

**SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF  
CULTURAL DIMENSIONAL FACTORS ON JOB AUTONOMY  
OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN  
TWO SELECTED SCHOOLS**

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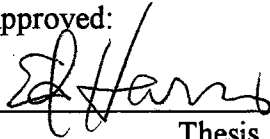
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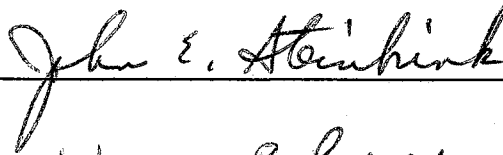
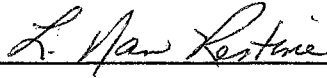
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Chapter I

Design of the Study

Schools serve as transitional places for children. They stand between the subjective, protective environment of the family and the more risky environment of the outside world. There is a commitment which must be shared by teachers, parents, administrators, and central office personnel to ensure young people are provided the best education possible. What better method is there to share this responsibility than through a partnership that will allow staffers to become personally involved and to respond effectively to the students' needs and concerns (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988)?

Site-based decision making is designed to build such a partnership. Site-based decision making stems from a belief in the actors in an individual school as being fundamental to making sound, reasonable judgment. It entails the focusing of resources to implement the decisions which are made at each individual school. The faculty and principal of a school constitute a natural management team (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988).

In site-based decision making, sharing of authority at the school site is designed to enable the faculty to be personally involved in decisions that directly relate to their

day-to-day activities within the school (Lindelov, 1981). Giving faculty substantial discretion in decision making supposedly encourages their productive participation in activities aimed at developing a sense of partnership or ownership with the school (Guthrie, 1986).

This chapter contains a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research question, theoretical framework, procedures, data needs, data sources, data analysis, significance of the study, and contents of the dissertation. The chapter concludes with limitations, premises of site-based decision making, and a summary of Chapter I.

This chapter outlines the procedures used to conduct this study. It includes the purpose of site-based decision making in three areas: staffing, curriculum, and budgeting. The injection of the Mary Douglas grid and group model was used to illustrate the importance of culture in the respective schools in this study for decision making for teachers and administrators. The chapter includes a brief, professional description of the researcher, including areas of involvement in decision making. Data for this research was collected from 12 employees from the Tentville school district: two principals, two assistant principals, and eight core department chairpersons from each school. Each participant responded to a set of interview questions to gather information on site-based decision making in the areas of staffing, curriculum and budgeting.

#### Statement of the Problem

Site-based decision making is designed to share job autonomy among teachers and administrators in an educational environment (David, 1989). Although site-based decision making is designed to give a broader latitude of decision-making opportunities



to educators at the local site level, some studies indicate that it decreases job autonomy among teachers and administrators (Duttweiler, 1989).

One explanation for these contradicting notions is that site-based decision making becomes a unique social construction within the different school cultures, which results in varying accounts of job autonomy among educators. Douglas (1982) posits that each culture has a unique social construction based on the interplay of grid and group, which are individual and corporate dimensions in a particular context that impacts individual autonomy and labor networks.

### School Culture

Culture has been the subject of many research efforts. Smircich (1983) states that organizations do not *have* cultures, they *are* cultures. Deal and Kennedy (1982) state that each culture possesses rituals and ceremonies. An organizational culture, as many note (Schein, 1985; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Wilson and Firestone, 1987; Sashkin, 1987), is composed of shared norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions about the world of work that shape how people think, feel, and act.

Some school cultures have value systems that are oriented towards teacher autonomy; some value order and discipline over creativity and achievement; some foster beliefs that teaching is a craft that can be learned, developed, and improved; and others foster beliefs that teaching is an art that comes from inside the person and is not easily changed, measured, or improved (Lortie, 1995).

School culture is largely determined by principals, who shape these cultures for effectiveness, productivity, motivation, and commitment of personnel to organizational

ends. School culture is a difficult concept to describe; it involves the patterns of values, norms, beliefs, and roles that people take on within a human organization (Schein, 1985).

The two schools in this study fall within Douglas's (1982) grid and group. Harris (1995, p. 622) describes high-group environment cultures as those in which strong allegiance to the educational institution is passed from generation to generation; entrenched traditions and norms are carefully preserved and propagated; and community recreation and identification are entwined with the academics, athletics, and social events of the school (Harris, 1995).

In describing grid cultures, Harris (1995) said that high-grid environments are those in which role and rule dominate individual life choices, while low-grid environments are characterized by individual autonomy and freedom in role choices (Harris, 1995, p. 623).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore site-based decision making and cultural dimensional factors on job autonomy of teachers and administrators in the areas of staffing, curriculum, and budgeting.

#### Research Questions

How is site-based decision making, particularly in the areas of staffing, curriculum, and budgeting, manifested in each of the two selected schools?

#### Theoretical Conceptual Framework

Mary Douglas (1982) provided the grid and group theoretical framework used to analyze the two schools in this study. Grid and group analysis does not assume that the

subjects' choices are predetermined, though costs may be high and some of the parameters may be fixed. This method allows for the cumulative effect of individual choices on the social situation itself: Both can interact and each can move, because the environment is defined to consist of all other interacting individuals and their choices. Grid and group starts by identifying choices which lead to further social transformation in a given direction (Douglas, 1982, p. 198).

Grid. The term "grid" suggests the crosshatch of rules to which individuals are subject in the course of their interactions. As a dimension, it indicates a progressive change in the mode of control. At high grid are visible rules about space and time related to social roles, while at low grid--near zero on the chart--the formal classifications fade and finally vanish (Douglas, 1982, p. 192).

Low grid combined with low group generates internal pressures for change. It places no control on information (Douglas, 1982, p. 192). The single cultural value that justifies movement toward low grid is the unique value of the individual person; each person can be justified for breaching constraints on his or her freedom. This principle is basic to low grid because it extends the individual's scope for negotiating (Douglas, 1982, p. 198).

A person who is not in a strongly classifying, insulating environment is moving down the scale toward low grid if he or she has a good degree of decision-making independence. Autonomy contributes a component in measuring the downward shift toward an individualist environment. One who is strongly insulated by rules and regulations not of his or her own making can nevertheless embrace them willingly and

make a subjectively defined, autonomous place wherever that person has been forcibly consigned (Douglas, 1982, pp. 202-203).

Group. The strongest effects of group can be found where it incorporates a person with others in a common residence, shared work, or shared resources and recreation, and where it exerts control over marriage and kinship (Douglas, 1982, p. 202). Strong group, the dominant social condition in this section, is when all human beings are divided into insiders and outsiders. Other characteristics of strong group are (a) there is a life commitment to the group and (2) the group suppresses conflicts since they cannot be openly resolved except by expulsion, given all the resultant worries about social life, the dampening of competition, the fear of jealousy and factionalism (Douglas, 1982, p. 209).

The stability of strong group is manifest over the content of knowledge. The group remains strong so long as it filters information from outside. New ways of doing things are not easily introduced (Douglas, 1982, p. 251).

### Procedures

#### The Researcher

My professional educational career spans some 30 years in two school districts and in two states. I have experienced a range of school leadership styles, spanning from autocratic, in which all decisions were made by the superintendent of schools, to participative, in which administrators, teachers, and parents were actively involved in site decisions.

In preparation to enter the field of school administration, I served on the Board of

Control at each school where I was employed, helping to decide which educational projects would be funded and for which purposes. In the department of social studies, I have served on an advisory council as chairperson of social studies to recommend policies to the principal regarding staffing, budgeting, and curriculum. I have served in similar capacities in other departments. Through these experiences I have gained insight on the importance of teamwork in creating an environment for students to develop their potential.

As an assistant principal and doctoral student, I share a common involvement with many of the teachers and administrators interviewed for this study, especially those in my school district. I conducted this study from the viewpoint that when interviewing, I must be aware of the philosophy, experiences, and levels of job autonomy of each respondent. I tried to go beyond my own perceptions and grasp the other persons' viewpoints.

Based on my experience with decision making at the local level, I believe all teachers should become involved in the decision-making process in matters relating to them. However, experience has taught me that in certain circumstances, some teachers find job autonomy in teaching but not in making decisions--and some administrators find job autonomy in making decisions but not in delegation.

### Data Needs

This research required data on site-based decision making in three areas: (a) staffing, (b) curriculum, and (c) budgeting. To obtain data for this study, I interviewed 12 employees of the Tentville school district. Interviewees included two principals, two assistant principals and four core department chairpersons from both Waymon and

Wesson High Schools. Each participant responded to a prescribed set of questions related to site-based decision making. In addition to the interviews, I used a variety of invaluable sources and observations to better understand the cultures of Waymon and Wesson High Schools. The sources included yearbooks, school board agendas, school documents, and bulletins.

### Data Sources

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study. To answer the research question, I selected the time period between August 14, 1995, and August 1997 to make the sampling time bound. Another consideration was context. I chose two urban schools in a city in a central state: (a) Waymon High School, which is a magnet school, and (b) Wesson High School, which is a community school. Two administrators and four teachers from each school were interviewed for this study. Multiple data sources such as interviews, personal observations, school documents, and artifacts were used in the study.

### Data Collection

To gain a better understanding of the relationship of grid and group to teacher-administrator job autonomy, I used the case study method. I made a detailed examination of the school sites to provide thick descriptions of the school cultures. In addition to the use of direct observations, documents, and artifacts, I conducted interviews using open-ended questions to allow probing into the social context of each school (Yin, 1984; Merriam, 1988).

### Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of reducing the data, portraying patterns, and finally

drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Analysis of data was done concurrently with data collection while I was in the field. Explanatory analysis (Yin, 1984) allowed for the use of a grid/group framework study. As I conducted the interviews, the Douglas framework provided a means by which to describe and explain the cultural contexts of each school. Data analysis took place throughout this study with the use of documents, artifacts, and interviews, and themes followed from the data collected.

### Significance of the Study

This study adds to the body of knowledge on site-based decision making in the areas of staffing, curriculum, and budgeting. One of the most important contributions of this work is the application of social anthropologist Mary Douglas's model for interpreting social order (1982). Through Douglas's model, this study displays the cultural values in each school setting and demonstrates the pressures that each of these social environments exert on individual autonomy.

People, not organizations, produce results. But organizations can make it possible for people to produce while using their best efforts. It was with the purpose of seeing how well the schools functioned and enabled their people to function while using site-based decision making that I sought to determine how teachers and administrators viewed site-based decision making as a means of improving curriculum for students, hiring new staff members, and distributing allocated resources.

This study enhances the field of education administration by providing information for schools regarding implementing site-based decision making as a means of improving both the curriculum for students and job autonomy for teachers and

administrators.

### Limitations

This study on site-based decision making was limited to two schools, Wesson High and Waymon High, located in a large urban school district with a population of approximately 41,000 students. Two principals, two assistant principals, and four teachers from each school provided much of the data for this study.

### Assumptions

The assumptions of site-based decision making are that those closest to the students should make decisions about the educational programs, the curriculum, budgeting, and staffing, and that such a practice will result in increased student performance through a more effective organization (Mojkowski, 1988).

### Summary

Site-based decision making is designed to give more autonomy to teachers and administrators at the site level in the areas of staffing, budgeting, and curriculum. The case study method was used to collect data to determine to what degrees teachers and administrators had autonomy. This process provided each participant an opportunity to respond to a prescribed set of questions about site-based decision making at his or her school and allowed for multiple perceptions of reality in each context.

Chapter II contains a review of the related literature. Chapter III presents the methodology used in the study. Chapter IV contains a narrative description. Chapter V includes theoretical analysis and comparison. Chapter VI has the summary, conclusion, alternative explanations and implications, and recommendations for further study.



## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to report the research findings on site-based decision making in three areas: staffing, curriculum, and budgeting. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one focuses on site-based decision making that could lead to, or increase, job autonomy for teachers and administrators. Section two reports the research that concludes that site-based decision making can decrease job autonomy for teachers and administrators. Section three contains a theoretical framework for decision making based on Mary Douglas's (1982) model of grid and group. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from the literature.

Site-based decision making is a decentralization process in which the actors in the school assume a greater role in the management of their own affairs. Decision-making authority between the district and the school is redistributed, but the degree and nature of this redistribution varies greatly from district to district. Site-based decision making is designed to enable educators to resolve issues regarding the educational needs of students (Howell, 1992).

#### Autonomy

With the implementation of site-based decision making, teachers and administrators are responsible for selecting new staff members in their schools as well as for implementing curriculum changes in various departments (David, 1994). According to

David (1994), teachers, students and parents are typically enthusiastic because they are then included in the decision-making process, which leads to job autonomy for all participants.

Lindelov (1981) said shifting decision-making authority to the school site gives administrators the flexibility they need to adjust conditions to meet the unique needs of students. Appelbaum and Stimson (1988) studies, conducted in Central Hower High School in Akron, Ohio, demonstrated that empowering teachers led to more autonomy for teachers and administrators. In this case, teachers and administrators made decisions on the budget and how it would be spent. Sicker (1988) concluded in his studies on site-based decision making that when teachers were placed in charge of curriculum and determined teaching assignments, they felt a sense of autonomy over their destiny.

Lindelov and Henyderick (1989) concluded that, as a result of site-based decision making, teacher attitudes increased positively toward their work because they were directly involved in decisions that related to them. This led to more job autonomy for teachers and administrators. Furthermore, site-based decision making gave teachers a sense of ownership and autonomy.

In Lindelov's (1989) study of the Cherry Creek School District in Denver, Colorado, one principal reported that his staff had 95% more autonomy over personnel and the curriculum in their school. More control meant more autonomy for teachers, parents and administrators.

David (1989) conducted studies in three areas: budget, staffing, and curriculum. His findings indicated that the practice of site-based decision making resulted in better

uses of resources in improving staff development, determining what repairs should be made, selecting and hiring new staff members, and, more importantly, developing the curriculum for their school--all of which gave teachers and administrators more autonomy over matters relating to them.

Appelbaum and Stimson (1988) concluded in their studies on site-based decision making that the sharing of power with teachers at all levels of the organization encourages them to be involved in making decisions that pertain to them. This leads to job autonomy for teachers and administrators.

Lindelow (1981) also said that sharing decision-making authority at the school site is designed to involve administrators and faculty in decisions that directly relate to their day-to-day activities. Guthrie (1986) stated that giving faculty substantial discretion in decision making encourages them to develop a sense of partnership with the school.

#### Site-Based Decision Making and Improved Job Autonomy

Site-based decision making is designed to increase job autonomy among teachers and administrators in an educational environment (David, 1989). Site-based decision making was the vehicle used in Kentucky's Education Reform Act for delegating authority to each school site. Under site-based decision making, each school formed a council that had the authority to set policy in eight areas: curriculum, staff time, student assignment, schedule, school space, instructional issues, discipline, and extracurricular activities. Councils were also responsible for certain staffing decisions when vacancies occurred; these included selection of a new principal, consultation when hiring staff, and changing staffing patterns (David, 1994).

In schools where these kinds of changes were occurring, teachers, students, and parents were enthusiastic. For example, as one 27-year veteran teacher put it, "Students are thinking for themselves. They are more confident. They are able to work together. They still need the skills, but we used to spoon-feed them, and that doesn't work. They are reading things that interest them now, the way I used to do it. Everyone on the same story at the same time was boring to them and to me. I used to practically fall asleep. Now they are excited; I am too" (David, 1994).

Lindelow (1981) asserts that site-based decision making is one of the changes in organizational structure being tested in the search for more effective ways of providing opportunities for students to succeed in learning. Moving decision making to the school site gives administrators the flexibility they need to adjust conditions to meet the unique needs of their students. Coupling the authority to make decisions with responsibility for student success appears to offer a chance for real school improvement. These studies indicated a desire of central office personnel to share decision making authority at the school site, thus enabling faculty members to be personally involved in decisions that directly related to their day-to-day activities within the school. The data gathered for these studies were derived from interviews with superintendents in Dade County, Florida (Lindelow, 1981).

Stimson (1988) concluded that when principals exercised their personal power properly, teachers had more autonomy. The process of collaboration and participative decision making gave teachers a sense of ownership and enhanced their self-esteem. For instance, in 1984 the Akron, Ohio district administration office charged Central Hower

High School with the responsibility to develop a school improvement plan. After site-based decision making was instituted, teachers and administrators determined how the budget would be spent and generally experienced a greater degree of autonomy in making decisions related to their jobs. As a result of site-based decision making, students' achievement scores improved and teachers and administrators felt a sense of achievement. They believed they were headed in the right direction with site-based decision making (Stimson, 1988).

In another study, staff members and the principal said if site-based decision making could work at Central Hower, it can work elsewhere. In this study, a faculty senate was used to set the school's educational policy and agenda. It oversaw the work of departments and committees, and it determined budget allocation. The senate worked with and through small groups and with faculty at large. In this study, the role of the principal changed in that the work was indirect and the sphere of communication was greater (Strauber, Stanley, & Wagenknecht, 1990).

