Geography education: Learning from the leaders

Susan K. Watne

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Geography Education: Learning from the Leaders

By

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

The University of Montana

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The purpose of this study was to document and understand what past and present trends have led to geography education's current status in American education and provide a vision of what needs to be done to bring the nation's students to greater geographic competency. The data collected suggest a model of four interacting influences upon which progressive change, reticence, or regression in geographic education in American schools is reliant. The influences are complex, interactive, and constantly evolving. They include social/political influences, systemic educational influences, economic influences, and leadership influences by key individuals or organizations. Synergy within these categories acts as the catalyst for change. If any of the four influences is missing or compromised considerably, positive change is stymied.

The resulting Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education was used to interpret trends in geography education over the past 30 to 40 years. Further it was used to provide a lens through which to view the current status of geography education. Finally it was applied to construct a vision for the future of geography education.

In this qualitative study employing in-depth surveys and interviews, respondents' hindsight reveals that media attention to global conflict or competition heightened public awareness of the relevance of geographic literacy, generally resulting in responsive political action to fund geography education reform initiatives. Efficacies of resulting initiatives were dependent upon collaborative efforts within the kindergarten through university educational system in which academic geographers worked closely with K-12 educators. Key individuals and professional geographic organizations, providing strong and visionary leadership, became the tools that sharpened the edge of progressive change.

Despite recent progress, respondents were quick to point out that progress must not be confused with conclusive success. Despite the bright spots, geographic education faces these serious shortcomings; failure to create and maintain effective pre-service teacher training; general public apathy and ignorance of the relevance of the discipline; tenuous economic support; and gradual withdrawal of key individuals from leadership positions. These challenges must not go unmet if the vision of bringing all American students to an internationally competitive world class standard of geographic literacy is to be achieved.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Purpose of the Study.

The growing interrelatedness of life on our planet has increased the need for citizens to possess the knowledge and sensitivity required to comprehend the global dimensions of political, economic, and cultural phenomena, and Americans know less than they should (Bednarz & Petersen, 1994). Increased human interactions across national and continental boundaries increase the potential for both cooperation and conflict. Human life has been globalized to the point where we must alter the ways we have commonly viewed ourselves and others. A view of the world as being a collection of countries pursuing separate destinies is no longer possible (de Souza & Brown, 1994). National security, prosperity, and quality of life are dependent in large part on citizens developing the capacity to comprehend transnational, cross-cultural interactions and to participate constructively in decisions influencing foreign policy (Natoli, 1994; Gritzner, 1990). This cannot be done in ignorance.

The United States is truly an international society. Its population originates from every part of the world. Their lives are part of a global
community—one joined by common economic, social, cultural, and civic concerns. Education in the United States has the prime responsibility to prepare students to participate in this global community.

Since Marshall McLuhan coined the term “global village” in the 1960s, education in the United States has not sufficiently promoted geographic literacy to help prepare students for their roles as responsible global citizens (Rogers, 1996). Research tells us that U.S. students rank behind those of other major industrialized countries in geographic literacy and basic geography skills (National Council for Geographic Education [NCGE], 1998; Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 1996; de Souza and Downs, 1994; Slater, 1990; Agnone, 1989; Joint Council of Geography Educators, 1984). The differential achievement of U.S. students in the area of geographic knowledge is well documented. Students will need the critical skills necessary to take on their roles as global citizens. American schools will have to respond to the needs of students who must be prepared to assume responsible global citizenship. The National Center for Education Statistics insisted that:

*If our children are to be productive and responsible citizens of both the United States and the global community, they must know and
understand the connections among the world's regions and peoples
and the circumstances that lead these connections to evolve and
change. In other words, they must have a working knowledge of the
subject of geography. (National Center for Education Statistics. NAEP 1994
Geography report Card)

Geography education can and must play a key part in transforming
education in the United States. Globalization of the world economy and the
internationalization of so many aspects of Americans' lives means that
employers, publishers, investors, scientists, and others find themselves
demanding greater geographic sophistication (Munroe & Smith, 1998).
Creative solutions to the problem of inadequate geography education
programs are required if America is to function both competitively and
cooperatively in the global economic and political arena (Boehm, 1994).

Yet despite the importance of geographic skills and competencies,
geography has occupied an inconsistent place in American education (NAEP
1994 Assessment in Geography). In one study of geography and state
standards in 1889, Laura Donan reported that all but three states prescribed
by law "the three R's, spelling, geography, and grammar are essential to
public enlightenment" (Donan, 1889, p. 513). Unfortunately, by 1998, a
study by Munroe and Smith concluded that fewer than two-thirds of the
states even had geography standards, and, of those, only six were deemed to be adequate (Munroe & Smith, 1998).

The purpose of this study is threefold: to document and understand recent trends in geography education; to discover characteristics of a common vision necessary to bring geography education to the position of curricular and societal relevance in American education (NAEP 1994 Assessment in Geography); and to suggest ways of improving geography education to help prepare students for their future role as global citizens.

Statement of the Problem

Geographic literacy is essential to global citizenship (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1994), and geographic ignorance is harmful to our country's future (National Council for Geographic Education, 1999). Geography is indeed relevant to the issues that confront the world today (Bednarz, 1994). Yet, surveys, polls, and national tests of basic skills competencies have indicated that schools in the United States are not adequately preparing youth for future roles as global citizens (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1994; Slater, 1990). America's chronically low achievement scores on national geography tests are one of the most obvious indicators of the need for an improved effort in geography education (Munroe & Smith, 1998).
The lack of geographic literacy is not restricted to children. In 1992, 23 graduating Harvard university students were asked what causes seasons on the earth. Only two were able to answer correctly (National Assessment of Educational Progress). Clearly, many citizens lack even the most rudimentary knowledge of geography. According to one well-publicized survey, 15 percent of American citizens could not locate the United States on a map of the world, and 25 percent could not find the former Soviet Union or the Pacific Ocean (Agnone, 1989). In 1988, U.S. citizens scored in the bottom third on a geography test of nine countries conducted by Gallup (Agnone, 1989). Sixth graders in the United States ranked fourth out of eight highly industrialized nations (Joint Council of Geography Educators, 1984). The first National Assessment of Educational Progress (1990) and 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress confirmed that few U.S. students were globally literate.

More than nine years after President Bush and the nation’s governors reached a consensus that established geography as one of five core subjects in the nation’s schools, most state content standards in geography barely make the grade (Munroe & Smith, 1998). In the study conducted by Munroe and Smith, all fifty states were evaluated on the quality of their geography standards. Among the 38 states with any form of geography standards, only
six garnered A’s and B’s, and about half received failing grades. The majority of state geography standards, the study concluded, lack rigor and clarity. According to Chester Finn, president of the Thomas Fordham Foundation, the academic expectations for this crucial subject are “flabby and vague” (Manzo, 1998).

Geography has regained a place in the U.S. curriculum and is being taken seriously by a handful of states. However, most current state standards for what students should know and be able to do in geography are weak (Munroe & Smith, 1998).

Limited emphasis has been placed on geographic literacy in K-12 education in the United States since the late 1800s (Haywood, 1985). Of the five core subjects delineated by the national educational goals for year 2000, geography is a unique case. It is the core subject that the overwhelming majority of U.S. schools have most neglected, the field that has had to start practically from scratch to regain its place in the curriculum (Munroe & Smith, 1998; Gritzner, 1992).

The need to improve the international orientation of children and youth is widely recognized (Monroe & Smith, 1998; de Souza & Downs, 1994). Nonetheless, concerted efforts to upgrade and expand the geographic dimensions of elementary and secondary curricula are not widespread.

What Foote and Checkley call "an emerging renaissance in geography education" affords an opportunity to examine concerted efforts and initiatives in the field of geography education (Foote, 1999; Checkley, 1996). The challenge is to identify emerging factors contributing to improvement of geography education so that educators have a clearer vision of what needs to be done to prepare students for participation in a world demanding greater geographic sophistication (Stoltman, 1997). This leads to the central questions this study explored.

Research Questions:

1.) According to recognized leaders in the field of geography education, how effective have previous reform efforts been in geography education?

2.) What do recognized leaders in the field of geography education propose needs to be done to affect positive change in geography education in America’s schools?
3.) What specific steps must be taken to bring American students to world-class standards in this core academic discipline?

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study the following terms have been defined:

1. **Geography**, as defined in *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* (1994) is the science of space and place on Earth's surface. It is an integrative discipline that brings together the physical and human dimensions of the world in the study of people, places, and environments. Its subject matter is the earth and the processes that shape it, the relationships between people and environments, and the connections between people and places (*Geography Education Standards Project, 1994*).

2. **Geographic literacy**, for purposes of this study, is defined by what Anthony R. de Souza and Roger M. Downs suggest a geographically informed person knows and understands. In their *Geography for Life National Geography Standards Executive Summary* (1994) they state that the geographically informed person knows and understands:

   1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

   2. How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places,
and environments in a spatial context.

3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

4. The physical and human characteristics of places.

5. That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.

6. How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

7. The physical processes that shape the patterns of Earth's surface.

8. The characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems on Earth's surface.

9. The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.

10. The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

11. The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface.

12. The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

13. How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface.

14. How human actions modify the physical environment.
15. How physical systems affect human systems.

16. The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.

17. How to apply geography to interpret the past.

18. How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

Delimitations and Limitations

Limitations

The purposeful sampling procedure for this study decreases the generalizability of findings. This study's results may not be generalizable to all areas and levels of geography education or to other experts in geography education.

In this qualitative dominant study, the findings could be subject to other interpretations.

Delimitations

Initially, this study confined itself to in-depth interviews with 14 nationally recognized leaders in the field of geography education. Although the study is limited to a population of 14, they are generally recognized as national and international leaders in the field of geography education. Three are classroom teachers who have achieved national prominence in
geography education. Three are leaders in social studies administration with a strong background in geography. Seven are academicians with various perspectives. Five of these have extensive K-12 classroom teaching experience, and six have been or are state geographic alliance coordinators. All are, in differing regard, curriculum-decision makers in American education. (Please see methodology section regarding names and selection of interviewees).

Significance of the Study

It is widely held that the foundation for our understanding of world events, the impact of international issues on our daily lives, and the interrelatedness of peoples and of cultures, should be built at the elementary and secondary levels (National Council for the Social Studies Position Statement, 1996). An urgent need exists to improve and expand geographic education in American schools (National Research Council, 1997; Coyl, 1996; Natoli, 1994; Gritzner, 1992; Hill, 1989). Sound educational responses to the challenges of international interdependence, cultural diversity, and competition for scarce resources require careful attention (Kennedy, 1987).

A strong commitment to solving the problem of geographic illiteracy has been assumed by the National Geographic Society (NGS), the National
Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), the American Geographical Society (AGS), and the Association of American Geographers (AAG). Several projects have led to the development of five fundamental themes, a set of national standards in geography, new teaching materials, in-service and pre-service instruction for teachers to improve geography teaching techniques, and an increased emphasis on geography in the parochial and public schools K-12. Still needed is a clear, consistent picture of what constitutes a high quality geography education and the vision for effecting its transformation in American schools.

This study will add to the body of knowledge concerning what past and present trends have led to geography education’s current status in American education and provide a vision of what needs to be done to bring the nation’s students to greater geographic competency. In-depth interviews were conducted with nationally recognized leaders in geography education. The results of those interviews are offered as a model for K-12 geography educators to be used in subsequent reform efforts nationally.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Themes from the literature

When considering geography and its place in American education, it is important to understand what the literature reveals regarding the history and evolution of geography education both as a separate subject and as a component of social studies curriculum. It is also necessary to examine innovative geography education initiatives, proposed national standards and assessments, geography education as a system that extends from kindergarten through university, and teacher preparation and in-service faculty development. In this review of the literature, four themes are developed: (a) the history and evolution of geography education in the United States, (b) descriptions of recent geography education initiatives including national standards and geography assessment framework, (c) geography education as a system, kindergarten through university, and (d) pre-service and in-service teacher preparation needs. Each theme is discussed separately.
History and Evolution of Geography Education

Historically in the United States geography education has occupied an inconsistent curricular position. It has, however, been a part of the school curriculum since the first North American textbook was written on the subject in 1784 (Mayo, 1965). Owing largely to the texts of Jedidiah Morse, geography was firmly established in the elementary curriculum until the 1820s when American history texts appeared (Hill & LaPrairie, 1989). Morse's books discussed physical, cultural, and economic geography with religious and moral overtones. According to Mayo (1965), it was probably the popularity of Samuel Augustus Mitchell's textbooks in the mid 1800s, that limited the study of geography to memorization of place locations, a reputation from which the discipline has attempted to recover during the last 150 years.

From the 1820s to 1830s, Americanism became the main objective of what is referred to today as social studies (Thomas & Brubaker, 1971), and U.S. history became the primary focus. Haywood (1985) assessed ethnocentrism in the United States and the reflection of that mindset in early geographic education. He described the United States as the adolescent upstart of European descendants compelled to accentuate its own sense of
nationality. By the end of the nineteenth century, America was endeavoring to blend everyone into a melting pot with an "American First" philosophy (Haywood, 1985). Historical forces led the majority point of view in America to be that the U.S. was No. 1, or nearly so, in everything. To think or teach otherwise was unpatriotic.

In 1892 the National Education Association's [NEA] Committee of Ten provided its first definition of secondary school curriculum for United States schools (Hill & LaPrairie, 1989). At this time, Arnold Guyot's ideas of teaching physical concepts had influenced high school and college geography curricula. The Committee of Ten's report adopted the recommendations of its Conference on Geography, led by William Morris Davis whose primary training was in geology. The emphasis of geography as a study of Earth's physical features became the basis for general science and geography teaching, while the emphasis on human influences in geography became secondary. The 1890s became known as the "Era of Physiography" (Hill & LaPrairie, 1989).

Early geography courses appeared in the public schools as an earth science component of general science after 1908 (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974). Physical geography was eventually replaced by more vocational, economic, and commercial geography designed to meet industry's demand
for trained workers. The percentage of high-school students electing physical geography fell from 21.5% in 1905 to 1.6% in 1934 (Hill & LaPrairie, 1989). Geography lost its position as an admission subject in most colleges, and the College Board stopped geography examinations as entrance requirements by 1934.

In part as a revolt against the rote learning that marked the pedagogy of history, geography, and civics of the times, a newly created framework called “Social Studies” emerged. The 1911 NEA Secondary School Curriculum Review Committee played a major role in establishing the field of social studies, which, by 1916, began to lay claim to geography. Stoltman (1987) contends that geography might have been strengthened at the time, but academic geographers insisted that geography was not a social study and consequently would not join the NEA curriculum development process of 1916. This left non-geographers to determine geography's place and importance in the social-studies curriculum.

By the 1940s, geography education appeared to be the distant step child of the comprehensive discipline called social studies which included government, history, sociology, and geography (Haywood, 1985). This integration had the consequence of a reduction of the instructional time dedicated to geography, consequently further limiting its scope.
World War II generated renewed interest in world and regional geography, cartography, and conservation. Consequently, the National Council for the Social Studies reassessed geography's role in high school curriculum and recommended it have a stronger place in social studies curriculum (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974). More geopolitics, global understanding, and world regional concepts were emphasized in the post World War II era. The technology of air photography and improved mapping techniques added to the geographic techniques that could be used in the classroom (Mayo, 1965).

The late 1950s and 1960s saw a wave of educational reform largely in response to the launching of the Soviet satellite Sputnik. Concerns were expressed about the state of education in the United States compared with other countries. Deficiencies were noted especially in mathematics and science programs, which then received massive infusions of federal funding and the renewed involvement of college and university scientists in elementary and secondary school curriculum development.

In what was referred to as the era of the "new social studies," new and better methods and materials were being developed for social studies, with increased attention to substance. Professional geographers attempted to improve geographic education in the schools through the Association of
American Geographers (AAG) sponsored High School Geography Project. Unfortunately, like other social science projects of the time, its acceptance and use was minimal (Weiss, 1978). Lack of teacher preparation was cited as one of the reasons (Winston, 1986). Some observers, however, believed that because academic geographers, rather than professional educators, were supported to design the project without the input of K-12 educators, the project was doomed to fail (Tucker, 1972). Geography was not mentioned as a separate high-school requirement by any state for the period 1955-1975.

As a result, geography languished in American schools in sharp contrast to the prominent position it held in schools in most other industrial-urban societies (Gritzner, 1999). Jeanne Kirkpatrick, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., lamented that many of our most bitter foreign policy disputes were a direct consequence of the fact that Americans decided at sometime not to study geography anymore... making it impossible to think sensibly about foreign affairs.

Gritzner (1990) speaks of the negative cycle perpetuated by the decline of geography instruction at the K-12 level. With relatively little geography taught in U.S. schools, decades of college students planning careers in teaching history or social studies avoided the subject of geography in the college coursework. This resulted in a lack of demand for skilled
geography teachers at the higher education level. The limited geography that was taught was often taught poorly, thereby minimizing a perceived need for the subject in the curriculum.

According to Gritzner (1990), “The United States is somewhat unique among industrialized nations in relegating geography to a very minor role in both elementary and secondary education. Although considerable progress has been made in terms of enhancing geography’s position in the curriculum during recent years, it remains a sad and somewhat shocking reality that most of the world’s educated people are much better informed about the world (and often about the United States!) than are the majority of American citizens.” (p.2)

Today as international trade begets interdependence, utilization of resources for survival becomes more competitive, and one country’s actions immediately affect the rest of the world, it is increasingly obvious that America can no longer afford geographic illiteracy. Haywood (1985) insists that it is in the national best interest to be well informed on the “nature of the world,” because for a country to be otherwise “places that country in peril” (Haywood, 1985, p.7). His hope is that the emerging maturity, leadership, and pluralism of the U.S. suggests that we may now be secure enough to incorporate geography education as one our underlying themes of
educational curriculum.

The 1989 National Governor's Conference was not quite as hopeful. A report from its Task Force on International Education lamented that even though nations today are more closely linked than neighboring villages were at the turn of the century, these important changes were not reflected in the way many U.S. schools prepare students for citizenship in an international economy. The report emphasized that languages, cultures, values, traditions, and even the locations of other countries are often ignored in K-12 education.

However the National Research Council (1997), Checkley (1996), Gritzner (1991), Salter (1990), and Kniep (1990) disagreed. After decades of being almost invisible in the K-12 curriculum, geography is making a comeback in U.S. schools in a renaissance that has the potential to improve geographic literacy and to prepare students for the responsibilities and challenges of global citizenship.

Geography education initiatives including national standards and assessment framework

If the United States is to succeed in the global arena of the 21st century, geography must be taught as rigorously in American schools as it is
in other countries (Souza, 1994). During the 1980s a number of well
publicized test results made the nation painfully aware of America’s
abysmal geographic ignorance (Gritzner, 1992). Widespread media
coverage of the need to improve geographic literacy generated increased
attention to geography education. This attention led to several reform
initiatives spearheaded by universities, professional associations, state
education agencies, private foundations, and the U.S. Department of
Education. Several of those initiatives are discussed below.

National awareness of the crisis

_The Chronicle of Higher Education_ (April 20, 1981) reported the
results of an Educational Testing Service survey on global awareness. The
headlines read, “Most U.S. Students Uninformed About Other Countries and
Have Little Interest in World Problems.” The article which followed
concluded that “the vast majority of college and university students do not
know enough about international affairs to live and work effectively in a
world where countries are increasingly interdependent.”

Shortly thereafter, a Gallup Poll survey given to 17- and 18- year-olds
concluded that the sample group showed “a shocking ignorance of basic
geographic information.” (Gritzner, 1981). Several other surveys
highlighted widespread student geographic illiteracy (CBS Affiliates Survey,
Such reports received extensive national and international media coverage. As is frequently the case in matters of education, progressive change is borne more often on the wings of crisis than on those of reason (Gritzner, 1990).

Development of State Geographic Alliances

One of the earliest and most far-reaching initiatives in increased communication within the geography community began in 1983 with the creation of the California Geographic Alliance. The informal alliance of university geographers, teachers, and administrators had as its expressed purpose the creation of a united voice to make concerns known about the lack of geographic competencies at the state level where social studies curriculums were being revised (Salter, 1987). The alliance was successful in providing input into curriculum mandates. By sponsoring in-service workshops, conferences, and presentations for teachers, they were able to positively gain the interest of social studies educators previously innocent of the power of geography education (Hardwick & Holtgrieve, 1996).

The Alliance concept caught on and captured the attention of the National Geographic Society [NGS], the largest nonprofit and non-governmental geographic organization in the world. At the time, National Geographic Magazine was publishing editorials about the chronic condition
of geographic illiteracy in the United States. In 1985, NGS President and Chairman of the Board, Gilbert Grosvenor, launched the Geography Education Program with a mission to revitalize the teaching and learning of geography in the United States' kindergarten through twelfth-grade classrooms (Bockenhauer, 1993).

With the support of the National Geographic Society eight state alliances were started in the mid 1980s. By 1993, every state had its own Geographic Alliance with California having two. The alliances began to coordinate energies of classroom teachers, administrators, and academic geographers to increase and improve geographic education. Most alliances took advantage of the multiplier effect by offering summer institutes staffed by university professors and Teacher Consultant graduates of the National Geographic Society summer institutes that began in 1986.

Establishment of Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools

During the early 1980s the Association of American Geographers (AAG) and National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) formed a Joint Committee of Geographic Education. One of its tasks was to identify a small number of geographic concepts or themes that geographers could agree are fundamental to their discipline (Natoli, 1994). The idea was that in
order to effectively promote geographic literacy, something was needed to inform the general public in everyday language about the uniqueness of geography, as well as its value in K-12 education and in its usefulness in life and for various careers (Natoli, personal communication, February 10, 2000). The representatives from the Association of American Geographers and National Council for Geographic Education distilled the unique essence of geographic thinking into fundamental themes (Natoli, 1994). Five themes were identified and published as the centerpiece for Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools (Joint Committee of Geographic Education 1984).

Briefly stated, the Five Themes of Geography included:

1. **Location—Position on Earth's Surface.** Where is it? Absolute and relative locations are two ways of describing the positions and distribution of people and places on the earth's surface. Absolute location refers to the exact position of a place on the earth. Relative location is the relationship of a place to other places.

2. **Place—Physical and Human Characteristics.** What's it like? This theme considers the human and physical characteristics that make one place different from all other places on earth.
3. **Human/Environment Interaction—Using the Environment and Shaping the Landscape.** What is the relationship between humans and the environment? This theme addresses the way humans culturally adapt to, use, and modify the natural environment.

4. **Movement— Humans Interacting on the Earth.** How and why places are connected with one another? This theme addresses the relationships between people in different places as shaped by the constant movement of people, ideas, materials, and physical systems such as wind and water.

5. **Regions: How they Form and Change.** How and why is one area similar to another? How do areas differ? A region is a basic unit of geographic study. It is a human construct that defines an area that has unifying physical or human characteristics.

(This summary of the Five Themes of Geography is adapted from the TC Tool Kit: A Resource for Teacher-Consultants, National Geographic Society, 1993.)
In contrast to the mediocre reception of the High School Geography Project of 1965, the Guidelines were widely accepted. The Five Themes, along with Essential Geographic Skills delineated in the Guidelines for Geographic Education, became central to K-12 geography education (Natoli, 1994). The use of these themes met with unprecedented success in catching the attention of the public and geography teachers across the nation (Hardwick & Holtgrieve, 1996).

At the national level, a Geography Awareness Week was proposed and instituted. In addressing the United States Senate in support of Geography Awareness Week, Senator Edward Kennedy stated “We must ensure that young Americans have a clear understanding of what the world looks like and the way in which geography influences human well-being.” (Kennedy, 1987).

The sponsor of the bill, Senator William Bradley remarked, “When 95% of some of our brightest college students cannot locate Vietnam on a world map, we must sound the alarm.” (Bradley, 1987).

After the publication of Guidelines for Geographic Education, evidence of renewed geographic interest grew. Implementation of geography curricula based on the Five Themes became a primary goal of the National Council for Geographic Education, the Association of American
Geographers, American Geographical Society, the Geographic Education National Implementation Project (GENIP), and the Geographic Alliance movement (Natoli, 1994).

Increased public attention led to the identification of geography as a core subject for American schools on par with science and mathematics, by President Bush and 50 state governors. In a series of policy statements and legislative proposals for national education reforms, geography's place in curriculum in American schools appeared to be gaining ground (National Research Council, 1997). These statements included the report of the Charlottesville (Virginia) Summit convened by the 50 state governors and President Bush in October 1989; education reform plans of both the Bush and Clinton administration; and Goals 2000: The Educate America Act, which Congress passed in 1994.

