BIMBY gap scores. Although it seems intuitive that support for and direct knowledge of public schools would decline among those who do not have children in public school, the qualitative portion of this research shows asking people to think about school quality often leads them to draw on their own memories of school experiences as well as the pride and connection they have with their community. These domains are likely to be quite active among older respondents. Older respondents are included in this analysis.

Overview of respondent opinions

The opinions expressed by respondents in the survey seem to parallel those that would come from most citizen surveys. Most respondents rated the quality of life in their communities highly (31% "excellent," 63% "good"), most of the respondents who were asked how often their communities' values are the same as their own said this was the case "most of the time" (46%) or "some of the time" (44%), and participation in various community-oriented activities or associations ranged from 16 to 43 percent.

Acquiescence was evident in the responses to the nurturant and strict statements about public schools, with eight of the ten items having a minimum of three-quarters of respondents agreeing at least "a little," and the other two items having 63 percent and 57 percent agreeing at least "a little."

About one-quarter of respondents (28.7%) said they changed schools twice, and similar proportions said they changed schools three times (26.6%) or four times (19.1%). Five respondents said they did not change schools, and the maximum report was nine changes.

As noted earlier, only 36 respondents (17.6%) said they currently have children in local public schools; only five respondents (2.5%) said they currently have children in parochial or private schools.

Key features of the responses

With 208 responses and 16 cells in the factorial design, one would expect an average of 13 cases in each cell of the design (referred to as "styles" in this dissertation). The number of cases in each style (i.e., the number of cases available to test four-way interactions) ranged from

seven to 18. This is not adequate to test four-way interactions, but that level of detail in the analysis was not proposed. The number of cases in either condition for each of the four experiments (i.e., the number of cases available to test main effects) ranged from 95 to 113, wholly adequate for analysis.

In addition to the factorial question-wording experiments, the three key variables in the survey data are questions that asked the respondent to rate public schools in the local area, the public school currently attended by the respondent's oldest child (who was attending public school), and public schools nationally. Due to the relatively small number of respondents and the oversampling of urban areas (which tend to have fewer households with children), only about one in six respondents (36 respondents) reported having children in public schools. This did not provide enough cases to test the effects of the factorial experiments on the BIMBY gaps involving schools attended by the respondent's child. Therefore, the key BIMBY gap analyzed in this project was the gap in ratings for public schools in the community and public schools nationally. About seventy-one percent of the respondents (n=148) had a valid value for this difference in ratings.

Despite the relatively small number of cases, some notable findings were obtained. Because of the exploratory nature of this research and the relatively small sample sizes, an alpha level of .10 was used for tests of significance.

Ratings of public schools

The BIMBY gap was replicated in this survey, although the percentage of respondents giving an A or B to community schools was higher than in the PDK/Gallup polls. Overall, nearly

eight in ten respondents (78.9%) gave their child's school an A or B, while about six in ten (61.0%) gave their local schools an A or B, and only one in six (16.6%) gave schools nationally an A or B. Rating categories were reverse-scored so that an A was worth five points, a B was worth four points and so on. See Table 13.

Table 13: The BIMBY effect in the dissertation survey

Ratings for…	Percent	Number	Mean
C5r: School attended by oldest child			
A or B	78.9	38	4.08
C or less	21.1	8	
C4r: Public schools in your community			
A or B	61.0	100	3.60
C or less	39.0	64	
C6r: Public schools in the nation as a whole			
A or B	16.6	28	2.86
C or less	83.4	141	

Analyses of one-directional paired-sample T-tests for the three mean ratings were all statistically significant (C4r vs. C5r, t=-2.890, p=.003; C4r vs. C6r, t=-9.895, p=.000; C4r vs. C6r, t=-8.474, p=.000).

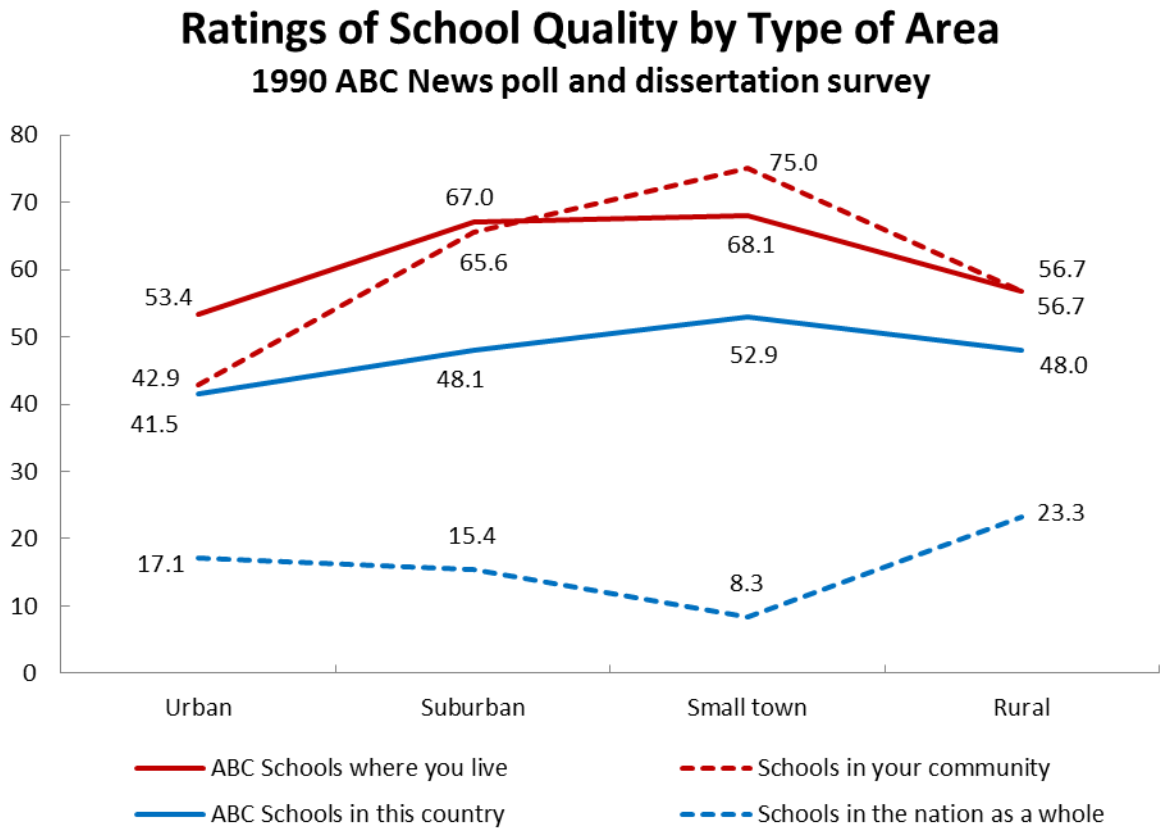
In line with data from the PDK/Gallup and ABC News data covered earlier, ratings for schools in the dissertation survey were higher for small town and suburban respondents, and lower for rural and urban respondents. See Table 14.

Table 14: Grades of A or B by type of living area

Gave rating of A or B for…	Percent	Number
C5r: School attended by oldest child		
Urban	83.3	5
Suburban	72.7	16
Rural	83.3	5
Small town	100.0	4
C4r: Public schools in your community		
Urban	42.9	12
Suburban	65.6	61
Rural	56.7	17
Small town	75.0	9
C6r: Public schools in the nation as a whole		
Urban	17.1	6
Suburban	15.4	14
Rural	23.3	7
Small town	8.3	1

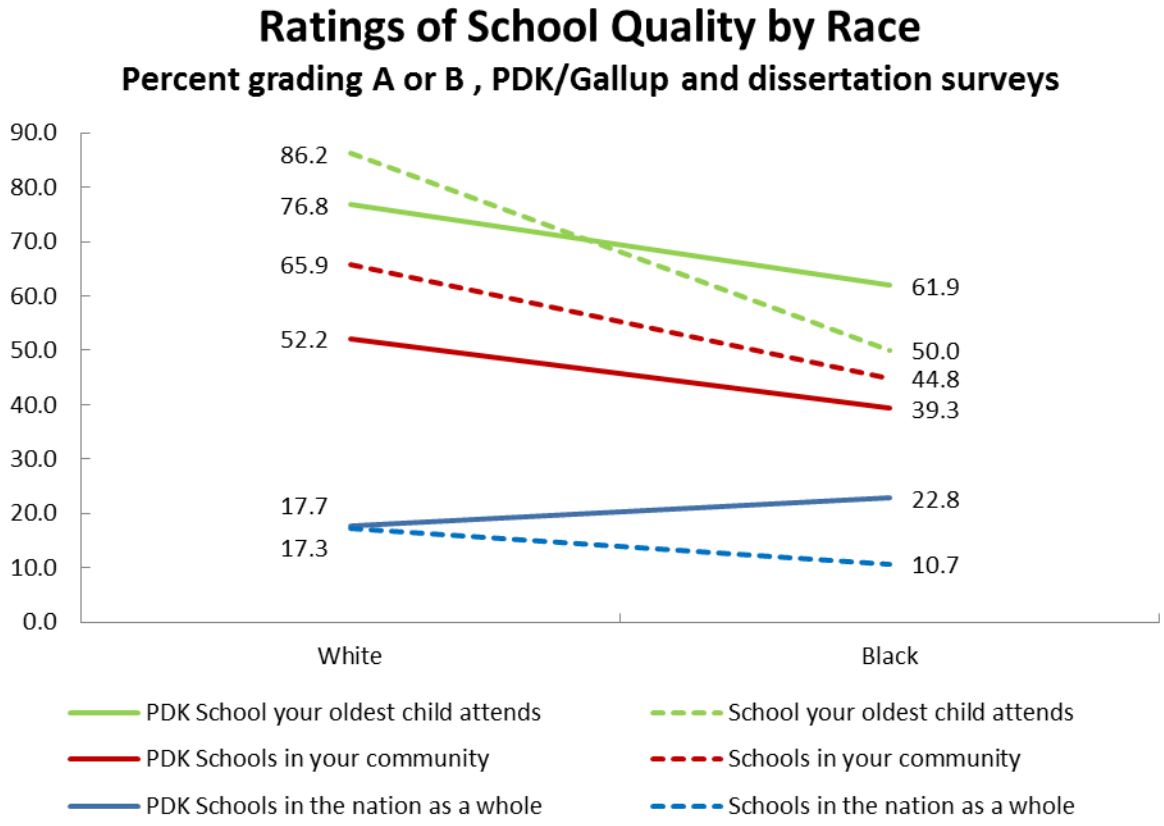
A more succinct picture is provided by adding the dissertation survey data to the plot of the ABC News data shown earlier in Figure 5. The dissertation survey ratings for local schools are very comparable to ABC News, but the ratings for schools in the nation as a whole are much lower. See Figure 12. Note that the ABC News poll ratings for the schools in the country are also much higher than ratings for public schools nationally in the PDF/Gallup series, where the percent giving an A or B to schools nationally ranges from 16 to 28 percent since 1981.

Figure 12: Ratings of school quality by type of area in the ABC News and dissertation surveys



The ratings of school quality given by whites and African-Americans in the dissertation survey have a structure similar to the results by race from the PDK/Gallup survey, as shown in Figure 13. Ratings are compared for white and African-American respondents only, because there were too few Hispanic respondents in the dissertation survey to support analysis.

Figure 13: Comparison of ratings by race, PDK/Gallup and dissertation surveys



Overall, despite the relatively small number of respondents to the dissertation survey, the structure of the data for key variables seems to be reasonably in line with two of the surveys used a benchmarks in this project.

The nurturant and strict frames

One of the experimental manipulations involved presenting a list of five agree/disagree statements about public schools in the qwuestionniare. There was a “nutrurant” list of statements and a “strict” list. The intent was to prime empathy in respondents who received the nurturant list, and to suppress empathy in those who receveid the strict list. Due to the relatively small size of the survey, there were no control conditions in this experiment (respondents who received no list, or respondents who received a mixture of nurturant and strict items). The lists are presented below.

Table 15: Questions in the nurturant frame

	Agree a lot	Agree moderately	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree moderately	Disagree a lot
a. Public education provides opportunity for all children in our country	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
b. Public education helps children discover their unique talents and abilities	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
c. Teachers in public schools all around the country care a great deal about the children they teach	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
d. Given the conditions in our society these days, public schools are doing a great job	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
e. Our nation's public schools do a great job preparing children to be contributing members of society	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*

Table 16: Questions in the strict frame

	Agree a lot	Agree moderately	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree moderately	Disagree a lot
a. More discipline for students is needed in public schools	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
b. Public schools should focus more on preparing students for work	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
c. Our nation's economic competitiveness depends on our public schools	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
d. Funding for public schools should remain primarily a local responsibility	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
e. Public schools could do a better job if politics affected them less	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*

These items were formulated by the researcher based on the literature reviews and the content of the qualitative interviews. Factor analysis on the nurturant scale resulted in only one dimension being extracted and Cronbach's alpha for the nurturant scale was .827. Factor analysis on the strict scale resulted in two dimensions – a "process" dimension containing items a, b, and e, and a "money" dimension containing items c and d. Not surprisingly, then, Cronbach's alpha on the strict scale was only .449.

