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STUDENT REPRESENTATION

ON

BOARDS OF TRUSTEES

IN

AUCKLAND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ORIEL KELLY

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Educational Administration

Massey University
New Zealand
1993

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this thesis is the contribution and effectiveness of the student representatives on a small group of secondary school Boards of Trustees in a New Zealand city.

The placing of a student on the governing body of New Zealand secondary schools was made law on October 1st 1989. This study, undertaken in 1991, the third year of participation, endeavoured to evaluate the working contribution of these representatives. Effectiveness was measured in relation to the expectations of the representatives themselves, their colleagues, and in the eyes of those they represent.

The literature review established that participation by students in school decision-making is necessary and commendable but difficult to achieve successfully. The New Zealand structure is unique; yet it is of a similar non-proportional, consultative nature to that in other countries and it was suspected that this model would suffer from the same difficulties as those overseas. These difficulties might include role definition, difficulties in communication and consultation, inadequacy of training for their role and objections to the presence of students on the boards.

A variety of methods was employed. The primary method used questionnaires administered to 16 newly appointed student representatives at schools in the Auckland area as a wide focus. Questions covered the areas of expectations, role, training, communication channels and limitations on student representatives' contribution to their boards.

The narrow focus observed the student representatives in the public aspect of their role at four large Auckland schools. Opinions of the students' effectiveness and contribution were also sought from their fellow board members and the student body being represented at each school. This was done by questionnaire and attitude scale respectively.

The two pronged investigation of wide and narrow focus sampling in the overall design provided the triangulation necessary to confirm the findings.

Major Findings

The study established that the role of the student representative is unclear to both themselves and those they represent. The role is also limited (illegally) by their fellow board members who place restrictions, "common sense" though they may be, on the contributions of the students, and often without the students themselves realising that their role has been restricted in this way. The student role tends to be more one of observer that participant.

As suspected, effective representation by consultation is difficult to achieve. There was a strong feeling that the students should have a voice on the board but communication channels were difficult to establish and maintain and the student voice was seldom hard at board meetings.

Few student representatives reported receiving any training for their role. This must, in turn, reduce the effectiveness of the student voice.

Opposition to the presence of students on the boards was not obvious but methods were employed to restrict the participation of

the students in sensitive areas - such as staff or student discipline - despite such restrictions being illegal and in contravention of democratic and participatory rights.

The inclusion of a student representative on secondary school Boards of Trustee has proved popular with the student body. However the lack of training, and the covert opposition to such students severely limits their effectiveness. It is to be hoped that the recent law change, making their inclusion optional, will not see the complete demise of their contribution.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is the contribution and effectiveness of the student representatives on a small group of secondary school Boards of Trustees in a New Zealand city.

The Board of Trustees is a recent development in New Zealand education. The Curriculum Review , (1986) and then the so-called "Picot Report", (1988) called for a more community responsive school system whereby parents and pupils would have more of a say in what went on in schools : "The running of learning institutions should be a partnership between the teaching staff (the professionals) and the community" (Picot, 1988 p. xi). The resulting administrative structure included a student voice.

The placing of a student on the governing body of secondary schools was made law on October 1st 1989. This study, undertaken in 1991, the third year of student participation, endeavoured to evaluate the working contribution of these representatives, now that most of the implementation had been completed. If the student voice was making an impact on Boards of Trustees then it should have been becoming apparent after two previous representatives had established themselves in the role.

Although student government is well entrenched in American high schools and has become popular latterly in New Zealand, never, before 1989, have our students had a statutory right to a voice in school management. It was anticipated that measuring student representational effectiveness in this new position would be difficult but perhaps possible by comparing the expectations of both the

student representatives themselves and those of the students they represented. The opinions of other board members were also sought on the effectiveness and contribution of the student representatives.

Participation by students in school decision-making is a theme in the work of Treslan (1983) in Canada, Chavez (1985) and Nussbaum (1990) in America, and Crouch (1970) in England. They agree that such participation is necessary and commendable but fraught with difficulties. The New Zealand structure is unique; yet it is of a similar non-proportional, consultative nature to overseas models and the writer suspected that it would suffer from the same difficulties as its precedents in student representation on management bodies: difficulties in role definition, difficulties in communication and consultation, inadequacy of training for their role and objections to the presence of students on the boards. These themes emerged from the literature review and formed the basis of the research questions which were investigated.

Research Methods

Five research questions were formulated and a variety of methods was employed to investigate each question.

The primary research method involved the use of questionnaires which, after trialing on two previous representatives, were posted to newly appointed student representatives at thirty schools in the Auckland area shortly after their election. Questions covered the areas of expectations, role, training, communication channels and expected limitations on student representational performance.

This was followed by a second questionnaire which was administered eight months later and which asked similar questions

on the above themes with the addition of a follow-up telephone interview on the areas of training which the representatives would have welcomed, their views on inclusion of additional students on the boards and the actual limits placed on their own contributions.

A second approach was to follow closely four of the student representatives in the public aspect of their role. Four large Auckland schools were selected and the representative at each of these schools was approached to seek permission to have his or her performance monitored. Regular discussions took place and a record was kept of each one's representative activities around the school. The researcher also attended a number of board meetings where the representatives' contributions were observed and recorded. At two of these meetings, the actual utterances were charted along with those of every other board member in order to compare the relative oral contributions. These were later combined across the four schools and analysed.

In order to gauge the resistance to the presence of these students on these boards from other board members and their perception of the students' role, a third questionnaire was devised which the adult board members of the four schools were asked to complete. So few individual replies were received despite frequent appeals, that the results were combined for analysis.

A third feature of the study of the four schools was a student body survey conducted on a random cluster sample of over one hundred students at each school. This was designed to test the student perception of the role and the effectiveness of the student representative amongst those each represented, as well as the extent of support for the inclusion of a student on the Board of Trustees. The survey used a Likert scale format but was analysed question by question and school by school.

It was hoped initially to use a further check of the level of contribution of the representatives by content analysis of the minutes but this proved impossible owing to the abbreviated nature of such documents in most cases.

The two-pronged investigation of small-scale and large-scale sampling in the overall design provided the triangulation necessary to confirm the findings.

Assumptions and Limitations

It must be assumed that the researcher brings some personal perceptions to the study despite the attempt at impartiality. These perceptions may influence the observations without the observer's knowledge. It was hoped that the use of several overlapping methods would minimise this factor. Likewise the very presence of the researcher would have an effect on the performance being investigated so attempts were made to establish rapport with each of the students to eliminate this factor as much as possible. It had to be hoped that the presence of the researcher would not affect the interaction between the adult board members and the student representative to any significant degree.

It was calculated that the use of questionnaires at three stages in the research would provide valid data, owing to the random nature of the replies themselves in two cases and the selection of clusters of respondents in the other. This, however, is yet another assumption only.

Because it was physically impossible to be with even four student representatives for every second that they were performing their

Board duties, there are obvious limitations on the scope of this study. Therefore, it was decided to concentrate on one public aspect of the students' duties - their contribution to Board of Trustees' meetings, which could be observed at first hand. The students themselves reported on other day-to-day duties which they performed and their statements were verified by checking with other participants in such occurrences, where possible.

The four selected schools were chosen both for convenience, as there was a considerable time commitment involved in attending four board meetings per month, and to provide a consistency of subjects as well as a variety of subjects. Unfortunately, no single sex school or private school could be included in the intensive aspect of the study because either board meetings coincided or their student representatives had been re-elected for a further term of office. This admittedly may limit the study's generalisability to a degree. The limitation may be offset by the inclusion of the more general questionnaire data obtained from a wider sample.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter two, The Literature Review, summarises the background to the introduction of student representatives to New Zealand secondary schools, their role definition and the student representational experience at tertiary level both in New Zealand and overseas. Participation by students in school government at secondary level and the leadership training found to be necessary overseas for success in such positions is outlined. Finally, the current New Zealand position with regard to opposition to and support for student representatives leads up to a discussion of the major themes emerging from the literature.

Chapter three outlines the research design which centred around five research questions developed from the themes prominent in the literature review, discusses the ethical issues considered and details the research methods utilised.

The data gathered from both the wide and narrow focus elements of the study are presented in chapter four, together with the findings and implications resulting from each research tool. The conclusions and recommendations arising from the study are presented in chapter five.

In Conclusion

As the following chapters indicate, the inclusion of a student on the Boards of Trustees of New Zealand secondary schools has been a popular move with the student body. There have been "teething" and communication problems and some subversion of the contribution of the student representative in some places but, for the most part, the students have been accepted by the adults and apparently encouraged to participate fully in board discussions and actions, although the students' actual contributions have been restricted by a lack of training opportunities.

The recent law change (Education Act 1989, amended 1 January 1992, s. 94B) which makes the inclusion of a student representative on the board now optional for secondary schools may result in the disestablishment of such positions. However, if schools take note of the wishes of their student body, student representation on Boards of Trustees will continue.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1972, a seventh form student at Masterton College, (now Makoura College) Marilyn Blake, took her place on the Masterton Secondary Schools Board, the governing body of the two secondary schools in the area. She had been elected the previous year by the parents as their representative, with the full support of the then Principal of Masterton College, Noel Scott, his staff and the senior students. This was the first and only time such an event occurred in New Zealand prior to 1989.

When interviewed by this researcher in December 1991, Noel Scott said that he had been, "[I]nterested to see an active involvement from a student in the election." He was not surprised at Marilyn Blake's election against a strong field of parent candidates and he considered that she carried substantial parental support.

There was, at that stage, no legal impediment to this student's election - that came later. But, Scott recalled, there was a startled reaction by the media at the time, which expected the Board and the Principal to be antagonistic towards working with a student. The opposition's points were predictable - the problem of confidentiality, the lack of maturity, a student could have no contribution to make, the election set a dangerous precedent. However, it was pointed out by Scott that the parents had a democratic right to elect whomever they wanted. Marilyn's election was contested publicly, Scott recalled, by other parents and the Post Primary Teachers' Association which at that stage did not have teacher representatives on Boards. Marilyn Blake completed her year as a Board member with distinction, in Scott's opinion.

Noel Scott maintained that he had always involved students in the decision-making process at Masterton College, in line with the democratic philosophy and practice of the school, and that, in his opinion, senior students had the maturity and ability to contribute to the government and operation of their own schools. This philosophy, and the valuable lessons students stood to learn about the political process from their participation, was his rationale behind pushing for the inclusion of a student elected to represent other students on the Boards of Trustees when these were established by Lange and the Labour Government, of which Scott was by now a member, as outlined in Tomorrow's Schools (1988).

The placing of a student representative on Boards of Trustees of New Zealand secondary schools is a recent development. Consequently there is only a very small body of literature in existence which relates directly to this topic.

However, taking a wider view, it is possible to place the phenomenon of student representation on Boards of Trustees in the context of student representation in general, on which there is a much broader body of research from which emerge several themes relevant to this study.

The Role Definition

The idea of a student representative on a Board of Trustees was first mooted in New Zealand in the Picot Report of 1988. The report stated the intention of including among the members of such boards:

> one member elected by the student body in the case of secondary schools, and by the pupils of Form 1 and above in the case of schools with both primary and secondary students. (p. 50)

The writers thought that a student voice on the board would be giving access to an interest group of the utmost importance previously ignored to a large extent in school management.

Tomorrow's Schools (August 1988) repeated the intention to place a student on Boards of Trustees and added that:

> The student representative will be free to withdraw from board meetings at any time if their presence is likely to compromise them. Boards will also need to be aware that in some cultures it is unacceptable for young people to work alongside those in authority. (p. 8)

This document also signalled the envisaged status of student representatives: "All board members have the same powers and responsibilities - whether co-opted or elected." (ibid)

The Education Act, October 1st 1989, made law the inclusion of student representatives on Boards of Trustees. The Act grants students powers which are equal to those of other board members but obliges them to withdraw from meetings if they are being discussed personally, and entitles them to leave voluntarily if the students feel uncomfortable. (Education Act 1989 p. 108)

The subsequent Lough Report (1990) attempted to clarify the roles of the Chairperson, Principal and Trustee members in general but made no mention of the special role (if any) of the Student Representative.It can be assumed from this document that the student is present on boards with the same roles as other trustees, namely:

- -to oversee and direct the process of selecting new principals
- - to provide continuing support to the principal in the execution of his/her duties
- - to make policy
- - to ensure the school communicates effectively with its community. (p. 23)

A Guide to Governance and Management appeared late in 1990, a production of the Principals' Implementation Task Force. The document outlines (p. 9) the "important" role of the student representative as being:

> the only direct avenue students have into the decision-making process. At the same time, it provides an insight into student wishes and concerns that might otherwise not be directly available to trustees.

The student, according to this document, is to serve the broad interests of the school and the students. For this to be achieved requires the support of the Principal and the Chairperson, in particular, to ensure "that their contributions to discussion are welcomed and respected by other trustees." (ibid). It requires the student representative be made familiar with his or her obligations and that he or she undergo a proper induction into the workings of boards and meetings.

Following a hui, facilitated by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, a flyer was sent to student representatives throughout New Zealand from the Office of Youth Affairs in September 1990. The flyer outlined a student's roles and responsibilities:

- to be a trustee and a student representative,
- to read all information sent to trustee members,
- to be present at the meetings and be part of the meetings.

The flyer contained a segment on the rights of the student representative, taken from the Education and the School Trustees Acts, and a section containing assertiveness strategies.

Finally, the flyer suggested methods of communicating with the student body being represented and listed some further sources of assistance or information.

This appears to be the extent of the official assistance given to students with regard to their role as elected members of Boards of Trustees. The role is by no means clear in the available literature and, therefore, one would expect some confusion amongst the representatives themselves and those whom they represent. For example, are the students' obligations restricted solely to student matters and concerns? Are they to offer an opinion only when they have consulted the student body? Are they to be a trustee or a student first?

The Tertiary Experience

This, then, is the beginnings of student representation on the governing body of **schools** in New Zealand. Victoria University in Wellington, however, had made some progress towards participation in educational decision-making in its institution. In the late 1960s, prompted by the students themselves, this participation was enhanced, as outlined in Victoria University's 1969 report, Student Participation in the University.

There had been one student on the University Council since 1938 but it was felt that there was still a wide gulf between students and staff. Communication was informal and insufficient and students wanted a greater say in decisions which directly affected them. The university response was pragmatic. Council representation was increased to two. The Professorial Board gained three representatives but on some committees it was still felt inappropriate to include students for reasons of confidentiality. The resulting structure was intended to ensure that students were now consulted whenever possible before decisions were reached and that the student body was adequately informed on the reasons for any changes. It was recognised that success was dependent on the

ability of the representatives to carry out their duties and on the reception the students received from the teaching and administrative staff.

This appears to foreshadow a trend discussed by Neave (1983) in his paper on the changes to tertiary education in Europe in the mid- to late-1970s when various countries introduced legislation to deal with student participation in decision-making and managerial accountability as a

> solution to the struggle for power or for 'democracy' (depending on whether one identifies with professors or with students) which affected higher education during that period (p. 219).

The authors of a UNESCO report, Students' Aspirations and Participation (1970), discussed the involvement of all groups of students in university decision-making as an important step towards the democratisation of universities and what the authors considered its associated benefits.- democratic citizenship practice which could promote community responsibility, tolerance, understanding and an aspiration towards improvement, equality and justice. However, their report did not consider that consultative participation constitutes genuine participation and numerical representation was the writers' preferred alternative.

Student participation at Auckland University is recorded in The University of Auckland Staff Handbook (1991) which states that the President of the Auckland University Students' Association is an ex-officio member the Council of the University and that, in addition, the student body elects one representative to Council who will then represent students on several of the Council committees. The Senate itself has six student representatives who likewise serve on its committees. The individual Faculties have student representation, the numbers being determined by the number of

students in the Faculty. The document also records student representation on Departmental and Student Consultative Committees.

Laverty (1984) surveyed 171 Catholic Colleges with degree-granting status in America and found only 22 to have student trustees. Her findings suggested that these student representatives perceived that they had greater influence on governing boards than their presidents reported and that student influence was predominantly on student affairs rather than on any other board issue. It was felt that the students may have gained more influence by utilising formal channels of input to the board than by having a sole voting seat.

This view is supported by Randall (1985) who reported that although the position of a student representative on public 4-year colleges and universities enjoyed a warm reception, it had little true impact on board decisions.

But consultative representation remains in America. A document reporting on the Governance of the State University of New York Community Colleges (Martens, 1985) indicates that students elect one member for a one-year term while the rest of the body is elected for a staggered nine-year term of office.

The Students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (1986) states that the Californian State Board of Education has had a student representative since 1969 and that, since 1984, the student member (appointed by the governor) has had the right to vote on Board actions. Nussbaum (1990) reported on the student representation in Californian Community Colleges which include students within various policy-making groups while, in Virginia, Snyder (1989) wrote of the Student Government Association

President having a place on the college council at Wytheville Community College.

Whereas the students themselves asked for a say in the affairs of their universities as discussed above, New Zealand secondary school students had the opportunity thrust upon them. Did they want it?

Secondary school student representatives are, in some cases, several years younger than those who are active in student politics at university. Many of the representatives in this study are senior students but the law permits representatives to be as young as fourth formers. In addition, Board of Trustee student representatives are a lone voice among adults. These two factors, coupled with the possibility that the students do not want to be represented anyway, could make a considerable difference to the performance and effectiveness of such student representatives.

Participation in the Secondary School

Student participation in secondary school administration has been a feature of American and Canadian schools, as reported in the literature. Participation, while being seen as advantageous, has generally been at a low administrative level in that it is based around the school student council. Some leadership training has been initiated to assist students in these positions.

In America, Chavez (1985, p. 12) discussed the merits of giving students "a voice in their own affairs" in order to increase learning and commitment to an organisation. He cited Calkin (1975, p. 47): "If schools are to be humane and democratic, students should be involved in the decision-making process." This is the rationale

behind the student government of Evergreen College in California.

Treslan (1983, p. 124) concluded from a synthesis of North American research and literature that:

1) secondary school students can and should be involved in educational decision-making;
2) the educational advantages of such participation far outweigh the disadvantages;
3) the secondary school is a propitious place to train students in the decision-making process.

Treslan notes, too, that, although schools agree that effective organisations will be characterised by supportive relations, mutual respect, confidence, trust and interaction, a quantum leap exists between thinking and actual practice. Little planning has been done to allow input from students into school governments which have been established. As early as 1975 Alexander and Farrell had noted that in Ontario, for instance, 90 per cent. of schools had student governments and yet the students were dissatisfied with their ability to influence decisions that vitally affected their lives. (1975, p. 75)

The findings were echoed by Berger, (1977), at Waterford Junior High School, where participation in the school's student council did not facilitate the attaining of democratic behaviours but, rather, produced learnings of a quite different nature: that those who were influenced by the decisions (the students) rarely participated meaningfully in making those decisions and that the school seemed to get along quite well with one person in charge.

Despite the negative tone of such evaluations, Treslan does outline a process which he suggests would "realize student decisional input" (op. cit. p. 124) and implement educational change by

involving a greater proportional number of students in decision-making even though such a process is time-consuming and cumbersome.

Nussbaum (1990) outlined what he thought were the required conditions for students to participate effectively in governance. They include:

1. A community of interest - by which he means a shared interest in quality education.

2. A continuity of relationships - this is difficult to achieve with a transient body of students.

3. A collective whole - it is not easy to unify such a large group in order to provide strong direction and authority but it is seen as a necessity.

4. Leadership and administrative support - without well-trained, continuous leadership and established administrative support it is unlikely that participation will be effective .

5. Vision - a sense of perspective and appropriate context is necessary as well as a long term view of the future.

Nussbaum maintained that these conditions could be achieved by bestowing equal rights on student representatives, making sure they were informed, focusing on communication and co-ordination, offering training and consultative services when required and respecting the integrity of, and providing support for, elections.

California has taken student representation a step further. As laid down in the Education Code, if a prescribed number of students petitions for a student member to be included on the school district

governing board, each board must add at least one **non-voting** student member to its ranks. Such students serve a one year term with the right to attend every board meeting except executive sessions and to get paid travel but not attendance expenses.

Garnella (1981) concluded from a study of the representatives for the 1979-1980 school year that student and curriculum matters were the two areas of greatest interest to the group, and that orientation appeared to be an area of neglect. Less than one third of the respondents had received orientation support. Garnella recommended that professional associations, officially designated advisors, and elected adult board members should combine efforts to orient, train and assist student board members.

The Board of Trustee innovation in New Zealand has given students a voice in their own affairs which is potentially more powerful than that provided by the student council structures in overseas examples, including even that of California. The law has given students the same rights as every other board member, but this study hopes to uncover the extent of the representatives' contribution and effectiveness in terms of decisional input on behalf of the electorate that they represent. It is suspected that very few representatives have efficient structures on which to rely for communication, in either direction, and that this limitation, combined with the lack of training given, would make it extremely hard for student representatives to perform the task asked of them.

Leadership Training

The Student Government Manual : A Practical Guide for Organising Student Governments (1985) was produced in New York in response to a need for students to have a legitimate channel for

voicing their concerns. In their handbook, the writers saw ongoing leadership training as essential and they outlined the skills of leadership which could be taught - such as the functions of leadership, decision-making, setting goals and conflict resolution - in order to make the students more effective leaders on student councils. The same sort of programme could be valuable for student representatives in New Zealand.

Schoening and Keane (1989) presented a paper in Oregon in which they outlined another leadership training programme which used outgoing student leaders to take workshops for incoming leaders based on their own experience. This kind of peer tutoring seems to occur only on a very informal basis in the schools in this study. Some of the student representatives reported that they had spoken to their predecessors about their role but all said that no formal, organised training sessions had been arranged.

Likewise, Stiles (1986) described a leadership training programme for high school girls on the student council at Mary Institute (Missouri) when council meetings were observed to be disorganised and unproductive. The two-day leadership training programme was designed to include communication, leadership concepts and roles, decision-making, group building and goal setting.

> The leadership training programme promoted a positive and productive attitude among the council members that was maintained throughout the next year. (p. 211)

She asserts that council members have continued to demonstrate effective leadership but she admits that there are no data to support this assertion of success.

Leatt (1987) also asserted that the kind of leadership training and

experience given to members of school councils as decision-makers carries over into the community in later life.Such an assertion appears to have merit but is unproved, as yet.

If it was found necessary in overseas situations to provide training in leadership and communication skills for students representing their peers, even at student council level, then it would seem that some thought should be given to similar training for student representatives on Boards of Trustees if they are to perform effectively.

Kitto (1990) undertook a study of the student representatives in the Waikato region during the first year of their involvement in the governance of secondary schools - 1989. He reported that, of all board members, students were given the least support. He recorded that little guidance was given to student representatives on their role as trustees and that little or no training was provided, even though it was the first time students had ever undertaken the role. Kitto echoes the findings of overseas researchers in similarly stressing the need to train and equip the students for their participation in what is arguably the most difficult membership role on the board.

The Current Position

In The Dominion of May 17 1989, John Barrington, a Reader in Education at Victoria University, was quoted as saying that some secondary school principals were strongly opposed to students being on Boards of Trustees. Principals' main objections were said to concern issues of confidentiality, discipline and student involvement in staff matters. It was also felt that students should be concentrating more on their studies, that they lacked maturity and

experience and that they would face pressure from their peers to divulge confidential matters. The objections of principals were also reportedly based on the fact that students were already represented through their parents (Dawson, 1989).

However, Barrington drew a parallel with the criticism about confidentiality which arose with the inclusion of staff representatives on boards under the Kirk Government in New Zealand, 15 years beforehand. He pointed out that teachers' presence is now regarded as logical and appropriate and that he suspected that, within a short time, the attitudes of those principals and others who opposed student representation would also change.

Kitto's study (op. cit.) reported that a small number of student trustees had been illegally excluded from meetings of their boards on some occasions and that they were unaware of their right by law to attend any board meeting.

A second article by Dawson, in the The Dominion Sunday Times of 3 September 1989, defended the inclusion of students on Boards of Trustees. Neale Pitches, Principal of Onslow College, called for there to be two students on each board. He felt that reversing the move to student participation on the board went against the partnership concept of Tomorrow's Schools as it ignored students who constitute the client group of any school. Pitches said that the student representative at his school had played a full and helpful part on the board.

Summary

Five themes of relevance to this study have emerged from the literature.

First: The role of the student representative in the official documentation could be summarised as being "to represent the broader interests of students on the board by providing insight into student issues and concerns." Given the non-specific nature of this direction, some confusion could be expected among the representatives themselves and also among those they represent as to what they are to do (Picot, 1988; Lough, 1990; Kitto, 1990).

Secondly: Consultative representation, as discussed in the literature, is inherently difficult in nature. The youth of the student representatives, and the fact that they are a single voice representing a disproportionately large number of voters by comparison with their Board of Trustees colleagues, will make their job even harder to perform (UNESCO, 1970; Laverty, 1984; Berger, 1977; Nussbaum, 1990; Treslan, 1983; Alexander and Farrell, 1975).

Thirdly: The necessity of establishing and making use of efficient communication avenues is seen as a major contributory factor to the success or otherwise of consultative representation (Stiles, 1986; Nussbaum 1990).

Fourthly: The importance of adequate training for students placed in the position of representing their peers is recognised in the literature. (Stiles, 1986; Garnella, 1981; Schoening and Keane, 1989; Leatt, 1987; Kitto, 1990).

Fifthly: There appear to be objections to the presence of students

on the Boards of Trustees, which could interfere with the effectiveness of the representative process (Kitto, 1990; Dawson, 1989).

This study, undertaken during the third year of student representation on Boards of Trustees in New Zealand, attempted to investigate each of these five themes which were developed into research questions as outlined in the next chapter.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Design

This investigation was an exploratory study of the contribution and effectiveness of the student representatives on Boards of Trustees in the Auckland area, and at four schools in particular. Owing to the recent nature of the move to having student trustees, no body of literature exists in New Zealand on the topic. The literature review undertaken, therefore, sought to place the phenomenon of student representation on boards in the context of student representation in general in order to see student representation from a variety of perspectives.

From the themes which emerged it was possible to construct five research questions to investigate in the context of student representation on Boards of Trustees:

1. Is the role of the student representatives on the board clear to both the representatives and those they represent ?

2. Do secondary students want a consultative representational voice on the board and how effective is it?

3. Are the vital communication channels of such representation functioning?

4. Is training occurring and, if not, does this influence the students' effectiveness?

5. Is opposition to student representation affecting their participation?

In order to investigate these questions a number of methods were employed. The hope is that "the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counter-balancing strengths of another" (Jick 1979 p. 604) and that some form of triangulation has "led to more valid results" (ibid, p. 603).

Research Techniques

The research design contained both a wide focus and a narrow focus element.

Wide Focus: Questionnaires

The primary method of data gathering employed a number of questionnaires.

An initial questionnaire was sent to all newly appointed student representatives in the Auckland area close to the beginning of their term of office (please see Appendix 1). It was designed to survey the student representatives' expectations with regard to their role, their communication with those they represented, the areas to which they were expecting to contribute, the training they had received and their expected reception by their fellow board members. Sixteen replies were received for analysis.

This questionnaire was followed eight months later by a second questionnaire (Appendix 2), which asked the students to reflect on what they had achieved during that period. Only eleven students found the time to reply. Each of these eleven respondents was then telephoned with a further set of questions (Appendix 3) which was to be answered after their replies had been discussed and clarified.

Dixon, Bouma and Atkinson (1987 pp. 80 & 85) recommend that questionnaires should be short, and pretested. The pretesting necessitated finding a group of students of a similar nature to those to be used in the actual survey, and some previous student representatives. A local school was used whose representative could not be included in the study as she was taking the office for her second year.

The use of questionnaires in social science research has been criticised by Perrow (1982, p. 686) for creating "the world we want to prove exists" by asking questions to elicit the required responses. The items in the questionnaires and follow-up questions used in this study were left open-ended to avoid this phenomenon as much as possible.

