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The Impact of City-County Consolidation upon Political Participation within Rural Georgia

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ABSTRACT

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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M.S.U.S. SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY, 2003

THE IMPACT OF CITY-COUNTY CONSOLIDATION UPON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION WITHIN RURAL GEORGIA

Committee Chair: William L. Boone, Ph.D.
Dissertation dated July 2016

Previous studies of urban consolidations suggest that black and female political participation is negatively impacted by city-county consolidation. However, researchers know little regarding the impact of consolidation upon minority political participation within rural counties. This study examines the belief that blacks and women are negatively impacted by consolidation. This study examines pre- and post-consolidated data for selected forms of political participation for blacks and women over a 19-year period for three rural consolidated governments in the state of Georgia. Three significant findings emerged from this study. First, the results suggest that black political participation actually increases within rural consolidated governments. Secondly, female political participation does seem to be adversely impacted by rural consolidations. Lastly, this study found that the political participation of the general electorate had increased over the study period. A number of possible explanations for the findings are noted and the implications of consolidation for black and female political participation within rural consolidated counties are discussed.
THE IMPACT OF CITY-COUNTY CONSOLIDATION UPON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION WITHIN RURAL GEORGIA

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

WILLIE GREEN III

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JULY 2016
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Thanks also go to my aunts, uncles, cousin, grandmothers, and Godmother for helping me along this journey. Additionally, I would like to pay tribute to Velma Hooker-Green (wife) and Desiree S. V. Green (daughter). Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to the hundreds of unsung activists living in the many rural areas of the State of Georgia that paved the way for me.
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<tr>
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Blacks will have to exhibit considerable more political sophistication and unity, in the future, if they are to maximize their interests or minimize the dangers to those interests implicit in metropolitan government. With respect to city-county consolidation, they will have to be especially vigilant to ensure that they do not trade off long-run strategic advantages for fanciful economic gains and a few more council or commission seats.¹

Statement of the Problem

The merging of municipal and county governments has proliferated across southern states, but there have been no published empirical reports of the impact of city-county consolidation within rural counties on minority political participation. Does consolidation adversely impact the political participation rates of citizens within rural counties, especially the political participation rates of blacks and women? Within the context of this study, political participation refers to the holding of municipal and county offices, the running for elected offices, the act of remaining an active registered voter, and the casting of municipal, state, and federal ballots. A number of concerns have been raised regarding the differential impacts of consolidation upon minority political participation within consolidated counties, yet few, if any published reports exist examining the impact of partial or complete consolidation within rural counties with populations under 25,000. It was hypothesized that, because minority political actors

have not been at the fore front of consolidation efforts within rural or urban areas, blacks and women would disproportionately shoulder negative consequences of consolidation politically.

**Overview**

Recently, rural counties with populations under 50,000 throughout the United States (such as Asotin, WA and Warren, VA) have continued to examine the pros and cons of city-county consolidation. In Georgia, a number of rural consolidation schemes have occurred in counties with populations under 25,000 such as Chattahoochee (2003), Quitman (2006), Echols (2008), and Webster (2008). Additionally, interest in consolidation has remained perennial in Georgia counties outside of major metropolitan areas such as Douglas, Spalding, Baldwin, Bibb, and Dougherty Counties.

In the face of consolidation interest in Georgia, researchers, consultants, citizens, and consolidation committee members have noted the lack of empirical data regarding the impact of consolidation within rural counties. Even more startling and appalling, as researchers at flagship universities have been providing consolidation consultant work for decades and for thousands of dollars, political scientists, public officials, and citizens still lack empirical data on the differential political impact of consolidation upon the political representation of blacks and women in rural counties of Georgia.

Researchers and political thinkers have noted that political representation is a significant element of western political ideology. Indeed, in the *Federalist Papers*, Madison noted that political representation at the national and state level was a contest of power in which the individual could retreat to one or the other to tilt policy preferences in
one’s favor. In the case of complete consolidation in rural counties of Georgia, the idea of balance or tilting may be forever removed for some political actors. In fact, in the recent consolidation of the governments of Payne, Macon, and Bibb County, The Telegraph noted that consolidation resulted in a new racial and gender composition of the first newly elected consolidated government. The newspaper noted that black representation in Macon-Bibb’s government tended to have remained proportional to previous elected seats. More importantly, the consolidation vote was along racial lines whereby more white precincts voted for consolidation than black precincts. In contrast, women did not seem to do as well in maintaining political representation. That is, in the pre-consolidation period women held a number of elected legislative seats within in the cities of Payne and Macon; however, in the post-consolidated government, the symbolic representation of women was embodied in that of one seasoned and former black councilwoman now as the sole woman on a legislative body of nine members. Moreover, some citizens viewed the remaining black councilwoman as a polarizing politician.

In view of the Bibb County gender and racial experiences with consolidation, it is significant to ask: What would happen to black and female political participation within rural counties that completely merged existing municipal and county governments? To date there is no published empirical report or news articles to provide political scientists, consultants and citizens with any clues to the impact of consolidation upon rural blacks and women nationally or within Georgia. Thus, the primary question to be answered by

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this study is: What happens to black and female political participation when a city-county consolidation referendum is successful in three rural counties in the great “Peach State?”

Because of the benefit of being able to collect recent political data from state agencies, Internet images and newspaper articles in Georgia, this study used the variables of holding municipal and county offices, running for elected offices, casting of ballots for local, state, and federal elections and remaining an active registered voter as outcome measures of political participation rates for whites, blacks, and women. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether minority rural political actors were negatively impacted by city-county consolidation within rural counties in Georgia. This study found that blacks and women were indeed impacted differentially by recent city-county consolidations within rural counties under 25,000 in the state of Georgia over the years 2003-2012.

With the recent consolidation of rural counties between 2003 through 2008 within the former Confederate state of Georgia, government reform schemes have provided a natural experimental opportunity to assess the impact of a natural political event on political representation utilizing an interrupted time series approach. Within the past fifteen years, Georgia has had four counties under 25,000 to merge their local governments. These consolidated governments have held various elections at equally space intervals for municipal, county, state-wide, off-year, and presidential elections. These routine elections offered data for the examination of the number of candidates, characteristics of candidates, votes cast for offices and the level and type of elections. Historically, these data have been reliable measures of relevant dependent variables for political scientists in the past. With the implementation of consolidation at various times
in each county, two segments of interests have been created for the collection of interrupted time series data: pre- and post-consolidation periods.