Ratings of schools and question-wording experiments

The mean ratings for schools at the personal, local and national levels were compared using the MEANS command in SPSS with the analysis of variance (ANOVA) table as part of the output. Initial analysis of main effects in separate MEANS commands showed that the mean ratings often increased when the nurturant frame was asked as opposed to the strict frame, when the community attachment questions were asked, and when the questions about changing schools was asked. But only one weak effect was found to be statistically significant – mean ratings for schools nationally were significantly higher when the nurturant frame was part of the survey (F=2.726, *df*=1, *p*=.050 [one-tailed]). No other statistically significant results were obtained regarding mean ratings of schools and the experimental manipulations when considered separately from one another.

Ratings of schools and demographic variables

The mean ratings for schools did vary according to some of the demographic variables. Most notably, the ratings for public schools in the community were significantly related to the type of area in which the respondent lived (F=4.755, *df*=3, *p*=.003 [two-tailed]). Ratings were higher for respondents in suburban areas and small towns.

Also, ratings were lower for African-Americans than they were for whites when rating public schools in the community (F=6.804, *df*=1, *p*=.010 [two-tailed]) and those schools attended by the respondent's oldest child (F=4.794, *df*=1, *p*=.036 [two-tailed]). Ratings for public schools nationally were lower for African-Americans compared to whites, but they were not significantly different (F=1.019, *df*=1, *p*=.314 [two-tailed]).

School ratings did not vary systematically – and were not monotonic – when analyzed across a three-category variable that collapsed the liberal-conservative scale to "liberal," "moderate" and "conservative."

Hypothesis testing on BIMBY gaps

The preliminary exploration of the data described so far has concentrated on mean ratings offered by respondents. The seven hypotheses generated from the qualitative interviews were tested using gap scores – differences between ratings for schools three levels. For each respondent, three differences in ratings were created. First, the local rating was subtracted from the rating for the school attended by the oldest child (gapmy2local). Next, the national rating was subtracted from the rating for the school attended by the oldest child (gapmy2national). Finally, the national rating was subtracted from the local rating (gaplocal2national). The means across cases of these gap scores were analyzed in accordance with the hypotheses.

H1: Inclusion of explicit don't know options will reduce the BIMBY gaps in ratings of public schools.

The three gap scores were compared for those respondents who received the explicit don't know option and those who did not. The mean gap score for personal schools versus local scores decreased with the explicit don't know option, from 0.43 to 0.29, which is consistent with the hypothesis. The mean gap scores for personal schools and schools nationally actually increased with the don't know option (1.19 to 1.57), as did the gap scores for local schools and schools nationally (0.70 to 0.85). None of these differences was statistically significant. There is no evidence in this survey to support the hypothesis. See Table 17.

Table 17: Means and ANOVA table for the experiment regarding the don't know option

DK ratings experiment		gapmy2local	gapmy2nation	gaplocal2nation
DK asked	Mean	.2941	1.5714	.8475
	N	17	14	59
	Std. Deviation	.68599	1.01635	.96156
Not asked	Mean	.4286	1.1905	.6966
	N	21	21	89
	Std. Deviation	.87014	.87287	.90960
Total	Mean	.3684	1.3429	.7568
	N	38	35	148
	Std. Deviation	.78572	.93755	.93038

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gapmy2local * dkratings DK ratings experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.170	1	.170	.270	.607
	Within Groups		22.672	36	.630		
	Total		22.842	37			
gapmy2nation * dkratings DK ratings experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	1.219	1	1.219	1.403	.245
	Within Groups		28.667	33	.869		
	Total		29.886	34			
gaplocal2nation * dkratings DK ratings experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.807	1	.807	.932	.336
	Within Groups		126.436	146	.866		
	Total		127.243	147			

H2a: Respondents receiving the nurturant frame will show smaller BIMBY gaps than those receiving the strict frame, overall.

This hypothesis was not supported. Here again, the gap from personal schools to local schools actually increased, from 0.31 to 0.41, contrary to the hypothesis. The gaps from personal schools to schools nationally, and from local schools to schools nationally, both decreased, from

1.40 to 1.30 and 0.81 to 0.71, respectively. But none of these differences reached statistical significance. See Table 18.

Table 18: Means and ANOVA table for the experiment regarding empathy

Framing experiment		gapmy2local	gapmy2nation	gaplocal2nation
Nurturant	Mean	.4091	1.3000	.7089
	N	22	20	79
	Std. Deviation	.85407	.73270	.83439
Strict	Mean	.3125	1.4000	.8116
	N	16	15	69
	Std. Deviation	.70415	1.18322	1.03292
Total	Mean	.3684	1.3429	.7568
	N	38	35	148
	Std. Deviation	.78572	.93755	.93038

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gapmy2local * frame Framing experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.086	1	.086	.137	.714
	Within Groups		22.756	36	.632		
	Total		22.842	37			
gapmy2nation * frame Framing experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.086	1	.086	.095	.760
	Within Groups		29.800	33	.903		
	Total		29.886	34			
gaplocal2nation * frame Framing experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.389	1	.389	.447	.505
	Within Groups		126.855	146	.869		
	Total		127.243	147			

H2b: Respondents classified as nurturant on either frame will show smaller BIMBY gaps than those classified as strict on either frame.

A scale was created to categorize respondents as having either a "nurturant" or "strict" worldview. The scale was created by counting a response of "agree a little" or stronger to the five nurturant frame items as +1, and a response of "disagree a little" or stronger to the five nurturant frame items as -1. The signs on the scale values were reversed when handling responses to the strict frame. Therefore, larger positive numbers on the nurturant/strict scale indicated a more nurturant worldview, and larger negative numbers indicated a stricter worldview. For simplicity, the resulting scale was then collapsed into "nurturant" and strict categories depending on the valence of the scale values. There were no zero values for the scale.

Because of the high level of acquiescence to the nurturant and strict frames presented in the survey, classification of respondents as nurturant or strict in this manner was strongly related to which form of the questionnaire they received (χ^2=126.515, *df*=1, *p*=.000). See Table 19.

Table 19: Classification of respondents and the framing experiment

			Framing experiment		Total
			Nurturant	Strict	
nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Nurturant	Count	94	5	99
		% within Framing experiment	83.9%	5.3%	48.1%
	Strict	Count	18	89	107
		% within Framing experiment	16.1%	94.7%	51.9%
Total		Count	112	94	206
		% within Framing experiment	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The simplified nurturant/strict dichotomy created from the scale of responses to the nurturant or strict frames was used to test H2b. Once again, the gap for the ratings of personal schools versus local schools actually increases, contrary to the hypothesis (from 0.33 to 0.40). And once again, the gaps from personal schools to schools nationally, and from local schools to schools nationally, both decreased, from 1.48 to 1.22 and 0.76 to 0.75, respectively. But none of these differences reached statistical significance.

However, the classification of respondents as nurturant or strict did have a significant impact on some *mean ratings* of schools despite its close relationship to the framing experiment and its loss of statistical information due to collapsing a scale variable. Nurturant respondents gave significantly higher mean ratings to schools at the community and national levels than did strict respondents, and the higher mean ratings given by nurturant respondents for schools attended by the oldest child would also meet the alpha level of .10 in a one-tailed test of significance, although that would be a fairly modest threshold to achieve. It should also be noted that the nurturant scale was essentially a list of positive things people could say about schools, while the strict scale was a list of negative things people could say about schools. If the strict scale items were phrased in a more positive way, the results might have been different. See Table 20 and Table 21.

Table 20: Means table for “nurturant” and “strict” respondents

Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)		c4r Grade public schools in your community (reversed)	c5r Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed)	c6r Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed)	Gap: my2local	Gap: my2nation	Gap: local2nation
Nurturant	Mean	3.84	4.25	3.09	.4000	1.2222	.7500
	N	80	20	78	20	18	72
	Std. Dev.	.787	.786	.687	.88258	.73208	.78274
Strict	Mean	3.38	3.89	2.66	.3333	1.4706	.7632
	N	84	18	91	18	17	76
	Std. Dev.	1.040	.758	.833	.68599	1.12459	1.05664
Total	Mean	3.60	4.08	2.86	.3684	1.3429	.7568
	N	164	38	169	38	35	148
	Std. Dev.	.950	.784	.797	.78572	.93755	.93038

Table 21: ANOVA table for “nurturant” and “strict” respondents

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
c4r Grade public schools in your community (reversed) * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Between Groups	(Combined)	8.541	1	8.541	9.976	.002
	Within Groups		138.697	162	.856		
	Total		147.238	163			
c5r Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed) * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Between Groups	(Combined)	1.235	1	1.235	2.066	.159
	Within Groups		21.528	36	.598		
	Total		22.763	37			
c6r Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed) * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Between Groups	(Combined)	7.780	1	7.780	13.150	.000
	Within Groups		98.811	167	.592		
	Total		106.592	168			
gapmy2local * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Between Groups	(Combined)	.042	1	.042	.066	.798
	Within Groups		22.800	36	.633		
	Total		22.842	37			
gapmy2nation * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Between Groups	(Combined)	.539	1	.539	.606	.442
	Within Groups		29.346	33	.889		
	Total		29.886	34			
gaplocal2nation * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Between Groups	(Combined)	.006	1	.006	.007	.932
	Within Groups		127.237	146	.871		
	Total		127.243	147			

H3a: The number of schools attended by the respondent will not be related to the BIMBY gap (null hypothesis).

In order to use the number of schools attended as a continuous variable, bivariate correlation analyses were run between the number of schools attended and each gap score. No significant relationships were present between the number of schools attended and the gap scores, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. See Table 22.

Table 22: Means and correlation analysis for BIMBY gap scores and schools attended

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Number of times respondent changed schools	2.88	1.605	94
gapmy2local	.3684	.78572	38
gapmy2nation	1.3429	.93755	35
gaplocal2nation	.7568	.93038	148

		C1 Number of times respondent changed schools	Gap: my2local	Gap: my2nation	Gap: local2nation
C1 Number of times respondent changed schools	Pearson Correlation	1	.129	.073	.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.635	.789	.908
	N	94	16	16	68
Gap: my2local	Pearson Correlation	.129	1	.387*	-.453**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.635		.022	.006
	N	16	38	35	35
Gap: my2nation	Pearson Correlation	.073	.387*	1	.647**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.789	.022		.000
	N	16	35	35	35
Gap: local2nation	Pearson Correlation	.014	-.453**	.647**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.908	.006	.000	
	N	68	35	35	148

H3b: Respondents who are asked about their past school experiences will not show different BIMBY gaps compared to those who are not asked (null hypothesis).

Hypothesis H3a is more concerned with the content of the responses to the question about number of schools attended. Hypothesis H3b is concerned only with the presence or absence of the question as a possible trigger for personal memories of school that might affect ratings of schools.

When the number of schools attended was asked of the respondents, *mean ratings* for local schools and schools nationally went up, but mean ratings for the school attended by the oldest child went down. The gap score for local schools to schools nationally increased, but the gap scores decreased for the oldest child's school compared to local schools and compared to schools nationally. None of these differences was statistically significant. Therefore, asking respondents about the number of times they changed schools did not affect mean ratings or gap scores. See Table 23.

Table 23: Means and ANOVA table for the experiment regarding number of schools attended

Personal memories of school experiment		gapmy2local	gapmy2nation	gaplocal2nation
Asked	Mean	.2353	1.3125	.8028
	N	17	16	71
	Std. Deviation	.83137	1.13835	1.00881
Not asked	Mean	.4762	1.3684	.7143
	N	21	19	77
	Std. Deviation	.74960	.76089	.85620
Total	Mean	.3684	1.3429	.7568
	N	38	35	148
	Std. Deviation	.78572	.93755	.93038

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
gapmy2local * Personal memories of school experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.545	1	.545	.880	.354
	Within Groups		22.297	36	.619		
	Total		22.842	37			
gapmy2nation * Personal memories of school experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.027	1	.027	.030	.864
	Within Groups		29.859	33	.905		
	Total		29.886	34			
gaplocal2nation * Personal memories of school experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.290	1	.290	.333	.565
	Within Groups		126.954	146	.870		
	Total		127.243	147			

H4a: Respondents with greater community attachment will show larger BIMBY gaps.