The employment of open-ended questions and the checking of the conclusions drawn from them with the individual respondents attempted what Hughes (1980, p. 128) regards as "a dialogue with their own subject matter" in that the respondents were able to comment on and further extend their initial responses in the course of the follow-up phone interview. It was hoped that thereby the respondents also provided what Lather calls "face validity" for the data which is "operationalized by recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through at least a subsample of respondents" (1986, p. 271).

Narrow Focus: Observation,The On-duty Representative

In addition to the questionnaires which were sent to all student representatives, four schools were selected at which a closer observation of the students performing their "official" duties could be maintained. The aim was to get as close as possible to the

reality of the situation for the students while in their official capacity as board members at board meetings. Such meetings are open to the public but participation by observers is usually not permitted. "Participant observation" in the true sense of the term, therefore, was restricted.

Wolcott (1988) distinguishes three different participant-observer styles: the active participant, the privileged observer, and the limited observer. Observation by this researcher at board meetings was restricted to that of the role of a limited observer as participation by non-board members is not possible. The relationship developed with the individual student representatives approached that of privileged observer: known and trusted and given easy access to information, but because of the limited contact able to be maintained, and the nature of task of representation itself, the participation fell far short of a true definition of privileged observer. "Shadowing" four student representatives for six months was also impossible

Sanday (1979) suggests that true participant observation occurs over an extended period of time - at least a year. Such a time frame would have been impossible to maintain with four subjects under observation. It was also not possible to be with even these four representatives in all their official situations as the meetings of the board committees of which they were members were unable to be observed. Complete commitment was given as far as possible, however, to "[T]he task of understanding" (ibid, p 527).

It was anticipated that the frequency of observation would ensure that what was observed was characteristic of the performance of a student representative and provide "sufficient involvement at the site to overcome the effects of misinformation" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). Further, the public nature of board meetings and the

formal setting associated with them would provide a degree of artificiality for the student which would, it was hoped, outweigh the effects of an observer at the meetings, even when the student was aware of the reason for the presence of such an observer.

The decision to observe meetings rather than rely solely on interview and questionnaire data was to avoid the "discrepancy between real and verbal behaviour." (Friedrichs and Ludtke, 1975, p.6). What the students reported might not have been in accordance with the factual behaviour of those present at a board meeting.

Observer distortion due to bias was minimised, in part, by familiarisation on the part of the researcher with board procedures during practice observations of student representatives undertaking their role in the year preceding the study, as recommended by Friedrichs and Ludtke, (1975). The frequency of observation and the systematic nature of the observation should also assist objectivity. The effects of any bias should be offset by the use of participant observation "supplemented by a variety of data collection tools" (Sanday, op. cit., p.528).

Meeting Contribution Survey

At two meetings for each of the student representatives a record was kept of the actual utterances of all board members present using an observation schedule worked out for the purpose (see Appendix 7) in order to assess the participation of the student representative in relation to adult board members. It provided some interesting results when analysed.

Pupil Surveys

As it was necessary to measure the effectiveness of the student representative in the eyes of those whom they represent, a survey was devised and this was based on the Likert scale, a recognised method of attitude measurement. The survey was administered to a random cluster of over a hundred students at the four schools under close scrutiny.

The survey usually employs an additive scale, where a high number would indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the performance of their representative and a low number would indicate a less favourable opinion. However, once the survey was completed, it was less useful simply to add the responses and to select an arbitrary number to represent satisfaction with the performance of the representative in each of the four schools than to describe the raw data itself and draw conclusions from that. Thus the latter method was employed.

Board Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to the adult members of the Boards of Trustees at the same four schools to measure their opinions of the effectiveness of the student representatives. Replies were confidential and unidentifiable so it was only possible to interview the chairperson to verify their observations. The questionnaire did, though , provide another view of the student representation process.

Triangulation

Triangulation is "critical in establishing data trustworthiness" (Lather, op. cit., p. 270) and was provided by including the Research Questions in several of the methods utilised. For example, the questionnaire administered to the adult members of the Boards of Trustees was based on Research Questions one, three and five. These same questions had been included in the wide focus elements and in the On-duty Representative stage. Questions one and three also occurred in the Pupil Survey. As a result, some convergence of data became apparent.

Content Analysis

It was planned that a content analysis would be carried out of the number of times the student representatives' names (and for what reason) appeared in the minutes as a further measure of their contributions. This strategy proved impossible as the board records did not, in most cases, record the mover and the seconder of motions during discussions.

The research process can be diagrammed as follows:

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

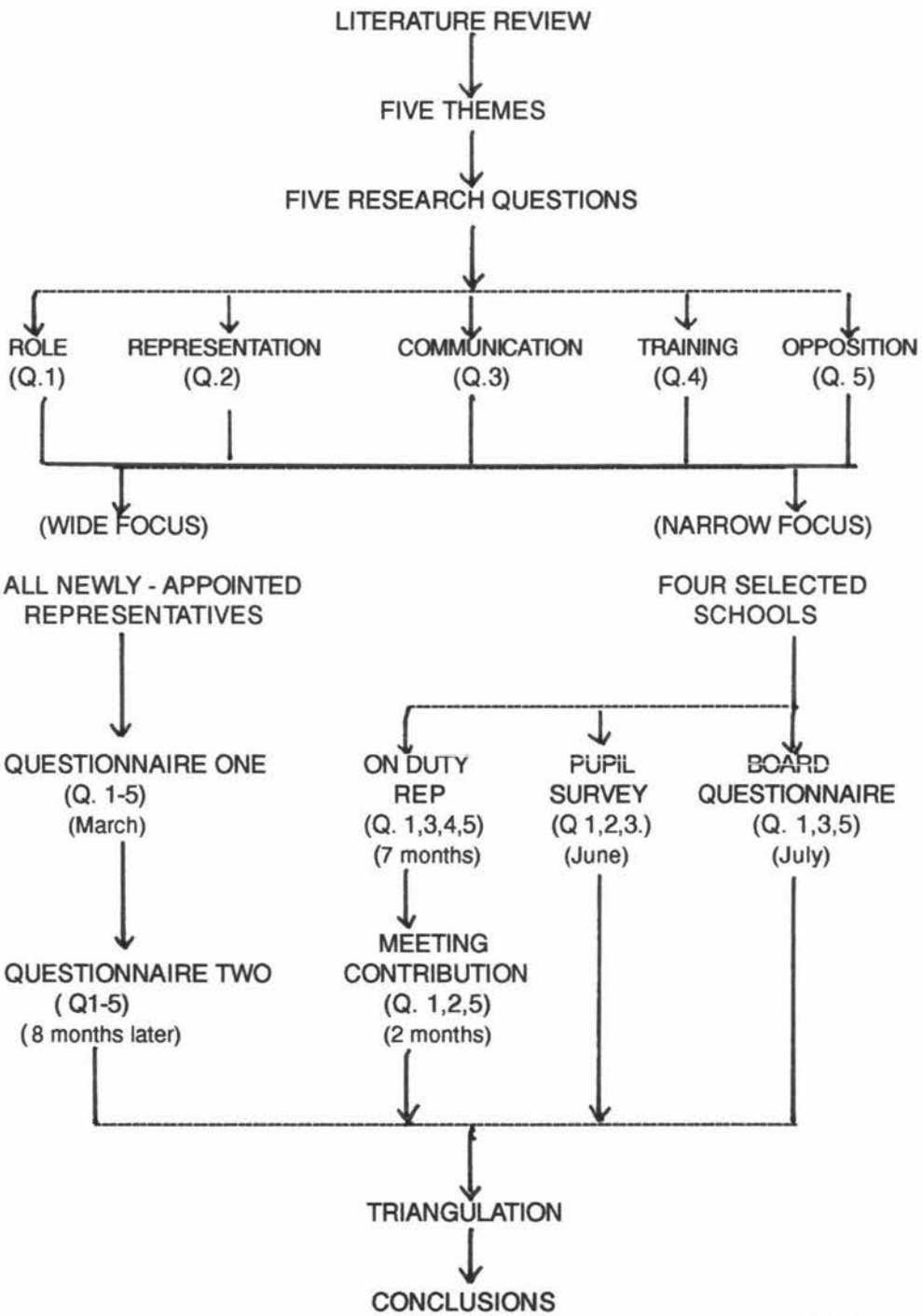


Table 1

The research process was designed to investigate each of the five

questions. Each question (as can be seen above) was included in at least three of the individual methods employed so that triangulation was possible.

The researcher hoped that this study would provide "catalytic validity", another of Lather's terms, meaning "the research process reorients, focuses, and energises participants toward knowing the reality in order to transform it" (ibid, p. 272). By participating in this research it was hoped that the student representatives, particularly those four with whom close contact was kept, would gain some self-knowledge, and some understanding of their situation in order to improve on the job they were doing for the rest of the students in their schools. The final research document would, however, be published after they had completed their term of office.

Ethics

The undertaking of this thesis involved giving attention to three primary ethical issues.

a. **Consideration:** The questionnaires were short and should not have taken the respondents long to complete. They were culled of unnecessary questions as part of the pretesting process as recommended by Dixon Bouma and Atkinson (op. cit.) and in order to limit the invasion of privacy to the narrowest extent possible. Informed consent was obtained (as outlined in Van Dalen, 1962, p. 35) before following the four selected students closely. Cluster sampling of the wider school population was selected for the survey as it caused minimal disruption to the school while maintaining the random nature necessary for validity.

b. **Confidentiality**: Although board meetings are open to the

public, permission was formally sought and granted for the researcher to attend them as an observer. All participants were assured that the replies to the questionnaires and surveys would remain confidential to the researcher and the outcomes would be kept as anonymous as possible (Van Dalen, op. cit.). Participants were assured that records of the observer sessions would ultimately be destroyed when no longer required, along with the questionnaires themselves, as recommended by Dixon, Bouma and Atkinson (op. cit.) and Van Dalen (op. cit.)

c. **Findings**: The inferences drawn form the raw data were checked with the participants to achieve "face validity" (Lather, op.cit.). Agreement to present the findings in the form of a thesis was sought and granted and the four student representatives and their schools will be supplied with a copy of the final report.

Research Methods

The First Student Representative Questionnaire

A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. Trialed on two previous representatives, the items were designed to elicit information from newly elected student representatives in 30 schools in the Auckland area. Sixteen replies were received from state and private schools, both co-educational and single sex, within the Auckland city confines and included replies from the four students who had agreed to be involved in the narrowly focused study.

The questionnaire enquired about how the student representatives saw their role on the board, the areas where, at this early stage

contribution would or would not be possible, the communication channels available, the training received and expectations of treatment by both the representatives' fellow pupils and fellow board members.

The five research areas were covered by questions incorporated in the questionnaire:

1. Role
2. Representation
3. Communication channels established
4. Training received
5. Expected opposition.

The covering letter which accompanied the questionnaire asked that only first-time representatives be included in the study as it was felt that those in their second year would be in the minority, and that experience could enhance - or detract from! - their effectiveness. The letter also assured participants of confidentiality. Of the 32 questionnaires mailed, only 16 usable replies were received. This was due in part to the stipulation that only first-time representatives should respond.

The Second Student Representative Questionnaire.

A copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2. It was designed to follow up the questions asked in the first questionnaire and to have the students reflect on what they had achieved, the communication channels they had used and how they themselves had operated as sources of student opinion or as the means of feedback from the board, the areas where they had felt able or unable to contribute, and the limits which had been placed on their

involvement in board activities. The second questionnaire, therefore, expanded on four of the research questions:

- the student representatives' role as they saw it now
- the reaction of their fellow students to their position
- the effectiveness of their communication
- the objections to their presence which had become manifest.

Only 11 replies were received from the 16 students who responded to the first questionnaire but each was followed by a telephone interview which included questions to clarify and check the inferences drawn and a further selection which can be found in Appendix 3. These subsequent questions primarily asked about training for the role, the only remaining element of the research design which the questionnaire itself had not contained.

The Pupil Surveys.

Using the cluster sample method for accuracy as well as convenience for the school, the survey which can be found in Appendix 4, was administered to over 100 pupils coming from all form levels at the four schools where the student representative was under scrutiny in this study.

Designed using the Likert Scale, the survey was trialed on a group of 60 equivalent students and slight modifications were made to the questions. It was necessary to obtain the clients' views of the student representative's role, the level of their desire to be represented, their representative's communication record and therefore, it approached those aspects of the research questions from a different perspective. As previously discussed, it was decided to treat the individual responses separately in order to

obtain a more differentiated picture of the students' views of their representative.

The On-Duty Representative.

A journal record was kept on each of the student representatives in action at his or her respective monthly board meetings and of any subsequent discussions for a period of six months. This running record provided the "on-duty" data which supplied the background detail to which the researcher could refer for clarification. The record also provided a means to collect data on aspects of the public role of the representative in situations which the researcher could not witness at first hand.

The contents of the journal record included the nature of the contribution made by the student to the observed board meetings, the topics of the reports given, the use made of communication channels and the issues raised through them, and the observed reaction of the other board members to the efforts of the student representative. It also noted the committees on which the student sat although it was not possible for the observer to be present at these events. A sample from one of these records can be found in Appendix 5.

At two of the board meetings for each of the four schools, the utterances of each board member were recorded using the observation criteria found in Appendix 7. This noted the nature of the contribution made by each member. The results of the meeting records can also be found in Appendix 7.

The object was to investigate the first research question: Is the role of the representative clear to the representative? The second: How

effective is the student voice on the board? The last: Is opposition to student representation affecting participation?

As a result, the contribution of the student representatives could be compared with that of every other member on the two nights to establish the students' effectiveness in relation to the other board members'. Selected results from the four schools were also combined to determine any pattern which existed.

The Adult Board Member Questionnaire

It was hoped that triangulation of the data would be achieved within the four schools by administering the questionnaire found in Appendix 6 to the remaining, adult board members. This was designed primarily to investigate two of the research areas:

1.The adults' perception of the role of the student representative.
2.The opposition to the presence of the representative.

Unfortunately, even after several follow-up reminders, only 15 responses were received from the possible 36 adults on the boards of the four schools and so the results were once again combined for analysis.

Summary

The research design, then, incorporated both a wide focus - the 16 first-time student representatives who responded to the initial questionnaires, and a narrow focus - the four schools where three different approaches were employed to enable triangulation.

Each of the research tools was designed to contain elements which explored at least three of the research questions forming the basis

of this investigation, to enable the cross checking of the findings at each stage and to provide a base from which conclusions could be drawn.

4 DATA - FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the data which were gathered in relation to the research questions in two sections. The first deals with the wide focus elements - the two student representative questionnaires. The second section presents the narrow focus data in three parts - the schools' opinions of their representatives, the students observed in action and, finally, the adult board members' view of the student representative structure. In each case the research question which guides the analysis is included at the beginning of the presentation.

Wide Focus

The findings of the two questionnaires are presented in two ways, both as fractions of responses and as percentages. The fraction is maintained as part of the result as in some cases the sample number is too low to allow generalisations to be drawn from the percentage with certainty. Where appropriate, individual replies have been included in order to enhance the impression gained from the data and to add a personal dimension to the study.

4. 1 THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' VIEWS

The First Student Representative Questionnaire (Appendix 1)

Is the role of the student representative clear to the students themselves?

When asked what they hoped to achieve as newly elected student representatives on their boards, 12/16 (75%) of those surveyed felt they were the student voice on the board on issues of student concern, 3/16 (18%) thought they might get some managing or governing skills from the experience. The rest either wanted specifics - such as the scrapping of exams, or to be role models, or had vague goals like involving the students more or getting things done.

The majority thought these tasks were what those who elected them expected: 10/16 (62.5%) thought they were there to be a voice for the students' points of view and one individual commented that her school expected her to "[C]hange the world"!

Although they seemed to have a fairly clear idea of why they were there, they were not so certain about how they were going to carry out their role. A fair majority, 11/16 (68.75 %) had only vague methods in mind at the start of their term, that they would somehow make contact with all levels of the school. Only two of the respondents thought they would make use of their student council to help them achieve their goals.

The same percentage, (68.75 %) felt they would be confident in contributing to discussion on "student issues" such as the tuckshop, student welfare, shelters, paths, the 7th form common room, uniform and hair issues, because they were familiar areas. There were only single responses for the areas of curriculum, discipline and public

relations as anticipated areas of contribution. On the other hand, there were also some clearly marked issues where the representatives felt they would be unable to contribute. Teacher discipline featured strongly (in 7/16 replies - 43.75 %) and financial matters were also going to be areas of withdrawal as the students felt they had no experience or expertise in this area of board business. As the initial survey was conducted shortly after their election, a number of the students (6/16, 37.5 %) did not yet know in what areas they would not be able to contribute.

Thus, the students were putting limits of their own onto the contribution they expected to make even before they had attended their first meeting. They felt competent to participate in only a narrow range of issues and doubted their ability to make a contribution to the full range of board matters.

Are the students aware of the importance of communication channels?

The students in the survey were mindful of the necessity to communicate with those they represented but over half (9/16, 56.25 %) at the early stages, were going to rely on informal channels such as word of mouth and their own class members to pass on information and suggestions. Six out of sixteen (37.5 %) had a student council to draw on, 3/16 (18.75) had house meetings, and only two mentioned that there were suggestion boxes already set up for use, despite the idea having been presented to former representatives by the Ministry of Youth Affairs.

Nearly half of the representatives, (7/16, 43.75 %) had no idea at the start of their term how they were going to enhance their communications. Three mentioned form level meetings, two would use assemblies for the first time and four were going to set up a suggestion box. Only single replies mentioned personally visiting

form classes or holding a referendum to gauge opinion.

Is any training taking place?

Despite the fact that overseas studies have shown the importance of training for students who take up representative positions, over three quarters, (13/16, 81.25 %) of these students reported that they had received no training for the task which they were about to undertake. Individuals mentioned chats with the principal about meeting procedure or with the previous representative about what went on during meetings but there was no evidence of the support envisioned by the writers of the Guide to Governance and Management (1990) .

The only experience which the student representatives saw as relevant to their present role was their time served on the student council (7/16, 43.75 %) while 4/16 (25 %) thought that being a member of the school body for a number of years was qualification in itself. Two had debating experience and two thought that active membership of a club had been valuable. One mentioned a peer support programme which had been useful and another valued the captaining of a sports team.

Are the students anticipating opposition to their election?

While 13/16 (81.25%) still wished to be treated as just another student by their fellows, 15/16 (93.75 %) expected to be treated as an equal, as one of the team, by the other board members. One respondent mentioned that the previous representative had felt she was being treated like a child and hoped that 1991 would be different. That was the only mention of expected opposition at this early stage.

The Second Student Representative Questionnaire

The second questionnaire, (a copy of which can be found in Appendix 2) was sent to students after eight months in their job, and elicited replies from only 11 of the 16 students who had responded to the initial questionnaire despite several follow-up calls. The results are summarised below and compared, where relevant, to those of the first questionnaire.

Has the students' perception of their role changed?
After eight months in office, 6/11 (54%) still thought their main achievement had been to raise student concerns at board level. As well, the same percentage felt they had informed the board of the students' opinion on various matters. However 6/11 also admitted that in a lot of cases it was their own opinion that was given as there was not time to canvass for student feeling on many of the issues raised at the meetings. Only two (18%) mentioned that they had gained skills such as meeting procedure from the experience while other single replies stated that their main achievement was staying awake at the midnight sessions and surviving the year.

How effective did the representatives feel they had been during their eight month's experience?
Question two of the questionnaire required the students to consider what they had not achieved that they had hoped to achieve. Only four (36%) said they could think of nothing they had left undone. Nearly all the others commented that they had found little to report to the student body and that the students in general were not very interested. One particular respondent was very negative about his term and claimed to have achieved absolutely nothing.

How had they communicated with the students whom they represented?

All 11 representatives who replied had made use of their student councils despite the small number who initially had considered it a means of effective communication. When councils met regularly they had been a source of ideas and a method of feedback from the board meetings. Unfortunately, it was reported by the majority that the frequency of meetings declined over the course of the year. For example, one school had had only one meeting in four months and, thus, denied the representative a necessary means of conveying information.

About half (7/11, 63%) had spoken to assemblies where they felt they were at least visible to the whole school, although, as one commented, it was impossible to measure if the students were actually listening to them. One thought assembly speeches had proved a "[F]at lot of use!" Three (27%) had used a suggestion box, one of the methods recommended by the Ministry of Education. One box had yielded three suggestions all year, another only four. Two had tried surveys - an 85% response was received by one, 43% from the other - so success was varied. Three had visited classes from time to time and reported good feedback from this activity. One had made use of the daily bulletin to pass on messages and one had held a monthly general meeting at which the number of students attending had gradually increased from five to about 50.

Overall, there seemed to be general agreement that communication with the students was important but difficult to maintain. Once again there was a feeling that there was really little interest in the dealings of the board except amongst a group which had raised a specific issue.

How effective is the student representative contribution?
The issues to which the students had felt able to contribute were, as

they had expected : buildings and grounds (10/11, 91%), uniform (8/11, 73%), tuckshop (4/11, 36%). Three had been involved in the disciplining of fellow students and four had been included in the selection of senior staff for their schools. Individuals had contributed to financial and policy matters and a lone voice claimed to have been able to contribute student opinion to all board matters. Conversely, 6/11(54%) said that board finances had been beyond them, particularly the bulk funding debates, and 8/11 (73%) reported they had been unable to contribute to the discipline role of the board.

As expected, personnel also scored highly especially with regard to principals' contracts and appraisal, staff appointments and wages. With most of these matters though, the limitations were perceived by the students themselves as stemming from a lack of expertise. They recalled being encouraged to take part in as much as they felt able to do so.

Has there been opposition to their inclusion?
There was no blatant obstruction noted but other subtle means were used to narrow the students' contribution.

Four (36%) representatives reported that committees had already been set up and a place was not offered. Others recalled that for reasons of ethics, confidentiality or student - to - student relations, they were informed that students would be best advised not to sit on committees such as discipline, which was mentioned by five students as an example (45%). Yet at other schools, student representatives were encouraged to confront miscreant students, often with very positive results, as one principal confirmed. Six (54%) reported they had been discouraged from taking part in staff issues, particularly with regard to disciplinary matters or salaries. They also reported that, in the main, they went along with these

recommendations as it was sensible to do so, but most felt that if they had really pushed the issue, they would not have been prevented from doing what they legally had a right to do. About half of those spoken to knew their rights under the Education Amendment Act and that they could not legally be excluded from taking a full part in any board activity.

How well received is the student voice?

All representatives felt they had been made welcome but only five (45%) thought they had been treated as an equal on their boards. Students reported having their points of view listened to and having things explained for them when required. The response from the student body was positive, with 5/11 (45%) recording no real change in their reception among their fellows, which they appreciated, but 3/11 (27%) claiming they were treated with respect and had had support, especially from the senior students. Another 4/11 (36%) said students from all the levels came up to them in the school grounds to ask questions. One said, "They were amazed I get paid."

How do the representatives view their own position?.

Only 4/11 (36%) thought student representation was an excellent idea. They pointed out that all the other sectors of the school community were represented and that students should have their chance to have some input as well. It was necessary, they said, for a student voice to present their case as an adult, while sympathetic, could never really know exactly what the students wanted. Two mentioned that having students on the board focussed the Board's attention on the pupils which was what schools were all about and that this,"[k]ept the adults honest."

Others felt that, although they were present and contributed when they could, they never really made an impact on what the board

decided. They often felt "out of their depth" and, although the board listened to their points of view, it was only an illusion that they had a say in things as the board tended to do what the parents favoured rather than what the students wanted. One even went so far as to say that he was wasting government money being there, that it had taken him six months to begin to understand what was going on and that, when he finally did, the students were not interested themselves.

Would training assist them in their role?

Many representatives had found their involvement enjoyable but time consuming and would have appreciated some training to enable them to do a better job. In the follow-up interview this aspect was raised with the students along with several other issues. The schedule of questions can be found in Appendix 3.

The areas mentioned by the students which they felt would have assisted them in their role were:

background information on the issues discussed, (6/11, 54%)
instructions on how to present an effective case, (6/11, 54%)
aspects of meeting procedure, (5/11, 45%)
the art of public speaking, (4/11, 36%)
leadership training in general, (3/11, 27%)
the writing of reports, (2/11, 18%)
time management, (1/11, 9%)
stress management, (1/11, 9%).

None of the representatives during the period of office studied had received anything but the most casual of instructions on how to carry out his or her role. (The situation had remained unaltered from the time of the first questionnaire). Only a few had had a chance to talk to the previous representative at their school apart from at their

first board meeting where the "reins had been handed over". Over half (54%) said that they would have liked more contact to have occurred and an identical number also said they would have found it valuable to speak with other representatives in their area. One had tried to arrange a meeting but had failed to do so through lack of initial interest shown in her idea.

Over three quarters of the respondents, (9/11, 82%) felt that a second student representative on the board would have been good to have and four had suggested it to their boards at times even if it were to occur only at the committee level. The students would have appreciated the moral support and a sharing of the workload. It was pointed out by several of the representatives that their burden of representation was considerably higher than that of any other board member. There was limited support for a two-year term of office (4/11, 36%).

Summary and Implications

The wide focus exploration of the research questions which guided the study revealed some initial trends which are summarised below:

Research Question 1 **Is the role of the student representative on the board clear to both the representative and those they represent?**

The role of the representative is somewhat narrowly defined by both the representatives themselves and those who serve on the boards with them. The representatives considered themselves to be the student voice and a channel for information in both directions. However their own reports to the board were primarily

about student activities and events rather than the student initiated issues, because of a perceived lack of interest on the part of the students themselves and because of the expectations of the boards on which they serve. The flow of information to the rest of the student body is restricted by the nature of board work itself which is, for the most part, of little student concern.

Question 2. **Do secondary students want a consultative representational voice on the board and how effective is it?**

The reception of the representatives by their peers seemed to suggest that there is a desire amongst students to have their voice heard at board level. Concrete evidence has yet to be collected on this point, however.

At the same time, effective representation is proving difficult to achieve owing, in part, to the sheer numbers involved, the representatives' feelings of isolation as a lone student voice and, once again, the lack of interest of their fellow students.

The nature of the students' contribution is confined to those areas where they think they have some knowledge and, thus, they often feel out of their depth and lacking in the background information needed to take a fuller role.

Question 3. **Are the vital communication channels of such representation functioning?**

The students have recognised the importance of their communication channels and many have tried a number of methods. Some of these were considered more effective than others.

Question 4. **Is training occurring and, if not, does this influence the students' effectiveness?**

The suspicion that little in the way of training had been carried out to help these students in their role was confirmed. Representatives themselves identified several areas where they would have appreciated such assistance in order to make their contributions more effective.

Question 5. **Is opposition to student representation affecting their participation?**

The opposition to a student presence as a trustee does not seem to have been apparent to the representatives. Most reported a welcoming board but at the same time admitted that a degree of shepherding had been practised with regard to particular board functions, notably discipline and staff matters.

The narrow focus section of the research design which concentrated on the specific contribution and effectiveness of student representatives at four Auckland secondary schools should reveal whether the above trends can be confirmed.

4.2 THE STUDENT IN ACTION

Narrow Focus

The students included in the narrow focus aspect of this study were from schools on both sides of Auckland City.

School one was a co-educational school with a roll of 1624. Its student representative in 1991 was a male 7th former.

School two was a medium-sized, co-educational school of 910 with a large non-European roll and a functioning student council on which the 7th form female student representative had a place.

School three was another large co-educational school of 1140 with a 25% non-European roll and a 6th form male representative who had only just that year arrived at the school.

School four was a co-educational school of 1550 with a student representative who was also the Head Boy.

Each of these schools (and their student representatives) had given permission to this researcher to closely monitor the public actions of the representatives in what could be called their "on-duty" role. This was considered to be the monthly board meeting, primarily, which was the sole venue at which the researcher could observe. Other aspects of the student representatives' "on-duty" performance could only be reported either by the students themselves or by other witnesses.

Observations were made at six of the monthly board meetings attended by each of the students. The data which were collected

from these meetings and the discussions with the student representatives either before or after the meetings were recorded in a log, a part sample of which can be found in Appendix 5. A separate record was kept for each student observed.