The natural assignments of black and female political actors to consolidated governments have been unexpected and unprecedented in the state. The consolidation of rural counties provides a number of variables on black and female political actors to study in the pre- and post-consolidated periods. Moreover, with almost two decades of data, the natural occurring policy shift could be supplemented by an interrupted times series component to answer this study’s research question. The main proposition in this study is that blacks and women benefit differentially from consolidation within rural southern counties. Additionally, this study argues that minority political actors within post-consolidated counties have responded differently to political events than political actors within post-consolidated urban counties. Finally, the study argues that as with anecdotal reports and newspaper articles of urban consolidations, rural consolidations may also adversely impact women politically.

A number of factors may account for the increased acceptance of consolidation referenda and the subsequent formation of regional governments in face of adverse impacts to minority political interests. It appears that elected officials are at the forefront of recent consolidation movements within many areas of the country. Secondly, public administrators have been very supportive of reducing government bureaucracies with the expectations of gaining efficiencies from local government operations and the establishment of improved business practices. Lastly, and more importantly, state legislatures have become more permissive in merging local governments, which include
changes in requirements for voting majorities between governments in order to have a successful referendum.

Changes by state legislatures in the majority rule concept of consolidation has been important to the passage of consolidation referenda. Indeed, during the 1970s and 1980s, many proponents of consolidation perceived the need for voting majorities in the city and county on consolidation referenda as a major hurdle. Moreover, at the state level, early consolidations occurred under the purview of state officials with little regards to local wishes. As noted by Makielski, “During the 19th Century city-county consolidation was brought about or attempted by direct action of the state legislature, usually with no effort to gain the consent or even the advice of the electorate in the affected areas.”

Some early state legislature consolidations were between the city of New Orleans and the County of Orleans and the city of Boston and Suffolk County. Makielski concluded that “[n]onetheless, circumstances may arise in which legislatures will reassert the predominance of the state’s interest in metropolitan problems.” Thus, although state legislatures have warmed up to consolidation, a change in subnational policy preferences can always derail local community structural preferences within rural counties in states such as Georgia.

With state legislatures bending slightly on the issue of consolidation, citizens requesting more information on the political impacts of consolidation upon political participation has become of importance to policymakers. The majority of early interest in


5. Ibid., 6.
consolidation seems to have come from urban residents within major metropolitan areas. Researchers and consultants have been continuously called upon to examine the impact of consolidation upon urban blacks, especially within southern counties where blacks are geographically concentrated and have been able to gain positions as mayors and county commissioners in view of past electoral discriminatory policies by white public officials.

Studies of urban consolidations have indicated that minority political participation is impacted differentially by consolidating city and county governments. Researchers have found that blacks tend to experience an increase in their symbolic political representation upon the passage of a successful referendum. That is, in many urban counties where blacks were discriminated or prevented from holding appointed or elected office, urban consolidations have resulted in many blacks being appointed or elected to regional administrative and legislative positions. The appointments of blacks to newly created consolidated governments have provided Black Elected Officials (BOEs) the ability to some degree and within socioeconomic constraints to direct resources to black constituents and neighborhoods.

Although blacks seem to benefit from consolidations, black scholars have noted the precarious situation that urban government place upon minority political participation. Political scientist Tobe Johnson warned that blacks political actors must be caution in what they are giving up in hopes of what they “may” receive in the future from elected or appointed offices in urban consolidated governments. Indeed, other scholars

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have noted that blacks tend to lose control over central city services and the municipal policy agenda with the creation of a consolidated urban government. Moreover, researchers have noted that urban consolidations have resulted in blacks being regulated to a minority status within an impotent minority political association (i.e., black political actors within a coalition of weakening and abandoning white Democrats). Additionally, print media, the Internet and anecdotal reports have indicated that female office holding and electoral success have been negatively affected by consolidations within urban counties.

The debate regarding the relationship between race, gender and consolidation is important for a number of reasons. First, the debate is important in regards to race relations within American cities as whites and middle class individuals have moved increasingly to the suburbs resulting in residential segregation of various regions of the country. Secondly, the debate is important for the provision and financing of public services whereby suburban residents are sometimes perceived as supporting and/or subsidizing poorer central city residents. Finally, understanding the impact of consolidation is important in view of the political representation that blacks, Latinos, and women have acquired since the 1960s within many urban and rural areas, which may be undermined by regional governance.

Since the 1970s, scholars have made numerous attempts to understand political impacts of city-county consolidation on black and female political interests, which concentrated more often on aspects of voting and representation at the local level while neglecting state and national politics. Political scientists have contributed greatly to elite and rank-and-file citizens’ knowledge base regarding urban consolidation and its
execution, planning, and evaluation. This study is an extension of those efforts by political scientists to understand and expand the knowledge about consolidations’ political impacts through the utilization of interrupted times series data on selected aspects of political participation.

In addition to the importance of the debate on consolidation, public and private entities have invested considerable time and effort in understanding and promulgating consolidations. Special interest groups such as the League of Women Voters (LWV) have conducted voter education forums in communities experiencing consolidation efforts in view of the potential negative impact upon women.\(^8\) On the public side, federal authorities, state legislatures, and county commissions have shown interests in consolidation by committing thousands of tax payer hours and dollars to consolidation efforts. Indeed, many states have conducted community outreach sessions to explore and explain city-county consolidation to their citizens.

Researchers and journalists have noted that consolidation studies by universities and private organizations have cost tax payers and non-profit organizations upwards of $50,000 per study.\(^9\) In the past, organizations such as the Ford Company and the Sloan Foundation have provided seed money to study and assist consolidated governments, but have yet to fund groups opposing consolidation. Private organizations, especially local chambers of commerce, have also been involved in examining and promoting consolidations. Irrespective of how consolidations are funded or promoted, consolidation

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attempts have often neglected to calculate the expended political will and/or social capital of participants and groups involved in seeking to maintain influence or power within their communities.