In the school district of Cerritos, California, teachers in the school district were placed in control of the curriculum. They determined teaching assignments and helped in the establishment of an evaluation procedure for all certified employees. These accomplishments provided them with a sense of autonomy over their destiny (Sicker, 1988). Prior to the teachers gaining more autonomy over curriculum and other matters related to them, test scores for students ranged below the 15th percentile on standardized achievement tests. After teachers were given more control, district-wide scores on the California Assessment Program Test reached the 62nd percentile in spelling, the 59th

percentile in written expression, and the 60th percentile in reading (Sickler, 1988).

In this study of the ABC Unified District, several initiatives were responsible for improvements: (a) a new management organization, goals of which were to keep management lean and keep the funds at the school; (b) the transfer of control of the curriculum into the hands of teachers in the ABC Unified District; (c) teachers as school leaders as they implemented teacher mentor programs; and (d) instructional resource teachers who provided instructional leadership for teachers and worked with principals on instructional issues (Sickler, 1988).

As a result of site-based decision making in Monroe County, Florida, enrollment increased and teachers' attitudes regarding their work grew more positive because teachers had more input in decision making over matters that pertained to them. Staff in schools were solving problems for students and were more efficient in processing information and organizing the routine of the school day (Lindelov & Henyderick, 1989).

Schools in Martin County, Florida reported having more autonomy with site-based decision making, with administrators receiving input from teachers, staff, and school advisory groups. Principals made the final decisions concerning budget, curriculum, and personnel, with the principals' staffs designing the program budget, utilities, busing, and special education. In the area of personnel, the principals and staff were responsible for the selection of every employee in their schools (Lindelov, et al., 1989).

Lindelov and Heynderick (1989) conducted a study of site-based decision making in selected schools in California, Massachusetts, and Colorado. In the Fairfield Suisun

Unified School District in California, administrators and teachers were able to plan programs for their schools' needs, design its budget, select personnel, review test results, and make changes for the next year. As teachers and staff became more involved with site-based decision making, their sense of ownership increased (Lindelov, et al., 1989).

In the Irvine Unified School District in Irvine, California, principals and their staff members were responsible for goal setting; needs assessment; reporting of educational results to the community; budgeting; program planning; and staff selection, development, and evaluation. Each principal reported having autonomy over matters related to his or her school. As a result of site-based decision making in the Irvine School District, assessment results continued to climb for fourteen years; the schools scored in the low-to-mid 90s on the California Assessments Tests, and students in Special Education programs were finding jobs and independence (Lindelov, et al., 1989).

The Irvine Unified School District was another of Lindelov's studies. In this school district, the implementation of site-based decision making stemmed from a statewide reform movement centered on the notion of standardized curricula and higher degrees of conformity. Furthermore, site-based decision making made each site the basic unit of management. It gave each principal and his or her staff the responsibility of program planning, budgeting, staff selection, development, and evaluation. According to Superintendent Corey, principals had more autonomy as long as they showed their schools were more participative. This data was derived from interviews of school personnel in the Irvine Unified District (Lindelov, et al., 1989).

The Luenberg School District in Luenberg, Massachusetts, began site-based

decision making in 1982. The principal and staff were given authority to determine the curriculum, evaluate staff and students, monitor achievement, and assess staff morale in the school through staff surveys. Department chairpersons met as a group to discuss changes in every staffing, budget, and curriculum needs aspect of their program (Lindelov, et al., 1989).

A reorganization of authority made each principal responsible for curriculum, staff evaluation, student evaluation, discipline, purchasing, and monitoring of achievement and staff morale in his or her school. The greatest change in the individual schools were the replacement of department chairpersons with interdisciplinary program coordinators. By developing coordinators of related disciplines (humanities, research science, applied science, and art), groups of teachers could meet as a single unit to discuss every aspect of their program: budget, staffing, and future curriculum changes (Lindelov, et al., 1989).

The Cherry Creek School District in Denver, Colorado had an enrollment of 27,000 students in the 1988-89 school year. One principal reported that he and his staff had 95% or more autonomy over personnel and curriculum in the school he headed. The district's principals and teachers made decisions on personnel for their respective schools; for example, they could decide between hiring a paraprofessional or a professional as need dictated, and curriculum was designed according to the needs of the students (Lindelov, et al., 1989).

The Cherry Creek School District refined its site-based decision making system over a long period; its practice was to give each principal a "shell" and the responsibility



of designing and developing everything in it. Principal Douglas Gowler reported having 95% or more autonomy over personnel and curriculum in the school he headed. The central office staff remained very small. The individual schools performed many of the traditional central office functions, while the principal could be paid well for his extra duty. Principal Gowler also said in his interview that parents were very much involved and community support was fantastically strong (Lindelow, et al., 1989).

In David's (1989) study of site-based decision making in the areas of budget, staffing, and curriculum, the findings were as follows: (a) teachers and administrators were able to use the resources allocated to each school in a manner which best fit their school, that is, improve staff development, determine what repairs should be made to the building, and purchase supplies as needed; (b) in staffing, the school staff could choose to spend residual dollars on another teacher, hire several part-time specialists, increase the number of instructional aides, or improve the amount of clerical support; and (c) in curriculum matters, teachers were encouraged to develop curriculum and select or create instructional materials, usually within a framework of goals or a core curriculum established by the district or state (David, 1989).

Guthrie (1986), from his study of site-based decision making, concluded that principals and staff must have discretion over school resources. They must be held accountable for the manner in which the resources are spent. In choosing the curriculum, the principal and staff of a given school might decide that the district's curriculum and instructional division could adequately meet their needs for technical information and advice, and they would elect to purchase curriculum and staff services from that division.

However, if the principal and school staff believed that private consultants, institutions of higher education, or corporations could better meet their needs, they would be free to contract instead with those agencies (Guthrie, 1986).

Guthrie (1986) said that under a site-based decision making system, a principal and staff should determine which curriculum and staff development activities would best meet the needs of their particular school. The principal and the staff also control the ways in which the financial resources are spent at each site (Guthrie, 1986). In Guthrie's proposal for reform, he said management transformation is best achieved through: (a) principals who function as chief executive officers; (b) school advisory councils; (c) school site budgeting and accounting; and (d) annual planning and performance reports.

Appelbaum and Stimson (1988) concluded in their study of principals and teachers in Anchorage, Alaska that teachers too often complained that they were powerless and at the end of a pipeline in which they were told what and when to teach and test, with virtually no input allowed from them. Appelbaum and Stimson (1988) said when power is shared with teachers at all levels of the organization, it encourages them to be involved in decision making without feeling manipulated. Such involvement encourages increased commitment to the organization and fosters greater self-respect. When teachers are involved in those decision that affect them, they are likely to experience job autonomy and feel good about their principal (Appelbaum & Stimson, 1988).

Stimson's studies on empowering teachers was designed to show how power sharing encourages people at all levels of the organization to be involved in decision

making without feeling manipulated. Stimson concluded that such involvement engenders increased commitment to the organization along with greater self-respect on the part of the subordinate. The data was compiled from interviews with teachers and principals (Appelbaum, et al., 1988).

### Summary

Site-based decision making offers a unique opportunity for teachers and administrators to have more input in decisions regarding them. For instance, when teachers were included in determining how the school's budget would be spent, teachers' attitudes improved regarding their work. Teachers played an important role in selecting staff members to their school. Student achievement test scores improved as a result of site-based decision making. In essence, site-based decision making improved teacher job autonomy and enhanced job productivity (Appelbaum & Stimson, 1988).

### Site-Based Decision Making And Decreased Job Autonomy

Although site-based decision making is designed to give a broader latitude to decision-making opportunities for educators at the local site level, some studies indicate that it decreased job autonomy among teachers and administrators (Duttweiler, 1989).

Duttweiler's studies (1989) concluded that principals believe they have little power to relinquish to teachers and that teachers are skeptical of receiving additional responsibilities without training, support and authority to execute the responsibility capably. Duttweiler said negative attitudes about site-based decision making, stemming from false starts and unsustained initiatives dictated from outside the school or from the principal, led to decreased job autonomy for teachers.

Mojkowski and Flemming (1988) concluded from their studies of site-based decision making in Dade County, Florida that some teachers balked at assuming responsibility for custodial duties, buying supplies and handling parents who had complaints. Both teachers and principals expressed the need for more training in budgeting, conflict resolution, conducting meetings, and arriving at a consensus. These factors led to decreased job autonomy for teachers and administrators because they were not prepared for the added responsibilities.

Harrison, Killon and Mitchell (1989) concluded from their studies that the inconsistencies of site-based decision making caused confusion about the district's direction and intent. They found that teachers felt they were alienated from the district and had little authority to carry out their duties as teachers. In some cases, all decisions on budgeting and staffing were made by the principal. These factors contributed to decreased job autonomy for teachers.

McGonagill's (1993) studies on site-based decision making concluded the district did not have an overarching district framework for site-based decision making. Instead, teachers and principals controlled the budget because the superintendent wanted it that way. Teachers and administrators felt frustration, resentment, fear, anger, helplessness, and burnout. These factors contributed to decreased job autonomy for teachers and administrators.

Gips and Wilkes (1993) concluded in their studies that teachers were skeptical about site-based decision making; they saw its use as another example of the central office adding responsibility without giving compensation for their time and effort.

Veteran teachers viewed site-based decision making as another means of creating the hope of making decisions, just to have their expectations dashed with an overload of additional work and few chances where it counted, in the classroom. These factors led to decreased job autonomy for teachers and administrators.

In other studies on site-based decision making conducted by Gips and Wilkes (1993), it was reported that the work day of teachers was already overfilled with activities; site-based decision making would only mean more meetings and more time away from students, thus leading to decreased job autonomy.

The 1984 Missouri Conference on Education presented the results from a study of the factors that facilitate or constrain the work of principals. The study found that responsibility without authority and lack of recognition were cited by principals as obstacles to effectiveness. The principals expressed frustration that they were accountable for expenditures, staff performances, and student achievement without being given the authority needed to discharge their responsibilities (Duttweiler, 1989).

From these studies, it is obvious that not everyone embraces site-based decision making. Many principals believe they have little power to relinquish to teachers and are nervous about the advocates of more radical forms of site-based decision making, who question whether a principal is really necessary. Teachers are reluctant to accept additional responsibility without being given the training, support, and authority to execute the responsibility capably. Efforts to implement site-based decision making will need to overcome well-established, often negative attitudes that have been honed to hardness by scores of false starts and unsustainable initiatives that have been dictated from

outside the school or from the principal's office (Mojkowski & Fleming, 1988).

Mojkowski and Fleming (1988) studied a pilot program of site-based decision making in Dade County public schools, Dade County, Florida. They reported that the pilot program experienced some difficult times in implementing site-based decision making. The district office provided few explicit guidelines about how the management structure should operate. Few people could say with certainty where the principal's role began and where the teachers' responsibilities ended. Some teachers balked at assuming responsibilities for custodial duties, buying supplies, or handling parents who came in with complaints. The process of achieving consensus proved to be time consuming, as well. Creating open lines of communication was difficult in some schools, particularly for junior and senior high schools in the program. Both teachers and principals expressed the need for more training in budgeting, conflict resolution, conducting meetings, and arriving at consensus. In this four-year pilot program, 32 schools were given more control over budgeting, staffing, and curriculum. Each school received a budget based on specified allotment, and schools received as much autonomy as possible (Mojkowski, et al., 1988).

Site-based decision making in Adams County, Colorado, began as a response to the first wave of reform reports. The superintendent and Board of Education had begun exploring strategies for improving education in the district (Harrison, et al., 1989).

In School District #12 in Adams County, Colorado, a few schools and principals were mistakenly trying to use the school improvement plan as the decision-making forum

for all decisions. Consequently, the inconsistencies of site-based decision making caused confusion about the district's direction and intent. Neither site-based decision making nor school improvement was having the intended impact. Because of these inconsistencies, teachers felt they were alienated from the district with little authority to carry out their duties as teachers. In most schools in Adams County, Colorado, principals continued to make the decisions about budgeting, staffing, and use of facilities with little or no input from teachers (Harrison, Killion, and Mitchell, 1989).

McGonagill (1993), in his studies on site-based decision making, noted a lack of an overarching district or state framework that would support teachers in articulating initiatives linked to core learning goals. Furthermore, he said, teachers fail to take the initiative when they can and hesitate to take risks when they must (McGonagill, 1993). Teachers and principals in this study reported that they had come to control the budget simply because the superintendent wanted it that way. As a result, they had little basis for commitment to the broader agenda of site-based decision making. Teachers and administration felt frustration, resentment, fear, anger, helplessness, and ultimately burnout. Teachers felt a need to protect themselves from the superintendent and his cabinet (McGonagill, 1993).

In the McGonagill study, teachers, administrators, and superintendents had developed several scenarios to demonstrate how site teams remain stuck, how they are challenged to generate district-wide goals, how they collude in maintaining old roles, and the overarching concern that neither can succeed without the other. The school board and superintendent introduced restructuring, and teachers typically were the critical resources

in making reforms work. Teachers saw site-based decision making as being asked to undertake work beyond their primary role in the classroom. In effect, they believed they were being asked to do the traditional work of administrators, often without any additional training or salary increases. Teachers were skeptical about site-based decision making and inclined to see it as yet another example of the central office adding responsibility without compensating them for their time and effort. Veteran teachers viewed site-based decision making as another means of creating the hope of making decisions just to have their expectations dashed, with an overload of additional work and few changes where it counted--in the classroom for students (McGonagill, 1993).

Gips and Wilkes (1993), studied a Lancaster, Ohio school district that was in the early stages of implementing site-based decision making, and examined the attitudes of teachers and administrators toward change. The teachers concurred that increased teacher participation would result in better solutions to problems. They were not opposed in principle to a higher level of involvement in school decision making, but they raised many personal and management concerns related to implementation of the change. They said their work days were already overfilled with activities and they did not see how additional meeting time could be added. Teachers feared that site-based decision making would involve many more meetings as staff discussed issues. At least half of the teachers expressed concerns that they did not want site-based implementation to mean they would have to take time away from their students (Gips & Wilkes, 1993).

Gips and Wilkes (1993) examined the initial implementation stages involved in considering a change to site-based decision making in one school district. Teacher



concerns were studied as they related to staff relationships within the school and the work environment, and to the acceptance or rejection of the change initiative. Elementary teachers and teachers from small schools were more amenable to implementation and change, and principals were more willing to implement and lead the change than were teachers (Gips & Wilkes, 1993).

According to Gips and Wilkes (1993), teachers reported that a certain comfort level with the status quo caused them to view site-based decision making unfavorably. Wayson and Boysen (1988, cited in Jennings, 1991) noted the resistance of teachers to change as being a barrier to implementation of site-based decision making. Lortie (1975) discussed the natural preference of teachers to close their doors and avoid interaction with other staff. All teachers exhibited some level of resistance to change. Three teachers reported that little activity to initiate site-based decision making was occurring in their school. These teachers observed that certain staff members viewed site-based decision making as just another educational fad which, in due time, would fade away (Gips & Wilkes, 1993).

### Summary

Site-based decision making is designed to give more autonomy to teachers and administrators at the site in order to improve instruction for students. Accepted research on site-based decision making has presented two conflicting premises on its effectiveness as a means of giving teachers and administrators job autonomy and improving curriculum (Lindelow & Heynderick, 1989).

One premise states that site-based decision making does enhance job autonomy

for teachers and administrators. Research on site-based decision making indicates that sharing power through collaboration and participation in decision making can give teachers a sense of ownership, enhance job autonomy, and improve curriculum instruction for students (Appelbaum & Stimson, 1988).

Another premise of site-based decision making states that it does not lend itself to job autonomy for teachers and administrators because it adds responsibility without authority. Site-based decision making requires teachers to spend time attending meetings and to make decisions they think administrators should make (Gips & Wilkes, 1993).

I offer a third premise, based on the work of Douglas (1982), for consideration in improving the quality of school organizations; this premise involves considering the school's culture. Douglas (1982) explained her use of the terms "grid" and "group." Grid and group refer to the degree that an individual's choices are constrained within a social system imposed by formal prescriptions such as roles, rules, and procedures. Roles, rules, and procedures of schools are interwoven into a school's culture, and the culture of a school exists because of community expectations and demands placed on it.

The term "grid" suggests the crosshatch of rules to which individuals are subject in the course of their interactions. As a dimension, it indicates progressive change in the mode of control: At the strong end are visible rules about space and time related to social roles, and at the other end, near zero on the scale, the formal classifications fade and finally vanish. At the strong end of the grid, individuals do not, as such, freely transact with one another. An explicit set of institutionalized classifications keeps them apart and regulates their interactions, restricting their options. At this point of the grid, males do not

compete in female spheres, sons do not compete in female spheres, sons do not compete in female spheres, and sons do not define their relations with fathers (Douglas, 1982, p. 192).