The most salient outgrowths of these policy statements and legislative proposals were perhaps the Geography Education Standards Project and The Geography Assessment Framework for the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Creation of National Geography Standards and NAEP 1994 Assessment

The Geography for Life: National Geography Standards (1994) was
written to describe specific essential subject matter, skills, and perspectives that all students should have in order to attain high levels of geographic competency (Geography Education Standards Project, 1994). The standards document, Geography for Life, which contains the "Six Essential Elements," is a working document that demonstrates how and what students should achieve (performance standards) in geography education at various levels in the educational ladder (Natoli, personal communication, February 10, 2000). Several major American geography organizations (NCGE, AGS, AAG, and NGS) developed the standards using a broad-based consensus process involving thousands of teachers, scholars, international geography specialists, and citizens (Natoli, 1994).

The Standards, embodied in six Essential Elements, outline what a geographically informed person must understand and be able to do as a result of K-12 education. Each element encompasses two or more standards (18 in all) that further refine and explain the element (Geography Education Standards Project, 1994). They include:

1. The World in Spatial Terms. Geography studies the relationships between people, places, and environments by mapping information about them into a spatial context.

2. Places and Regions. The identities and lives of individuals and
peoples are rooted in particular places and in those human constructs called regions.

3. **Physical Systems.** Physical processes shape Earth's surface and interact with plant and animal life to create, sustain, and modify ecosystems.

4. **Human Systems.** People are central to geography in that human activities help shape Earth's surface, human settlements and structures are part of Earth's surface, and humans compete for control of Earth's surface.

5. **Environment and Society.** The physical environment is modified by human activities, largely as a consequence of the ways in which human societies value and use Earth's natural resources, and human activities are also influenced by Earth's physical features and processes.

6. **The Uses of Geography.** Knowledge of geography enables people to develop an understanding of the relationships between people, places, and environments over time—that is, of Earth as it was, is, and might be (pp. 34-35).

The national geography standards are voluntary for states. This is a
significant U.S. variation when compared to other nations such as Japan or the United Kingdom where a national curriculum is mandated (Phillips, 1994). The voluntary situation preserves control at the local and state levels, but poses an interesting dilemma for geography.

Phillips (1994) emphasizes that curriculum at the local level is shaped by teachers, administrators, parents, students, and other community members. Local districts often establish social-studies-curriculum committees, but separate curriculum-review committees for geography rarely exist. Many social-studies-curriculum committee members have little background in geography, or hold a limited view of geography (place location and map skills). Phillips concludes that the geographic community alone is not powerful enough to implement the national standards, and weak public and educator backgrounds in geography will require two rare resources--funding and time--to remediate.

The Geography Framework for the 1994 Assessment of Educational Progress is a document for assessing knowledge of every fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade student in the core subject of geography. Since 1994 was the first year for its use, it is the document that guided the baseline assessment in geography. (The next assessment, one that could possibly be used for comparative purposes, will be given in 2001.) Findings were
reported in *NAEP 1994 Geography Report Card: Findings From the National Assessment of Educational Progress*, which concluded that only about one-quarter of the students tested reached the Proficient achievement level.

*Geography as a category for Blue Ribbon Schools*

In 1993 the U.S. Department of Education included geography education in one of its categories for Blue Ribbon Schools recognition. *Blue Ribbon Schools: Outstanding Practices in Geography and History Education* profiled seven schools recognized for their outstanding geography education programs. Criteria for selection included (but was not limited to) high-quality teaching, appropriate, up-to-date curriculum, strong leadership, and a clear sense of mission shared by all connected with the school.

As reported in a 1994 publication by James F. Marran, a classroom teacher who had worked on the High School Geography Project in the 1960s, the NAEP assessment committee in the 1980s, and the *National Geographic Standards Project* in the 1990s, the “old geography” and the “new geography” were vastly different (Marran, 1994). Yet despite the changes, and the promising endeavors of curriculum projects such as *Activities and Readings in Geography of the United States (ARGUS)*, *Activities and Readings in Geography of the World (ARGWorld)*, and
Geographic Inquiry into Global Issues (GIGI), Marran insists that what geography education needs now is a long-range plan that will provide a strategy for the full implementation of all the recent initiatives.

Gritzner (1992) concurs. He states that many geographers perceive the present as the dawning of a “Golden Age” of opportunity for geography education. Evidence of this opportunity is visible in the development of exemplary curriculum materials (ARGUS, ARGWorld, GIGI). It suggests the evolution of a geography education consensus (Nellis, 1994). However, like Phillips (1994) and Bednarz and Petersen (1994), Nellis sees a need for lowering the barrier between academic geographers and geographic educators to jointly develop a thoughtful plan for implementing future progress.

Geography education as a system, kindergarten through university

It is widely held that geography education should be thought of as a system that extends from elementary school to university (National Research Council, 1997; Bednarz & Peterson, 1994; Dulli, 1994; Marran, 1994; Phillips, 1994; Wilbanks, 1994). Local school districts, college and university education and geography departments, private organizations, and commercial textbook and materials developers all have necessary roles in advancing geography education in the United States (Natoli, 1994).
Hardwick and Holtgrieve (1996) reflect that the gap between professional geographers—usually university professors or people in private business or public sector positions—and classroom teachers has often seemed "a deep and unbridgeable chasm" (p. 21). They suggest that one of the difficulties inherent in the High School Geography Project of the 1960s was that communications between university geographers and classroom teachers was limited and often contradictory.

Bednarz and Peterson (1994) agree. They insist that every geographer and geography educator should recognize that all levels of geography education are part of an interdependent system. In order to realize what Gritzner (1992) called the "Golden Age of Geography," Bednarz and Petersen suggest geographic educators must be willing to break down some of the barriers that have unnecessarily divided the discipline. In the past, geographers as a group, they contend, often lauded the integrative perspective of their discipline as an advantage, while simultaneously dividing themselves into narrowly focused interest groups. Geographic educators, they say, must realize that the geography education system cannot be strong unless all of its subsystems are strong and afford mutual respect to all those who do exemplary work.

The system is looped. Developments in K-12 geography education
(e.g., National Geography Standards) often have important effects on college and university geographers and vice versa. Colleges and universities have the responsibility of preparing K-12 geography teachers. If the demand for instruction in geography at the K-12 level increases, the demand for geography classes by pre-service teachers also should grow. The content of these courses should reflect what teachers will be expected to teach (Natoli, 1994). Therefore, colleges and universities should be familiar with certification requirements and curriculum guidelines (Bednarz & Petersen, 1994). Concurrently, K-12 geography education programs influence the quality and quantity of students entering university programs.

All geographic educators share in the responsibility of continuing the re-emergence of geography education. A rigorous research agenda for geographic education will help to determine productive classroom techniques to effect increased student learning (Natoli, 1994; Bednarz & Petersen, 1994).

In his chapter Discovering Innovative Curricular Models for School Geography, in A Decade of Reform in Geographic Education, James Marran (1994) argues that implementation of effective reforms will necessitate ongoing cooperation by teachers, researchers, university educators, and professional organizations. Hill (1994) agrees that
collaborative activities are needed and suggests a national implementation oversight committee, which would develop a national implementation plan. The plan would include developing materials to support individuals or groups at local and state levels that want to serve as advocates for geographic education reform.

Fortunately, say Hardwick and Holtgrieve (1996), recent successes in raising public interest in geography education are forging such cooperation and helping to close the gap between professional geographers and K-12 teachers.

**Teacher Education**

Studies have shown that teachers play the major role in determining what is taught and what goes on in the classroom (Switzer 1986; Lengel & Superka, 1982; Morrissett, 1982; Manson, 1981). Unfortunately, formal education in geography has not generally been a requirement for K-12 teachers (Gritzner, 1992.) Geography is complex and interdisciplinary by nature, yet of all subjects, geography is most likely to be taught by teachers with little or no training in the subject (National Research Council, 1997; Hill & LaPrairie, 1989).

Two separate national surveys of high-school teachers reported that of the average number of courses taken in the subject area in which they most-
frequently taught, geography had the lowest mean of the areas reported (National Research Council, 1997; Ruttner, 1986). Two similar surveys (National Research Council, 1997; Farmer, 1984) showed that fewer than 6% of geography teachers felt qualified to teach geography. Cirrincione and Farrell’s (1988) survey indicated that the majority of teachers strongly supported expanding geography in the curriculum, but were insufficiently prepared to teach it.

To address the problem of teacher preparation and support, the National Geographic Society has succeeded in accomplishing a major objective by blanketing the United States with Geographic Alliances that conduct summer institutes and leadership seminars providing substantial in-service education for teachers well into the 21st century (Boehm, Brierley & Sharma, 1994; Agnone, 1989). This kind of faculty development alone will not solve the problem (Boehm, Brierley, & Sharma, 1994). “If all we do is provide in-service training in geography for teachers,” they say, “then we institutionalize the continual need for further in-service teacher training. We must fashion effective pre-service programs” (p. 93).

Boehm, Brierley, and Sharma (1994) agree with Cheney (1990) that there are major structural problems associated with teacher education programs in regards to geography education and geography departments.
They warn of an aura of elitism that emphasizes research over teaching, and certainly not the teaching of future teachers. Cheney (1990, p.5) quotes a professor saying, “The way one prospers is by finding time away from teaching to get one’s own work done.” She further quotes a young professor who received the following advice while trying to get tenure: “Beware the students, they will destroy you.” Phillips (1994) laments that major changes in course requirements for prospective teachers are needed to provide a geographic foundation. Unfortunately, most academic geographers do not communicate with social-studies-method teachers and geography methods classes are nearly extinct. These authors conclude that in such an environment, it is unlikely that teacher-certification programs will receive the attention they need.

Summary

The literature reviewed reveals a driving need to embrace the renaissance in geography education as a way to further the goals of education and to create a “period of enlightenment” in geographic literacy (Checkley, 1996). A rigorous curriculum that improves the geographic literacy of U.S. students and challenges them to look beyond the nationalist philosophy of "America First" in order to prepare for their roles as responsible global citizens must be implemented (Haywood, 1985).
As Bednarz and Peterson insisted in The Reform Movement in Geographic Education (1994), geography as a discipline must scrutinize its present position in American education in order to make continued progress in the future. They wrote:

*The current reform movement in geographic education has encouraged the discipline to reflect on its entire educational system. Self-study or self-assessment is an integral part of making real progress. Without determining what has been accomplished, what needs to be done, and how geography education can get where it wants to go, it is difficult to imagine how real improvement can occur* (Bednarz and Peterson (1994) The Reform Movement in Geographic Education).

The need for geography's self-study and self-assessment demands answers to the research questions posed in study and the subsequent survey questions that must be asked of leaders in geography education (Appendix pp. 224-227). Without these answers, a consensus vision for the future of geography education is out of reach. Without that vision and subsequent plan of action, the hope for enhancing the geographic literacy of American students diminishes.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to seek to understand current trends in geography education from the perspective of leaders involved in the geography education movement and to discover characteristics of a common vision necessary to bring geography education to a position of curricular and societal relevance in American education. The results of the study add to the body of knowledge concerning how past trends and present developments have led to geography education’s current status in American education and provide a clearer vision of what needs to be done to bring the nation’s students to greater geographic competency. The following questions were explored: 1) What recent trends have occurred or are occurring in geography education? 2) What do recognized leaders in the field of geography education propose needs to be done to effect positive change in geography education in America’s schools? 3) What steps must be taken to bring American students to world-class standards in this core academic discipline?

In-depth surveys and interviews were conducted with fourteen nationally recognized leaders in geography education. The results of those
interviews are offered as a reflection of recent trends and developments in geography education and a proposed vision of the direction in which geography education needs to go in order to foster further national reform efforts in geography education.

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

The qualitative research paradigm has its roots in sociology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) and cultural anthropology (Roberts, 1976). Although it has only recently gained recognition in the field of education, it harbors a long and rich tradition (Borg & Gall, 1993). The intent of a qualitative study is to understand a particular situation, event, group, or process as the researcher inductively makes sense of a phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, cataloging, and classifying the characteristics of the object of study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The researcher, through ongoing interaction, seeks the informants’ perspectives and meaning (Creswell, 1994). Creswell suggests that the researcher begin by gathering detailed information and forming categories or themes as patterns emerge. The research questions may evolve and change as descriptions of the informants’ experiences inform the design (Tierney, 1992). The intent of this study was to seek to understand recent trends in geography education from the perspective of leaders involved in
past and ongoing geography education initiatives.

Assumptions of qualitative and quantitative paradigms help to differentiate them and determine their applicability, assets, restrictions, and necessary checks of validity (Creswell, 1994). The following is a synthesis of commonly articulated assumptions of the qualitative paradigm as they apply to this study.

Ontologically, the qualitative researcher views reality as subjective and constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). Information becomes data only if a researcher is able to make it meaningful (Eisner, 1991). Multiple realities exist in any situation. Flexibility, adjustment, and interactivity are three hallmarks of qualitative method (Eisner, 1991). In this study, recent trends in geography education are reported from the perspective of individuals who are or have been directly involved in the initiatives. In order for the data collected from the survey to become meaningful, additional follow-up questions were asked and answered in a variety of ways including e-mail, surface mail, and telephone conversations.

The axiological assumption for the qualitative researcher is that the research is value laden and biased (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As is the case in
this study, the focus is on participants' perceptions and experiences, and the ways they make sense of situations (Merriam, 1988).

Qualitative research is an inductive process. There is both mutual and simultaneous shaping of factors in the study. The design emerges with categories being identified during research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In this study, techniques included analysis of various survey documents, open-ended interviewing, and follow-up questioning. Ongoing identification of emerging themes during data collection helped refine and inform follow-up questions.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that this research tradition relies on the utilization of tacit knowledge (intuitive and felt), because the nuances of the multiple realities can often be most appreciated in this way. Data are not quantifiable in the traditional sense of the word. Therefore, results of this study are reported in subject narrative. Qualitative designs develop sensitizing concepts, describe multiple realities, and create understandings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Straus & Corbin, 1990).

Rather than traditional validity and reliability measures, the researcher seeks trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and believability based on coherence, insight, and instrumental utility (Eisner, 1991) through a process
of verification. Credibility is fostered by prolonged engagement (in this case on-going e-mail, telephone, and in-person interviews), peer debriefing, and member checks (Jick, 1979). Leaving an easy-to follow audit trail, and a reflective journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1991) enhances reliability or provides evidence of reliability. All e-mail communications and transcripts from telephone conversations involved in this study were printed and saved in a reflective journal. Follow-up questions and responses were also included.

Research Design

This study is a qualitative methodology consisting of in-depth e-mail surveys and interviews with nationally recognized leaders in geography education. A copy of the initial e-mail survey is available in the appendix. Follow-up questions were sent to various respondents for clarification of original responses. Follow-up telephone interviews were also conducted. Additionally, the researcher had the opportunity to participate at the National Council for Geographic Education conference in Boston, November 3rd through November 7th. Here she was able to interview six of the research participants.

Interview design

The purpose of the ongoing interview process utilized in the study
was two-fold. First, questions were asked to discover what leading geography educators considered to be recent trends and their effects in geography education. Second, respondents were questioned to determine their vision for geography education in the future.

For purposes of this study, e-mail correspondence with respondents was the preferred type of data collection procedure due to economy of the design, rapid turn around in data collection, and ability to communicate in an ongoing, open-ended manner simultaneously with all respondents. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recommend making sure that the researcher captures the perspectives of the informants accurately by utilizing ongoing member checks with the subjects. As questions are answered, new questions emerge (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). They suggest a free-flowing, exploratory interview to get a general understanding of a range of perspectives on the topic. Prospective research subjects were contacted and initially agreed that e-mail would be most convenient and conducive to completing the ongoing interview process. Later in the study, however, some follow-up interviews were conducted through telephone conversations.

**Population and Sample**

The population sample for the interviews are nationally and internationally recognized leaders in the field of geography education or
social studies. Criterion-based selection (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993) of this purposeful sample directly reflected the purpose of the study. In order to ensure that the responses represented the varied perspectives of those leaders involved in recent geography education initiatives, respondents had met three criteria. Each participant had to fit into one or a combination of the following categories: classroom teachers who had achieved national prominence in geography education; leaders in social studies administration with a strong background in geography; or academicians and researchers actively involved in geography education. The exception was Gilbert Grosvenor, former President of National Geographic Society, and the Society's current Chairman of the Board of Directors. Each participant also had held a leadership position in at least one geography education initiative in the past 30 years. Finally, participants had to have been actively involved in geography education or social studies throughout their professional career.

Through a review of the literature in geography education the names of men and women who have been or are currently involved in salient geography education initiatives emerged. Informants' names were then selected using three sampling techniques: snowball, maximum variation, and unique sample.
Using what Bogdan and Biklen (1992) call the *snowball sampling* technique, when one respondent was asked to participate, that person was also asked to recommend someone else who had had a leadership role in past or present geography education initiatives.

Since during the literature review several opinions and perspectives became apparent, *maximum variation* sampling was used to ensure that the names selected represented a balance of perspectives, and experiences. According to Marriam (1998) findings from a relatively small sample of diverse perspectives produce critical, shared patterns that gain significance by emerging from heterogeneity.

A *unique* sample is employed when the sample selection is based on unique characteristics, attributes, or occurrences particular to the phenomenon of study (Marriam, 1998). Participants for this study were selected because of their unique leadership roles in the following areas; classroom teacher and teacher consultant, state Department of Education administrator, coordinator of the Geography Education National Implementation Project (GENIP), co-author of the National Geography Standards and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), co-author of the High School Geography Project, president of both the National Council for the Social Studies and National Council for Geographic
Education, director and Distinguished Chair at Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education at Southwest State University, coordinator of the nation's most successful geographic alliances, academic consultant and program evaluator for undergraduate and graduate programs in geography in 17 colleges and universities, Chief of Social Sciences in the Division of Educational Personnel Development with the U.S. Office of Education, coordinator of the Geographic Alliance Network at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., and President of the National Geographic Society.

All informants contacted agreed to be part of the study, allowing for a full representation of the group. (Please see the Appendix for a list of the respondents and a further explanation of their unique professional experiences and consequent contributions to this study.)

Procedure

A cover letter explaining the study was sent to each respondent via e-mail. This was accompanied by a personal telephone call. In the case of one participant, surface mail was used initially, since both telephone number and e-mail address were originally unavailable. Eventually an e-mail connection was established with all respondents. To obtain a high response rate, advanced consent to be part of the study was obtained (Dillman, 1978;
Creswell, 1994).

This study used a modified form of Creswell's recommended procedure for a survey and Bogden and Biklen's recommended procedure for an interview. Creswell recommends, for maximum response rate, that an initial mailing followed by a second mailing and a follow-up postcard be sent to each respondent (1994). The administration period covers a total of six weeks (Creswell, 1994). However, Oblinger and Maruyama (1997) remind us that the Internet is becoming the tool of choice for communicating with each other. Tapscott (1996) and Gates (1995) concur and suggest that today's technology can eliminate distance in both time and space thereby enhancing communication and understanding. Consequently the researcher in this study sent initial interview questions and follow-up reminders, as Creswell suggests, but used the Internet to facilitate an administration period of far less time. Since much of the interview process occurred in December of 1999, the researcher also sent duplicate questions to respondents via regular mail and requested regular mailing addresses in case there were any problems with the Internet during the transition to January 2000. Six respondents sent duplicate answers via e-mail and regular mail.
Instrumentation

The interview protocol used in the study's initial phase was composed of open-ended questions seeking to understand respondents' perspectives about where geography education has been, is, and needs to go. The data were reduced in a qualitative way seeking emerging themes and traits of exemplary vision for geography education for the twenty-first century. These results were used to develop a construct with which to conduct additional follow-up communication as necessary. Categories that emerged during the e-mail communications were compared to see if patterns or themes occur.

The overt approach (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) was used to make interests clearly known and to seek the cooperation of those studied. Although the subjects interviewed are recognized as exemplary leaders in the field of geographic education, confidentiality of any or all comments was offered to respondents.

Credibility and trustworthiness

Several techniques were applied to increase the credibility of findings produced by a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1994). This study utilized peer debriefing, thick description, and member checks to
generate the trustworthiness of this study.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation allows the researcher to look for convergence among sources of information and different methods of data collection (Jick, 1979). Interviews of leaders in geography education from several different perspectives were conducted. These included classroom teachers who have achieved national prominence in geography education, former classroom teachers who went on to positions of leadership, social studies administrators with a strong background in geography, academicians, and leaders of major geographic organizations.

**Thick description**

A thick description of the study was completed. As Geertz (1973) suggested, a thick description involves extensive recording, sorting and analyzing of data collected in order to give a clear picture of what has occurred. The thick description is necessary to enable interested readers to make a decision about whether the results of this study are transferable to their own area of interest.

**Peer debriefing**

Peer debriefing provided an opportunity to expose the research and
the researcher to questions from a peer for the purpose of exploring aspects of the study that might otherwise remain unclear. It allowed testing of emerging models of influence affecting change in geography education and characteristics of a vision for the future of geography education. Peer debriefing also helped to clarify next steps of investigation during the formative stages of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

**Member checks**

As categories and themes emerged, they were taken back to the informants for verification of accuracy. The epistemological nature of a qualitative study includes a close relationship between the researcher and the researched (Creswell, 1994). Through member checks, the researcher was able to ensure that the understanding of the data that emerged fit the context in which they were being studied.

**Types of analysis**

This study used inductive analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), beginning with the data collected through initial interviews. From these data, categories and relational propositions were derived. The process was generative and constructive. Units of analysis were determined from the data gathered in e-mail communications. The inferences were subjective in
nature and reported from the perspective of the individuals under investigation.

A coding system was developed to organize data into manageable units. Once categories emerged, they were synthesized, searching for patterns and discovering what was important and what could be learned from the research regarding geography education programs.

After each interview survey was returned, the researcher scanned the data for units, themes, and categories. Working typologies were developed which were then applied to new data. These were then modified and refined on the basis of subsequent surveys and interviews.

The method of constant comparison provided an excellent fit for this study. The constant comparative method (Strauss, 1987) is a research design for multi-source data in which formal analyses begins early in the study and is nearly completed at the end of the data collection. As phenomena were recorded and classified, they were compared across all categories. Lincoln and Guba (1985) report that constant comparison stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories. Since a description and explanation of what constitutes a necessary vision for geography education was one of the goals of this study, the constant comparison method of data analysis was particularly applicable.
As categories emerged, the researcher returned to print outs of e-mail communications, transcripts of recorded telephone conversations, and notes from interviews to verify accuracy. As the relationships between the data become more evident and the category set more coherent, a model of influences affecting change in geography education and consensus vision for the future of geography education became clearer. With the data collection and processing going on more or less simultaneously, later data collection efforts were directed more specifically at fleshing out categories, filling in gaps in the larger category set, and clearing up anomalies or conflicts.

Delimiting the construction began as fewer and fewer modifications were required and the list of original categories was reduced due to improved articulation and integration (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Conclusion

To become a more effective agent of geographic literacy in a global age, schools in the United States need to continue to expand efforts to improve the curriculum. The deficit of geographic competencies for U.S. students is well documented in the literature. What this study disclosed were recurring categories of influence affecting trends in geography education and existing strands of vision for quality geography education that can be used to
enhance geographic literacy. By examining the themes that emerged, methods of improving geography education were discovered. These results are reported in the following chapters.
CHAPTER IV

Report of Findings

Recent Trends from the Respondents' Perspective

The purpose of this study was to document and understand recent trends in geography education from the perspectives of leaders in the field and to discover characteristics of a common vision necessary to bring geography education to a position of curricular and societal relevance in American education. The data collected from this study suggest a model of four interacting influences affecting change in geography education. This model was used to interpret trends in geography education over the past 30 to 40 years. (See Chapter Four.) Further it was used to provide a lens through which to view the current status of geography education in Chapter Five. Finally it was applied to construct a vision for the future of geography education in Chapter Six.

William Mayo's 1965 study The Development and Status of Secondary School Geography in the United States and Canada, contributed significantly to the historical understanding of the development of geography education in the United States (James, 1965). Mayo suggested in
the mid-1960s that the vision of what geography education might be was "obscured by the lack of adequately trained teachers" (p. iii), and that teacher training/retraining alone was the key which would allow geography access to its proper place in the educational process.

A decade later Vuicich and Stoltman's 1974 study, Geography in Elementary and Secondary Education: Tradition to Opportunity, added to the understanding of geography's inconsistent place in educational curriculum in the United States. Like Mayo, the authors saw the lack of teacher training as part of the problem. However, they also suggested that curricular revision was necessary. Vuicich and Stoltman recommended that for the success of future geographic education, educators include decision-making, values education, and conflict resolution along with the traditional locational considerations of geography.

In Robert Bednarz's and James Petersen's 1993 article, The Reform Movement in Geographic Education: A View from the Summit, the authors suggest that geography has made "much progress in the last decade" (p. 3). The reason, they proffer, is because the American public recognizes that "geography is relevant to the issues that confront the world today."