From the examination of urban consolidation politics, two major strands of theory seem to have dominated the early literature on consolidation. Some of the earliest advocates of consolidation were associated with the Progressive Movement in the United States from the late nineteenth century to the closing of WWI. During this period, a number of individuals and groups attempted to bring attention to the plight of those caught in the industrial development of the country. More politically, reformers also attempted to change the structure, nature, and operations of local governments to wrest control of power from political machines within metropolitan areas.\textsuperscript{10} As noted by Schaffer, Streb, and Wright, “[t]he goal of the Progressives was to remove party politics from the local level, which would cripple the machines’ powers and make municipal government more responsive to the citizens.”\textsuperscript{11} Thus, according to Progressives ideology, good government (i.e., city-county consolidation) could be practiced with structural changes and a cadre of morally conscious citizens.

More recent ideas of the progressives in terms of city-county consolidation have been taken up principally by white male elected officials and white male public administrators with the assistance of male BOEs. This second strand of consolidation ideology has it emphasis in consolidating government for the efficient promotion of


economic concerns. These more recent proponents of consolidation cast their arguments in terms of government accountability, service delivery, and enhanced business processes. Moreover, post-progressive proponents of consolidation seem to concentrate on the financing of public services. By concentrating the consolidation agenda on the impact of consolidation on financing public services, policy entrepreneurs (i.e., future mayors or councilmen) are able to dominate the public agenda and neglect power and decision making components of consolidated governments. Moreover, these progressive brethren have indicated that consolidation may help citizens to hold elected and appointed officials accountable for their public actions and decisions. Journalistic accounts of consolidations have noted that government officials and policy entrepreneurs often note that consolidating local governments would allow communities to speak as one voice on various economic issues or what Banfield and Wilson in *City Politics* once referred to as “public regarding projects.”  

In following both strands of consolidation ideology, a chorus of writers and researchers has examined a number of factors associated with voters’ opposition or support for consolidation. Many of these early studies neglected the political power aspects of structural changes and the adverse impact that consolidation may have on selected political actors and minority interests.

For all of their many differences, early assumptions and theories of consolidation were of urban areas with very little being published on rural regions within states such as Georgia. More recently, this oversight in the literature has slowly begun to shift in the

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late 1980s. Within the United States, citizens in the South have shown the most interest in consolidation. Since the first consolidation of New Orleans-Orleans Parish in 1805, southern states such as Georgia have indicated tremendous interests in their pursuit of consolidation referenda. In fact, Georgia has accounted for more than twenty percent of the major consolidation efforts since 1950.\(^{13}\) With the 2012 consolidation of the city of Macon, city of Payne, and Bibb County, Georgia has pulled ahead of the southern states of Florida, Tennessee, and Kentucky in having the most consolidation attempts and governments since 1970.\(^{14}\) Indeed, Georgia’s counties have attempted more consolidations than the combined total of all Midwestern states.\(^{15}\)

The numerous attempts and successes of consolidation in Georgia have not occurred without controversies. Issues surrounding racism, government efficiency, and economic development have figured prominently in consolidation attempts in the state with much less being said about gender and consolidation. Thus, with Georgia’s seminal role in black oppression, the potential influence of consolidation upon black political, economic, and social development could be devastating.

Issues surrounding consolidation and black political representation may have merit within historical incidents and legal processes surrounding consolidation campaigns within Georgia. Consider for example, that in the consolidation of the city of Columbus and Muscogee County, the committee to form a regional government did not have blacks


\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 13.
as standing members although blacks represented more than 35 percent of the county’s residents. The marginalization of blacks in consolidation efforts in Georgia continued with campaigns to consolidate the city of Athens, host city of the flagship University of Georgia, and Clarke County. During consolidation efforts in Clarke, few blacks were appointed or allowed to serve on consolidation committees. Even in the city of Augusta, many blacks believed that the four consolidation attempts in Richmond County were due to the perception that blacks could soon control the city and thus “prescribe” the operation of the region and the nationally known Masters Golf Tournament now who want that to have occurred.  

Many black residents within southern counties have opposed consolidation on the grounds of voter dilution and not public service provisions. The long fought rights set forth in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) have provided blacks with legal footing to elect black municipal and county officials within Georgia. Indeed, as a result of the VRA, black representation increased significantly from a few hundred elected officials to thousands of blacks being elected to municipal and county offices for the first time in Georgia. More recently, changes in provisions of the VRA have altered the need for many former Confederate states to seek preclearance from the US Department of Justice for voter or election laws changes that may adversely impact black proportional or symbolic representation within southern counties.  

In addition to blacks’ concern over consolidated government, the merger of local governments fundamentally alters power relations within a given political setting, which the financing of public services does not consider. Institutional arrangements are important in structuring political actions and activities. Consolidated governments in comparison to municipal or county governments have very different implications for converting public and private interests into public policies. For example, the consolidated government of Jacksonville-Duval County has a council composed of nineteen members whereas in the past the city of Jacksonville and Duval County had independent structures accountable to smaller electorates. Further, studies of the potential fiscal impacts of consolidation have often noted that consolidated governments will generally have larger budgets than previously fragmented governments. These larger budgets have sometimes increased conflict over local government allocation. On the other hand, researchers have also indicated that consolidated regions are perceived to provide citizens with a greater degree of clarity into the job performance of local elected officials, which has often received mixed reviews from black residents regarding service provisions.

Significance of the Study

This study has a number of significant attributes. First, it is a study of rural counties with small populations within rural consolidated counties. Secondly, it is a study of counties that have completely merged all of their respective governments into a single entity unlike the counties of Jacksonville-Duval (1957), Indianapolis-Marion.

(1970), and Louisville-Jefferson (2000) that allowed a number of municipalities, boards
and commissions to remain independent within their borders. This study is significant
also in that it provides data on consolidated counties outside of metropolitan areas in
which most successful consolidations have occurred.\textsuperscript{19} Thirdly, this study is of
consolidated counties in the Sunbelt region undergoing significant political, social and
economic changes (e.g., political incorporation of women, blacks, and Latinos and
deindustrialization of the U.S. economy). Also, this study may provide insight for public
administrators and citizens as to potential moderating factors influencing and affecting
the relationship between government efficiency and political integration. Finally, this
study is important in its examination of the political behavior of women within pre- and
post-consolidated counties, which may be the first of its kind in the U.S. in providing data
on gender and consolidation.