The community attachment module consisted of three main parts. First, there were three items that asked how long the respondent had lived in the community, how often they felt the values of the community were similar to their own, and how they would describe the diversity of the community. The second section asked the respondent to indicate on a list of four community-oriented activities which ones they had participated in within the last twelve months. The third section was similar to the second – a list of three community-based meetings for which the respondents were to indicate which ones they had attended in the last twelve months.

Two measures of community attachment were created. First, similarly to the nurturant and strict scaling, a scale was created to tally the number of community-oriented activities and community-based meetings the respondent indicated being a part of. The maximum was seven, the minimum was zero.

This scale was correlated with gap scores. No significant relationships were observed. (No significant relationships were observed when correlated with mean ratings, either.) See Table 24.

Table 24: Means and correlation analysis for BIMBY gap scores and community attachment

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Community attachment scale	2.0619	1.77843	97
gapmy2local	.3684	.78572	38
gapmy2nation	1.3429	.93755	35
gaplocal2nation	.7568	.93038	148

		comattach Community attachment scale	Gap: my2local	Gap: my2nation	Gap: local2nation
comattach Community attachment scale	Pearson Correlation	1	-.444	-.042	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.149	.907	.620
	N	97	12	10	63
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.688	.677	.000	.000
	N	75	35	35	148
Gap: my2local	Pearson Correlation	-.444	1	.387*	-.453**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.149		.022	.006
	N	12	38	35	35
Gap: my2nation	Pearson Correlation	-.042	.387*	1	.647**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.907	.022		.000
	N	10	35	35	35
Gap: local2nation	Pearson Correlation	.064	-.453**	.647**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.620	.006	.000	
	N	63	35	35	148

The other three items in the community attachment module had more to do with community homogeneity and the respondent's sense of self as being in an ingroup or outgroup. Each of these three items was an ordinal variable with at least four categories, and these items were only asked of about half the respondents. This led to some sparse data in these three

community attachment variables. Therefore, each was correlated against the three school ratings and three gap scores. Length of time living in the community was not significantly correlated with school ratings or gap scores, nor was the self-report of the diversity of the community. But the respondent's sense of how often the community's values reflected their own was significantly correlated with the grade given to the school attended by the oldest child, and to both gap scores involving the school attended by the oldest child. However, ratings for the child's school *increased* as the respondent's sense of being in step with the community's values *decreased*. This is contrary to the hypothesis, but this finding must be taken as extremely tentative due to the small number of cases that received this module and who had children in local public schools (n=12). See Table 25.

Table 25: Means and correlation analysis for BIMBY gap scores and community values

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
How often do you feel that your community's values are the same as your own values?	2.59	.708	87
gapmy2local	.3684	.78572	38
gapmy2nation	1.3429	.93755	35
gaplocal2nation	.7568	.93038	148

		A3 How often do you feel that your community's values are the same as your own values?	Gap: my2local	Gap: my2nation	Gap: local2nation
A3 How often do you feel that your community's values are the same as your own values?	Pearson Correlation	1	.884**	.645*	-.163
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.044	.225
	N	87	12	10	57
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.880	.677	.000	.000
	N	66	35	35	148
Gap: my2local	Pearson Correlation	.884**	1	.387*	-.453**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.022	.006
	N	12	38	35	35
Gap: my2nation	Pearson Correlation	.645*	.387*	1	.647**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.022		.000
	N	10	35	35	35
Gap: local2nation	Pearson Correlation	-.163	-.453**	.647**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.225	.006	.000	
	N	57	35	35	148

Overall, hypothesis H4a does not seem to be supported.

H4b: Respondents who receive this module will show no differences from those who do not receive it (null hypothesis).

As with hypotheses H3a and H3b, hypothesis H4a related to the substance of the experimental module and hypothesis H4b relates to the mere presence or absence of the module as a trigger to the respondent.

A means analysis and ANOVA table showed no statistically significant differences in mean ratings or gap scores, supporting (failing to reject) the null hypothesis. See Table 26 and Table 27.

Table 26: Means for the experiment regarding community attachment

Attachment experiment		Grade public schools in your community (reversed)	Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed)	Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed)	Gap: my2local	Gap: my2nation	Gap: local2nation
Asked	Mean	3.56	4.25	2.95	.5000	1.2000	.6349
	N	73	12	75	12	10	63
	Std. Deviation	1.000	.622	.769	1.00000	.78881	.88539
Not asked	Mean	3.64	4.00	2.79	.3077	1.4000	.8471
	N	91	26	94	26	25	85
	Std. Deviation	.913	.849	.815	.67937	1.00000	.95750
Total	Mean	3.60	4.08	2.86	.3684	1.3429	.7568
	N	164	38	169	38	35	148
	Std. Deviation	.950	.784	.797	.78572	.93755	.93038

Table 27: ANOVA table for the experiment regarding community attachment

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
c4r Grade public schools in your community (reversed) * Attachment experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.232	1	.232	.256	.614
	Within Groups		147.006	162	.907		
	Total		147.238	163			
c5r Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed) * Attachment experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.513	1	.513	.830	.368
	Within Groups		22.250	36	.618		
	Total		22.763	37			
c6r Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed) * Attachment experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	1.060	1	1.060	1.678	.197
	Within Groups		105.531	167	.632		
	Total		106.592	168			
gapmy2local * Attachment experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.304	1	.304	.485	.491
	Within Groups		22.538	36	.626		
	Total		22.842	37			
gapmy2nation * Attachment experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	.286	1	.286	.319	.576
	Within Groups		29.600	33	.897		
	Total		29.886	34			
gaplocal2nation * Attachment experiment	Between Groups	(Combined)	1.628	1	1.628	1.893	.171
	Within Groups		125.615	146	.860		
	Total		127.243	147			

Assessing the full factorial design

For the most part, these tests of the hypotheses are essentially separate tests of main effects in the factorial design without accounting for the other factors in the design. They also do not take into account the potential influences of demographic variables such as the type of area in which the respondent lives and the race of the respondent – two demographic variables that are related to ratings of school quality in this survey and in other surveys. Therefore, the full factorial ANOVA was explored with some added demographic factors and covariates for each of the three mean ratings, as well as the gap score comparing ratings for public schools in the community and public schools nationally. There were too few respondents with children in the local public schools to assess the factorial design on gap scores comparing personal schools to local school and personal schools to schools nationally.

After some exploration of the data, the researcher established a default model that would include the four experimental factors (attachment, frame, memories and dkratings), the type of area in which the respondent lived (d1), the collapsed self-description of liberal-conservative leanings (d11cat), the collapsed nuturant-strict scale (nscat) and the race of the respondent for whites and African-Americans (racecat). The respondent's rating of the quality of life in their area was treated as a covariate in three of the models (a1). See Table 28.

Table 28: Fully specified ANOVA model

Factors	**Categories**
ATTACHMENT Was the attachment module asked?	1 Asked 2 Not asked
FRAME: Was the nurturant or strict frame presented?	1 Nurturant 2 Strict
MEMORIES: Was the respondent asked how many times they changed schools?	1 Asked 2 Not asked
DKRATINGS: Was the respondent given an explicit don't know option for school ratings?	1 DK given 2 DK not given
D1: Type of area in which the respondent lives	1 Urban 2 Suburban 3 Rural 4 Small town
D11CAT: Liberal or conservative? (Recoded from a 7-point scale)	1 Liberal 2 Moderate 3 Conservative
NSCAT: Nurturant or strict answers to the frame presented in the frame experiment?	1 Nurturant 2 Strict
RACECAT: Race of respondent (for whites and African-Americans only)	1 White 2 African-American
A1: Rating of the quality of life in respondent's community [A1 was treated as a covariate in two analyses]	1 Excellent 2 Good 3 Only fair 4 Poor
Dependent variables	
C4r: Grade for public schools in your community	A=5 to F=1
C5r: Grade for the public school your oldest child attends	
C6r: Grade for public schools nationally	
Gaplocal2national: Gap score between the grade for public schools in your community and the grade for public schools nationally	Max. range -4 to 4 Ranges -2 to 3 in data

All models were run in IBM SPSS Statistics version 19 using the ANOVA command with the /METHOD=EXPERIMENTAL subcommand. The researcher evaluated the fully specified model in each case and subtracted terms based on significance, presence in two-way

interactions and overall goodness of fit of the model. The intent was to find the most parsimonious model for each of the three ratings and the one gap score that was analyzed. Because of the large number of cells in these models and the relatively small number of cases, the results should be considered to be tentative.

ANOVA model for ratings of local public schools

The fully specified model for ratings of local schools (C4R) had an R Squared of .240. After keeping just FRAME, D1, NSCAT and A1 (as a covariate), the R Squared held at .223 and all main effects were statistically significant. See Table 29 and Table 30.

Table 29: Final means table for the model for ratings of local public schools

Framing experiment	Type of area	Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Grade public schools in your community (reversed)	
			Mean	N
Nurturant	Urban	Nurturant	3.33	12
		Strict	2.50	4
		Total	3.13	16
	Suburban	Nurturant	4.06	35
		Strict	2.71	7
		Total	3.83	42
	Rural	Nurturant	3.67	15
		Strict	2.00	1
		Total	3.56	16
	Small town	Nurturant	3.83	6
		Strict	5.00	1
		Total	4.00	7
	Total	Nurturant	3.82	68
		Strict	2.77	13
		Total	3.65	81
Strict	Urban	Nurturant	3.00	1
		Strict	3.00	8
		Total	3.00	9
	Suburban	Nurturant	5.00	2
		Strict	3.59	41
		Total	3.65	43
	Rural	Nurturant	4.00	1
		Strict	3.67	12
		Total	3.69	13
	Small town	Nurturant		0
		Strict	4.20	5
		Total	4.20	5
	Total	Nurturant	4.25	4
		Strict	3.58	66
		Total	3.61	70

Total	Urban	Nurturant	3.31	13
		Strict	2.83	12
		Total	3.08	25
	Suburban	Nurturant	4.11	37
		Strict	3.46	48
		Total	3.74	85
	Rural	Nurturant	3.69	16
		Strict	3.54	13
		Total	3.62	29
	Small town	Nurturant	3.83	6
		Strict	4.33	6
		Total	4.08	12
	Total	Nurturant	3.85	72
		Strict	3.44	79
		Total	3.64[a]	151

a. Grand Mean

b. Grade public schools in your community (reversed) by Framing experiment, Type of area, Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories) with Overall, how how would you rate the quality of life in your community?

Table 30: Final ANOVA model for ratings of local public schools

c4r Grade public schools in your community (reversed)		Experimental Method				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Covariates	A1 Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in your community?	11.920	1	11.920	17.362	.000
Main Effects	(Combined)	17.351	5	3.470	5.054	.000
	frame Framing experiment	3.784	1	3.784	5.512	.020
	D1 Type of area	8.251	3	2.750	4.006	.009
	nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	8.808	1	8.808	12.829	.000
2-Way Interactions	(Combined)	8.539	7	1.220	1.777	.097
	frame Framing experiment * D1 Type of area	5.009	3	1.670	2.432	.068
	frame Framing experiment * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.694	1	.694	1.011	.316
	D1 Type of area * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	6.925	3	2.308	3.362	.021
3-Way Interactions	frame Framing experiment * D1 Type of area * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.470	2	.235	.342	.711
Model		38.279	15	2.552	3.717	.000
Residual		92.687	135	.687		
Total		130.967	150	.873		

R-squared=.223

The results indicate that when respondents rate the public schools in their community, their overall ratings of their community (A1) and their general nurturant or strict world view (NSCAT) are important. In addition, the type of area they live in (D1) is important.

Also, there are two interaction effects. First, respondents who lived in urban or suburban areas and who received the nurturant frame in the framing (empathy) experiment gave higher ratings for their local schools than did their counterparts who received the strict frame, and those who received the strict frame and who lived in rural areas or small towns gave higher ratings to their local schools than did their counterparts who received the nurturant frame. See Table 31.

Table 31: Type of area and framing experiment: interaction

		Framing experiment			
		Nurturant		Strict	
		Grade public schools in your community (reversed)		Grade public schools in your community (reversed)	
		Mean	Valid N	Mean	Valid N
Type of area	1 Urban	3.18	17	2.91	11
	2 Suburban	3.79	48	3.64	45
	3 Rural	3.41	17	3.69	13
	4 Small town	4.00	7	4.20	5
Total		3.62	89	3.58	74

In the second interaction effect, nurturant respondents (NSCAT) in suburban areas gave higher mean ratings to their local schools than did strict respondents, as did nurturant respondents in urban areas and rural areas. But nurturant respondents in small towns gave lower mean ratings to their local schools compared to strict respondents in small towns. Note that these findings must be considered tentative due to small numbers of cases. See Table 32.