Yet what this study uncovered suggests progress or stagnation in geography education has been affected by more than the singular influences
of either poorly educated teachers, inadequate curriculum, or societal perceptions of the relevance of geographic literacy. Rather the influences affecting change in geography education are complex, interactive, and constantly evolving. These influences fall into four categories, which include social/political influences, systemic educational influences, economic influences, and leadership of key individuals or organizations. Synergy within these categories acts as the catalyst for change. If any of the four influences is missing or compromised, positive change is stymied.

Recent trends in K-12 geography education during the latter half of the 20th Century are discussed from the perspectives of the respondents to the study, and the resulting model derived from their perspectives is used to explain the efficacy of geography education initiatives. This same model is used to introduce the collective vision of what the respondents to this study believe to be necessary components of a plan for the future of geography education. First, however, a brief background discussion of the status of geography education during the first half of the 20th Century is provided.
**Early 20th Century background**

Charles Gritzner described the status of geography education in the United States during the first half of the 20th century as follows:

Geography largely had been excluded from the American (K-12) school curriculum since the early years of the 20th century. There was no positive "tradition" of geography that policy makers and others could fall back on in order to recognize the importance of geographic awareness. To those who had been exposed to geography as a classroom subject, the course quite probably was a "load on the memory" rather than a "light in the mind."

A major reason geography languished in the curriculum during the early years of the century is that it was poorly taught. After geography was largely replaced by social studies (in the late teens) in the curriculum, there was no incentive for teachers to study geography. History filled the gap. Thus began a vicious cycle: little geography in the curriculum = no need for prospective teachers to take geography coursework = geography poorly taught in the context of social studies = even less interest in geography = even less interest in learning geography because it was not taught, etc., etc., etc.
At the turn of the century, most European countries had a strong geography curriculum. In the U.S., a man who many considered to have been the Father of American Geography—William Morris Davis—who was trained as a geologist, was instrumental in changing the character of school geography in the United States. Rather than being traditional geography, it became physiography (physical geography with a heavy emphasis on geology). Physiography was very poorly taught, of little interest to students, and in general quite unpopular. In the mid-teens (and this is a long and complex history that I shall avoid delving into here) social studies literally was "invented" to fill the void created by the transmogrification of geography into physiography. Once momentum built for social studies, and history with an already secure footing, geography was forced out of the curriculum and into oblivion.

(personal communication, November 1999)

Salvatore Natoli described the strong physical aspect of geography during the early 20th century like this:

(At the turn of the century) physical geography was very strong. At that point in the history of geographic thought, the human aspect of geography was more or less an afterthought, sort of an
anthropogeography. This anthropogeography came from the German tradition, which was very physical, while the French tradition was more humanistic. The blend of the two (with a heavier dose of the physical side) at the turn of the century led to our (K-12) school geography which was mostly physical geography. (personal communication, November 1999)

By the 1930s, social studies, a concept unique to the United States, had either replaced or become the parent subject for whatever geography may have remained in pockets of the K-12 curriculum (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974). The onset of World War II, however, generated some renewed interest in geography as American troops and supplies were shipped to distant shores. Natoli (personal communication, February 6, 2000) states:

The post-World War II era coincided with a period of educational initiatives for reform and change. World War II's global demands created new and changing opportunities for applied and academic geographers. As Preston James once noted, "I suppose really, there are two professional fields that do in fact benefit from a war; one is medicine, the other is geography."

As American interest in the happenings around the world increased, so did the assertions of geographic illiteracy leveled against the American
schools. Responses to public criticism were different in the elementary and secondary school curriculums.

A major portion of the elementary social studies was devoted to history, but age-mate geography, the objective and fictionalized study of similarly aged children in other environments, was also included. The Progressive Education Movement, begun by John Dewey decades prior to World War II, led to the emergence of a social studies curriculum philosophy that became known as the *expanding environment*. This philosophy placed emphasis on the integration of the social sciences and developmental psychology. As a child moved through the grades, the scope of study progressed from self to neighborhood, community, state, nation, hemisphere, and world. A number of professional geographers authored or consulted on segments of *expanding environment* textbook series (including Phillip Bacon, a respondent to this study). However, generally speaking, factual materials were left out in favor of the interest-centered appeal (Mayo, 1965).

Geography in the secondary curriculum fared even worse (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974; Mayo, 1965). Respondents to this study suggest that geography's image, as an eclectic collection of impractical, uninteresting, irrelevant facts, was one likely reason (S. Jumper, personal communication,
January 3, 2000; P. Bacon, personal communication, November 15, 1999; S. Bednarz, personal communication, November 15, 1999; C. Gritzner, personal communication, November, 1999; S. Natoli, personal communication, November, 1999). Lack of consensus on the very nature of the discipline was likely another (Natoli, personal communication, February 6, 2000).

Sarah Witham Bednarz suggested:

Looking back at the practice of geography education... one can readily identify key structural constraints: the lack of geographically-informed teachers; weak pre-service programs for would-be geography teachers; a subject—geography—that had been eviscerated by the loss of physical geography to Earth Science and diluted by an incorporation of human geography under the rubric of social studies, a curricular domain that was/is dominated by history. (personal communication, November 15, 1999)

By the mid 1950s the following was true according to Mayo (1965):

1. Physical geography was almost completely neglected.

2. Within the sparse offerings of human geography, factual materials were minimal.
3. Within the integrated social studies approach, geography was not given equal time with history or other social sciences.

4. Geography was rarely included in high school or junior high school curriculum.

5. Inadequate teaching of geography was due to lack of teacher preparation.

The reason behind the decline of geography in the curriculum at all levels, according to several respondents, was a result of the history-dominated social studies. Richard Boehm said:

The rise of history-dominated social studies programs after World War II had a significant negative influence on geography education in the first half of the 20th Century. Remember that social studies became the catch-all of citizenship, civic responsibility, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and dozens of other new directions. (personal communication, December 23, 1999)

Salvatore Natoli noted, "The single most negative influence in the twentieth century was the placement of geography as a part of the social studies curriculum and the transferring of physical geography to the earth science curriculum. This destroyed the holistic nature of geography education" (personal communication, November 1999).
James Marran and Sidney Jumper agreed. They both insisted that changing geography's identity as a true discipline by integrating it almost exclusively into the structures of the social studies had a significant negative influence.

Marianne Kenney suggested that society's perceptions of the relevance of geography education's import, and its lack of understanding of the true nature of the discipline, adversely influenced its position in education in the United States. She said:

Another extremely negative influence on geography education during the (first half of the) 20th century was the lack of public understanding of the importance of geography, or more specifically, the public's misperception of what geography was. They didn't understand the scope of geography as a discipline. How did the public get that way? How did it (geography) get so watered down? Many geographers say that the worst thing that happened was that it became part of the social studies. (personal communication, December 2, 1999)

Blaming the social studies, according to Michael Hartoonian is a knee jerk reaction (personal communication November 28, 1999). He asserted: It's ridiculous to say that because of the rise of social studies, there was a decline of geography. You have to go back a couple more
steps. The academic geographers of the time (early 20th Century) felt like they didn't want to make contributions to what was happening at the K-12 level and the larger community. The only time you can develop strength in programs is when you make contributions. If you're waiting around for people to come to you because you think what you're doing is important—you're going to wait a long time! A lot of academic geographers just sat around, and when the thing [geography at the K-12 level] disappeared, they were surprised. If there are no programs offering geography, guess what—historians win out! The social studies are made up of teachers and teachers are academically trained.

Gritzner concurred, at least from the historical perspective of the early 20th Century. He added:

Hartoonian is correct in an historical context. Geographers did not respond well to the early social 'studies' movement. Geographers, then, (a) arrogant and convinced that physical geography was geography, (b) willing to let the social studies people (and historians) do whatever they wanted with human issues (hence, the lack of participation in the SS programs), and (c) finally, numerically inundated by historians and social studies people, lost the curriculum
Sidney Jumper added, "Geographers contributed to making geography a subspecies of social studies, and, therefore, a sub-unit of history. Failure to pursue geography as a physical science was a significant weakness of the geography education effort" (personal communication, January 3, 2000).

Summary of influences on geography education during the first half of the 20th Century

In order to understand the stagnation of geography education in the first half of the 20th Century, the Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education is applied (figure 4.1). The assumption of the Model is that in order for sustainable progress to be made in geography education, all four components of the model must be in place and working synergistically. This, of course, was not the case.

Social/Poliical Influences

The American public showed little interest in geography education during much of the first half of the 20th Century. As Kenney and Gritzner suggested, this was due in part to the public's general lack of understanding of the scope and breadth of the discipline and professional geographers' lack of initiative to do much about that perception. Gritzner also believes that the
Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education

Figure 4.1
American public lacked comprehension of the economic, environmental, and political relevance of geography education. Charles Gritzner wrote:

Geographic literacy helps one better understand his/her relationship with our planetary environmental life support system and with other human beings. Geography has been called the "knowledge for survival," i.e. geographic literacy has strategic value. Inasmuch as the United States held the position of world power during most of the 20th century, we (as a country) felt little need for the kinds of information that geographic awareness provides about other peoples.

Our forefathers settled a vast land with few people and a cornucopia of environmental resources (think population density, space, farmland, natural resources in European countries from which they came). These elements constitute fundamental themes of geographic interest and concern. Geography did not seem to be relevant to Americans other than knowing the *encyclopedic variety* of where places are. (personal communication, February 11, 2000)

**The Education System**

Clearly, geography education as a system kindergarten through college/university was not operating as a cooperative unit. K-12 teachers
were poorly trained (if at all) in geography, and academic geographers did little to contribute to the K-12 system or its curriculum. Phillip Bacon indicates:

Early in my career (1946) there were very few geographers willing to work with people representing the social studies. My first year of teaching, I taught at Castle Heights Military Academy, where I was the entire social studies department. Consequently, I had an opportunity to infuse a lot of geography into the whole 5-12 curriculum. However, by and large, geographers resented the social studies movement, and in many cases refused to work with it. As a result, geography lost considerable ground in the schools.

As geography lost ground, fewer and fewer young people entering colleges to train to be teachers saw geography as a viable area of study. Consequently, geography's voice in making critical curriculum decisions was either not heard at all or reduced to a whimper. (personal communication, November 15, 1999)

Influence of key individuals of organizations

In the first half of the 20th Century, there appeared to be no key individuals or organizations working specifically to improve geography education at the K-12 level.
"In fact," says Gritzner, "any geographer who did anything to assist (K-12) teachers was in danger. For a long time any professional geographer who cooperated with the social studies teachers was in danger of losing standing in his own field" (personal communication, November 1999).

Gritzner's observation does not mean that there were no strong leaders in the field of geography at the college and university level. Many have been recognized. An excellent summary on these geographers and their contributions is Thomas Barton's and Paul Karan's Leaders in American Geography (1992). However, as Natoli points out, "The type of geography taught in the schools bore little relationship to college geography" (personal communication, November 1999).

Economic influences

Since the American public did not see geography education as necessary or relevant to the economic success of the country, there appeared to be no move to fund initiatives to improve K-12 geography education. (Figure 4.2). This however was about to change.

Trends, Initiatives, and Influences of the 1960s and early 1970s

By the 1960s, geography was a dismembered segment of the curriculum with its physical geography component relegated to the earth sciences and its cultural geography component buried in social studies. The
Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education:
Early 20th Century
Figure 4.2

Social/Political
- Public apathy
- Lack of general understanding of the scope of the discipline

Systemic Educational
- Lack of cooperation or contribution between K-12 and university geographers
- History dominant Social Studies
- Inadequate teacher training
- Geography poorly taught

Leadership
- Individuals/Organizations
- Lack of key individuals or organizations supporting K-12 geography education
- William Davis emphasis on physical geography

Economic
- No perception of economic relevance of the discipline
- No significant funding sources for geography education

Synergy

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challenge of the 1960s was to reintroduce geography to a prominent curricular role.

In a speech presented at the 84th Annual Meeting of the National Council for Geographic Education (Boston, Mass., November 5, 1999), Salvatore Natoli stated:

By the late 1950s and early 1960s a number of general educational reforms rose to the foreground, those of the later period spawned by the arms and satellite races between the U.S. and Soviet Union, whereas those of the earlier period grew out of the general dissatisfaction with elementary and secondary school education.

The Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957 ignited an intense education reform movement in the United States, characterized by heavy federal funding and the involvement of college and university scientists and social scientists in K-12 curriculum development. Suddenly the United States found itself relegated to the uncomfortable position of second best in the area of space science, and government agencies joined scientists and academicians in a massive attack against the perceived inadequacies of the United States educational system.

In 1958 the Congress of the United States passed the first National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Federal funds were available to improve
teaching science, mathematics, and foreign languages. However, in 1964 Congress revised the original act by specifying six additional fields of study perceived as critically necessary to improve the interest of national security; geography was included.

As chief initial granting agency, the National Science Foundation channeled most of its resources into the science and math fields. However, pressure for support for the social sciences was mounting (Mayo, 1965). Geography was viewed as a bridging discipline between the physical and social sciences. Federal funds were made available for aid to graduate students of geography, for teacher training summer institutes, for appointment of geographers to state education departments, and for up-to-date classroom materials and equipment (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974).

Professional geography's answer for improving geography in the schools (K-12) was the High School Geography Project (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974). The Association of American Geographers (AAG) sponsored project officially began in September 1961 under the title Study of the Improvement of High School Geography, with an initial $55,000 grant from the Fund for the Advancement of Education, a specialized branch of the Ford Foundation. In 1964 new funding and project direction were
obtained from the National Science Foundation. James Marran remembered:

The High School Geography Project (HSGP) was a genuine catalyst in reviving geography. It gave geography a prominence that it had somehow lost as social studies replaced the teaching of discrete subjects in the social sciences. The Project also demonstrated that geography could be taught in creative and engaging ways. (personal communication, November 1999)

Influential in the development of the High School Geography Project was an academic geographer, Gilbert White. The chairman of the Chicago Board of Education, Sargent Shriver, sought counsel from White in an effort to improve geography's unfavorable position in secondary schools. White joined Clyde Kohn to form what became known as the Joint Committee on Geographic Education (Barton & Karan, 1992). Supported by the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education, the Committee determined its goal to be the improvement of geography in education through updated and improved classroom materials (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974). Academic geographers were gradually becoming involved with geography education. Phillip Bacon wrote:
In the late 50s, the Association of American Geographers appointed me to a new committee on education. I believe that this was the first time that the AAG made any serious strides toward involvement in education. I didn't plan it that way in graduate school. But because I did teach for six years at both the elementary and secondary levels, (and very few professional geographers have had that experience) I, almost by default, was identified as someone in the geographic profession who knew "a lot about schools." [The appointment] was also aided by (virtue of) my position as a geographer at Teachers College, Columbia University, coupled with my graduate degrees from George Peabody College for Teachers, now Vanderbilt University. Certainly, one of the most positive trends was the expanded interest in geography education by some competent, professional geographers who had not been involved in education before. (personal communication, November 15, 1999)

James Marran agreed that involvement of academic geographers in K-12 geography education made a significant contribution. He recalled:

I think that Nick Helburn and Dana Kurfman as the point men for High School Geography Project (HSGP) made an inestimable
contribution, because they proved that geography was applicable in the lives of people and could make a difference in how we use space.

Further, the endorsement of Gilbert White at the University of Colorado as chair of the HSGP Steering committee for the life of the Project was enormously meaningful due to his prestige among academic and professional geographers. One of the individuals having had the most positive influences on American geography education during the 20th Century would be Gilbert White for his vision promoting the High School Geography Project. (personal communication, November 1999)

Joseph Stoltman agreed that the contributions and influence of Gilbert White added prestige and direction to the HSGP (personal communication, January 31, 2000). "Gilbert White," Stoltman said, "was an internationally recognized scholar and professional geographer who made both professional and personal commitments to geography education."

Phillip Bacon concurred. He wrote:

One of the individuals who has had the most positive influence on American geography education during the 20th Century was Gilbert F. White, chair of the High School Geography Project. As a former college president, a member of the Department of Geography at the
University of Chicago (when it was probably the best department in the country), and during his work on environmental hazards at the University of Colorado, he committed himself to working on curriculum and on the training of teachers. As an internationally recognized scholar, he had no professional need to do so. (personal communication, December 6, 1999)

Natoli agreed that Gilbert White's leadership in both the High School Geography Project and the National Science Foundation-funded Commission on College Geography (for which Natoli served as Associate Director) was crucial. He said:

Gilbert White (when I was a staff geographer with the HSGP at the AAG) was probably the best known geographer in the world because of his groundbreaking research. He constantly bemoaned the fact that if only geographers could agree on some common themes, we would have an easier time in promoting geography.

The road to consensus was fraught with questions of content, vested individual interests, and interorganizational tensions. The nucleus of the original committee, representing the Association of American Geographers (AAG) and National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) was made up of eight people; seven of whom had
direct interests in at least one textbook either on the market or under development. (personal communication, November 1999)

Natoli, citing William Pattison (who served as director during the first phase of the High School Geography Project), noted that "Some individuals perceived that a successful project might become a threat to the status quo and to all of the current introductory college textbooks that would need to be discarded" (Pattison, 1970:60).

Joseph Stoltman recalled:

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a lack of commitment among most professional geographers to (K-12) school geography. It became a subsidiary to the discipline and little was invested in it at the personal or professional level. The High School Geography Project was the single exception, but it wasn't sustainable.

The High School Geography Project did not match the skills of geography teachers in the United States who had been educated in regional, descriptive geography for the most part. It was thematic geography and a mismatch in terms of what the teachers saw as important to teach and what HSGP was presenting on the cusp of a major change in the geographic discipline—from description largely to scientific inquiry. There were no driving forces, like the standards
movement, to initiate the discussion about the benefits of HSGP.

I was teaching in Illinois at the time—in high school—and it was very difficult to get the other two geography teachers to even consider changing to as radical a departure from World Geo textbooks to HSGP. (personal communication, January 31, 2000)

Many teachers of the 1960s and early 1970s were never exposed to geographic concepts and assumed that teaching geography simply meant selecting facts about places and requiring students to commit them to memory. As concern with virtually the entire secondary and elementary curriculum (Goodlad, 1966) produced new and exciting classroom learning materials, the need to update the experience levels of the teachers who were being asked to use the new materials became evident. Thus was born the summer institute effort (Vuicich & Stoltman, 1974). Charles Gritzner wrote:

Geography was included in National Defense Education Act legislation (1960s) that supported summer institute programs for in-service for educators. I directed and taught in three National Defense Education Act (NDEA later EPDA) Summer Institutes during the 1960s. Millions of dollars were spend during the 1960s on such programs as the NDEA and EPDA teacher education institutes and the High School Geography Project. There was very little follow-up to
any of this. Once teachers completed their summer programs (which were extremely intensive, e.g., nine credits in course work taken over a nine-week period), there was no further contact or involvement.

The High School Geography Project was a 'top down' project, put together by some of the nation's most outstanding geographic scholars; the results were hardly "teacher friendly." In fact, it was openly stated that the units were "teacher proof," i.e. could stand alone without much teacher involvement. Needless to say, the ca. $3,000,000 project fell flat and gained very little classroom use.

I suspect that a healthy dose of arrogance can explain the relative failure of these programs. Many of the key individuals had absolutely no understanding whatsoever of the problems, interests, needs, capabilities, and so forth of the classroom teacher.

This has changed. Today there exists a healthy cadre of college/university faculty who have gained a great deal of valuable experience in working directly with teachers (and accepting them as co-equals). I believe the 'Ivory Tower' set has a great deal to contribute, but their potential only recently is being recognized. For far too long, the college and university faculty looked down on "lowly" schoolteachers. Any relationship that existed was strictly
paternalistic. Basically, there was no reward from C/U faculty to become involved, so they didn't. In fact, for those few who did, academe often rewarded their efforts with tenure denial.

The exception was when money became available, as it did with the NDEA programs of the 1960s. A research scholar would be rewarded for obtaining a grant, but he (and most of them at the time were) would not be rewarded for teaching. Most academicians had not a clue how to interact with teachers in the classroom. This comes slowly to most of us and often via learning by the 'school of hard knocks.' In retrospect, it probably took me 20 years before I truly became 'simpatico' with teachers and their needs. (personal communication, November 1999)

Salvatore Natoli, who was also involved in the summer institutes, commented:

I worked with the National Defense Education Act program in geography. We ran summer institutes—six, eight, twelve weeks of intensive training—these teachers were exposed. The participating teachers were selected—everybody was after the same people. The net result of what we discovered was that the good teachers became better. We really didn't reach whom we needed to. We thought we
really should turn this whole thing around and get the weakest teachers to go, because the good teacher's going to learn what they need anyway. And the problem was, you had too many of the others, who were not good teachers. (personal communication, November 1999)

The experimental nature of the HSGP materials necessitated a process of repeated classroom trials before being published. After three sets of field trials and several years of additions, deletions, and revisions, the project materials were published in 1970 as Geography in an Urban Age. Following public distribution and use in the early 1970s, the High School Geography project was generally felt to possess both strengths and limitations.

Strengths included the use of the inquiry method, focused learning emphasis over broad course coverage, high student and teacher interest, and problem solving using geographic principles. The Project also generated interest in geographic education within professional geographic organizations.

Limitations to the HSGP included lack of teacher education in geography (not generally available to them at the time), limited communication between university geographers and classroom teachers, and lack of fit between the Project and the adopted curricula in most states.
As Stoltman stated, the High School Geography Project was the exception to the fact that during most of the 1960s and 1970s, there was a lack of commitment among professional academic geographers to K-12 geography education (personal communication, January 31, 2000). Consequently, the momentum toward improvement in geography education, begun during the 1960s, was impossible to sustain.

Charles Gritzner wrote:

During the National Defense Education Act era of the 1960s, many well-known and respected geographic scholars became involved in geographic education simply because the money was there. The minute the pump went dry, they fled GeoEd like rats fleeing from a sinking ship. As a general rule, faculty members working in geographic education were considered to be the lowest class of (academic geographic) citizen. There was considerable discrimination against them. A small number of us (academic scholars) had always shown allegiance to GeoEd, but the numbers were small. (personal communication, November 1999)
Summary of influences on geography education during the 1960s and early 1970s

Applying the Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education helps to explain the partial success yet unsustainable momentum of the trends in geography education of the 1960s and early 1970s (Figure 4.3).

First, social/political influences, sparked largely by the successful launching in 1957 of the Soviet spacecraft, Sputnik, created a renewed public interest in improving geography education. National concerns about being a second class nation academically spurred Congress to pass the National Defense Education Act providing funding for educational research and curriculum and materials development. This economic influence helped to generate, at least temporarily, considerable interest and involvement of leaders in the field of academic geography and professional geographic organizations.

However, teachers lacked sufficient training in geography to fully embrace the resulting High School Geography Project. Concurrently, communication between academic geographers and K-12 geography teachers was limited and often contradictory. Therefore, the necessary synergy between the four influences (social/political, economic, key
Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education
1960s through 1970s
Figure 4.3

Social/ Political
- Sputnik success
- renewed public interest
- Uncomfortable status
- as second class nation
- Congress enacts NDEA

Systemic Educational
- Some cooperation between K-12 and university geographers HSGP
- Summer institute training for teachers
- Academic geographers unfamiliar with needs and capabilities of K-12 teachers
- K-12 teachers still untrained
- Closure of geography

Economic
- NDEA funding for educational research and materials
- National Science Foundation-HSGP
- Summer institutes funded to train teachers
- Closure of geography departments at several major universities

Leadership Individuals/Organizations
- Joint Committee on Geographic Education [GENIP]
- AAG new committee on education
- Gilbert White/HSGP
- William Pattison Four Traditions

Synergy

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individuals or organizational leadership, and systemic educational) was insufficient to sustain continued and lasting reform.

**Trends, influences, and initiatives of the 1970s and early 1980s**

Geography education in schools in the United States failed to make significant progress in the 1970s, suffering what some considered to be sizable setbacks at both the K-12 and college/university levels (S. Jumper, personal communication, January 3, 2000, 1999; M. Hartoonian, personal communication, November 28, 1999; P. Bacon, personal communication, November 15, 1999; S. Natoli, personal communication, November 1999).

During this decade, several major universities eliminated their geography departments entirely. Professional geographers and professional geography organizations were fragmented in their research interests and professional goals (C. Gritzner, personal communication, November 1999; S. Natoli, personal communication, November 1999). Additionally, geographers appeared to have missed the opportunity to apply the issues-based learning methods introduced during the High School Geography Project to the ecology awareness movement entering United States classrooms in the 1970s. By the beginning of the 1980s, most subjects not considered fundamental to the "back to basics" philosophy of education in the United States were being excluded from the curriculum. Reading and
writing dominated the curriculum at the expense of other subjects, including geography (Hardwick & Holtgieve, 1996).

The closing of geography departments in several major United States universities insinuated that geography was neither vital nor necessary to curriculum in America's schools. Michael Hartoonian lamented:

The single most negative influence on geography education during the 20th Century was probably when major universities 25-30 years ago started getting rid of departments of geography. That sent an interesting signal or message to the K-12 educators and to the public. Geography wasn't seen as a very vital discipline in a culture that was dominated so much by vocationalism and economic advancement.