\textbf{Study Contentions}

This study aims to contribute theoretically and empirically to the consolidation
literature by examining potential political impacts of consolidation upon minority
political participation within southern counties. This study contends that consolidation is
principally undertaken for the purpose of maintaining the power and/or influence of
private interests, particularly propertied interests, within state controlled institutions,
processes, and structures. Moreover, this study asserts that because of the “history, spirit,
and nature” of democratic thought in the United States, non-propertied interests in
counties do benefit indirectly from regionalization and/or political integration in the early

\textsuperscript{19} Leland, “City-County Consolidation,” http://www.ipsr.ku. edu/conferen.
implementation stage of city-county consolidation. Finally, this study assumes that population size matters in the participation of politics within small consolidated regions in comparison to urban counties.

**Limitations of the Study**

The findings from this study should be considered in light of a number of research constraints. First, this study will focus primarily on consolidation efforts that have occurred within the past two decades within Georgia. This limitation is accepted because of the availability of electronic data and the naturally occurring event of city-county consolidation in the state. Secondly, because of the lack of information on what Dye has called “community political systems” affected by consolidations, this study will be principally be concerned with examining consolidations within counties with a population of less than 25,000.20 Thirdly, because of the general trend of consolidation efforts principally occurring in low occupant counties with few municipalities, the study will be concern primarily with consolidation efforts occurring in the south. Fourth, this study does not attempt to account for idiosyncratic effects of various elections within the consolidated counties. Additionally, this study does not attempt to account for the variation in active voter data resulting from various registration regulations or environmental changes that may have occurred within Georgia. As with previous studies of political participation, the current study also neglects to take into consideration the influence of “individual-level variables—education, homeownership, income, and so on” that may affect minority political participation within pre- and post-consolidated

governments. Lastly, this study was principally concerned with examining available aggregate level political data.

**Purpose of the Study**

With the above research caveats in place, the main purpose of the study was to take advantage of a unique natural political opportunity, using a quasi-experimental design and interrupted time series analysis, to assess the impacts of city-county consolidation within rural counties on selected forms of black and female political participation rates. To our knowledge, this is the first study examining impacts of consolidation in the South and in rural Georgia counties specifically.

Studies utilizing time series data has a number of advantages. The strength of interrupted time series design is in the usage of retrospective routinely collected political data that minimizes participant reaction and researcher bias. The gathering of data before and after the natural political event also allowed for the accounting of secular trends over the study periods. More specifically, the study attempted to investigate whether city-county consolidation decreases minority political participation rates within rural Georgia counties. To answer this question, this study will (1) explore black, white and female office holding, electoral participation and voter registration rates within pre-consolidated municipal and county governments; (2) compare black, white, and female office holding, electoral participation and voter registration rates between pre-consolidated and post-consolidated governments at the county level; lastly, (3) describe aggregate votes cast for pre- and post-consolidated state, off-year, and presidential elections at the county level.

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We hypothesized that, as minority groups, blacks and women would be more adversely impacted by city-county consolidation within rural counties in Georgia. Further, it was expected that these adverse impacts may be experienced differentially with female political participation rates being disproportionately impacted within consolidated rural counties in Georgia.

**Presentation of Research**

The next section of this study examines literature related to city-county consolidation, political representation, urban and rural politics, gender politics, and economic development. The first part of the literature review examines reports, empirical studies, website, and books related to city-county consolidation and race. The second part of the literature review places more emphasis on general findings and conclusions within the city-county consolidation literature. Lastly, the literature review is followed by a discussion of the study’s research methodology.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A constitution [municipal charter] is not just a written document or a thing of today only. It is a body of ever-changing basic rules of government. It is an essential part of the historic development and traditions of the people. It is developed by the leaders and forces in society that are dominant at the time, in the light of the needs they feel, the ideas they hold, and the intentions they express for improving the government.¹

In every instance of city-county consolidation in the South, white political power and influence have increased. In contrast, researchers have reported that black voting strength has been diluted and that changes in black political representation have been mixed in consolidated counties. Over the past two decades, the majority of successful consolidations have occurred in the South and outside of major metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, there is a void in the consolidation literature regarding the political impacts of consolidation within rural southern counties. Thus, based on a review of the urban consolidation literature, a number of analytical propositions have been derived predicting potential political impacts of consolidation upon the political participation of blacks and women within rural southern counties. These propositions will provide empirical data to answer the primary research question: How have blacks experienced political life within selected rural consolidated governments in a southeastern state? The review is primarily concerned with three proxies of political participation: (1) voter registration, (2) number of elected officials, and (3) votes cast (i.e., local, state, federal elections).

Because of the complex interactions between race, economics, and politics, the literature review is limited in some ways and expanded in numerous other ways. First, the review is limited to consolidation articles and studies covering the period 1950 from 2012. Secondly, the literature is principally concerned with consolidations occurring in the South. Beyond these limitations, studies in the review are an eclectic mixture of academic fields. The review is also inclusive of research on cities and counties of various population sizes that have consolidated governments, created governmental consolidation committees, or executed a consolidation referendum.

In researching the political impacts of consolidation, the review first examines and identifies political actors and events associated within pre-consolidated local governments. Next, the review discusses socioeconomic conditions and factors associated with voter registration, voter turnout, and elected public officials. Third, the review examines the post-consolidation scholarship and other literatures related to political boundary changes. Finally, the review is summarized and critically examined for the present study.

**Pre-Consolidation, Rural Government, Public Office, and Elections**

A number of articles, reports, and studies have extolled the sometimes dire and problematic issues facing cities prior to a consolidation attempt. Booth noted in an attempt to consolidate Nashville-Davidson County that “the tax base was being eroded by the large percentage of low-income Negroes living in the city who generally contributed little to property tax” as a major metropolitan issue.  