A more open, competitive environment gives individuals more options to deal or not to deal, to choose their own partners. One result is that selecting is the dominant feature of the environment; everyone knows that they are choosing and being chosen (Douglas, 1982, p. 192). Moving the other way down the grid, we can trace out systematically the consequences of reduced insulation. The people trying to operate in this world find their actions judged by multiple criteria, less explicit sequencing, and rules for promotion (Douglas, 1982, p. 194).

Grid and group analysis gives the subject choice. It does not suppose that the choices are predetermined, though costs may be high and some of the parameters may be fixed. This method allows for the cumulative effect of individual choices on the social situation itself: both can interact; the individual and the environment are defined to consist of all the other interacting individuals and their choices. This method starts by identifying which choices lead to further social transformation in a given direction (Douglas, 1982, p. 198).

The one, single cultural value that justifies the movement toward low grid is the unique value of the individual person; each person can be justified for breaching constraints upon his freedom. This principle is basic to low grid because it extends the individual's scope for negotiating. Each basic principle--the value of the group, the value of the individual--is the point of reference that justifies action of a potentially generative

kind. When one wins heavily against the other, the slide starts toward strong group or toward low grid; when each pulls against the other, the tension is a dialogue within society (Douglas, 1982, p. 198).

One of the special merits claimed for the grid and group approach is that it cuts across the class structure. It is a method of identifying cultural bias, of finding an array of beliefs locked together into relational patterns. The beliefs must be treated as a part of the actions and not separated from them as in so many theories of social action. The interaction of individual subjects produces a public cosmology capable of being internalized in the consciousness of individuals if they decide to accept and stay within it (Douglas, 1982, p. 199).

The purpose of grid is to establish a dimension on which social environments can be rated according to how much they classify the individual person and thus leave minimum scope for personal choice. Strong grid, by this definition, is in itself not difficult to access (Douglas, 1982, p. 202).

One who is not in a strong classifying, insulating environment will be moving down toward zero on the grid scale if he or she can enjoy a good degree of independence in making decisions. Autonomy contributes a component in measuring the downward shift toward an individualist environment. Insulation shows social control. The amount of control endured depends on the application of the rule throughout the whole population studied. The source of control could be from groups on the right side of the grid, from which they are excluded, or from the blind forces generated by competition in the bottom left of the grid (Douglas, 1982, p. 203).

Anyone who is strongly insulated by the rules and regulations of others can, nevertheless, embrace them willingly and make a subjectively defined autonomous place where he or she has been forcibly consigned (Douglas, 1982, p. 203). Grid dimensions start where the individual transacting as an individual is strongly insulated from others. Low grid is an accommodation to the harsh experience of a competitive society (Douglas, 1982, p. 209).

The stability of strong group is manifest over the content of knowledge. The group remains strong so long as it filters information from outside. New ways of doing things will not be easily introduced. The individual negotiating within the group can manipulate tradition, and by conspicuous devotion to group causes, can climb the ladder of eminence (Douglas, 1982, p. 224). Low grid/low group provides ground rules that enable play to be compared and judged fairly (p. 243). One characteristic of low grid/low group is the high tolerance for deviance (p. 250).

### Chapter III

#### Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the usefulness of Douglas' grid and group framework in explaining site-based decision making in the areas of staffing, curriculum, and budgeting autonomy in two selected schools. The method used is appropriate for this research because of the nature of the research question and the end product desired. The question is timely and the end products (research findings) are applicable to today's schools. In this research, the nature of the research question, the amount of control, and the desired end product are all reasons for choosing the case study to investigate the research question. The desired results are insight, discovery, and interpretation to enhance school environments.

The research focuses on site-based decision making and its impact on school environments. The data is a rich and thick description of the school's cultures. The data brings about many meanings, and it can extend the reader's experiences and confirm what is known.

#### Site

One might expect to see a new building or two, or at least one that is not in need of repair, on the campus of Waymon High School, but there is none. In fact, Juan Carlos, superintendent of the Tentville School District, described Waymon High School as "the worst looking high school we have in the Tentville district" (Newborn, Tulsa World,

October 20, 1997). When I visited the school, the west side of the school building and the parking lot south of the gymnasium were paved and in decent condition. However, just in front of the building on the south side was an unpaved lot that was not neatly trimmed nor well kept. It is not what I would have expected to see at a school like Waymon High School (Observations, April 11, 1996 and July 10, 1997).

Waymon High School had two primary buildings: the main building, which housed most of the student population, and the administration office. An old elementary school building, located approximately three hundred feet from the main building, formed the other part of the school. In it were held some math, social studies, and driver education classes. Adjacent to the main building and elementary school building were a football stadium, a basketball field house, and some prefabricated buildings where some social studies, math and ROTC classes were taught (Observation, April 11, 1996).

Four doors form the main entrance to the front of the building, and four more doors provide an entrance on the west side of the building. Sandy Scholtz, parent of a former Waymon High School student, described the front entrance by saying, "There's a feeling when you walk through the front door, an atmosphere of learning and caring" (Forbis, 1983). The design and decoration of the front entrance and hallways of the building seemed to set the atmosphere for all of Waymon High School.

The school's seal was embedded in the floor only few feet from the front entrance, yet the students would not walk on it. To learn why, I spoke with ROTC instructor Bill Young, who happened to walk in the door as I stood near the seal. When asked to explain the significance of the students' deference to the seal, he said, "The seal is sacred.

Students will automatically walk around it. It is never stepped on by students." According to this teacher, junior and senior students forbade underclass students to step on the seal because it was part of the school's culture. The junior and senior high students inculcated freshmen students about the importance of the seal (Observation and impromptu conversation, July, 10, 1997).

In the main foyer, on the wall directly in front of the entrance, were three plaques. Inscribed on one was the school hymn, on another was the picture of the man for whom the school is named, and on another was the school creed and biographical sketch. Right below the plaques was a large trophy case containing awards and trophies won by students attending Waymon High School over the years. The trophy case was divided into two sections. One section contained trophies from athletic events, and the other held academic awards and trophies. Academic trophies included academic bowl and science awards. The athletic trophies were in football, basketball, baseball, and track and field (observation, July 10, 1997).

Against the far left and right walls of the main foyer of the building were two curved stairways leading to the second floor. Murals had been painted on the walls of the hallways. Some were painted in orange and black, the school colors. On the wall near the main entrance was a display case for bulletins and announcements. Lining the walls left and right of the main administrative office, pictures of students who had formerly won the title of "Ms. Waymon" were displayed (Observation, July 10, 1997).

A unique feature of the main building was the Boren room. In it were achievement awards, trophies representing all the school's sports, a table in the center of the room with



magazines on it, and a computer. Kara Kroger, Waymon High School principal, said it was a cozy place for interviews and meetings and an appropriate room in which to visit with VIPs visiting the school (Interview and observation, July 10, 1997).

Walking down the halls, I could feel the pride and excitement in the school. The murals painted in school colors and depicting various academic disciplines; the cafeteria painted in the school colors; pictures of former Ms. Waymons; the many trophies in the main office and large trophy case in the main foyer; and depictions of the man for whom the school is named, the school creed, and school hymn--all these denoted a strong sense of school pride. (Observation 7-10-97).

However, the sense of school pride was sharply contrasted by the poor condition of the school buildings. The conditions were not only unattractive, but some faculty thought they were dangerous. Describing the main building, Bonnie Akins, English department chairperson, said, "We are always afraid the ceiling will fall in when it rains" (Interview, April 25, 1996). The need for improvements inside the building were apparent; window shades were in need of repair and some classrooms were in need of fresh paint. In addition, a poor heating and cooling system kept some rooms too hot and some too cold.

Evidence indicated that the poor conditions of the buildings had not impeded the students' learning process nor their love for Waymon High School (Interview and observation, April 25, 1996). Superintendent Juan Carlos said, "If you look at the equipment at Waymon and look at the facility at Waymon, it is the worst looking high school we have in Tentville Public Schools. Waymon High School shows you that even

without the kinds of materials other schools have, they produce high standards and high quality students from that program. Not only is it one of the top schools in the state, it is one of the top schools in the nation" (Newborn, 1997).

### Respondents

Purposive sampling was employed. All respondents were identified by the positions they held in the respective schools. All respondents played a direct role in decision-making activities in their schools. I contacted all respondents by phone and by appointments made to conduct interviews. When interview schedules conflicted, I rescheduled to follow through with the interview. Some of the interviews were conducted in homes when schedules did not permit school visits, and none of the interviews were conducted by phone.

The purposive sample consisted of 12 high school personnel from the two schools, Waymon and Wesson High Schools. The high schools have been given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. I interviewed two principals, two assistant principals, and four core department chairs in science, math, English, and social studies at each school. McCracken (1988) said that the "respondents should be few in number, no more than eight" (p. 37). However, for this study, as Erlandson, et al. (1993) said about using purposive sampling, "There are no rules for sample size" (p. 83).

For the purpose of confidentiality, respondents selected for this study were assigned pseudonyms.

### Instrumentation

I selected the case study as the technique to be used in this study and, as

researcher, served as the principal instrument for this research project. McCracken (1988) reminds us that a researcher cannot achieve useful results without using one's own experience and imagination in a variety of ways. Erlandson, et al. (1993) reminds us that "the human instrument is a wonderful data-processing organism. It is more sensitive to various shades of meaning and more able to appropriately respond to them than the most elaborate nonhuman instruments that might be imagined" (p. 107). In my opinion, this fact makes a qualitative study richer in its depth of study.

The research process provided me with a special set of lens through which to peer into the cultures of the selected schools. The respondents were allowed to tell their stories, and along with a structured set of interview questions, the information they disclosed provided the data from which to glean the answers to the research question. McCracken (1988) recommended the long interview technique. "For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing" (p. 9).

#### Data Collection Strategies

Data were collected through observations, interviews, etc. I conducted personal interviews and examined schools documents, including student handbooks and other artifacts that provided a history of each school.

The study took place during the 1995-96 school year. The two schools selected for this study provide some contrasts which were related to the following areas: (a) participants for the study, (b) location of each school, (c) curriculum, and (d) a commitment from the district for each school's existence.

Observations of the two schools in this study occurred over a period of time

beginning in August, 1995 and ending in August, 1997. Observations consisted of football and basketball games at Waymon High School, and the classrooms and students' interactions in the halls, cafeteria, and library at each school. Two to three informants were provided at each school. The informants understood the culture and provided some insight into understanding the cultures of each school. The informants were teachers and assistant principals from each school.

The observations varied in length of time in each building, and the days were staggered in order to see students at different times of the day and in different settings. In addition to observations, each school provided student handbooks and documents that depicted its history.

I asked for and received permission from the Central Office of the Tentville District to conduct this study. The district was also given a pseudonym in this study. Each participant responded to a set of prescribed questions to gain information on site-based decision making in each school. Some nonhuman sources, such as student handbooks and other artifacts, were used to get information on the history and culture of each school.

### The Interview Process

Step One. The first step involved getting the permission from the district's research department to conduct this study. Since this district was in the final stages of implementation of site-based decision making, permission was granted without delay. Following that step, the first contact with respondents was a telephone call to set up an appointment for the interview. These interviews were conducted in the fall of 1995 and continued through the spring of 1996. The respondents were advised to call the research

department at the Oklahoma State University College of Education if they had questions about the legitimacy of this study.

Step Two. The next step in the process occurred at the first of each interview session. The teachers and principals reviewed the content of the consent form used in the study (See Appendix C.). The consent form detailed the parameters of the study, ensured confidentiality, emphasized the voluntary nature of participation, and provided names of university contact persons the respondents could use to answer questions or express concerns about the study or researcher. All respondents were given a consent form.

Step Three. I conducted the interview. A carefully planned series of questions were used that directed the respondents' conversations (See Appendix E.). The initial questions sought background information and provided me with information that revealed how respondents viewed the general elements of their school's culture. I conducted the interviews in a conversational mode to relax the respondents.

Step Four. Following each interview, I recorded observations and reactions of the respondents. This would provide any information that did not surface in the taped interviews. Any additional information gained was added to the transcripts.

Step Five. This step involved transcribing the interviews. A copy of each interview was maintained for each respondent. A planned follow-up contact was not necessary to verify contents of the tapes. A verbatim transcript of each interview was made and filed.

### The Analysis Process

"In the collection and analysis of data it is sometimes hard to distinguish between

when the collecting ends and when the analysis begins, for gathering and analysis are complimentary, ongoing, and often simultaneous process," explained Erlandson, et al. (1993, p. 85). I found this to be true. During the interviews the data were examined for recurring themes that emerged from the respondents.

McCracken (1988) maintained that there are five stages in the process of analysis. The first stage is to take the statements made by respondents and to break them into their smallest units of complete thought. This involves, according to Erlandson, et al. (1993); "desecrating data into the smallest pieces of information that may stand alone as independent thought in the absence of additional information other than a broader understanding of the context" (p. 117).

The second stage is, "Each observation should be used as a lens with which the transcript can be scanned to see whether any relationship or similarity suggests itself" (McCracken, 1988, p. 45). I noted any similarities and began to look for relationships among statements. In the third stage of McCracken's procedures, patterns or themes within the interview began to emerge. Major themes of this study were evident and set the stage for solidifying my efforts. In the fourth stage of this analysis process, judgment is passed on the data. The emergent themes are clearly identified, five of which became the focus of this research. In the fifth stage, the themes of individual interviews are analyzed in relation to the other interviews in the study. Each unit in the individual interviews became a part of the overarching themes for the research project. In this study, the recurring themes identified had been found during the interview process.

#### The Application of the Douglas Grid/Group Framework

A framework was needed to explain school culture. The Grid/Group typology, devised by Mary Douglas (1982), provided the initial framework for this study. The theory base of this framework is grounded in sociology and anthropology.

In interpreting various social contexts, Douglas (1982) used the term "grid" to illustrate the individual dimension and "group" to represent the collective social forces. "Grid also describes rules to where individuals are subjects in the course of interactions" (Douglas, 1982, p. 192). The polar coordinates span the dimensions from individual and social context. The Douglas (1982) framework provided a vantage point and a set of lens through which to peer more deeply into the research problem. My purpose in this study was to explore the usefulness of this Douglas framework in explaining site-based decision making in the areas of budgeting, staffing, and curriculum. In order to explore this framework, the cultures of each school and the cultural values were to be examined. A major assumption that influenced the study is that organizations are social constructions, symbolically constituted and reproduced through interaction (Smircich, 1985). Using the Mary Douglas model, I identified the cultural values in each school setting and examined a demonstration of the pressure that each of these social environments exerted on the behavior and autonomy of affected individuals.

Douglas (1982) stated that grid refers to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed formal prescriptions such as role expectations, rules, and procedures. Douglas (1982) suggested four criteria to determine grid: insulation, autonomy, control, and competition.

Group represents the degree to which people value collective relationships and are

committed to a social unit larger than the individual. Group deals with the holistic aspect of social incorporation and the extent to which people's lives are absorbed and sustained by corporate membership. The goal of group interaction is to perpetuate the life of social collective rather than its individual member. "Further, the strongest effects of group are to be found where an environment incorporates its members by implicating them together in common residence, shared work, shared resources and recreation, and by inserting control over marriage and kinship," according to Douglas (1982).

Lingenfelter (1992) further stated that in low group environments, pressure for group-focused activities and relationships is relatively weak. Members of social working and working subgroups tend to focus on short-term activities rather than long-term corporate objectives, and their allegiance to the larger group fluctuates and changes. Furthermore, when group strength is low, people negotiate their way through life on their own behalf, neither constrained by nor reliant upon a single group of others (Gross & Rayner, 1985).

Appendix B contains the tables identifying the types of cultures. In the first table the four cosmological types are described, and in the second table grid and group criteria are examined in explaining centralization versus decentralization and in explaining coordination versus fragmentation. Using these criteria, each school culture was identified using the model and references were to be made according to exploring site-based decision making.

### Summary

The five stages that were suggested by McCracken (1988) were used in this study



and provided a very organized manner in which to analyze the data and maintain its usefulness. The long interview enabled me to identify themes and summarize the data in the field and provided structure for completing the case study. The data gathered and organized during the interview process provided information that was practical and could be used in a systematic way. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that flexibility allows the research to "...unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge." Erlandson, et al. (1993, p. 210) suggested the desirability of flexibility: "The simultaneous analysis and data collection that occurs in naturalistic studies allows the researcher to direct the data collection phase more productively" (p. 109).

## Chapter IV

### Narrative Descriptions Of Waymon and Wesson High Schools

#### Waymon High School

Waymon High School was located in the northern part of the city of Tentville.

The school was two blocks east of Prue Avenue, a main artery running north and south in the city. This allowed for easy access to the far north and south sections of Tentville.

Most inhabitants of this community were African Americans, reflecting past patterns of de jure and de facto segregation. North on Prue Avenue were a few convenience stores, a McDonald's, a host of churches, day care centers and some old houses--some in need of repair, some well painted with neatly trimmed lawns.