The most precious parts in a culture are often the most indefensible. So it's sometimes very difficult to defend what's precious until it's gone. The perception that geography wasn't vital to economic development is, of course, ridiculous. At the time, it wasn't viewed as utilitarian enough. (personal communication, November 28, 1999)

Phillip Bacon agreed. Though he is convinced the motives for closure were due to economic influences of the time, he is concerned that the effects were far-reaching into the next century. He said:
I believe that the dropping of geography programs from some of our best colleges and universities did irreparable damage to the field. When Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, Columbia, Emory, and Vanderbilt decide that they do not need geographers on their faculties, this rings bells in the offices of deans and academic vice-presidents, who must, of necessity, search for ways of finding money. If you can get rid on an entire program (with no one there to defend it), the ripple effect is seen clearly (personal communication, December 6, 1999).

An opportunity for geography education to exhibit instructional relevance during this period could and should have been the environmental/ecological movement, according to Christopher Salter (personal communication, December 27, 1999). "The environmental and ecological movement has been a major movement," he insisted. "However, geography did a relatively poor job of capturing the environmental and economic themes."

Geography education and professional geographers in general could not present a united front in defense of their discipline. With a general public bereft of comprehension or interest in the subject, a woeful lack of economic support to sustain geography departments at major universities, and a fragmented constituency of professional geographers' organizations, the
1970s saw little advancement in the field.

Charles Gritzner remembered the lack of communication and cooperation between the four major geographic organizations. He reflected:

Prior to the early 1980s, there had been very little cooperation between or among the four geographic organizations, each of which tended to serve a quite different constituency:

NCGE (National Council for Geographic Education) = Educators
AAG (Association of American Geographers) = Academicians
AGS (American Geographic Society) = Business community and educated public
NGS (National Geographic Society) = Public at large, popular

The National Council for Geographic Education was all but moribund when I was serving in the capacity of Executive Director more than 20 years ago. (personal communication, November 1999)

As Joseph Stoltman frankly stated, "There was a major loss during the period in the status of geography and geography education. Recovery began in 1985, but it was painfully slow with many obstacles" (personal communication, November 19, 1999).

What, then, initiated the recovery, or renaissance in geography education, as it has come to be called? Respondents to this study suggest it...
was the result of these four very powerful and interactive influences working synergistically: (a) social and political influences, resulting from increased public awareness; (b) systemic educational influences, resulting from increased communication and cooperation between K-12 teachers and academic geographers; (c) economic influences resulting from increased public and political pressure and commitment of resources by key individuals and professional organizations; and (d) the influence of the leadership of key individuals and geographic organizations. These influences are discussed in the following section. They are not, however, discussed as separate entities since it is their synergistic interaction that fostered reform.

**Trends, influences, and initiatives of mid 1980s to mid 1990s**

Gritzner suggested that of the most negative trends in geography education, public ignorance and apathy ranked highest. The catalyst, he said, was that, "Academic geography had been elitist; rarely, if ever, had geographers carried their message (including who we were, what we did, why it was exciting, and why it was important) to the lay public. If they didn't know us, why should we expect them to support us?" (personal communication, November 1999).
But something happened to change that. Gritzner proposes that this event may have been the single most important positive change in geography education during the past century. His description of what occurred and its impact on geography education due to enhanced public awareness follow.

He wrote:

Allow me to play devil's advocate...(I love to search for the most minute and seemingly unimportant cause for historical change!) In the early 1980s, geography education in American schools was languishing; geographers were in a "gloom and doom" frame of mind. At the University of Miami, a geographer, David Helgren, did what most geographers have done since Day One—give a test to one's students on the first day of class to show them how little they know about geography (I had done this regularly since 1960). But in Helgren's class was a particular student—unknown by name to American geographers—who happened to be the editor of the campus paper. He wrote a story about the test results.

The Miami paper picked up his story and, in turn, it hit the national printed and electronic media. Suddenly, everyone in America knew that we didn't know much geography! This single incident, and the national response, served as the single most
important catalyst to all that has followed (i.e. positive change) in terms of the discipline's phoenix-like rise from the ashes of despair. (personal communication, November 1999)

The profession's positive response to the opportunity presented by the public's awareness of American's abysmal geographic illiteracy culminated in the formation of a task force. During the early 1980s, the Association of American Geographers (AAG) and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) formed a Joint Committee of Geographic Education. One of its tasks was to identify those geographic concepts that geographers could agree were fundamental to the discipline of geography. This joint committee eventually produced what is now referred to as The Five Themes of Geography. Salvatore Natoli chaired the committee. In a November 1999 interview he recalled:

It was my singularly most rewarding professional experience because a lot of things converged at the same time. I won't name names. There were five members on the committee beside myself. One or the other of the organizations nominated these people. We had $12,000, six months, and six people to get this done—to come up with some sort of consensus statement as to what we thought the unifying elements of geography were.
We purposefully avoided a definition, because we had to get this approved by the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), the Association of American Geographers (AAG), the American Geographic Society (AGS), and the National Geographic Society (NGS). And they say, you know, if you lay economists end-to-end they'll never reach a conclusion. Well, if you put a whole bunch of geographers together, they would not agree on a definition of geography.

The initial step towards (the Five Themes) came from Bill Pattison's *The Four Traditions of Geography*. And we derived these themes from what we called *primitive concepts*.

We met twice; we had two meetings. What we did was we had homework assignments. We had two meetings in Texas, one in Houston, and one in Dallas, both near the airports. After the meetings, on the plane, I put together the minutes of the discussion. By the time I got back to the office, my secretary typed this up, and we sent it to all the committee people. Then people were assigned various sections to work on.

One of the things was, we had one person who was going to be obstructive. After the first morning's session I took him aside and I
said, "Either you're for this project, or you're not. And if you're not for it, get off the committee and let us select somebody else. We have to produce something.

Here's the background—it took me five or six years to get both of the executive boards to approve this committee.

I don't say that [I was the force behind getting the five themes written], because I'm modest, but more importantly because we borrowed generously from Pattison's *Four Traditions*. In fact Pattison, in an article in *Journal of Geography*, 1990, talks about how our committee had borrowed from his work, what we came out with, and what we also seemed not to ignore.

We were not *babes in the woods*. Our intended audience was the people who were in control of geography in middle schools and high schools, and those were the social studies people. And we were not presenting them with physical geography, because in the schools, that was earth science. Social studies was where it had to get in; it wasn't going to get in through earth science. We had four out of the five (themes) in cultural geography, so it went into the social studies. If we'd focused on the physical geography, it would politically have been a mistake; we knew that.
Conceptualizing the essence of geography into easily stated, remembered, and understood themes was a positive step for geography education. These themes were identified and published in *Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools* in 1984. As Richard Boehm suggests, "There have been significant breakthroughs in curriculum, standards, and testing. In curriculum, the story begins with the 1984 Guidelines" (personal communication, December 23, 1999).

Gritzner agreed that the publication of the Guidelines had a positive impact. He says one of the catalysts behind the relatively recent progress of geography education was publication of *Guidelines for Geographic Education* (1984) along with the "widespread acceptance of the Five Themes by education policy-makers, publishers, and educators" (personal communication, November 1999).

Policy makers were indeed beginning to take notice. "In fact," he noted, "in 1984, South Dakota (where he was/is Geographic Alliance Coordinator) became the first state to mandate a geography requirement for graduation from secondary school. The South Dakota Lobbying Model was published, presented in many workshops, and sent by request to individuals in 50% of all states" (personal communication, November 1999). He continued:
The beauty of the Five Themes was that they could be expressed in five words—Location, Place, Interaction, Movement, and Region—all of which were nothing more than common sense and easily remembered. History and social studies also had their key themes/concepts, but they tended to be long, detailed, and difficult to commit to memory. (personal communication, November 1999)

Douglas Phillips concurred. He wrote:

A major event in the early 1980s was the development of the five geographic themes. This had tremendous impact at the K-12 level where few teachers had more than a single course in geography.

What we don't know or understand, we don't teach—pretty basic logic but very true in that most teachers, before the Five Themes, didn't have a conceptual understanding of geography.

Academic explanations often intimidated teachers and discouraged instruction. The Five Themes provided teachers with a simple set of lenses that they could view the world through. They could also give this lens to their students to assist them in interpreting the world through geographic eyes.

The themes have since been used by publishers and were picked up by the National Geographic and the geographic alliances. Because
of their simplicity they have spread widely in the K-12 world—much more than the historical themes provided by the Bradley Commission who erred somewhat by making their core themes forgettable—not easy to remember like the geographic themes. (personal communication, December 9, 1999)

"The introduction of the Five Themes provided an organizational structure that teachers found engaging and understandable," said James Marran (personal communication, November 1999). He added:

Positive changes were a result of the dream and vision of some key people—Sam Natoli at the AAG, Gil Grosvenor and Barry Bishop at NGS, the members of the NCGE/AAG committee that identified the Five Themes. And as a result, NGS became interested in geographic education and used its significant resources to prepare teachers to use the themes and incorporate geography into the curriculum in clearly identifiable ways.

Collaboration among the professional geography organizations was on the rise. Less than a year after the publication of Guidelines in Geographic Education, K-12 in 1984, a collaborative professional task force emerged. This task force included several leaders from the four major organizations that represent the discipline—Association of American Geographers,
American Geographical Society, National Council for Geographic Education, and National Geographic Society.

James Marran stated that the establishment of the Geography Education National Improvement Project, GENIP, in 1985 was the vehicle that brought the geography community together to speak with a single voice on issues in geographic education (personal communication, November 1999). He said:

Its influence allowed geography to reach well beyond the typical confines that geography (as a small discipline) had formerly held in the schools. The importance of GENIP as a coalition of the four major geography groups in the country (AAG, NCGE, NGS, AGS) is unprecedented. None of the other physical or social sciences has created a similar unit. GENIP has meant, over the years, that there is only one agenda in geographic education and that there is equity among all the professional players regardless of their size or the amount of money they have at their disposal.

There was a growing embarrassment about the general geographic ignorance among Americans—especially younger Americans. Results of polls and surveys helped persuade the National Geographic Society to
formalize a program that would cause geography to make a difference in the schools.

Gilbert Grosvenor, President of the National Geographic Society at the time and current Chairman of the Board, agreed that the public's apathy and geographic illiteracy in the early 1980s was blatant. Media coverage of results of students' inadequate geography education caught his attention. During a telephone interview (February 11, 2000) he remembered:

It was pretty clear to us even in the early 80s that something bad was going on in the area of K-12 geography education. We were getting isolated reports of kids not knowing anything. But we really didn't [get involved directly] until the geography quiz that the University of North Carolina did, in which they discovered their students were just woefully inadequate in their geography education.

They found for instance that when asked to name some of the states contiguous with North Carolina, they got such things as Athens; they got really crazy answers. It was clear that they didn't know north, south, east, west directions. It was also clear that the only way they got home from the parking lot was because they could follow an interstate number. It was very bad; so we thought we really had to find out if it was really that bad.
So we (National Geographic) commissioned the George Gallup organization to conduct a poll for us. We expanded it to a nine-nation poll designed to see how our 18-24 year olds and our adults stacked up. What we found out was they didn't stack up very well. In the adult group we were close to last of the nine nations, trailing only Mexico and Italy. In the 18-24 year olds, we were dead last.

We asked people (in the poll) to find the location on a physical map of the world, and 14% of them couldn't even locate the United States! A fourth couldn't find the Pacific Ocean. Only one in five could point to a country in Europe and name the country. One in three could not understand north, south, east, west directions. It was a pretty devastating poll. But from our point of view, it got us started and gave us a lot of momentum to start. It was eventually helpful to us.

I went back to the Board of Trustees, and they agreed we should mount a full court press to try to restore geography to the curriculum and to train teachers. So one of the first things we did was to get on the agenda of the National Press Club in Washington, and we had a luncheon. These weekly luncheons at the Press Club basically draw the Washington contingent of the national press. We
must have had 200-300 people at that luncheon. They were absolutely appalled at what we had to say. That survey then made headlines throughout the country. It's what basically got the attention of the public and got things started. To this day, we use that survey to show how bad it was when we got started (in the 80s).

We didn't really (I'd like to say we did) commission that poll and survey with the thought in mind that's the route we would take. But it was clear, and Bob Sims, our public relations man at the time, agreed that this was a really good way to get [the situation] known fast. This was a big problem, and we were going to do something about it. (telephone interview, February 11, 2000)

Exactly what to do about the embarrassing geographic illiteracy of the American public was another question. On both coasts of the United States isolated attempts were being made to launch effective remediation. However, it wasn't until the efforts of leaders on both coasts, and all states in between, united that real progress was made.

Initial attempts by Gilbert Grosvenor and the National Geographic Society to get a K-12 geography education program started met with little enthusiasm by professional geographers. Mr. Grosvenor remembered:
Most professional geographers of the time were not interested in attacking the problem. It took us a significant amount of time to convince them that it was in their best interest to address this problem. As a matter of fact, at one Association of American Geographers (AAG) annual meeting in Washington at this particular time, they asked me to make a major address at the beginning of this convention.

Barry Bishop and I worked on this speech really long and hard. Basically I gave a pitch about the appalling shape of K-12 geography education in the United States and how, in my opinion, this was impacting the interest of geography at the collegiate level, because college kids didn't know what geography was. I basically said the AAG had the brains of the professional geographers to solve this problem, and we had the money and were willing to put up the money and provide the distribution, the coordinating, and the drive of this program.

I made a big deal of it; I gave them my telephone number and I said, "I'm going back to my office now after lunch. Give me a call."

There were 500, maybe more, people in that room. I got back to the office, and I didn't get one phone call. Not one single phone call. That had a profound impact on us in the beginning, because we
weren't sure at that point if we would ever be successful in corralling professional geographers and encouraging them to join this crusade.

In fact the idea of combining "brains with bucks" has become kind of the amusing anecdote of that AAG convention. The end of that story was quite recently when we'd had some success, and I was talking to a group of these people, many of who'd been in the project from the beginning.

We were talking about what we'd thought had been accomplished in the last 10 years. I left them with a final thought. I said, "You know, you guys started out with the brains, and we started out with the money. Now after 10 years, you're brain dead, and I'm bankrupt (chuckle)." Of course that's not true for either of us, but there were times that I'd wondered about it.

When asked which individual they believed had the most positive influence on American geography education during the 20th century, nine of the 14 respondents to this study responded with the answer, "Gilbert Grosvenor." The reasons they gave included vision, commitment and unrelenting support to an ideal, risk taking, passion and belief in the mission of geography education, and courage in committing resources. Marianne Kenney pointed to Mr. Grosvenor's ability to recognize and utilize the
leadership abilities of others. In a telephone interview on December 2, 1999, she said:

Gilbert Grosvenor had the vision, the money, and the resources to make things happen—like the superintendent of the school district, who says; "I want this to happen." The superintendent, though, finds the right person to make it happen. Kit [Christopher] Salter was the right person. Gil contacted Kit and said he understood there were good things happening in California. He asked Kit to help make those positive changes nation-wide and to put them into place.

Those "good things happening in California" were the result of a California Geographic Alliance in which Christopher Salter and Cathy Salter were actively involved. Christopher Salter reflected:

I began to give real attention to geography education in 1982 when I grew concerned about the fact that our two children were getting no geography in public education in Los Angeles schools. I was involved in the creation of the California Geographic Alliance in 1983. Positive changes occurred because of the genuine energy and belief in the minds of the university faculty and the classroom teachers thrown/brought together in Alliance activities.
There was a beautiful and productive synergy gained in such cooperation, and it has led to enormous efforts in change. One of the reasons the Alliance movement was so important was that it brought the university and the K-12 teachers together around the topic of geography. The energy that has been unleashed in this collaborative effort has been great for the K-12 world, but it has also been a source of learning and energy for the university professor. At the individual level, many, many groups of K-12 and university professors see the intellectual, educational, even spiritual benefits in this interaction.

Gilbert Grosvenor has been the most important individual. Even though Gil has had virtually no formal geography education, his support of the Alliance movement early on opened the door for nearly all of the major success that the movement has experienced in the past fifteen years. He brought the National Geographic Society to the table and opened the discussions between university geographers and K-12 teachers. He forced the Society to become involved and supportive. (personal communication, December 27, 1999)

The importance of the collaboration between the efforts of the National Geographic Society and the California Geographic Alliance cannot
be underestimated. Douglas Phillips, in an e-mail communication (December 9, 1999) wrote:

An obvious major influence of this era (mid 1980s) was the (creation of) geographic alliances combined with the involvement of the National Geographic Society. This brought resources, never seen before to geographic education. As usual, with money, the outcomes are mixed. On the good side, thousands of K-12 educators "found" geography. Many of these are well intended and committed educators that have come to see the wisdom and merit of geography.

Some others were waves that wash up on the shore of every educational trend that has money. The latter were with us for a short while and then moved on to the next funded activity. The positive is still more important though, as the involvement of the National Geographic Society raised the profile and importance of geographic education in the public eye.

Grosvenor remembered the initial collaborative efforts between himself, representing the National Geographic Society, and Christopher Salter:

I went out to see Kit in California at UCLA, and we had lunch. We had a "good lunch," and he and Cathy (Kit's wife who was also
involved in the California Geographic Alliance) invited me to dinner. It was really a wonderful dinner. But it wasn't until recently that I realized that dinner cost me $100,000,000! Now that's a pricey dinner (chuckle)!

I, like a lot of people, came under the influence of Kit. Clearly, Kit Salter is the "godfather" of this project. I really believed in what he was doing, the concept of the "Alliance," the training of K-12 teachers, and how this would openly help collegiate geographers.

Kit had an Alliance in California, and it really worked well. The Alliance model seemed like the logical thing to do. After dinner and wine, it just didn't seem too difficult. I certainly give Kit full credit for it—Kit and Cathy.

Cathy is a classroom teacher. I visited her school, the Audubon School, and it was extraordinary. Here it was in the heart of Watts, basically an Afro-American and Spanish student population. That school was one of the best schools I have visited in the United States. Cathy played a big role in this too.

Kit came to Geographic for several years. He had a profound influence on the Geography Alliance Program—both of them did. We started with eight states. We basically chose seven charismatic
teachers from each one of those states. They were brought to study at National Geographic for four weeks—total immersion on how to teach geography. It was a fabulous thing. Then they went back to their own states to work with their alliance coordinators.

We did that for seven or eight years until we had every state with hard-core disciples (K-12 teachers). Now we still have institutes and workshops in Washington, D.C.; they're a couple weeks in duration. I'm not totally confident that it's as effective as it was when we had them in smaller groups for a longer time. There was an incredible spirit in those summer institutes that I've never experienced in my career before nor since. I'm not sure you can inculcate that feeling in a person in just two weeks.

A coordinator was/is crucial to this process. Coordinators are typically academic geographers—usually college/university geography professors or directors of state offices of public education.

I started talking to some of the really first-rate professional geographers in the country who were dealing with the K-12 teachers like David Hill, at the University of Colorado, and Sid Jumper in Tennessee. David has since retired, but I tell you, David was profound in the beginning. He had really good ideas. David was
under the influence of Gilbert White, who of course is considered the
"Dean of American Geography", even today.

I couldn't get Gilbert White, because Gilbert was getting old; he
was retired; and I don't think he thought in the beginning that we were
going to be serious about the project. I think maybe Gilbert could
have been discouraged about the long-range results of the High
School Geography Project, but I also think Gilbert had been in the
National Geographic several times prior to that, and I don't think he
got much encouragement from my predecessors about geography
education.

I think now he does. In fact, we awarded Gilbert White our
highest medal, the Hubbard medal for his contribution to geography,
so you know I have a lot of respect for Gil White. But I don't think
that at the time he thought this was going to amount to much. And I
don't blame him; I'm not sure a lot of people did.

That's how we originally got started. People like Dave Hill, Sid
Jumper, Norm Bettis, Dick Boehm, Barry Bishop, Sam Natoli, Roger
Downs played a huge role in the early days, and many continue to this
day to play a huge role. (personal communication, February 11, 2000)
The Geography Education Program of the National Geographic Society was officially founded in 1985. By 1986 the National Geographic Society Alliance Network was in place with eight established state alliances. By 1993 the National Geographic Alliance network included all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Ontario, Canada. "That network," said Boehm, "is the envy of all other subject areas" (personal communication, December 23, 1999).

Christopher Salter believed that a combination of materials, methodology, and leadership helped accelerate the "alliance phenomenon" (personal communication, December 27, 1999). He stated:

The Five Themes from the 1984 Guidelines served wonderfully to provide both a structure and a drive to Alliance efforts. People like David Hill, Roger Downs, Dick Boehm, Bill Strong, and Norm Bettis, who gave such major blocks of their lives and hours to the movement, were able to use such teaching aids to bring geography to the thousands of good and spirited teachers who knew little or no formal geography. The course design that came from people like Marianne Kenney, Martha Sharma, and Fred Walk came because of the role and attention given to the campaign by the (National Geographic) Society and the leaders mentioned above (and many others, too).
Respondents to this study generally agreed that the collaboration between K-12 teachers and professional geographers through the Geographic Alliance has had a profound and positive influence on geography education. Michael Hartoonian contended that the collaboration was due in large part to the work of the National Geographic Society (personal communication, November 28, 1999). He said, "The positive changes have been due to the work of NGS in developing those opportunities for teachers and professors to work together—and giving the attention to the classroom teacher that the classroom teacher deserves and needs." He continued:

There are three positive trends that standout relative to geography education over the last 15 to 20 years: (a) an increased attention given to professional growth within state alliances and university programs, (b) increase in geography content in the K-12 curriculum, and (c) the development of themes and (later) standards. The best reason for these changes can be found in the work of the National Geographic Society.

Douglas Phillips (personal communication, December 9, 1999) and Cathy Salter (personal communication, December 30, 1999) agreed. According to Salter, geography education has been given renewed life and
energy by the teachers who have participated in National Geographic Society sponsored summer geography institutes. She said:

There has been an increase in cooperation between (K-12) teachers and college and university geography departments. I feel certain that K-12 students involved in geography related activities and classes have had a stronger geography foundation since the combining of efforts of NGS, GENIP, NCGE, AGS, and AAG to work together to improve geographic education over the past decade.

Sidney Jumper stated, "Most of the really positive things to happen to geography education during my career have occurred since Gil Grosvenor began using the resources of National Geographic Society in the (Alliance) effort during 1985" (personal communication, January 3, 2000).

Richard Boehm added:

The National Geographic Society brought money, power, influence, and media and political attention to the situation for geographic education. The work was carried out by hundreds of geographic educators and geographers, but without Mr. Grosvenor and the Society, little would have been accomplished. (personal communication, December 23, 1999)
According to Phillip Bacon, Grosvenor was looking for a way to improve the status of geography in the schools, and decided to put his "wallet where his mouth was." Bacon said:

A major and powerful factor has been the personal commitment of Gilbert Grosvenor and the massive effort on the part of the National Geographic Society [NGS] in terms of money they have made available and commitment of their personnel.

Gil was searching for a way to make his years at NGS stack up against the great contributions that his father and grandfather made in upgrading the quality of the National Geographic Magazine and making NGS a world scale institution. Gil (initially) committed $25,000,000 to improving geography education. By deciding to establish the geography alliances, he fostered a major cooperative effort involving departments of geography with professional educators. (personal communication, November 15, 1999)

According to Gilbert Grosvenor, however, what inspired him to get involved was embarrassment. He admitted:

The bottom line is, I was really embarrassed that I had spent ten years as editor of National Geographic; my family had spend over 100 years at National Geographic, and I had been CEO then for several years.
To find a whole generation of geographically illiterate kids was just more than I could handle.

I also felt that we had the only organization that could effectively address the issue of a geographically illiterate nation. From the Society's own mission, which is to "increase the diffusion of geographic knowledge," it's so logical that we wonder why we didn't do it a lot earlier. We had the resources to do it, the energy to do it, the reason to do it, and the distribution apparatus to make it happen. It just seemed perfect for us.

I don't think there are many organizations who could have put this in effect, because they don't have the outreach that we have at National Geographic. We have magazines; we have a news service; we have a public affairs division; we have television. We have a lot of recognition, a lot of clout, and great wealth of experience in distribution of materials—dissemination of information—that's very important. (personal communication, February, 11, 2000)

As Phillips asserted, the involvement of the National Geographic Society with geography education, raised the status of geographic education in the public eye. In 1987 Congress passed a bill sponsored by Senator Kennedy that declared a week in November of each year as National
Geography Awareness Week. Phillips wrote that the public's enhanced perception of geography, "helped to set the stage for geography being (listed as) one of the original five (discipline) areas included in American 2000: An Education Strategy, under Bush, and Goals 2000 under Clinton" (D. Phillips, personal communication, December 9, 1999).