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indicated that political corruption and the sewer issue were two major impetuses for consolidation. However, consolidation efforts in rural areas have not been plagued by similar urban impetuses for governmental reorganization. More importantly, political analysts have yet to ask the serious question in the words of Charles R. Adrian: To what extent has appeals to “anxieties and aspirations” been used to justify consolidation?

In the absence of political or psychological concerns, more recent attempts at consolidation, especially that of rural southern counties, have attempted to exploit expected efficiencies to be gained from the reductions in local governmental structures and operations. In a report, the Stennis Institute stated that “At the forefront of any discussion on city-county consolidation is the idea that consolidation of local governmental units operating within the same geographic area creates greater economies of scale, and that in general save the taxpayer money.” In a recent article, it was noted that Douglas County, Nebraska, “closed 166 of 353 polling precincts just weeks before the May 5 primary” and that this move allowed the county to “save $115,000” in view of concerns expressed by Nebraska’s Republican Secretary of State. During a hearing on the U.S. Farm Bill, Georgia U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss noted that during “the past decade, the U.S. population has increased by a national average of 9.1 percent, but rural

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counties gained only 2.9 percent. Couple this with state budget short-falls and broader global economic conditions, and you quickly realize how rural areas are struggling to create jobs, provide sufficient services and avoid out-migration.”

The outmigration of citizens in rural areas has had a significant impact on voter participation and turnout. An ongoing debate amongst political scientists has been the relative political participation rates of urban and rural voters. Pitkin defined political representation as “acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner that is responsive to them.” This definition indicates that elected officials and their constituencies have mutual obligations to one another. This symbiotic relationship may not always be reflected in representative bodies as a result of political participation. In the Federalist Papers, Alexander Hamilton expressed concern for political representation in the new republic beyond the interests of landowners. Yet, since the founding of the American democratic experience, Native Americans, women, and blacks have historically faced a number of obstacles in achieving Pitkin’s and Hamilton’s views of political representation. The representation of minorities in governmental affairs has been made even more difficult by the regional location and level of governmental and bureaucratic operations.


Within various aspects of government, political interests have been represented through elected officials in a number of ways. Researchers have identified four common types of political representation: (1) formal, (2) substantive, (3) symbolic and (4) descriptive.\(^\text{10}\) Formal representation may be viewed as political representation of a group of individuals based on jurisdictional boundaries. A second form of political representation is called substantive representation. Substantive representation is concerned with an elected official actually serving the needs of the represented through resulting public policy preferences. Researchers have noted that substantive representation may occur on two fronts: First, elected officials may act as a trustee, in which his views on public policies are dictated by personal values among other factors. Second, elected officials may act as a delegate, whereby he or she conforms to a known majority view of their constituency. Symbolic representation is a third form of political representation in which representation is promoted by psychological beliefs between the elected and the represented through public policies or positions taken on community issues. A final form of political representation, especially important to the present research, is descriptive representation. Mansbridge describes descriptive representation as “individuals who in their own backgrounds mirror some of the more frequent experiences and outward manifestations of belonging to the group.”\(^\text{11}\)

Some studies have been critical of the ideas and functions of descriptive representation. Swain, Reed, and Thernstrom and Thernstrom have argued that


descriptive representation may also blind communities of interests to the ineffective political influence and/or power of their descriptive elected officials, especially minority officials. Nevertheless, researchers still maintain that descriptive representation engenders a higher level of trust for the political system when elected officials display characteristics similar to those that they are supposed to be representing. Indeed, aspects of the U.S. Constitution entail descriptive representation regarding qualifications for U.S. Presidents. Regardless of the form of political representation, voters are affected when boundaries are enlarged or erased within local consolidated governments.

**Pre-Consolidation, Voter Turnout, and Spatial Location**

In general, studies of political representation and voter turnout suggest that in some cases rural voter participation exceeds urban voter participation. Monroe, in a study controlling for selected socioeconomic variables, found higher levels of voter turnout in rural areas of Indiana than in urban areas of the state and similarly, Robinson and Standing found higher levels of voter turnout in rural areas than in urban areas of Illinois. Still others have found merit in both sides of the debate and have found weak relationships for the urban/rural political participation argument. Nevertheless, it

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appears that the assumption that political participation is higher in urban areas than rural areas has remained entrenched in the political science literature.

In order to achieve parity in urban and rural political participation, researchers have suggested a number of factors that may improve voter turnout. In California, Hajnal found that “less out-sourcing of city services, the use of direct democracy, and more control of elections by the elected as opposed to appointed officials” could increase voter turnout. On the other hand, consolidation proponents have argued that rural areas could save tax revenues associated with elections and other operations by merging governments in view of state budget cuts. But as Banfield and Wilson have noted, efficiencies in government sometimes run afoul of the policy preferences and self-interests of rank-and-file voters. Indeed, what consolidation reformers have assumed to be inefficient governmental operations in decentralized governments, may well suit the desires of suburban, urban, and rural voters. This may be evidenced in the dismal outcomes of consolidation efforts and lack of elite support.

Although spatial location and policy preference affect political participation, the socioeconomic model has preeminence within the social science and on Main Street in explaining voting behaviors. The model maintains that higher socioeconomic status (SES) individuals are more likely to engage in political affairs than low SES individuals. The SES model may be significant in understanding impacts of

18. Banfield and Wilson, City of Politics, 9.
consolidation, in that a number of scholars have noted that consolidation movements are principally driven by middle-class reformers and supported or refuted by community elites. On the other hand, economists have also viewed consolidation as a redistributive policy rather than an economic development policy supported by non-property owners. Nevertheless, social class and resources are important to political participation. In a regression analysis of an open-space referendum within urban and rural municipalities in New Jersey, in which five socioeconomic status variables were compared to the level of support and level of voting, researchers found that “the most predictive variable” in the SES model “was driven by high-income, rapidly developing wealth belt communities.”

Although ingrained in such works as Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality, the SES model has seen a number of challenges to its preeminent position as it relates to racial, ethnic, and gender politics. Piven and others cited numerous efforts in which working-class blacks and Latinos overcame voter suppression efforts by Republican and Democratic officials in numerous local and state

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elections. Still, it seems viable that low SES individuals and rural communities may be marked by low rates of political participation regarding local government reform and thus susceptible to Adrian’s “anxieties and aspirations” theory of city-county consolidation.

