Cumulative Voting Comes to the Amarillo Independent School District

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of cumulative voting in the 2000 Amarillo Independent School District Board of Trustees election. As in many jurisdictions, cumulative voting was adopted to settle a lawsuit brought by minority residents of Amarillo and two minority membership organizations. Using data collected from the actual ballots cast, this paper illustrates the use of cumulative voting by Amarillo voters and identifies which candidates benefited from the new election system. The paper also adds to our limited knowledge of the dynamics of campaigns for local school boards.

Cumulative Voting Comes to the Amarillo Independent School District

On May 6, 2000, the Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) in the Texas Panhandle became the largest government entity to use cumulative voting to elect members of its Board of Trustees. This paper examines the new voting system to understand why it was implemented and how it may have changed politics in the city of Amarillo. Only the first election using cumulative voting is analyzed. A particularly important question is whether or not cumulative voting allowed the minority community to elect one or more board members. This paper seeks to answer the question: did cumulative voting work? Along the way, we will get a glimpse of the dynamics of politics in the city of Amarillo and add to the limited knowledge of campaigns for local school boards.

This investigation of AISD's experience with cumulative voting is important because the school district, with a population of 148,811[1], is the largest jurisdiction using cumulative voting. The state of Texas is a leader in implementing cumulative voting systems, primarily as settlements in voting rights lawsuits. Engstrom and Brischetto (1998, footnote 10) report that by 1997 "cumulative voting is known to have been adopted by thirty-two school districts, fifteen municipalities, and one hospital district in Texas." In addition, there are two significant minority communities in the school district; most jurisdictions with cumulative voting have only one significant minority group. The 1990 Census reports that 15.3 percent of the residents of AISD are Hispanic and 6.1 percent are Black. The presence of two significant minority groups is important to this study because Dyer, Vedlitz, and Worschel (1989, 611) argue, "blacks and Mexican Americans are more accepting of Anglos than they are of each other." The first cumulative voting election also was the first in which two minority candidates went head-to-

head. Did the two groups work together to elect a single minority member to the Board of

Trustees? Table 1 presents demographic and voter registration data for the Amarillo

Independent School District.

[Table 1 about here]

Minority Vote Dilution, Cumulative Voting, and <u>Reynoso, et al. v. AISD</u>

The method of selecting the members of a policy-making body determines the persons

who serve on that body, as well as the policies produced by that body. The Progressives

introduced at-large election systems as governmental reforms in the early 20th Century. Rather

than elect members of city councils from specific districts, the reformers presumed that

representatives elected by all voters in the city would focus more on citywide problems. Looking

primarily at city council elections and using data from the 1970s, a large body of research

demonstrated that at-large election systems dilute the voting strength of minorities (Cole 1974;

Jones 1976; Karnig 1976; McManus 1978; Robinson and Dye 1978; Taebel 1978; Davidson

1979; Davidson and Korbel 1981; Karnig and Welch 1982; Engstrom and McDonald 1981,

1982, 1986; Vedlitz and Johnson 1982). The debate over the relationship between at-large

election systems and minority vote dilution is not settled, however. More recent research

revealed questions about the degree of impact of election structure on representation (see Welch

1990; Polinard, Wrinkle, and Longoria 1991; Grofman and Davidson 1992, 306-310; Bullock

and MacManus 1993).

Many at-large election systems were challenged under the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and

its amendments. The most common response to these challenges was for jurisdictions to draw

single-member districts, so-called "majority-minority districts." Single-member districts allowed

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[1]The city of Amarillo has a population of about to 180,000 people, but the city limits are

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minority groups the opportunity to elect representatives that would reflect the interests of Black

or Hispanic residents and thereby ensure that minority groups would be represented at the policy

making table (Engstrom and McDonald 1981; Guinier 1991). In Texas, most major cities and

school districts adopted single-member districts in response to Voting Rights litigation or to

avoid such litigation (Brischetto, Richards, Davidson, and Grofman 1994; Brischetto 1995, 6).

Single-member districting was not without its critics. O'Rourke (1980), Butler (1982),

and Thernstrom (1987) argued that single-member districts actually harm minorities by

enforcing an electoral segregation and by keeping race a politically divisive issue. Such

districting also discourages the creation of minority and white coalitions, thereby decreasing the

influence of minority groups in enacting policy. The U.S. Supreme Court entered the debate in

the mid-1990s with a series of decisions limiting the use of race in drawing districts (Brischetto

and Engstrom 1997, 973-974). Cumulative voting has emerged as a compromise to correct the

problems of at-large elections without violating the Supreme Court limits on race-based districts.