Table 32: Nurturant or strict world view and type of area: interaction

		Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)			
		Nurturant		Strict	
		Grade public schools in your community (reversed)		Grade public schools in your community (reversed)	
		Mean	Valid N	Mean	Valid N
Type of area	1 Urban	3.36	14	2.79	14
	2 Suburban	4.05	43	3.44	50
	3 Rural	3.69	16	3.36	14
	4 Small town	3.83	6	4.33	6
Total		3.84	79	3.38	84

ANOVA model for ratings of schools attended by the oldest child

The fully specified model for ratings of schools attended by the oldest child, or "personal schools" (C5R) was not viable because there were too few cases who reported having children in the local public schools. However, a model was constructed by specifying ratings of the quality of life in the community (A1) as the only factor, and this simple model yielded an R Squared of .215. See Table 33.

Table 33: Final means and ANOVA model for ratings of school attended by the oldest child

Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in your community?	Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed)	
	Mean	N
Excellent	4.54	13
Good	3.79	24
Only fair		0
Poor		0
Total	4.05[a]	37

a. Grand Mean

b. Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed) by Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in your community?

c5r Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed)		Experimental Method				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Main Effects	A1 Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in your community?	4.703	1	4.703	9.576	.004
Model		4.703	1	4.703	9.576	.004
Residual		17.189	35	.491		
Total		21.892	36	.608		

R-squared=.215

The results here echo the findings from Bushaw & Lopez (2011), emphasizing that opinions about local and personal schools are closely tied to pride in one's community.

ANOVA model for ratings of public schools nationally

The fully specified model for ratings of local schools (C6R) had an R Squared of .151. After keeping just ATTACHMENT, FRAME, DKRATINGS and NSCAT, the R Squared was

.111 and two of the four main effects (FRAME and NSCAT) were statistically significant. The other two factors were kept in the model because they were involved in a two-way interaction that was statistically significant. See Table 34 and Table 35.

Table 34: Means for the final ANOVA model for ratings of public schools nationally

Attachment experiment	Framing experiment	DK ratings experiment	Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed)	
				Mean	N
Asked	Nurturant	DK asked	Nurturant	3.12	17
			Strict	2.60	5
			Total	3.00	22
		Not asked	Nurturant	3.05	20
			Strict	2.20	5
			Total	2.88	25
		Total	Nurturant	3.08	37
			Strict	2.40	10
			Total	2.94	47
	Strict	DK asked	Nurturant		0
			Strict	3.08	12
			Total	3.08	12
		Not asked	Nurturant	4.00	1
			Strict	2.80	15
			Total	2.88	16
		Total	Nurturant	4.00	1
			Strict	2.93	27
			Total	2.96	28
	Total	DK asked	Nurturant	3.12	17
			Strict	2.94	17
			Total	3.03	34
		Not asked	Nurturant	3.10	21
			Strict	2.65	20
			Total	2.88	41
		Total	Nurturant	3.11	38

			Strict	2.78	37
			Total	2.95	75
Not asked	Nurturant	DK asked	Nurturant	2.93	15
			Strict	2.33	3
			Total	2.83	18
		Not asked	Nurturant	3.19	21
			Strict	2.00	2
			Total	3.09	23
		Total	Nurturant	3.08	36
			Strict	2.20	5
			Total	2.98	41
	Strict	DK asked	Nurturant	2.50	2
			Strict	2.30	23
			Total	2.32	25
		Not asked	Nurturant	3.50	2
			Strict	2.88	26
			Total	2.93	28
		Total	Nurturant	3.00	4
			Strict	2.61	49
			Total	2.64	53
	Total	DK asked	Nurturant	2.88	17
			Strict	2.31	26
			Total	2.53	43
		Not asked	Nurturant	3.22	23
			Strict	2.82	28
			Total	3.00	51
		Total	Nurturant	3.08	40
			Strict	2.57	54
			Total	2.79	94
Total	Nurturant	DK asked	Nurturant	3.03	32
			Strict	2.50	8
			Total	2.93	40
		Not asked	Nurturant	3.12	41
			Strict	2.14	7
			Total	2.98	48

	Total	Nurturant	3.08	73
		Strict	2.33	15
		Total	2.95	88
Strict	DK asked	Nurturant	2.50	2
		Strict	2.57	35
		Total	2.57	37
	Not asked	Nurturant	3.67	3
		Strict	2.85	41
		Total	2.91	44
	Total	Nurturant	3.20	5
		Strict	2.72	76
		Total	2.75	81
Total	DK asked	Nurturant	3.00	34
		Strict	2.56	43
		Total	2.75	77
	Not asked	Nurturant	3.16	44
		Strict	2.75	48
		Total	2.95	92
	Total	Nurturant	3.09	78
		Strict	2.66	91
		Total	2.86[a]	169

a. Grand Mean

b. Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed) by Attachment experiment, Framing experiment, DK ratings experiment, Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)

Table 35: Final ANOVA model for ratings of public schools nationally

c6r Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed)		Experimental Method				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Main Effects	(Combined)	11.861	4	2.965	5.225	.001
	attachment Attachment experiment	1.168	1	1.168	2.058	.153
	frame Framing experiment	2.123	1	2.123	3.740	.055
	dkratings DK ratings experiment	1.170	1	1.170	2.061	.153
	nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	7.978	1	7.978	14.059	.000
2-Way Interactions	(Combined)	6.224	6	1.037	1.828	.097
	attachment Attachment experiment * frame Framing experiment	.236	1	.236	.415	.520
	attachment Attachment experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment	2.788	1	2.788	4.912	.028
	attachment Attachment experiment * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.004	1	.004	.007	.932
	frame Framing experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment	1.199	1	1.199	2.113	.148
	frame Framing experiment * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.193	1	.193	.339	.561
	dkratings DK ratings experiment * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.843	1	.843	1.485	.225
3-Way Interactions	(Combined)	1.114	4	.278	.491	.743
	attachment Attachment experiment * frame Framing experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment	.433	1	.433	.764	.384
	attachment Attachment experiment * frame Framing experiment * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.356	1	.356	.628	.429
	attachment Attachment experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.046	1	.046	.081	.777
	frame Framing experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment * nscat Nurturant or Strict Answers (categories)	.014	1	.014	.025	.874
Model		19.199	14	1.371	2.417	.004
Residual		87.393	154	.567		
Total		106.592	168	.634		

R-squared=.111

The results indicate, of course, less explanatory power than the previous models. Opinions about local context and sense of place – ratings of quality of life in the community and self-reports of the type of community the respondent lives in – no longer have a place in the model. The respondent's general world view stays in the model, though. Perhaps not unexpectedly when investigating opinions that may be held with somewhat less intensity, the experiment of offering an explicit don't know option remains in the model.

There is one interaction effect – when the attachment module was asked, those who received the explicit don't know option for school ratings gave higher ratings for schools nationally than did those who did not receive the explicit don't know option (3.03 to 2.88, n=34 and 41, respectively). But the opposite was true when the attachment module was not asked – those who received the explicit don't know option gave lower ratings to schools nationally (2.53 to 3.00, n=43 and 51, respectively). Again, this finding must be considered tentative due to the small numbers of cases involved. See Table 36.

Table 36: Attachment experiment by explicit don't know experiment: interaction

		DK ratings experiment			
		DK asked		Not asked	
		Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed)		Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed)	
		Mean	Valid N	Mean	Valid N
Attachment experiment	1 Asked	3.03	34	2.88	41
	2 Not asked	2.53	43	3.00	51
Total		2.75	77	2.95	92

ANOVA model for the BIMBY gap between ratings of local public schools and public schools nationally

The fully specified model for the BIMBY gap between ratings of local public schools and public schools nationally (GAPLOCAL2NATIONAL) had only 128 cases in it due to item nonresponse in the survey, primarily to the ratings questions for local schools and school nationally. The fully specified model had an R Squared of .236. After keeping ATTACHMENT, FRAME, MEMORIES, DKRATINGS, D1 and A1 as a covariate, the R Squared was .216 and two of the five main effects (DKRATINGS and D1) as well as the covariate (A1) were statistically significant. The other three factors were kept in the model because they were involved in two-way interactions that were statistically significant. The means table for the model is extensive – see Appendix D for that table. See Table 37 for the ANOVA results.

Table 37: Final ANOVA model for ratings gap between local and national schools

gaplocal2nation		Experimental Method				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Covariates	A1 Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in your community?	8.981	1	8.981	12.604	.001
Main Effects	(Combined)	15.802	7	2.257	3.168	.004
	attachment Attachment experiment	.450	1	.450	.631	.429
	frame Framing experiment	.323	1	.323	.453	.502
	memories Personal memories of school experiment	1.145	1	1.145	1.606	.208
	dkratings DK ratings experiment	2.737	1	2.737	3.841	.053
	D1 Type of area	11.957	3	3.986	5.593	.001
2-Way Interactions	(Combined)	13.026	18	.724	1.016	.449
	attachment Attachment experiment * frame Framing experiment	.245	1	.245	.343	.559
	attachment Attachment experiment * memories Personal memories of school experiment	1.374	1	1.374	1.928	.168
	attachment Attachment experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment	2.172	1	2.172	3.048	.084
	attachment Attachment experiment * D1 Type of area	.156	3	.052	.073	.974
	frame Framing experiment * memories Personal memories of school experiment	.271	1	.271	.381	.539
	frame Framing experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment	.317	1	.317	.445	.506
	frame Framing experiment * D1 Type of area	4.936	3	1.645	2.309	.080
	memories Personal memories of school experiment * dkratings DK ratings experiment	1.947	1	1.947	2.732	.101
	memories Personal memories of school experiment * D1 Type of area	.430	3	.143	.201	.895
	dkratings DK ratings experiment * D1 Type of area	1.581	3	.527	.740	.531
Model		37.809	26	1.454	2.041	.006
Residual		76.961	108	.713		
Total		114.770	134	.856		

R-squared=.216

The results may not be surprising given that the gap score involves the ratings for local public schools – which we have seen are based on local context – and the ratings for public schools nationally, which seem to be based on more global attitudes or world views. The type of area (D1) and opinions about the quality of life in the area (A1) seem to retain their significance in this model, presumably due to their influence over the local ratings. The experiment about offering explicit don't know options also has significance in this model, presumably due to some influence over ratings of public schools nationally.

There are two weak interaction effects, which may be spurious due to the small number of cases available for analysis here. The first is an interaction between the attachment experiment and the explicit don't know experiment. Here, respondents who received the community attachment module have reduced gaps when they are given explicit don't know options, but essentially the same gaps when there are not explicit don't know options on the ratings questions. See Table 38.

Table 38: Attachment experiment by explicit don't know experiment: interaction

Gap: local2nation		DK ratings experiment			
		DK asked		Not asked	
		Mean	Valid N	Mean	Valid N
Attachment experiment	1 Asked	.54	24	.69	39
	2 Not asked	1.06	35	.70	50
Total		.85	59	.70	89

The second weak interaction effect is a relationship between the framing experiment and the type of area in which the respondent lives. Here, the gap score between the local and national schools decreases for urban respondents who received the strict frame, to the point where local schools actually score lower than national schools. But the gap score increases for respondents in all other types of areas when they receive the strict frame. In fact, this decrease in gap scores in all areas but urban areas when presented with the nurturant frame fits hypothesis H2a (respondents receiving the nurturant frame will show smaller BIMBY gaps than those receiving the strict frame, overall.) See Table 39.

Table 39: Framing experiment and type of area: interaction

Gap: local2nation		Framing experiment			
		Nurturant		Strict	
		Mean	Valid N	Mean	Valid N
Type of area	1 Urban	.40	15	-.18	11
	2 Suburban	.86	43	1.00	40
	3 Rural	.40	15	.77	13
	4 Small town	1.20	5	1.60	5
Total		.71	78	.81	69

Summary

The dataset used in this analysis was adequate for most purposes. The BIMBY gaps in ratings between personal, local and national schools were replicated. Demographic differences in school ratings by the type of area in which the respondent lives and the race of the respondent also paralleled those seen in the benchmark surveys used in secondary analysis in this dissertation – PDK/Gallup 2009 and ABC News 1990. Other data from the dissertation survey

seemed to have face validity. The survey dataset appears to be useful for analysis of the BIMBY effect. The results will be interpreted and discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Interpretation and Discussion

Overview

The survey dataset performed reasonably well, although some analyses were impossible due to the relatively small number of completed surveys. The BIMBY gap existed in the survey data, and survey ratings among key demographic subgroups in the dissertation survey lined up reasonably well with the 1990 ABC News Education Poll and the 2009 PDK/Gallup Annual Education Survey.