In rural areas these anxieties may be exploited by politicians and the media utilizing political cues associated with rural communities. According to McKee in a study of rural and non-rural voters in presidential elections, “Compared to non-rural voters, rural voters are less likely to be racially/ethnically diverse, older, less educated, lower income, more likely to be married, more male for two elections, more Protestant and other Christians (but less Catholic), and more conservative and less liberal.”

In sum, political participation in rural southern counties is often impacted by democratic assumptions, historical relationships, and socioeconomic factors that may result in higher voter turnout and candidate selection. Moreover, the rural character of southern counties in which value voting is important may engender a marked degree of political participation, especially when elections have viable conservative or Republican candidates. Nevertheless, SES has been important in accounting for voting behaviors among working-class voters and the poor. Thus, taken collectively, the above studies suggest the first analytical proposition to be examined: Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities (P1A) will be characterized by low rates of voter turnout. Pre-consolidated rural southern counties (P1B) will be characterized by low rates of voter turnout.


Pre-Consolidation, Incumbency, and Electoral Competition

Studies of urban consolidations suggest that consolidation efforts are the results of multiple communities of interests jockeying for political legitimacy to control the public agenda and governmental resources, especially middle-class control. It has been cited that blacks, as well as urban business interests, stand to gain enhanced political influence and/or power from consolidating local governments. More importantly, it has also been argued that in some communities that consolidation could be and has been used to remove entrenched politicians from office, particularly white males in urban counties.

Although not explicitly stated in consolidation pronouncements, removing incumbents from their respective offices seem to have been an objective of many reformers. An incumbent may be defined as “holding an indicated position, role, office, etc., currently.”  

Scholars have found that the concepts of incumbent and incumbency became mainstays of American politics in the middle of the twentieth century and political scientists earnestly studied the phenomena in the 1960s and 1970s under names such as the “incumbent advantage” or the “incumbent effect.”  

In general, researchers have found that incumbents hold a significant advantage in being reelected to public office for additional terms. One caveat of the research notes that incumbency is not monopolistic and can be affected by political misdeeds or missteps by politicians, which allow challengers electoral opportunities and a change in community policy preferences. City-county consolidation movements have been seen as attempts by communities of

interests to supplant other interests. For instance, Swanson argued that in Jacksonville-Duval “Consolidation replaced the incumbent politicians, who had displeased many in the way they handled the political predicaments of external and internal cross-pressures, with reformers who were “public regarding.”

Incumbents and incumbency have been protected by a number of mechanisms and factors in rural southern municipal and county governments. These mechanisms have included the politics of party organizations, party boss, and the county unit system. While it is difficult to generalize how minorities have been affected by features of incumbency, it is important to note that blacks and women have fared differently under various de facto and de jure political mechanisms that maintained ineffective and often racist political representation. In many rural areas electoral support is affected by party affiliation, which in the South Democrats held a monopoly for a number of decades. For instance, in Georgia more than 140 years had passed since the election of the last Republican governor in 1871 resulting in decades of Democrats ruling the state through single-party dominance. Such one party rule was often viewed by reformers, particularly northern, as undemocratic; however, party politics differ regionally and have had temporal dimensions. McKee noted that recent presidential elections have seen that “The percentage of rural voters is higher in the South” and that with “party identification, the percentage of Republican rural voters has increased and the percentage of rural voters...


Democrats has decreased.” Nevertheless, researchers have argued that party affiliation is not monolithic in electoral politics. In discussing rural politics, Snider noted that “more important than a candidate’s party affiliation, in determining voter support or opposition, are such matters as his church and lodge affiliations, his general reputation in the community, and what local gossips say concerning him and members of his family.”

If rural voters feel comfortable with mayors and council members on an intimate level, as seems the case in rural areas, it is expected that elected and appointed officials will remain in office longer, which may affect incumbency. Further, because of the personal politics of rural southern counties, it is believed that local elections will not be highly competitive or manipulative of voters. Snider, noted that “frauds like impersonations and repeated voting are readily perpetuated in large cities than in rural communities, where most of the voters are personally known to election officials.” In contrast, Bullock and Henry found that in a number of Georgia counties that white VAP exceeded the county population prior to and after the passage of the VRA, especially in rural counties where blacks were a large percentage of the VAP.

In many ways politics in urban and rural areas are characterized by a high degree of personal relationship maintenance as proclaimed by Snider. Politicians create ties to

33. Ibid., 317.
their electorates by delivering goods and services to constituents. This level of comfort with incumbents is often facilitated by elected officials conducting casework, claiming credit for public policies, and interacting directly with constituencies and ingratiating themselves with voters through media appearances and legislative policies. Additionally, a number of studies have indicated that incumbents have utilized their offices to influence tax policy and engage in corrupt activities. Moreover, in order to be re-elected or gain additional support, incumbents “vote on legislation in a way that reflects the ideological make-up or economic interests of their constituencies.”

As with providing services, studies have found that officials who spend more time in their districts are more likely to get re-elected. By working in their districts, incumbents come to represent the known in comparison to the unknown which may pose a greater risk to voters (i.e., non-incumbents). Incumbency also acts as a cue to short-circuit the political cost of democratic citizenship. Ethnicity and gender, as political cues, have been found to have electoral advantages and disadvantages in urban and rural settings. As noted earlier by McKee, rural voters in comparison to non-rural “voters are less racially/ethnically diverse” which may provide voter cues when minorities run for elected office and their respective policy preferences.

In addition to the tangible benefits of incumbency, non-intangible benefits accrue to society as a result of the minority descriptive representation of incumbents at the municipal and county levels. Researchers have found positive effects of black


representation on white voters. Hajnal in an analysis of the American National Election Study (ANES) found that black incumbents have an important effect upon the policy preferences of selective groups of whites, especially white Democrats but not white Republicans. More importantly, the author found positive racial attitudes among whites with increases in the length of black public service.\textsuperscript{37} The positive impacts of incumbency and incumbents seem to extend to gender and political participation. Female incumbents also appear to play pivotal roles in American politics. Palmer and Simon found female incumbents engender greater political intra-competition and that inter-party races among women increases with the presence of female office holders.\textsuperscript{38} Although the aforementioned studies dealt with urban populations and medium size cities, it is expected that tangible and non-tangible benefits of minority incumbency will hold for consolidated governments.