Cumulative voting is an at-large voting system in which voters have a given number of

votes which they may divide among the candidates however they choose. The number of

possible votes is determined by the number of seats to be filled. For example, four seats on the

AISD Board of Trustees were to be filled in the 2000 elections; thus, each voter had up to four

votes. An AISD voter could cast one vote for each of four favored candidates, or she could split

the votes among two or three candidates, or she could cast all four votes for one strongly

preferred candidate. Casting multiple votes for a candidate is called "plumping." Of course, a

voter could choose not to use all four votes (Still 19993; Brischetto and Engstrom 1997; Mulroy

1999). Using cumulative voting, an organized minority group can plump their votes for a chosen

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not coterminous with school district boundaries.

candidate and thereby increase the chances of electing a representative from that minority group.[2]

Cumulative voting is not a new electoral system. Corporations have used cumulative voting for many years to elect their Boards of Directors (Glazer, Glazer, and Grofman 1984), but its application to elections to fill public offices is a recent development. Cumulative voting as an alternative to single-member districting emerged in the late 1980s when a court settlement in a voting rights case in Alamogordo, New Mexico, called for its implementation (Engstrom, Taebel, and Cole 1989). The only previous experience with cumulative voting was in Illinois where from 1870 until 1980 the House of Representatives was elected using the system. Illinois voters approved a constitutional amendment in 1980 to end the system. Since the Alamogordo case, a number of local governments have implemented cumulative voting. Besides the 48 jurisdictions in Texas, Engstrom and Brischetto (1998, footnote 10) state that the electoral system has been adopted by "four municipalities, one county, and one school district in Alabama; one municipality in Illinois; one municipality in New Mexico; and one school district in South Dakota."

The history of AISD elections has not been completely researched. Experts retained by the plaintiffs in Reynoso, et al. v. AISD (2-98-CV-186-3, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Texas, Amarillo Division) prepared the only available historical analysis of AISD and, thus, this discussion relies heavily on that research. The plaintiffs claimed that there was a history of discrimination in the district "that touched the right of Hispanics and Blacks to register, vote, or otherwise participate in the democratic process." At the state level, Texas employed a poll tax until it was abolished by a federal court in 1966. This poll tax had the effect of preventing

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[2] The literature on cumulative voting specifies that a "minority group" can be a group of

Blacks and Hispanics from registering and voting. Beginning in 1974, the Amarillo Independent School District employed the numbered-place system (see Young 1965) and majority vote requirement. The goal of these electoral system changes, the Reynoso plaintiffs claimed, was to dilute the voting power of minority groups in Amarillo. The plaintiffs' attorneys were able to uncover evidence to support this claim.

Prior to 1973, the district used a pure at-large system to elect members of the Board of Trustees. The pure at-large system is fairly simple. Let us assume that the school board consists of seven trustees and four seats are to be filled at this election. Seven candidates file to run for these four seats. Voters may cast a maximum of four votes, or one vote for each of four candidates. The four candidates who receive the highest number of votes are elected as trustees (see Coleman, Calvi, and Marsh 1996, 198). Young (1965, 18-20) demonstrates one of the "shortcomings" of the pure at-large system, "single-shot" voting. Any group of voters has a better chance of electing one or two members to a local legislative body by voting for only one or two preferred candidates. The single shot occurs because the voters add to the total of only one or two candidates without adding to the totals of the other candidates. If an organized group can get its voters to vote for only one candidate, that candidate has a better chance of obtaining enough votes to be elected.

Single-shot voting did occur in AISD elections in the early 1970s. According to the plaintiffs' findings, Reverend V.P. Perry, a Black candidate for Trustee, was unsuccessful in a 1972 campaign for the school board. He was one of eleven candidates competing for two seats. Despite using the single-shot voting technique, the Black community was unable to elect Rev. Perry, who came in third, about 600 votes behind the second-place finisher. Three seats were to

persons with a minority opinion as well as an ethnic or racial minority.

be filled in the 1974 election. According to the plaintiffs, "approximately eight months before the 1974 election, the AISD school board adopted the numbered-place system for its elections." It also adopted the majority vote requirement. The minutes of the September 10, 1973, school board meeting reflect the opinion of Trustee Carter on the issue of single shot voting:

> [A] particular group, that have an interest in a particular election, gets behind one candidate whether he be an incumbent or a minority race member, or whatever, get behind and vote only for that person and vote for no one else, and this offers the possibility in a close race of affecting the outcome of the election.