The experimental manipulations failed to produce any of the hypothesized effects, and they failed either to exacerbate or reduce the BIMBY gaps as anticipated. However, they did affect the mean ratings of schools in some situations.

More comprehensive ANOVA modeling of the experimental manipulations plus selected demographic variables produced more interesting results. These analyses indicated that different criteria or contexts do in fact influence ratings for schools at different levels. These findings are in line with the basic thrust of the theory underlying this study and with some of the literature about the issue. But the results do not clearly explain the BIMBY gaps. Table 40 summarizes the results for the formal hypotheses tested in this study. Table 41 summarizes the results of the comprehensive ANOVA modeling.

Table 40: Summary of findings regarding the research hypotheses

Hypothesis	**Finding**
H1: Inclusion of explicit don't know options will reduce the BIMBY gaps in ratings of public schools.	Unsupported. Gap scores moved in different directions.
H2a: Respondents receiving the nurturant frame will show smaller BIMBY gaps than those receiving the strict frame, overall.	Unsupported. Gap scores moved in different directions.
H2b: Respondents classified as nurturant on either frame will show smaller BIMBY gaps than those classified as strict on either frame.	Unsupported. Gap scores moved in different directions, but nurturant respondents reported higher mean ratings for schools.
H3a: The number of schools attended by the respondent will not be related to the BIMBY gap (null hypothesis).	Supported (failed to reject the null hypothesis).
H3b: Respondents who are asked about their past school experiences will not show different BIMBY gaps compared to those who are not asked (null hypothesis).	Unsupported. Gap scores moved in different directions. Mean ratings moved in different directions.
H4a: Respondents with greater community attachment will show larger BIMBY gaps.	Unsupported. Tentative finding that school ratings increase as feeling that the community's values reflect the respondent's own values decreases, contrary to hypothesis.
H4b: Respondents who receive this module will show no differences from those who do not receive it (null hypothesis).	Supported (failed to reject the null hypothesis).

Table 41: Summary of findings regarding the comprehensive ANOVA modeling

Dependent variable	Significant factors
C4r Grade public schools in your community ("local schools") R Squared=.223	A1 Rate quality of life in your community
	FRAME Framing (empathy) experiment
	D1 Type of area
	NSCAT Nurturant or strict world view
	FRAME * D1
	D1 * NSCAT
C5r Grade public school your oldest child attends ("personal schools") R Squared=.215	A1 Rate quality of life in your community (too few cases to have multiple factors)
C6r Grade public schools in the nation as a whole ("schools nationally") R Squared=.111	FRAME Framing (empathy) experiment
	NSCAT Nurturant or strict world view
	ATTACH Community attachment experiment * DKRATINGS Explicit don't know experiment
Gaplocal2nation Ratings gap between rating for local schools and schools nationally R Squared=.216	A1 Rate quality of life in your community
	DKRATINGS (Explicit don't know experiment)
	D1 Type of area
	ATTACH Community attachment experiment * DKRATINGS Explicit don't know experiment
	FRAME Framing (empathy) experiment * D1 Type of area

Interpretation

If item A1 (Rate quality of life in your community) is taken as a proxy for pride in one's community, then its presence in all three models dealing with local or personal schools corroborates the qualitative data from the 2011 PDK/Gallup Annual Education Survey as well as the information gleaned from the qualitative interviews conducted for this study. That is, many survey respondents rate their local or personal schools highly because they take pride in their communities – in which the local and personal schools are rooted.

The framing (empathy) experiment looms large in the modeling at the local and national levels. Respondents who received the nurturant scale gave higher ratings for schools at all levels compared to those who received the strict scale. In retrospect, however, the strict scale did not work well as a scale and it was more negatively worded. The results for the framing (empathy) experiment may simply reflect more positive priming from the nurturant scale.

The nurturant or strict world view of the respondent also looms large in the modeling at the local and national levels. This attribute was created from the responses to the nurturant and strict scales, so the weaknesses of the nurturant snd strict scales may create weaknesses in this measure of world view. However, it is interesting to note that world view is a statistically significant factor in ratings at both the local and national levels.

The experiments regarding community attachment and the explicit don't know response created interaction effects in two different models – for grades of public schools nationally and for gap scores between local schools and schools nationally. In both cases, when the explicit don't know choices are not offered, ratings or gap scores are very similar regardless of whether the attachment module was asked. But when the explicit don't know choices are offered, those who were not asked the attachment module become outliers for mean ratings of schools nationally and for gap scores between local schools and schools nationally. It is unclear what this means or why it should be so. If the finding can be replicated it may be worth pursuing further.

This study was based on four possible factors that influence ratings of public schools and the BIMBY gaps between those ratings: lack of information, framing/empathy/insider and outsider perspective, past experience with public schools, and community attachment. There

seems to be good support for at least three of these themes as key factors in ratings of school quality – lack of information, framing/empathy/insider and outsider perspective, and community attachment. The main hypotheses developed for this study were not supported by the data, but ANOVA modeling of the data and some of the interaction effects provide some support for the ideas underlying these three main hypotheses.

Discussion

The "insider" and "outsider" perspectives on school quality that were derived from the qualitative phase of the study provide a more detailed picture of how people think about school quality in different situations. They relate strongly to the main finding from the study – that people know their local schools in specific, qualitative ways, and they know schools nationally in general, quantitative ways. These very different ways of knowing would seem to be implicated in BIMBY somehow. Ratings for local schools are strongly held and anchored to community contexts such as pride in the community and some objective assessment of quality (as indicated by differences in ratings among respondents in communities of different types). Ratings for schools nationally are more weakly held and perhaps more heuristically based or subject to ingroup/outgroup perceptions. This finding is confirmed by data obtained in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study. The insider and outsider perspectives need to be a part of future study of the BIMBY effect.

One noteworthy feature of the insider perspective is that it focuses on inputs into the education process, while the outsider perspective focuses on outputs. Could it be that perceptions of local and personal schools are more positive because somehow they reflect the hopes and

dreams of exceptional futures that we all have (or had) for ourselves or our children when we embark on our journeys through public education? And perceptions of schools nationally focus on the inevitable failures to be exceptional that confront most of us at the end of the journey? Are "local" ratings essentially future-oriented and aspirational, while "distant" ratings are retrospective assessments of the harsh realities of the herd and the bell curve? This notion would seem to represent the opposite of Loveless's (1997) sense that ratings for schools nationally use an idealistic frame of reference while ratings for local schools are based on a relatively pragmatic frame bounded by practical realities and limitations. If this idea were accurate, it would have to work for other topics in which BIMBY is also found.

Alternatively, the finding about the insider and outsider perspectives might appear to support Loveless (1997) and Davidson (1979) when they contend that ratings of objects at these different levels are different because the objects themselves are different. "The public judges schools and systems differently because they *are* different" (Loveless, 1997, p. 142).

But it does not appear in this study that local schools and schools nationally are two different ratings objects. It seems more accurate to say that people use different criteria or heuristics to judge schools (and other things) at the local and national levels. Even people who are outsiders to their local schools are insiders in their communities, and it seems that attitudes about the community are very closely related to attitudes about the quality of the community's schools. Attitudes about schools nationally appear to be more loosely held (thus more affected by the factorial experiments) and more closely related to personal world views or more abstract criteria.

However, Lakoff (2007) might argue that the qualitative ways of knowing local schools – based as they are in direct sensory input – create neural networks full of empathy for local schools. Lack of such qualitative input would create neural networks activated by the concept of "schools nationally" that would lack empathy for those schools. Thus, the way of knowing might be more important than the information content that is absorbed about schools at different levels. If having empathy results in expressing more favorable opinions about schools – as this study indicates it does – then greater empathy for local schools might produce the BIMBY gap. The problem in this study was that presenting the nurturant scale induced higher ratings for schools at all levels, thus preserving the BIMBY gap.

Smith (1998) proposed several possible explanations for BIMBY. Few of them, if any at all, can safely be eliminated as a result of this study.

Whether the BIMBY effect is something so elemental that it cannot be explained, just described, is open to question. But recall that at one time, questionnaire wording effects were merely cataloged, not understood. Now they are better understood with the application of cognitive theory to survey methodology. Perhaps we can move beyond cataloging BIMBY to explaining it.

Limitations and caveats

The nurturant scale used in the framing experiment led to higher mean ratings for schools at all levels, in line with the hypotheses about empathy and its effect on attitudes toward schools. But it should be noted that the nurturant scale was essentially a list of positive things people could say about schools, while the strict scale was a list of fairly negative things people could say

about schools. Therefore, this experiment may have actually been a simpler experiment about priming with positive and negative messages. If the strict scale items were phrased in a more positive way, or there had been control conditions of no scale whatsoever and a scale of mixed items, the results might have been different.

One of the key measurements in a study of the BIMBY effect in school ratings is the rating for the school attended by the respondent's oldest child. There were too few cases in this study to support much analysis using this measure. The study oversampled urban households to ensure minority representation and representation from school divisions with more schools not meeting Average Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind legislation. But this may have reduced the proportion of households with children in the sample. And the race of the respondent did not turn out to be a significant factor in the analyses, perhaps because of small numbers of cases even after oversampling urban areas.

Some of the interaction effects are based on small numbers of cases and should be treated with caution.

The sample was limited to the Richmond and Charlottesville (Va.) metropolitan areas. The response rate to the mail survey was relatively low, 23.1%. No attempts were made to estimate potential nonresponse biases. No weighting was performed on the data because the study focused on analyses of relationships within the data, not description of the general population using unbiased estimates of population parameters.

In general, the study needs to be considered as exploratory because of the small number of cases overall and the previously untested nature of some of the key survey questions. The

qualitative research was based on a small convenience sample recruited through interpersonal contacts in the Richmond and Charlottesville (Va.) metropolitan areas.

As noted earlier, there were two natural disasters during the quantitative data collection period: a magnitude 5.8 earthquake hit Central Virginia on August 23, and Hurricane Irene caused widespread power outages and tree damage in Central Virginia during and after August 26-27. Any possible effects on the data or the results presented here are unknown.

Future research

There are several avenues of further research that would be valuable. First, more can be done with secondary data analysis of existing survey datasets to explore possible causes of BIMBY related to ratings of public schools. The secondary analyses performed in this dissertation were fairly cursory and illustrative, nothing more.

In addition, a simple replication of this study with a larger sample size would be valuable to check on some of the relationships found in this study that seem tentative due to small cell sizes or lack of well-developed theory to explain them. It would be important to ensure enough cases with children in public schools to be able to analyze ratings and BIMBY gaps for personal schools.

Obviously it would be helpful at some point to conduct a more robust survey project with larger cell sizes and a revised questionnaire that included control conditions for the nurturant and strict scales. This would create a four-category factor for the nurturant/strict scale: nurturant asked, strict asked, neither one asked, and both asked. It would also be wise to invest some time

and energy in devising and validating more formal scales first. That in itself would be a small research program.

This project was not able to identify the impacts of respondents being ingroup or outgroup members, but this might be important for future research. The qualitative data and the related literature in innumeracy should not be ignored in future research of BIMBY effects.

Literatures in neurology, authoritarian personality and political preferences, and heuristics were not seriously explored in this study. They would need to be consulted in future research.

It may also be useful to identify and study phenomena that run counter to BIMBY – for example, survey ratings of new U.S. presidents and the end of a new president's "honeymoon" period with the voters. This is one example that easily comes to mind of survey ratings that decline as the object being rated becomes better known and "closer" to the survey respondent.

Untangling the sources of BIMBY not only would improve our understanding of public opinion about public schools, it would almost certainly enhance our understanding of survey research and human cognition more generally.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
This form will be read verbatim to collect consent.

Thank you for your interest in the quality of public schools. Before you decide to participate or not, I'd like to tell you about the project. Please ask me to explain anything that you do not clearly understand. The **TITLE** of this study is "A Mixed Methods Exploration of Survey Ratings Regarding the Quality of Public Schools." It was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). The IRB number is HM12607. This is my dissertation project for my PhD in Education at VCU. The results will be published in my dissertation and may be presented at professional conferences or used for journal articles.

The **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY** is to learn more about how people go about rating the quality of public schools. We will have a conversation about your own experiences and opinions. The conversation might last from 30 minutes to no more than an hour. We will only use first names in our conversation. I'll take a few notes as we go and I will tape record our conversation. At the end of our conversation, I'll check my notes with you to see if you agree with what I took from the conversation. I may want to contact you after our conversation to follow up on things. **The tape recording will be typed into a transcript with all individually identifying information removed. The tape will then be destroyed.** The typed transcript of the tape will not be put into the dissertation -- the transcripts will only be summarized.