The people living there commuted by bus and automobile to work and to different shopping centers all over the city. On Prue Avenue North, well-placed signs proclaiming "Waymon High" were located on both sides of the street about two blocks from the school.

(Observations, April 11, 1996 and July 10, 1997).

Although Waymon High School had a good reputation for its top-rate academic program and sense of proud tradition, its structures and surroundings were in poor condition. Some of parking areas reflected this. The west side of the school building and the parking lot south of the gymnasium were paved and in decent condition, but just in front of the building on the south side was an unpaved lot that was neither neatly trimmed

nor well kept. (Observations, April 11, 1996 and July 10, 1998).

Waymon High School had two primary buildings: the main building, which housed most of the student population, and the administration office. An old elementary school building, located approximately three hundred feet from the main building, housed some math, social studies, and driver education classes. Students attending classes in this building were forced to hurry across campus within five minutes when they needed to get to classes in the main building. Principal Kroger said, "I can stand at my window and watch students hurry across campus trying to make it to the next class" (Follow-up interview and observations, July 10, 1997).

In spite of the school's poor condition, people in the community indicated that they felt the school imparted both a sense of comfort and academic progress. Sandy Scholtz, parent of a former Waymon High School student, commented, "There's a feeling when you walk through the front door, an atmosphere of learning and caring" (Forbis, 1983, p. 11).

The design and arrangement of the school's interior reflected the school's tradition and sense of pride. The school seal was embedded in the floor only few feet from the front entrance, yet the students would not walk on it, because, according to ROTC instructor Bill Young, "The seal is sacred. Students will automatically walk around it. It is never stepped on by students." He said the junior and senior high students inculcate freshmen students about the importance of the seal and forbid them to step on it (Observation and impromptu interview, July, 10, 1997).

In the main foyer, on the wall directly in front of the entrance, were three plaques.

Inscribed on one was the school hymn, on another was the picture of the man for whom the school was named, and on another was the school creed and biographical sketch. Below the plaques was a large trophy case divided into two sections, one containing trophies from athletic events, and the other holding academic awards and trophies. Academic trophies included academic bowl and science awards. The athletic trophies were in football, basketball, baseball, and track and field (Observation, July 10, 1997).

To the left and right of the large, open, main foyer of the building were two stairways curving upward to the second floor. Murals had been painted on the hallway walls. Some were painted in orange and black, the school colors. On the wall near the main entrance was a display case for bulletins and announcements. Lining the walls left and right of the main administrative office were photographs of students who had formerly won the title of "Ms. Waymon" (Observation, July 10, 1997).

I could feel the pride and excitement in the school. The murals painted in school colors and depicting various academic disciplines; the cafeteria painted in the school colors; pictures of former Ms. Waymons; the many trophies in the main office and large trophy case in the main foyer; and depictions of the man for whom the school is named, the school creed, and school hymn--all these denoted a strong sense of school pride (Observation, July 10, 1997).

#### Waymon High School, the Magnet School

Waymon High School, which had formerly had a student body that was entirely African American, became a magnet school in 1974. This was accomplished by African American and Caucasian citizens with divergent views working together to formulate a

plan acceptable to both communities to integrate Waymon High School on a voluntary basis. The plan called for building a student population of 1,200, comprised of 600 African American and 600 Caucasian students. The Board of Education approved the plan, and the school opened in the fall of 1974 with T.H. Graham (a Caucasian man) as its first principal (Mayes & Maces 1969).

Bob Bell, superintendent of Tentville schools at that time, said that in order to attract Caucasian students, an elite curriculum and some of the best teachers were needed to make the magnet school work (Maces and Maces, 1969).

Finding enough African American students to make up 50% of the student body was not a problem, but finding enough Caucasian students willing to leave their neighborhoods for a school in a part of town that was new and strange to them required a major recruitment effort. Supporters of the volunteer plan sought pupils for Waymon through a city-wide student drive. The response was slow in the beginning, but as time passed and more Caucasian students entered Waymon, finding students to attend was less of a problem (Forbis, 1983).

#### The Culture of Waymon High School

Teachers and students at Waymon High School enjoyed an unusual amount of autonomy, according to faculty members. Bonnie Akins, English department chairperson, said the first principal of Waymon High as a magnet school, T.H. Graham, "helped to shape the school and give it its focus. He believed in giving teachers power (autonomy), and teachers would give students power.... Teachers and students enjoy a great deal of flexibility and autonomy at Waymon High School. I do not want to teach at any other

school in the district, nor any other school" (Interview, April 25, 1996).

Jane Blakemore, assistant principal, said, "Students are allowed to do things here that students do not experience at other schools. There is a high tolerance for students here" (Interview, June 6, 1996).

School officials also took pride in its diversity, both in terms of its students and in its culture. "The school is a very interesting phenomenon," said Principal Kara Kroger. "I have come to learn that it is two schools within one because we have a group of students who come for the academics, and we have another segment of students who come because of the tradition of the school" (Interview, June 20, 1996). Barbara Bark, social studies chairperson, echoed Kroger's viewpoint about it being two schools within one. "African American students come to Waymon for its tradition and the spirit of the school; Caucasian students attend Waymon for the high academic courses they can get at Waymon High School" (Interview, June 6, 1996).

The students in Advanced Placement Classes (courses offered for college credit) were observed to be mostly Caucasian with only a few African Americans, and students in International Baccalaureate classes were all Caucasian. The most challenging classes all had only one or two African American students. The general classes were predominately African American; these included science, math, English, social studies and electives (Observation, April 11, 1996).

Kara Kroger, in a follow-up interview on July 10, 1997, said, "Both cultures (Caucasian and African American) are very diverse academically and economically. The interests of both groups are diverse." There were reasons for this disparity, she said.

"African American students come to Waymon for the culture of the school; they want a diploma from Waymon High School. That is not to say that these students don't graduate, go to college and do well at Waymon; it means their interests are different. About eighty percent of our students attend college. Secondly, not enough African American parents encourage their children to take the challenging classes" (Interview, July 10, 1997).

In a follow-up interview on July 10, 1997, Principal Kroger explained the two schools and how she balanced them. "It is difficult," she said. "We have activities to get them (students) together, to get them out of their safety zone. For example, we have International Night, Brotherhood Day and other activities designed to blend the entire student body. However, students tend to segregate themselves in classes and in association."

Percy Clayton, a 1979 graduate of Waymon High School, said, "There is still some self-imposed separation between African American students and Caucasian students. Many of the students live in primarily African American or Caucasian neighborhoods, and at school you tend to associate with people you know" (Forbis, 1983, p. 11).

When asked if Waymon High School serves the purpose of educating all its students, Principal Kroger said, "I wasn't around when Waymon was founded as a magnet school. I don't think it was designed to have two schools in one, but it certainly has become that. We do meet the needs of all students because we have something for everyone, from advanced classes for the advanced students to the average classes for our average students. I do believe we meet the needs of all students here at Waymon High

School.

"The beauty of this school is that it serves the needs of all our students. Some students live to play on the football team, the basketball team, or play in the band and other events or activities. I fear that the academics suffer for those students who come for reasons other than the strong academics. The goals of the school, when established, were to meet the needs of a broad base of students. I believe we have done that (Interview, July 10, 1997).

Jane Blakemore, assistant principal, agreed with Principal Kroger's assessment, saying that "Caucasian students attend Waymon for the academics" (Interview, June 6, 1996). Barbara Bark, social studies department chairperson, voiced the same opinion, commenting, "African American students come to Waymon for its tradition and the spirit of the school. Caucasian students come for the high academics courses they can get here at Waymon. We have two schools within a school, one for the gifted and bright students, another school for the average students. Not enough African American students take advantage of the more challenging courses; that explains the two schools (Interview, June 6, 1996).

Ara Fickle, math department chairperson, said, "Most Caucasian students attend Waymon High School for its strong academic programs. Most African American students attend Waymon because of its heritage and the culture of the African American community (Interview, May 5, 1996).

Observations made during visits to many classrooms at Waymon High School upheld the viewpoint that Waymon was two schools within one. For example, some



classes consisted of all Caucasian students, while other classes were either entirely African American or included only a few Caucasian students. In the strong academic classes, such as International Baccalaureate classes, there were no African American students (Observations, April 23 and 25, 1996).

Principal Kroger suggested that both the academic excellence of the magnet school aspect of Waymon High School and its proud African American history--the two cultural aspects that comprised the "two schools within a school"--generated a sense of loyalty from the students. She commented, "There are strong emotional bonds to Waymon High School, whether it is due to the fact it was the all African American school or because it is a magnet school" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

Pride in Waymon High School was evident in its sports traditions. At a Waymon home football game on Friday, October, 20, 1995, long lines of cars were driven into the parking lot. Students and staff members were dressed in the school colors and cheered the home team while waving pom-poms and banners during the game. The band, also a source of pride for the school, marched into the stadium prior to the start of the game and performed at half time. One of the audience's favorite songs played by the band was "I Am So Glad I Go to Waymon High School" (Observation, October 20, 1995).

Attendance at these games was high. The audience consisted mostly of African Americans who lived in the community; some lived in other communities and attended other schools but attended Waymon's football games (Observation, October 20, 1995). In a follow-up interview on July 10, 1997, Principal Kroger said, "Waymon's football and basketball games are the north side (of Tentville)." She cited the homecoming game as an

example. Typically, she said, African American students and a few Caucasian students begin to prepare for the football season and homecoming in late July and August. A visit on Wednesday, August 6, 1997 confirmed this. The halls were filled with students milling around, seemingly in anticipation of the beginning of school. Some cheerleaders and other students were walking the halls, and most were African American students (Observations, August 6, 1997).

Because of their strong pride in the Waymon High School football team, community leaders insisted that it be a winning team. In the fall of 1997, the football team lost several games and the students wanted the coach replaced. An article in the September 18, 1997 *Oklahoma Eagle*, written by alumnus football player Phil Collins a week after the Waymon football team was defeated 14-7, probably summed up students' feelings the best:

It's a shame to see the state's best all-time football high school program look the way it does. The Hornet team looked like a middle school team, from the coaches to the players. I have nothing against Waymon's coaching staff but it is time for a change. Now is the time for the next generation of diehards to lead the program. I remember the old songs we sang before going to war on game day. Those songs are now long gone. On the practice field we would sing those fighting songs daily until it was truly a part of being a Hornet. This is a team that needs a good dose of what it means to be a real Hornet. No one can convince me this is Waymon's football, because I know Hornet football when I see it. I am a Hornet (Collins, 1997).

An examination of the Waymon High School 1995-96 Yearbook, Volume 41, provided a broad view of the school. For example, snapshots of students who had traveled to Russia, London, China, and Cancun, Mexico revealed that all were Caucasian. The following list of student membership in various school activities indicates students' participation according to race:

Homecoming Royal Court	14 African American, 1 Caucasian
Ms. Football Queen	1 African American
National Honor Society Seniors	5 African American, 5 Caucasian
Junior National Honor Society	3 African American, 53 Caucasian
National Arts Honors	1 African American, 18 Caucasian
Latin Club	Mostly Caucasian
Japanese Club	3 African American, 33 Caucasian
Chinese Club	5 African American, 43 Caucasian
Russian Club	1 African American, 14 Caucasian
German Club	All Caucasian, 38 members
Ecology Club	7 African America, 52 Caucasian
Marine Biology	1 African American, 24 Caucasian
NJROTC	Mostly African American, 100 members
Academic Bowl	All Caucasian, 10 members
Drama Club	6 African American, 54 Caucasian
Speech Club	Mostly Caucasian, 60 members
Jazz Band	6 African American, 24 Caucasian

African American Society	All African American, 150 members
Young Democrats	11 African American, 34 Caucasian
Youth and Government	2 African American, 33 Caucasian
Future Business Leaders Association	34 African American, 11 Caucasian
Newspaper Staff	All Caucasian
Improv	All Caucasian, 20 members
Computer Club	All Caucasian
Waymon's T. Connection Band	97 African American, 10 Caucasian
Majorette	All African American
Dance Ensemble	All African American, 14 members
Cheerleaders Varsity	10 African American, 4 Caucasian
Varsity football	41 African American, 6 Caucasian
Varsity basketball, boys	All African American
Varsity basketball, girls	All African American
Cross Country	All Caucasian, 23 members
Swimming, male, and female	1 African American, 21 Caucasian
Tennis, Varsity	All Caucasian, 10 members
Golf	1 African American, 8 Caucasian
Baseball	1 African American, 14 Caucasian

Students appeared to form cliques. At noon, African American students and Caucasian students sat at different tables in the cafeteria. Caucasian and African American students also appeared to collect in separate groups at different times and

different locations in and around the building (Observations, April 23 and 25, 1996). Principal Kroger said the cliques formed because of the "two distinct cultures here at Waymon High School. It is not uncommon for me to see students in small groups, either Caucasian or African American. It is difficult to break these cliques because students group themselves by classes they take, or common interests."

Principal Kroger said school staff also formed cliques. "Cliques can be found among staff members; for example, coaches have cliques. There are cliques among various discipline, some of which are formed because of common interest." (Interview, July 10, 1997).

Copies of the Tentville School Board Agendas provided deeper insight into the culture of Waymon High School by revealing what recognitions had been bestowed on students and staff at Waymon High School. The following list gives examples of the recognition received:

- (a) Waymon High School's Academic Team was honored for finishing first in the state and in two national academic competitions, the Quest Tournament and the Master academic competition (Board of Education, Tentville County, January 8, 1996).
- (b) At the October 2, 1995 board meeting, the school board approved \$40,000 in funds to be raised for the band to participate in the Peach Bowl on December 28-31, 1995.
- (c) At the April 8, 1996 board meeting, Waymon's Academic Bowl coach was recognized as 4-A Academic Bowl Champion (Board of Education, Tentville

County, April 8, 1996}.

- (d) The school board recognized five students as winners in the 5-A State Orchestra Contest, and one student was recognized for winning the All-State Jazz Ensemble Contest (Board of Education, May 6, 1996).
- (e) Seven students were recognized as finalists in the National Forensic League's National Speech Tournament. At the same board meeting, the speech and debate team were recognized as 4-A speech and debate winners (Board of Education, April 22, 1996).
- (f) The Board of Education approved \$10,000 to be spent for the choir to attend an annual contest in Arlington, Texas on May 3- 4, 1996 (Board of Education, November 11, 1995).
- (g) The Board of Education recognized the coaches and boys' basketball team for winning the state championship.
- (h) At the April 8, 1996 board meeting, Edgar Medgar was recognized as an Academic All Stater.
- (i) At the April 22, 1996 board meeting, Becky Sams was recognized for being chosen as an Argonaut for the Jason Project.
- (j) At the November 20, 1995 board meeting, the board approved payment for students to take the International Baccalaureate Test in May 1996.

- (k) At the August 7, 1995 board meeting, five students were recognized for earning the International Baccalaureate Diploma.
- (l) At the August 7, 1995 board meeting, the board approved using \$7,500 from general funds for teachers to attend the International Baccalaureate Conference in Canada.
- (m) At the February 5, 1996 board meeting, Victor Lightener was recognized for winning the Martin Luther King, Jr. oratorical contest.
- (n) At the February 5, 1996 board meeting, 10 students were recognized who served as peer tutor/mentors to assist students with academic deficiencies from February 6, 1996 to May 1, 1996.
- (o) At the October 6, 1995 board meeting, the employment of Paul Sakes, a retired Waymon English teacher, to serve as part-time teacher was approved. His services enabled the English department to have an additional experienced teacher on staff. Funds were paid by the executive director of Senior High Schools.

#### Community Support

Comments from school officials and faculty clearly indicated that community support was high. Principal Kara Kroger, in an interview on June 20, 1996, said, "There are strong emotional bonds to Waymon High School. Graduates are donating funds by way of a phone-a-thon, [and] other graduates give in other ways to this school."

Bonnie Akins, English department chairperson, said, "To teach at Waymon High School is a source of pride. The love, support, and allegiance to Waymon High School is

fantastic" (Interview, April 25, 1996).

Principal Kroger also said that all of the Waymon High School activities were "well attended--athletic events, musicals, International Night, Brotherhood day, and the band." She added, "Homecoming is very important to students and former students and the staff, but it is especially important to African American students" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

Assistant Principal Jane Blakemore said "Support and allegiance is high at Waymon High School; there is an atmosphere here that lasts a lifetime. There is a strong sense of community support for the school from parents" (Interview, June 6, 1996).

Bonnie Akins, English department chairperson, said, "Support for the school is high. This is evident at sport events and other school functions" (Interview, April 25, 1996).

Chairpersons of the English, science, and social studies departments commented that Waymon High School functions and sports events were well supported by the school and by the community, both of which Eva Hacker said provided "love, support and allegiance" for Waymon. Their opinions were very similar to those of Ara Fickle, chair of the math department, who said, "School functions are important to the school and they are well attended by the community, even though the culture of the school has changed over the years. All activities are important, but homecoming is especially important to African American students. Students begin to gear up for homecoming as soon as school begins. Classes of students decorate the halls to display school pride" (Interview, May 28, 1996).