Carter then stated that this was a bad practice and that it would be a good idea to change the election process so single-shot voting could not happen again. After Trustee Carter's statement, the board voted to adopt the numbered-place method of election.[3]

The numbered place method is an at-large system, but candidates must declare which seat they are seeking. Voters still have the opportunity to cast four votes, if four places are being filled, but only the top vote-getter in each place is elected. This method of election benefits incumbent members of legislative bodies because they do not have to run against each other and it certainly protects against single-shot voting; the Reynoso plaintiffs also claimed that it had the effect of diluting minority votes. The plaintiffs illustrated how the place system and the majority requirement worked together to keep a minority candidate off the Board of Trustees. In 1980, Elijah Demerson, a member of the Black community, was a school board candidate. He received a plurality of votes against three Anglo candidates, but the majority requirement forced a head-to-head runoff election. Mr. Demerson was defeated by the Anglo candidate in the runoff. In 1994, the Texas legislature prohibited the use of the majority requirement for school elections.

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[3] Trustee Carter was not alone in his assessment of single shot voting. Young (1965, 21) records that a member of a city charter commission admitted that the place system was written into the charter "to prevent minority groups from voting against all candidates but one in order to ensure their man got the most votes."

No Black candidate was elected to the AISD Board of Trustees and no Black was appointed to the board before 1999. James Allen was appointed in June 1999 to complete the term of a trustee who had resigned.[4] Only one Hispanic was elected to the board. Jose Rael was elected in 1972 and reelected in 1978. David Contreras, a member of the Hispanic community, was appointed to complete an unexpired term. He was defeated by an Anglo candidate in a 1990 attempt to retain his seat. Blacks or Hispanics were candidates at least 10 times from 1980 through 1996; all were defeated by Anglo candidates. In 1980, a Black candidate was unsuccessful in a runoff election. The same candidate ran against two Anglo candidates in 1988 and was defeated. In 1990, a Black candidate was defeated by an Anglo candidate and a Hispanic was unsuccessful in a bid to retain his seat. The Hispanic candidate was able to force a runoff, but he was defeated by an Anglo candidate in the two-person contest. A Black candidate ran unsuccessfully against four Anglo opponents in 1996. A Hispanic candidate was defeated by an Anglo candidate in 1996. In 1998, three Hispanic candidates, running in separate numbered places, were defeated by their Anglo opponents.

Shortly after the May 1998 school board elections, two Hispanic residents, one Black resident, and the League of United Latin American Citizens, Council #4427 (LULAC), brought a suit against the Amarillo Independent School District under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The lawsuit claimed that ". . . the present at-large, numbered place method of electing members of the board of trustees of the AISD results in a denial or abridgement of the right to vote of Hispanics and Blacks on account of their race, color, or ethnicity, by having the effect of canceling out or minimizing their individual voting strength." After trying to work with the

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[4]Ricky George, "Amarillo ISD Selects First Black Trustee," <u>Amarillo Daily News</u>, 18 June 1999.

school board, the Amarillo Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Amarillo NAACP) joined the suit in November 1998.[5]

The plaintiffs sought a court order directing the AISD to create seven single-member districts. One of the districts would be a "majority-minority" district. The proposed district would include a population of 20,324 with 30.5 percent Hispanic and 27.4 percent Black. The suit asserted that the proposed district would be "geographically compact and the boundaries of the district follow, to a large extent, traditional districting boundaries such as railroads, major streets, highways and natural boundaries." The plaintiffs and their supporters argued that single-member districts work "citing [Potter] county government's district system that has yielded minority justices of the peace and county commissioners."[6]

The lawsuit was settled before coming to trial. Both sides agreed to a cumulative voting system patterned after the system used in Alamogordo, New Mexico, and a growing number of other localities. The two parties were able to choose a cumulative voting system because of a 1995 Texas statute permitting school districts to use alternative voting systems to elect board members. The AISD Board of Trustees voted 3-2 in favor of the settlement with one abstention and one vacancy. Trustee Annette Carlisle, who abstained, "said she could not vote for the settlement because cumulative voting is confusing, does not guarantee minority representation and can potentially give unfair advantage to cohesive special interest groups." She chose to abstain because she also did not want to subject the district to a long and potentially costly trial.

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[5]"Civil Rights Group Joins Lawsuit Against School District," Associated Press, 17 November 1998.

[6]Melanie Yeager, "Single-Member Districts Urged after AISD Vote," Amarillo Daily News, 4 May 1998.

With a vacancy on the seven-member board, a "no" vote would have caused a tie.[7] After pre-clearnance by the U.S. Department of Justice, the first AISD election to use the cumulative voting system was set for May 6, 2000.