Also, when I have done a few more conversations, I may want to contact you and share the overall findings with you to see if you agree with them. I may also be doing this with some of the other people I talk with. You don't have to agree to be re-contacted if you don't want. And I may not need to re-contact you even if you agree to it. You do not have to talk about anything you do not want to talk about, and you may stop the conversation at any time and your data will be returned to you. **Immediately after the conversation I will give you** a small gift of $10 as a token of my appreciation for your help with this study. The cost to you for participating in the study is that you volunteer some of your time now and perhaps later if I re-contact you.

I will report the results in a way that does not identify who you are.

My contact information:
Jim Ellis, Doctoral student
School of Education, VCU
Cell: 804-263-8936
jmellis@vcu.edu

Other information about this research:
Dissertation chairman: Dr. Jim McMillan
School of Education, VCU
Oliver Hall, 1015 W. Main St.
P.O. Box 842020
804-827-2620
jhmcmill@vcu.edu

This information was also given to you on a separate piece of paper for you to keep. Do you have any questions about any of this? May I proceed with the conversation?

Participant name PRINTED	SIGNED	Date	Re-contact OK?	Gift received
Researcher name PRINTED	SIGNED	Date		

Rev. 1/16/10

APPROVED
1/8/10 SA 1 D 6

Appendix B

Master Questionnaire

Central Virginia
Community and School Satisfaction Survey

This survey is part of my doctoral dissertation. Your help is very valuable – Thank you!

Contact information for the student researcher: Jim Ellis, 804-263-8963, 434-243-5224 or jimellis@virginia.edu
Contact information for the dissertation advisor/PI: Dr. Jim McMillan, 804-827-2620 or jhmcmill@vcu.edu

A. General Information

I'd like to start the survey by getting a sense of your life in your community. Please circle the best response from the choices following each question.

[Module is randomly varied: 50% receive all of the Section A questions and 50% receive only A1]

A1. Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in your community?

1 Excellent
2 Good
3 Only fair
4 Poor
8 Not sure/Don't know
9 Prefer not to say

A2. For how long have you lived in your community?

1 Less than one year
2 One to two years
3 Three to five years
4 Six to ten years
5 Eleven to nineteen years
6 Twenty years or more, but not all my life
7 All my life
8 Not sure/Don't know
9 Prefer not to say

A3. How often do you feel that your community's values are the same as your own values?

1 Always
2 Most of the time
3 Some of the time
4 A little of the time
5 Never
8 Not sure/Don't know
9 Prefer not to say

A4. How would you describe the diversity of your community?

1 Very diverse
2 Somewhat diverse
3 Only a little diverse
4 Not diverse at all
8 Not sure/Don't know
9 Prefer not to say

A5. In the last 12 months, did you actively participate in any of the following?

	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. Non-partisan civic organizations	1	2	9
b. School or club associations	1	2	9
c. Hobby, sports team or youth groups	1	2	9
d. Neighborhood association or community groups	1	2	9

A6. In the last 12 months, did you attend any of the following?

	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. PTA/school group meeting	1	2	9
b. Community group meeting	1	2	9
c. A local government meeting or public hearing, even if you attended by watching it live or on a recording on television or Internet	1	2	9

B. Things some people might say about public education

[50% of respondents get questions from the "nurturant" frame in the table below]

The following statements are about public schools in general (grades K-12). They have been selected from a longer list of things that some people might say about public education. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	Agree a lot	Agree moderately	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree moderately	Disagree a lot
a. Public education provides opportunity for all children in our country	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Public education helps children discover their unique talents and abilities	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Teachers in public schools all around the country care a great deal about the children they teach	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Given the conditions in our society these days, public schools are doing a great job	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Our nation's public schools do a great job preparing children to be contributing members of society	1	2	3	4	5	6

Attitudes toward public education: Strict frame

[The other 50% who don't receive the nurturant frame receive these items from a "strict" frame]

B1. More discipline for students is needed in public schools, B2. Public schools should focus more on preparing students for work, B3. Our nation's economic competitiveness depends on our public schools, B4. Funding for public schools should remain primarily a local responsibility, B5. Public schools could do a better job if politics affected them less

C. School ratings

C1. Thinking of your own years attending grades K-12, how many times did you change to a different school? Please do not include starting in kindergarten. Please include changing from elementary to middle or junior high school and middle or junior high school to high school.

_____ Number of times you changed schools in grades K-12 *[50% get C1]*

As you know, in some communities there are three kinds of schools: public schools, parochial or church-related schools, and private schools (sometimes called independent schools).

C2. Do you have any children in the local public schools, whether in kindergarten, elementary, middle, junior or high school?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know
4 Prefer not to say
5 Have no children

C3. Do you have any children in the parochial or private schools, whether in kindergarten, elementary, middle, junior or high school?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know
4 Prefer not to say
5 Have no children

C4. Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here – A, B, C, D, or FAIL[– or do you not have enough information to say]? *[50/50]*

1 A
2 B
3 C
4 D
5 FAIL
8 [Not enough information to say]
9 [Prefer not to say]

C5. (If "Yes" to C2 or "Yes" to C3) Using the A, B, C, D, or FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends[– or do you not have enough information to say]?

1 A
2 B
3 C
4 D
5 FAIL
8 [Not enough information to say]
9 [Prefer not to say]

C6. How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally – A, B, C, D, or FAIL[– or do you not have enough information to say]?

1 A
2 B
3 C
4 D
5 FAIL
8 [Not enough information to say]
9 [Prefer not to say]

D. Demographics

D1. How would you describe the area where you live?
1 Urban
2 Suburban
3 Rural
4 Small town

D2. Are you…
1 Male
2 Female

D3. What is your age group?
1 18-24 years
2 25-34 years
3 35-44 years
4 45-54 years
5 55-64 years
6 65-74 years
7 75 or older

D4. Which of the following describes the most education you have had?
1 Less than high school
2 High school diploma or GED
3 Job training, vocational training, or technical school
4 Some college or Associate's degree
5 Bachelor's degree
6 Graduate or professional degree

D5. Which of the following best describes you?
1 Working full-time (35+ hours/week)
2 Working part-time
3 Looking for work
4 Homemaker
5 Retired
6 Student
7 Other (specify) _____

D6. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?
1 Yes
2 No

D7. How would you describe your race? *(Check all that apply.)*
- ❑ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ❑ Asian
- ❑ Black or African American
- ❑ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- ❑ White/Caucasian
- ❑ Other, specify:_____

D8. What is your current marital status?
1 Married
2 Separated
3 Divorced
4 Widowed
5 Never married

D9. What type of housing are you living in?
1 Single-family home
2 A duplex or townhouse
3 An apartment or condominium (a multi-family building with three or more units)
4 A mobile home or trailer
5 Other, please specify:_____

D10. Do you own or rent your home?
1 Own
2 Rent

D11. In general, do you think of yourself as…
1 Extremely liberal
2 Liberal
3 Slightly liberal
4 Moderate, middle of the road
5 Slightly conservative
6 Conservative
7 Extremely conservative

THANK YOU! Lost your envelope? Please return the survey to:
Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory
Virginia Commonwealth University, P.O. Box 843016
Richmond, VA 23284-3016

Appendix C

Frequencies

style

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	17	8.2	8.2	8.2
	2	18	8.7	8.7	16.8
	3	9	4.3	4.3	21.2
	4	17	8.2	8.2	29.3
	5	8	3.8	3.8	33.2
	6	7	3.4	3.4	36.5
	7	10	4.8	4.8	41.3
	8	12	5.8	5.8	47.1
	9	11	5.3	5.3	52.4
	10	12	5.8	5.8	58.2
	11	14	6.7	6.7	64.9
	12	15	7.2	7.2	72.1
	13	13	6.3	6.3	78.4
	14	14	6.7	6.7	85.1
	15	15	7.2	7.2	92.3
	16	16	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	208	100.0	100.0	

A1 Overall, how how would you rate the quality of life in your community?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Excellent	59	28.4	30.7	30.7
	2 Good	121	58.2	63.0	93.8
	3 Only fair	10	4.8	5.2	99.0
	4 Poor	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	192	92.3	100.0	
Missing	8 DK	3	1.4		
	9 Ref	3	1.4		
	System	10	4.8		
	Total	16	7.7		
Total		208	100.0		

A2 For how long have you lived in your community?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Less than 1 year	3	1.4	3.1	3.1
	2 1-2 years	8	3.8	8.2	11.3
	3 3-5 years	12	5.8	12.4	23.7
	4 6-10 years	15	7.2	15.5	39.2
	5 11-19 years	22	10.6	22.7	61.9
	6 20+ years	28	13.5	28.9	90.7
	7 All my life	9	4.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	97	46.6	100.0	
Missing	9 Ref	1	.5		
	System	110	52.9		
	Total	111	53.4		
Total		208	100.0		

A3 How often do you feel that your community's values are the same as your own values?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Always	2	1.0	2.3	2.3
	2 Most of the time	40	19.2	46.0	48.3
	3 Some of the time	38	18.3	43.7	92.0
	4 A little of the time	6	2.9	6.9	98.9
	5 Never	1	.5	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	41.8	100.0	
Missing	8 DK	7	3.4		
	9 Ref	1	.5		
	System	113	54.3		
	Total	121	58.2		
Total		208	100.0		

A4 How would you describe the diversity of your community?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Very diverse	22	10.6	24.7	24.7
	2 Somewhat diverse	41	19.7	46.1	70.8
	3 Only a little diverse	22	10.6	24.7	95.5
	4 Not diverse at all	4	1.9	4.5	100.0
	Total	89	42.8	100.0	
Missing	8 DK	4	1.9		
	9 Ref	1	.5		
	System	114	54.8		
	Total	119	57.2		
Total		208	100.0		

A5A Non-partisan civic organizations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	20	9.6	22.2	22.2
	2 No	70	33.7	77.8	100.0
	Total	90	43.3	100.0	
Missing	9 Not sure	4	1.9		
	System	114	54.8		
	Total	118	56.7		
Total		208	100.0		

A5B School or club associations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	29	13.9	30.9	30.9
	2 No	65	31.3	69.1	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

A5C Hobby, sports team or youth groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	39	18.8	42.9	42.9
	2 No	52	25.0	57.1	100.0
	Total	91	43.8	100.0	
Missing	9 Not sure	1	.5		
	System	116	55.8		
	Total	117	56.3		
Total		208	100.0		

A5D Neighborhood association or community groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	40	19.2	42.6	42.6
	2 No	54	26.0	57.4	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	9 Not sure	1	.5		
	System	113	54.3		
	Total	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

A6A PTA/school group meeting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	15	7.2	16.0	16.0
	2 No	79	38.0	84.0	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	9 Not sure	1	.5		
	System	113	54.3		
	Total	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

A6B Community group meeting

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	26	12.5	28.6	28.6
	2 No	65	31.3	71.4	100.0
	Total	91	43.8	100.0	
Missing	9 Not sure	3	1.4		
	System	114	54.8		
	Total	117	56.3		
Total		208	100.0		

A6C A local government meeting or public hearing, even if you attended by watching it live or on a recording on television or Internet