#### Authority Structure

Waymon High School's authority structure was composed of the principal, two assistant principals, three counselors, and a dean of students. In addition, each department



had a department chairperson, and each core department chairperson of science, math, social studies, and English was considered a decision maker at the discretion of the principal (Howell, 1992).

Prior to site-based decision making implementation at Waymon High School, the school functioned according to the dictates of the principal and superintendent of schools (Howell, 1992). Foster (1996) described this authority structure as follows: "The duties of the principal and assistant principals and other school officials are to obey the directives of the superintendent because the personality of the superintendent is so overpowering that people want to obey, part of which stipulates obedience" (Foster, 1986, p.120).

Site-Based Decision Making. Site-based decision making was a relatively new concept in the Tentville School District, having been implemented in the 1992-93 school year. Howell (1992, August) described site-based decision making as a vehicle that will ultimately enable most decisions regarding the educational needs of students to be made and resolved at the school site. However, the Tentville School District central office staff had retained authority for making decisions regarding most schools in the district; these included decisions such as placement of trim-off teachers, provision of a pool of teacher candidates, and the allocation of funds to each school (Howell, 1992, June).

Even though the superintendent of schools was in charge of the district, each principal was directly responsible for the personnel in his or her building and thus had some autonomy in decision making. The principal was the instructional leader and was ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school. At Waymon High School, the core department chairpersons, along with the principal, assistant principals,

and site advisory councils, were responsible for decision making (Howell, 1992, June).

Howell (1992, August) said the purpose and function of the site advisory council is to serve as one component of site-based decision making for the district. The site council is composed of patrons and employees of each school to ensure varying viewpoints are obtained. The basic activities of the advisory council include developing an annual educational plan for the site and preparing a budget to support the plan. In addition, council members serve on standing committees including building and grounds, curriculum, budget, and gifts and endowments. The site council at any site may choose to delegate these standing assignments or serve as a committee of the whole for any or all of them.

To adequately prepare each site principal and site council for leadership roles, the following activities were made available at Waymon High School: (a) Staff development/in-service activities were initiated in March 1991 for professional staff and site advisory councils; numerous opportunities were made available. (b) A site-based decision retreat for principals and executive staff was held at the conference center in August 1992. The purpose of the retreat was to assist principals in implementing site-based decision making at their schools. (c) Town meetings were held in July 1992; included in the meetings were central office personnel and site committee members. The monthly sessions followed. (d) Workshops were held to define and develop the educational plans and review components of the plan and its relationship to building the 1993-94 site budget. Howell said the establishment of site advisory councils would enable each site to become more autonomous, which would best serve each individual

site (Howell, 1992, August).

Staffing Decisions. The effect of site-based decision making at Waymon High School in the areas of staffing, curriculum, and budgeting were that Principal Kroger had empowered department chairpersons to "make decisions in their departments. They interview and make recommendations to me, and usually their recommendations are accepted as final. Department chairpersons are responsible for socializing new members to their departments" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

Bonnie Akins, English department chairperson, spoke for the department chairs, saying, "We have a lot of freedom here thanks to T.H. Graham. He believed in giving teachers more power, and teachers would give students power. We select our department members" (Interview, April 23, 1996).

Curriculum Decisions. Principal Kroger said that each Waymon High School department chairperson was "directly responsible for the curriculum in his/her department. They implement it and make changes as needed (Interview, June 20, 1996). Jane Blakemore, assistant principal, said, "Decisions are made by department chairpersons on all curriculum matters" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

The faculty agreed. Ara Fickle and Barbara Atkins said each department chairperson was responsible for selecting and socializing new members to his or her department (Interview, May 28, 1996). Eva Hacker said that in the science department, "We are autonomous; no one in administration knows anything about science, therefore we make all decisions about our department" (Interview, April 23, 1996). Barbara Bark, social studies department chairperson, added, "We had more autonomy long before site-based

decision making" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

Budgeting Decisions. Principal Kara Kroger said that the site council, composed of teachers, parents and the administration, was responsible for making decisions regarding the budget. She said, "It works because it provides an opportunity to share the authority and responsibilities with department chairpersons and other staff members. When I first came here two years ago I noticed some cliques on the site council and Board of Control. Some people got what they wanted and others did not. I broke up the cliques by replacing them with new members and more diverse members to represent the school's population and faculty population (Interview, June 20, 1996).

In a follow-up interview with Principal Kroger on July 10, 1997, she shared this information. "Football and basketball supports all other sports. We budget approximately \$30,000 for all sports. However, additional monies are spent as needed through the Board of Control; for example, bus rentals to away football and basketball games, and hotel and food for coaches and players." Other programs, such as band, cheerleading, music, were self supporting. She said, "In our AP and International Baccalaureate classes, we send a team of teachers to international conferences each year. The central office pays for this training. Advancement placement classes are expensive, as are training, books, and supplies. This, too, is paid for by the central office (Follow-up interview, July 10, 1997).

Jane Blakemore said, "The site council makes all decisions on the budget. When I got here things were out of control, things were done in a crisis mode, there was no plan of action. Whoever got their request in first got the money to spend, and some people got nothing. ... There was much resentment on the part of some teachers, because only a few

departments got the money to spend." She said the new administration "is doing a much better job of sharing the money with all departments" (Interview, June 6, 1996).

Ara Fickle, Barbara Bark, Eva Hacker, and Bonnie Akins all said site council made all the budget decisions (Interview, April 25, 1996).

### Summary of Waymon High School

As a magnet school, Waymon High School afforded teachers and students a great deal of autonomy over matters pertaining to them. That included curricular, budgeting and staffing matters. Students were afforded a high degree of tolerance, thus making Waymon High School a unique place for them to be.

Waymon High School was two schools in one. African American students attended it for its strong traditions and the spirit and pride of the school. Caucasian students attended for the highly rated academic courses. The academic courses met the needs of the entire student body.

Waymon High School was site-based. The administration and core department chairpersons were considered decision makers. Some of them sat on the site council. All department chairpersons were responsible for their departments in the areas of curricula and staffing. The budget was the responsibility of the site council, which was composed of parents, teachers, students and administrators.

Having been a school for African American students, Waymon High School, one of the oldest schools in the Tentville District, had a rich history. The love, pride and devotion to the school was shown by the patrons, students and teachers by their support of its program and their time, energy, and effort given to maintain the school's traditions.

Wesson High School

Wesson High School was located on the west side of the Tentville, approximately one-half mile off one of the major expressways passing through the city. The school was hidden among large trees and houses in a quiet, old, traditional neighborhood. Driving along the expressway approaching the west side of Tentville, I did not see signs denoting Wesson High School. I had to leave the expressway to find the school; it was crouched in a middle-American, homework backyard village. An outsider would have never known the school was there (Observation, May 15, 1996).

The school was located on twenty acres of land and separated from most of the city by the Ark River. There was an absence of stores for shopping, and people were forced to use the expressway system to find shopping centers and to go to work. According to social studies chairperson Cara Hunter, this inconvenience did not hinder their affection for the community in which their beloved school was located (Interview and observation, May 15, 1996).

Entering the campus from any direction, a panoramic view of Wesson High School would reveal a college-like campus with massive oak trees and neatly trimmed lawns that enhanced the beauty of the community. The community was old, and the houses were smaller than many in other parts of the city. Nevertheless, the houses were neatly maintained, reflecting the strong work ethic of the people who lived in them. (Observation, May 15, 1996 and Sudberry, 1971).

The campus of Wesson High School was comprised of several buildings, including the main school building that housed most classrooms, the administration offices, a

gymnasium, prefabricated buildings, and a football stadium approximately two hundred feet from the main building. In front of the main building were parking spaces for the administration and staff. Large concrete steps led up to the main building (Observation, June 4, 1996).

Stepping inside one of the four doors of the front entrance to the main building, I saw trophy cases on the right and left walls. The school seal was displayed directly in front of the entrance and roped off in school colors. On the front wall was a large, painted mural of an American Indian on horseback, underscored with the words "Indian Pride." The walls were filled with plaques bearing names of outstanding individuals the school chose to honor, such as graduates and civic leaders. Assistant Principal Susan Pauls said the pictures represented the pride of the school and the people who made that pride (Observation and interview, June 4, 1996).

Principal Warren talked about the importance of the school seal. "It is very important to our students. Even though we have links around it, it is sacred to our students" (Interview, June 4, 1996).

### The Culture of Wesson High School

Principal Dan Warren and James Saso, math chairperson, said Wesson's community could be described as one large family living in many different houses. They said there weren't any strangers, and outsiders were easily recognized. Many of the school's personnel were Wesson graduates or were people who just want to be here. For many Wesson graduates, the goal had been to return to Wesson as a teacher or administrator or to work in some other capacity at the school. Wesson's student body was composed of

students living in the area. Students were not bused in or out for the sake of integration; Wesson was the first school in the state to integrate its student body (Interviews: Dan Warren, June 4, 1996; James Saso, May 2, 1996).

Susan Pauls indicated how deeply the community's loyalty to the school had carved its culture. She said, "I am in this building as an assistant principal because I was on staff here for 25 years. I don't think an outsider can do well as an administrator here. It just won't work" (Interview, June 4, 1996).

Dan Warren, principal said, "At Wesson High School, the Student Creed, school alma mater, [and] Victory March are as much a part of student life as the academics and sports" (Interview, June 4, 1996).

"The school is the most important thing there is," according to Cara Hunter. She said, "Monday night was our graduation and it was like a small town. There were pictures of kids from kindergarten through high school. The Vespers service, sponsored by the community, was attended by the entire senior class. It is a wonderful feeling that few schools in the district have such a close-knit community like this. Traditions are strong here; they go back to the beginning of the school. We sing the alma mater, recite the creed. Principal Warren talks about the traditions of Wesson when he speaks to our students" (Interview, May 25, 1996).

James Saso, math department chairperson, said, "We were the first school to integrate; we were not affected by busing. Students live in the neighborhood and attend school freely. Wesson is the west side (of town). Efforts in the past were made to close it because of its small enrollment. There was such an outcry from the community until they



dropped that idea. I live here, I will always live here. My children attend school here; they attended elementary and middle school in this community. Approximately 34% of our graduating seniors attend college" (Interview, May 20, 1996).

I observed many classrooms at Wesson High School and compared the school culture to that of Waymon High School. I did not see "two schools in one"; students interacted in groups in the library, classrooms, the hallway, and the cafeteria, and all interaction seemed to be genuine. In most classrooms, displays on bulletin boards reflected an interest in the students and the school. The advanced classes had some African American students, the numbers small but reflecting the composition of student body. All the student interactions seemed to have been based on the culture of the community.

I asked Cara Hunter to explain student interaction at Wesson High School. She said, "Students in this school live in this community. They have gone to grade school and middle school together. This contributes to their getting along here at Wesson" (Interview, May 15, 1996).

To look more deeply into the culture of Wesson High School, I examined copies of the Tentville School Board Agendas to determine what recognitions were bestowed on its students. The following are examples of the contents of the agendas:

- (a) At the April 8, 1996 board meeting, Diane Mason was recognized as an Academic All-Stater.
- (b) At the April 22, 1996 Board of Education meeting, two students from Wesson High School were recognized for winning the state wrestling championship.
- (c) At the same meeting, the speech team was recognized as 3-A speech champions.

(d) At the May 20, 1996 Board of Education meeting, Wesson High School was approved for the purchase of "Principles of Technology" lab equipment for the science department.

Wesson High School's football fans seemed just as loyal but more subdued than those of Waymon High. There was not a long line of cars, but rather a slow pace of people, going to the stadium to cheer their team. The usual rituals were displayed--the band, cheerleaders, pom-poms, fans cheering for the team--although there appeared to be little for Wesson's fans to cheer for that night. Wesson's team lost the football game by a score of 50 to 7. Nevertheless, the small number of fans remained to the end to watch their team play (Observation, September 10, 1997).

A look at the 1995-96 Wesson High School yearbook, Volume 51, revealed student representation in groups. Snapshots on pages 2 and 3 indicated that the students mixed well multi culturally. Snapshots were of student interacting in mixed groups; some were all Caucasian and some were all African-American while others were a mixture of students.

Clubs and Organizations. Clubs and organizations depicted in the yearbook also revealed a mixture and a separation of students according to various interests. For example, the cheerleaders were all Caucasian; the Key Club had 10 students, of which one was African American; and the yearbook staff was comprised of a mixture of all students. Organizations which had all Caucasian students included the Academic Team, Science Club, Distributive Education, Drama, Speech, baseball and swimming. Students in the campus Red Cross organization and African American Student Association were

all African American. Auto mechanics members were multi cultural, and the mixture of students memberships in NJROTC football, wrestling, and golf represented the student body.

The Wesson High School administration was composed of one principal and two assistant principals, and one of the latter was African American. The counseling staff was one African American female and one Caucasian male.

Community Support. According to school officials and faculty, community support of Wesson High School was very high. Principal Dan Warren said, "You would not believe the amount of support we get from the community. Parents, grandparents, and other family members attend activities at Wesson High School. The support is evident in the \$50,000 given to the school to remodel the gymnasium and provide scholarships to students. The graduation ceremony is one for the entire community. Students walk arm in arm and sing the alma mater at this ceremony. There is a great deal of community support and pride here at Wesson High School" (Interview, June 4, 1996).

Susan Pauls, assistant principal, said, "The community supports all the things we do here at Wesson High School. School functions are well attended by family members-- back-to-school night, football games, homecoming and other activities."

Carla Hunter, social studies chairperson, said, "The level of support is at its highest. People support the school in many ways. Business people give funds to purchase athletic shoes and other student necessities. We have tremendous family and church support for this school. Wesson is a unique place; we are separated by the Ark River, and most people don't know that we are here. We like it that way (Interview, May 15, 1996).

James Saso, science department chairperson, said, "Our community on the west side of town is well supported by community people. Most of the people in the community went to school here, their children go to school here, and they remain here after graduating from High School (Interview, May 20, 1996).

Cherry Eckert, science department chairperson, said, "The level of support for Wesson is at its highest. Business people will donate funds for athletics, scholarships and in any way they can help the school (Interview, May 8, 1996).

Laura Rinehart, English department chairperson, referred to the school as "a community." She added, "A teacher with a negative attitude stands out, as if they don't fit in. At homecoming, former homecoming queens come back each year, the dress is formal, we have a small parade and students participate in it each year" (Interview, June 5, 1996).

Authority Structure. Wesson High School's authority structure is composed of the principal, two assistant principals, two counselors, and one dean of students. In addition, each department has a department chairperson, and each core department chairperson of science, math, social studies, and English is considered as a decision makers at the discretion of the principal (Howell, 1992).

As in Waymon High School, Wesson High School functioned according to the dictates of the principal and superintendent of schools prior to site-based decision making (Howell, 1992). Foster (1996) described this authority structure as follows: "The duties of the principal and assistant principals and other school officials are to obey the directives of the superintendent because the personality of the superintendent is so overpowering

that people want to obey, part of which stipulates obedience" (Foster, 1986, p. 120).

Site-Based Decision Making. As mentioned previously, site-based decision making was a relatively new concept in the Tentville School District. It had been implemented in the 1992-93 school year. Howell (1992, August) described site-based decision making as a vehicle that will ultimately enable most decisions regarding the educational needs of students to be made and resolved at the school site. However, the Tentville School District central office staff had retained authority for making decisions regarding most schools in the district; these include decisions such as placement of trim-off teachers, provision of a pool of teacher candidates, and the allocation of funds to each school (Howell, 1992, June).

Even though the superintendent of schools was in charge of the district, each principal was directly responsible for the personnel in his or her building and thus had some autonomy in decision making. The principal was the instructional leader and was ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school. As at Waymon High School, at Wesson High the core department chairpersons were responsible for decision making along with the principal, assistant principals, and site advisory councils (Howell, 1992, June).

Howell (1992, August) said the purpose and function of the site advisory council is to serve as one component of site-based decision making for the district. The site council is composed of patrons and employees of each school to ensure varying viewpoints are obtained. The basic activities of the advisory council include developing an annual educational plan for the site and preparing a budget to support the plan. In addition,

council members serve on standing committees including building and grounds, curriculum, budget, and gifts and endowments. The site council at any site may choose to delegate these standing assignments or serve as a committee of the whole for any or all of them (Howell, 1992).

Staffing Decisions. Principal Dan Warren said he made all decisions on staffing at Wesson High School, with input from department chairpersons (Interview, June 4, 1996). Assistant Principal Susan Pauls and all four department chairpersons agreed that principal Warren made the final decision on all staffing matters (Interviews: Pauls, June 4, 1996; Rinehart, June 5, 1996; Eckert, May 8, 1996; Saso, May 20, 1996; Hunter, May 15, 1996).