The Presence of Candidate Slating

Among the plaintiffs' claims was that "minority candidates have been denied access to the candidate slating process in the AISD." Because AISD elections are nonpartisan, candidate slating is conducted by a "nonpartisan slating group." Nonpartisan slating groups are "organizations not formally connected to national parties but which, like those parties, nominate a list of candidates identified with a name such as 'Citizens for Good Government'." Slating groups, largely composed of the city's leading businessmen, recruit and financially assist candidates for local offices (Davidson and Fraga 1988, 374-375). In his study of slating groups in Texas cities, Fraga (1988, 550) found that the groups were able to structure the vote in an at-large system to benefit Anglo, middle- and upper-class voters. He also indicated that slating groups lost their influence in cities such as Dallas and San Antonio as federal courts began ordering the creation of single-member districts in city council elections (Fraga 1988, 550-551).

The slating group identified by the Reynoso plaintiffs is called "Business Involved in Our Schools" (BIOS). The group, which does not have a formal organization or leadership positions or a formal nominating process, was "organized" in the late 1980s, when then-AISD Trustee Jose Rael discussed some of his concerns with some of his friends including Don Curphey. In an interview, Curphey related that the men decided that in order to have a good school district there needed to be a good school board (Curphey 2000). BIOS tries to remain "low profile" because

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[7]Chad Johnson, "AISD Settles Pending Lawsuit, Amarillo Daily News, 8 May, 1999.

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"it is counterproductive to stir up a hornet's nest."[8] According to a newspaper report, a number

of members of BIOS signed a letter sent to other Amarillo business owners identifying the

candidates supported by BIOS. The letter called "for strong support of James Allen, Annette

Carlisle, Rita Sandoval, and Pete Smith. Curphey and Rael were two of the BIOS members who

signed the letter.[9] Other signatories were John Marmaduke, president of Hastings Entertainment,

and Jerome Johnson, a prominent local attorney and the chair of the Texas Ethics Commission.

Interestingly, only in April 2000 did the group file a campaign finance report with the Texas

Ethics Commission. The group did not contribute money to any campaign, but Curphey, Rael,

Marmaduke, and Johnson made individual contributions to a number of the endorsed

candidates.[10]

Before endorsing the candidates, the group did not interview all of the candidates. This

caused at least two of the candidates who were not endorsed to be rather upset with the group's

procedures and question the members' motives. One of the candidates, Tate Williams, went as

far as to call the group a "bunch of liberal Democrats" (Williams 2000). While gauging BIOS'

ideology is difficult, the members of the group certainly are pro-public education. Williams, a

businessman himself, confronted one BIOS member and asked about the group's endorsements.

He was told that BIOS decided "it should endorse the candidates" it chose to support (Williams

2000). Based on evidence presented in the Reynoso court documents, the 2000 election marked

the first time that BIOS endorsed a Black candidate (Allen) or a Hispanic candidate (Sandoval).

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[8]BIOS has been very good at keeping a low profile. The only newspaper article found
about BIOS was one published in May of 2000 right before the first cumulative voting election.

[9]Beth Wilson, "Business Group Says It Backs Four AISD Candidates," Amarillo Daily
News, 5 May 2000.

[10]Wilson, "Business Group Says It Backs Four AISD Candidates."

Since 1990, a majority of the candidates endorsed by BIOS were elected. Would 2000 be different?

Understanding the 2000 AISD Board Election

This paper makes a simple inquiry: did cumulative voting work in the Amarillo Independent School District? A number of interesting subquestions emerge from this simple question. First, to what extent did voters cumulate, or "plump," their votes? Trustee Carlisle's concerns about the complexity of cumulative voting causes one to hypothesize that few voters cumulated votes or if they voted more than once, they cast one vote each for four candidates. A second question involves the candidates who benefited from the cumulated votes. The final, and the most important question, is: did the minority community elect their preferred candidate to the Board of Trustees? Did Black and Hispanic voters come together to elect a minority Trustee? A question about the role of BIOS in Amarillo politics has been raised by the 2000 school board elections; however, this line of research is out of the scope of this paper.

Previous studies of cumulative voting have used data collected by exit polls in answering these questions. The present research utilizes a method applied by Aspin and Hall (1996) in their study of cumulative voting in the Peoria, Illinois, City Council elections. The primary data source for this study are the actual ballots from the May election. These data were provided by AISD Assistant Superintendent Les Hoyt in the form of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets on which he identified the appropriate polling place and whether or not the ballot was cast during the early voting period.[11] I transferred the data to SPSS for additional analysis.

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[11]I am grateful for Mr. Hoyt's assistance. My alternative had he not provided the data in digital form would have been to code each ballot by hand.

As Aspin and Hall (1996, 229) recognized, there are advantages and disadvantages to using individual ballots for this type of examination. The advantages include being able to describe how voters cumulated their votes and determine what percentage of each candidate's vote came from plumped ballots. Unfortunately, ballots do not record voter characteristics, such as race or age or ideology. The optimal methodology would be to combine exit poll data with ballot analysis.