At two meetings of each board the actual contribution of the students was recorded in conjunction with those of every other board member. These outcomes are explored in more detail following the discussion of the general observation period.

The On-Duty Representative

It was hoped that the public performance of the student representative at board meetings would demonstrate the role as they themselves perceived it to be, (research question 1), the effectiveness of the communication channels which were operating, (research question 3) and any opposition to the students' presence on the boards, (research question 5). The discussions would also reveal the training the representative had received for the role and any use which was being made of it, (research question 4).

School one

Is the role of the student representative clear to the representative?

From the observation of the performance of this school's representative at a number of board meetings it became clear that the student considered himself to be, primarily, a channel of communication from the students to the board. At his first meeting, he announced that he would be visiting each class to collect issues to bring to the board and that he would make use of the student

council. His contribution to subsequent meetings confirmed that he had indeed carried this out when he gave, regularly at each meeting, a verbal student report from the notes which he had made. The board was informed of student news rather than issues, however, as the student kept up a steady stream of information. Some minor issues to do with student facilities were also raised. His reports were politely received.

The process was repeated in reverse. The student saw that part of his role was to report board affairs to the students and this he endeavoured to do by speaking at the school assemblies. He maintained a high profile.

The chairman of the board, however, helped to define the role for the student representative to some extent. At his first meeting the student was informed of the board's expectations:

- to bring information on the students to the board,
- to collect information for the board when requested,
- to serve, he was told, on the uniform committee.

As discussed above, the student appeared to agree that it was his role to inform. The committee placement had also been expected as his predecessor had held a similar post. No other committee placements were offered by name.

Are the communication channels functioning?

This student representative was prepared to seek contributions and feedback from the student body. He regularly visited form classes and was accessible around the school. He relied on his fellow seventh formers to provide him with information from their vertical form groups, which gave the representative access to all levels of the school. He also relied on the student council which met with

decreasing frequency throughout the year, dependent as it was on the organisation of the teachers in charge.

The communication to the board was certainly thorough, but like most of the representatives in the wider focus section, he found little of relevance to report back to the student body. The information he was able to pass on, he reported to all school assemblies as soon as possible after a board meeting.

Had any training been received?
This representative had received no formal training for his role. The communication channels he initiated were of his own design, apart from the student council which had been used by the previous representative. He had not had the chance to meet with other representatives at all and had spoken only briefly to his predecessor about what to expect. He was aware of basic meeting procedure but received no further instruction in how to conduct himself at a board meeting.

Is opposition to the student affecting participation?
There was no blatant opposition in evidence during the months of this study. The student was welcomed warmly to the board at his first meeting, although it was two and a quarter hours before the chairman remembered to introduce to him the rest of the board members present. The staff representative sat close to the student in order to offer moral support at this and subsequent board meetings.

The student was told to take a full part in proceedings as he had the right to participate fully in any board action. There were no barriers put in the way of his being part of the selection panel for senior management posts but he was denied a place on the discipline committee - for his own protection, it was explained to him.

This student felt that his opinion was valued and that it carried equal weight to those of other board members. He was not aware of any opposition to his presence.

In reality, there was a degree of opposition. A student presence on the senior staff selection panel was a battle fought by his predecessor the previous year which resurfaced during this student representative's term of office. Once again, as no legal impediment could be found to prevent it, the student was included in the decision-making .The pointed directions of the chairman at his initial meting also limited the student representative's participation, although he appeared to be unaware of it at the time.

School two

Is the role of the student representative clear to the representative?

The student representative at the second school in the study conceived of her role in a similar fashion to the first - that it was important in that she was the means of expression of student opinion. She too prepared reports for board meetings from the issues raised at the school council meetings, usually delivered verbally, but on at least one occasion her report was presented in written form. At one meeting she reported that the council had raised three issues: the sound system for the hall, the food in the tuckshop and the tightening of discipline. The principal was asked by the chairman to prepare a report for the next board meeting on each of these areas.

The representative kept notes of any matters raised at meetings which would be of interest to the students and often undertook to gather feedback and student reactions to issues for the board to be

reported on at a subsequent meeting. When the representative was not able to give a report she contributed very little to the meeting except in answer to direct questions on a student matter. Student opinion was seldom sought on any matter not directly related to the students, however.

Are the communication channels functioning?

When the school's student council was functioning, students from all levels of the school had a chance to contribute via their class representative who, in turn, reported the board matters back to the classes. The council meetings generated four reports to the board in six months.

When the council meetings became more erratic (the council was supposed to come together once a week but a meeting was not always arranged) the student representative had endeavoured to invite communication through a suggestion box, but this had not been successful. She estimated that one per cent of the students responded when she asked for feedback on any issue.

No other channels were explored by the representative to maintain contact with the student body. Her infrequent speeches to assembly were more in her role as student leader, she confessed, and no board matter was generally included.

Had any training been received?

This representative had received no training for her role on the board. She relied on the procedures established by the previous representative, working through the student council, of which she had been a member for several years. She had tried to initiate a meeting of representatives in her area in order to share ideas and problems, but had been unable to do so because of lack of interest among other student representatives.

Is opposition affecting participation?

It was noted that the staff representative was particularly supportive and often praised the student representative's efforts with regard to the reports which were received enthusiastically by the chairman and the principal.

At this school, the student representative was once again prevented from serving on the discipline committee. She accepted this, as school staff members were also prohibited. However, technically, it was an infringement of the Education Act to bar the student representative from doing so. She was also not included on the appointments committee and so was in essence prevented from contributing in that area of the board function.

Apart from those two areas the student representative was of the opinion that she was treated in the same way as other board members and that her points of view were listened to along with those of the other board members. It appeared to the researcher that her opinion was seldom sought or offered, however, and that, in reality, the student representative contributed little to the proceedings.

School three

Is the role of the student representative clear to the representative?

The student representative at this school expected to represent the student body and bring matters from the students to the board. In practice he very rarely participated in the board meetings, often having nothing to report from the students. He was asked direct questions on discipline, uniform, the tuckshop and sports equipment which are obvious student concerns. He was seldom

asked for a student opinion on any other topic.

The representative did report his greater contribution to the sub-committees on which he sat and that he had involved another student in one of his presentations to one of these committees.

This particular student representative was new to the school, and the country in fact. He therefore did not have the experience of a year under a previous representation as a reference. The student had been taken on a tour of the school by the principal and had spoken to the former incumbent of the representative's position but had received few guidelines as to his actual function. The student representative was welcomed by the chairman to his first board meeting as an observer, a role which, with very few exceptions, he sustained throughout the period of this study.

Are the communication channels functioning?

There was a student council at this school but the student representative made no attempt to utilise it. Instead, he relied primarily on a suggestion box for communication from the students. The representative reported that he had spoken at assemblies promoting the box's establishment as a means of contact (it was not in operation until July) but received only three valid suggestions during the period of the study which he considered board matters and which he could present as student representative for board consideration.

The student did not appear to be very visible around the school except to his sixth form peers, a number of whom had ready access and for whom he achieved some success with the board in the establishment of a basketball hoop and playing area. This same group were canvassed for their opinions when a student point of view was required.

Had any training been received?
As was the case in Schools one and two, this student likewise had received no training for his role on the board. He was even further at a disadvantage being new to the country and not having previously experienced student representation at this level in a school. He expressed appreciation of the assistance given by the principal.

Is opposition affecting participation?
The student was warmly welcomed to his first meeting by both the chairman and a representative of the Tangata Whenua. As student representative he was invited onto **any** of the established committees with the chairman's added comment that those of discipline and uniform a student would particularly relate to. The representative subsequently joined both of these committees. The chairman was aware that the student representative might understand little of what was being discussed. The staff representative repositioned himself so as to be able to explain procedures quietly when required. Such staff assistance was withdrawn at later meetings and the representative was left to manage as best he could.

This student representative was one of the few students in the study included on the student disciplining committee of the school and reported that he took an active part in discipline meetings, asking questions of, and sometimes offering moral support for, the student before the board. The student representative felt comfortable with his role on this committee. The principal was also complimentary of the performance of students on this committee both at present and in the past and saw it as advantageous to have the student representative involved.

The student reported that he had frequent discussions with the

principal, who confirmed for him whether a matter the representative wished to raise was a board concern, or should be referred to another body to be dealt with. The student's contribution to board agendas was therefore monitored by the principal.

One matter which was brought by the representative had appeared in the suggestion box on the afternoon of a board meeting and had therefore not had a chance to be discussed in advance with the principal. As an unsigned letter bemoaning the state of the toilets and drinking fountains available for student use it was initially added to the correspondence. But as it was unsigned and the principal had a policy of not accepting anonymous material from any source, the letter did not receive a formal, written response. The matter was discussed, however, and it was pointed out that the toilet blocks were on the deferred maintenance list. One adult board member commented that it was good to receive input like this from the students, but no further action was actually taken at that point.

The student himself was aware of no restrictions being placed on his participation as a board member. He was never prevented from attending any board activity but did recall being told that he didn't "[H]ave to come" on a couple of occasions. The student representative had not been involved in neither the principal's salary negotiations nor the appointment of the deputy principal as, in his own opinion, he "had nothing to contribute".

School four

Is the role of the student representative clear to the representative?

The board meetings of this school followed a very formal pattern. The sub-committees and other contributors prepared a written

report for circulation before each full board meeting and then a spokesperson invited comment. The report was subsequently accepted by motion. The student representative therefore felt it part of his role to produce a similar written report for board perusal. The contents of the student representative's reports were solely news of student events - the ball, socials, mufti days, musicals, sport exchanges, etcetera, so the student clearly saw his function as a source of information.

The representative developed his spokesperson's role by offering student views on issues, when asked. He was of the opinion that adults who could not be part of the school body, could never know the reality of school life for the students. He, on the other hand, felt qualified to offer opinion ("The insider viewpoint") on the probable outcome or impact of a particular decision on the students.

This particular student was very active on two of the board's sub-committees, first property, for which he personally investigated designs for the refurbishing of the tuckshop, and secondly, uniform. The student also had a place on the discipline and curriculum committees. In this aspect this particular student representative was the most committed of those in the study.

This student representative also offered comment, and was asked for an opinion at meetings, on a wider range of topics than the three other student representatives. For example, he gave a point of view on the staff smoking policy, the use of school grounds by outside groups, the staff indemnity for private property loss or damage at school - rather than solely on the traditional student topics other representatives were limited to, or limited themselves to, for comment.

Are the communication channels functioning?

Once again a viable student council provided a source of ideas and feedback for this student representative. He also established a third and fourth form Forum to gain more contact with the junior school. The student was of the opinion that these functioned adequately and that information flowed to the board and back again. The two bodies did not appear to supply him, as student representative, with contentious issues to raise, however.

As Head Boy as well as student representative this young man was very visible around the school and so accessible to most of the students. He reported that he spoke at assemblies after board meetings but had become disheartened at the lack of information which he felt worth passing on. As board representative he was aware that much of what concerned boards would be of little interest to the student body

Had any training been received ?

This student had received no training for his board role. He was well equipped for public speaking by his drama and musical experience, however, and was extremely confident and articulate. He threw himself enthusiastically into the role, but was not fully aware of his rights under the Act governing Boards of Trustees.

Is opposition affecting participation?

The student representative was aware of no outright opposition to his presence on the board. He felt he was treated as a full board member and had been included in all board activities. As with the other students he felt there were areas where he could not contribute - finance, for example - because of a lack of expertise, but was forwarded the minutes of the sub-committee meetings and offered comment when he was able.

The student sensed, though, that one particular board member did

not appreciate the inclusion of a student voice on the board. The student's representative was of the opinion he had not allowed this apparent opposition to impose limits on his student contributions in any way, however.

Because of the formal meeting procedure adopted by this board, spontaneous contribution was limited. In the discussion allowed, the student felt comfortable enough to offer opinion and ask questions where appropriate. He did not restrict himself solely to student concerns and it appeared to both himself and the observer that his point of view was welcomed and valued by all but one of the board members.

Summary

The chart below summarises the findings in relation to each student representative at the four schools, question by question:

Summary of Four Schools in Narrow Focus Study

Question	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Role	information student issues feedback	information student issues feedback	information student issues feedback	information opinion on student and non-student issues feedback
Committees	uniform	uniform	uniform discipline	uniform discipline property curriculum
Communication	student council form class visits assemblies	student council suggestion box (unsuccessful)	student council (not used) suggestion box (unsuccessful)	student council assemblies Junior Forum
Training	none	none	none	none
Opposition	unaware but covert	barred from discipline or appointments committees	unaware but Principal monitoring	aware of one member's opposition

Table 2

At all four schools in the study, the representatives conceived of their role as being primarily one of informing the board of student activities. They were seldom asked to give a student opinion on any matter other than a student issue. In this sense their role was defined for them by the adults on the board.

Their communication channels with the students they represent

were many and varied. School councils were an important source of ideas and feedback, but other methods were found effective: such as classroom visits, speaking at assemblies, and other forums.

Little or no training was given to the student representatives in their role on the board but the students experienced little overt opposition to their presence. Some use was being made of covert means, however, to prevent students from taking part in sensitive meetings or gaining positions on committees where a student contribution was considered inappropriate.

The On-Duty Survey

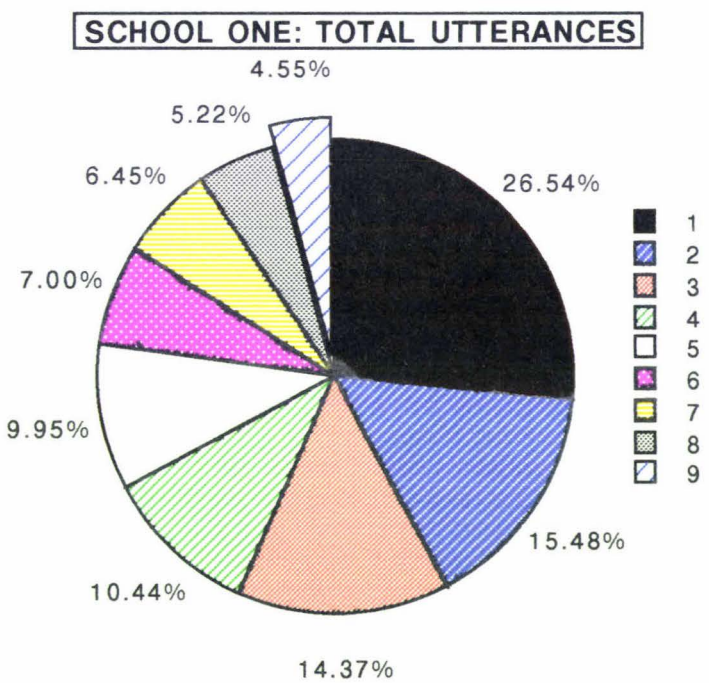
In order to assess the contribution of the student representative relative to other board members while on duty, a record was kept at two of the six board meetings observed for each student representative, of the type and frequency of utterance of all those present. It was considered that this would be an objective way of measuring the effectiveness of the students as spokespersons for those whom they represented (research question 2) as their participation in the business of the board at such meetings constituted a large segment of their representative role. The students' record could then be compared with those of the other board members, particularly those of the staff representatives who held a similar position.

The following classifications were used:
S = statement
R = response to a direct question
Q = question asked by the board member
P = procedural utterance (moving or seconding a motion.)

The reading of reports or correspondence was not included as contributions but the subsequent discussions were recorded. The responses were totalled for each member of the board at each school from the two meetings observed in this way and then all responses were added for a combined analysis. The tables of these totalled utterances can be found in Appendix 7.

The graphs which are included in this section show the total number of utterances only of each board member present, although the discussion includes percentages taken from the tables of figures in Appendix 7.

School One



key: 1 Chairman
2. Principal
3. Staff Representative
4. Parent (m)
5. Parent (m)
6. Parent/staff (m)
7. Parent (m)
8. Parent non E (f)
9. Student (m)
10. Parent non E (m) **absent**

fig. i.

The student representative contributed the least to the two meetings which were observed in terms of total utterances. In fact, this level of utterance was only marginally less than the non-European female parent representative who also took little part in the meetings. (The non-European male parent representative attended neither of the meetings observed.)

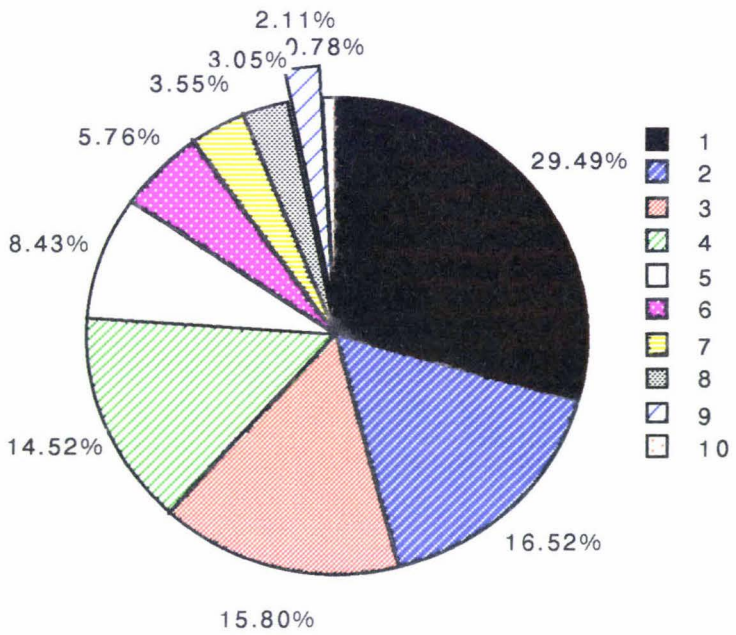
The largest total contribution to the meetings was made by the chairman, who spoke more than twice as many times as the next highest contributor, the principal. As can be seen from the actual utterances recorded, (refer to Appendix 7), the chairman was responsible for 44% of the questions asked and 24% of the statements, while the principal contributed 12% of the total statements but responded to 47% of the questions asked while the student representative made fewer statements than any other board member (5% of the total) but actually made more responses (6%), as the result of questions directed at him, than most of the parent representatives (3% or 5%), and so was forced to contribute an opinion.

The researcher noted in the observations, though, that there was a limited range of topics upon which the student was asked questions. They usually related directly to student affairs such as uniform, the tuckshop, or to other students. At no time during these two observations was the student asked a question on anything other than student related topics.

The representative asked as many questions as the non-European female parent representative (2.5% of those asked) and took more part procedurally by seconding four motions (which was 8% of the total utterances of that type).

School Two

SCHOOL TWO: TOTAL UTTERANCES



key:

1 Chairman
2. Parent/staff(f)
3. Principal
4.Staff rep. (f))
5. Parent (f)
6. Parent (m)
7. Parent non-E (m)
8. Parent non E (f)
9. Student non-E (f)
10. Parent non E (f)

fig. ii.

The student at this school contributed only 2% of the total utterances at the two meetings recorded. She was not, though, the board member who contributed the least, as the non-European female parent representative was responsible for only 0.8%. The student's contribution was not significantly less than the other non-European female parent representative at 3%. Neither was it much less than the male non-European member at 3.6%.

The staff representative, who occupied a somewhat similar representational position to that of the student, but who spoke on

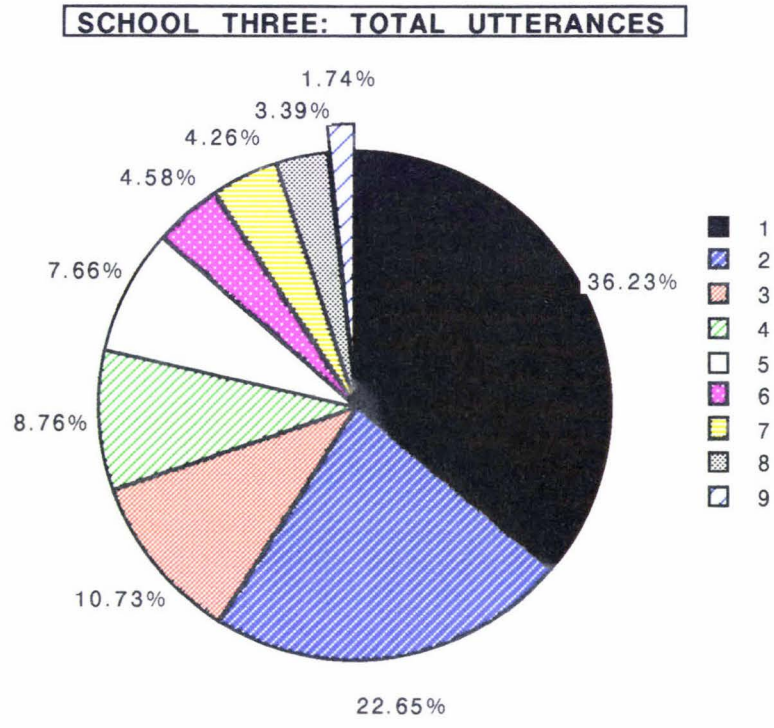
behalf of a much smaller group, had a contribution of 14.5% which is considerably greater than that of the student. The chairman was the most vocal board member, (29.5%), speaking almost twice as often as the next most frequent contributor, the parent member who was also on the staff of the school (16.5%).

The detailed breakdown contained in Appendix 7 shows that the student representative volunteered more statements (1%) than one of the non-European parent females present, who contributed only 0.5% of the total statements made. The student's statements were in respect to her reports which were delivered at both meetings observed.

The student responded to more direct questions than half of the group (8.7%). The observation record shows consistency with the previous school discussed in that the topics of these questions were once again solely on student related matters and in the main referred to the contents of the student's report. The representative asked more questions than only one other member, however, and took no part in the procedural aspects of the meeting.

Once again the chairman was responsible for the majority of the questions asked (49%) and the statements made (25%), while the principal was asked the greatest number of direct questions, (35%).

School Three



key:

1 Principal
2.Chairman
3. Staff Representative (m)
4. Parent non-E (f)
5. Parent/staff (f)
6. Parent (m)
7. Parent (f)
8. Parent (m)
9. Student (m)

fig. iii

The student representative at this school clearly made the least contribution of any board member, (1.7%). The largest contribution this time was made by the principal (36.2%), which was considerably more than that of the chairman, (22.6%). The least contributing parent (at 3.4%) made double the number of utterances of the student. The non-European parent member made a more significant contribution than that of all the other parents, (8.7%).

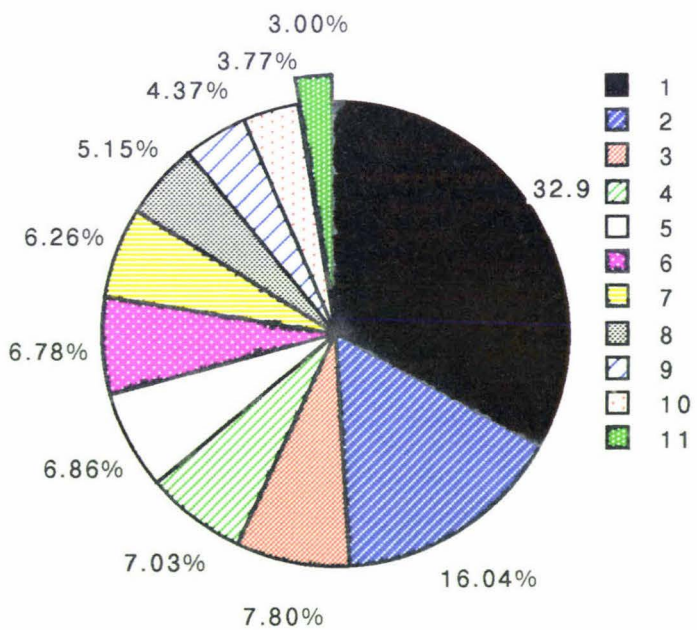
The record in Appendix 7 shows that although the chairman asked the most questions, (53%), less of these were directed at the

student at this school's meetings than the previous two since he contributed only 5% of the responses. However, the student did respond more often than the three European parents on the board who were asked few if any questions directly. The principal clearly answered the most questions, contributing 59% of the responses,

The student representative also took little procedural part, (only 1%), and made very few statements (1%), as the record shows. At the two meetings where this record was kept, there was no student report given, despite allowance for it on the agenda.

School Four

SCHOOL FOUR: TOTAL UTTERANCES



key:

1 Chairman
2. Principal
3. Parent non-E (m)
4. Parent non-E (f)
5. Staff rep (m)
6. Parent (m)
7. Parent/staff (f)
8. Parent non E (m)
9. Parent non-E (f)
10. Parent /staff (m)
11. Student (m)

fig. iv

Once again the student made the least contribution to the meetings observed, (3%). The meeting officeholders, (the chairman and the principal, who acted as secretary) contributed 33% and 16% respectively. However, the student's total contribution is not significantly less than that of several other members, notably the male parent/staff member, the non-European female parent, nor the less vocal non-European male parent, who each contributed less than 6% of the total utterances.

The staff representative's contribution was considerably lower at this school than at the other three, reaching only 6.8% of the total contribution, still double that of the student, however.

The recording technique employed did not include the reading of a report as an individual's utterance. The business of this board was conducted mainly by the reporting of subcommittees, in a formal atmosphere, the reports being moved and seconded for acceptance. Staff and student reports were likewise presented, often in written form, and discussion or questions invited. Consequently, overall, less discussion took place than at the meetings of the other schools' boards, but the number of procedural utterance was higher. The student contributed 6% of this type of utterances, (which can be seen from the figures in Appendix 7), which was more than two other members, including the chairman (at 4.5%). The student was asked more direct questions (1.4%) than only one member of the group and asked fewer questions himself (0.9%) than any other person present. He did, though, make as many statements as the two lowest contributing adults (4%).

Combined Analysis: Data from Four schools

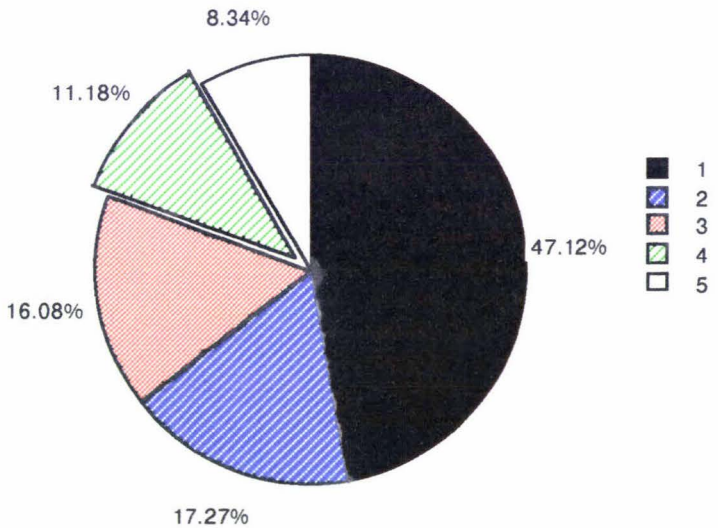
When aggregated, the above data demonstrates some

consistencies across the schools:

1. As would be expected, the meetings' officeholders make the largest contribution to meetings in terms of total number of utterances.
2. The student representative is always one of the lowest contributors to Board of Trustees' meetings.
3. The staff representative, who is in a similar position to the student in that they represent a body from within the school itself, scores consistently in the top half of the table of contributors.
4. Joining the student representative at the bottom of the table is a low-contributing parent representative, often a non-European adult.

In order to demonstrate the last three of these trends, selected individual scores from each school were combined and are presented together. The graph below displays the combined student contribution, that of the staff representatives (as their roles are equivalent if somewhat numerically different), that of the non-European male parent representatives, the non-European female parent representatives, and that of the lowest contributing parent representative at each school. The percentages shown are of the combined utterances of the stated board members at the two meetings where a record was kept.

FOUR SCHOOLS COMBINED



key: 1.Staff representatives
2.Non-European female parent representatives
3.Lowest contributing parent representatives
4.Student representatives
5.Non-European male parent representatives

fig. v

The students score only about five per cent lower (at 11.18%) than the least contributing parent representatives (at 16.08%) when their utterances are combined and only six per cent lower than the female non-European parents (at 17.27%). As a group, student representatives make more of a contribution (at 11.18%) than the non-European males (at 8.34%).