Curriculum Decisions. Principal Dan Warren said that the assistant principal for academic affairs and department chairpersons made all decisions on the curriculum. All department chairpersons concurred with his statement. (Interviews: Rinehart, June 5, 1996; Eckert, May 8, 1996; Saso, May 20, 1996; Hunter, May 15, 1996).

Budgeting Decisions. In my first interview with Dan Warren, he said the site council played a major role in deciding how the discretionary funds were spent. He also cited some problems associated with site-based decision making, for example people at the central office wanted "to retain power and control. However, we have good communications with the site council and other staff members, thus making it work for us at Wesson High School" (Interview, June 4, 1996). Susan Pauls and all four core department chairpersons said the site council made all decisions on the budget (Interviews: Rinehart, June 5, 1996; Eckert, May 8, 1996; Saso, May 20, 1996; Hunter,

May 15, 1996).

In a follow-up interview a year later, Principal Warren provided additional information on budgeting and the role of the site council. He revealed that the school's budget was approximately \$18,000 per year for athletics, "not counting payroll for coaches." To save money, the coaches drove the buses to and from athletic games, both in town and out of town. "The district gives us approximately \$1,000 for music, band and cheerleading; other organizations raise money for special projects; and the district helps out with our (AP) classes, books, training, workshops. We spent approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000 for art and other special classes; this money comes from site funds." He said the site council trusted him to make decisions without their input when pressed for time. "When decisions need to be made and time is running out, my site council trusts me to make the decision. I will make it and tell them what I have done. ... In addition to the site council, we use ideas and suggestions from students, teachers, and parents who are not part of the site team" (Interview, July 30, 1997).

#### Summary of Wesson High School

Wesson High School, separated from the other schools in the Tentville District by the Ark River, is a close-knit community school. Many graduates return to work at the school to carry on its rich traditions. Typically, its administrators are Wesson graduates. The school is site-based. Administrators and core department chairpersons are considered decision makers in the areas of curriculum, budgeting and staffing.

## Chapter V

### Theoretical Analysis and Comparison

#### Applicability of Douglas' Grid/Group Framework

The applicability of Douglas's (1982) grid and group model is evident in the two schools in this study. Waymon and Wesson High Schools appeared to be two powerful cultures. Their cultures differed, nevertheless they were similar in many ways. They both had strong support from the community, students and teachers. Deal and Kennedy (1982) stated that each culture possess rituals and ceremonies, and both were inherent to the students, staff and the communities of Waymon and Wesson High Schools. They each held homecoming as a source of pride; played the school song at football games; recited the school's creed at special assemblies; and performed other rituals inherent in the culture of each school.

Smircich (1993) stated that organizations do not *have* culture, they *are* cultures. This fact was evident at Waymon and Wesson High Schools, in that both were pillars of strength in their respective communities. To mention the name of a school to its staff members and administrators generated an aura of excitement. This excitement stemmed from the community and strong feelings that existed for each school. For instance, sporting events were important and well attended. At each school--more so at Waymon, because it was formerly an all Black school--a history of winning games and state championships in basketball and football was evident. Furthermore, parents at each



school supported their school through fund raisers and providing student scholarships.

Douglas (1982) stated that grid refers to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed formal prescriptions such as role expectations, rules, and procedures. At Waymon and Wesson High Schools, no rules of exclusion were imposed on students when it came to participating in school organizations such as student council, athletics and debate teams. Neither gender nor race were barriers to membership in most groups. Most sports events were separated by tradition rather than race or gender. For instance, the band at both schools were coed. All classes were open to students who qualified, based on past grade point averages and teacher approval for recommendation for said class (Waymon Student Handbook, 1996).

In the matter of curriculum, state law mandated some constraints, for instance the number of units needed for graduation from high school and the required courses for students entering college. Waymon High School was less constrained with its curriculum than was Wesson High School because it was a magnet school, offering more courses to attract students to their campus (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 1996).

Douglas (1982) suggested four criteria to determine grid: insulation, autonomy, control, and competition. In my study of Waymon and Wesson High Schools, it was evident that students at Waymon had more autonomy when choosing classes and in determining how their time would be utilized. For instance, students at Waymon High School who failed to make good grades during any semester were not merely required to report to study hall; they were dismissed from Waymon to attend their home schools (Waymon Student Handbook, 1996). As of June, 1993, the Oklahoma State Regents for

Higher Education outlined the criteria necessary for college admission. This criteria included successfully completed courses in computer science, two units of foreign language, four units of English, two lab sciences, three units of mathematics, two units of history, and one unit of citizenship. In addition, students entering state colleges were required to make a minimum score of 19 on the ACT (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 1996).

At Wesson High School, students making a D or F in a course were required to report to the teacher of the course during Encore time. Encore time was a 30-minute slot of time given to all students prior to lunch time (Wesson Student Handbook, 1995-96, p. 6). Encore was not a "free period" for students. It was not "their" time; it was part of their schedule as instructional time, to be used as needed. Use of this time was to be determined by the teacher or the student. When a teacher assigned a student to Encore, attendance was mandatory. Failure to report for mandatory Encore resulted in disciplinary action. The first offense entailed sending the student home to returned with a parent or guardian. The second offense involve a three-day suspension and being placed on contract. The third offense involved being suspended for that block and possibly the next block. Wesson High School was one of the few schools on the block schedule, in which the students could complete a one-unit course in a semester (Wesson High School Handbook, 1996, p. 8). Principal Dan Warren said, "As a result of Encore, we have improved our attendance rate for our students and their grades have improved" (Interview, July 30, 1997).

Waymon High School was very competitive in academics and athletics. For

instance, students attending Waymon were required to maintain a passing grade of "C" in all classes or report back to their home school, improve their grades, and re-apply if they wished to reenter Waymon the next semester. At Waymon, a coach of a major sport (football, basketball) could lose his or her job if the team did not win games and win state championships. It was a community expectation that the coaches should win all their games and the state championship. No such rule existed at Wesson High School. Winning was important, but it was not as important as student participation. Students remained at Wesson regardless of grade point average. Wesson was not as competitive in athletics; participation was Wesson's goal, not state championships.

Both schools, Wesson and Waymon, were subject to control and insulation that stemmed from school board policy that prohibited off-campus lunch periods. This policy was designed for students' safety, yet the restrictions insulated and to some degree controlled actions of the student body. For example, prior to the closed campuses policy in all Tentville High Schools, students enjoyed the freedom of leaving campus on their lunch time. To students, this off-campus lunch period was their time to leave campus without punishment. At the time of this study, students leaving campus without permission would be suspended for five to 10 days (Tentville Student Code of Conduct, 1996, p.13).

Evidence of a culture that reflected Ellis, Thompson and Wildavsky's study of high grid could be found at Wesson High School. Roles were more defined at Wesson; for instance, it had been said that Wesson High School did things because the community wanted it done that way. The community neighborliness was present at Wesson because

its students were from the neighborhood. Few students were bused in or out of the district for any reason. The same was not true of Waymon High School, because half of its students were bused in from all areas of the city.

Waymon High School fit into the low-grid, high-group quadrant of Douglas's (1982) model, which was evident in the freedom granted the student body. For instance, Waymon High School was the only school in the district that had an activity bus for after-school use. Students participating in any event after school could expect a ride home when the day ended regardless of where they lived. In addition, Waymon enjoyed the prestige of being a magnet school and the best school in the city. Bonnie Akins, English department chairperson, said, "This idea of being the best school provides a great deal of freedom to all students attending Waymon High School. ... T.H. Graham set the tone for Waymon as a magnet school. Under his leadership teachers and students were given more autonomy. That still exists today" (Interview, April 25, 1996). Waymon High School typically received no negative media attention. It was the status school for the district, and little if anything had been done that would destroy that status in the school district.

In grid and group theory, group represents the degree to which people value collective relationships and are committed to a social unit larger than the individual (Gross & Rayner, 1985). Group deals with the holistic aspect of social incorporation and the extent to which people's lives are absorbed and sustained by corporate membership. The goal of group interaction is to perpetuate the life of the social collective rather than its individual member. Further, the strongest effects of group are to be found where an environment incorporates its members by implicating them together in common residence

and shared work, shared resources and recreation, and by inserting control over marriage and kinship (Douglas, 1982).

Lingenfelter (1992) further stated that in low-group environments, pressure for group-focused activities and relationships is relatively weak. Members of social and working sub-groups tend to focus on short term activities rather than long term corporate objectives, and their allegiance to the larger group fluctuates and changes. Furthermore, when group strength is low, people negotiate their way through life on their own behalf, neither constrained by nor reliant upon a single group of others (Gross & Rayner, 1985).

Based on my study of Waymon and Wesson High Schools, it was evident that Waymon fit well within the Collectivist low-grid, high-group quadrant. This quadrant of Douglas' model states that role status is competitive, and rules for status definitions and placement are more stable than in weak group societies. Individual identification is heavily derived from group membership. Social relationships and experiences are constrained and influenced by boundaries maintained by the group against outsiders. Group survival is highly valued. As a magnet school, Waymon High school drew half of its student population from all segments of the city. Academically and athletically, Waymon was competitive. Most of the best athletes wanted to play sports at Waymon, and many students wanted a diploma from Waymon High School for status purposes, especially those students whose parents attended Waymon High School.

Although Waymon's student population was diverse and had differing interests, Caucasian students attended Waymon for its strong academics and African American students attended Waymon because of its history and the culture of the community. There

were some common threads that bound all students, such as love for and pride in their school. In addition, other common threads bound the student body of Waymon High School. These included International Night, a special event held to celebrate the cultural diversity of the student body, and Homecoming, an event which linked the past to the present. Students were proud to say, "I attend Waymon High School" and "I am a graduate of Waymon High School."

Wesson High School fit within Douglas' quadrant of Corporate Systemic high-grid, high-group context. Social relationships and experiences were influenced by boundaries maintained by the group against outsiders. Individual identification was heavily derived from group membership, and individual behavior was subject to controls exercised in the name of the group. Roles at Wesson were hierarchical. According to Douglas, roles at the top of the hierarchy have unique value and power generally limited to a small role distinction at the middle and bottom rungs. Perpetuation of tradition and group survival are of utmost importance (Douglas, 1982).

Wesson High School was separated from most of Tentville by the Ark River, on the west side of town. Residents were proud of their west side status, and their isolation from Tentville was seen as a plus for the community. Students graduating from Wesson High School graduated and remained in the community to carry on the rich traditions of their school. The typical desire of Wesson High School graduates was to return to the school and work in some capacity to ensure Wesson's heritage was carried on for the next generation.

As a community school separated from the city of Tentville by the Ark River,

Wesson's culture was based upon the culture of the community. Students from the community attended grades K-12, went on to graduate from Wesson, and remained in the community to ensure its heritage. Upon graduating from Wesson High School, most students joined the alumni association and supported their school. Students were proud of Wesson High School, and that pride was exhibited through the many things they did for their school.

Both schools, Waymon and Wesson, were site-based, used the site council for decision making, and gave the teachers a large degree of autonomy over matters relating to them.

#### Summary and Final Analysis Interpretation

I began analyzing the data gathered in a naturalistic inquiry the first day I arrived at the setting. I worked from the premise that, as Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 365) have said, the report should see the world "through their eyes." In addition, the writing should be free of the inquirer's interpretations and evaluations in the descriptive segment so that the reader can make his or her own interpretations.

I used several methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Methods included using artifacts, student handbooks, and published articles on the schools' history; making direct observations; and holding interviews with informants, students, administration officials, and core department chairpersons. The use of these resources afforded me the opportunity to investigate more deeply the culture of each school and answer my research questions. Interviews and direct observations gave me the data to validate my research questions and understand the cultures of each school. The

interview questions provided the data to answer both questions.

Both Waymon and Wesson high schools employed a site advisory council composed of teachers and parents for decision making. This empowering of teachers and parents made them stakeholders and decision makers in their respective schools. The research gathered for this study validated my belief about each school in this study. Both schools were site based, employing a site council to assist in decision making in each school. Howell (1992, August) said the purpose and function of the advisory council is as one component of site-based decision making for the school district. The site council was composed of patrons and employees of each school; they assisted in developing an annual educational plan and preparing a school budget. In addition, council members served on standing committees including building and grounds, gifts and endowments, and building committees. They made recommendations on issues pertaining to each principal's school (Howell, 1992). Douglas (1982) said grid refers to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed formal prescriptions such as role expectations, rules and procedures. Table 1 provides a grid/group profile of Waymon High School, and Table 2 provides a grid/group profile of Wesson High School.

In both schools, Waymon and Wesson, the focus of decision making was reserved for, or controlled by, the school administration. They were the school leaders. The chain of command in each school was hierarchal, stemming from one principal, two assistant principals, one dean, two or three counselors, and a chairperson of each department. The core department chairpersons in English, math, science, and social studies were decision makers and were selected for this study (Howell, 1992).



Table 1

Profile of Waymon High School

Collectivist  
Low Grid, High Group

Grid Characteristics

Mandated closed campus

State mandates for attending college

Competitive athletics and academics roles

Students bound to a conduct code

Revocation of student transfer for below-average grades

Cultural role expectation for coaches to win all games

Required maintenance of "C" average in all classes

Hierarchal roles

Group Characteristics

Membership to organizations open

Site-based decision making affords autonomy

Activity bus for after-school activities

High tolerance for diversity

Individual autonomy important

Magnet concepts afforded individualization

Continuance of cultural traditions

Tremendous school pride

School and community support

District commitment to Waymon

Students recognized for accomplishments

Cultural traits binding teachers and students

Band a source of pride in school

Homecoming a grand affair

Neither gender nor race barriers to group

Group survival important

Status school

Table 2

Profile of Wesson High School

Corporate Systemic  
High Grid, High Group

Grid Characteristics

Mandated closed campus  
State mandates for college  
Hierarchical roles  
Curriculum designed for students  
Student actions restricted by Encore  
Students bound to code of conduct  
Teachers with negative attitudes noticed  
Non-west siders not usually hired as administrators

Group Characteristics

Family-oriented community  
Students recognized for accomplishments  
Strong community support  
Strong rich traditions  
District's commitment to maintain Wesson  
Group survival important  
Site-based decision making affording autonomy  
Culture traits binding teachers and students  
Graduates living in the community  
Graduates wanting to work at Wesson  
Homecoming a grand affair  
Neither gender nor race barriers to group  
Group membership important to all

### Authority Structure at Waymon High School

Staffing Decisions at Waymon. Department chairpersons were empowered to make decisions in their respective departments. They interviewed and made recommendations to the principal. The principal usually accepted the recommendations of the department chairpersons as final. Department chairpersons were responsible for socializing each new member to their departments.

Curriculum Decisions at Waymon. Principal Kara Kroger said department chairpersons were directly responsible for the curriculum in their respective departments. "The department chairpersons implement the curriculum and make changes when needed," she said. Barbara Bark, social studies department chairperson, said, "Our school is one of few schools in the district with such autonomy to make decisions in our departments." However, she said, "We need more courses for students who are not as bright as other students." Eva Hacker confirmed that the department chairpersons were autonomous, making "all decisions regarding the curriculum" (Interviews: Kroger, June 20, 1996; Bark, June 6, 1996; Hacker, April 23, 1996).

Budgeting Decisions at Waymon. The site council, composed of teachers, parents, and the administration, was responsible for making decisions regarding the budget, according to Principal Kroger. She said, "It works because it provides an opportunity to share the authority and responsibility with department chairpersons and other staff members" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

Assistant Principal Jane Blakemore explained that site council control of budget decisions facilitated equitable distribution of funds. She said, "When I came here things

were out of control, things were done in a crisis mode. There was no plan of action. Whoever got their request in early got the money to spend, [and] there was much resentment on the part of some teachers because only a few departments got all the money." She said the new administration was doing a better job of allocating the money among all departments. (Interview, June 6, 1996).

### Authority Structure at Wesson High School

Staffing Decisions at Wesson. Principal Dan Warren made all decisions on staffing, with input from department chairpersons.

Curriculum Decisions at Wesson. Principal Warren said the assistant principal for academic affairs and the department chairpersons made the decisions on curriculum matters. Joe Saso, math department chairperson, said, "The curriculum is teacher driven; we have a great deal of input along with the assistant principal for academic affairs" (Interview, March 20, 1996).

Budgeting Decisions at Wesson. Principal Warren said the site council had "a major role in deciding how the discretionary funds are spent. There are some problems associated with site-based decision making; people at the central office want to retain power and control. However, we have good communications with the site council and other staff members, thus making it work for us at Wesson High School" (Interview, June 4, 1996).

Susan Pauls, assistant principal for academic affairs, said, "I have found that you can get things done when people who are affected have input in making decisions. When we receive our budget from the central office, items to be purchased are brought before

the site council and they make the decisions. Because teachers are on the council, things are discussed among the staff before it goes to the site council" (Interview, June 4, 1996).

Carla Hunter, social studies department chairperson, said the site council met monthly to consider budget proposals. "Anybody can bring a proposal, and it goes to the committee and they decide on it," she said (Interview, May 15, 1996). Joe Saso, math department chairperson, said, "The site council makes decisions on discretionary funds that best fit our needs" (Interview, May 20, 1996).