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	31	14.9	32.6	32.6
	2 No	64	30.8	67.4	100.0
	Total	95	45.7	100.0	
Missing	System	113	54.3		
Total		208	100.0		

b1a_nu (NU) Public education provides opportunity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	27	13.0	24.1	24.1
	2 Agree moderately	52	25.0	46.4	70.5
	3 Agree a little	15	7.2	13.4	83.9
	4 Disagree a little	5	2.4	4.5	88.4
	5 Disagree moderately	7	3.4	6.3	94.6
	6 Disagree a lot	6	2.9	5.4	100.0
	Total	112	53.8	100.0	
Missing	System	96	46.2		
Total		208	100.0		

b1b_nu (NU) Helps children discover talents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	12	5.8	10.7	10.7
	2 Agree moderately	38	18.3	33.9	44.6
	3 Agree a little	42	20.2	37.5	82.1
	4 Disagree a little	7	3.4	6.3	88.4
	5 Disagree moderately	7	3.4	6.3	94.6
	6 Disagree a lot	6	2.9	5.4	100.0
	Total	112	53.8	100.0	
Missing	System	96	46.2		
Total		208	100.0		

b1c_nu (NU) Teachers all around the country care

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	17	8.2	15.3	15.3
	2 Agree moderately	44	21.2	39.6	55.0
	3 Agree a little	31	14.9	27.9	82.9
	4 Disagree a little	9	4.3	8.1	91.0
	5 Disagree moderately	6	2.9	5.4	96.4
	6 Disagree a lot	4	1.9	3.6	100.0
	Total	111	53.4	100.0	
Missing	System	97	46.6		
Total		208	100.0		

b1d_nu (NU) Given conditions, schools do a great job

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	12	5.8	10.7	10.7
	2 Agree moderately	32	15.4	28.6	39.3
	3 Agree a little	40	19.2	35.7	75.0
	4 Disagree a little	13	6.3	11.6	86.6
	5 Disagree moderately	8	3.8	7.1	93.8
	6 Disagree a lot	7	3.4	6.3	100.0
	Total	112	53.8	100.0	
Missing	System	96	46.2		
Total		208	100.0		

b1e_nu (NU) Schools do great preparing children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	4	1.9	3.6	3.6
	2 Agree moderately	32	15.4	28.6	32.1
	3 Agree a little	41	19.7	36.6	68.8
	4 Disagree a little	18	8.7	16.1	84.8
	5 Disagree moderately	6	2.9	5.4	90.2
	6 Disagree a lot	11	5.3	9.8	100.0
	Total	112	53.8	100.0	
Missing	System	96	46.2		
Total		208	100.0		

b1a_st (ST) More discipline needed

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	39	18.8	41.5	41.5
	2 Agree moderately	26	12.5	27.7	69.1
	3 Agree a little	17	8.2	18.1	87.2
	4 Disagree a little	6	2.9	6.4	93.6
	5 Disagree moderately	4	1.9	4.3	97.9
	6 Disagree a lot	2	1.0	2.1	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

b1b_st (ST) Focus more on preparing students for work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	34	16.3	37.0	37.0
	2 Agree moderately	30	14.4	32.6	69.6
	3 Agree a little	18	8.7	19.6	89.1
	4 Disagree a little	8	3.8	8.7	97.8
	5 Disagree moderately	2	1.0	2.2	100.0
	Total	92	44.2	100.0	
Missing	System	116	55.8		
Total		208	100.0		

b1c_st (ST) Economic competitiveness depends on schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	55	26.4	58.5	58.5
	2 Agree moderately	26	12.5	27.7	86.2
	3 Agree a little	8	3.8	8.5	94.7
	4 Disagree a little	3	1.4	3.2	97.9
	5 Disagree moderately	2	1.0	2.1	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

b1d_st (ST) Funding should remain local responsibility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	17	8.2	18.1	18.1
	2 Agree moderately	20	9.6	21.3	39.4
	3 Agree a little	17	8.2	18.1	57.4
	4 Disagree a little	12	5.8	12.8	70.2
	5 Disagree moderately	13	6.3	13.8	84.0
	6 Disagree a lot	15	7.2	16.0	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

b1e_st (ST) Schools could do better if politics affected them less

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Agree a lot	40	19.2	42.6	42.6
	2 Agree moderately	29	13.9	30.9	73.4
	3 Agree a little	16	7.7	17.0	90.4
	4 Disagree a little	5	2.4	5.3	95.7
	5 Disagree moderately	2	1.0	2.1	97.9
	6 Disagree a lot	2	1.0	2.1	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

C1 Number of times respondent changed schools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	5	2.4	5.3	5.3
	1	9	4.3	9.6	14.9
	2	27	13.0	28.7	43.6
	3	25	12.0	26.6	70.2
	4	18	8.7	19.1	89.4
	5	5	2.4	5.3	94.7
	6	2	1.0	2.1	96.8
	7	1	.5	1.1	97.9
	8	1	.5	1.1	98.9
	9	1	.5	1.1	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

c1cat Number of times respondent changed schools (collapsed)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	5	2.4	5.3	5.3
	1.00	9	4.3	9.6	14.9
	2.00	27	13.0	28.7	43.6
	3.00	25	12.0	26.6	70.2
	4.00	18	8.7	19.1	89.4
	5.00 5 or more	10	4.8	10.6	100.0
	Total	94	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	114	54.8		
Total		208	100.0		

C2 Do you have any children in the local public schools?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	36	17.3	17.6	17.6
	2 No	133	63.9	65.2	82.8
	5 Have no children	35	16.8	17.2	100.0
	Total	204	98.1	100.0	
Missing	3 DK	1	.5		
	4 Ref	2	1.0		
	System	1	.5		
	Total	4	1.9		
Total		208	100.0		

C3 Do you have any children in parochial or private schools?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	5	2.4	2.5	2.5
	2 No	161	77.4	80.1	82.6
	5 Have no children	35	16.8	17.4	100.0
	Total	201	96.6	100.0	
Missing	3 DK	3	1.4		
	4 Ref	2	1.0		
	System	2	1.0		
	Total	7	3.4		
Total		208	100.0		

c4r Grade public schools in your community (reversed)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 F	7	3.4	4.3	4.3
	2 D	10	4.8	6.1	10.4
	3 C	47	22.6	28.7	39.0
	4 B	77	37.0	47.0	86.0
	5 A	23	11.1	14.0	100.0
	Total	164	78.8	100.0	
Missing	8 DK	33	15.9		
	9 Ref	2	1.0		
	System	9	4.3		
	Total	44	21.2		
Total		208	100.0		

c5r Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 D	1	.5	2.6	2.6
	3 C	7	3.4	18.4	21.1
	4 B	18	8.7	47.4	68.4
	5 A	12	5.8	31.6	100.0
	Total	38	18.3	100.0	
Missing	8 DK	7	3.4		
	9 Ref	4	1.9		
	System	159	76.4		
	Total	170	81.7		
Total		208	100.0		

c6r Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 F	13	6.3	7.7	7.7
	2 D	27	13.0	16.0	23.7
	3 C	101	48.6	59.8	83.4
	4 B	27	13.0	16.0	99.4
	5 A	1	.5	.6	100.0
	Total	169	81.3	100.0	
Missing	8 DK	30	14.4		
	9 Ref	3	1.4		
	System	6	2.9		
	Total	39	18.8		
Total		208	100.0		

c4rd Grade public schools in your community (reversed, dichotomized)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 C or less	64	30.8	39.0	39.0
	1 A or B	100	48.1	61.0	100.0
	Total	164	78.8	100.0	
Missing	System	44	21.2		
Total		208	100.0		

c5rd Grade the public school your oldest child attends (reversed, dichotomized)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 C or less	8	3.8	21.1	21.1
	1 A or B	30	14.4	78.9	100.0
	Total	38	18.3	100.0	
Missing	System	170	81.7		
Total		208	100.0		

c6rd Grade public schools in the nation as a whole (reversed, dichotomized)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 C or less	141	67.8	83.4	83.4
	1 A or B	28	13.5	16.6	100.0
	Total	169	81.3	100.0	
Missing	System	39	18.8		
Total		208	100.0		

gapmy2local

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	2	1.0	5.3	5.3
	.00	24	11.5	63.2	68.4
	1.00	9	4.3	23.7	92.1
	2.00	2	1.0	5.3	97.4
	3.00	1	.5	2.6	100.0
	Total	38	18.3	100.0	
Missing	System	170	81.7		
Total		208	100.0		

gapmy2nation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-1.00	1	.5	2.9	2.9
	.00	4	1.9	11.4	14.3
	1.00	15	7.2	42.9	57.1
	2.00	13	6.3	37.1	94.3
	3.00	1	.5	2.9	97.1
	4.00	1	.5	2.9	100.0
	Total	35	16.8	100.0	
Missing	System	173	83.2		
Total		208	100.0		

gaplocal2nation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2.00	1	.5	.7	.7
	-1.00	10	4.8	6.8	7.4
	.00	47	22.6	31.8	39.2
	1.00	59	28.4	39.9	79.1
	2.00	28	13.5	18.9	98.0
	3.00	3	1.4	2.0	100.0
	Total	148	71.2	100.0	
Missing	System	60	28.8		
Total		208	100.0		

D1 Type of area

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Urban	41	19.7	20.0	20.0
	2 Suburban	112	53.8	54.6	74.6
	3 Rural	37	17.8	18.0	92.7
	4 Small town	15	7.2	7.3	100.0
	Total	205	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.4		
Total		208	100.0		

D2 Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Male	59	28.4	29.1	29.1
	2 Female	144	69.2	70.9	100.0
	Total	203	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.4		
Total		208	100.0		

D3 Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 18-24	8	3.8	3.9	3.9
	2 25-34	32	15.4	15.7	19.6
	3 35-44	26	12.5	12.7	32.4
	4 45-54	39	18.8	19.1	51.5
	5 55-64	52	25.0	25.5	77.0
	6 65-74	26	12.5	12.7	89.7
	7 75+	21	10.1	10.3	100.0
	Total	204	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.9		
Total		208	100.0		

D4 Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Less than high school	9	4.3	4.3	4.3
	2 High school diploma or GED	18	8.7	8.7	13.0
	3 Job training, vocational training, or technical school	12	5.8	5.8	18.8
	4 Some college or Associate's degree	44	21.2	21.3	40.1
	5 Bachelor's degree	61	29.3	29.5	69.6
	6 Graduate or professional degree	63	30.3	30.4	100.0
	Total	207	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		208	100.0		

D5 Employment status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Working full-time (35+ hours/week)	95	45.7	46.1	46.1
	2 Working part-time	25	12.0	12.1	58.3
	3 Looking for work	4	1.9	1.9	60.2
	4 Homemaker	16	7.7	7.8	68.0
	5 Retired	50	24.0	24.3	92.2
	6 Student	13	6.3	6.3	98.5
	7 Other	3	1.4	1.5	100.0
	Total	206	99.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.0		
Total		208	100.0		

D6 Hispanic/Latino

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Yes	4	1.9	2.0	2.0
	2 No	199	95.7	98.0	100.0
	Total	203	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.4		
Total		208	100.0		

race Race (merged)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 Asian	4	1.9	2.0	2.0
	3 Black/African-American	35	16.8	17.2	19.2
	5 White/Caucasian	161	77.4	79.3	98.5
	6 Other, multiple races	3	1.4	1.5	100.0
	Total	203	97.6	100.0	
Missing	0 Refused or blank	5	2.4		

race Race (merged)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 Asian	4	1.9	2.0	2.0
	3 Black/African-American	35	16.8	17.2	19.2
	5 White/Caucasian	161	77.4	79.3	98.5
	6 Other, multiple races	3	1.4	1.5	100.0
	Total	203	97.6	100.0	
Missing	0 Refused or blank	5	2.4		
Total		208	100.0		

racecat Race (merged, white and African-American only)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 White	161	77.4	82.1	82.1
	2 African-American	35	16.8	17.9	100.0
	Total	196	94.2	100.0	
Missing	System	12	5.8		
Total		208	100.0		

D8 Marital status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Married	118	56.7	57.8	57.8
	2 Separated	4	1.9	2.0	59.8
	3 Divorced	20	9.6	9.8	69.6
	4 Widowed	20	9.6	9.8	79.4
	5 Never married	42	20.2	20.6	100.0
	Total	204	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.9		
Total		208	100.0		

D9 Housing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Single-family home	157	75.5	77.0	77.0
	2 A duplex or townhouse	16	7.7	7.8	84.8
	3 An apartment or condominium	23	11.1	11.3	96.1
	4 A mobile home or trailer	2	1.0	1.0	97.1
	5 Other	6	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	204	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.9		
Total		208	100.0		

D10 Rent or Own

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Own	158	76.0	77.1	77.1
	2 Rent	47	22.6	22.9	100.0
	Total	205	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.4		
Total		208	100.0		

D11 Liberal or Conservative

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Extremely liberal	12	5.8	5.9	5.9
	2 Liberal	52	25.0	25.4	31.2
	3 Slightly liberal	27	13.0	13.2	44.4
	4 Moderate	37	17.8	18.0	62.4
	5 Slightly conservative	28	13.5	13.7	76.1
	6 Conservative	47	22.6	22.9	99.0
	7 Extremely conservative	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	205	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.4		
Total		208	100.0		

attachment Attachment experiment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Asked	98	47.1	47.1	47.1
	2 Not asked	110	52.9	52.9	100.0
	Total	208	100.0	100.0	

dkratings DK ratings experiment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 DK asked	111	53.4	53.4	53.4
	2 Not asked	97	46.6	46.6	100.0
	Total	208	100.0	100.0	

frame Framing experiment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Nurturant	113	54.3	54.3	54.3
	2 Strict	95	45.7	45.7	100.0
	Total	208	100.0	100.0	

memories Personal memories of school experiment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Asked	100	48.1	48.1	48.1
	2 Not asked	108	51.9	51.9	100.0
	Total	208	100.0	100.0	