The table below shows the percentages broken down into the different types of utterances, together with the total utterances for the group. The figures are arranged in descending order of total utterances.

The scores combined (in percentages)

Personnel	**S**	**R**	**Q**	**P**	**TOTAL**
Staff representatives	47.5	40.3	55.1	36.2	47.1
Non-European females	17.8	19.7	14.4	15.2	17.3
Parent representatives	16.7	9.9	15.4	26.7	16.1
Students	**9.8**	**22.7**	**6.2**	**11.4**	**11.2**
Non-European males	8.2	7.3	8.9	10.5	8.3

(percentages have been rounded)

key: **S**= statement made **R** = response to a direct question
Q = question asked **P** = procedural contribution

Table 3

As a group, the students volunteer more statements (9.8%) than the non-European male parents (8.2%) and are asked more direct questions (22.7%) than either the non-European males (7.3%), non-European females (19.7%), or the lowest scoring parent representatives (9.9%).

Student representatives take about as much part in the procedural matters (11.4%) as both male (10.5%) and female (15.2%) non-European parent representatives but ask fewer questions than any other group (6.2%).

4.3 THE SCHOOLS' OPINIONS

To achieve a triangulation of approach, both the student body and the representatives' fellow board members at the four schools were surveyed for opinions of their representatives' performances.

1. The Pupil Surveys

In order to assess student perceptions of the contribution and effectiveness of their representative on the board, as well as the extent of support for such a position, a questionnaire was administered to a random cluster sample of third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh form students at each of the four schools where the representative was involved in the narrow focus study.

The student survey (a copy of which can be found in Appendix 4) was based on the Likert scale, the respondents being asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements. Over 100 surveys were completed at each school. The initial intention of adding the responses after scoring the survey to give an indication of each school body's attitude to the performance of their representative was abandoned in favour of a much more informative technique of handling the responses to each of the statements individually, so that some interesting trends could be investigated.

Roll and Response Rates

School	Roll	Responses
School one	1600	**158**/160
School two	910	**101**/150
School three	1140	**145**/150
School four	1550	**127**/160

Table 4

The findings are presented below in the following fashion:

- Each question is treated separately.
- The responses for each question in terms of agreement or disagreement with the statement are presented as percentages and graphed collectively by school.
- Where appropriate, the individual components (such as male/female distinctions or senior / junior differences) which comprise the total response for each school are explained and discussed. Such statements are based on the graphs in Appendix 8, which present data in the following manner:
- Third and fourth form responses have been grouped as juniors, but male and female responses are treated separately
- Fifth, sixth and seventh form responses have been grouped as seniors, but male and female responses are treated separately.
- The categories of response are the same as on the other, combined graphs and the figures are presented as percentages of the number of students responding.

Statement 1: **Students know who the Student Representative on the Board of Trustees is.**

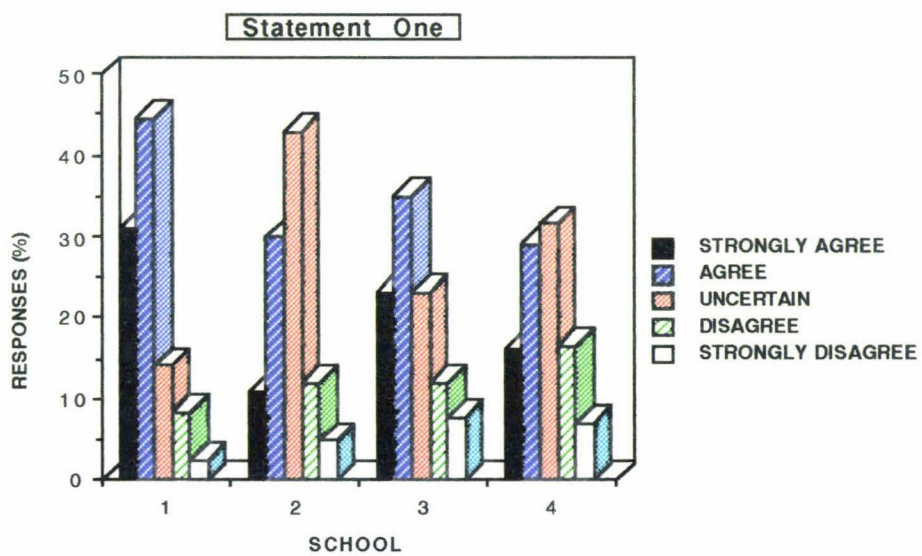


fig. vi

School one

There is convincing support for the belief that the students at all levels in the school know the identity of their representative. Of the total, 31% strongly agreed and 45% agreed that students knew who their representative was. Only 14% were not certain and 11% disagreed to some extent. As can be seen from the graph in Appendix 8 which breaks the result down into levels and differentiates between the sexes of the respondents, there was strong support for the statement from both the senior females (51%) and the junior females (48%) in agreement, while 40% of the senior males and 31% of the senior females agreed strongly. There was little strong disagreement - from 7% of the junior males and only 4% of the junior males. It would be safe to assume that this representative had achieved a high profile across all levels in this school during his term of office.

School two

The female seventh former representative had not made as great an impact on the students of this school. Of the total, 43% were uncertain that the students would know her identity. However, more were prepared to agree to some extent (11% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing) than disagree (12%, and 5% strongly disagreeing).

The support for the statement was unevenly spread among the levels (see Appendix 8). The males in the senior school tended to agree with the statement (47%) rather than be undecided (at 35%), while half the senior females were undecided with only 32% agreeing that the students knew who the representative was. In the junior school, 50% of the females and 34% of the males were uncertain. Strong disagreement with the statement, though, was restricted to the junior school.

School three

Of those students asked, more were sure to some degree (23% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing) that students knew who their representative was, than who were uncertain (23%). The detailed breakdown shows the strongest support for the statement comes from the senior females at 43% agreeing and 35% strongly agreeing that the school knows who their representative is. Support from the senior males is almost as strong at 39% and 34%. The junior males are the group most uncertain at 40% and most in strong disagreement at 16%. It would appear that the student representative had made more of an impact, then, with the senior than the junior school.

School four

At this school the highest percentage (31.5%) were once again the uncertain but almost as many (29%) agreed and 16% strongly agreed that the student representative was known by the student body. Within the levels, (refer to Appendix 8) 40% of the senior females agreed with the statement and 21% strongly agreed that the school knew who their representative was. Support was strong among junior females as well at 35% and 24%. The males were less certain with 42% of the juniors and 30% of the seniors in the uncertain category. There were more males than females who disagreed or strongly disagreed that the students knew who their representative was from both junior and senior levels. It would appear then, that this student representative was better known among the female than the male students.

Statement 2

The Student Representative never tells us what is going on. (This statement had to be scored in reverse to the previous one.)

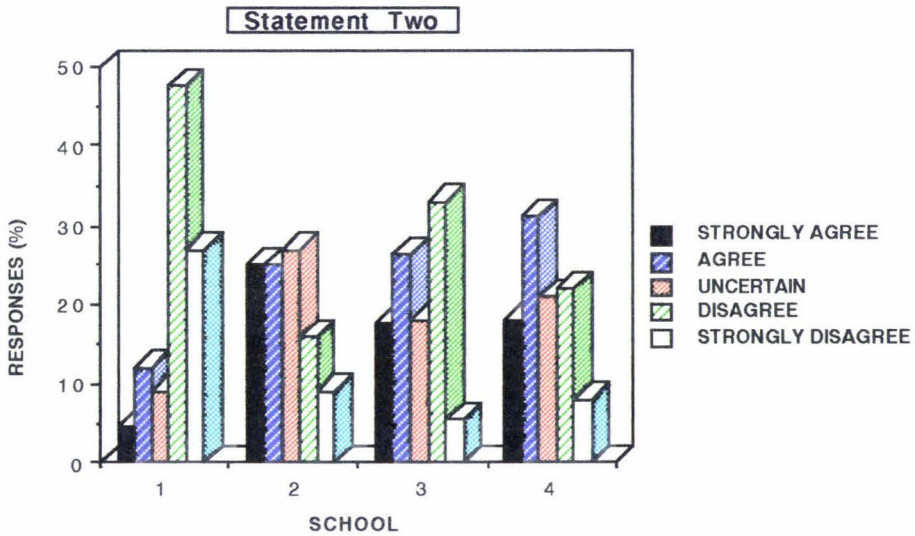


fig. vii

School one

Support for the representative was indicated by disagreement with the statement (27% strongly disagreed and 47.5% disagreed making a total of almost 75%). Only 9% were uncertain and 12% and 4.5% agreed that the student did not keep them informed.

Within the levels, disagreement was over 50% among all sectors except the senior females at 36% which was explained by their high return in the strong disagreement category (36%) where there was considerable showing from other levels as well. Communication channels appear to be well established and working effectively at this school. There were very few responses at any level which agreed strongly with the statement and none at all from the junior boys.

School two

Even allowing for the negative question, those who thought their representative was keeping them informed, (15% disagreeing and 9% strongly disagreeing) were far outweighed by those who felt she wasn't, at 25% for both categories of agreement with the statement. Despite the fact that there is a student council at this school which meets regularly, with a representative from each class present to hear the feedback from the Board of Trustee meetings, and that the representative had occasionally spoken at assemblies, the school population did not feel informed about matters which concerned them.

Within the levels (as can be seen from the graphs in Appendix 8) junior females are evenly split between strong agreement (29%), agreement (25%) and uncertainty (25%), as are senior females at 28% in both of the agreement categories, while 32% remain uncertain. The senior males lead the agreement category at 35%, and the disagreement category at 29%, with 23% remaining uncertain as to whether the student representative keeps them informed. The junior school as a whole are generally more in agreement or uncertain, but 21% of the junior males disagreed that the student representative never communicates with them, along with 8% of the junior females. No senior students opted for this category at all, however.

School three

There was a degree of support at this school for the student and the communication which he was able to maintain, with 33% disagreeing and 5.5% strongly disagreeing with the statement. However significant numbers agreed with the statement, thereby indicating dissatisfaction with the degree of communication maintained.

The level and gender response analysis, while showing the senior females to be supportive, with 48% disagreeing with the statement to some extent, also revealed that over half the senior males (54%) felt they were not being informed (they agreed with the statement to some extent). The females in the junior school returned equal scores in the agreement and disagreement categories but the junior males were more supportive with 38% disagreeing with the statement.

The level of dissatisfaction school-wide was therefore still fairly high with, overall, 17.5% strongly agreeing and 26.5% agreeing that their representative did not tell them what was going on.

School four

A total of 30% of those asked disagreed with the statement to some extent at this school, thus approving of the level of communication being maintained by their representative, 22% disagreeing and 8% strongly disagreeing. A further 21% were uncertain but 18% strongly agreed and 31% agreed with the statement meaning a total of 49% were dissatisfied with the flow of information.

It was noted from the level analysis that most of the senior school this time were critical of their representative's performance with 59% of the senior females agreeing with the statement to some extent along with 60% of the senior males. Strongest support came from the junior females with 40% disagreeing with the statement to some extent. Junior males were not as firmly of the opinion that their representative kept them informed, however, with only 23% disagreeing with the statement to some extent.

Statement 3

It is easy to contact the Student Representative.

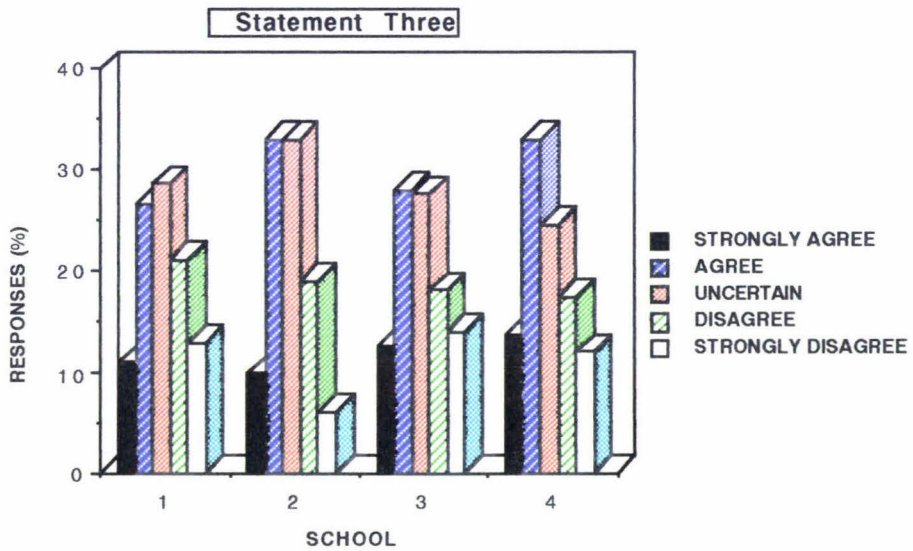


fig.viii

School one

The 11% who strongly agreed with this statement consisted almost entirely of the senior students (as can be seen from the graphs in Appendix 8). A total of 26.5% found him easy to contact nevertheless (consisting, though, of twice as many seniors as juniors), while 28.5% were uncertain and 21% disagreed. A total of 13% (predominantly from the junior school) strongly disagreed with the statement.

Although the results of the previous statement might suggest that downward communication was good at this school, the high degree of uncertainty in the response to this question could suggest that upward communication was not so easily facilitated.

School two

The same percentage was able to agree that their representative was easy to contact as was uncertain (33%) although the breakdown of support was varied as can be seen from Appendix 8,

with 46% of senior females uncertain that their representative was able to be contacted along with 34% of the junior males, while on the other hand, around 40% of junior females, senior males and senior females all agreed that the representative communicated with them.

A further 10% of the total school body strongly agreed that the representative was accessible, those responses coming from the junior school and the senior males. No senior females felt able to agree to that extent. While 19% disagreed, only 6% (spread across all levels) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The channel for communication, primarily the classes' council representatives, would theoretically have been equally available to all levels of the school and this is reflected in the spread of responses.

School three

Of the total number of those asked at this school once again an almost identical number were uncertain (27.5%) as agreed that the representative was easy to contact, (28%). More disagreed (18%) and strongly disagreed (14%) than strongly agreed with the statement (12.5%). Within the levels, (see Appendix 8), the strong support came almost without exception from the senior students, there being only a small 7% response from the junior male and female students combined in the strongly agree category. The seniors slightly exceeded the juniors in the agree category. The most undecided group was the junior males at 40.5%. The junior females had found the student difficult to contact with 31% in the disagree category along with 21.5% of the senior females. Some 20% of the senior males (predominantly seventh formers) had also found the student very difficult to contact, in their opinion. It would seem the sixth form representative was accessible to his own level

and more to males than females at this school.

School four

There was a stronger trend at this school, with 33% of those asked prepared to agree that their representative was easy to contact and 13.5% strongly agreeing, while only 24.5% were uncertain. Of those with negative replies, 17.5% disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed. The most prominent trend in the replies for this statement was that the females at all levels thought it easier to contact the representative than the males. Over half of the senior females either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 62% in total, (see Appendix 8). This figure was matched by a similar response from the junior females at 58%. The male response was more evenly spread among the junior males. The senior males were of the opinion that the student was very difficult to contact however, indicated by the strongly disagree category response of 26%.

Statement 4

The Representative takes what students think to the Board.

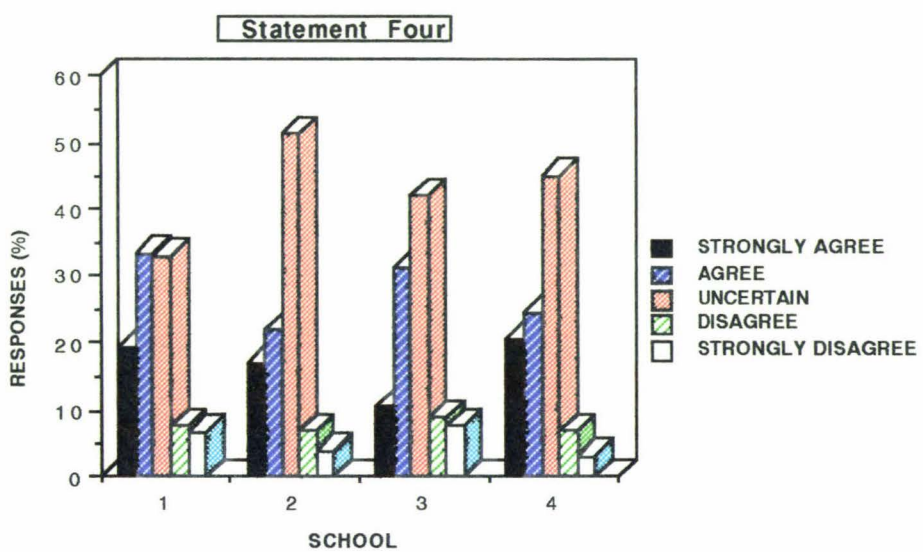


fig.ix.

School one

Once again there was almost an equal number of students who were uncertain (33%) as were able to agree with the statement (33.5%). Of those asked, 19.5% strongly agreed while only 7.5% disagreed that the representative took what students thought to the board, and 6.5% strongly disagreed. From the individual breakdown in Appendix 8 it can be seen that there was strongest agreement amongst the senior school with 59% of the males and females agreeing to some extent with the statement. The rest of the school was more evenly split between uncertainty and agreement with the statement but nearly half the junior males were unable to decide if their representative took what the students thought to the board. Very few responses occurred in the disagreement categories, though, and there was little difference in the opinions between the sexes in any category.

School two

Once again the majority (51%) could not give a certain response on this question. Those who could give an opinion were spread between 17% strongly agreeing and 22% agreeing with the statement while 7% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. Within the levels, the individual breakdown shows the junior school were particularly undecided: 62.5% of the junior females and 47% of the junior males. Some 53.5% of the senior females could not decide either but the males were less represented in this category at 35%. However no females at either level would go so far as strongly disagreeing with the statement, and only 15% of the total male population was prepared to. There were also only minimal responses in the disagree category across the levels.

School three

Again a large proportion were uncertain as to the truth or otherwise of this statement (42%), yet almost as large a proportion (41.5% -

consisting of 31% in agreement and 10.5% strongly in agreement) were certain that their views were represented. Only 9% disagreed and 7.5% strongly disagreed with the statement that their representative took what they thought to the board. Within the levels, the strongest support came as previously from the senior school with 43% of the males agreeing with the statement, 8% strongly agreeing and 37% of the senior females in agreement, a further 8% strongly. The junior school, though, were not far below these levels of support, though over 50% of junior females could not decide if upward communication of their thought was occurring.

School four

The trend observed in the previous schools was again evident here with 45% of those asked uncertain whether their views were represented. However, the sum of those who agreed with the statement (24.5%) and those who strongly agreed (20.5%) is exactly the same number, (45%). The negative responses are well down with 7% disagreeing and only 3% strongly disagreeing. The breakdown showed 50% of the senior males, 45% of the senior females, 41% of the junior females and 34.5% of the junior females unable to decide. The strongest agreement came from the junior school and the senior females, all scoring in the mid twenties for the strongly agree category. No junior females and few students at any level strongly disagreed that the representative was taking what they thought to the board.

Statement 5

We don't need a Student Representative on the Board of Trustees. (Also to be scored in reverse).

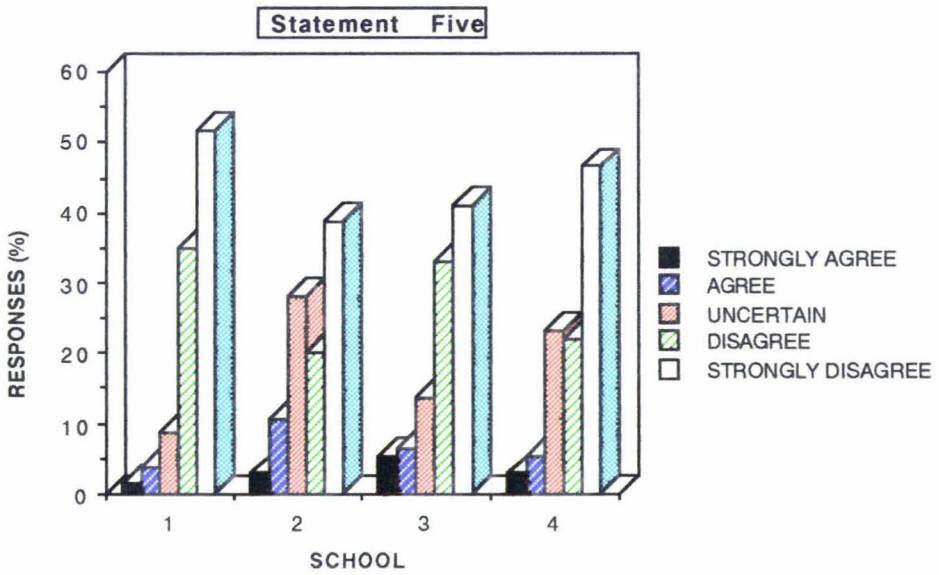


fig. x.

School one

The desire to be represented at board level is expressed by disagreeing with the statement. It would appear that there is overwhelming support for the presence of student on the Board of Trustees. At this school, 51.5% strongly disagreed with the statement which, when combined with the 35% who disagreed, means 86.5% supported the idea with very few not in favour: 4% agreeing and 1.5% strongly agreeing that a student representative is not needed on the board. It must be admitted that the question being phrased negatively may have had some bearing on the outcome but the result is so consistent across the levels that this seems unlikely. Strong disagreement was around 50% of the response for all levels; disagreement ran consistently around 30% for both senior and junior students. Only senior males featured in the strongly agree category.

School two

A combined total of 59% disagreed to some extent with this statement made up of 39% strongly disagreeing and 20% disagreeing, thus showing support for the idea of a representative on their board. This was a smaller percentage than that recorded in the other schools surveyed but still the majority of students support the concept, it would seem. Only 28% were uncertain, while 11% agreed that there was no need and 3% strongly agreed with the statement.

There was equally strong support from both the senior and the junior school (see Appendix 8) with between 35 and 40% of all levels strongly disagreeing with the statement. Conversely, the junior school alone featured in the strongly agree category and levels of uncertainty with regard to the statement were high in all levels: junior males 28%, junior females 20%, senior males 29% and senior females 32%, as reflected in the combined totals graphed above.

School three

At this school the total percentage disagreeing to some extent was even higher with 74% (41% strongly disagreeing combined with 33% disagreeing) than the previous two schools discussed. Support from all the levels was consistently high with only 6.5% agreeing, 5.5% strongly agreeing that there was no need for a student on the board. The breakdown shows more females than males strongly supported the concept but support is strong in both junior and senior school for a voice on the board. Less than 25% of either level were undecided.

School four

Once again very strong support was shown for a student voice on the board reflected in disagreement (a total of 68.5%) which

crossed all levels equally and comprised the 46.5% who strongly disagreed and the 22% who disagreed with the negatively phrased statement. The few respondents who agreed with the statement (5.5% and 3%) were junior and senior males as shown by the level breakdown, with only 6% of senior females agreeing with the statement. The junior school made up the bulk of the undecided while the females were strongly in favour of having a student voice on the board.

Statement 6

The Student Representative is doing a good job.

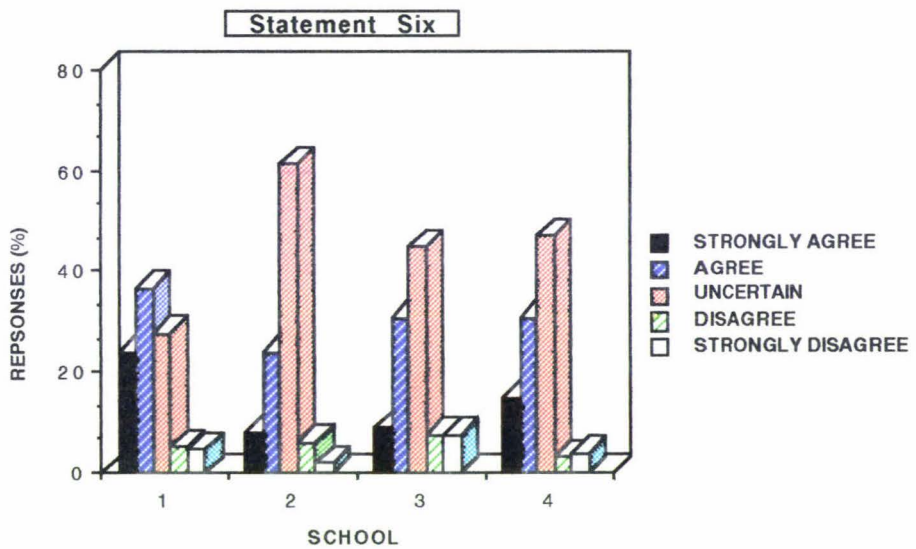


fig. xi

School one

There was strong support (a total of 61%,comprising the 24% strongly agreeing and the 37% agreeing with the statement) for the view that this representative was performing well in his role. The breakdown in Appendix 8 shows all levels of the school were consistent in their responses: for example, 36% of both males and females in the senior school agreed the student representative was doing a good job as did 45% of the junior females and 39% of the junior males. Strong agreement was consistently around 20%

except among the senior females where it reached 36%.

School two

The majority of students at this school were in the uncertain category (61%). Only 24% agreed that their representative was doing a good job and a mere 8% strongly agreed with the statement. However, only 6% could disagree and 2% strongly disagree. The uncertainty was strongest amongst senior females at 77%, dropping to 62% with junior males, 58% with junior females. The rate of uncertainty about the job being done by their representative was lowest among senior males, at 35%. No females at all strongly disagreed with the statement.

School three

Here again there was uncertainty as to whether the representative was doing a good job for those he represented. Of those asked, 45% remained uncertain while 31% agreed that he was doing a good job and only 9% strongly agreed. The student's fellow sixth formers provided the bulk of the strong support with 12% of the senior males in that category. Agreement with the statement was more evenly spread across both the junior and senior school, while no junior females registered in either of the disagreement categories, featuring strongly among the uncertain instead at 69%.

School four

The principal group was the 47% of respondents uncertain as to whether their representative was doing a good job. However it must be noted that a total of 46% were prepared to say that a good job was being done (comprised of the 31% who agreed and the 15% who strongly agreed with the statement).and only 7% were actually critical of him (3% disagreeing and 4% strongly disagreeing). Within the levels, the junior males were the most uncertain at 61%, although only 34% of the junior females were undecided. The third

and fourth form girls were the most in agreement that the student representative was doing a good job as they returned 37% in the agree category and 24% in the strongly agree category.

Statement 7

The Student Representative is doing what we expected them to do.

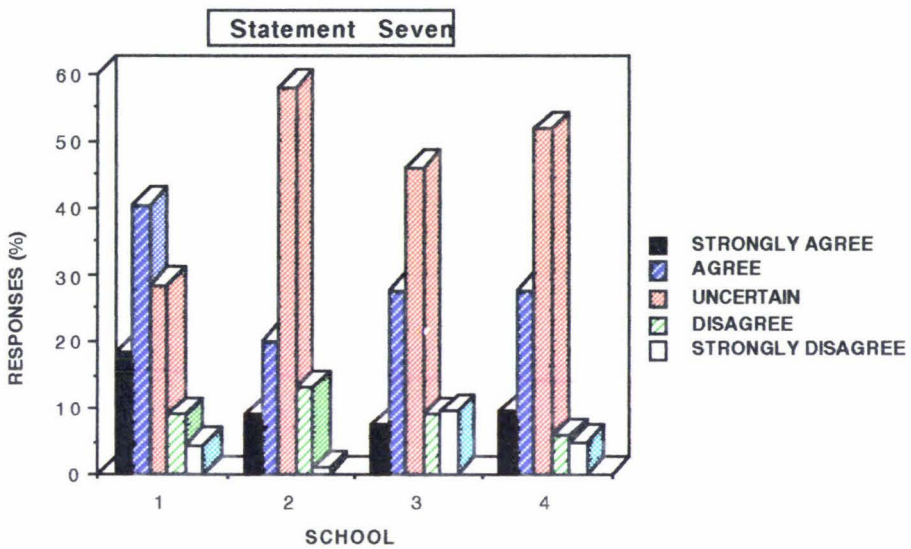


fig. xii

School one

At this school there seemed to be some agreement that the student representative is performing the job expected of him. Of the respondents, 18% strongly agreed and 40.5% agreed with the statement, making a total of 58.5%. Only 28.5% remained uncertain that he was doing what they expected a representative to do while 9% disagreed and 4.5% strongly disagreed that he was meeting their expectations. Strongest support came from the junior and senior females who registered around 45% each in the agreement category. In the strongly agree category, response was consistent across both level and gender. More males than females at both levels were uncertain and junior males in particular strongly disagreed with the statement (13% compared to 2% for junior

females; 4% for senior males and a nil return among senior females).