#### Grid-Group Characteristics of Waymon and Wesson High Schools

Waymon High School would be characterized as low grid. Characteristics identified include competitive athletic and academic roles, required maintenance of a "C" average in all classes, and hierarchical roles. Wesson High School would be characterized as high grid. Characteristics include the restriction of students' actions by Encore, a curriculum designed for students, and the tendency not to hire non-Wesson graduates as administrators.

Students attending Waymon and Wesson high schools were insulated by rules of the Tentville School District. For example, all students were bound by the district code of conduct and all schools had mandated closed campuses. They were different in their degrees of individuation. Students at Waymon exhibited greater individual autonomy that did students at Wesson. Both schools were high group environments, as indicated by the following characteristics: community and school support were evident; group survival was important; strong, rich traditions were present; graduates supported their schools; and group membership was important to all.

## Chapter VI

### Summary, Conclusion and Alternative

#### Explanations, Implications and Recommendations

Chapter VI contains the summary, conclusion, and recommendations. In addition, this chapter contains background data summaries; differences and similarities in themes; cultural bias; benefits and boundaries of cultural theory; and alternative explanations and implications, research theory and practice. This chapter concludes with recommendations for further study.

#### Summary

##### Background Data Summaries

To gain information for this research on site-based decision making in two selected schools, I interviewed six personnel from each high school, Waymon and Wesson. The individuals interviewed were the principal and two assistant principals from both schools and four core department chairpersons from each school's English, social studies, math and science departments.

Each interviewee responded to a prescribed set of questions; it was necessary to use probes to gain additional information on some questions. All respondents answered the questions candidly and with a good understanding of their respective schools. I have used pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of each respondent.

Principal Warren of Wesson High School and principal Kroger of Waymon High

School were relatively new to their positions; both were in their third year as principals. Both principals had spent time in the ranks as teachers, counselors, and deans prior to being appointed principals. One of the two assistant principals interviewed for this research had been a principal of a middle school, and she had been in administration for ten years. The other assistant principal was in her third year in this position.

All department chairpersons at both schools were appointed to their positions because they were excellent teachers first, and secondly because they had demonstrated good leadership skills in their departments prior to being appointed department chairpersons.

Every respondent interviewed for this research professed to love their jobs, and each believed his or her school was the best school in the district. Each believed his or her school provided a quality education for all students.

### Difference and Similarities

Differences. Several differences were evident in the two schools selected for this study. A notable difference was in the ethnic makeup of their student populations, a factor that was a result of, and was instrumental in forming, the schools' cultures.

Waymon High School was a magnet school whose student population was approximately 50% African American and 50% Caucasian. Most of the Caucasian students commuted to Waymon High School from the south side of the city. African American students lived near the school, and some of them commuted by bus to Waymon. According to the fall 1995 figures released by the Tentville School District, Waymon's enrollment was comprised of 1,186 students and had the following ethnic

composition: 575 African American, 542 Caucasian, 38 American Indian, 24 Asian, 7 Hispanic (Welker, 1995).

Wesson High School was a community school. Most of its students lived in the west side of Tentville and attended grades K-12 in that community. Wesson's enrollment was comprised of 737 students and had the following ethnic composition: 155 African American, 453 Caucasian, 96 American Indian, 9 Asian, 24 Hispanic (Welker, 1995).

Evidence of the differences in the grid and group of the schools were interwoven in each school's culture. Their goals were different: Waymon's goals were holistic for the district. African Americans and Caucasians from various sections of the city worked collectively to develop goals for Waymon High School regarding student composition and student ratios. Additionally, there were restraints placed on the number of African Americans who could attend Waymon High School in spite of the fact that they lived in the community. No such rule applied to Wesson High School, because it was a community school and its students lived in the community. Wesson's goals were established by its Site Advisory Council, parents and teachers to meet the needs of students at Wesson High School.

In matters of staffing decisions, Principal Warren of Wesson High School was more directly involved in hiring new teachers than was Principal Kroger of Waymon High School. The curricular goals of the two schools differed, as well. Waymon High School's goals were established in 1974, and were designed to develop and maintain the magnet school concept as an answer to desegregate the high schools in the Tentville school district. Waymon High School's goals were initiated by members of the African American



and Caucasian communities. At Wesson High School, the stated goals were: (1) to improve math skills, (2) to improve communication skills, and (3) to improve citizenship skills. They were designed to measure the growth and development of the student body on a yearly basis.

Similarities. In my analysis of the data collected from the taped interviews, I found more similarities than differences between the two schools. Principal Warren of Wesson High School and Principal Kroger of Waymon High School were both in their third year in the principalship. Both spent time in the ranks as teachers, counselors, and assistant principals prior to being appointed to the principalship. Neither principal operated from an autocratic style of leadership, and both principals relied upon the site council for guidance in decision making. Both principals gave their department chairpersons the opportunity to be leaders in their departments.

Both schools, Wesson and Waymon, were a source of pride in their respective communities. Their survival was extremely important to students, teachers, and the communities. Wesson High School, the only school in west Tentville, was the focal point of the community. Waymon High School was the only magnet school in the district. It had formerly been an all-African American High School, therefore its survival was important to the district and to the African American community.

Support for both schools was strong. This was evident in the students' and communities' involvement in the many activities of each school. Support and allegiance for both schools was strong when they were founded and at the time of this study, and it appeared that the strong levels of support would continue indefinitely.

School functions at Waymon and Wesson High Schools were an integral part of student life. Both offered school functions that provided opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities that enabled them to feel a sense of closeness to other students and strengthen their bonds to the schools. Both had many organizations in which students could belong and participate, and in both schools, homecoming represented a cultural linkage of the past to the present.

Regarding the schools' fit within Douglas's (1982) grid and group model, it was evident that both schools possessed more similar characteristics in group than in grid. Neither principal was autocratic; each relied on the site councils for decision making and allowed teachers and parents to help make decisions. The survival of both schools was important, community support was strong, and all organizations were open for all students to become members. No restraints of exclusion were present at either school.

#### Cultural Bias

Ellis, Thompson & Wildavsky (1990) defined cultural bias as shared values and beliefs. Both Wesson and Waymon High Schools held many shared values and beliefs that helped to shape them. The applicability of the Douglas (1982) grid and group model was evident in the two schools. Waymon and Wesson High Schools were both powerful cultures. Their cultures differed, yet they were similar in that they received strong support from their communities, students, and teachers. Deal and Kennedy (1982) stated that each culture possesses rituals and ceremonies, and both of these were inherent in the activities of the students, staff and the communities of Waymon and Wesson High Schools. Smircich (1993) said that organizations do not have cultures, but instead, they are

cultures. This was true of Waymon and Wesson High Schools; both schools were pillars of strength in their respective communities.

Douglas (1982) said that grid refers to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed formal prescriptions such as role expectations, rules, and procedures. At Waymon and Wesson High Schools, no rule of exclusion was imposed on students' participation in school organizations such as the student council, athletics, the debate team, etc. Neither gender nor race were barriers to membership in most groups. And, most sporting events were separated by tradition rather than by race or gender.

In conclusion, there were some constraints mandated by state law that were imposed on both schools, such as the number of units needed for graduation from high school and the required courses for students entering college. Waymon High School was less constrained with its curriculum than was Wesson High School, because as a magnet school, Waymon offered more courses to attract students from outside the community to its campus.

#### Benefits and Boundaries of Culture Theory

Douglas's theoretical framework provides a conceptual lens through which researchers may discover new perspectives on people, social activities, and the expressed meaning and values that are part of cultural research. Furthermore, Douglas's model can help us understand how social roles constrain or confer autonomy, and how membership and collective participation in groups are deemed essential or marginal to social relationships and transactions.

To understand the variances in culture in the two schools selected for this study, one needs to understand the significance of each school to the respective communities. For instance, Waymon High School was a high profile magnet school that required students to apply for admission; it was a status school in which the curriculum was designed to benefit students from outside the community as well as those from within the community. In addition, Waymon's student body had formerly been entirely composed of African Americans, whose support for the school was still unequalled. Many of Waymon's students graduated and went on to enter colleges and universities.

In my study of Wesson High School, I detected a paradigm shift from that of Waymon. Wesson High School was a community school in which the curriculum was designed to enhance the well being of its students, who lived in the community. It was not a status school, nor did most of its graduates attend college; nevertheless, a strong bond developed among its students, faculty, and community. People in Wesson's community loved their school and what it meant to them.

Douglas's model provided conceptual lens through which I, the researcher, could discover the expressed and constructed meaning in a given context. Furthermore, it provided a means of contrast and comparison among other contexts.

### Conclusion

This study on site-based decision making established the fact that both Waymon and Wesson high schools were site-based and employed a site council for consensus building and problem solving. The culture of each school supported these similarities. Ellis, Thompson & Wildavsky (1990) viewed culture as referring to the total way of life

of a people, including their interpersonal relationships and attitudes. I used this definition of culture as a guide for understanding why things were done the way they were at the two schools in this study.

The research questions served as the basic foundation for this research. The Douglas (1982) framework provided a vantage point and a set of lens through which to peer more deeply into the research problem. The research question is: How is site-based decision making, particularly in the areas of staffing, curriculum, and budgeting, explained by the Douglas framework in each of two selected schools? It was evident that both schools were site-based and relied on a site council for decision making and consensus building.

Douglas (1982) identified two social factors, grid and group, to explain the interaction between individual and social environments. Grid refers to a dimension of individuation in which environmental pressures exert enough influence on individuals to make them conform to behavior through status roles and social rules. Site-based decision making was an environmental pressure exerted on individuals at each school and gave teachers, administrators and parents new roles and status as decision makers.

The central office of the Tentville school district mandated the use of site-based decision making, and the principals of Wesson and Waymon high schools developed their site teams from parents and teachers they chose to make decisions at their schools. As a result, administrators, parents and teachers enjoyed more autonomy over budgeting, staffing, and curriculum matters related to them.

According to Douglas, anyone who is strongly insulated by rules and regulations

not of his own making "can nevertheless embrace them willingly and make a subjectively defined autonomous place where he has been forcibly consigned" (Douglas, 1982, p. 205). Administrators of the two schools in this study did not choose to be site-based. However, they were insulated by rules and regulations not of their own making. They embraced the rules of site-based decision making, used them as guidelines, and made them a viable entity of their schools. An example is their site advisory councils, which they formed by choosing teachers, parents and administrators to make decisions for their schools.

#### Wesson High School: High Grid, High Group

High Grid. Wesson High School exhibited grid characteristics in the following: hierarchical authority roles; mandated closed campus during lunch time; restricted student actions; the Encore program of mandatory study time for failing students; the failure of teachers with negative attitudes to fit in with the other teachers; and the tendency to refrain from hiring administrators who were not from the school's community or the west side of town.

Authority roles at Wesson High School were hierarchical, which is typical of all organizations. However, at Wesson High School administrators were expected to be chosen from the community in order to ensure they reflected community values and continued the culture of Wesson High School. Because leaders were selected from the community, a great deal of trust to make decisions was afforded them. For example, assistant principals and department chairpersons were selected by the principal because they reflected the culture of the school. Susan Pauls, assistant principal, said, "An

outsider cannot do well as an administrator here, it just won't work. I am in this building because I was on staff for 25 years prior to an appointment to the principalship" (Interview, June 4, 1996).

Although students at Wesson High School were given autonomy over some matters related to them, the Encore program restricted their lunch time if they earned failing grades in any class. Student action was further restricted by a School Board policy prohibiting going off campus during lunch hour. One of the unique characteristics of Wesson High School staff was that teachers with negative attitudes could not fit in. These grid characteristics insulated and protected the continuation of the Wesson High School culture.

High Group. As Douglas said, "The strongest effects of group are to be found where it incorporates a person with the rest by implicating them together in common residence, shared work, shared resources and recreation" (Douglas, 1982, pp. 201-202).

Wesson High School exhibited the following group characteristics: a family-oriented community; strong community support; strong, rich traditions; importance placed on group survival; cultural traits binding teachers and students; graduates living and working in the community; homecoming treated as a grand affair; and the importance of group members to the school.

Wesson High School was described by its principal as "one big family living in many houses." It was a community school, well supported by the community. This was evidenced by the many activities attended by members of the community. The strength of their culture would be virtually unequaled in many schools; their strong culture was

indicated through their singing of the Alma Mater, reciting of the school creed, and the choice many graduates made to live in the community and carry on the school's culture and traditions.

High-group characteristics were evident in Wesson High School's homecoming tradition, which was to hold a gala affair for the community that featured a parade, a homecoming dance, and the return of former homecoming queens. The inhabitants of Wesson's community were proud of their "west side" status, and they were proud to say they attended Wesson High School.

While Principal Warren made all final staffing decisions, he did seek input from department chairpersons. No constraints were evident. Decision making regarding curriculum matters was by a group. Principal Warren said the assistant principal for academic affairs and department chairpersons made curriculum decisions. Joe Saso said the curriculum was "teacher driven" and that the site council helped write the curriculum goals for the year.

Principal Warren said the site council played a major role in deciding how the discretionary funds were spent. He said that although "people at the central office want to retain power and control," the school had good communication with the site council and other staff members, which made site-based decision making effective at Wesson High School (Interview, June 4, 1996). Susan Pauls, assistant principal, said that because teachers were on the site council, purchasing decisions they were considering were discussed among the staff before they were submitted to the site council.

Although it was mandated, site-based decision making allowed teachers, parents



and administrators to become active stakeholders at Wesson High School. The only constraint associated with site-based decision making at Wesson High School was the idea that the central office wanted to control the power and action at the site level.

Waymon High School: Low Grid, High Group

Waymon High School exhibited the following grid characteristics: a mandated closed campus; competitive athletics and academic roles; revocation of student transfers for making lower than a "C" average; the expectation for football and basketball coaches to win all games; and hierarchical roles.

Even though roles at Waymon High School were hierarchical, which is typical of all organizations, administrators were not expected to come from the community. Nor were they expected to be African American. The first principal of Waymon High School as a magnet school was T. H. Graham, a Caucasian. He was selected for his leadership skills and his ability to assemble a diverse staff in a diverse school and make them one unit to achieve a common goal, which was to make the magnet concept work. Assistant principals and core department chairpersons at Waymon High School were selected by the principal for their leadership qualities.

The two social factors identified by Douglas (1982), grid and group, explain the interaction between individual and social environments. Grid refers to a dimension of individuation in which environmental pressures exert enough influence on individuals to make them conform to behavior through status roles and social rules. Site-based decision making was an environmental pressure exerted on individuals at each school and gave teachers, administrators and parents new roles and status as decision makers.

The central office of the Tentville school district mandated the use of site-based decision making, and the principals of Wesson and Waymon high schools developed their site teams from parents and teachers they chose to make decisions at their schools. As a result, administrators, parents and teachers enjoyed more autonomy over budgeting, staffing, and curriculum matters related to them.

According to Douglas, anyone who is strongly insulated by rules and regulations not of his own making "can nevertheless embrace them willingly and make a subjectively defined autonomous place where he has been forcibly consigned" (Douglas, 1982, p. 205). Administrators, parents, and teachers embraced the rules of site-based decision making, used the guidelines, and made them a viable entity of their schools. For instance, the site council composed of teachers, parents and administrators were stakeholders with the autonomy to make decisions as needed at Waymon High School.

Low Grid. Students attending Waymon High School had more autonomy than students at other schools, but they were insulated by the school board policy that prohibited off-campus lunches. Athletically and academically Waymon High School was very competitive, as indicated by the rule that students must earn a "C" average in all classes or risk having their transfers revoked. Athletically, coaches of major sports, basketball, and football, were expected to win all games and the state championship each year.

Administrative roles were hierarchical, from the principal, to the assistant principals, to the core department chairpersons. None of these administrators at Waymon were expected to have come from the community. Of the core department chairpersons,

only one was a graduate of Waymon High School. None of the administrative staff were graduates of Waymon High School.

High Group. Douglas (1992) said the strongest effects of group are to be found where it incorporates a person with the rest by implicating them together in common residence, shared work, shared resources, and recreation (Douglas, 1982, pp. 201-202).

Waymon High School exhibited the following group characteristics: open membership to organizations, a high tolerance for diversity, individual autonomy, individualization through the magnet school concept, continuance of cultural traditions, school pride, strong community support, district commitment to maintain Waymon High School, recognition of student accomplishments, students and teachers who were bound to the community through cultural traits, homecoming treated as a grand affair, and the importance of group survival.

Waymon High School was described as the showcase for the school district. It was a school that afforded more individual autonomy for teachers and students largely because of the influence of T. H. Graham, who helped give the magnet school its focus. It was a school that sanctioned cultural diversity and offered opportunities for membership to all groups of students.