"The National Governors' Conference (1989) in Charlottesville identified geography as a core subject," explained James Marran (personal communication, November, 1999). "That made it a real curricular player and established it as a component in the national education reform movement that the Charlottesville Conference launched under George Bush."

Gritzner concurred that a major recent influence in geography education has been the "bipartisan support for geography as one of the five academic disciplines included in America 2000: An Education Strategy" (personal communication, November 1999).

Sidney Jumper added:

National Geographic Society involvement brought tons of prestige to bear on the matter (of geographic illiteracy); Grosvenor got the nation's governors involved (at the Charlottesville Conference)
because it was easy to demonstrate that Americans knew little about the rest of the world in an expanding global economy.

National Geographic Society had enormous clout with political and business leaders. It used that clout in late 1980s with governors, senators, etc. (personal communication, January 3, 2000).

"Key policy makers and lay public finally became aware of the need for geography," said Gritzner (personal communication, November 1999). "Geographic knowledge is essential to individual well-being and to national survival. It exists because of need and relevance. It took the U.S. nearly a century to figure this out!"

Grosvenor admitted with a laugh that he has a "fair amount of political clout." He acknowledged he knew President George Bush who convened the nation's governors at the Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1989.

George and I were only about four years apart in college. I've kept track of him and he me. Hilary [Clinton] had some really good ideas about and believed in our [geography education] programs. She was really ahead of her time, but she was very serious about doing [geography education] and we got to know her through that process. Bill [Clinton] participated in our Geography Awareness Week, and
the [Geographic] Bee one year. Chelsey [Clinton] participated in the Bee one year. So they were pretty well plugged into the importance of geography. It just meshed at Charlottesville." (personal communication, February 14, 2000)

Grosvenor insisted, however, that his political clout was due to his association with NGS. He added:

My influence, my power, my ability to be heard is strictly because of the institution of the National Geographic. It's an organization that has great respect; when the organization says something, people generally listen. Let me give you an unrelated, yet related event that happened to me ten days ago.

I was in South Korea, and I was going up the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). In order to pass through the DMZ you have to go through a special travel group that specializes in doing that. They told me to be in front of my hotel, which I was. They picked me up and took me to the DMZ, and much to our horror, there was checkpoint where they asked to see my passport. Nobody had said anything to me about bringing my passport. (Believe me, I don't generally carry a passport on me in a country like that.) They asked for ID. I showed
them my driver's license with my picture and signature on it, but that
was not enough; they wanted more.

Finally, they got a supervisor. I was going through my wallet
and pulled out my National Geographic ID card with my signature on
it. The man said, "I've read your magazine for years. Go on through."

The results of the Charlottesville Summit set off a national chain
reaction that significantly affected geography education. The nation's
governors and President George Bush determined at the Education Summit
in Charlottesville, Virginia, that teaching and learning in kindergarten
through grade 12 should focus on five subjects: geography, science,
mathematics, English, and history. Consequently Goals 2000: Educate
America Act was drafted in 1989, and adopted in 1990. In 1991 the U.S.
Department of Education included geography as one of five core subjects in
its America 2000 plan.

In 1992 the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in
geography was developed. (In fact, even before the National Education
Goals were adopted by President Bush and the nation's governors in 1989,
the NAEP had been authorized by Congress to conduct an assessment of
geography in 1994.) James Marran suggested that the inclusion of
teaching in the NAEP testing program at least once a decade was a
recognition that geography was a curricular expectation in every child's school experience. He said, "The trend data that will result from these studies [of test results] will provide a reference base which can be used to inform decision making within [the] geographic community on the use and allocation of resources" (J. Marran, personal communication, November 1999).

The National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST) concluded in that same year that it was "feasible as well as desirable to create national education standards," (Geography Education Standards Project [GESP], 1994). Consequently, the National Geography Standards were developed and published in 1994.

The efforts culminating in the creation of National Geography Standards clearly demonstrated the synergy central to the Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education (Figure 4.4). When writing Geography for Life: National Geography Standards 1994 the members of the Geography Education Standards Project acknowledged the elected officials who adopted the national Education Goals which were incorporated in Goals 2000: Educate America Act. They offered that without the support of public officials there would have been no national standards for geography (GESP, 1994). Within the document they thanked
Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education
1980s through 1990s
Figure 4.4

Social/ Political
- National and electronic media publicize test results of geographic illiteracy
- Gallop Poll results publicized
- National Press Club luncheon
- SD first state to mandate a geography requirement for graduation
- 1989 Charlottesville Conference-Amer ica 2000 lists geography as one of five core subjects
- NCEST mandates NAEP testing and development of national standards

Systemic Educational
- Guidelines for Geographic Education (1984) positive impact on curriculum-Five Themes
- SD mandates geography requirement for graduation
- California Geographic Alliance fostered collaboration between K-12 teachers and academic geographers
- Geography listed as core subject in America 2000 Goals
- 1993 all states have alliances making K-University collaboration more prevalent
- More teaching training through alliance summer institutes

Economic
- NGS funding for state geographic alliances
- Money for NAEP testing
- Economic support for development of National Geography Standards

Leadership
Individuals/Organizations
- AAG and NCGE join forces to write Guidelines for Geographic Education containing Five Themes
- GENIP fosters collaboration between professional geography organizations
- NGS, Gilbert Grosvenor, Kit Salter
- Alliance coordinators providing leadership within state geography alliances
- Academic geographers take the lead in K-12 geography education initiatives

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the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Geographic Society for their financial support. They also expressed gratitude to Gilbert M. Grosvenor whose leadership, the Standards Project Committee said, had "almost single-handedly put geography back on the map of American education (by) teaming up academic and professional geographers and classroom teachers" (p. 245).

James Marran, a high school teacher and one of the authors of Geography for Life: National Geography Standards (1994) said:

The standards moved geography beyond the five organizing themes into a body of challenging K-12 content and also provided a set of skills unique to the study of geography. The standards unequivocally proclaimed that geography had practical applications which could effect a student's world view and provide the know-how to be a more effective problem-solver and decision-maker. (personal communication, November, 1999)

Joseph Stoltman believes that the development of the geography content standards was the most important positive change in geography education in the 20th Century (personal communication, November 19, 1999). Phillips, Natoli, Marran, Kenney, Gritzner, Boehm, Bednarz, and Cathy Salter all concurred that the standard's development had a significant
and positive impact on geography education. As Gritzner put it, "The Standards made an extremely important contribution to geographic learning" (personal correspondence, November 1999).

Both Gritzner and Cathy Salter suggested Geography for Life: National Geography Standards should be used as the framework for shaping an ideal curriculum. Salter wrote:

This document is an excellent model that incorporates the ideas and perspectives of K-University geographers and teachers, and suggests what students need to know and understand at various levels K-12. This is what should drive the development of an ideal curriculum with geography woven throughout. (personal communication, December 30, 1999)

Marianne Kenney expressed her perception of the advantage of the National Geography Standards. She explained that the standards are, of course, voluntary. However, she said ideally they will become the basis for state standards. In an e-mail dated December 10, 1999 she wrote:

State mandates are the primary factors that influence curriculum and instruction. In the past, we had a "de facto" national curriculum with textbooks. Even though people think we have local control, there are three or four states that have state mandated curriculum: New York,
California, Texas, and Florida. A state like Texas has textbook adoptions; textbook publishers want these states to buy their textbooks. So those states drive everything. What happens is everyone relies on the textbooks, so there you have it... the national curriculum. Some of the texts are so watered down due to trying to appease various interest groups.

When you go to a standards-based system, you take the control away from the textbook publishers, and put it into our own hands. The standards are the basics of what the discipline is about, and then you develop the curriculum around it. Standards are another word for framework. They are a part, but not the whole curriculum; you build the curriculum around the standards.

Gritzner agreed that the textbook publishing industry formerly had a huge impact on what geography got taught when. He wrote:

In my experience, most curriculum design has been that provided by the textbook publishing industry. Not knowing geography, most teachers have "taught the text." Having authored or co-authored three textbooks (all as volumes within a thoughtfully integrated series) I am aware of the degree to which publishers attempted to provide a coherent sequence of topics through the grades and school year. In
the past, at least, most teachers and curriculum committees viewed the textbook selection process as the primary determinant of curriculum and course content.

The ideal, of course, is to have geography educators who are well enough versed in subject matter content to make their own curriculum and individual course content. Here in South Dakota, at least, we see this beginning to happen. In addition to the ca. 140 TC's (teacher consultants) scattered throughout the state, we have 19 TC's who either have completed Master of Science degrees in Geography, or who are well into their course work toward the degree. These people will never go back to "teaching the book" and allowing a publishing company to determine curriculum and course scope and sequence. (personal communication, November 1999)

Doug Phillips stated that the development of the national standards in geography along with the loosely affiliated state and local standards development has been a most significant effort during his era in geography education. He added, "The breaking up of the social studies again into disciplines in the standard movement caused the educational world to take notice that perhaps too much had been lost in mushing the social sciences
together into the social studies" (personal communication, December 9, 1999).

"For the past 20 years," said Sarah Witham Bednarz, "the attention of all members of the geography education community has been focused on two things: a fight for survival and a fight for space in the curriculum" (personal communication, November 15, 1999). She suggested that the need for the latter consumed the bulk of attention from the geography community in the 1990s. However, what appeared to have been a major gain of curricular position resulting in part from the Charlottesville Summit did not go unchallenged.

"We've lost some ground since Charlottesville," conceded Grosvenor, "when a few more subjects were added to the list of 'core' subjects" (personal communication, February 14, 2000). He continued:

I think—I know—that history became quite outraged at our success at the Charlottesville Summit. I know for a fact that there were a number of very, very strong history proponents on the staff of the Secretary of Education during the Bush administration. They weren't anti-geography, but they felt that geography was going to basically replace some aspect of history in the curriculum or, worse yet, in their minds, compete with history as an elective. And that rightly scared
them. So you make gains; you suffer losses; you learn from your losses; and you move forward.

Gritzner agreed. "Vicious turf wars by the history and social studies organization and educators [had a negative effect]. Geography, as a very numerically weak minority, relative to history and social studies, faced an almost insurmountable hurdle in lobbying for curricular time and attention" (personal communication, November 1999).

Cathy Salter also cautioned against "relaxing our guard in the realm of curriculum battles." She encouraged, "Those who are committed to what has been started by National Geographic Society and others must continue to communicate that commitment" (personal communication, December 30, 1999).

Christopher Salter added, "If we let the Alliance movement drift away into History and history, we will be faced with the collapse, yet again, of geography into the dustbin of unconsummated educational ambitions" (personal communication, December 27, 1999).

Social studies doesn't have enough prominence in the curriculum as it is according to Marianne Kenney, Social Studies Specialist and Project Director at Colorado Department of Education. "Add to that the number of subjects within the social studies—these disciplines argue with each other
about what's most important. It has a negative effect" (M. Kenney, personal communication, December 10, 1999).

Michael Hartoonian voiced concern about what he called "curricular imperialism." He said that the only negative changes he's seen in geography education over the course of his career have to do with the tendency to want to "go it alone" and not build alliances with other subjects or content fields.

He stated:

Individuals in any of the fields within the social sciences tend to want to go it alone. There's a feeling of curriculum imperialism where there is a sense that my subject in number one. I've discovered over the years that some people feel they will be diminished if some other discipline is given more attention. Geographers find themselves outnumbered by historians; that is a fact of life because of the way the curriculum is constructed and because there ARE a lot more historians. History does get more attention in the curriculum. I think that by working cooperatively there's an opportunity to teach historians that geography is a critical subject." (personal communication, November 28, 1999)

According to the respondents to this study, geography's recognition as a "critical subject" has already begun to happen. "When the College
Board recognized geography as an Advanced Placement subject in 1995, its profile was dramatically and significantly raised at both the high school and the college level," said James Marran (personal communication, November 1999). He continued, "Geography's presence in the stable of AP subjects helps ensure the continued strength of the subject in the high schools."

Bednarz, Boehm, and Gritzner agreed that the introduction of the Advanced Placement (AP) Human Geography program in academic year 2000-2001 will mark another milestone in geography's fight for recognition. Bednarz believes that the advanced placement course will also offer a challenging experience for high school students that may encourage more students to begin their college careers as geography majors (personal communication, November 15, 1999).

"Once the Advanced Placement is there, geography [will have] established a certain legitimacy," said Salvatori Natoli. He continued:

It is so important, and yet it is so tenuous. It's tenuous because you have to get 7000 people to take it every year or the College Board will drop it; they won't allow it.

James Marran started that initiative [for an AP geography course] in 1985. The interesting thing is that it took a long time to convince geographers that it was needed. Why? It means that there
will have to be changes in the whole makeup of introductory courses in geography. For some colleges that's their bread and butter.

(personal communication, November 1999)

"If one reflects on where geography and geographic education have come from during my career," said Gritzner, "it has all been uphill! There have been very few negative changes, i.e. things getting worse. Based on the status of GeoEd during the 1950s and 1960s, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to have gotten worse," (personal communication, November 1999).

Most respondents to the study would agree with Gritzner that geography education has made considerable progress during the last half of the 20th century. Gritzner cautions however, that "The momentum must be maintained!"

Stoltman agreed that the progress, or "recovery" has been "painfully slow, with many obstacles" (personal communication, November 19, 1999).

Cathy Salter noted that the progress that did occur has been the result of the interplay of many influences working together. She stated:

This has occurred because of many working at the state and national level; it has occurred through Alliances and national geography associations; it has occurred because of enormous effort and capital
put forth by National Geographic Society to make geography not just a stronger subject in school, but a subject that will arm students for life with skills and knowledge that will make them more responsible and active citizens. Can this continue as we move into the new millennium. Absolutely! (personal communication, January 1, 2000)

As Marran put it, "The structures for continuing change are now in place. They need not be reinvented to meet the challenges that lie ahead but must be responsive to fresh opportunities" (personal communication, November, 1999).

Chapter Five examines the current status of geography education from the perspective of respondents to the study. Constructed from the Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education, Chapter Six presents a consensus vision for the future of geography education from those same perspectives.
CHAPTER V

Current Status of Geography Education in the United States

From the Respondents' Perspectives

Geography education in the United States has made considerable progress during the last half-century and particularly the last fifteen years according to the respondents of this study. As Gritzner suggested, "It would be difficult, if not impossible, for [geography education] to have gotten worse!" However, most study respondents cautioned that there is much work left to be done. They warn that assuming the stance of custodians of the status quo would be deleterious to recent progress.

"There has been the mythic belief that we have created real progress, so people relax and lose interest," said Christopher (Kit) Salter (personal communication, December 27, 1999). "In fact," he continued, "educational reform has to go on for years and years and years in order to truly bring change to the monumental glacier of school curriculum."

Richard Boehm agrees but believes that continued positive growth is possible. He said, "We still have a long way to go, but we are fairly well positioned at the end of 1999" (personal communication, December 23, 1999).
Recent positive growth in geography education is evidenced in many areas. However, as Grosvenor emphasized, "I don't think the war's won. I think we've made a lot of progress, but I don't think we're anywhere near up to our goal of bringing the average American student up to a world-class geography education. I don't think we come close to competing with the top countries of Europe. I'm not sure we can compete yet with certain Asian countries. I think it would be a terrible error to declare a victory" (personal communication, February 14, 2000).

Cathy Salter reflected on both the positive progress in geography education and areas of continuing need and concern. She wrote:

Geography has been given life and energy. There has been a marked increase in attendance at geography and social studies conferences at state and national level. Classroom teachers (K-12) have become involved in curriculum design, state and national geography standards development, assessment, and in giving presentations at state and national geography conferences.

Geography has become a visible subject again, millions of kids have gotten involved in school, state, and national geography bees. Congress has endorsed Geography Awareness Week events, and state
Departments of Education and some state legislatures have become involved in [financially] supporting state geographic alliances.

There has been an increase in cooperation between K-12 teachers and college and university geography departments, and I feel certain the K-12 students involved in geography classes have had a stronger geography foundation using new teaching materials.

[However,] there still needs to be considerable work done in getting college and university departments of Geography and departments of Education to become involved in this effort. And there are still those who would like to see geography buried within the broader umbrella of Social Studies.

You can't ever relax and think that you can simply build on last year's geographic foundation. You cannot assume that they [students] or the new teachers coming into a social studies department have had any geography background. And so it continues to be necessary to push for more teacher training, summer opportunities for teachers in geography education, better teaching materials for kids, more geography in the curriculum, more support by college and university departments of geography, and more awareness of the tremendous resource that lies within the covers of the 1994 Geography for Life:
Respondents' perceptions of the current status of geography education in the United States can be categorized into the four areas represented in the model previously presented in this study: societal/political status; status within the educational system; current leadership of key individuals or organizations; and economic support. Each will be discussed separately with the understanding that no area stands alone and each significantly influences the other.

**Societal/Political Perceptions**

Respondents suggested that generally there has been increased respect in both the social and political valuation of geography education over the last four decades. Yet they concur that there still exists an overriding sense of public apathy regarding geographic illiteracy of students in the United States and ignorance about the true value and nature of the discipline of geography. Additionally the special advantage geography education enjoyed during the last administration is slipping away. The focus has shifted from the national to state and local levels, and local curriculum decision-makers are insufficiently knowledgeable about geography.
Bednarz noted that one recent indication of increased societal and political valuation of geographic literacy is the current partnership with NASA's *Mission Geography* program. The Education Division of NASA listed geography, mathematics, science, and technology as the four educational foci of NASA Education programs, and Bednarz is currently preparing curriculum support materials linking the National Geography Standards with NASA's missions and results (personal communication, November 16, 1999).

Grosvenor, Gritzner, Kenney, Marran, Natoli, and C. Salter observed that an increasing national awareness of global connectedness has almost forced an increased societal/political interest in geographic literacy. Grosvenor stated, "I think it [geographic literacy] is absolutely essential! I think we will deteriorate as a responsible nation in the community of nations if we don't become more geographically literate. It's true! How can we try to influence global environmental issues, if we're geographically illiterate?" (personal communication, February 14, 2000).

Gritzner agreed. He wrote, "Somewhat optimistically, perhaps, I hope (believe might be a bit strong) that there is an increasing national awareness of what I refer to as global *intradependence*—one world, closely tied, in
which literally every country, location, and culture depends upon every other in some way" (personal correspondence, November, 1999).

An important influence contributing to the continued enhanced societal perception of geography education according to Kenney is the "smaller world that we live in because of technology." She says:

We're going to have to deal with people in this world on a daily basis. People from other countries ridicule our lack of understanding. If we're going to work globally with others, we're going to have to understand them.

Also, understanding environmental issues from a global perspective is really important. We'd like to say nothing's really happening and we don't have to worry about our resources, but the truth is—we need to be informed and aware in order to make wise decisions about our future. That should be reflected in the way we teach our students. (personal correspondence, December 10, 1999)

"Geography is a curricular vehicle for encouraging an understanding of the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainable development," according to James Marran (personal communication, November 1999). He continued, "Geography is being presented [and
perceived] as a practical body of content that can inform decision making and problem solving at both the national and international level."

Natoli also noted positive trends in terms of public awareness. He said, "There is perhaps a new conception of what the discipline is all about rather than the superlative lists type of geography, e.g., highest mountains, longest rivers, deepest oceans, etc." (personal communication, November, 1999).

Boehm and Grosvenor noted an increased public awareness of geographic literacy due in part to such things as National Geography Awareness Week and the Geography Bee. Grosvenor said:

I think Geography Awareness Week and the National Geographic Bee help. Anytime you can get the public involved in following an intellectual exercise, it helps. We've seen it with spelling bees and math competitions. Those core subjects have a competition with which to align themselves to generate public interest. I think it helps. (personal communication, February 14, 2000)

Still despite continued efforts, most study respondents agreed that public understanding of the importance of geographic literacy needs to improve. As Grosvenor said (personal correspondence, February 11, 2000):
Despite all our efforts, I don't think the public fully understands or appreciates the critical role that geography plays in the thinking process and voting process of citizens in a democracy. I do not believe that democracy can flourish with an illiterate electorate, and clearly in the area of geography our electorate has been illiterate.

If our electorate was geographically literate, not only would they choose more competent people, they would be more sensitive to issues—other than worrying about whether or not Al Gore took a puff of marijuana in high school. So in order to get a geographically literate public, we need to have a strong K-12 presence in geography.

"We do need more PR with society in general," says Michael Hartoonian, "and we need to promote the understanding of integrative relevance of geographic literacy with the K-12 education system. We have to be more explicit about it by engendering it in our writings—by the rationales and mission statements that we create. Wherever we get the chance—do it" (personal communication, November 28, 1999).

Other indications of current societal or political valuation of geography offered by study respondents include the development of national standards and assessments for geography, the introduction of the advanced placement course in geography, and the increased use of geographic
information systems (GIS) by private and public organizations (S. Jumper, personal communication, January 3, 2000; C. Salter, personal communication, December 30, 1999; S. Natoli, personal communication, November, 1999). Yet, as respondents also pointed out, the national geography standards have yet to be translated into most state and local standards (M. Kenney, personal communication, December 2, 1999; J. Stoltman, personal communication, November 19, 1999); the success of the AP geography course is tenuous and dependent upon 7,000 students taking the AP exam in geography (Natoli, personal communication, November, 1999); and K-12 schools have relatively little access to geographic technology like GIS (G. Grosvenor, personal communication, February 14, 2000).

Both Kenney and Grosvenor see a current decline in the previous positive trend of support for geography education at the national political level. "I see the trend declining," Kenney said, "due to a focus at the national level in reading, writing, and math." She continued:

Other subjects like history and geography aren't getting national focus anymore. The President [Clinton] wanted a national test. He's a consensus person; he works for compromise. Reading, writing, and math are basically safe—not controversial agenda. He found a middle
ground, because everyone can agree on reading, writing, and math.

(personal communication, December 2, 1999)

Grosvenor agreed that "Washington" was focusing more on reading and math because it was politically safe and "testable." In a telephone interview on February 14, 2000 he said:

You can't really argue with that. You can't really say that geography should be taught before basic skills like reading. If you can't read or write, you won't be able to take geography. It's kind of hard to argue. I don't try to. I'm just saying there's clearly a need for reading, writing, and arithmetic, just as there is a clear need for geography. I think there's enough time and room in the curriculum to do all of those.

**Status within the Educational System**

Geography education within the K-University education system currently enjoys a more respectable and recognized position than it did 50 years ago according to the respondents of this study. However many areas of concern and needed remediation still exist. These areas will be discussed below.

Expanded interest and involvement by professional geographers and enhanced relationships between K-12 educators and academic geographers

According to 12 of the 14 respondents to the study, the Alliance movement has been instrumental in bringing together university and K-12 teachers to improve geography education. Charles Gritzner wrote:

The Alliance program has given legitimacy to college/university people working with in-service teachers. Further, through participation in Alliance instructional programs, a substantial number of faculty members have gained experience in working with K-12 teachers. Also, through work with teachers, many of the stereotypes have been broken down (basically that teachers are "dumb"). Many of us have found that teachers are every bit as professional as we are. In my case, thinking back over the 38 graduate students I have advised
(thesis or B-Option research papers), with but one or two exceptions, far and away the best students have been teachers.

The point being, and I believe that it is extremely important, that negative stereotypes held by C/U [college/university] faculty are beginning to evaporate. We value our relationships with teachers and are quite sensitive to their needs and problems. For a number of us, this work is the most gratifying thing we have done during our entire career! (personal communication, November, 1999)

As Kit Salter stated, "[The Alliance movement] has been critical in expanding the circle of concerned, articulate voices calling for more geography." He continued:

The problem is that the system within which they work traditionally sees such intramural efforts as being more of a distraction than a benefit. Educational protocols have made such interaction very difficult. We, as a culture, have worked so very hard to separate the educational missions in our school systems. That persists and that will continue to work against the sort of collaborative gain that the Alliance movement has spawned. (personal communication, December 23, 1999)
Those "separate educational missions in our school systems" about which Salter speaks are clearly illustrated in the following recollection by (Geography Professor, Dr.) Charles Gritzner. He wrote:

May I digress and tell a war story? During my career, on many occasions (East Carolina, possibly Montana, Oregon College of Education, and here at South Dakota State University) I have offered a course in Methods of Teaching Geography (sometimes K-12, sometimes secondary). In every instance, someone has found out that I am not certified to teach [at the K-12 level], and that has ended my role in this capacity! In all but one of the foregoing instances, the course was picked up by an individual who had credentials in Education, but no background whatsoever in Geography!

Meanwhile, I have six text or other teaching oriented books and probably 100 of my 150 publications pertain to education; during my career, I have conducted an estimated 400 short courses or workshops designed for educators; DoDDs [Department of Defense Dependent Schools] had me in-service their Social Studies teachers worldwide. I was NCGE Editor of Media Materials for many years and served as Contributing Editor to "Media Review" in the *Journal of Geography* from 1969-1972, etc. Yet the *Educationalists* deem me to be
unqualified to teach a methods class? Do you see anything wrong with this? (personal communication, November 1999)

"University and research geographers have a critical role to play in improving the status of geography in the [K-12] schools," agreed Natoli (personal correspondence, November 1999). "But," he continued, "in the university culture pre-college education efforts are not looked upon as having high priority. The reward system in college and university teaching are based primarily upon research output as opposed to teacher performance and university and community service."