School two

Here there was a greater overall feeling of uncertainty about what exactly the representative was supposed to be doing with 58% uncertain if their representative is doing what they expected her to do. However a further 29% (comprised of the 20% who agreed and the 9% who strongly agreed with the statement) felt that she was doing the job she was elected to do, however, and only 14% were prepared to say that she was not performing as expected with 13% disagreeing and only 1% strongly disagreeing. Within the levels, the senior students -both male and female - returned no strongly negative responses and although 23% of the senior males disagreed with the statement, only 3% of the senior females did so. Nearly 80% of the senior females, however, were uncertain that the student was performing as expected. Senior males on the other hand, were predominantly in agreement with the statement at 41%.

School three

Nearly half (46%) of the students surveyed at this school were uncertain if the representative was doing what they expected or not. A smaller percentage (27.5% and 7.5%who agree to some extent, making a total of 35%) agreed that he is performing as expected while 9% and 9.5% disagreed. The junior females made up the bulk of the uncertain responses at 63%, the other groups all returning in the low forties. Strongest disagreement came from the senior males at 18%.

School four

There was again a high degree of uncertainty at this school as to whether the student representative was meeting expectations at 52% of the total. There was also, though, some sign of satisfaction

with 27.5% agreeing and 9.5% strongly agreeing (a total of 37%) that he was performing as expected and only 11% disagreeing (5% and 6% respectively).

Strongest agreement came from the senior females, at 43% of those asked. The other groups were more conservative in their estimation of success.

The male representative appeared to be meeting the representative expectations of significantly more females than males.

Statement 8

There is evidence that the Representative has an effect on what the Board decides.

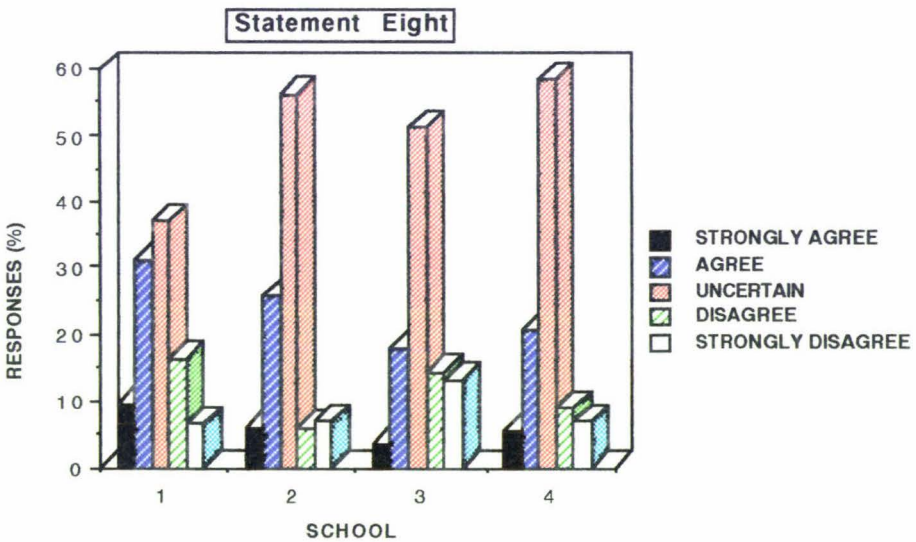


fig. xiii.

School one

A total of 40.5% of the students surveyed (comprised of the 9.5% who strongly agreed and the 31% who agreed) were of the opinion that there was evidence their representative was having an effect on board decisions. A further 37% were uncertain, however, but only 16.5% disagreed and 6.5% strongly disagreed. The graphs in

Appendix 8 show that the strongest support for this statement came form the females at both junior and senior levels. However 40% of the senior females were uncertain that evidence existed. Of the junior males, on the other hand, 41% were uncertain while 27% disagreed that evidence was available. Senior males scored highest in the strong disagreement option at 12%. The figures for this school are, though, more favourable to the representative than those for the other three schools studied.

School two

At this school 56% of those asked could not be certain that evidence existed. Only 32% (6%strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing) were of the opinion that some was available while 6% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. Within the levels, the highest degree of uncertainty was among the senior females at 71%. Over half of the junior males and females were uncertain also. Strongest agreement that there was some evidence in existence came from the junior females at 42%. No females at all appear in the strong disagreement category.

School three

A high degree of uncertainty was again obvious from the results of this school. As many as 51% were not able to give an opinion while only 3.5% strongly agreed that there was evidence that their representative had an effect on board decisions and 18% were in agreement. The highest degree of uncertainty was amongst the junior females at 72%, with the senior females' return at 54%, and 51% of the junior males uncertain. Only males were able to strongly agree that evidence did exist (3% of the juniors and 8% of the seniors). These may well have been the few males who were aware of the representative's achievement with regard to the basketball hoop.

School four

Once again a large majority (58.5%) were uncertain as to the existence of any evidence of the effectiveness of their representative to influence board decisions. Only 26% were prepared to agree to some extent with the statement (with 5.5% strongly in agreement and 20.5% agreeing) while 9% signalled that there had not been any evidence and 7% were strongly in disagreement.

Highest uncertainty was among the junior males at 65% but the other groups registered between 54% and 60% uncertainty. Agreement was strongest among junior females at 27% and senior females at 23% which once again suggests this representative had more support among females than males at the school.

Summary

The student survey was designed to investigate three of the research questions:

One - the role of the student representative
Two - the desire for and effectiveness of the student voice on the boards.
Three - the functioning of the communication channels.

The summary which follows endeavours to draw together the outcomes of the survey for each of the schools. The chart below sets out the results for each survey question at each school and indicates how the question asked relates to the research questions above.

Summary of Four Schools: Student Body Survey

Question	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Rep. known (Q.1)	Well known	uncertain	known	known
Communicates with students (Q.3)	kept informed	not informed	not informed	not informed
Easy to contact (Q.3)	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain	females agreed
Opinions to board (Q.2)	uncertain	uncertain	seniors certain	uncertain
Desire for rep. on BOT (Q.2)	strong support	strong support	strong support	strong support
Doing a good job (Q.1)	performing well	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
Doing as expected (Q.1)	as expected	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
Evidence of effect (Q.2)	females agree	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain

Table 5

School one

Although generally the students' representative was well known at this school, his actual role did seem to be a little unclear to those he represented, although a slight majority confirmed that they were happy with the way their representative was carrying out the job. In this particular school, it seemed the role as the pupils perceived it and the job being done for them were quite well aligned.

There was strong support for the place of a student representative

on the board. Apparently this particular student body did want a say in matters which concerned them and females especially felt their representative had some influence on board decisions and so was functioning as an effective voice for the students. The majority, though were uncertain whether their opinions were being heard at board level.

It would seem that the representative had a very high profile and was reasonably easy to contact by the upper school anyway. The problem of representing such a large group did not seem such an onerous task and the communication channels he used functioned reasonably well in a downward direction in their opinion with the majority of students feeling they knew what was going on at board meetings when it concerned them. They would probably have been surprised to learn that much of what occurred at board level would have been of little interest to them which is why the representative could give so little feedback to assemblies and council meetings.

School two

Once again there appeared to be some confusion with regard to what the representative is supposed to be doing for the students. A majority could not say that she was doing what they expected her to do. Over half of them were unprepared to say that there was evidence that the representative had influenced board decisions or that she was doing a good job. However there was once again a clear signal that the students did want their say and did want to be represented at board level.

Communication was proving difficult for this student representative despite access to assemblies and a well structured student council through which to report back. In reality the council did not meet as often as it should have. There appeared to be only the one channel available for student voices to reach the board at the school and

when the council did not meet no communication was possible, which explains why less than 1/3 thought she was easy to contact and why almost half of the students surveyed did not think they could say that students knew who their representative was.

School three

Once again the students at this school were having difficulty defining the role of their representative and have a problem judging whether he was doing a good job or not. They were, though, apparently quite sure that their voice should be heard at board level.

A majority of the school was not feeling consulted or informed with the communication channels not well defined - the student representative reported that he had set up a suggestion box but it was not producing much in the way of items to take to the board, although one anonymous letter was received and duly presented. A group had also asked about some sports equipment which was favourably received and acted upon, which may account for the small faction who could be certain there was evidence the representative was effective.

School four

The role of the student representative on the board once again did not seem to be very clear in the minds of the students at this school despite the representative's being widely known. While agreeing that he took their ideas to the board they could not with any certainty say that he was effective in this. However there were more positive than negative responses apparent once the undecided were removed. This implies a feeling of trust that their representative was representing their interests to the board as well as could be expected.

There was a clear indication that the students did want a say in their own affairs, which is in line with the findings at the other three schools in the study.

These students, though, were not happy with the functioning of the communication channels established, which consisted at this school of: a student council which met periodically and to which the representative reported back; a 3rd and 4th form forum recently established which met fortnightly and passed on suggestions to the student council via the representative; occasional reports to assemblies; the representative's casual chatting to his peers in the 7th form. The females of the school, however, found the representative easier to contact than the males.

Combined outcomes

The same pattern was repeated in all four schools:
The role of the representative is not clear to the students they represent at these schools. Most could not say if their representative was doing what they expected him or her to do. There was support for the concept that the representative should and does take what students think to the board.

There is a clear signal that the students do want a representational voice on the board. There is less conviction that their voice is listened to.

Effective communication was proving difficult to achieve despite, in some cases, the representative's maintaining a high profile and open communication channels.

This was the opinion of the students at the schools on the performance of the representative. What of the representative's

fellow board members?

4.4 THE ADULTS' VIEWS

The Adult Board Member Questionnaire

The adults on the Boards of Trustees of the same four schools in the narrow focus were asked to fill in the questionnaire which can be found in Appendix 6. It was designed to investigate their perceptions of the student's role (research question one) and to gauge the level of opposition to the student inclusion (research question five).

Despite several requests, only 15 replies were received from a pool of 35 adult members so their responses were combined for analysis rather than treated as individual schools. Reference is made to the comments of some individuals where this is relevant to the discussion.

When asked what they, as fellow board members, felt was the role of the student representative, 13/15 (87%) said that it was to present the student perspective to the board, 9/15 (60%) said that their role was to communicate board activities and decisions to the students, 4/15 (27%) thought they represented student interests and 3/15 (20%) thought they should be implementing board policies.

There was a single respondent who saw student representation as giving students a meaningful place in the college, one who, conversely, regarded it as mere tokenism, and one who admitted that he was outrightly opposed to students being on the boards.

None of the replies stated that the student should be a full board member with a role equal to that of adults.

When asked how effective they felt their particular representative had been in the role as they defined it, 6/15 (40%) were prepared to say that the students had been very effective, 5/15 (33%) thought they had been doing a good job and 2/15 (13%) thought they were only fair in their role. Two felt that they had been as effective as any student could be, given their age and lack of experience, but one staff representative noted that the student was only ever asked questions about student matters and so felt that this was patronising the student to an extent. One respondent felt that the presence of a student was beneficial as it brought the focus back onto the students in the school.

Only one adult board member thought that the student was ineffective as he/she was incapable of articulating an argument in order to contribute to the reaching of a consensus, which is how he thought a board should operate.

There does seem to be a degree of satisfaction with the performance of the student representative on these four boards with 73% (11/15) of those responding approving of the way the role was carried out. In general the respondents felt that the effectiveness of the representative varied according to the calibre of each student. Most felt that so far they had been lucky in the actual representative chosen by the students but 3/15 (20%) were concerned about the consequences of an "unsuitable" selection or of getting a student representative one who opposed the decisions of the Board of Trustees. Others (2/15, 13%) mentioned the shortness of the term of office which gave little time to develop the skills necessary to do an adequate job and the heavy work load for senior students with board responsibilities on top of their school work.

When asked about areas to which the board members felt the student could make a valuable contribution, 10/15 (67%) felt that the representative's greatest contribution was that of bringing the student view to discussions and decisions. However, the list of areas mentioned - uniform (by 4/15, 27%), discipline (by 5/15, 33%), administration systems and how they affected students (by 5/15, 33%), liaison role between a board of trustees and the students (by 4/15, 27%) and school environment (by 2/15, 13%) - omits major areas of board concern.

The member who disapproved of students being on boards pointed out that, in his opinion, it was impossible for one student to represent over 1500 others on any matter, be it student or regular board affairs.

When asked about areas in which board members felt a student representative could not make a contribution and why, only 4/15 (27%) stated there were none. The areas mentioned by the remainder were almost exclusively to do with the teaching staff in the school: 5/15 (33%) thought students should not be involved in dealing with staff complaints, 4/15 (27%) felt staff discipline was an inappropriate area, 3/15 (20%) thought staff selection and promotion could be of concern, as well as the principal's salary, contract and appraisal. The reasons given were matters of confidentiality, the staff's right to privacy, and bias and peer pressure with regard to appointments.

There were doubts raised about the student's ability to contribute to financial matters (by 3/15 ,20%) and general areas of management (by 2/15, 13%), mainly because of lack of experience.

When asked whether there were any occasions when they felt the student representative should not have been present, 6/15 (40%)

said that there had been none but 3/15 (20%) felt that the student should not have had a role in the selection of executive staff. Two respondents reported having held that opinion until their representative had been involved in an appointment exercise and that they had subsequently changed their stance on the matter. There had been one instance in the questionnaire replies of a representative not being part of the negotiation of the principal's contract and two reports of excluding the student from pupil discipline meetings.

Summary

Student representatives have a legal right to contribute to any of the board activities and (like any other board member) cannot be asked to leave unless the matter directly concerns them,.

It seems then that the board members are restricting the role of the student representative by their behaviour towards them, and by a line of reasoning which could equally be applied to their fellow adults - inadequate expertise in some areas, and matters of influence and confidentiality.

When watching each of these representatives in action however, it was recorded that their contribution was almost solely that of providing information about student affairs and they rarely offered an opinion on anything other than a student matter or an issue they had raised themselves during the period of observation. This tends to confirm that student representatives were acting in the role that their fellow members thought was appropriate.

The adult board members place restrictions on the scope of the role played by the student representatives. They see the students as a

means of communication of student opinion but only on those areas of direct student concern. It was felt that, in this area, the students were doing a good job. Adult board members do not, though, see the student as an equal, even though many of the student representatives themselves considered they were so treated.

The adults wish to restrict the student contribution in areas pertaining to staff, and student, discipline despite the fact that legally they are not able to. This questionnaire therefore confirmed the trends which had become apparent from the students' answers.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study of student representation on Boards of Trustees was guided by five research questions which arose from the literature review undertaken in Chapter Two:

1. Is the role of the student representative on the board clear to both the representative and those they represent ?

2. Do secondary students want a consultative representational voice on the board and how effective is it?

3. Are the vital communication channels of such representation functioning?

4. Is training occurring and, if not, does this influence the students' effectiveness?

5. Is opposition to student representation affecting their participation?

The research methods used have their own limitations. It had to be assumed that the presence of a researcher would make some difference (Friedrichs and Ludtke, 1975) to the performance of the student representatives in carrying out their public duties. However, given that the student representatives were already in a public and scrutinised position, it could be expected that the extra pair of eyes would have only a minor effect. Only one of the four representatives who was monitored mentioned being aware of the extra presence

after the initial meeting. The same presence could affect the performance of the other board members to some extent as well; although the primary target was the student, the contributions of other members were also under scrutiny.

It was hoped on the other hand that some feedback on the student representatives themselves could enhance their performance without interfering with the field of observation. As it happened the study was concluded too late for the findings to be of use to the students personally during their actual term of office.

The various research methods which were outlined in Chapter three were designed to investigate each of the research questions in at least three contexts, thereby providing a triangulated approach which would, hopefully, compensate for the inherent faults in each method and gain a clearer picture of the performance of the student representative on the Boards of Trustees. It was expected that, by ensuring that each research question was included in at least three of the methods utilised, triangulation would be achieved.

The first questionnaire, which was distributed to thirty schools and returned by only sixteen, was its own random sample in a sense and could be considered, therefore, as a valid measure of the wider opinion of the student representatives in general when analysed. There was a consistency of answers which tends to confirm this.The second questionnaire followed up on the same questions.

The use of a cluster sample to test the opinion of those represented is a recognised valid method of obtaining a sample from which to generalise. The attitudes of those surveyed were consistent from school to school with only minor differences which could be attributed to the relative profiles maintained by the four representatives. On most matters the students at the four schools

were in agreement.

The small nature of the return from the adult board member questionnaire made it less reliable so the results from the four schools were combined for a clearer picture and once again the trends quickly emerged. It can only be hoped that the right questions were asked and that the answers do represent the opinions of the majority.

Because it was physically impossible to be with the four student representatives for every second of their working life at the selected schools, there are obvious limitations on the scope of this study. Some of the representational role taken by student representatives is manifested during school time and at subcommittee meetings and not just at the public board meetings which the researcher was observing. Consequently, some of the research material had to be reported to the researcher. Where possible such reports were verified by other means in order to minimise the possible bias.

On the assumption that valid data were collected it is possible to draw some conclusions with regard to the research questions which formed the basis of the investigation. It must be remembered that the study was limited to four schools in the narrow focus aspect and the responses of sixteen other student representatives in the Auckland area in 1991. Any conclusions drawn can speak only for those schools at that time.

The research questions are treated separately in the discussion which follows but any trends which triangulation appears to confirm are included. The wider issues of democracy, representation and participation which emerged in the final discussion and which proved fundamental to this study, are also considered.

Research Question One: **Is the role of the student representative on the board clear to both the representative and those they represent ?**

Dewey (1975) promoted democracy in education. He saw a democratic school as a miniature community, an embryonic society where the needs of all and the unique judgment of each person can be taken into account. (cited in Rizvi, 1989). School pupils have a democratic right like everyone else in society, to express their views on matters that closely concern them. The designers of the student representative legislation (Picot 1988, Lough 1990) were intent on a more responsive school system with students having a say in the partnership. In effect, this opportunity formalised the democratic right of students not only to be represented on secondary school Boards of Trustees but also to have their views expressed by student representatives and considered by all board members.

Student representatives were therefore given the same powers and responsibilities as adult trustees. Representatives were to ensure effective communication with their student communities and to provide a direct avenue for students into the decision - making process. Although Tomorrow's Schools (1988) suggests that students should make a contribution to the decisions of the board, or the making of policy, neither this document nor any of the other documents available stipulates precisely either how these responsibilities will be achieved, or the detailed expectations of the role of the student representative, other than that which is the same as any adult board member. What, then, has been discovered about the role of the student representative during the course of this study?

The concept of the role of the student on the board which emerged from the wide focus questionnaire (administered as the

representational term of office began) was one of the voicing of student concerns to the board. Respondents were of the opinion that this was what would be expected of them as student representatives. They were anticipating contributing to student matters raised at board level (as envisaged by the Principals' Implementation Task Force, 1990), but withdrawing from any board areas where they as students had no expertise, thereby limiting their own role. There was also no mention of a student contribution to the decisions of the board, or the making of policy.

By the time they responded to the second questionnaire, administered after eight months of their time in office had elapsed, student representatives claimed to have raised student concerns at board level, voiced opinions (although often their own, uncanvassed opinions), and ensured that the student voice had been heard on student matters. There was still no mention of non-student matters, tending to suggest that student contributions had been limited to student affairs and that student opinion was seldom sought on any other matter: a severe restriction of a board member's role. As a result, only 45% felt that they as students had been treated as equal board members.

The narrow focus study by way of confirmation, likewise revealed a narrowly defined role. Despite the students having full board rights, it was observed that the adult board members gave the student representatives little opportunity to express opinion, either their own or those of the students they represented, on **non**-student matters. During the period of the study only one student volunteered opinions on matters not directly of student concern but, as he regarded his contribution as a valuable "insider" viewpoint, he therefore forced it upon the group. Other students did not display such determination.

Students were also limited in their committee appointments either by not being invited to or by being actively discouraged from sitting on "sensitive" committees such as discipline or those dealing with staff matters. This further restricted the students' representational role and redefined it for the students by permitting only a narrow range of contribution. Students for the most part did not seem to be aware of such systematic narrowing of their role and so few took measures to counteract these forces. Such practices appear contrary to the spirit of partnership and the "direct avenue" to the decision-making process envisaged in The Guide to Governance and Management (1990) and also contrary to the spirit of democracy and participation.

The On-Duty Survey further confirmed a consistently low contribution rate on behalf of the students - student representatives do not say much at board meetings. They can, however, be asked a greater number of questions than parent representatives (though only on student-related topics, the record revealed) but students ask few questions themselves even when encouraged to do so. The student representative's role, then, is one of observer rather than participant as meetings often contain little of apparent student concern and the students tend to offer few opinions on any other matter. The predominant participants at the observed board meeting discussions were the chairpersons, the secretaries / principals, the staff representatives and occasionally, a particularly vocal parent representative.

The combined participation scores showed that student representatives are consistently among the lowest contributors to board meetings. The staff representative, who performs a similar function to the student representative in that he/she is the voice of a group within the school itself, (though admittedly the adult sector) contributes 47% of the total utterances at a meeting while the

student contributes only 11% thereby allowing the adult view more opportunity to influence policy. The fact that the students respond to 22.7% of the questions asked, however, does suggest that fellow board members do endeavour to obtain a contribution from the student sector.

The student representative role, then, is restricted in both its scope and expression at board meetings.

How is it conceived of by those whom the student represents?

Visibility around the school, being in contact with those the student represents in order to convey their opinions and concerns to the board, is an element of role, it was considered. A measurement of the success of this aspect was taken with the first question of the school body survey.

With the exception of one school, there was great uncertainty among the students surveyed as to whether the school body did know who was their student representative on the Board of Trustees. This could stem from a number of factors:

1.The size of the schools - the large numbers involved makes effective representation difficult.
2.A low profile - the representative who, with a restricted role, finds little to report on to the board and even less to report back to the student body.
3. The non-mixing of levels within schools - representatives tend to be senior students with little contact with the junior pupils in most schools.

This last point was borne out by the figures which showed the peer group level of every student representative to be more certain of the

school's knowledge of who their representative was than were other levels of the school. However, in the school where a higher profile was maintained by the representative who made a deliberate effort to be visible and available, all levels were more certain of their school's knowledge of the identity of their board representative.

Visibility as an aspect of role is parallelled by performance. The student representatives themselves conceive the necessity of taking what the students think to the board to be part of their role. To what extent does the student body see this as happening?

A high degree of uncertainty existed among pupils in all four schools in the study (between 35 and 50% of the students) as to whether their representatives took what the student body thought to the board. However, twice as many were prepared to agree to some extent than to disagree. The representatives were most strongly supported in this, once again, by their own peer group levels. The high degree of uncertainty could also mean that students did not see taking student opinion to the board as a function of a representative but this is unlikely as the representatives themselves all identified this as one of their primary functions. It is more likely that the student body lacked the evidence on which to base a conclusion.

There was, likewise, a high degree of uncertainty about the representatives doing what the students expected them to be doing in their role. Between 30% and 60% of those asked at the four schools in the close focus study could not decide if their representative was fulfilling their expectations. This implies that, either, the student body are unsure of what they expect a representative to do for them, or, that there is little evidence that, if the students do have a role in mind, their representative is carrying

out that role to the knowledge of the student body itself. Either conclusion reflects a poor understanding by the student body itself of the role of the student representative or that the student representatives are unable to effectively carry out their role because of the actions of their fellow board members as discussed above.

The same school as before stood out as having nearly two thirds of the student body of the opinion that their representative was fulfilling his role. This representative actively canvassed for opinion, was highly visible and accessible and gave regular reports to the student body on aspects of board business which concerned or might interest them. It seems, then, that these factors are what constitute the role of the student representative, as far as the student body is concerned.

The adult members of the Boards of Trustees who responded to their questionnaire conceived of the student role as, primarily, to present a student perspective to the board and to communicate board activity and decisions to the students. As a channel of communication, the four student representatives were functioning adequately, in the adults' opinion (although as has been discussed previously, the information the boards request is of a restricted nature, student perspective is only sought on student matters). One board member actually noted that the student was always asked only student-related questions.

Only 20% of the adult board members who responded to the questionnaire indicated representing student **interests** as being a function of the student representative role on the board as distinct from being an **information** source for the board. The areas where adult board members felt the student could make a contribution included uniform, discipline, administration systems, student liaison

and the school environment. These areas echo those of the observation phase, where board members limited their questions of student representatives to a similar, narrow range of topics.

However, the student representative role is not conceived as being equal to that of that of an adult's role on the Board of Trustees. Areas in which adults were of the opinion that student representatives should be restricted from concerned staff matters in the main, and the reasons given cast doubt on the students' integrity and maintenance of confidentiality. Such exclusions are illegal and reveal a lack of commitment to according student representatives full board member status.

Adult board members, it would appear, do seek to restrict the role of the student representative in ways which were indicated by the earlier phases of the study.

Conclusions

The role of the student representative, then, is narrowed by self-imposed restrictions where a lack of expertise is perceived. Adult board members shape and restrict the student's role even more narrowly, often without the knowledge of the student representative. Student access to certain board functions is sometimes illegally denied.

Students themselves rarely spontaneously offer opinions on matters other than student affairs. Neither are their views solicited on many other matters, leading to a low contribution rate at board meetings and restricting of the direct channel into the decision-making process.

Unless the representatives are highly active and visible, those whom the students represent have no clear perception of the role of the student representative and, consequently, are often unsure that

the role of representative is being carried out.

Recommendations

1. That student representatives be clearly informed of their rights under the Education Amendment Acts.

2. That boards be prevented from re-defining the student representative's role by the stipulation of the role in a legal document. (A job description for the student representative was suggested by Kitto, 1990).

3.That students (and others if necessary) be given access to background information to enable informed discussion to take place on issues which come before the board.

Research Question Two: **Do secondary students want a consultative representational voice on the board and how effective is it?**

Tomorrow's Schools (1988) and the Picot Report (1988) suggested students should have a voice in the running of New Zealand secondary schools. The Education Amendment Act 1990 made this suggestion law. The student voice had been heard at university level (for example at both Victoria and Auckland Universities) in New Zealand, and in overseas universities as documented in the literature review (Laverty, 1984; Randall, 1985; Martens, 1985).

The overseas secondary school student voice has been restricted to the school council level only (as discussed by Chavez, 1985; Treslan , 1983). Nussbaum, 1990 outlines how student voices can be effective in a representative position, although difficult to achieve in reality.

The New Zealand experiment was introduced without widespread canvassing of student opinion as to their desires to have a student voice on the board. Do New Zealand students want one? Now that there is a student voice, how effective is it?

The student representatives in the wide focus aspect of this study were expecting to be the student voice on issues and concerns. This, they thought, was what those they represented wanted of them. In the second questionnaire, completed after eight months in office, student representatives were asked to consider their own effectiveness in those terms. Of those who replied, 36% could think of nothing left undone although most admitted that there had been little during that time on which they could report back to the students as few student issues had been raised. The representatives' contributions themselves, they reported, had been limited to grounds and buildings matters, uniform, the tuckshop; a narrow role which had limited their effectiveness. Lack of expertise in areas such as bulk funding and board finance also limited the effectiveness of the student voice. The difficulties the students encountered in understanding what was going on were compounded by what the representatives conceived to be a bias towards the views of the adults on the board so that several students felt that they were wasting their time offering a student opinion.