Reading the Ballots

Seven candidates sought four seats on the Amarillo Independent School District Board of Trustees in May 2000. Annette Carlisle and James Allen were incumbent Trustees. Allen was selected in June 1999 to fill a vacancy on the Board.[12] Rita Sandoval was recruited by leaders of LULAC to run for the Board. The other four candidates were Anglo males. Sam Lovelady, an incumbent Trustee, ran unopposed for the remaining two years of Allen's term. There was some confusion immediately before filing closed regarding the candidacies of Allen and Lovelady. According to an arrangement between the Hispanic and Black communities, Allen was to run for reelection to the final two years of his term (as an appointed Trustee, he needed to run to finish the unexpired term). Instead, Allen filed for a full four-year term and Lovelady filed for the unexpired term. One explanation was that Lovelady wanted to remain on the Board to ensure a degree of continuity, but that he was not willing to serve another full term. The importance of this change of plans was that now two minority group candidates face each other on the same ballot.

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[12]George, "Amarillo ISD Selects First Black Trustee." It would be interesting to uncover the role of BIOS in filling vacancies on the Board of Trustees.

The AISD Board of Trustees was one of three items on the ballot for most Amarillo residents. One item on the ballot was the election of members to the Amarillo College Board of Regents. A second, more controversial, issue was Proposition 1, a 12-percent pay increase for Amarillo police and firefighters.[13] The turnout for the May 6 election was 12.7 percent,[14] much higher than the 3.4 percent who turned out for the 1998 AISD elections. Of course, most the increase in turnout can be attributed to Proposition 1. Of the 11,541 ballots dropped in ballot boxes within the AISD boundaries, slightly less than 26 percent (n=2,975) did not include a vote for AISD Trustees. This significant number of ballots has been excluded from further analysis.

Texas law provides for early voting (Coleman, Calvi, and Marsh 1996, 59-60). In-person early voting begins twenty days before a regular election and ends four days before the election. About 18 percent of the votes in this election were cast during the early voting period and analyses of these ballots did not exhibit any differences when compared to the ballots cast on election day. Early-voted ballots were marked with the proper polling place number and are included in the analyses of those polling places.

Most voters used their cumulative power and also many plumped their vote for a preferred candidate. Of the 8,566 voters who voted in the AISD election, 83 percent cast four votes, 5.3 percent cast three votes, 8.4 percent cast two votes, and 3.3 percent cast one vote. More than one-quarter (27.2 percent) voted four times for the same candidate, while 4.3 percent voted three times for the same candidate.

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[13]Trisha Capansky, "Firefighters, Police Get Raise by 200 Votes," Amarillo Sunday News-Globe, 7 May 2000.

[14]Beth Wilson, "Allen Tops AISD Voting in New Cumulative System, Amarillo Sunday News-Globe, 7 May 2000.

While several candidates benefited from cumulative voting, it is clear that James Allen was preferred by most voters. He received at least one vote from more than half the voters (51.6 percent) and 7.8 percent of the ballots had four votes cast for him. This finding is not too surprising considering that Allen received the support of BIOS and an endorsement from the Amarillo newspaper, as well as spending over $5,000 in a campaign that included a TV ad blitz. Pete Smith, the second highest vote-getter with 6,487 votes was supported by about 44 percent of the voters earning four-vote ballots from 6.4 percent of the voters. Annette Carlisle came in third by picking up four votes from 3.4 percent of the voters. The final candidate elected to the Board was Rita Sandoval. She received four votes from 3.6 percent of the voters, more than Carlisle, but fewer voters actually cast a ballot for Sandoval. Sandoval clearly benefited from cumulative voting. Her campaign materials clearly asked voters to "Vote 4 for Rita." Table 2 reports the breakdown of voting by votes cast.

[Table 2 about here]

The data also can provide information on who did not cumulative their votes. Looking at the four candidates (Allen, Smith, Carlisle, and Sandoval) who were elected, only 6.5 percent of the voters split their four votes among those candidates.

It is easy to see that several candidates benefited from receiving four votes on the same ballot. Who did voters support if they cast only two or three votes for a candidate? Since James Allen and Rita Sandoval were the preferred candidates of the minority community (actually Allen appears to be the preferred candidate of almost every section of Amarillo), I examine their support more closely. For example, only 2 percent of the voters split their votes evenly (two votes each) between Allen and Sandoval. However, 14 percent cast one vote for Allen and one vote Sandoval. At 2.4 percent, not very many voters split their votes evenly between Allen and

Smith, the second highest vote-getter. Just about 15 percent of the voters cast one vote each for Allen and Smith with the other votes either wasted or going to one or two other candidates. In the absence of voter characteristics, we can learn very little useful information by looking at how voters split their votes.