Phillip Bacon concurred. In a personal communication (November 15, 1999) he wrote:

Pie-in-the-sky to me would mean willingness, backed up with money and recognition on the part of the university administrators, to be not only supportive but encouraging to people who are willing to cross the line between a research oriented professor and the K-12 school system.

My many years of experience tell me that this is not apt to happen. School work [working with K-12 schools] is demanding in terms of both time and effort, and the rewards simply aren't there for someone who wants to travel that route.
Geography always has a big hurdle to jump when deans and academic vice-presidents have no understanding of the nature of geography themselves. Without their support, geography in general and geography education in specific is dead in the water.

Cathy Salter agreed that despite the collaboration between academic geographers and K-12 teachers through state alliances, such collaborative efforts are not omnipresent. She wrote:

Some academic geographers feel it is not their responsibility to become involved with the K-12 world. Some do not attend the NCGE [National Council for Geographic Education] meetings and never witness the energy and commitment of the dynamic K-12 teachers who attend those meetings religiously from year to year. Some never set foot in an elementary, junior high, or high school.

And the reverse is that some teachers never become involved in the broader world of geography educators because they simply close their door, teach, and go home. (personal communication, December 30, 1999)

Another positive trend in geography education within the educational system, according to Sarah Witham Bednarz, is the rise of Ph.D. programs in geography education and the increased number of undergraduate geography
majors (personal communication, December 23, 1999). "This," she said, "has been partially fueled by better geography instruction K-12."

Christopher Salter and Richard Boehm agreed with Bednarz. In a personal correspondence dated December 23, 1999, Salter wrote:

Yes, Geography Education has become a strong and creative part of the K-12 curriculum. We are just now beginning to get strong and bright kids coming into college who declare in their frosh year that they want to be Geography majors! This has hardly ever happened before. If the discipline is ever to gain a position of respect and higher positive imageability in American culture, it will have to grow as a productive and significant part of the average American student's education.

Boehm added that several universities are now offering Ph.D. degrees in geographic education. Kansas State, Penn State, Florida State, Texas A&M, and Southwest Texas State University now offer such programs (personal communication, December 23, 1999).

Despite the noted increase in undergraduate students studying geography, and the additions of Ph.D. programs in geography education at several universities, Christopher Salter still sees a reluctance on the part of many students to major in the field of geography. He attributes this
reluctance to the "low esteem our discipline is given in popular culture." He wrote:

What a bear this is to change. I still find bright kids wanting to major in geog[raphy], but terribly frightened about having to answer the question, "A geography major???? Are you serious? Why? What in the world can you do once you have memorized the capitals?" More affection for the discipline because of a higher status in popular culture would change that somewhat. (personal communication, December 27, 1999)

Along with the addition of graduate programs in geography education, Richard Boehm sees what he called a "huge" increase in research in geographic education as a positive trend (personal communication, December 23, 1999). However, most of the respondents to this study said that though there has been an increase in the volume of research in geography education, the discipline is essentially what Kenney termed "research poor" (C. Salter, personal communication; December 30, 1999; M. Kenney, personal communication, December 2, 1999; S. Bednarz, November 15, 1999; C. Gritzner, personal communication, November 1999; S. Natoli, personal communication, November 1999).
Like Kenney, Natoli is concerned about the current lack of quality research in geography education. He said:

Research agendas for geography educators are poorly organized and dominated mostly by people engaged in action research, psychosocial, or cognitive studies. The NCGE [National Council for Geographic Education] has recently initiated a series of annual meeting sessions on research in geographic education. Most of the papers presented are results of recent doctoral dissertations or individuals engaged in graduate level research. It's a spotty mix, but still has not come up with an overall research agenda, although it's a positive step forward. (personal communication, November, 1999)

In response to a question about the current research agenda in geography education, Bednarz sent an excerpt from a chapter she is currently writing with Downs and Vender. In it they write:

Taken in totality, it is possible to characterize this work [research in geography education] as small scale (in terms of numbers of participants—students, schools, teachers, etc.); largely asynchronous (few longitudinal studies); rarely controlled (in the sense of formal experimental design); and often descriptive and anecdotal. Theory can only be built from and grounded in empirical data and there is a
dearth of such data in the area of geography education. (personal communication November 15, 1999)

The majority of respondents to this study (nine of 14) saw an increase in teacher education as a positive trend in geography education within the K-University system. Most of the training, they noted, came from Alliance Summer Geography Institutes. In a personal communication dated November 15, 1999, Phillip Bacon wrote:

Other than the programs offered by the alliances, I don't see a whole lot of serious [geography] in-service going on in the schools. Teachers are so heavily laden now with bureaucratic mandates that many are simply burned out by the end of the day making many in-services programs a joke. This is sad but true.

Nearly all (12 of 14) respondents indicated an undeniable concern for the overall lack of teacher training (either pre-service or in-service) in geography content. Several also voiced concern that two-week summer institutes are insufficient to adequately prepare teachers to teach the complex subject of geography.

Gritzner posed this question: "Would any board, superintendent, principal, etc. hire someone to teach chemistry, mathematics, foreign language, etc. without prior course work in the subject? Certainly not! Then
why are they willing to do so in the case of geography?" (personal communication, November 1999).

James Marran shared a similar concern. "How interesting it is that in Illinois, one can teach geography without any courses at all in the discipline, but to teach psychology, the state certification board requires a minimum of 18 hours. The same is true for history" (personal communication, November 1999).

The Alliance program has attempted to remediate the lack of teacher training in geography by offering in-service training during summer institutes. However several respondents spoke of their concern that two weeks of summer workshops does not a geography teacher make. Kenney said:

The geography alliance network is wonderful! It's had a huge impact. But here's the pitfall; teachers who don't really know geography, get up and perpetuate bad geography over and over again in workshops for other teachers. We get all these enthusiastic teachers, but they don't have the depth of understanding in geography and the alliance coordinators [typically academic geomapers] don't know what to do with them. Some of them have just enough information to be dangerous. (personal communication December 10, 1999)
Natoli agreed. He said, "The negative chiefly surrounds sending teachers into the field with their only preparation being a two to three week summer institute in geography, and who are then holding workshops and in-service training for equally under-prepared other teachers" (personal communication, November 1999).

Grosvenor agrees that teacher training is "where it's all at" when it comes to enhancing geography education. He contends that until a higher percentage of those teachers currently teaching in classrooms in the United States acquire a better background in geography, the in-service must continue. He said:

If I thought we had caught up with in-service training, I would say that pre-service training is the most important. But I don't think we've caught up yet. I don't think that [a high] enough percentage of teachers are going through pre-service training in geography. If every teacher were required to pass a proficiency exam in geography in order to teach, then we would be home free, I think. But that is not the case, I'm afraid.

I still believe in the alliance concept because I think it's crucial to bring those collegiate geographers in contact with K-12 teachers. These alliance coordinators realize that K-12 teachers are their farm
system, and although it's anecdotal, I can tell you in state after state that geography elective courses in college have blossomed in numbers because kids are coming to college understanding geography and realizing it's not only important, but it's fun.

Coordinators are beginning to realize that. In states like Kansas—Kansas State—their faculty number is determined by the number of students that enroll in their courses. Recently Kansas State has picked up a full professor and two associates because of the increased enrollment. (personal correspondence, February 11, 2000)

However, Kenney noted what she believes to be a flaw in the way teacher in-service training is being offered through the Alliance program. She wrote:

It used to be different when the Alliance movement first started. It used to be that NCGE [National Council for Geographic Education] was very vital, exciting, and always [had] something happening. However, I did feel a great many TCs were giving entertaining workshops that lacked substance. The [National Geography] Standards led to having workshops with more substance, but it now seems that they are not current in what's happening with professional development and the systemic changes happening in schools.
Education has made huge strides, and it appears that geography education hasn't kept up with it.

We also need to realize the "sea change" in the way that professional development is delivered. Now the movement is systemic reform where the training is on going and embedded in the job for teachers. In other words, districts are finding time so teachers can receive training as part of their workday. It's not just a one shot workshop after school or in the summer anymore. There are action research and study groups in the schools. I don't think geography education understands the way professional development is now conducted in the schools. If they have [the] same model that they've always had before, they won't be effective. (personal communication, December 2, 1999)

Bednarz agreed that the current situation with teacher training needs improving. She wrote:

We need many more really geographically-literate teachers; not just the products of two-week institutes, but teachers with a rich and fluent understanding of geography and the ability to develop good and exciting curriculum materials. This means delving into teacher prep issues. (personal communication, November 15, 1999)
All the respondents to the study noted a positive trend toward overall increases in the amount of geography content in K-12 curriculum in the United States as well as an improvement in many instructional materials. However, they also voiced concern that up-to-date teaching materials are not readily available to most teachers, and there exists a heavy reliance on textbooks by teachers with insufficient familiarity with the discipline.

Kenney said that the geography programs needing improvement the most involve teachers who do not understand what geography is and rely on a textbook and worksheets (personal communication, December 2, 1999). She continued:

Too often social studies and geography are rated as their [the teachers'] least favorite subject. The teachers hate the subject—basically they got "stuck" teaching it. They don't put their heart in it. They rely on the textbook and don't understand the subject. They make it trivial rather than relevant.

Richard Boehm noted, "There is a widespread criticism of textbook-driven geographic education because texts frequently do not completely concentrate on problem-solving geography. Yet textbooks have improved immensely (revised on a two-year cycle) and they are the lifeline for vast
numbers of teachers and students" (personal communication, December 23, 1999).

Phillip Bacon wrote about the difference between the ideal and the reality. He wrote:

Ideally, curriculum design would be a cooperative effort between curriculum people in the schools and professional geographers. In reality, however, this is not apt to happen. University geographers get few if any rewards for such efforts and, indeed, may be penalized for "wasting" their time when they should be doing scholarly research.

This dumps the responsibility back into the lap of the curriculum person. If he or she has training in geography, that school system will be fortunate. If they do not, they and the handful of teachers who may have had some training in geography (or at least a love for the field, regardless of the training) will turn elsewhere for guidance. Where?

Very often they will turn to the newest textbooks, and this isn't as bad a choice as some would make it out to be. Publishers spend millions of dollars bringing out new programs and they can't afford to waste this money, so they do try to stay on top of the best curriculum
design and the best people. (personal communication, November 15, 1999)

Unfortunately, according to Charles Gritzner, college and university faculty are not consulted frequently enough regarding K-12 instructional materials (personal communication, November 1999). He asks:

Why have C/U people been almost completely ignored by school textbook—or other instructional material purchase—committees? We have the background to judge the quality of content; most teachers do not. Hence, many absolutely dreadful textbooks and other instructional materials are on the market and in the classroom.

James Marran voiced similar concerns when discussing the Alliance model which has teachers (called teacher consultants or TCs) teaching other teachers and developing and sharing materials. He expressed concerns about the lessons developed and disseminated under the Alliance model. He said:

The TC [teacher consultant] model that NGS [National Geographic Society] established, while powerful, encouraged the production of thousands upon thousands of lessons but without any criteria evaluating their quality. As a result, there is no way to objectively differentiate the good from the bad, the effective from the ineffective. (personal correspondence, November 1999)
Though respondents to the study lauded the current increase in geography in K-12 curriculum, they also noted that in primary grades, geography was barely visible. Hartoonian and Kenney discussed the lack of geography in the primary grades and the possible reason behind the shortage. Hartoonian said:

What's happening in the K-3 programs is that content is basically being run out of the schools because of the emphasis on skills testing of reading and arithmetic. In many states (in their primary curriculum) you can barely find any science or social studies. In those high-stakes states (Texas, etc.) where testing results have high stakes, what is tested, is what is taught.

It's really quite frightening. What it does with particularly minority students, is it disenfranchises them even more with regard to content. Again, if comprehension is what we're after, and comprehension is a function of vocabulary and logic, if you don't teach science and social studies, or the disciplines within those two areas, students won't be learning the vocabulary or the logic. You think differently in geography than you do in biology, and you think
differently in literature than you do in physics, and unless the
children are getting that, they're going to have some "skills" that are
pretty useless. (personal communication, November 28, 1999)

Leadership of Key Individuals and Organizations

All respondents to this study agreed that strong individual and
interorganizational leadership has had a positive influence on the current
status of geography education in American schools. Most (13 of 14
respondents) noted the current cooperation between the four major
professional geography organizations as a significant positive influence.

Gritzner pointed out that since the early 1980s the professional
organizations/societies have been working together rather than pulling in
separate directions. He wrote:

Professional organizations are now working together. The AAG,
AGS, NGS, and NCGE each serve a different constituency, but work
toward a common purpose. There was a massive infusion of new
members [resulting] from the Alliance program. In addition to
achieving financial stability, the NCGE [National Council for
Geographic Education] reorganized in quite significant ways and has
also enjoyed a remarkably long period of sound leadership.
Organizations must continue to cooperate (as through the Geographic Education National Implementation Project, or GENIP); continued active participation of NGS and the Alliance program is absolutely essential; geography education must be an attractive disciplinary option for our brightest young minds entering the profession; the Alliance Teacher Consultant (TC) network must continue to be recognized and energized. (personal communication, November, 1999)

Continued cooperation between professional geographic organizations is pivotal to the continued improvement of geography education in American schools according to Marran. "In fact," he said, "the demise of GENIP [Geography Education National Improvement Project] as the coordinator and facilitator of initiatives in geographic education would be the single most negative influence in geography education in the 21st Century" (personal communication, November 1999).

While collaborative leadership from professional geographic organizations/societies was viewed as crucial to maintaining positive trends in geography education, all respondents agreed that the leadership of key individuals is also essential. Several voiced concern that the dynamic
leadership previously available is quickly disappearing from the geography education scene.

Gilbert Grosvenor, whom many study respondents identified as the individual having the most positive influence on geography education in the 20th Century, admitted that he would like to "sail off into the sunset and not have to look behind." In a telephone conversation February 14, 2000, he explained:

I think the closest I've come to that is the reality that the alliance coordinators are the ones who can really carry that ball. Somebody from Washington, somebody from [National] Geographic has to motivate those coordinators, but time and time again I have seen examples of the coordinators being the ones that really make the difference in their state.

My role comes in trying to convince the powers that be at the Geographic and the powers that be at the state level to support those Alliances. That's what I spend a lot of my time doing. I was in Chicago last week; I'm going to Hawaii next week; I'll be going to Florida sometime in March; all on Alliance business so to speak. I'm putting my time in that, because I believe if there's a weakness or a risk in this program it is from the Alliance [coordinator] level.
In other words, how long can one person really maintain such a high intensity level of a Kit Salter type? Now Kit's unusual, but take Mike Libbee. Mike's been in it for a long time. How long can Mike Libbee do this? But he's really important to this program, particularly in the state of Michigan.

It's true of every Alliance coordinator. You can almost name a state's progress by looking at the state's Alliance coordinator. We pay the coordinators a really small stipend, which never covers their expenses, and many of them donate it back to the Alliance. None of our TCs [teacher consultants] make any money. You see the key to this program is volunteerism. Yet you can't ask somebody to do that for 20 years. This crusade is mostly a volunteer crusade. You can make an argument that the really best crusades in the world ARE volunteer crusades, but you can't sustain that forever unless you can replenish the leaders. So there has to be a system where Alliance coordinators motivate [and] captivate their own successors.

I think we have to continue the difficult task of keeping alliances and alliance coordinators, not only on the cutting edge of teaching, but on the cutting edge of enthusiasm. It is tough. It's easy to create a program; it's tough to maintain it. Different people come
along. We have to be careful to try to avoid the institutionalization of things. We have to avoid the idea that it's boring and we're doing the same thing over and over again.

Mike Libby is really good at changing focus and programs, initiating new programs and keeping his alliance vibrant. He has a lot of the same kind of charismatic qualities that Kit [Salter] has. Charisma is huge. It's hard to find 50 of those.

Kenney agreed with Grosvenor and suggested that training and inspiring teacher leaders may be the key to continued success. She voiced concern, however, about the impossibility of replacing "two irreplaceable people like Kit Salter and Gilbert Grosvenor" at the national level (personal communication, December 2, 1999).

"We need strong leaders to carry the geography education banner,"

said Sarah Witham Bednarz (personal communication, November 15; 1999). She continued:

In recent years the National Geographic Society has become less interested in promoting geographic education in as powerful a manner as in the past. No one is picking up the banner effectively, leaving a power void. This is very dangerous for geography education. There
really isn't a second, younger generation coming on to carry forward, and we old ones are tired and weary.

Christopher Salter shared Bednarz's concerns. In a personal communication dated December 23, 1999, he added:

I am perhaps most worried about the fading role of university geography leadership in the Alliance movement. As the pioneers walk off stage and become replaced by professors who have not had the excitement or the uncertainty of dealing with the first years of this movement, there is the potential for a downshift in the level of commitment.

These [positive] changes [in geography education] occurred largely because of the phenomenon called the Geographic Alliance. It was a simple collaborative that caught the attention of Gilbert Grosvenor and a hundred other change agents in American education. These changes cannot easily be replicated in the next 20 years because the NGS [National Geographic Society] linkage has become ever-more masked with red tape and the frontier spirit that was so characteristic of the innovative years of the Alliance ('85-'93 or '94) has been hidden by paper requirements . . . and because of the slow
disappearance of Gil Grosvenor from the management scene of the Society.

Also, I have great fear about the high costs of requiring so much paper in the ongoing management of an Alliance. The teachers and professors who are trying to keep the Alliance movement working effectively all have (other) full-time jobs. As the [National Geographic] Society and the NGS Foundation expand the role of paper and deadlines in the Alliance dynamics, the spirit of the leadership is going to lose steam.

This will drive the Alliance movement more and more into the hands of professional educator administrators, and that is likely to suck the energy out of the life form. That is not always the case, but once the Alliance becomes nothing more than one other little interest group being managed in a central office, it will lose its appeal to many of the most useful and most productive supporters.

Such is the history of innovation. What works as innovation soon gets institutionalized and once that happens, rules are made; deadlines are established; forms are printed; budgets are formalized, and people are given minor domains of power and authority. Such a new configuration can only lead to major change and major structure.
Such structure undercuts the spirit of innovation that mothered the changes. And pretty soon innovators are replaced by functionaries and so the spirit drifts away.

This is not unique to Geog Ed. This is the human pattern surrounding innovation and growth and institutionalization. There is hardly any way to avoid such pitfalls. It is an associate component of growth, especially when the money comes mostly from the organization that is in charge of the innovation and its management.

Salter's concerns for sustaining enthusiasm that originated with the early years of the Alliance movement, the future potential leadership in geography education, and associated funding sources lead to the next area of discussion—current economic influences.

Economic Influences

Respondents to this study list five positive economic influences currently attesting to the improved status of geography education in American schools. These include: federal funding and support for the 2001 National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] in Geography; U.S. Department of Education grant money for writing a geography curriculum framework; annual financial backing for each state geographic alliance by National Geographic Society; establishment of NGS million dollar
permanent endowments for geographic education in 14 states and partial endowments in six states; and the development of the NCGE Million Dollar Fund for Geographic Education in the Third Millennium, the 21st Century Fund. Each will be discussed briefly.

The NAEP is a congressionally mandated project of the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education Statistics is responsible, by law, for carrying out the NAEP project through competitive awards to qualified organizations. In 1988, Congress established the National Assessment governing Board to formulate policy guidelines for NAEP. The Board is responsible for selecting the subject areas to be assessed from among those included in the National Education Goals. In 1994 NAEP assessed geography learning at grades 4, 8, and 12 for the first time and provided baseline data on how well U.S. students were doing in geography at midpoint in the Goals process. This assessment will occur again in 2001 and provide valuable data regarding recent progress in geography education and geographic literacy (R. Boehm, December 23, 1999). Stoltman agreed that NAEP assessment on a regular basis indicates increased support and federal backing of geography education (personal communication, November 19, 1999).
Marianne Kenney, state social studies specialist and project director at Colorado Department of Education, facilitated the development of Colorado State Geography Standards. In her opinion, one of the reasons Colorado's standards got such high marks was that she was:

able to get grant money from U.S. Department of Education and was able to get a grant to write a geography curriculum framework, which acts as a bridge on how to get from the standards to the classroom.

This kind of economic support indicates positive trends in geography education. (personal communication, December 2, 1999)

In addition to federal funding directed toward improving geography education, National Geographic Society continues to offer considerable economic support. According to Gilbert Grosvenor:

We put $50,000 a year into each alliance. The alliance still has to get matching money. That's money that goes to each alliance for teacher training and teacher empowerment, primarily. Once in a while, they'll wander and come up with different programs. That's okay with us, as long as it's geography driven.

We've also been working hard on the concept of individual permanent endowments. We have a million-dollar permanent endowment in eight states and partial endowments in another six, I
think. Basically National Geographic will contribute up to half a million dollars, the other half has to raised in that state. Those million dollars go into an endowment that we manage for free. The endowment is in perpetuity in that state for geography education. Nobody can ever take that away from them. We have a committee in that state who determines how best to use the income from that endowment.

Not surprising, the first state to raise the money was Colorado. David Hill was helpful; the Gates Foundation was the leader in that. when all the pieces were put together, it totaled half million dollars; we matched it. That was perhaps seven years ago. That endowment now is worth 2.3 million dollars. That spins off more than $100,000 per year for geography education. That's really important because the state of Colorado, in its infinite wisdom, decided not to match our money anymore [the annual $50,000 in matching funds of alliance support]. It went off on its own campaign for education. If that endowment hadn't been there, Colorado would be in trouble today. Fortunately, we can still support the teachers directly through the endowment.
Some people are hinting that they're afraid that [National] Geographic is going to go off in other tangents and it's not going to follow through [with annual support for the state alliances]. That's a possibility. It isn't going to happen as long as I'm around, but I'm not going to live forever. It's a possibility. But don't forget we have a foundation that has a hundred million dollars that's just for geography education—but it [the national foundation] doesn't address how the money's used. As long as the income is used for geography education, it can be used in any number of ways. I don't see, unless the alliances start to fall apart, I really don't see us going back from that alliance support. (personal communication, February 11, 2000)

Geography educators are not sitting back waiting for and relying on outside economic backing. According to Douglas Phillips, a significant development on another level is the creation of the National Council for Geographic Education [NCGE] Million Dollar Fund for Geographic Education in the Third Millenium. He wrote:

This action politically started during my presidency under the leadership primarily of Jim Petersen at SW Texas. Educators contributing their own money in significant amounts to a bright geographic future is quite astounding and unique I think. This shows
a commitment that rides above the norm and portends a good crossing of the millennial threshold. (personal communication, December 9, 1999)

Respondents' perspectives of the current influences in geography education are briefly delineated in Figure 5.1. Chapter Six presents a vision for the future of geography education from the study respondents' perspective including steps they consider necessary to facilitate what Phillips referred to as the "good crossing of the millennial threshold."
Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education
Current Status
Figure 5.1

Social/Political
- Increased respect in social and political valuation, but overriding sense of public apathy and ignorance of discipline's value
- Global "intradependence" forcing societal/political interest
- Environmental issues requiring geographic literacy
- Partnership with NASA Education Program
- Geography a visible subject again, but "Washington" focusing more on reading and math
- Geography Awareness Week
- National Geography Bee

Systemic Educational
- Increased cooperation between K-12 teachers and professional geographers
- University culture does not yet value pre-college education efforts
- More teachers trained, but majority untrained
- New teaching materials, but not readily available—heavy reliance on textbooks
- More geography in K-12 curriculum, but missing in K-4 level
- Rise of Ph.D. programs in geography education
- Increase in undergraduate geography majors
- Increase in GeoEd research, but still a "spotty mix."

Economic
- Federal funding for 2001 NAEP in Geography
- U.S. Department of Ed. support for writing geography curriculum framework
- NGS support for state geographic alliances
- Establishment of NGS million dollar permanent endowments for geo ed. in 8 states—partial endowments in 6 states
- NCGE million dollar fund for geography education. 21st Century Fund

Leadership
- Individuals/Organizations
  - Strong individual and interorganizational leadership
  - GENIP fosters collaboration between professional geography organizations
  - Concern that dynamic leadership of key individuals quickly disappearing
  - "Grosvenor and Salter irreplaceable"
  - Alliance coordinators providing leadership within state geography alliances
  - Alliance coordinators can't go on "forever" as volunteers

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CHAPTER VI

Vision for the Future of Geography Education in American Schools

From the Perspective of Respondents to the Study

Despite a mix of encouragement and concerns over the present status of geography education in American schools, respondents to this study have a clear and unified vision of what geography education can and should be in the United States and suggest steps to actuate that vision. Geography education, they concur, now has a considerable degree of momentum that must be used to move in the right directions. Those directions include the four categories within to the Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education introduced previously. Each will be discussed separately with the underlying assumption that it is the synergistic interplay of the four influences that facilitate progressive change in geography education.