Although they were well received by their peers, the student representatives commented on the apathy they encountered with

regard to board affairs. Students, it would appear, have narrow interests where Boards of Trustees are concerned. Do students, then, want a voice on the board?

As part of the narrow focus element, the student body survey revealed overwhelming support for the place of a student on the Board of Trustees. Strongest in the school where a high profile had been maintained, support was nonetheless confirmed as very much in the majority in the other three schools as well. It would appear that the students do want a voice in the running of their schools.

Judgment of the effectiveness of that voice is harder to achieve objectively. Since representation necessarily involves contribution to discourse if representation is to take place, the measurement of the contribution of student representatives to meetings of the Board in which they hold a representative position goes some way towards measuring effectiveness. If nothing is contributed, little representation occurs.

The on-duty surveys revealed how relatively insignificant the student contribution was compared to that of some other members of the board. Students regularly scored lower than chairmen, principals, staff representatives and some parents, for example, meaning that the student opinion was not aired as often as staff or parent opinion. The students' representative, therefore, was not as effective.

However, when compared to the lowest contributing parents and non-European board members, there was little difference between the contributions of the groups. In fact, the combined student voice was heard more often than that of the non-European male members of the boards. This highlights an aspect revealed by this study but beyond its scope - the lack of contribution (and, therefore,

effectiveness) of the non-European members of Boards of Trustees. This is an area which could be investigated by a subsequent study.

It would seem, then, that the student body was right to be uncertain as to the contribution made by their representative to board matters. Such a low rate of utterance must limit the effectiveness of the student voice; doubly so when combined with the effects of the limitations placed on the scope of that contribution, as previously discussed.

However, visibility corresponded to judgments of effectiveness as far as the student body was concerned. Uncertainty about the effectiveness of their student representative was lowest in schools where students agreed that the representative was known by all levels of the school. Only in one school, though, did this parallel certainty of belief that there was evidence that the student board member influenced board decisions. The schools which scored their representative as less widely known were more uncertain of the effect of their representative on such decisions.

The adult board members equated flow of information with effectiveness. Most were satisfied that what was maintained by their student representative was adequate for the boards' needs and, therefore, adequately fulfilled the student's role.

Conclusions

The student body do want a voice on the Boards of Trustees of their schools. Students judge the effectiveness of that voice by the visibility of their representatives.

Adult board members judge the effectiveness of the student

representative by the flow of information which comes to the board.

The actual effectiveness of the student voice is hampered by a lack of contribution to discussion at board meetings (measured in relative terms of total utterances). What is not heard cannot be considered.

Recommendations

4. That student representatives be retained on Boards of Trustees.

5. That students be trained in ways of increasing their participation in Board discussions and be encouraged to do so.

6. That parent board members, particularly non-European parent representatives, receive similar assistance in order to increase their contribution.

Research Question Three:. **Are the vital communication channels of such representation functioning?**

Victoria University's 1962 report recognised that the success of student representation on decision-making bodies depends on communication, a finding echoed by Nussbaum (1990) and Stiles (1986).

It is significant, then, that the student representatives in the wide focus aspect of this study at the beginning of their term of office were contemplating relying on only informal channels for much of their communication. The main formal methods (such as student councils) were going to be only marginally important in their

opinion and few representatives had any idea of how to enhance communication with those they represented.

Eight months later the reality and problem of trying to communicate with such a large number had become obvious. All were now using the student councils (when they functioned) and many had made use of other formal situations such as assemblies. All had found communication difficult to maintain owing to the large numbers involved. The majority of the student representatives were in favour of having a second student on the board to give some moral support and improve the numerical ratio of representation and, thereby, ease the burden of communication.

Student representatives also reported that a lack of feedback to give and disinterest on the part of the student body to receive it compounded their communication problems.

The narrow focus study confirmed these trends. Of the four schools involved, one board representative was more energetic at collecting information, and visited those he represented more informally than formally, while one student representative tended to rely more on his own peer level for information and gave little feedback. Yet, at both of these schools the student body felt strongly that they knew who their representatives were and scored their representatives more highly in terms of receiving information than at the schools which maintained a viable student council for most of the year. However, the latter two schools considered their student representatives were easier to contact, presumably through the available formal channel.

Representatives at all four schools found it difficult to report back to the student body on a regular basis as board business, discussions and activities seldom related directly to the students themselves, or

the representatives felt that the student body displayed little interest in what they were able to say. All four representatives endeavoured to report on anything which they felt might be relevant.

The lack of communication correlated with the high degree of uncertainty amongst the student body at three schools as to whether their representative was doing a good job. Without communication, it was difficult to decide. The same three schools scored high on uncertainty with regard to the student representative performing to their expectations, influencing board decisions and taking their concerns to the board. Exchange of information is one way of ensuring and measuring effectiveness. The three schools where the representatives relied more heavily on formal channels scored higher degrees of uncertainty about their representatives' performances at board level.

At the one school where the representative maintained informal as well as formal contact, students were more willing to agree that their representative influenced board decisions, was doing what they expected and was doing it well.

It would seem that good communication channels, both formal and informal, are necessary for success as a student representative as far as those who are represented are concerned.

The student representatives' fellow board members likewise viewed communication as a vital part of the student representative function. Information exchange, in their opinion, should flow up to the board and down to the students via the student representative. In this function, almost three quarters of those surveyed were of the opinion that their representative had carried out that role effectively. It has been noted previously, that the range of information expected and conveyed was narrow, consisting mainly of student events

related to the board and decisions of the board (where appropriate) conveyed back to the student body. The utterance survey revealed how much of a contrast the student representatives' overall contribution was to that of some of the other, adult board members.

Conclusions

Communication with such a large group is difficult to maintain. A second representative would decrease the representational load carried by these students.

For the representative, there is the problem of a lack of material to communicate, in part owing to student lack of interest in board affairs, forcing a fallback onto student activities to convey to the board, which in turn results in little feedback to give to the students.

Good communication as far as the student body was concerned involved both formal and informal channels with ready access to the representative if the need should arise.

The student council is a vital link for the representative and it is necessary that every effort be made to maintain its continued functioning. Other, less formal channels are just as vital and the successful representative is one who displays energy and ingenuity in making contact with those she/he represents.

Recommendations

7. That student representatives be trained in methods of effectively communicating with the large groups they represent.

8. That the possibility of increasing representation to two students be investigated, particularly in large schools where the ratio of

student to representative is great.

9. That every effort be made to ensure the student councils, in schools where they exist, are kept functioning for the duration of the year to assist the exchange of information and that the meetings are timed to give the students the opportunity to prepare issues to be taken to the Board of Trustees, and for feedback to be disseminated following a board meeting.

10. That efforts be made to raise the consciousness of the school body about the channel which is now available to them in order to take a real part in the decision - making process of their board.

Research Question Four: **Is training occurring and if not, does this influence the students' effectiveness?**

A Guide to Governance and Management (1990) stipulates that student representatives should undergo a proper induction into the workings of boards and meetings. The students who took part in the wide focus aspect of this study could not recall more than a cursory introduction to such matters. The narrow focus students also confirmed a lack of training being offered. When left up to individual schools, training for representatives does not appear to occur. Certainly little in the way of training was observed by this researcher during the course of the first year of this study.

Nussbaum (1990) sees a need for training and administrative support to achieve effective student participation in school government. Garnella (1981) too, stresses the need for advisors to orientate, train and assist student board members. The Student Government Manual (1985) outlines leadership training techniques which could be adopted in New Zealand. Schoening

and Keane (1989) discuss the value of peer tutoring. Yet none of the student representatives in this study had received substantial help in any of these areas, despite the conclusions of Kitto's 1990 study which found that the least support of all was given to student representatives on Boards of Trustees in New Zealand.
After eight months in office, the students in the wide focus aspect of the study were prompted to reflect on the kinds of tasks they had been asked to perform and the types of training and support which they would have found useful. The full data which resulted have been presented earlier but it will be recalled that background information on issues featured strongly, as did presenting an effective case. Interestingly, only a few student representatives mentioned leadership training as an aspect which would assist them in their role.

The training which these student representatives in Auckland in 1991 reported as having received was informal and inadequate. Few had had contact even with their predecessor and many expressed a desire to meet with other representatives, despite the reported failure of such a meeting attempted by a student representative of one of the close focus schools.

During the second year of this study, such a meeting was arranged for the representatives in the wider Auckland area. Some of the preliminary findings of this study were included as the basis of a training day for the newly appointed representatives. Topics such as student representative rights under the law, role definition, communication methods and training in handling some likely situations were included in the day. Feedback was very positive and the students appreciated the opportunity to meet other representatives and establish support networks. Further training days are planned. The need for them has certainly been demonstrated.

The four student representatives in the narrow focus aspect had likewise, unfortunately, not received anything like the above training for their roles. There was little evidence of induction and support for the representatives in Auckland during the first year of this study. The staff representative appeared to be the most sensitive to the student's position at board meetings during the observation phase of this study and support was periodically given in the form of explanations, praise and proximity.

Principals usually made themselves available to student representatives for consultation at other times for which the students reported they were grateful. Little else which could be classed either as support or training was recorded.

Lack of training could be a factor which influenced student representative effectiveness as demonstrated in the low contribution rate of students to meeting discussion. The normally articulate, confident students who undertake these representative positions do not seem able to speak out in such company. Students in the wide focus study commented that it took them several months to "learn the ropes" and, by that time their term of office was practically over. A similar phenomenon was reported and observed in the narrow focus aspect of the study. Overall, student contribution was well below that of their fellow board members.

Conclusions

Training for student representatives is not being provided by individual schools. Mostly, student representatives are left to discover for themselves meeting and board procedures.

Little support is given to the student representative at any time

during his/her term of office. What is offered is casually organised and intermittent.

It would seem that lack of training is hindering student effectiveness as it limits their contribution to board discussion. Students themselves, and overseas studies, have identified areas where training could be helpful and increase student representational effectiveness. For example, assertiveness training could go some way to remedying the lack of contribution to discussion, as could having the ability to effectively present a case. A proper induction into meeting and board procedures could shorten the "hesitancy" period at the start of a term of office for these students.

The student body, who desire a representative on the Boards of Trustee, would be better served by a well trained and supported student who well understood the function and operation of the role and who could articulate the student voice with confidence.

Recommendations

11. That an organised programme of training for student representatives on Boards of Trustees in New Zealand be instituted along the lines of those found useful in other countries.

12. That schools be advised of how best to support the student representative in the course of her/his term of office.

13. That opportunities be provided for student representatives to meet with others in order to establish mutual support networks.

Research Question Five:. **Is opposition to student**

representation affecting their participation?

Arguments against the the concept of student participation in democratic government centre on the premise that democracy demands not only protection of one's own rights but also the choosing of ends and means for, and on behalf of the people whose interests are represented. Opponents claim that youth is a time of such rapid development that the importance to students of chosen purposes (means and ends) would change in a similarly rapid fashion.

A further argument against student participation is that a young person's limited experience could lead to injudicious choices or decisions swayed by enthusiasm or whim. Opposition to representation stemming from these arguments could be overt or covert. This perspective hinges on effective participation in a democracy being a developmental process - for which adolescents **may** not yet be suitably prepared.

Overt opposition to the inclusion of a student on the Board of Trustees was reported in Kitto's 1990 study. He recorded that, at some schools in the Waikato area student representatives had been illegally excluded from board meetings. Overt opposition was also reported by Barrington (1989) in that some secondary school principals were strongly opposed to a student presence on boards.

Kitto's study also concluded that student representatives were given the least support of any board member. Non provision of support could be interpreted as covert opposition.

Both overt and covert opposition to student representatives is in evidence in this study also.
In the wide focus aspect of this study, the newly appointed student

representatives anticipated little opposition to their position and participation. After eight months in office, few could report any blatant obstruction but more subtle means had been employed to curb student participation. Explanations such as confidentiality (also mentioned by Barrington, 1989) or student-to-student relations were given as reasons why student representatives would be best not to sit on committees such as discipline or be involved in staff matters or principals' contract negotiations.

Most students in the wide focus group had bowed to adult wishes on these matters, they reported, despite a legal right to attend any board meeting and to take part in any board function. Only about half of the students who were asked felt that they had been treated as an equal on their board.

In the narrow focus aspect of the study, these trends were confirmed. Blatant opposition was rarely seen. Other methods were utilised, such as: committees being already established with no place subsequently offered to the student; students directed to other, particular, "relevant" committees; student opinion only actively sought on student matters; procedural rules invoked to prevent discussion or action on a student-raised matter; suggestions that student representatives would have little to contribute to, or little interest in, a particular matter and, therefore,need not attend.

Conversely, it was noted during the observation phase that some student representative contributions were warmly received and a student point of view was listened to. However, as has previously been discussed, such contributions were from a very narrow range of topics.

The on-duty survey confirmed the above trends with students asked questions directly on student topics alone. The lack of training and

support was probably a contributing factor to the low participation rate by students in the general discussion of meetings.

The student body survey revealed little or no opposition among school students to the position of a student representative on the Boards of Trustees. Very small numbers of students (less than five per cent of any school surveyed) strongly agreed that there was no need for a student representative on the board. By contrast, disagreement with the statement ranged from forty to fifty per cent.; thereby demonstrating strong support for a student voice on the boards.

The adult board member questionnaire revealed only one respondent who admitted being outrightly opposed to the inclusion of a student representative. There were more replies which wished to limit student contribution, however. Such areas concerned mainly staff matters (as also reported by Barrington, 1989) for reasons of confidentiality, bias and peer pressure with regard to appointments. Finance and general management also featured as areas where adult board members felt students had no expertise. (Surely the same criticisms could be levelled at some adult board members).

Conclusions

Although few adult board members were prepared to admit they opposed student representation, chairmen, principals and others were seen to be adept at finding ways of excluding students from what the adults considered sensitive areas and of limiting the scope of student participation.

Student representatives rarely objected to such limitations of their role.This state of affairs was compounded by lack of support and

training for the representatives; thereby impairing student performance. These are covert means of opposing student representation. The student body, however, is strongly in favour of their voice being heard at board level, with only a small percentage indicating opposition to the representative position.

Recommendations

14. That adult board members be somehow prevented from excluding student representatives from any aspect of board business.

15. That student representatives be made aware of possible limitations which could be placed on them and that they be shown how to counteract such actions.

16. That students be encouraged and supported in order to make an equal contribution to all facets of board functions, in a true spirit of democracy.

A Final Comment

This study focussed not on philosophy, but on actual participation. However, the final discussion of the data presented above exposed an important philosophical perspective - that of democracy and representation. This thesis, then, is not merely about the mechanics of participation. It also concerns the rights of participation in what is now supposed to be a democratic institution.

Michels (1958) and others claim, however, that organizational democracy is an unrealizable and unrealistic dream. "Elite

governance is inevitable, regardless of any human efforts to counteract it." (Rizvi op. cit. p. 207). For Michels, oligarchy is the inevitable product of the very principle of organization. "Power once assumed by individuals naturally leads them to ensure that it is preserved." (ibid, p. 209). The reaction of the adult board members in this study, as recorded in their questionnaire answers, the restrictions placed on student representatives, and the reactions of principals reported by Dawson, (1989), all tend to suggest the presence of oligarchy: government by a select few who wish to remain in control.

The New Zealand government has now ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which should protect the rights of students. Yet in 1992, the same government repealed the legislation which guaranteed secondary students a voice on school Boards of Trustees, a move, which, in the opinion of Robert Ludbrook, a lawyer with the Youth Law Project in Auckland, breaches the Convention, article 12 of which states that children should be given the right to participate in decisions being made about themselves (Young, 1993). The Convention may not be any more successful at securing the democratic rights of students to participate in the decision-making process of schools than the repealed legislation proved to be.

Michels further claims that followers themselves foster oligarchy by showing little concern with organizational decision-making beyond their personal interests and have no interest in how decision-making takes place. The reactions of the school bodies, as reported by student representatives in the wide focus element, would appear to corroborate this conclusion. Representatives reported widespread apathy among their fellow students beyond immediate student concerns. Likewise, the narrow focus response revealed that, although there was widespread support for a student voice on

the board, few students could be certain of what role they wished their representative to take on their behalf or that the student voice was being heard at board level. These three factors tend to suggest that the student bodies had not maintained interest in board affairs and, therefore, (and perhaps unwittingly) had not fully exercised their democratic rights of representation and participation.

Dahl (1961) and others argue that the notion of organizational democracy is mistaken in its assumption that people actually want to participate in decision-making processes. These authors base this claim on a body of evidence which suggests that people are socially and politically apathetic and do not wish to be involved or participate. However, the apathy displayed by the student bodies in this study could be the fault of the organizations: the schools themselves.

Rizvi sees apathy as an index of the extent to which institutions have fallen short of the democratic ideal. "Human beings can be politically engaged only in an organization in which they are encouraged to participate" (Rizvi, op. cit., p. 220). The schools in this study covertly denied their students a democratic voice. Schools, in particular, should be places which facilitate a concern for democratic activism, in order to develop an acceptance of participation as inherent in society so that, as adults, citizens would be more inclined to participate in the wider democratic process.

Pateman (1970, p. 25) claims that participatory structures, once established, are self-sustaining; encouraging and promoting of participation because, "the very qualities that are required of individual citizens if the system is to work successfully are those that the process of participation itself fosters and develops."

The schools in this study, although supporting the principle of

participation, did not facilitate it. The student representatives, as discussed earlier, were not given the necessary training and support to ensure that their participation was equal to that of the greatest contributors among their fellow board members. Some representatives were prevented from participating at all in sensitive board activities. The students at the schools in the study, therefore, did not have true representation at board level, the partnership envisaged by the initiators. The democratic structure had been subverted.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study of student representation has identified two areas worthy of further study:

1. The first area concerns the rights and participation of non-European members of Boards of Trustees. The level of contribution from this sector of the school community falls well short of the partnership envisaged by the designers of the legislation.

2. The second is that a further examination of the role of student representation in a wider range of schools be undertaken with a specific focus on the extent to which the democratic rights of students and their elected representatives are actually protected, in action, on Boards of Trustees.

Student representation on Boards of Trustees in Auckland schools in 1991 was not the partnership envisaged by the designers of the "Tomorrow's Schools" legislation. It was instead, a "fraudulent attempt to give the impression of enlightenment without conceding anything of substance" (Wringe, 1984, p.79).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you hope to achieve as a student representative on the Board of Trustees

2. How do you expect to be able to do these things?

3. What communication channels do you have with the students you represent?

4. What new communication channels do you expect to open up?

5. What areas do you think you will be able to contribute to most? And why?

6. What areas do you feel you won't be able to contribute to? And Why?

7. How do you expect to be treated by other Board members?

8. How do you expect to be treated by your fellow students?

9.What experiences have you had that you think have prepared you to be a Board rep?

10. What training have you had for the job?

11 What do you think are the student's expectations of you as their representative?

12. Any further comments?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix 2

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE TWO

Name_____
Phone_____

School_____

1. What have you achieved as Student representative that you hoped to achieve? Can you say why?

2. What have you not achieved that you hoped to? Can you say why not?

3. What communication channels have you had with students and how well have they functioned?

4. In what areas do you feel you have made a contribution and represented student opinion?

5. In what areas have you been unable to contribute?

6. Have you had any limits placed on your involvement in Board activities

7. How have you been treated by Board members?

8. How have you been treated by your fellow students?

9. What is your opinion of the Student Representative set up?

10. Any further comments ?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix 3

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

What sort of training would have helped you do a better job?

Would you have liked to talk to previous representatives?

Would you like to have talked to other representatives doing the job this year?

What do you think of the idea of two students on the board?

Any further comments?

Appendix 4

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY

SCHOOL_____ FORM LEVEL_____

SEX_____ AGE_____

Please show your agreement or disagreement with the statements below by circling the response that is closest to your own.

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Uncertain
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

1. Every student knows who the Student Representative on the Board of Trustees is. **SA A U D SD**

2. The Student representative never tells us what is going on. **SA A U D SD**

3. It is easy to contact the Student representative **SA A U D SD**

4. The representative takes what students think to the Board. **SA A U D SD**

5. We don't need a Student representative on the Board of Trustees. **SA A U D SD**

6. The Student representative is doing a good job. **SA A U D SD**

7. The Board takes notice of what the Student representative proposes. **SA A U D SD**

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

Appendix 5

BOT MEETING 26 2 91:

Farewell to D, retiring rep letter sent to commemorate tenure and job done.
Welcome M on behalf of students (chair)
bring info on students
may ask to get info to help us

warning about confidentiality - meaning of in committee
offer of help - chairman available
they laugh and have digs at each other, know each other well
two full years together

Procedures

D shared minutes with M, given own package like other board members
voted with group on correspondence considerations
some general agreement joined into
asked to reinforce message re use of 7th form common room
D asked a question about 7th form c r re siting

Student Report (M)

changes accepted well
personal - uniform suggestion offered
told - "will be on the uniform committee" - chair
will go around and ask each class before next meeting to collect issues on a regular basis
aware won't happen spontaneously
SAG basis for feedback D[redacted] said didn't work:
info to them -> form -> SAG didn't get back
CL: assemblies may be better used now (house)

Chairman **finally** introduced M around table 9:43!!
"no time to stop for detail
take full part
any area have right to add" assurance

asked after D and future : B Com. Ak Uni congrats on bursary

M seemed reasonably relaxed except when delivering report. Staff rep sat close by to give moral support.

26 3 91 2nd BOT

General Procedures:
folders contain material for members, M gets one; some other material posted out before meeting.
semi formal set up
agenda followed as per folder but chairman asks if there are any other items at start.
minutes and matters arising : free and open discussion is allowed, chair asks most of the questions and keeps meeting moving

asks for movers and votes to speed things along.
correspondence is retained by secretary and relevant items are read in full to group. Some are passed around for members to read if they are interested. All members have a typed list of the items in their folder
Reports: **Finance** ($) copy given to all members
discipline they have copies of
property copy if available and spoken to by members present at both meetings
Tutanga Maori co-opted member spokesperson - verbal report only
uniform - verbal only report on the meeting if taken place
employer verbal report
principal - written to members
staff- prepared report usually on departments
student - verbal report from notes
associations - wca
other agenda items
Involvement in appointment of AP Sat last:
read cvs
asked questions with the group
felt fully part of the proceedings

Meeting:
teacher rep sat next to M again
M listened and voted on proposals re literacy question etc.

asked what info to pass on to students about new AP

Student Report
had been busy going to classes
workday: SAG now called Student Council
- new lighting tower scaffold thing unsafe
- mural for gym
- seating around buildings
- drinking fountains

dress standard for mufti days social - no guidelines needed?

Mufti day to be May 9
non-smoking concert Health dept. $4 lunchtime - well informed about deals doing here

Council choosing charity for donation - Amnesty int

Bus request - to pick up kids on Liston bus for own run

No-one feels threatened , no no go areas in the school -response to class survey appreciate teachers on duty though

canteen service slipping - treatment at counter lacks courtesy, short changed , prices on items a concern

feedback - prices on things seen as good point by chairman
and 7ths on canteen duty? - rostered on

bell new times - mixed reaction half status quo half want change back

survey to be arranged perhaps?

C= "Good on you"
"Thank you Questions for us? Thanks"

Appendix 6

BOARD OF TRUSTEES QUESTIONNAIRE

Position (please circle one) : Chairman Parent representative Staff representative Student representative Principal

1. What in your opinion is the role of the Student Representative on the Board?

2. How effective is your Student Rep in carrying out that role?

3 In what areas do you feel the Student Rep can make a valuable contribution?

4. Are there any areas where you feel they cannot make a contribution? Why?

5. Were there occasions when you felt the Student Rep should not have been present? Why?

6. Any other comments?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Appendix 7

Schools' Utterance Survey Raw Data

The following classifications were used:

S = statement

R = response to a direct question

Q = question asked by the board member

P = procedural utterance (moving or seconding a motion.)

School One

Personnel	S	R	Q	P	Total
Chairman	227	38	163	4	432
Principal	111	126	14	1	252
Staff representative	142	22	60	10	234
Parent (m)	106	8	44	12	170
Parent (m)	102	13	35	12	162
Parent/staff (m)	86	14	14	0	114
Parent (m)	67	9	21	8	105
Parent non E (f)	52	23	10	0	85
Student (m)	**44**	**17**	**9**	**4**	**74**
Parent non E (m) (abs.)	0	0	0	0	0

School two

Personnel	S	R	Q	P	TOTAL
Chairman	263	36	220	13	532
Parent/staff (f)	218	27	52	1	298
Principal	165	100	20	0	285
Staff Rep (f)	159	41	58	4	262
Parent (f)	81	16	52	3	152
Parent (m)	63	21	18	2	104
Parent non E (m)	37	10	17	0	64
Parent non E(f)	40	7	6	2	55
Student non E (f)	**10**	**25**	**3**	**0**	**38**
Parent non E(f)	6	6	2	0	14

School three

Personnel	**S**	**R**	**Q**	**P**	**TOTAL**
Principal	303	118	31	7	459
Chairman	122	12	153	0	287
Staff representative	68	21	34	13	136
Parent non E(f)	75	15	11	10	111
Parent/Staff (f)	53	14	23	7	97
Parent (m)	30	2	8	18	58
Parent (f)	18	7	16	13	54
Parent (m)	27	1	7	8	43
Student (m)	**9**	**9**	**3**	**1**	**22**

School four

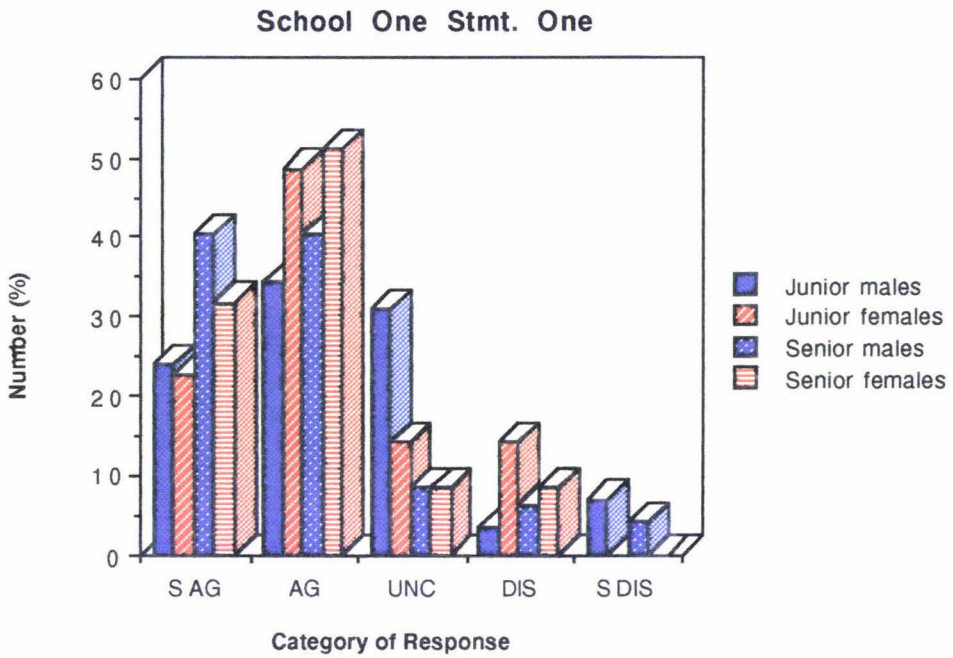
Personnel	**S**	**R**	**Q**	**P**	**TOTAL**
Chairman	174	23	182	5	384
Principal	187	43	18	9	187
Parent non E (m)	50	23	8	10	91
Parent non E (f)	41	13	15	13	82
Staff Rep (m)	50	10	9	11	80
Parent (m)	35	19	15	10	79
Parent/staff (f)	27	5	21	20	73
Parent non E (m)	35	7	9	9	60
Parent non E (f)	24	2	19	6	51
Parent/staff (m)	21	1	10	12	44
Student (m)	**23**	**2**	**3**	**7**	**35**