There are two polling places in Amarillo located in areas with significant minority populations. Both of these polling places would have been in the majority-minority district proposed by the Reynoso plaintiffs. Voters from Precincts 401, 403, and 404 vote at North Heights Center. Precincts 401, 403, and 404 are 62.7 percent Black, 87.5 percent Black, and 10.2 percent Black, respectively. Voters from Precinct 203 vote at Bowie Middle School. The population of Precinct 203 is 65.6 percent Hispanic. Recognizing the dangers in interpreting individual-level voting behavior from aggregate-level data, I analyze these boxes as the Black voting center (North Heights Center) and the Hispanic voting center (Bowie Middle School). The goal of this analysis is to gauge the degree of racially-polarized voting that may remain under cumulative voting.

Racially-polarized voting appears to be present in the North Heights Center polling place according to the data presented in Table 3. James Allen received 827 votes, with 175 voters (58.9 percent) casting four votes. None of the non-Black candidates received more than 100 votes at the polling place. Indicative of a challenge within the non-Anglo community, Rita Sandoval received 71 votes. Pete Smith, a successful candidate in the election and the second highest vote-getter citywide, actually was the fifth highest vote-getter at North Heights Center. His 31 votes placed him behind attorney Jesse Quackenbush who had 35 votes.

[Table 3 about here]

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At the North Heights Center polling place, 61.6 percent of the voters cast all four votes for one candidate (Table 3 suggests the beneficiary was James Allen) while 5.4 percent cast three votes for one candidate. Over three-quarters (78.8 percent) of the ballots cast at this polling place recorded four votes. Voters at North Heights Center clearly understood and chose to exercise their cumulative power.

The voters who cast ballots at Bowie Middle School also exhibit some racially-polarized voting. According to Census data, the precinct is approximately 65 percent Hispanic. Staffers at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund examined sign-in sheets and estimated the voter turnout among the Hispanic population to be about 3.6 percent and that 49 percent of the 126 voters who signed in were Hispanic. Of those 126 voters, only 86 persons voted for any of the Trustee candidates. Rita Sandoval received 167 votes with 36 percent of the voters casting ballots with four votes. Curiously, the second highest vote-getter at Bowie Middle School was Jesse Quackenbush who garnered 52 votes. During the last days of the campaign, the attorney ran a number of television commercials which included a cumulative voting message. James Allen, Annette Carlisle, and Pete Smith, received 32, 20, and 16 votes, respectively. As at North Heights Center, Pete Smith would not have been elected with the results from Bowie Middle School.

[Table 4 about here]

At Bowie Middle School, 44.2 percent of the voters cast all four votes for one candidate while 5.8 percent cast three votes for one candidate. Voters at Bowie Middle School chose to exercise their cumulative power with 77.9 percent of the ballots recording four votes.

The ballots from Bowie Middle School also paint a disappointing picture for those activists who had hoped that the Black and Hispanic communities would come together to

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support minority candidates. The voters' preferred candidate here was Rita Sandoval with James

Allen coming in a distant third. Of course, additional research is necessary to determine whether

it was Hispanic voters who cast the large number of ballots for Quackenbush and why.

<div align="center">**Lessons Learned from Amarillo's Experience with Cumulative Voting**</div>

A number of interesting lessons can be learned from Amarillo's first experience with

cumulative voting. The new election system seems to have worked, with the results better than

the minority communities expected. When the <u>Reynoso</u> plaintiffs began their legal action, no

members of the AISD Board of Trustees came from minority communities. After the election,

there are now two minority Trustees. Of course, one was appointed by the Board shortly after

the lawsuit was settled. James Allen was very successful in earning a full four-year term. Recall

that the plaintiffs were asking for **one** single member district to represent both minority

communities.

Cumulative voting did not appear to be a difficult system for voters to understand.

Minority and Anglo voters alike plumped their votes; however, one has to wonder about 25

percent of the voters who chose not to participate in the school board election even though they

voted on the other parts of the ballot. This fact also points out that cumulative voting alone did

not create a larger turnout for the AISD elections. School board elections are low information

elections. The change to a new election system created a number of news stories and focused

attention on the upcoming school board elections.

Finally, the role of BIOS must be considered in evaluating the outcome of the election.

Had the group decided to support a minority candidate in 1996 or 1998, would the lawsuit have

been necessary? The effect of cumulative voting would have been even more dramatic had

BIOS endorsed a candidate who did not win. The political power structure in Amarillo withstood the challenge presented by cumulative voting.