Finally, economics also plays a significant role in elections, candidate cues, and incumbency. Tessin found that “Poor candidates do seem to use more cues than rich candidates, perhaps because cues maximize the impact of scarce advertising dollars.”\textsuperscript{39} The author concluded that “Across all models, there is consistent evidence that candidates provide more cues when resources are scarce, when the communication

\textsuperscript{37} Hajnal, “White Residents, Black Incumbents,” 610.


environment is crowded, and when voters are unsophisticated. Thus, taken collectively, the above studies suggest the propositions to be examined: (P2A) Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities by high rates of incumbency and low rates of contested elections; and (P2B) Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by high rates of incumbency and low rates of contested elections.

**Pre-Consolidation, Rural Government, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity**

White males for many decades have held significant influence and power in local elections by holding electoral office for many years. Although the 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments provided blacks and women the right to equality before the law, the framework for minorities to actively participate in elected and appointed offices remained difficult for decades. Thus, a new movement was needed to address social problems and concerns among minorities that have not been adequately addressed by a legal framework created and designed for whites. “Minority empowerment” and “political incorporation” have become key concepts in understanding political representation among racial, ethnic, sexual preference, and gender groups. Minority empowerment and political incorporation may be defined as the active inclusion of minority groups into positions and institutions of decision making that are legally responsible for the distribution and allocation of societal tangible and intangible resources, particularly at the municipal and county levels.

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40. Ibid., 18.

Studies of women, blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians suggest that the presence of perceived group membership with an elected or appointed official increases the political participation of minority members. This participation generally enhances the number of minority group members feeling empowered and their resultant political participation in community organizations. Minority empowerment has also been found to exist internationally. Baldacci, Donovan, and Karp in a comparative study of descriptive representation in the U.S. and New Zealand found that when minorities are represented by individuals sharing similar characteristics that affective and cognitive aspects of politics are heightened.\textsuperscript{42} Conversely, empowerment and incorporation have had the affect of increasing the number of registered voters and conflict among communities of interest for political power and influence. For instance, in a study of minority empowerment in Providence, Rhode Island, Filindra and Orr found that whites and blacks were pessimistic regarding their future in the city after the election of the first Latino mayor.\textsuperscript{43}

Conflict centered on gender has also been a part of the American landscape and minority incorporation movement. Formal electoral structures have been found to impact the electoral participation and presence of women internationally and locally. Within British laws, women were electorally banned from participating in municipal corporations. According to Darcy, Welch, and Clark, “The disenfranchisement of


women in English local government lasted from 1835 to 1869, only thirty-four years.”

Similarly, women were disenfranchised in colonial and post-colonial America. According to the authors, women’s enfranchisement in local government was given a significant boost when “Kentucky was the first state to reintroduce women to the electorate when in 1838, the right to vote for members of school boards was extended to widows.” Still, it was not until the ratification of the 19th Amendment, the so called Susan B. Anthony Amendment, in 1920 that women voting became prevalent and legal.

The fight for women’s political participation seems to have been concentrated in urban areas of the United States and thus leaving southern and rural women politically vulnerable to continued discrimination by white and black men. Indeed, in southern states like Georgia women could not vote until 1922 and the state did not ratify the 19th Amendment until 1970. Nevertheless, women in Georgia have made strides in the state. From 2002 to 2010, Shirley C. Franklin became the first black female mayor of the city of Atlanta and Stacy Y. Abrams became the first female House Minority Leader for the Georgia General Assembly in 2010. At the gubernatorial level, researchers have found that female governors were more likely to be concerned about social issues than male governors.


45. Ibid., 11.


47. Ibid.

A number of studies have indicated that many factors affect women’s representation on city councils. Researchers have found that information, demographics, and stereotypical behaviors were significant factors in the elections of council women in multi-candidate elections. Some studies also point to structural mechanisms as important factors in the election of women to local governments. For instance, Smith, Reingold, and Owens in a study of 239 cities found that the election of female mayors and councilwomen were a function of “electoral structures and other institutional features.” Similarly, Troustine and Valdini in a study of over 7,000 cities with various district types found that district representation significantly affected the presence of white and black female councilors. Thus, taken collectively, the above studies suggest the third analytical proposition to be examined: (P3A) Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of female candidate participation.

As with female political participation, blacks in America have also faced significant barriers to municipal and county political participation. However, in comparison to women, especially white women; black electoral success at the local level came in the late 1960s. According to Jennings, “Black political behavior essentially represented a response to racism. Regardless of region or city, Black political strategies and tactics responded and reacted to the physical and social limitations placed upon


Blacks.”  

Scholars have indicated that the VRA and subsequent amendments were significant in the election of blacks within urban and rural areas. Indeed, the VRA helped to usher in black minority empowerment and political incorporation in major urban areas such as Cleveland, Ohio and Gary, Indiana, with the elections of Carl B. Stokes and Richard B. Hatcher, respectively. However, unlike urban counties with many resources and safety in numbers, in many rural areas federal officials had to meet secretly with blacks to improve their electoral participation in southern states like Georgia.

Following the 1970s, researchers and the white public at-large became more familiar with black elected officials (BEOs). According to research by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, “The number of BEOs has increased from 1,469 in 1970 to over 10,500 today.” Several studies have indicated that BEOs seemed to have been effective in meeting the socioeconomic interests of black constituencies more effectively than whites. Nevertheless, black representation has not been totally viewed as linear. Scholars such as Reed and Nelson have contended that black political representation has not completely delivered the goods to the black community.


53. J. Phillip Thompson, *Double Trouble; Black Mayors, Black Communities, and the Call for a Deep Democracy* (Long Beach, CA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 51.