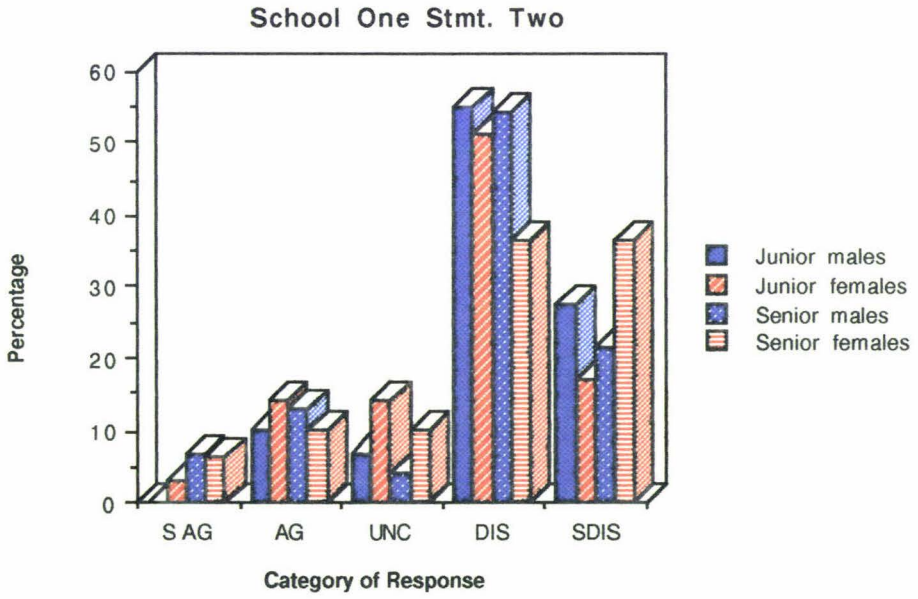
The scores combined

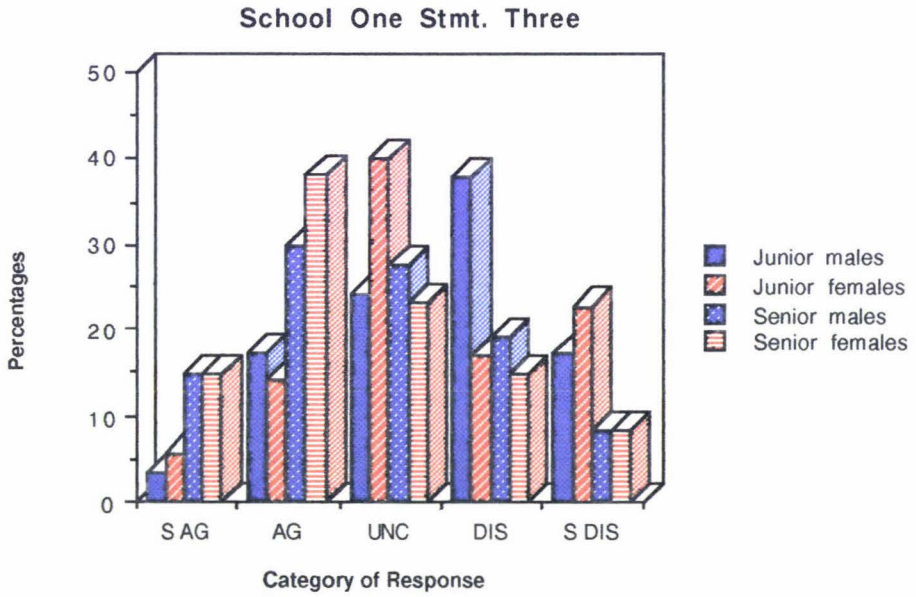
Personnel	**S**	**R**	**Q**	**P**	**TOTAL**
Staff representatives	419	94	161	38	712
non-European females	157	46	42	16	261
Parent representative	147	23	45	28	243
Students	**86**	**53**	**18**	**12**	**169**
non-European males	72	17	26	11	126

Appendix 8

Graphed Responses to School Body Survey



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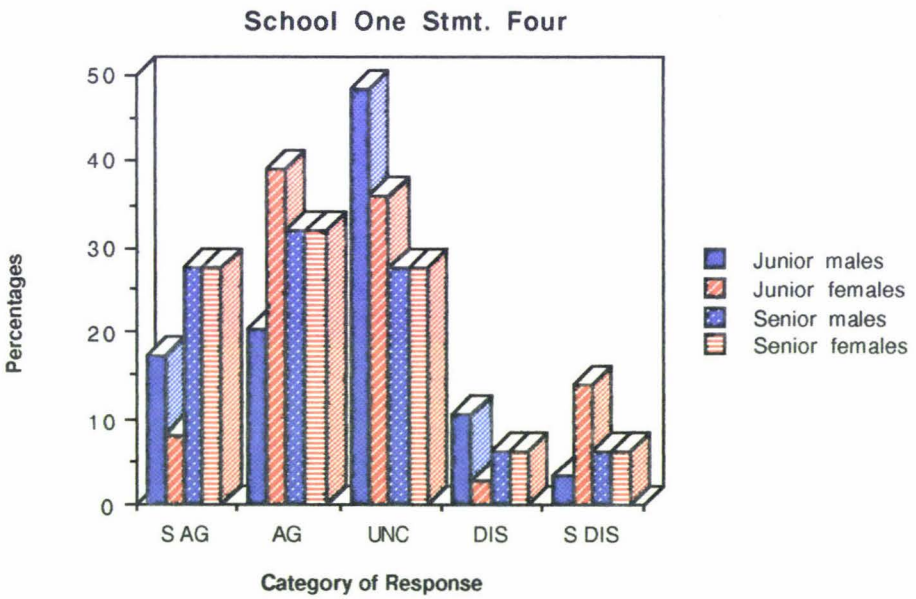
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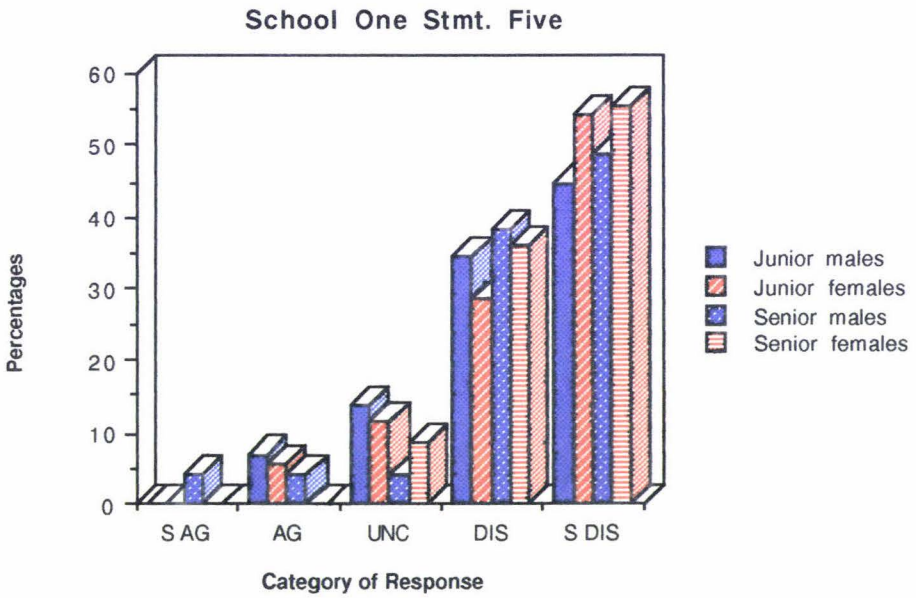
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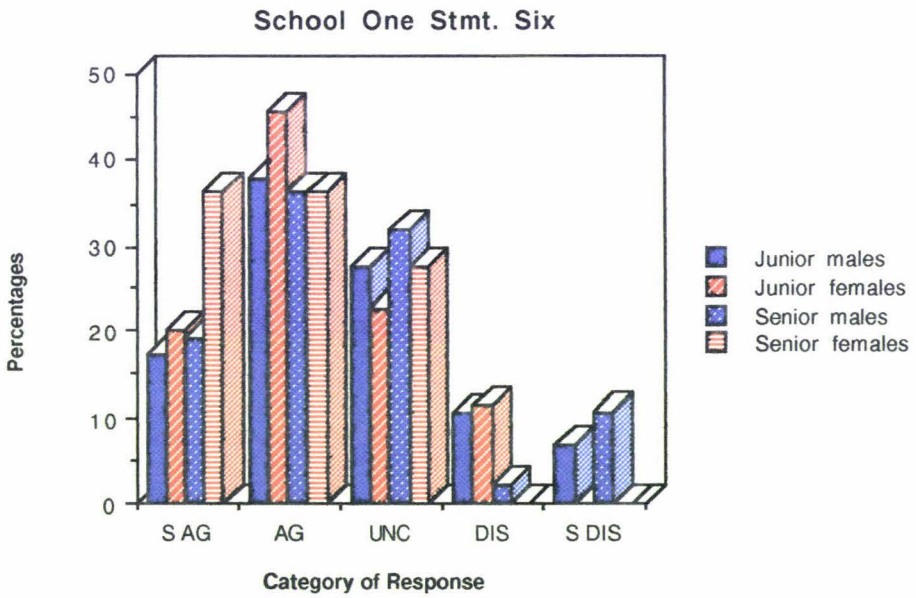
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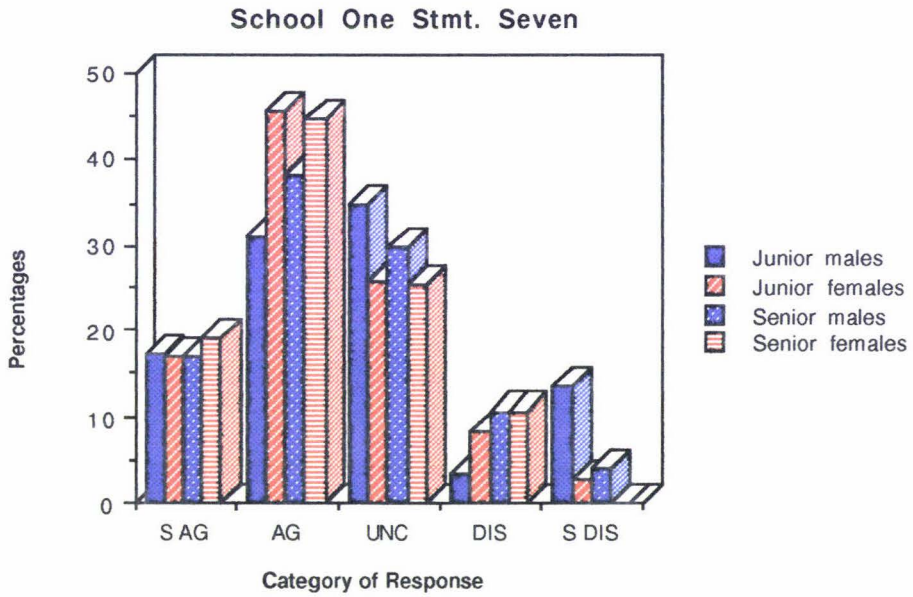
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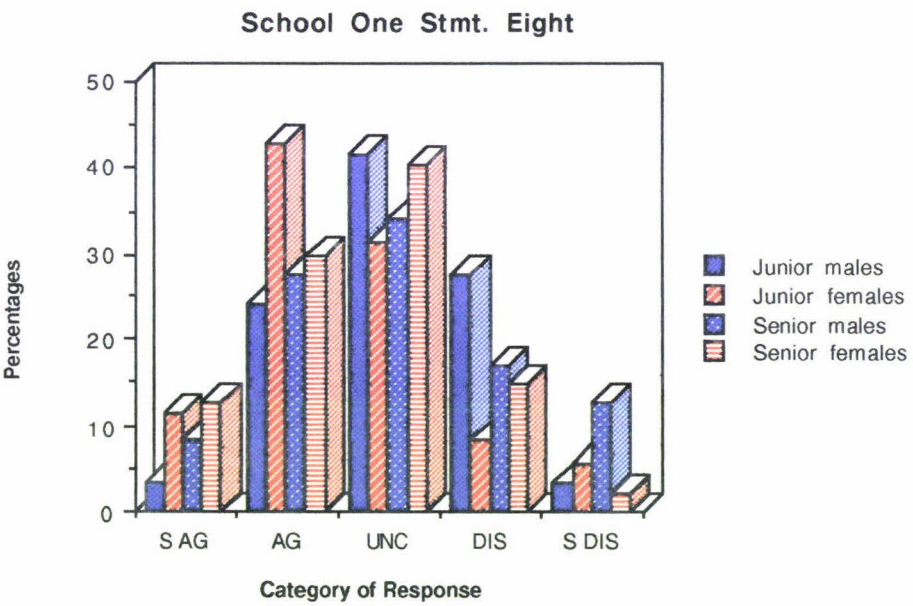
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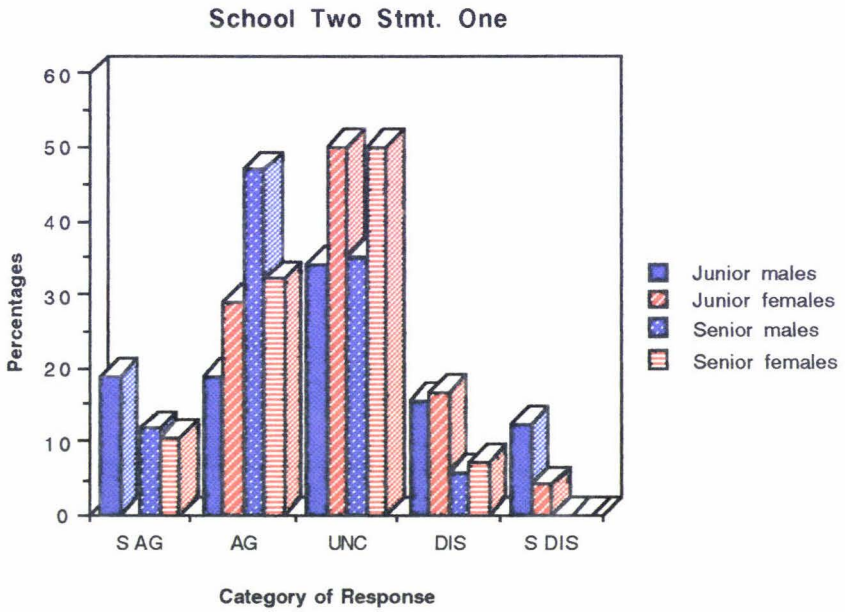
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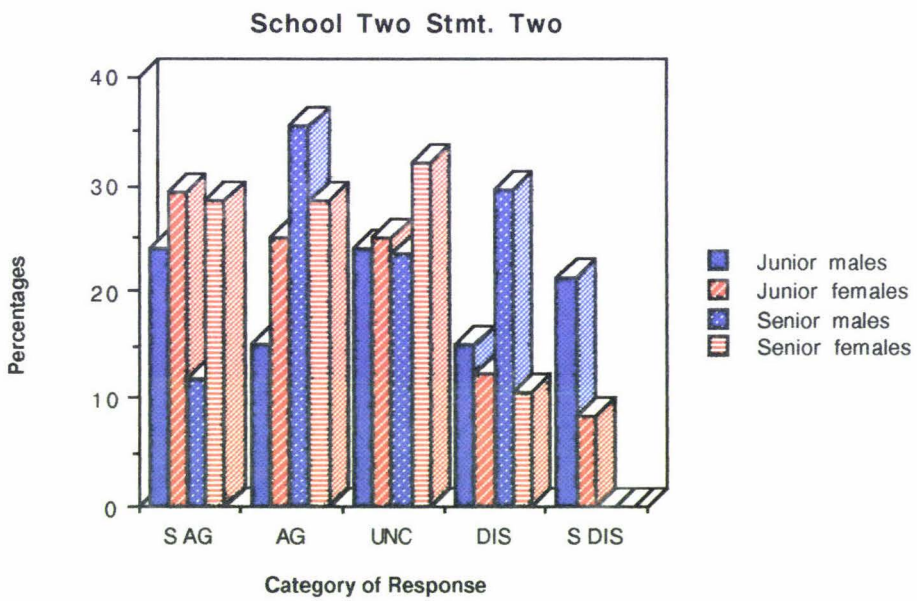
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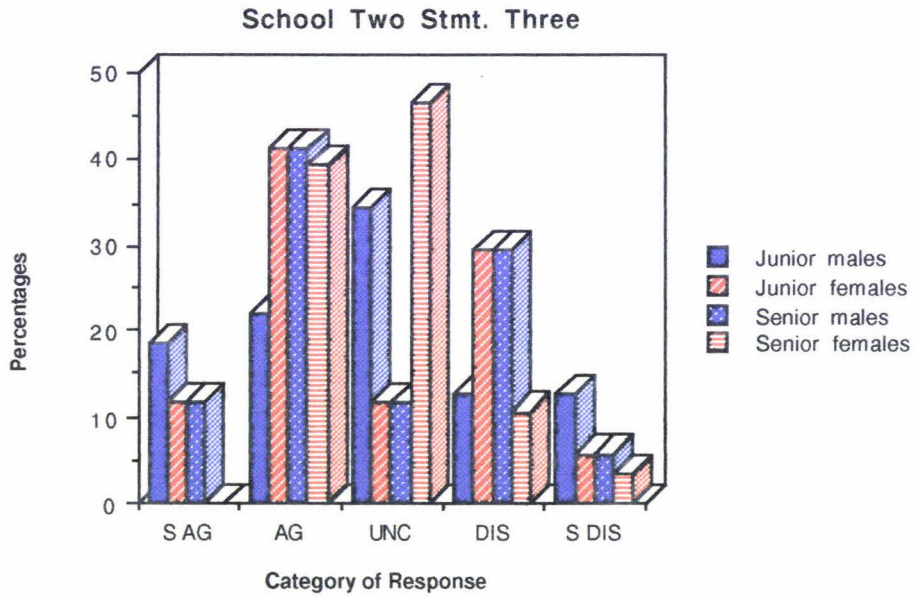
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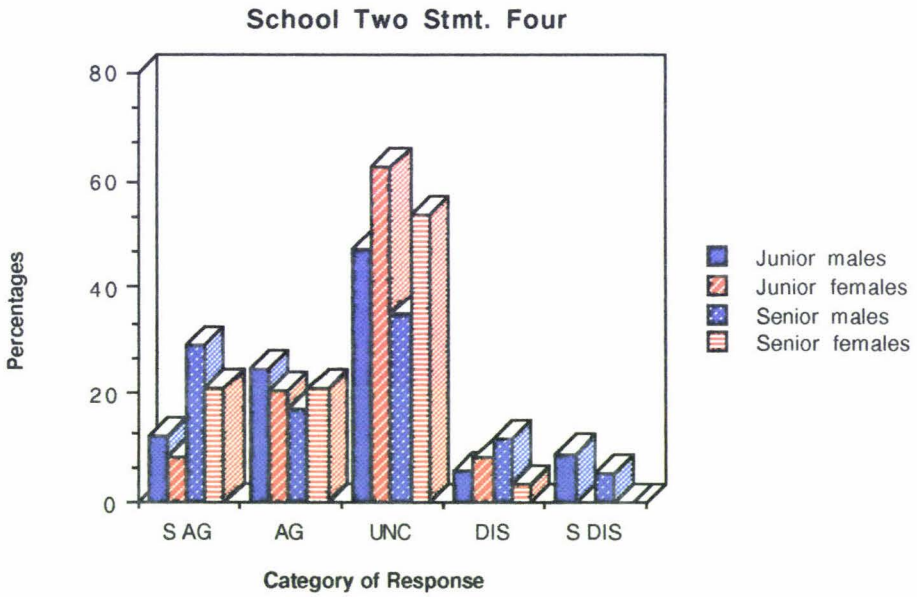
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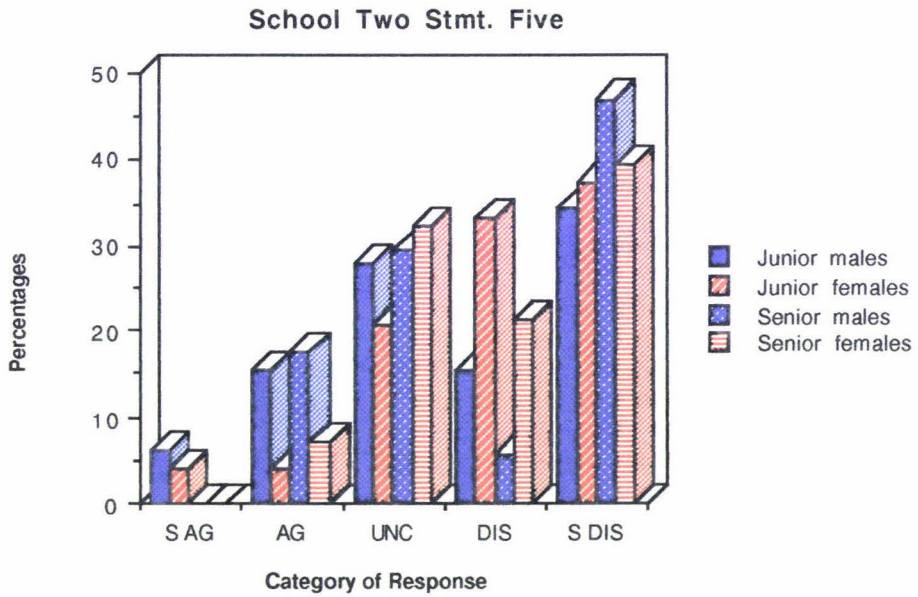
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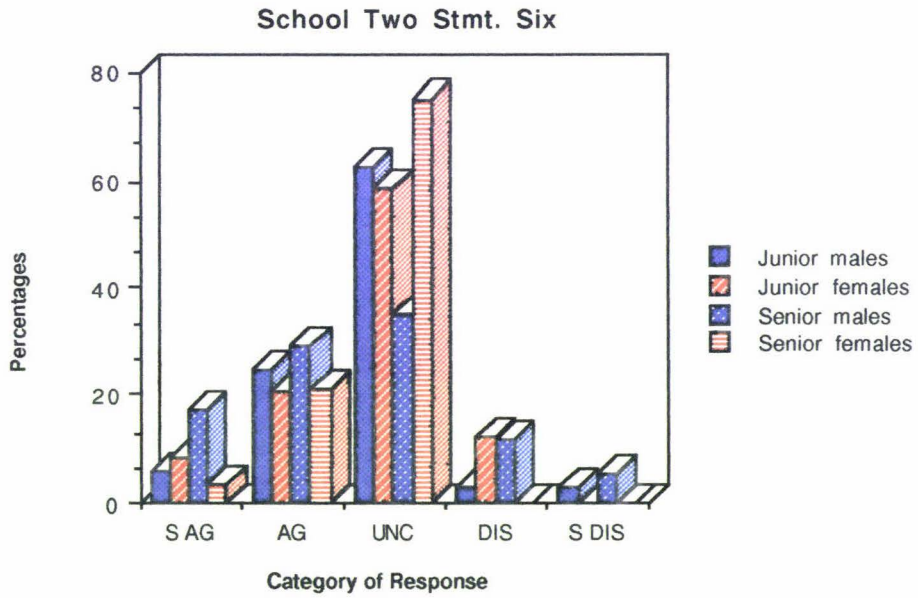
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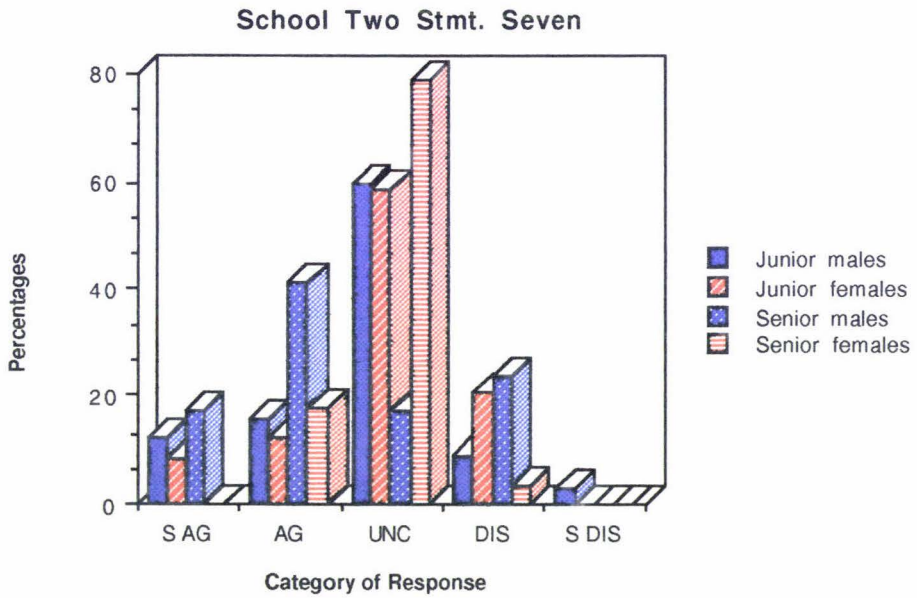
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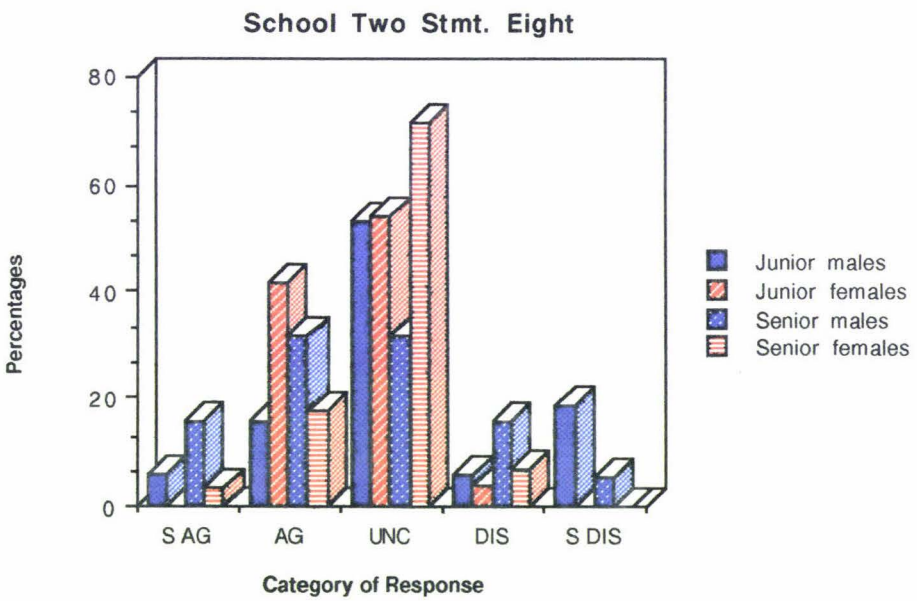
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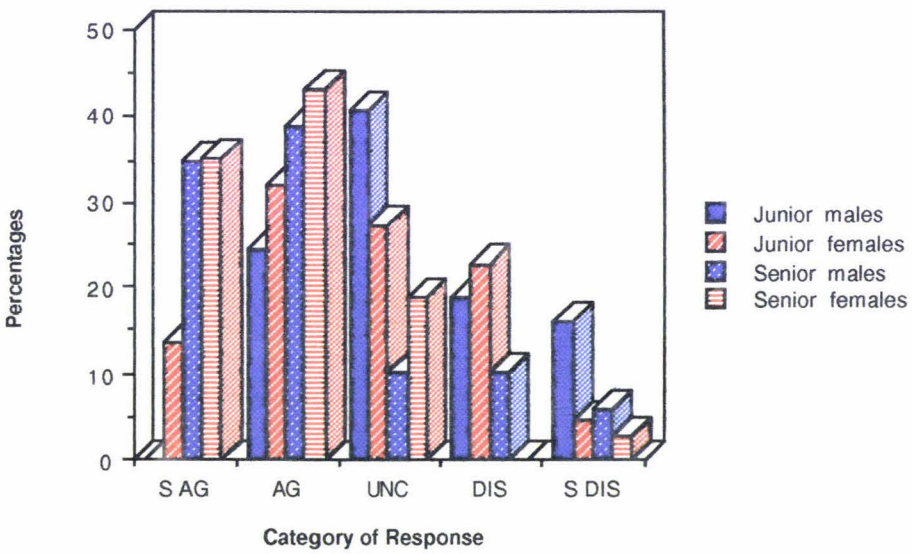
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
Junior males
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females