The Vision

The consensus vision for the future of geography education from the perspectives of the respondents to this study is clearly this: To bring all American students to an internationally competitive world class standard of geographic literacy.
The essential elements of that vision according to respondents include:

1. An informed, supportive public that understands and values the utility and relevance of geographic knowledge.

2. A kindergarten through college/university collaborative education system in which the best and brightest geographers and educators devote at least part of their professional effort in collaborative preparation of pre-service and in-service teachers; a large cadre of classroom teachers who understand the nature of geography and how to impart their understanding to the young people in their classrooms; curriculum built around the framework of clear and explicit geography standards; decisions regarding curricula, delivery methods, and materials grounded in solid research; and geography taught and institutionalized as a strong cohesive discipline given adequate time and attention in the instructional day.

3. Continued and enhanced local, state, and national economic support for research, materials, and training.

4. A new generation of teacher-leaders and academic geographers who assume supported leadership roles in local, state, and national geography education initiatives; and continued cooperation and leadership from professional geography organizations.
Melrose (1998) said in his video *Managing Change*, "Vision without action is merely a dream. Vision with action can change the world."

Therefore, the findings of this study include respondents' suggested steps to actuate the vision. Only those steps with which a clear majority of respondents agreed are included. With consensus, the findings created a model for action based on the *Model of Influences Affecting Change in Geography Education*.

**Remedial steps to actuate the vision**

Respondents suggest that progressive change, reticence, or regression in geographic education in American schools is reliant upon the interaction of four major influences. Any hope of continued momentum and advancement of the discipline hinges upon careful and vigilant attention to the following: (a) societal perceptions and political influences; (b) continued and enhanced economic support from new and renewed funding sources; (c) visionary individual and organizational leadership; and (d) reform within the kindergarten through college/university education system. Each is delineated below.

**Societal perceptions and political influences**

Bednarz, citing Hill and LaPrairie (1989: 19), reminds that "Americans, consummate pragmatists, will judge geography by what it
proves it can do to help them improve their lives and their worlds, as they define them" (personal communication, November 16, 1999). Therefore, Bednarz cautions, it remains the constant challenge of geographers and geography educators to continue to convince non-geographers (the general American public) that geography matters and is essential. "The change process," she says, "is political and reliant on public perception of relevance."

Respondents concur that they have a responsibility to the discipline and its future regarding the promotion of more viable and visible geography. They see a need to be prepared to perform very well under a new kind of spotlight and to work effectively in the political arena as well as the intellectual and educational ones.

Grosvenor agrees that the challenge is a difficult one that must be addressed from many levels simultaneously (personal communication, February 14, 2000). Like Bednarz and Bacon, he insists that geographers and geography educators must speak up for geography on every possible occasion and concurrently lobby school boards, parents, the public, and legislatures. As Bacon stated, "If we are weak and only mumble when asked important questions about the role of geography education, I believe that our field could go down the tube" (personal communication, December 6, 1999).
Kenney agreed that it is important to "get everyone onboard" (personal communication, December 10, 1999). She continued:

How can we do this? Many people don't understand what geography is. The public and the legislature think of geography as "target practice on a map," so if the public doesn't understand what the discipline is, they don't understand how important it is. Legislators don't see why it should be mandated. (They see why civics is important!) To improve the K-12 system, you have to get the parents on board too. It's a systemic kind of thing—you can't leave that out. They create the mandates.

Where to begin speaking out is a topic of general concurrence among the respondents. Geography will need to be shown as sufficiently compelling to the average citizen so that it will be embraced locally. Grosvenor's and Salter's suggestions represent the collective sentiment of the group. Grosvenor said:

I would like to see Alliance [members] effective at the local action group level—PTA meetings, school boards. They have tremendous influence. If we had two or three people on or closely interacting with any major school board in the country, they would have tremendous influence in convincing school board members about the importance
of geography education and the broad aspects of geography in curriculum. (personal communication, February 14, 20000)

Both Christopher Salter and Cathy Salter noted the significance of lobbying for geography education at the local, grassroots level. They believe that geography must be shown as sufficiently compelling in the 17,000 local school districts to move the adoption of geography standards in those schools. K. Salter wrote:

There are 3000 counties in the U.S. There are about 17,000 school districts in the U.S. There are at least 3000 units that want major administrative independence, and more likely there are 17,000 units that want the autonomy to create their own curriculum. Geography will make it to the drawing board and written curriculum in those multiple units only when we have bright and dedicated geographers playing roles in those curriculum committees . . . and when we have parents coming to such meetings asking for more and better geography instruction at those same meetings.

The reality is that curriculum design and school policies are almost the final Town Meeting for American society. Therefore, there still is a chance to have geography talked about productively at such forums, but only if there is a geographic presence in such meetings.
Building a stronger place for geography education in the K-12 world, I can imagine an American populace more interested in geography at all levels, in all walks of education and culture. This would be a perfect evolution of what has been unleashed this past 15-16 years.

Stoltman agreed that geography must consistently be "put on the table of curriculum committees," but he added that it must also be "hammered to teachers and policy makers just as the Five Themes were hammered from 1985 to 1992" (personal communication, November 19, 1999). The issue is for geographers to explain to the American people the reason why they should care about the discipline. The question must be answered crisply for the public, elementary and secondary educators, and government funders.

Both Gritzner and Marran encouraged the geography education community to promote geography as an essential subject K-12. They contend that geographers must move outside comfortable and familiar circles of professional communication and talk with professionals of other disciplines and associations on national, state, and local levels. They note that a few geographers have been doing this for years, and concede it is not easy. Gritzner wrote:
In accomplishing this objective [of improving geographic literacy by enhancing societal perceptions], we must continue building on the existing foundation, and continue seeking new ways to promote our goals and objectives. Paramount among the latter, in my judgment, is that geographers absolutely must do a much better job of communicating our nature and contributions to the lay public and key policy makers. Neal Lineback (Geography in the News) and Harm de Blij (network television) are the only two geographers of whom I am aware who on a regular basis communicate geography to the public at large.

We must continue to "sell ourselves" to the public at large, to administrators, to curriculum committees, and to individual (as yet unpersuaded) social studies educators. We also must convince historians that students will learn much more history if they know geography! (personal communication, November, 1999)

Marran asserted that the discipline must be a part of every child's school experience every year of the child's schooling, and geography educators must lobby at every level to make it happen. He said:

Geography must not be presented as an option. Just as we teach history across the grade levels to encourage students to think critically
about time and eras and the event/personages within them, so too must we encourage students to critically think about spatial relationships, regions, and the human and environmental interaction that defines space and region. (personal communication, November 1999)

"We have to convince leaders in education, politics, and business of geography education's importance," wrote Jumper (personal communication, January 3, 2000). He continued:

There are many bureaucratic obstacles to improving geography education in K-12 education. Basically, we have to sell leaders in education, politics, and business, as well as the general public on the value of geography in general education. This will require that major organizations with prestige, like NGS [National Geographic Society], focus attention on the leadership of the nation.

Curriculum design is largely in the hands of state education agencies, assessment programs, major textbook publishers, and those who design pre-service education programs. The way to change geography’s position with these people is to convince the nation's leadership that changes are essential. NGS, if it chooses, can re-ignite the attention of major political leaders to the importance of knowing world geography if the U.S. is to continue as a world leader.
Grosvenor sees this as being in the best interest of both the national and international community, as well as the National Geographic Society itself. In a telephone interview (February 14, 2000) he said:

Aside from the importance internationally and nationally of doing this, if you're just a dollars and cents business person, you've got to say, "It's good for business!" I've never looked at it that way, but clearly it's in the society's best interest to get more people interested in geography when they grow up if we expect to have them as [Society] members. Looking at it from a crass point of view, you can make the argument that business-wise, it's the smart thing to do.

Gaining the attention of society at large can be accomplished in several ways according to the respondents of the study. One way is by getting more "print coverage" for geography education. As Hartoonian stated, "We need to do more PR with society in general, and we need to promote the understanding of integrative relevance of geographic literacy within the K-12 system. We have to be more explicit about it by engendering it in our writings" (personal communication, November 28, 1999).

Boehm and K. Salter would like to see more geography related materials in print, Boehm in professional journals, and Salter in the literature.
of popular culture. Boehm wrote, "Geographic educators could help by carrying out high-level research and publishing in first-rate journals" (personal communication, December 23, 1999).

Christopher Salter agreed that proliferation and dissemination of high quality, geography-education-specific research would add credibility to the discipline, but added that the promotion of geography by a popular contemporary author would be efficacious. He lamented the profession's "lack of any author who has embraced the words and concepts of geography and been an effective popular writer" (personal communication, December 27, 1999). He continued:

Harm deBlij was important when he had national TV to provide him a setting for his clever and provocative work. But we have no William Least Heat-Moon, or Joel Garreau, or Barry Lopez who is actually a "geog." Those writers write fine, delicious geography, but they never use the term. We need a major pen who can show the literate lay audiences of our country the power of geographic thinking. What if James Michener had really used the word geography to define and explain the opening chapters in his works? He was kind to geography in his speeches at national geography and social studies meetings, but we need someone who uses geography to add flavor and power to his
or her prose—and proclaims such language and perspective explicitly as GEOGRAPHY.

According to Christopher Salter, another way of spreading geography's message of relevance to the general public is through press coverage generated through innovative teaching. He wrote, "The Alliance movement has been wonderful for a lot of reasons, but one of the most important is the visibility it has given our profession—mostly through the effective work of K-12 teachers who have gotten press for clever classroom work" (personal communication, December 23, 1999).

Hartoonian believes that linking geography with the overall purpose of American education is crucial to enhancing societal and political perceptions of the discipline. He cautions that if geography educators wish to leave geography "better off then when they came," proving its relevance to society by educating students to be better problem solvers is a worthwhile endeavor. In a November 28, 1999 personal correspondence he wrote:

One of the things that I think is really critical at this point in time is to try to link geography's purpose with the first and fundamental purpose of education in this republic, and that is to develop enlightened citizens. One of the things that it does and should do in public education from kindergarten through graduate school is to help people
understand their civic responsibilities by understanding their
landscape, relationship with the environment, and all those things that
the Standards have addressed. Put it [geography] with the whole idea
of developing a more civil society.

A final step (suggested by respondents) that would keep geography
present in the minds of the American public is to connect it to visible issues
of public concern. It is possible, they believe, to focus on the trans-
disciplinary national educational needs without losing touch with what
geography offers as a discipline. According to Christopher Salter, "We can
bring geography to the assistance of highly visible issues of environment,
food supply and distribution, urban sprawl, and urban health, etc. [This]
would do a great deal to make geography seem both more visible and more
productive in the mind of the American public" (personal communication,
December 23, 1999).

Continued and enhanced economic support from new and renewed
twoing sources

Funding for the improvement of geography education at the K-12
level has dramatically increased both in the amount raised and the number of
funders making grants (Jacobson, 1994). However, as study respondents
concur, despite the generous and continued support of the National
Geographic Society and the recent partnership with NASA, geography is still not high on the priority list of most funders.

Philanthropic support for precollegiate education has quadrupled since 1980, but the only disciplines among the top funding priorities have been science and mathematics. Nevertheless, as Jacobson stated, "Although philanthropic support for geography education remains modest, the case for geography education has never been stronger" (Jacobson, 1993, p. 102). And as respondents proposed in the previous section, the time to make the case for geography education is now.

Continued funding for geography education must come from several areas. Federal, state, and local funding for education in general and disciplines in specific depend in part upon curricular goals emphasis at the respective levels. Congressional mandates impact allocation and expenditures of education dollars, and distribution of grant monies is often dependent on perceptions of specific areas of educational relevance and need. This type of economic support, according to respondents, is largely tied to the societal perceptions and political activism discussed in the previous section. What is crucial, according to Natoli is that "We must make sure that our messengers are up to the task, and that the gatekeepers
understand and care for the message" (personal communication, November 1999).

"Caring for the message" is not being left to chance, as Douglas Phillips pointed out (Chapter Five). Geography educators, members of the National Council for Geographic Education, are contributing their own money to establish the NCGE million dollar fund for geographic education, or 21st Century Fund. This permanent endowment will help to insure future economic support for geographic education (D. Phillips, personal communication, December 9, 1999).

Respondents voiced some concerns about continued future funding from National Geographic Society.

"The large infusion of money coming from NGS into departments of geography for the development of better geography programs for the schools (and the training of teachers to utilize these programs) has certainly impacted geography departments in ways that had never occurred before," wrote Phillip Bacon (personal communication, November 15, 1999). He continued:

By deciding to establish the geography alliances in every state, he [Gilbert Grosvenor] called for a major cooperative effort involving departments of geography with professional educators. It's difficult to
say what it will take to keep these efforts moving forward into the next millennium. The National Geographic Society is not a bottomless pit from which vast amounts of money can be siphoned. Large sums of money coming from NGS cannot be counted on forever.

Boehm also attributes much of geography education's recent positive success to the investment of money, power, and influence by the National Geographic Society (personal communication, December 23, 1999). He sees the one million dollar permanent endowments established by NGS in several states as positive signs of on-going economic support. These endowments would remain in tact and continue to provide interest monies for annual expenditure for state geography education. Of course, not every state has an endowment due to inabilities to raise required matching funds. Therefore, the possibility of combining states to form regional endowments is under consideration.

Grosvenor spoke of the continued necessity of NGS economic support and involvement in geography education. In a telephone interview on February 14, 2000 he said:

I don't think public perception of the problem is the strongest influence for improvement. I would like to think it is, but to be honest with you, having gone through this now for 12-13 years, it's total
commitment of an institution that has the interest to work on the problem, has the resources to mobilize a group of people nationwide, and this is undoubtedly the most important of all, has the established outreach to put into effect any plan they might have.

As I said before, some people are hinting that Geographic is going to go off in other tangents, and it's not going to follow through with Alliance support. It's a possibility, but it won't happen as long as I'm around. Don't forget there is a Foundation with a hundred million dollars that's just for geography education, but it can be used in a number of different ways. Unless the Alliances start to fall apart, I don't see us pulling back from that. But I think we're going to evolve it; I think we can accomplish a tremendous amount using the web site.

The worst possible thing that could happen to geography education in the future—the thing I would least like to see happen to geography education—would be that National Geographic decide that some other missions have greater relevance than geography education at this particular time, declare victory, and go on to something else.

But if enough teachers wrote in to the President of National Geographic and said, "I think this program is essential. Thank you for what you're doing; we really appreciate it. You're program recognizes
teachers and we think that's important; and it really reaches kids." I guarantee you that this program would be soundly funded. Because you see, we don't hear from people. So we don't know, if you don't go out in the field and pound the pavement, whether anything is really being done or not.

For example: We sent out a map to every school in the United States and Canada, and a lot of teachers wrote in to John Fahey [current President of National Geographic]. He took those letters to the Board and read them! Those letters from the map program came from around the country and had a profound influence on John Fahey. In fact, we're going to do some more of that [distribution of free maps to schools] because of the response.

People just don't understand how eager CEOs are to learn how effective their programs are, or whether it's just another program where money goes out the window and nobody knows where it goes. It is evidence from the field that the program is getting through to teachers that influences CEOs.

**Visionary individual and organizational leadership**

Past trends in geography education have illustrated that the presence or absence of either visionary individual or organizational leadership has
influenced the outcomes. Findings from this study indicate respondents believe leadership remains a critical influence in future progress, and many voiced concern that current leaders are ready to walk off the stage leaving no younger generation to take their place. Hartoonian wrote:

What could be the single most important influence or factor contributing to the positive role of geography in curriculum in the 21st century is Leadership! Geographers in general must take a leadership role in the K-12 education movement. People, particularly those who have had experience with the Alliance—if they let themselves—are developing or have developed a very good understanding of how the schools work—how curriculum is developed. And if they will again pursue that and make contributions to that, geographers could find themselves in a very good leadership position, much like historians have had in the past only even better. I say this because of this positive work they've been doing. I would say [academic geographers] taking a leadership role in K-12 education is crucial.

Gritzner sees the role of the academic geographer as important, but also sees the importance of co-leadership with teacher consultants [TCs] within the Alliance model. He wrote:
Obviously college and university faculty must play a dominant role. I believe we have become much more sensitive to and proficient in the task as a result of the Alliance Program. Of particular importance is the role of the TC's working with the C/U faculty in instructional programs. Most of us, I suspect, view their contributions with amazement and awe! (personal communication, November, 1999)

Since study respondents believe that leadership must come, not just from academic geographers, but teacher-leaders as well, most suggested that it is time to take stock of people and resources available to move geography's agenda forward. Those who have an interest and ability should be given the training and support necessary to take the lead. "We need to develop the leadership of teachers in order to be able to build capacity as well as create quality geography curriculum," insisted Marianne Kenney. In a telephone interview December 2, 1999, she added:

We need to work on developing teacher leaders and giving them good knowledge and background in geography education. I would like to see summer institutes where teacher/leaders would be trained and then provided on-line classes—keep working with this group of teachers for at least a semester—and then bring them back together again. We'd then develop this giving them a parallel course in leadership
skills and mentoring skills. After going through this whole process they would work strategically with their alliance coordinator.

Grosvenor believes that the state alliances will be a major source of leadership. "The heart and soul of the program is teachers—teacher training, teacher empowerment—that's what this [Alliance] program is all about. So what we need to do to get this vision in place," he said, "is train our teachers and empower them" (personal communication, February 11, 2000). He continued:

We're doing a lot of it [discovering new leaders] through the Alliance Network. We have, in most states, really highly dedicated teachers who have decided that the way to improve geography is to work through the state's Office of Superintendent of Education, or through the curriculum area of the state. They have basically dropped teaching and gone into those areas to influence the curriculum in their state. That's pretty powerful stuff. Marianne Kenney in Colorado is probably the leading example of that. She was one of the firsts to do that, and I think she's been immensely successful. She got good grant money from a lot of places, including us, because she is competent, dedicated, and committed. She's effective.
Though the leadership roles of academic geographers and teachers are essential, major professional geography organizations must continue in their organizational leadership roles according to respondents. The National Council for Geographic Education, the Association of American Geographers, the American Geographical Society, and the National Geographic Society have effectively joined forces to move the cause of geographic literacy forward. As Marran insists, the continued leadership of GENIP [Geography National Improvement Project] as the coordinator and facilitator of initiatives in geographic education is crucial.

Grosvenor also believes that visionary leaders at the organizational and national level are important. He would like to see National Geographic Society continue in its position of organizational leadership in the Geography Alliance Program. But that, he says, would probably best be done with leadership within the Society. He said:

It would be best if it came from National Geographic Society. I know trustees in that Society who have been around the organization for 10-15 years and thoroughly understand it [the Alliance program] and support it. But I think as the institution changes and evolves, we get into different kinds of programs, and new leadership looks to its own programs. What I'm working hard to do now is make sure that the
new leadership understands, appreciates, and supports geography education.

New leaders who "understand, appreciate, and support geography education", as Grosvenor put it, are currently being educated within the university systems of several states that have recently developed Ph.D. programs in geography education (S. Jumper, personal communication, January 20, 2000; R. Boehm, personal communication, December 23, 1999; S. Bednarz, personal communication, November 16, 1999). Phillip Bacon wrote, "Today a large number of young geographers are participating [in K-12 geography education] and we are also seeing people in graduate school looking toward geography education as their area of interest and research, along with the possibility of using geography education as their career goal" (personal communication, November 15, 1999).

Visionary leadership, economic support, and enhanced societal perception of the discipline of geography are all areas of influence affecting the status of geography education in American schools. However, as respondents suggest, perhaps the strongest influences affecting change in geography education come from within the kindergarten through university educational system itself.
Reform within the kindergarten through college/university education system

In order to effect change in K-12 geography education, a systemic approach will be necessary. As S. Bednarz put it:

There is no easy solution to the problem. Robert Bednarz and I wrote about it while discussing teacher preparation in the Journal of Geography (Sept.-Oct. 1995). We won't get better instruction until we get teachers who have a deeper understanding of geography and develop what Shulman calls "pedagogical content knowledge"—an understanding of how to select and teach content. We won't get that until we change teacher certification requirements, which won't change until the State and other certifying institutions change requirements, which won't happen until parents complain about geographic illiteracy . . . and on it goes in "frustrating circularity."

So what gets geography in the curriculum? A multi-faceted approach at all levels. Get the teachers enthused and knowledgeable. Institutionalize geography through state and district standards and assessments. Lobby school boards, parents, the public, legislatures, etc. simultaneously. (personal communication, November 15, 1999)
Respondents agree that college/university geographers must face their responsibilities for the preparation of teachers, and they must be allowed, encouraged, and courted to do so. Gritzner wrote, "The academic reward system must recognize good teaching, as well as the importance of working with teachers. The 'Ivory Tower' folks must recognize that their edifice is only as secure as the foundation upon which it is built. When geography in the schools prospers, we all benefit" (personal communication, November, 1999).

"What is most important," suggests Hatoonian, "is considering a community of scholars; K-12 teachers need to be embraced into the community of scholars" (personal communication, November 28, 1999). He continued:

I think that there are a number of opportunities that university professors can avail themselves to if they start working with K-12 people, and the other is true also. I think in some of the alliances that I've worked with across the country, that it has in fact happened. If it doesn't happen, then you maintain two cultures—one basically concerned with theory and research, and the other concerned with implementing ideas. It's really not very healthy particularly for the K-12 people. But it's also unhealthy for the theorists because one ought
to see the implementation of things. It's through implementation that new theories come to be. I see it as a problem—but I see it as one that has to be overcome.

I think the Alliance model is doing that. The other thing I would like to see is more exposure of the research geographer to the geography educator in the schools and colleges of education. There really needs to be a mutual embracing among the schools of education, K-12 educators, and the academic geographers. Those three communities need to come together in a way that all three can contribute.

The operative word here is contribute. It's extremely important that the seventh grade teacher understand that she can make contributions to what the professor in the university is doing. We have to find ways for people to contribute who they are as well as what they know.

Marran agreed with Hartoonian. He sees the importance of continuing to promote a sense of equity so that professional geographers recognize the value of school geography and the role it plays in educating the citizenry. Marran would like to see the development of teacher-professor partnerships. He wrote:
I think teacher-professor partnerships would be helpful. Such could be mutual mentoring endeavors where the professional geographer learns about the realities of school culture and classroom life and the teacher learns about the realities of university life, governance issues, and the challenges of research v. teaching. (personal communication, November, 1999).

Respondents agree that this kind of collaboration must be continuous and ongoing. As Cathy Salter put it, "It takes this kind of cooperation, and continued effort, year after year, summer after summer, annual meeting after annual meeting" (personal communication, December 30, 1999). She wrote:

University and research geographers need to become/remain involved in K-12 geography education by playing a role in curriculum development, in developing new teaching materials, in offering summer geography courses for teachers, in attending national meetings of NCGE and AAG, and becoming involved in presentations and activities that relate to K-12 geography issues.

Teacher preparation, according to respondents, must be a high priority, because one key to good teaching is knowing the subject. As Gritzner wrote, "If teachers know geography, they should do a good job of conveying appropriate information to their students; if they are ignorant of
geography, they will do a poor job of teaching it regardless of how many 'A's' they have in methods classes" (personal communication, November 1999).

How much teacher preparation should be available to and required of all teachers was another matter of considerable agreement. Respondents to this study insist the answer is "More! Much more!" "As more and more teachers are trained in the geography field," says Bacon, "inevitably the quality of geography teaching in the schools will improve" (personal communication, December 6, 1999). He sees the effort required to do a better job of training pre-service teachers as massive, but not impossible. He writes:

Pre-service training is essential. Ideally, the student would be working back and forth between a good geography department, a strong college of education, and a master teacher in the schools. Is this too idealistic? I don't think so, but it would sure require a lot of effort on the parts of a lot of people to make it work.

First, the geography department must be committed to training pre-service teachers. Many are not at present. Their objective, oftentimes, is to prepare professional geographers; consequently, the pre-service teacher is too often forgotten. Secondly, the college of
education must be willing to keep in contact with counterparts in the department of geography. This would require some giving and taking on the parts of everyone. Finally, master teachers must be identified and there must be incentives established to make the master teacher willing to work with the pre-service teacher. The rewards to do such are often limited and this needs to be changed. (personal communication, December 5, 1999)

Respondents to this study agree that pre-service teacher education is essential to improve the geographic literacy of both the teachers and their students. However, they also concur that in-service teacher education is imperative and cannot be overlooked, largely due to what Boehm termed "three decades of neglect" at the pre-service level. He wrote, "In-service training is crucial. But if all we do is in-service teacher training then we will forever be involved in in-service teacher training. We must fix simultaneously the pre-service system."

As Salter summarized stated, "In-service is better than no service at all; pre-service is the best thing to have."