Research on cumulative voting must continue in AISD in order to gauge the effects of cumulative voting. Three Trustees will be elected in 2002 and the four elected this year will face the prospects of reelection in 2004. The AISD and the Reynoso plaintiffs will have to wait through at least two more election cycles before accumulating adequate evidence to judge the utility of cumulative voting. With two minority Trustees, will the Black and Hispanic communities work together to elect a third minority Trustee in 2002? With the proper organization, it is a distant possibility to elect a total of four minority Trustees. In 2004, Trustees Allen and Sandoval will face reelection. Will the Hispanic and Black community work together to keep both Trustees on the board? With representation on the Board of Trustees, do members of the minority communities feel they have a greater voice in matters relating to public education in the city of Amarillo?

In future elections, organized interests, other than racial and ethnic groups, may emerge to take advantage of cumulative voting, as Trustee Carlisle has feared. Because of the reliance on data without voter characteristics, this paper also did not considered the sizable and growing Asian community in Amarillo. Research on future elections will combine data collected from ballots with exit poll data to produce a more complete picture of the effect of cumulative voting in the Amarillo Independent School District.

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Table 1. Amarillo Independent School District
Demographic Data.

Population	148,811
Percent Hispanic	15.3
Percent Black	6.1
Percent "other"	2.6
Voting-age Population	107,300
Percent voting-age Hispanic	12.4
Percent voting-age Black	5.3
Percent voting-age "other"	2.3
AISD registered voters in October 1998	95,936

Source: 1990 U.S. Census; "AISD Voter
Demographics," *Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, 1 August
1999, p. 7A.

Table 2. Composition of Each Candidate's Support in the AISD Election: Voters Voting and Resulting Votes Cast for Each Candidate.

Votes	Williams Voters Number	Pct	Votes Number	Pct	*Allen Voters Number*	*Pct*	*Votes Number*	*Pct*	*Sandoval Voters Number*	*Pct*	*Votes Number*	*Pct*	Sarzynski Voters Number	Pct	Votes Number	Pct
Cast 0	7,124	83.2	0	0.0	*4,142*	*48.4*	*0*	*0.0*	*5,631*	*65.7*	*0*	*0.0*	6,433	75.1	0	0.0
Cast 1	1,199	14.0	1,199	65.4	*2,656*	*31.0*	*2,656*	*34.9*	*2,136*	*24.9*	*2,136*	*48.7*	1,468	17.1	1,468	44.3
Cast 2	164	1.9	328	17.9	*1,010*	*11.8*	*2,020*	*26.5*	*454*	*5.3*	*908*	*20.7*	387	4.5	774	23.3
Cast 3	11	0.1	33	1.8	*88*	*1.0*	*264*	*3.5*	*39*	*0.3*	*117*	*2.7*	37	0.4	111	3.3
Cast 4	68	0.8	272	14.8	*670*	*7.8*	*2,680*	*35.2*	*306*	*3.6*	*1,224*	*27.9*	241	2.8	964	29.1
Totals	8,566	100.0	1,832	99.9	*8,566*	*100.0*	*7,620*	*100.1*	*8,566*	*100.0*	*4,385*	*100.0*	8,566	100.0	3,317	100.0

Votes	**Carlisle Voters Number**	**Pct**	**Votes Number**	**Pct**	Quackenbush Voters Number	Pct	Votes Number	Pct	**Smith Voters Number**	**Pct**	**Votes Number**	**Pct**
Cast 0	**4,887**	**57.1**	**0**	**0.0**	7,001	81.7	0	0.0	**4,790**	**55.9**	**0**	**0.0**
Cast 1	**2,600**	**30.4**	**2,600**	**48.3**	1,095	12.8	1,095	44.1	**2,274**	**26.5**	**2,274**	**35.1**
Cast 2	**736**	**8.6**	**1,472**	**27.3**	232	2.7	464	18.7	**842**	**9.8**	**1,684**	**26.0**
Cast 3	**56**	**0.7**	**168**	**3.1**	27	0.3	81	3.3	**111**	**1.3**	**333**	**5.1**
Cast 4	**287**	**3.4**	**1,148**	**21.3**	211	2.5	844	34.0	**549**	**6.4**	**2,196**	**33.9**
Totals	**8,566**	**100.0**	**5,388**	**100.0**	8,566	100.0	2,284	100.1	**8,566**	**100.0**	**6,487**	**100.1**

Candidates elected to the Board of Trustees are in **bold**.
Minority candidates are in *italics*.

Table 3. Composition of Each Candidate's Support in the North Heights Center Polling Place: Voting and Resulting Votes Cast for Each Candidate.