Appendix D

Means Table for ANOVA Model for Ratings Gap Between Local and National Schools

Attachment experiment	Framing experiment	Personal memories of school experiment	DK ratings experiment	Type of area	gaplocal2nation	
					Mean	N
Asked	Nurturant	Asked	DK asked	Urban	.2000	5
				Suburban	1.0000	3
				Rural	1.0000	1
				Small town		0
				Total	.5556	9
			Not asked	Urban	.3333	3
				Suburban	.5000	6
				Rural	.6000	5
				Small town	1.0000	2
				Total	.5625	16
			Total	Urban	.2500	8
				Suburban	.6667	9
				Rural	.6667	6
				Small town	1.0000	2
				Total	.5600	25
		Not asked	DK asked	Urban	.0000	1
				Suburban	1.0000	3
				Rural	.0000	2
				Small town		0
				Total	.5000	6
			Not asked	Urban	.0000	1
				Suburban	1.0000	6
				Rural	.0000	1
				Small town		0
				Total	.7500	8
			Total	Urban	.0000	2
				Suburban	1.0000	9
				Rural	.0000	3
				Small town		0
				Total	.6429	14
		Total	DK asked	Urban	.1667	6
				Suburban	1.0000	6
				Rural	.3333	3
				Small town		0

			Total	.5333	15
		Not asked	Urban	.2500	4
			Suburban	.7500	12
			Rural	.5000	6
			Small town	1.0000	2
			Total	.6250	24
		Total	Urban	.2000	10
			Suburban	.8333	18
			Rural	.4444	9
			Small town	1.0000	2
			Total	.5897	39
Strict	Asked	DK asked	Urban		0
			Suburban	2.0000	1
			Rural	.0000	2
			Small town		0
			Total	.6667	3
		Not asked	Urban		0
			Suburban	1.5000	2
			Rural	.0000	2
			Small town	1.0000	1
			Total	.8000	5
		Total	Urban		0
			Suburban	1.6667	3
			Rural	.0000	4
			Small town	1.0000	1
			Total	.7500	8
	Not asked	DK asked	Urban	1.0000	1
			Suburban	.2500	4
			Rural	1.0000	1
			Small town		0
			Total	.5000	6
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	1
			Suburban	.8000	5
			Rural	1.0000	2
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	.8889	9
		Total	Urban	.5000	2
			Suburban	.5556	9

			Rural	1.0000	3
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	.7333	15
	Total	DK asked	Urban	1.0000	1
			Suburban	.6000	5
			Rural	.3333	3
			Small town		0
			Total	.5556	9
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	1
			Suburban	1.0000	7
			Rural	.5000	4
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.8571	14
		Total	Urban	.5000	2
			Suburban	.8333	12
			Rural	.4286	7
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.7391	23
Total	Asked	DK asked	Urban	.2000	5
			Suburban	1.2500	4
			Rural	.3333	3
			Small town		0
			Total	.5833	12
		Not asked	Urban	.3333	3
			Suburban	.7500	8
			Rural	.4286	7
			Small town	1.0000	3
			Total	.6190	21
		Total	Urban	.2500	8
			Suburban	.9167	12
			Rural	.4000	10
			Small town	1.0000	3
			Total	.6061	33
	Not asked	DK asked	Urban	.5000	2
			Suburban	.5714	7
			Rural	.3333	3
			Small town		0
			Total	.5000	12

			Not asked	Urban	.0000	2
				Suburban	.9091	11
				Rural	.6667	3
				Small town	2.0000	1
				Total	.8235	17
			Total	Urban	.2500	4
				Suburban	.7778	18
				Rural	.5000	6
				Small town	2.0000	1
				Total	.6897	29
		Total	DK asked	Urban	.2857	7
				Suburban	.8182	11
				Rural	.3333	6
				Small town		0
				Total	.5417	24
			Not asked	Urban	.2000	5
				Suburban	.8421	19
				Rural	.5000	10
				Small town	1.2500	4
				Total	.7105	38
			Total	Urban	.2500	12
				Suburban	.8333	30
				Rural	.4375	16
				Small town	1.2500	4
				Total	.6452	62
Not asked	Nurturant	Asked	DK asked	Urban	2.0000	1
				Suburban	1.7500	4
				Rural	.5000	2
				Small town		0
				Total	1.4286	7
			Not asked	Urban		0
				Suburban	.5000	6
				Rural	1.0000	1
				Small town		0
				Total	.5714	7
			Total	Urban	2.0000	1
				Suburban	1.0000	10
				Rural	.6667	3

			Small town		0
			Total	1.0000	14
	Not asked	DK asked	Urban		0
			Suburban	.6000	5
			Rural		0
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.8571	7
		Not asked	Urban	.6667	3
			Suburban	1.0000	4
			Rural	.0000	2
			Small town	1.0000	1
			Total	.7000	10
		Total	Urban	.6667	3
			Suburban	.7778	9
			Rural	.0000	2
			Small town	1.3333	3
			Total	.7647	17
	Total	DK asked	Urban	2.0000	1
			Suburban	1.1111	9
			Rural	.5000	2
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	1.1429	14
		Not asked	Urban	.6667	3
			Suburban	.7000	10
			Rural	.3333	3
			Small town	1.0000	1
			Total	.6471	17
		Total	Urban	1.0000	4
			Suburban	.8947	19
			Rural	.4000	5
			Small town	1.3333	3
			Total	.8710	31
Strict	Asked	DK asked	Urban	-.5000	2
			Suburban	2.0000	4
			Rural		0
			Small town		0
			Total	1.1667	6
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	2

			Suburban	.7143	7
			Rural	1.6667	3
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	.9231	13
		Total	Urban	-.2500	4
			Suburban	1.1818	11
			Rural	1.6667	3
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	1.0000	19
	Not asked	DK asked	Urban	1.0000	1
			Suburban	1.6000	5
			Rural	.6667	3
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	1.3000	10
		Not asked	Urban	-1.0000	2
			Suburban	.8000	10
			Rural		0
			Small town	1.0000	1
			Total	.5385	13
		Total	Urban	-.3333	3
			Suburban	1.0667	15
			Rural	.6667	3
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.8696	23
	Total	DK asked	Urban	.0000	3
			Suburban	1.7778	9
			Rural	.6667	3
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	1.2500	16
		Not asked	Urban	-.5000	4
			Suburban	.7647	17
			Rural	1.6667	3
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.7308	26
		Total	Urban	-.2857	7
			Suburban	1.1154	26
			Rural	1.1667	6
			Small town	1.6667	3

			Total	.9286	42
Total	Asked	DK asked	Urban	.3333	3
			Suburban	1.8750	8
			Rural	.5000	2
			Small town		0
			Total	1.3077	13
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	2
			Suburban	.6154	13
			Rural	1.5000	4
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	.8000	20
		Total	Urban	.2000	5
			Suburban	1.0952	21
			Rural	1.1667	6
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	1.0000	33
	Not asked	DK asked	Urban	1.0000	1
			Suburban	1.1000	10
			Rural	.6667	3
			Small town	1.6667	3
			Total	1.1176	17
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	5
			Suburban	.8571	14
			Rural	.0000	2
			Small town	1.0000	2
			Total	.6087	23
		Total	Urban	.1667	6
			Suburban	.9583	24
			Rural	.4000	5
			Small town	1.4000	5
			Total	.8250	40
	Total	DK asked	Urban	.5000	4
			Suburban	1.4444	18
			Rural	.6000	5
			Small town	1.6667	3
			Total	1.2000	30
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	7
			Suburban	.7407	27

				Rural	1.0000	6
				Small town	1.3333	3
				Total	.6977	43
			Total	Urban	.1818	11
				Suburban	1.0222	45
				Rural	.8182	11
				Small town	1.5000	6
				Total	.9041	73
Total	Nurturant	Asked	DK asked	Urban	.5000	6
				Suburban	1.4286	7
				Rural	.6667	3
				Small town		0
				Total	.9375	16
			Not asked	Urban	.3333	3
				Suburban	.5000	12
				Rural	.6667	6
				Small town	1.0000	2
				Total	.5652	23
			Total	Urban	.4444	9
				Suburban	.8421	19
				Rural	.6667	9
				Small town	1.0000	2
				Total	.7179	39
		Not asked	DK asked	Urban	.0000	1
				Suburban	.7500	8
				Rural	.0000	2
				Small town	1.5000	2
				Total	.6923	13
			Not asked	Urban	.5000	4
				Suburban	1.0000	10
				Rural	.0000	3
				Small town	1.0000	1
				Total	.7222	18
			Total	Urban	.4000	5
				Suburban	.8889	18
				Rural	.0000	5
				Small town	1.3333	3
				Total	.7097	31

	Total	DK asked	Urban	.4286	7
			Suburban	1.0667	15
			Rural	.4000	5
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.8276	29
		Not asked	Urban	.4286	7
			Suburban	.7273	22
			Rural	.4444	9
			Small town	1.0000	3
			Total	.6341	41
		Total	Urban	.4286	14
			Suburban	.8649	37
			Rural	.4286	14
			Small town	1.2000	5
			Total	.7143	70
Strict	Asked	DK asked	Urban	-.5000	2
			Suburban	2.0000	5
			Rural	.0000	2
			Small town		0
			Total	1.0000	9
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	2
			Suburban	.8889	9
			Rural	1.0000	5
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.8889	18
		Total	Urban	-.2500	4
			Suburban	1.2857	14
			Rural	.7143	7
			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.9259	27
	Not asked	DK asked	Urban	1.0000	2
			Suburban	1.0000	9
			Rural	.7500	4
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	1.0000	16
		Not asked	Urban	-.6667	3
			Suburban	.8000	15
			Rural	1.0000	2

			Small town	1.5000	2
			Total	.6818	22
		Total	Urban	.0000	5
			Suburban	.8750	24
			Rural	.8333	6
			Small town	1.6667	3
			Total	.8158	38
	Total	DK asked	Urban	.2500	4
			Suburban	1.3571	14
			Rural	.5000	6
			Small town	2.0000	1
			Total	1.0000	25
		Not asked	Urban	-.4000	5
			Suburban	.8333	24
			Rural	1.0000	7
			Small town	1.5000	4
			Total	.7750	40
		Total	Urban	-.1111	9
			Suburban	1.0263	38
			Rural	.7692	13
			Small town	1.6000	5
			Total	.8615	65
Total	Asked	DK asked	Urban	.2500	8
			Suburban	1.6667	12
			Rural	.4000	5
			Small town		0
			Total	.9600	25
		Not asked	Urban	.2000	5
			Suburban	.6667	21
			Rural	.8182	11
			Small town	1.2500	4
			Total	.7073	41
		Total	Urban	.2308	13
			Suburban	1.0303	33
			Rural	.6875	16
			Small town	1.2500	4
			Total	.8030	66
	Not asked	DK asked	Urban	.6667	3

			Suburban	.8824	17
			Rural	.5000	6
			Small town	1.6667	3
			Total	.8621	29
		Not asked	Urban	.0000	7
			Suburban	.8800	25
			Rural	.4000	5
			Small town	1.3333	3
			Total	.7000	40
		Total	Urban	.2000	10
			Suburban	.8810	42
			Rural	.4545	11
			Small town	1.5000	6
			Total	.7681	69
Total		DK asked	Urban	.3636	11
			Suburban	1.2069	29
			Rural	.4545	11
			Small town	1.6667	3
			Total	.9074	54
		Not asked	Urban	.0833	12
			Suburban	.7826	46
			Rural	.6875	16
			Small town	1.2857	7
			Total	.7037	81
		Total	Urban	.2174	23
			Suburban	.9467	75
			Rural	.5926	27
			Small town	1.4000	10
			Total	.7852[a]	135

a. Grand Mean

b. gaplocal2nation by Attachment experiment, Framing experiment, Personal memories of school experiment, DK ratings experiment, Type of area with Overall, how how would you rate the quality of life in your community?

Appendix E

Vita

James M. Ellis, Jr. was born September 3, 1960 in Montclair, NJ. He is an American citizen. He graduated from Haverford Township (PA) Senior High School in 1978. He was admitted to the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia in 1978 and graduated with a B.A. in English in May 1982. After briefly pursuing freelance creative writing in perhaps the two worst-paying writing markets in existence – poetry and short fiction – he decided to attend Virginia Commonwealth University and was admitted in 1985. He received his M.S. in Mass Communications in August 1989. During this time, he joined the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at VCU as a graduate assistant and started full-time at SERL in July 1989, a partnership that offered a series of jobs covering all aspects of an academic survey shop and lasted until 2007. In May 2003 he received his second M.S., this one in Survey Methodology, from the Joint Program in Survey Methodology at the University of Maryland at College Park. He became Director of Research at the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia in September 2007 and continues in that position to the present day.