Even though Waymon High School attracted new students by becoming a magnet school, parents, teachers and the community at large continued the rich traditions that had been established before it became a magnet school. Some of these traditions were the annual homecoming celebration; strong, competitive sports programs; the school band entertaining during half time at games; and many organizations for student membership.

Survival of groups was important not only for students, parents, and the community, it was also important for the school district to meet its commitment to desegregating the high schools in Tentville.

In staffing matters, core department chairperson were responsible for selecting and employing new staff members to their departments. There was no pressure from any authority figure for a department chairperson to employ one individual over another one. Core department chairpersons were also responsible for all curriculum matters. This policy began when Waymon became a magnet school and T. H. Graham gave teachers more autonomy.

Responsibility for Waymon High School's budget matters belonged to the site council and Principal Kara Kroger. This allowed the school to allocate funds more fairly than they had prior to the arrival of Principal Kroger, who said, "When I first came here two years ago, I noticed some cliques on the site council and Board of Control. Some people got what they wanted and others did not. I broke up the cliques by replacing them with new members and more diverse members to represent the school's population and faculty population. I believe we are giving each group a better opportunity to share funds allocated to our school" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

Assistant principal Jane Blakemore agreed. "When I got here, things were out of control, things were done in a crisis mode, there were no plan of action. Whoever got their request in first got the money to spend, some people got nothing. There was much resentment on the part of some teachers because only a few departments got the money to spend" (Interview, June 6, 1996).

Although site-based decision making had been mandated, it allowed teachers, parents, and administrators to become active stakeholders at Waymon High School by being part of a site making team. There were no grid restraints, because the rules for implementing site-based decision making were spelled out by the district. However, there were some group constraints, as evidenced by the fact that prior to principal Kroger's tenure as principal, some departments received much larger allocations of funds than others. At that time, the site council made the decisions regarding which department would receive most of the funds.

In the area of staffing, the effects site-based decision making resulted in the department chairpersons having a major role in selecting new teachers to their departments. This high-group activity occurred more so at Waymon than at Wesson.

Waymon High School. In the Douglas model, Waymon would be classified as Collectivist, which is low-grid, high-group. Indications that Waymon was high-group are that group survival was highly valued, individual identification was heavily derived from group membership, and role status was competitive. Department chairs and administrators had a major role in selecting new teachers. An indication that Waymon was low-grid was that the individual behavior was subject to controls exercised in the name of the group. Because of the nature of the magnet school concept, fewer constraints were placed on department chairs and administrators in order to maintain this attractive feature at their school.

The area of curriculum was a very important component of the magnet program at Waymon. Because of its emphasis on high academic standards, the broad curriculum

offering was probably the most important reason many of the students were attracted to Waymon. As Ara Finkle said, "Most Caucasian students attend Waymon for its strong academic programs" (Interview, May 28, 1996). This feature lends itself to the high-group classification for this school. Students knew that some of the curriculum features were not offered anywhere else in the district. This distinguished Waymon from other schools in Tentville.

Wesson High School. Wesson High School would be classified as Corporate Systemic, which is high-grid, high group. This was indicated by the fact that at Wesson, the survival of the group was most important and the continuation of tradition was a major factor in staffing the school. Seldom were non-Wesson graduates employed as administrators of the school, and many of the graduates returned to live, work and participate in the community. As Susan Pauls, Assistant Principal, said, "I don't think an outsider can do well as an administrator here. It just won't work" (Interview, June 4, 1996). This close-knit school community was maintained through the staffing pattern of selecting insiders. Individual identification was heavily derived from group membership.

Social relationships were constrained by boundaries maintained by the group against outsiders. Being a "west sider" was to be very different from other schools in Tentville, and the staff members acknowledged this as being very important.

The effects site-based decision making in the area of curriculum can be explained by the Douglas model: In this area, both principals afforded the assistant principals and the core department chairs a great deal of latitude in making decisions that affected them. Such decisions commonly included, for instance, making the master schedule,

determining course selection, and making changes in teacher assignments.

Curriculum development at Wesson High School also justifies the school's classification as high-group, high-grid. Survival of the group and the perpetuation of traditions were the most important concerns in the area of curriculum. The curriculum was traditional and composed of courses that met the general education needs of all of Wesson's students, with no major effort to attract anyone from outside of this community. The site-based team determined the needs of the school community and provided a curriculum that was exercised in the name of the group.

#### Site-based Decision Making at Waymon and Wesson High Schools

Site-based decision making, especially in the areas of staffing, curriculum, and budgeting, gave teachers and administrators more autonomy over matters directly related to them. This was reflected in the cultural dimensional factors in each school community.

Site-based decision making at the two schools in the area of budgeting can be explained by the Douglas model in this manner: The Tentville School District mandated (Howell, 1992, June) that each school's site advisory council must be composed of parents, principals, and teachers whose responsibilities included making decisions for their respective school sites. Each interviewee indicated that the site advisory councils were directly responsible for making decisions on the budget. As Principal Kara Kroger of Waymon High School said, "It provides an opportunity to share the authority and responsibility. There are fewer complaints when all of the stakeholders help to make the decisions" (Interview, June 20, 1996).

In the area of budgeting in both school environments, the site advisory councils

and department chairs decided how funds were to be spent. Both schools were high-group, meaning that group survival was highly valued and funds were spent to improve the school programs and maintain the schools' status in their communities. This included the purchase of textbooks and school supplies, and all funds that were needed for school activities. Because budgeting of funds in both schools was managed by the site councils, there were no major differences in the area of budgeting to contribute to the differences in grid classification of the two schools.

However, the culture and history of both Waymon and Wesson High Schools did provide avenues for job autonomy for their teachers and administrators. When Waymon High School became a magnet school in 1974, T. H. Graham set the tone for the school because he believed teachers should be empowered and this empowerment would filter down to students. Teachers and students came to believe they were special, and they were treated as such. At Wesson High School, students and teachers were proud of their close-knit family school. They did not have a need to overcome bussing for the sake of integration, because they were the first school in the state to become integrated. They believed they worked in and attended the best school in the city.

#### Alternative Explanations and Implications

Research on site-based decision making has presented two conflicting premises as means of giving teachers and administrators job autonomy and improving curriculum for students. One premise states that site-based decision making enhances job autonomy for teachers and administrators. Another premise says site-based decision does not lend itself to job autonomy for teachers and administrators because it adds responsibility without



authority. A third premise, which I have offered for consideration in improving the quality for school organizations, involves considering the school's culture.

Grid and group refer to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system imposed by formal prescriptions such as roles, rules, and procedures. Roles, rules, and procedures of schools are interwoven into a school's culture, and the culture of a school exists because of community expectations and demands placed on it.

Alternative explanations for this study have been divided into two categories, research and theory.

### Research

The review of the literature indicated site-based decision making can promise more job autonomy for teachers and administrators at the site level. In reality, studies have shown that the reverse has occurred. Site-based decision making adds responsibility without authority. For example, it increased the workload of teachers by requiring them to attend additional meetings to implement site decisions. Neither school in this study was completely site-based.

### Theory

In theory, site-based decision making works well because the language, "site-based," gives the impression that each site can and will be allowed to make decisions at the site level void of central office interference. In reality, each school in this study was subjected to constraints placed on them from the central office of the district, that is, the superintendent's mandates and school board policies.

Recommendations

In my study of site-based decision making, I realized that all the research data on the subject could not be included in this study. Therefore, my recommendations for further study include the following additional research in the areas of staffing, budgeting, and curriculum. Follow-up research should include a more extensive study of (a) cultural dimensional factors and their relationship to job autonomy, and (b) the relationship of site-based decision making to job autonomy.

I believe further study in these areas will enhance and broaden the understanding of site-based decision making.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

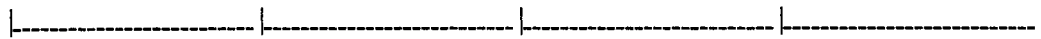
GRID AND GROUP CRITERIA



GRID CRITERIA: CENTRALIZATION VS. DECENTRALIZATION

High-Grid

Low-Grid



5

4

3

2

1

Power-authority is centralized.

Power-Authority is decentralized.

Locus of decision making reserved for or controlled by administration.

Locus of decision making reserved for or controlled by teachers, parents, or community.

Leaders (superintendents, principals, etc.) exercise independent power and control over labor (staffing), finances (budget), and resources (curriculum).

Teachers retain independent power and control of labor (staffing), finances (budget), and resources (curriculum).

Hierarchical chain of command in organization.

"Leveled" chain of command in organization.

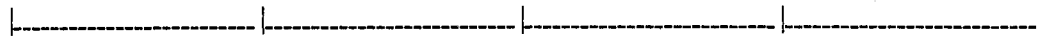
Role/status are ascribed (non-competitive).

Roles/status are achieved (competitive).

GROUP CRITERIA: COORDINATION VS. FRAGMENTATION

High-Grid

Low-Grid



5

4

3

2

1

Strong heritage of common beliefs/traditions.

No (or weak) heritage of common beliefs/traditions.

Ritual and symbol used to affirm group unity are manifested strongly.

Ritual and symbol are manifested weakly.

Clearly defined group membership criteria.

Weakly defined group membership criteria.

Survival/perpetuation of group of paramount importance.

Survival/perpetuation of group of no importance.

Group allegiance is high.

Group allegiance is nonexistent.

APPENDIX B

DOUGLAS' FOUR COSMOLOGICAL TYPES

High-Grid	B Bureaucratic Systemic	C Corporate Systemic
Low-Grid	A Individualist	D Collectivist
	Low-Group	High-Group

Douglas's (1982) four cosmological types are described as follows:

A. Individualist (low-grid, low-group).

1. The social experience of the individual is constrained by group rules.
2. Role status and rewards are based on merit.
3. There is little distinction between individual role status.
4. Long-term group survival is not important.

B. Bureaucratic Systemic (high-grid, low-group).

1. In the extreme, the individual has no scope for personal transactions.
2. There is minimal personal autonomy for the individual.
3. Individual behavior is defined by role without ambiguity and is rewarded only in

the context of role.

4. Group survival is not important.

C. Corporate Systemic (high-grid, low-group).

1. The social experience of the individual is constrained by the external boundary maintained by the group against outsiders.

2. The individual's legitimacy is derived from group membership.

3. Individual behavior is subject to controls exercised in the name of the group.

4. A hierarchical pyramid of role levels exist with greater individual power at the top of the pyramid.

5. Group survival and status quo is of the utmost importance.

D. Collectivist (low-grid, high-group).

1. Same as 1 through 3 Corporate Systemic.

2. There are few formal specialized roles.

3. Role status is competitive, yet because of the strong group influence, rules for status definitions and placement are more stable than in weak group societies.

4. Group survival is important.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_ authorize Gene A. Barnes to collect information regarding our school. This is done as a part of an investigation entitled, "Site-Based Decision Making: A Qualitative Study of the Cultural Dimensional Factors on Job Autonomy of Teachers and Administrators in Two Secondary Schools."

Confidentiality of all records identifying all participants will be maintained.

I understand that participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time.

I may contact Dr. Ed Harris, Oklahoma State University for more information at (405) 584-0300, Extension 7244.

I may contact Gay C. Clarkson for more information at Oklahoma State University, 305 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078; (405) 744-5700.

I have fully read and understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. Administrator – A high school principal or assistant principal, certified by the State Department of Education in charge of managing others to accomplish goals efficiently.

2. Artifacts, non-human – Artifacts can be technological devices (e.g., computer printouts and disks), works of art, writing instruments, tools, and almost any other physical evidence (Erlander, p. 100).

3. Educator – A high school teacher tenured and non-tenured, certified by the State Department of Education. S/he is directly involved in planning or directing the learning process of others.

4. Grid and Group – A component of Mary Douglas model that focuses on grid which is the dimension of individuation and the rules individuals are subject to in the course of interaction. Group is the dimension of social incorporation.

5. Informant – "One who can express thoughts, feelings, opinions, his or her perspective, on the topic being studied" (Merriam, 1988, p. 76).

6. Interview – Prescribed questions – Dexter (1970) describes interviews as a conversation with a purpose (p. 85).

7. Magnet School – A school designated by the Board of Education as a means to

desegregate the school system. Usually, a magnet school population is derived from a diverse group of students from all over the city.

8. Observations – As defined by Marshall & Rossman (1988) "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p. 79).

9. Site-based decision making – A vehicle that will enable most decisions regarding the educational needs of the students to be made and resolved at the school site.

10. Urban high school – A high school located within a town or city, with a population of 2,500 or more people.

11. Site-based decision making is a product of the decentralization process in which the school assumes a greater role in the management of its own affairs. Site-based decision making enables educators at the school to resolve issues regarding the educational needs of students.

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Background information:

- What is your current position in the school?
- What responsibilities are associated with that position?
- How long have you been at that position?
- How did you get your position?

1. What are the goals of your school? How were they established? Who was involved?

What problems, if any, has the school had in accomplishing these goals? How were these problems handled (or overcome)? OR: Why aren't there any problems?

2. How are decisions made in your school concerning budget? How are decisions made in your school concerning staffing? How are decisions made in your school concerning curriculum?

For question 1 and 2:

Who is involved? How are they involved? What problems, if any, have occurred in the decision making process? How were these problems handled (or overcome)? OR: Why aren't there any problems?

3. How would you define SBM?

To what extent does SBM occur in your school? Budgeting? Staffing?  
Curriculum?



What are the roles of students, teachers, and administrators in SBM? How were these roles determined?

What problems, if any, have occurred in SBM?

How were they handled? OR: Why aren't there any problems?

What are teacher awards associated with SBM? How are they determined?

4. How important is the survival of the school to students, teachers and the community?

Describe the level of student, teacher, and community support and allegiance to the school.

How long has this allegiance been strong (or weak)?

5. How are school functions and activities important to the school? Examples?

How are day-to-day activities important to the school? Examples?

APPENDIX F

OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW DATES OF WAYMON HIGH SCHOOL

Waymon High School

8/12/95	All City Football Game
10/20/95	Football Game
1/16/96	Basketball Game
2/15/96	Basketball Game
4/11/96	Observation of classrooms 7:30 a.m. 12:00 p.m.
4/19/96	Observation of classrooms 7:30 a.m. 12:30 p.m.
4/23/96	Observation of classrooms 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
4/25/96	Observation of classrooms 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Interviews - Waymon High School

1. Barbara Bark, Social Studies Department Chair, 6/6/96, her home.
2. Jane Blakemore, Assistant Principal, 6/6/96, Waymon High School.
3. Bonnie Akins, English Department Chair, 4/25/96, Waymon High School.
4. Ara Fickle, Math Department Chair, 5/28/96, my home.
5. Eva Hacker, Science Department Chair, 4/23/96, Waymon High School.
6. Kara Kroger, Principal, 6/20/96, 7/10/97, Waymon High School.

APPENDIX G

OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEW DATES OF WESSON HIGH SCHOOL

Wesson High School

1/24/96	Observation of school 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
2/5/96	Observation of classrooms 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
5/1/96	Observation of school 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
5/3/96	Observation of classrooms 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
5/8/96	Observation of classrooms 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
7/30/97	Observation of school 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
8/4/97	Observation of school 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Interviews - Wesson High School

1. Dan Warren, Principal, 6/4/96 and 7/30/97, Warren's Office
2. Susan Pauls, Assistant Principal, 6/4/96, Pauls's Office
3. Cara Hunter, Social Studies Chair, 5/15/96, Wesson High School
4. James Saso, Math Chair, 5/20/96, Saso's Office
5. Laura Rinehart, English Chair, 6/5/96, Wesson High School
6. Cherry Eckhert, Science Chair, 5/8/96, Wesson High School

APPENDIX H

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 04-27-98

IRB #: ED-98-114

Proposal Title: SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSIONAL FACTORS IN TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Principal Investigator(s): Edward Harris, Gene Barnes

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

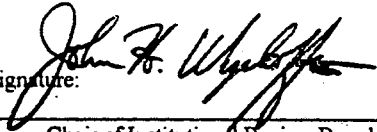
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:



Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Gene Barnes

Date: May 14, 1998

RECEIVED  
JUN 05 1998

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

VITA

Gene A. Barnes

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSIONAL FACTORS ON JOB AUTONOMY OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN TWO SELECTED SCHOOLS

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Enid, Mississippi, April 6, 1942, the son of Herman and Cora Barnes.

Education: Graduated from Allen-Carver High School, Charleston, Mississippi, May 1961; received Bachelor of Arts in Geography from Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi, August 1967; received Master of Education with emphasis in history from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, July 1985; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, July, 1998.

Professional Experience: Teacher of history at Oxford City Schools, Oxford Mississippi, 1967-1971; teacher at Foster Middle School, August 1971-August 1987-May 1994; teacher and department chairperson at Central High School, August 1994-May 1996; assistant principal at Central High School, August 1996-June 1997; assistant principal at McLain Career Academy, August 1997-present; assistant principal at Cleveland Middle School, August 1996-present; adjunct instructor of history at Tulsa Community College, Metro Campus, January 1991-present.