Fixing the pre-service system is crucial but presents challenges, according to respondents to the study. Gritzner and Stoltman note that pre-service training in geography education poses some problems because, as
Gritzner wrote, "All institutions that offer teacher education should offer at least some geography, but many do not. Teacher certification holds the key to course availability. Strengthening certification requirements to ensure that they include appropriate course work in geography should rank as one of our highest priorities" (personal communication, November 1999). He continued:

[We must] ensure that the geography we place in the curriculum is the finest that we have to offer. We absolutely cannot allow geography to become an exercise in rote memorization of trivia. Geography must be dynamic, interesting, and relevant!

To achieve [that objective], we must ensure that teachers have an appropriate academic background in geography. Geography is the most complex discipline extant (physical environment, human/cultural environment, processes acting through time to contribute to contemporary conditions, and where things are, why they are there, and why they are important). Yet far too often, the course is given to a coach with no background whatsoever in the subject. This suggests that we must also educate administrators in the nature and importance of the discipline!
Salvatore Natoli is concerned that too much money is being spent on in-service training at the expense of badly needed improvements in pre-service teacher education. He says, "Unless we concert our efforts at the pre-service level, we are never going to catch up with in-service. Continuing the emphasis on in-service institutes at the expense of pushing for many needed changes in pre-service preparation could have a negative effect" (personal communication, November, 1999).

Cathy Salter agrees with the importance of both. She sees the monumental need for extending pre-service teacher education in geography, but sees in-service education as "Extremely important, especially for teachers with no geography course work in their background." Regarding pre-service teacher training she wrote:

What I have learned working so many years with K-12 teachers is this—they all need a solid foundation in geographic content and skills. Then they need to work on developing teaching strategies that fit the particular needs of the level or courses in geography that they work with. HS [high school] teachers who teach specialized courses and AP [advanced placement] Geography should have additional hours required.
If all a teacher gets in their pre-service training is methods [courses] paired with content learned in their major, they will teach social studies largely based on what they know about history, and geography will not be the potential partner that it should be. They will perhaps take course work during the summer if they are assigned to teach a freestanding course in geography, but why not then have it required in pre-service teaching and prepare them in the first place?

Though opinions on exactly how much pre-service coursework in geography should be required varied slightly among the respondents to the study, all agreed that some type of standardized minimum certification program in geography must be advocated for grades K-12. Study respondents felt geographers should interface with teacher-education accreditation boards. They also insisted that geography departments must take time to work with and understand the world of professional education engendering discussions on how to best educate teachers in geography.

Study respondents noted the contrast between the "ideal" and the "reality" of coursework requirements. Gritzner wrote:

Here the ideal and the reality come into severe conflict! Ideally, all teachers, K-12, would have a basic course in physical geography, cultural geography, and regional geography. Pragmatically, K-4
should have World Regional Geography. In the U.S., I suspect that
the majority of geography taught/learned is in the middle grades, 5-8.
This poses a real problem, because most teachers at that level are
steeped in methods, but weak in [geography] content. Hence, the
folks who are teaching the majority of geography taken by American
students have very little background in the subject (in most instances,
one course, if any at all).

High school teachers should have a major in the discipline they
are teaching. Yet in a state like SD [South Dakota], where many
teachers teach up to a half-dozen courses, this would be impossible.
For certification, I still would like to see a nine credit hour
requirement, including World Regional Geography.

Phillip Bacon agrees that facing reality will be essential to getting in
place at least a minimum certification requirement in geography. He wrote:
First, let's get real. When I talk with geographers around the country,
they insist on wanting a geography major for pre-service teachers.
This simply is not realistic. As things now stand, it often is taking
pre-service teachers five years instead of the traditional four years to
complete their undergraduate program. Are we going to ask them to
acquire majors in geography, history, political science, etc., before we
send them out to the schools? This isn't going to happen. So—what can we expect a student to take before he or she steps into the classroom? I would like students to have at least nine hours of credit in geography. These nine hours should include a one-semester course in physical geography, a one-semester course in topical and/or world-regional geography, and one regional course.

No disagreement exists among the study respondents about the geography curriculum they say needs to be in place in K-12 schools. All say that a curriculum built around a framework of clear and explicit geography standards is essential, and most would like to see a more delineated scope and sequence developed. Though the majority would like to see geography taught every year at every grade as a stand-alone subject, most agree that is not likely to happen particularly at the K-4 level.

Gritzner suggest that the best opportunity geography educators have for developing a curriculum with a meaningful scope and sequence is to be found in adopting the geography standards. He wrote:

For them to "work," of course, teachers need to be aware of the nature, concepts, and relevance of the discipline. The "ideal curriculum," then would be standards driven and preferably taught by educators with a good grasp of the discipline generating (albeit from...
diverse sources) and using their own materials (rather than depending on textbooks). (personal correspondence, November 1999)

Though not all respondents see a need for a national scope and sequence (Bednarz, in fact stated emphatically that she "despises the idea of a national scope and sequence"), most agree that the current sequence of geography taught could be better ordered. Hartoonian wrote:

What needs general improvement is the whole way K-12 education is laid out as a sequence for geography. Often times there isn't much rhyme or reason to the kinds of things that are done. What I'd like to see is more emphasis on geography with more correlation with the kinds of general topics that are taught in the social studies program. I would like to see social studies integrated K-12 with periods within that sequence where geography is taught as a stand alone. For example, a course in the middle school and a course in the high school that would concentrate more fully on the geography discipline.

Unfortunately, if it occurs that way, it's a rare exception. (personal communication, November 28, 1999)

Not only would respondents like to see "more and better" geography taught at the K-12 level, but they would also like to see teaching methods and instructional materials enhanced and grounded in sound research. Most
respondents admitted that conducting research has not been integral to what has been done in geography education over the last three decades, and a failure to do so inhibits success in efforts at educational reform. Bednarz wrote, "For the last 15 years or so, geography educators have been too busy with DOING geo advocacy and not studying it (little or no research output). I am guilty of this too." She continued:

I think we need to try many approaches to change the system now. At one scale/approach, we need research—a series of small-scale case studies/success stories/experiments to see what works and what doesn't. There is a large and interesting literature in teaching science and history and mathematics and language arts. There is almost no systematic study of teaching geography. What are the attributes of an expert geography teacher? What are the common misconceptions held by geography students? What are the most effective means by which we can teach spatial skills and problem solving?

Research may not be the total panacea, according to respondents, but a grounding in research would allow geography educators to make recommendations that far exceed the current grounding in experience, anecdote, and enthusiasm. Cathy Salter offered:
It can't hurt, because university and college departments of education live and breathe research-based data. The more that can be done to show the value of geography boldly placed in the curriculum, the greater the chance they will make geography a required subject for K-12 teachers enrolled in their programs. (personal communication, December 30, 1999).

Looking back over the span of their careers, all respondents reflected that geography education has come a long way toward improving the geographic literacy of K-12 students in the United States. Yet they concur there exist many challenges ahead, innovations and exciting things to be done, and enthusiasm about the opportunities. The resulting model delineating those innovations and opportunities as steps to actuate a vision for geography education follows. (Figure 6.1)

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand what past and present trends have led to geography education's current status in American education and provide a vision of what needs to be done to bring the nation's students to greater geographic competency. The respondents' high level of agreement on the importance of societal perceptions, economic support, leadership, and a collaborative kindergarten-through-university education
Model of Innovations and Opportunities
Recommended to Actuate Consensus Vision for Geography Education

**Figure 6.1**

### Systemic Educational
- College/university geographers allowed, encouraged, and courted to collaboratively train teachers in conjunction with departments of education
- Establish "Community of Scholars" with K-12 teachers and academic geographers—teacher/professor partnerships
- Institutions offering teacher education offer at least some geography
- Establish standardized minimum certification requirements in geography (Nine credit hours)
- Increased pre-service and on-going in-service teacher education
- Curriculum and assessments built around clear, explicit geography standards
- Geography taught every year at every grade—stand alone course at middle school and high school
- Teaching methods and materials grounded in solid research
- Quality teaching materials available to all teachers

### Social/ Political
- Geography educators prepared to perform in political, intellectual, and educational arena
- Geography educators promote a more viable and visible geography—"Why geography?"
- Lobby school boards, parents, public and legislatures concurrently—geography must not be presented as an option
- NGS re-ignite attention of major political leaders to importance of geographic literacy
- Obtain more "print coverage" in professional journals, literature of popular culture, and teacher press for clever classroom activities
- Link geography with overall purpose of American education—to develop enlightened citizens

### Economic
- Make case for larger share of philanthropic support
- Keep geography’s relevance in public eye to capture larger share of national, state, and local funding
- Garner matching funds to establish NGS million dollar state or regional endowments
- Correspond successes with CEOs of NGS and other funding organizations
- Build NCGE million dollar fund for geography education

### Leadership
**Individuals/Organizations**
- Geographers take leadership role in K-12 education
- Academic geographers in co-leadership role with teacher consultants [TCs]
- Court and train teacher-leaders
- Professional geography organizations continue in collaborative organizational leadership roles
- Ph.D. programs train leaders in geography education

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system indicate the interrelatedness of these influences. This preliminary analysis would indicate that simultaneous attention to each is crucial to further reform.

Respondents' hindsight reveals that media attention to global conflict or competition heightened public awareness of the relevance of geographic literacy, generally resulting in responsive political action to fund reform initiatives in geography education. Efficacies of resulting geography education initiatives were dependent upon collaborative efforts within the kindergarten through university educational system in which academic geographers worked closely with K-12 educators. Key individuals and professional geographic organizations providing strong and visionary leadership became the tools that clarified the mission and vitalized the spirit of the geography education community.

Despite recent positive developments, respondents were quick to point out that progress must not be confused with conclusive success. Despite the bright spots, geographic education faces serious shortcomings: failure to create and maintain effective pre-service teacher education; continued general public apathy and ignorance of the relevance of the discipline; tenuous economic support; and the gradual withdrawal of key individuals from leadership positions. These challenges must not go unmet if the vision
of bringing all American students to an internationally competitive world class standard of geographic literacy is to be achieved. Therefore, the following recommendations are offered.

**Actions**

Students currently in school are approaching the complexities of becoming citizens in a "global era" of human history. They must not face this challenge unprepared. If the United States is to succeed in the global arena of the twenty-first century, America can no longer afford geographic ignorance. A geographically literate citizenry is crucial if the United States is to retain its strength as a world leader. Sound educational responses to the challenges of international interdependence must take on many forms, as this study suggests.

As Bednarz and Peterson (1994) insist, geography as a discipline must scrutinize its past and present position in American education in order to make continued progress in the future. This study affords such scrutiny. Any judgmental, prescriptive exercise is necessarily fraught with difficulty, but future progress necessitates critical analysis of the starts and stops of previous enterprise coupled with bold purport for the future. Therefore, the following recommendations are offered as essential steps toward furthering the progress of enhanced geographic literacy of American students. As
indicated by the *Model of Influences Affecting Geography Education*, these steps must not be made in isolation, but must be simultaneously enacted to maximize their effectiveness.

There is an extraordinary value in utilizing what currently exists and has been created to support geography education over the last 15 years. A national network of educators and academic geographers is already in place providing direct access to America's k-12 schools, colleges, and universities nationwide. The potential to use the Geographic Alliance network to directly and immediately impact geographic literacy in the United States is very real. Many of the following recommendations are presented for use within the already existing Alliance framework.

1. Geography educators must become highly visible and vocal to their state legislatures, not just for the "cause" of geography education, but to elicit support for education in general. No single discipline can gain or maintain support if the educational system of which it is a part remains under-supported. Concurrently, any discipline contributive to the whole is strengthened by the whole. As the reasoned discourse of geography educators builds from what Jumper calls a "whimper" to what Gritzner calls a "strong and unified voice," the vitality and viability of the
discipline as an integrative essential to the overall purpose of American education will be made evident.

2. Geography educators must become actively involved in the ongoing process of development and improvement of state and local standards. As Monroe and Smith (1998) concluded, less than ten state standards relating to geography were considered adequate. Montana's content and performance standards for social studies, proposed for adoption in 2000 are case in point. Only one of the social studies content standards (#3) addresses geographic knowledge and skills, and it specifies (in parenthesis) the five geographic themes developed in 1984 rather than more recently developed current national geography standards.

3. Educators with a true understanding of the nature and value of geography must attend and address the public hearings regarding the adoption of such vague and misguided proposals.

4. National Geography Awareness Week must be expanded within each state geographic alliance to become a year-round priority. Drawing the public's attention to the importance of a geographically literate citizenry only 1/52nd of the year, has not attracted sufficient social/political attention necessary to actuate such necessary mandates as minimum
geography certification requirements for pre-service teachers or minimum geography requirements for high school graduation.

5. Those educators who are actually "doing good geography" must actively seek media coverage not only of what they're doing, but why such efforts are important.

6. Communication between funding sources and geography educators is crucial and must be ongoing if the flow of economic support for geography education is to continue or accelerate. It is recommended that each state geographic alliance designate a communication committee whose responsibility it is to communicate with local, state, and national funding sources delineating efficacies of current programs and proposals for future ones. Donors must hear of resounding appreciation and effective applications of the economic resources funneled into geography education.

7. As Jacobson (1993) suggests, teacher consultants who have an interest within each geographic alliance should be given the training and support necessary to prepare grant applications and make presentations to prospective donors.

8. One major step toward solving the problem of geographic illiteracy is to provide and require sound geography instruction for America's k-12
teachers. The geography alliances and professional geography organizations cannot bear the entire teacher-education burden alone. However, they can and must work in concert to convince such entities as the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities (both helped fund the Geography Education Standards Project) to fund Standards-implementation projects that provide inservice professional development activities for teachers. Simultaneously, academic geographers must review subject-matter certification requirements on their campuses and approach and work with departments of education to offer preservice geography coursework for teachers. Geographers must interact with teacher-education accreditation boards.

9. Geographers interfacing with professional educators must insure that methods courses, whether taught by geographers or by professional educators include examples of how geography can/should be taught with science, literature, math, art, history, and how these subjects can be taught in geography.

10. Positive change in education cannot be based on enthusiasm and effort alone. Rather, sound decisions regarding curriculum, instructional methods, and materials must be grounded in sound and ongoing research. Geography educators and academic geographers must unite to devote as much energy to
research in geographic education as has been devoted geography education evangelism.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." Academic geographers and geography educators must be willing to individually and collectively take the responsibility and lead in effecting the changes necessary to bring America's students to an internationally competitive world class standard of geographic literacy.
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Appendix

Phase One Survey Questions Sent to Leaders in the Field of Geographic Education

**Background Information** (*Note please: You have the option of indicating a particular statement or statements in which you want anonymity. If you desire, your identity will be protected at publication).  
1. What is your role in geography education?  (A short 100 word vitae).

2. How long have you been involved in geography education?

**Trends in geography education**

3. *What positive trends have you seen in geography education over the span of your career?

4. Why do you think these changes occurred? Could or should those catalysts be repeated for change in the next millenium? How?

5. *What negative changes have you seen in geography education over the span of your career?

6. Why do you think these changes occurred? How could or should those catalysts be avoided in the future?

**Reform efforts**

7. The National Research Council in *Rediscovering Geography* (1997) stated that “Nothing is more vital to strengthening the foundations of
geography than the improvement of geography education in primary and secondary schools.” Do you agree? If so, how can this be done?

8. Who/what do you see as being responsible for curriculum design in K-12 geography education programs? (Please include both your opinion of the ideal and the reality.)

9. What do you see as a vision for the future of geography education? (Ex: the role of geography in the curriculum, the kind of geography offered, geography in the social studies, or as a stand alone classroom subject)

10. What steps must be taken to achieve that vision? In other words, just because geographers think geography education is important doesn't get it into the curriculum. What does?

**Geography education as a system k-university**

11. What do you view as the role of university geographers and research geographers in regard to K-12 geography education?

12. What do you perceive to be the barrier between academic geographers and geography educators? How can this barrier be lowered?

13. Do you see a need for a research agenda in geographic teaching and learning? What could be done to insure that the results of such research reach preservice and inservice educators?

**Teacher Training/Inservice and Preservice**
14. What geography coursework do/should states require for K-12 teachers and school administrators? Do K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 teachers all need the same kind of geography training?

15. What preservice and inservice training in geography education is/should be available for classroom teachers?

16. In your opinion, how important is geography preservice training for K-12 teachers? What would be the ideal?

17. In your opinion, how important is geography inservice training for K-12 teachers?

18. What courses in geography, if any, do you feel should be required for all preservice K-12 teachers?

**Traits of Quality Geography Education Program**

19. In your opinion, what are the key components of a quality geography education program K-12?

20. Of the K-12 geography education programs you have observed or been involved with, what did you see as strengths?

21. Of the K-12 geography education programs you have observed or been involved with, what areas did you see as areas as needing improvement?
**Instructional Materials/Technology**

22. What do you believe to be the primary factors that influence curriculum and instruction (i.e. course design)? What do you believe should drive an ideal curriculum?

**General Opinion**

23. What do you believe to be the single most important positive change in geography education during the past century?

24. What do you believe to be the single most negative influence on geography education during the 20th century?

25. What do you believe will be the single most important influence/factor contributing to a positive role for geography in the curriculum of the 21st century?

26. What do you believe could be the single most negative influence affecting the role and vitality of geography in the 21st century curriculum?

27. What individual do you believe has had the most positive influence on American geography education during the 20th century? Why?
Respondents to the Study
(Background information contributed by respondents, unless otherwise indicated)

Classroom teachers who have achieved national prominence in geography education:

Sarah Bednarz-Co-cordinator of the Texas Alliance for Geographic education, project coordinator of the Geography Education National Implementation Project (GENIP), former associate editor of the Journal of Geography, professor of geography at Texas A&M. Past efforts include helping to write the National Geography Standards and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment in geography. Currently coordinating a NASA grant to prepare curriculum support materials linking the National Geography Standards with NASA's missions and results. Taught in middle schools and high schools in Illinois and Texas.

James Marran-Teacher Emeritus Winnetka, IL. (secondary school geography teacher for nearly 40 years). Past president of the National Council of Geography Education and for a number of years has been the coordinator of GENIP (Geographic Education National Implementation Project.) Worked on the High School Geography Project in the 1960s, the NAEP Assessment Committee in the 1980s, and the National Geography Standards Project in the 1990s (1992-1999). One of the authors of Geography for life: National Geography Standards (1994). Has made hundreds of presentations on topics in geography in both professional and public realms in the United States and abroad. Worked to promote geographic education in a number of prescriptive ways through National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE), National Geographic Society (NGS), and Association of American Geographers (AAG). Has consulted on and written geography text materials for the middle and secondary levels including atlas development and revisions.

Cathy Salter-high school teacher who has risen to national prominence as a recognized leader in geographic education. Involved with the creation of the 1983 California Geographic Alliance; was a Teacher Consultant in summer institutes at UCLA for K-12 geography teachers; directed a Geography Pilot Project for National Geographic Society at Audubon JHS in LA before being hired by NGS to work in their Geography Education Program in Washington, DC. Worked in nine NGS Summer Geography Institutes as a Teacher Consultant from 1986-1993 and in three Urban Geography Institutes from 1994-1996. Writes questions for the NGS Geographic Bee and has been Missouri Geography Bee Coordinator for nine years. Participant in early stages of the National Geography Standards as a teacher consultant participant. From 1988-1997 Co-Editor of the Journal of Geography's July/August Teachers' Issue.
Leaders in social studies administration with a strong background in geography

Marianne Kenney-State Social Studies Specialist and Project Director at Colorado Department of Education. Seven years with department of education and 14 years in geography education. Selected for the first National Geographic Society Summer Geography Institute in 1986. Facilitated the development of Colorado State Geography Standards and wrote a geography curriculum framework which acts as a bridge of how to get the standards to the classroom.

Douglas Phillips- President of the National Council for Geographic Education [NCGE] and for 18 years the Social Studies Coordinator for the Anchorage, Alaska School District. Served a variety of positions in the NCGE including Vice President of Curriculum and Instruction. Founded both the South Dakota and Alaska Councils for the Social Studies and assisted in forming the Alaska Geographic Alliance. Former teacher, administrator, and has played a major role in district, state, national, and now international educational initiatives. Worked on national standards in civics/government and geography.


Academicians with various perspectives

Salvatore Natoli—geography consultant, Chief of the Geography Section, Acting Chief of Economics, and Chief of Social Sciences in the Division of Educational Personnel Development with U.S. Office of Education (now the Department of Education-1966-1969); ended career with the U.S. Office of Education as Deputy Chief of the TTT (Trainers of Teacher Trainers) Program. Educational Affairs Director as well as Editor for Association of American Geographers in Washington D.C. for 18 years. Director of Publications and Editor of Social Education with the National Council for the Social Studies from 1987 to 1993. Currently Editor of Special Publications Program of the National Council for Geographic Education. Served on numerous science, social science, social studies, and geography professional association committees and advisory boards, editorial consultant for several publishers, editorial film consultant for public television projects, consultant for many undergraduate and graduate departments of geography, and chair of the AAG-NCGE Joint Committee on Geographic Education that developed and wrote the Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools. Authored more than 75 refereed journal articles, edited 43 books, and presented more than 125 invited speeches and lectures throughout the U.S. Canada, Japan, and the former Soviet Union. Author, co-author, or participant in numerous national projects in geographic education (e.g. High School Geography Project, Commission on College Geography).
Geography, Commission of Geographic Education, Commission of Geography and Afro-
America, Teaching and Learning in Graduate Geography, Model Introductory Course
Development Project, National Commission of Social Studies in the Schools, and
National Geography Standards Project. Served as an academic consultant and program
evaluator for undergraduate and graduate programs in geography in seventeen colleges
and universities.

Christopher "Kit" Salter—Currently the chairman of the Department of Geography at
the University of Missouri. Involved in the creation of the California Geographic
Alliance in 1983 which became the model on which the National Geographic Society’s
Geographic Alliance Network. Director of first Summer Geography Institute at NGS,
and for eight years coordinator of the Geographic Alliance Network at the National
Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., acting as main faculty member. Co-chaired the
NAEP effort to situate geography in a national framework, and was national Co-Chair of
the Geography Standards Project that culminated in the publication Geography for Life:
Educator Award of the National Geographic Society.

Joseph Stoltman—Professor of geography and Distinguished Faculty Scholar at
Western Michigan University. Co-coordinator of the Michigan Geographic Alliance.
Involved in geography education for 38 years. Authored textbooks for elementary and
secondary school students, and has published many papers on geography and geographic
education in the United States and overseas. Served as a visiting professor at the
University of London and at the University of Zimbabwe. Member of the Commission
on Geographic Education since 1976, and chair of the Commission since 1980.

Phil Bacon—served the better part of five decades in geography education. Former
president of both the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) and the
National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Taught for six years at both the
elementary and secondary levels. Geographer at Teachers College, Columbia University
and held graduate degrees from George Peabody College for Teachers (now Vanderbilt
University). Appointed to a new committee on education by the Association of American
geographers in late 1950s (the first time that the AAG made any serious strides toward
involvement in Education). During the 1960's-1980's, was often referred to as "America's
#1 person in geographic education." Authored several texts, and his books were #1 for a
long time (C. Gritzner, personal communication, October, 1999).

Richard Boehm—Director and Distinguished Chair at the Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center
for Geographic Education, Southwest Texas State University. Co-Coordinator, Texas
Alliance for Geographic Education, 1986-present. Editorial Board for Journal of
Geography; Editor, Media Materials for National Council for Geographic Education.
Variety of leadership positions in NCGE including president. Member of writing team
for Geography for Life: National Standards. Authored hundreds of articles, books, and
professional papers on geography education. Received the NCGE Distinguished
Teaching Achievement Award and was president of NCGE.
Charles Gritzner—Department of Geography, South Dakota State University. Coordinator of South Dakota State Geographic Alliance. Directed and taught in three National Defense Education Act (NDEA and later EPDA) Institutes during the 1960s. Has conducted more than 400 workshops and courses for teachers. Has authored three books; co-authored three books; ca. 150 refereed publications. Successfully lobbied for the nation's first high school geography requirement (South Dakota 1984-1988). Distinguished Teaching Achievement Award for National Council for Geographic Education. Fifteen years as member of the National Council for Geographic Education Executive Board, serving as both director and president. Executive Director, NCGE (1977-1980); President, NCGE (1986). Chair of the National Council for the Social Studies advisory committee on history, geography, and the social sciences.


Chairman of Board and former President and CEO of National Geographic Society

Gilbert M. Grosvenor—Editor of the National Geographic from 1970 to 1980 when he was elected the Society's 14th President. Elected Chairman of the Board in 1987. Pledged more than $4 million dollars a year beginning in 1985 to a comprehensive program aimed at improving teacher training and establishing a network of alliances made up of teachers, administrators, university geographers, and public policy makers working to improve geography education (Barton & Karan, 1992).