	Williams				*Allen*				*Sandoval*				Sarzynski			
	Voters		Votes		*Voters*		*Votes*		*Voters*		*Votes*		Voters		Votes	
Votes	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	*Number*	*Pct*	*Number*	*Pct*	*Number*	*Pct*	*Number*	*Pct*	Number	Pct	Number	Pct
Cast 0	279	93.9	0	0.0	*34*	*11.4*	*0*	*0.0*	*244*	*82.2*	*0*	*0.0*	280	94.3	0	0.0
Cast 1	16	5.4	16	80.0	*62*	*20.9*	*62*	*7.5*	*42*	*14.1*	*42*	*48.7*	14	4.7	14	63.6
Cast 2	2	0.7	4	20.0	*13*	*4.4*	*26*	*3.1*	*7*	*2.4*	*14*	*20.7*	2	0.7	4	18.2
Cast 3	0	0.0	0	0.0	*13*	*4.4*	*39*	*4.7*	*1*	*0.3*	*3*	*2.7*	0	0.0	0	0
Cast 4	0	0.0	0	0.0	*175*	*58.9*	*700*	*84.6*	*3*	*1.0*	*12*	*27.9*	1	0.3	4	18.2
Totals	297	100.0	20	100.0	*297*	*100.0*	*827*	*99.9*	*297*	*100.0*	*71*	*100.0*	297	100.0	22	100.0

	Carlisle				Quackenbush				**Smith**			
	Voters		**Votes**		Voters		Votes		**Voters**		**Votes**	
Votes	**Number**	**Pct**	**Number**	**Pct**	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	**Number**	**Pct**	**Number**	**Pct**
Cast 0	**260**	**87.5**	**0**	**0.0**	271	91.2	0	0.0	**274**	**92.3**	**0**	**0.0**
Cast 1	**32**	**10.8**	**32**	**76.2**	23	7.7	23	65.7	**19**	**6.4**	**19**	**61.3**
Cast 2	**5**	**1.7**	**10**	**23.8**	0	0.0	0	0.0	**1**	**0.3**	**2**	**6.5**
Cast 3	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**	0	0.0	0	0.0	**2**	**0.7**	**6**	**19.4**
Cast 4	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**	3	1.0	12	34.3	**1**	**0.3**	**4**	**12.9**
Totals	**297**	**100.0**	**42**	**100.0**	297	99.9	35	100.0	**297**	**100.0**	**31**	**100.1**

Candidates elected to the Board of Trustees are in **bold**.
Minority candidates are in *italics*.

Table 4. Composition of Each Candidate's Support in the Bowie Middle School: Voting and Resulting Votes Cast for Each Candidate.

	Williams				*Allen*				*Sandoval*				Sarzynski			
	Voters		Votes		*Voters*		*Votes*		*Voters*		*Votes*		Voters		Votes	
Votes	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	*Number*	*Pct*	*Number*	*Pct*	*Number*	*Pct*	*Number*	*Pct*	Number	Pct	Number	Pct
Cast 0	74	86.0	0	0.0	*61*	*70.9*	*0*	*0.0*	*28*	*32.6*	*0*	*0.0*	79	91.9	0	0.0
Cast 1	11	12.8	11	84.6	*18*	*20.9*	*18*	*56.2*	*14*	*16.3*	*14*	*8.4*	5	5.8	5	45.5
Cast 2	1	1.2	2	15.3	*7*	*8.1*	*14*	*43.7*	*10*	*11.6*	*20*	*12.0*	1	1.2	2	18.2
Cast 3	0	0.0	0	0.0	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*3*	*3.5*	*9*	*5.4*	0	0.0	0	0.0
Cast 4	0	0.0	0	0.0	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*31*	*36.0*	*124*	*74.3*	1	1.2	4	36.4
Totals	86	100.0	13	99.9	*86*	*99.9*	*32*	*99.9*	*86*	*100.0*	*167*	*100.1*	86	100.1	11	100.1

	Carlisle				Quackenbush				**Smith**			
	Voters		**Votes**		Voters		Votes		**Voters**		**Votes**	
Votes	**Number**	**Pct**	**Number**	**Pct**	Number	Pct	Number	Pct	**Number**	**Pct**	**Number**	**Pct**
Cast 0	**67**	**77.9**	**0**	**0.0**	60	69.8	0	0.0	**71**	**82.6**	**0**	**0.0**
Cast 1	**18**	**20.9**	**18**	**90.0**	14	16.3	14	26.9	**14**	**16.3**	**14**	**87.5**
Cast 2	**1**	**1.2**	**2**	**10.0**	4	4.7	8	15.4	**1**	**1.2**	**2**	**12.5**
Cast 3	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**	2	2.3	6	11.5	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**
Cast 4	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**	6	7.0	24	46.2	**0**	**0.0**	**0**	**0.0**
Totals	**86**	**100.0**	**20**	**100.0**	86	100.1	52	100.0	**86**	**100.1**	**16**	**100.0**

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