School Three Stmt. One



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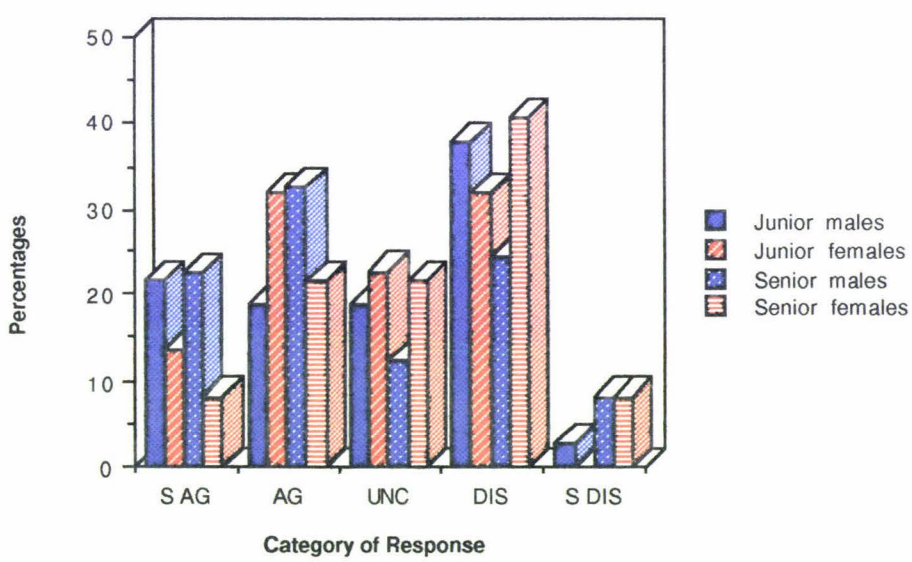

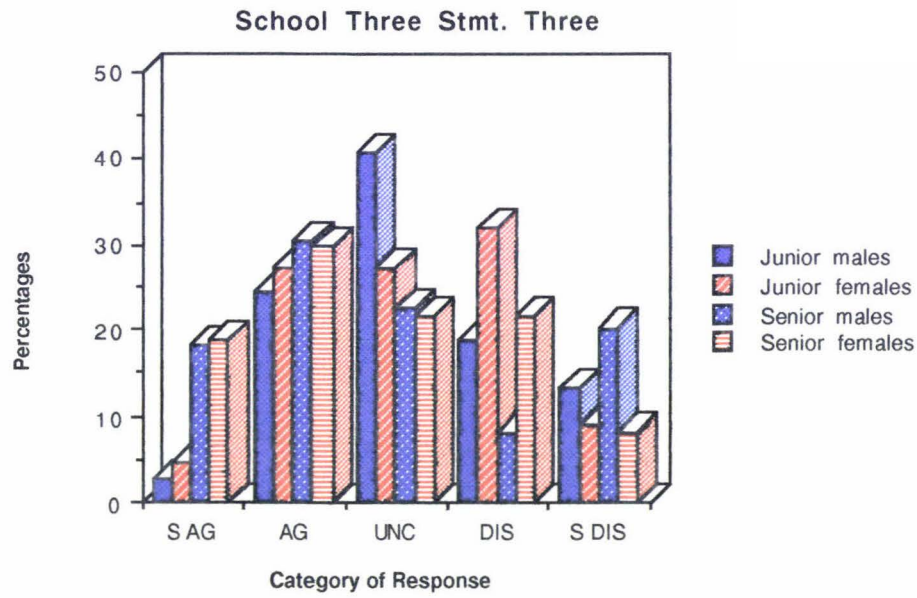
School Three Stmt. Three
Percentages
50
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30
20
10
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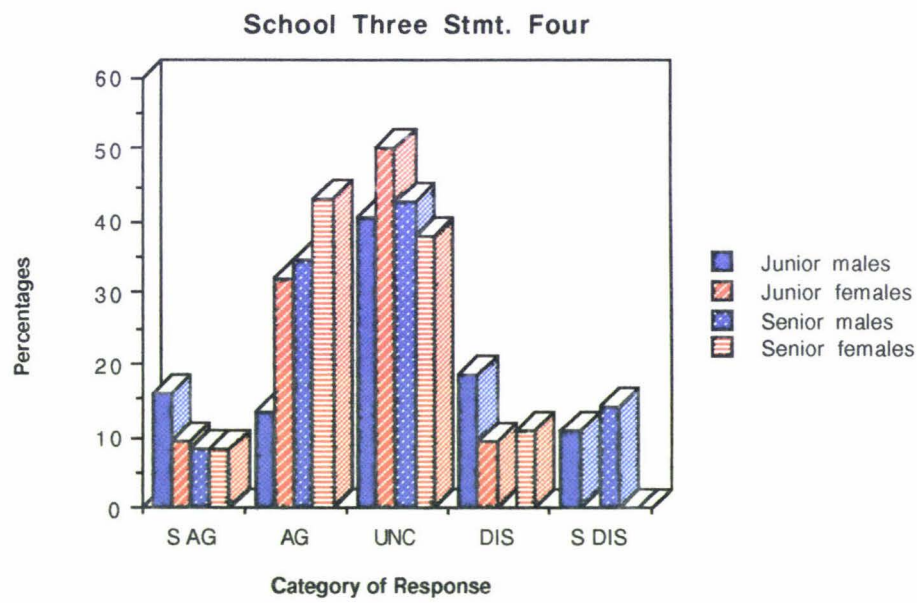
AG
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
Junior males
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Three Stmt. Four
Percentages
60
50
40
30
20
10
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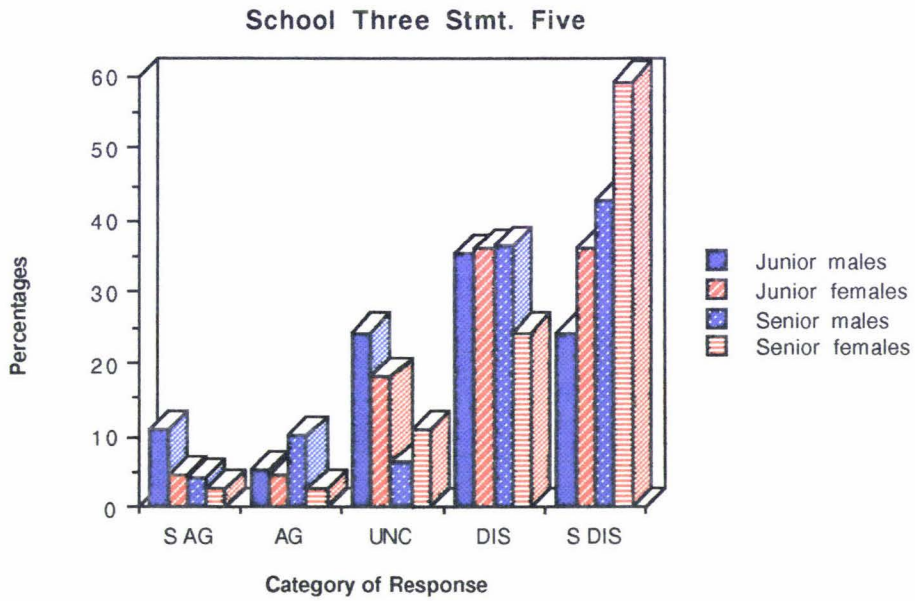
AG
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
Junior males
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Three Stmt. Five
Percentages
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50
40
30
20
10
0
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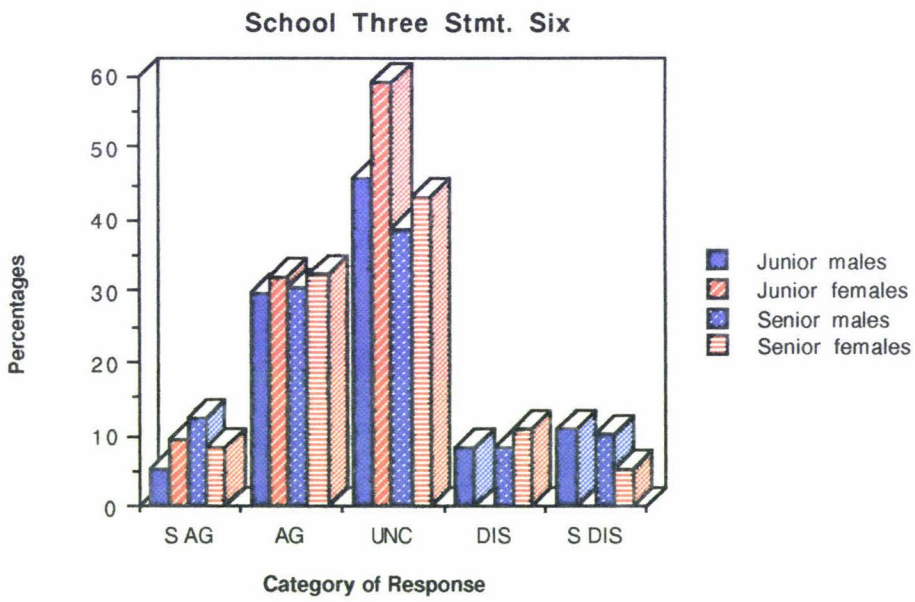
AG
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
Junior males
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Three Stmt. Six
Percentages
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
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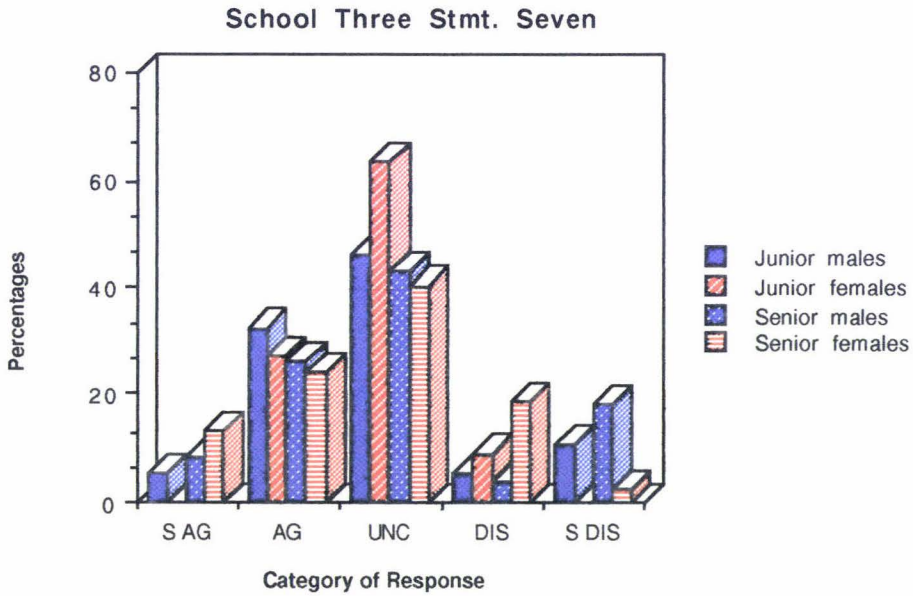
AG
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
Junior males
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Three Stmt. Seven
Percentages
80
60
40
20
0
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AG
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
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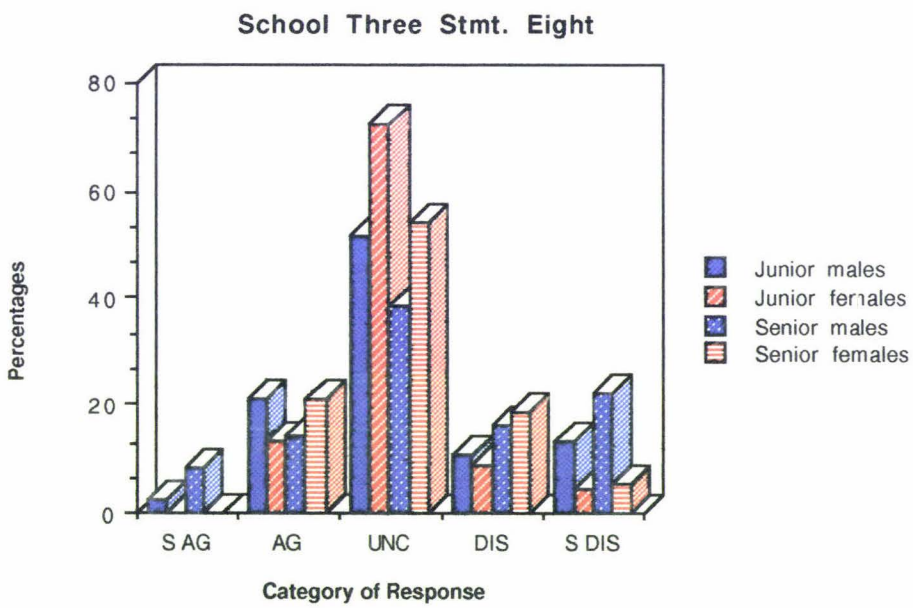
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Three Stmt. Eight
Percentages
80
60
40
20
0
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AG
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
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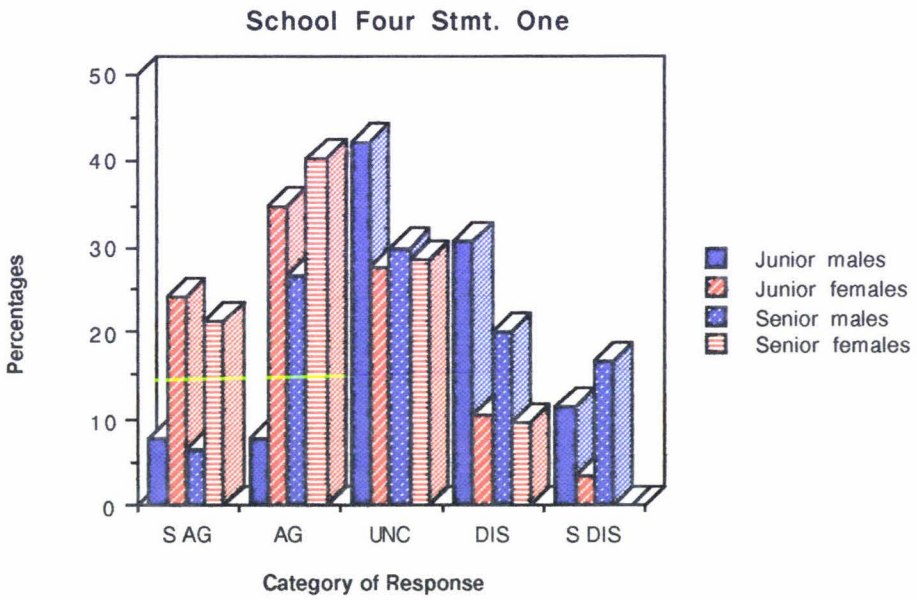
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Four Stmt. One
Percentages
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40
30
20
10
0
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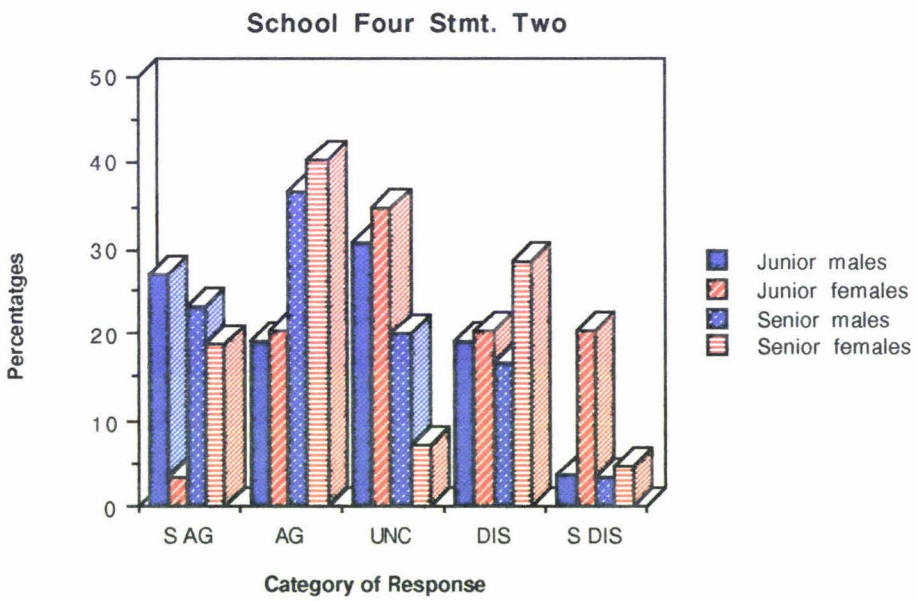
AG
UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
Junior males
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Four Stmt. Two
Percentatges
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UNC
DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
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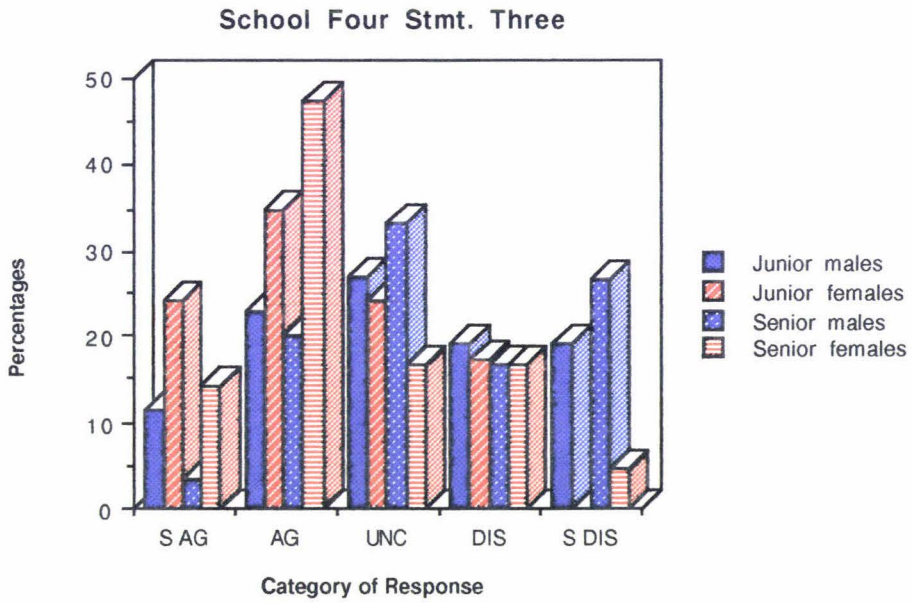
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Four Stmt. Three
Percentages
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30
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10
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AG
UNC
DIS
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Category of Response
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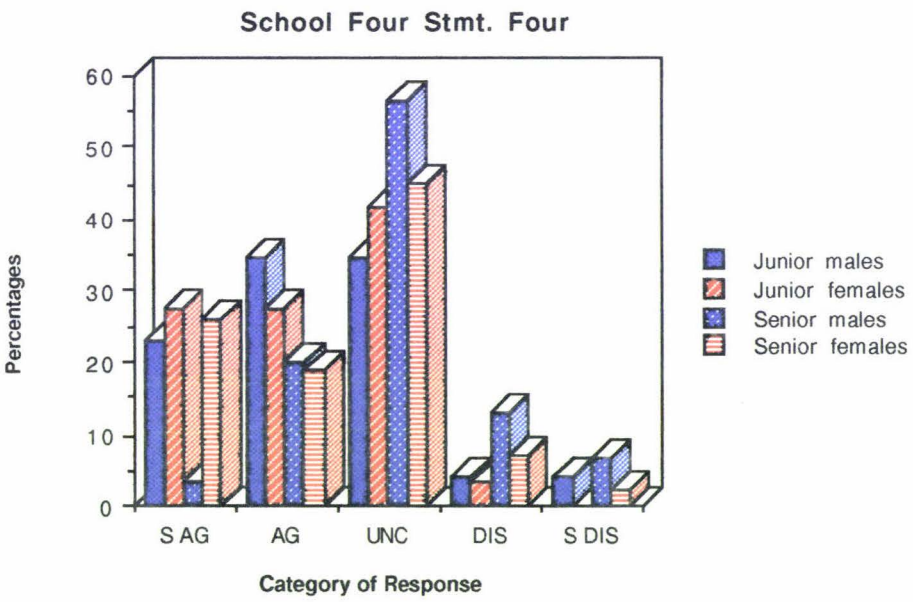
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females


School Four Stmt. Four
Percentages
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S DIS
Category of Response
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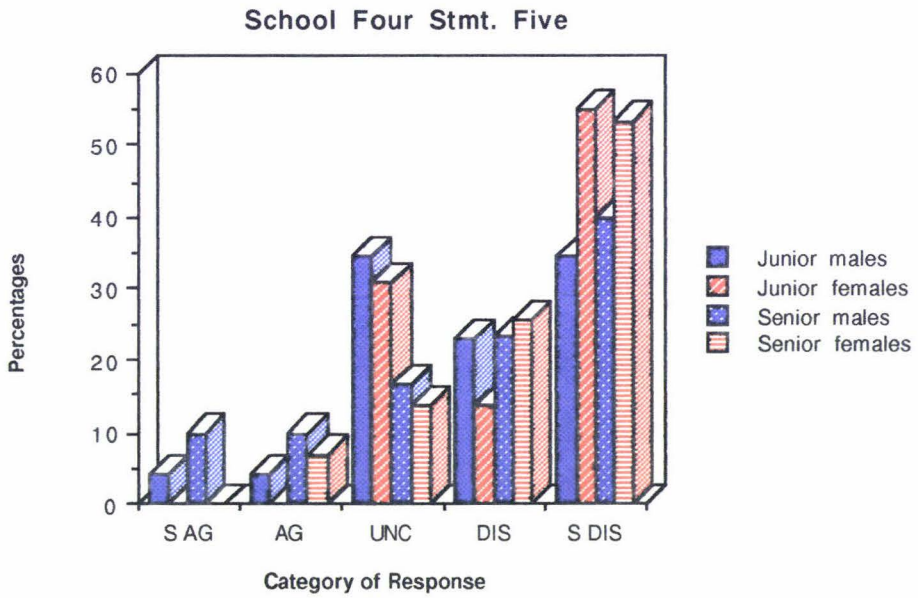
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females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Percentages
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Category of Response
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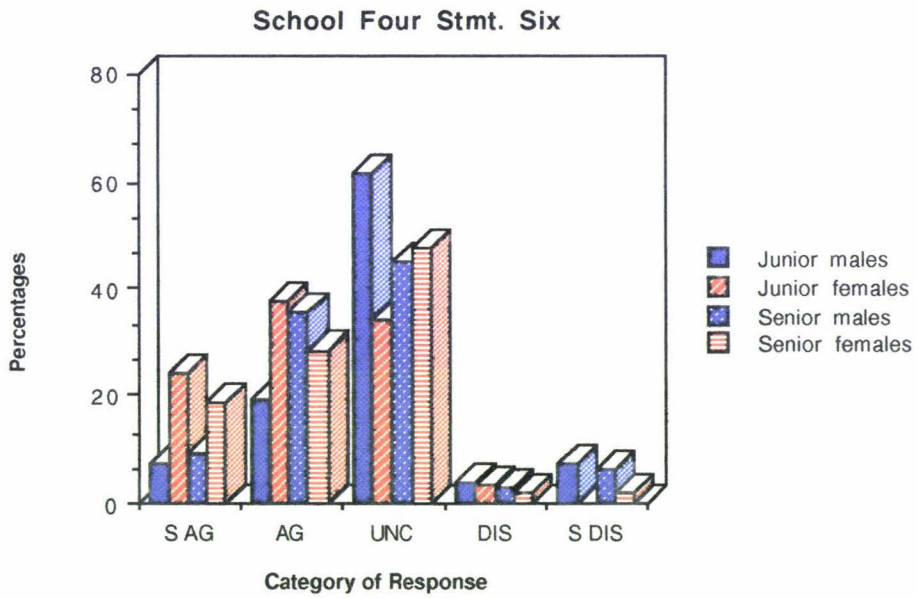
Senior males
Senior females


School Four Stmt. Six
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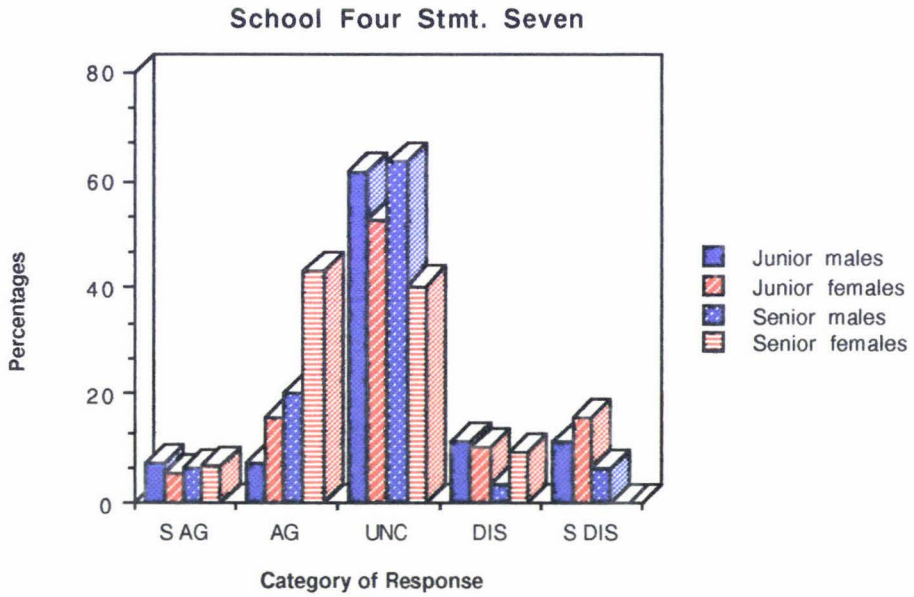
Senior females


School Four Stmt. Seven
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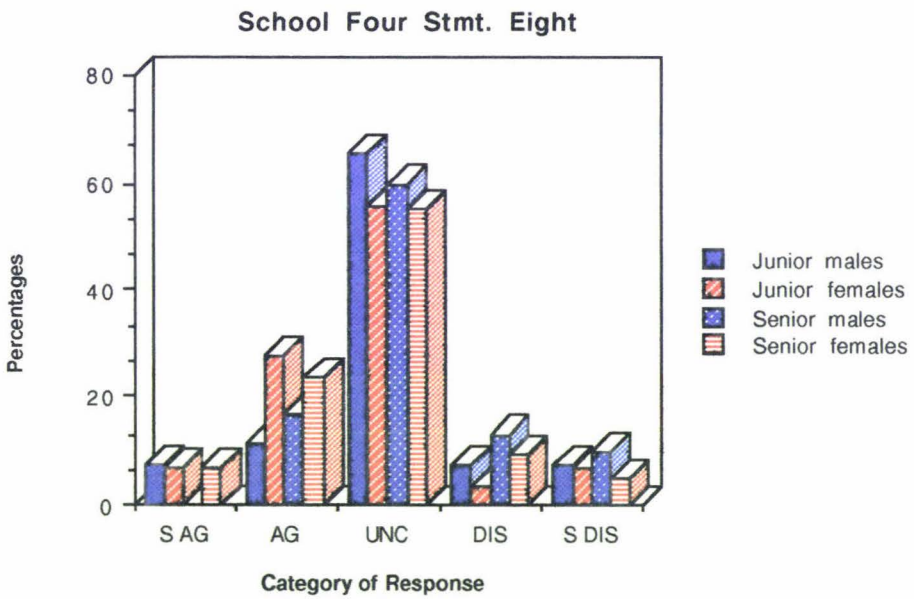
Senior females


School Four Stmt. Eight
Percentages
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40
20
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S AG
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DIS
S DIS
Category of Response
Junior males
Junior females
Senior males
Senior females

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