Although blacks in urban areas employed numerous resources to protest and fight against racism, few vital resources were available for black empowerment and incorporation in rural areas. Karnig, in a study of 126 cities with over 25,000 citizens and a black population exceeding 15 percent, found that communities with national civil rights organizations and a low black/white income gap had higher levels of black council penetration (BCP). Moreover, the author found that BCP was negatively associated with southern locations and positively associated with district-based elections. The author concluded that: “But these data are also perplexing, since they indicate that relatively prosperous and organized black populations—presumably less in need of proportional representation—are more prone to gain fair penetration; and relatively poor and unorganized black populations—which might well benefit the most from proportional representation—are less apt to receive equitable penetration.”

Although Karnig’s study did not include rural communities with fewer than 20,000 residents, blacks in a number of rural southern counties have created organizations to fight for political representation. In Eatonton, Georgia, blacks formed the Putnam County Improvement League in the late 1970s. According to Swift the league made a number of inroads for the black community in Eatonton. The author noted that the league organized to remove an unconstitutional city curfew ordinance after the killing of a black resident by a white police officer and “Had the league not put forth its efforts, ...

58. Ibid., 148.
the dormant curfew would probably still be on the books.” Additionally, further court actions by the League in the 1970s resulted in Eatonton electing its first two town officials. Similarly, blacks in Webster County, Georgia, filed a court proceeding to change from a sole-county commission, one that existed for more than thirty years, to a district commission. In a recent article in the *Associated Press*, it was noted that “In 1988, Webster County, GA, tried to reduce the black population in several school board districts after citizens elected a majority-black school board for the first time.”

Political Scientist Charles Bullock has consistently shown in his research that southern white voters are less likely to engage in cross-over voting than black voters.

Very little is known regarding the political participation of voters in pre-consolidated rural local governments, especially blacks and women. A great deal of empirical data indicates that blacks and women in urban areas have achieved some degree of descriptive and substantive political representation. In rural areas the federal government has been a key player in assisting minorities with political representation. Nevertheless, although numerous legal and policy positions have altered the political status of minorities in local government, it is believed that a number of barriers still exist to thwart the political participation of blacks and women in southern rural counties. Thus, taken collectively, the above studies suggest the fourth proposition to be examined:

60. Ibid., 23.


Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of black candidate participation.

**Post-Consolidation, Rural Government, and Voter Registration**

City-county consolidation has been proposed as a public policy to address a number of issues facing local governments. One such issue (real or imagined) has been the lack of political participation in local governments. Groups such as the League of Women Voters (LWV) have viewed consolidation as a tool for increasing civic participation, which has often been measured by the number of registered voters within a political jurisdiction.

Voter registration has been a concern for national officials as well as local communities of interests. In 1993, Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and according to Highton and Wolfinger, the NVRA “was designed to increase electoral participation in the United States by requiring states to implement a variety of procedures to lighten the burden of voter registration.”

63 The authors concluded that “Of the low-turnout groups we have identified, people with the least schooling have the weakest interest in politics and least concern about election outcomes.”

States have also attempted to address voter registration issues by allowing same day registration, rescinding voter ID requirements, and increasing internet voting registration. Georgia has been an important state in the area of voter registration. Over the decades, Georgia has maintained a number of institutional laws limiting voting by

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64. Ibid., 101.
minorities; however, more recently, the state seems to be supportive of voting registration. For instance, Georgia was one of a few states found to be compliant with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), which was designed to improve voting processes in view of the 2000 presidential election and after the passage of voter id laws, turnout among blacks and Hispanics increased.  

Although minority political participation has increased in Georgia, critics point to a number of voter registration concerns within the state. Georgia is still viewed as a state that seems intent on increasing the cost of voter registration upon groups such as the poor, elderly, mobile, and young. For example, in 2006 Georgia Republican Governor Sonny Purdue signed legislation implementing new ID rules for voter registration. Further, under Republican Governor Nathan Deal, the government finally stopped fighting a lawsuit allowing voter registration to be offered at county public assistance offices. The settlement may have a positive impact on the number of poor registered voters in the state in view of the number of Georgians seeking public assistance in rural counties. Additionally, registering citizens in social service agencies may become important in view of the fact that the majority of recently consolidated counties are within areas having persistent poverty levels above 20 percent.  

Even with voter registration policies at the federal and state level, researchers have continued to find negative relationships between low SES and voter registration. Although blacks and women have made incredible socioeconomic and political gains in southern counties, a number of contextual and individual factors may hinder their voter registration rates in the United States. Studies suggest that federal and state laws do have an effect on voter registration rates. Mixed results have indicated that federal policies do seem to increase the number of registered voters; however, researchers remain cautious in view of state policies enacted before and after the federal registration laws. Researchers have noted that voter ID laws have a tendency to suppress voter registration rates of minorities and poor residents. On the other hand, findings have also indicated that voter registration rates of poor residents and renters are high within particular states. The major problem with survey studies of voter registration has been researchers’ inability to disentangle public policies and individual motivational factors.

Individual characteristics have also been important factors in the examination of voter registration in the U.S. Studies at the subnational level have examined motor voter registration rates nationally and regionally while controlling for socioeconomic and demographic factors. These studies have indicated that race and numerous individual factors affect voter registration. Similarly, political geographers have found that age and mobility matter in voter registration rates within urban and rural areas.

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70. McDonald, “The True Electorate,” 602.

researchers are in agreement that rural and urban residents experience various costs and expenditures associated with political participation via registering to vote and casting ballots. In terms of consolidation, advocates have argued that merging local governments would promote greater voter registration. Reformers have also noted that possible increases in voter participation will result from simplifying the ballot and reducing the number of elected officials. On the other hand, opponents of consolidation argue that consolidation decreases political participation and in some cases may suppress voter registration, as with previous electoral changes implemented by southern whites.

Still, others have noted that the lack of education has not been the most significant barrier to voter registration. Historically, the black SES has been utilized as a major factor in explaining a number of ills facing blacks in America; however, low-income residents, blacks, women, and the elderly have been important constituents in fighting inequality in local politics.\(^72\) Indeed, in a descriptive analysis of black politics in the South, Campbell and Feagin found that working-class blacks were principal registrants in black organizations in rural southern counties that led to significant increases in voter registration rates and mobilization.\(^73\) On the other hand, researchers have indicated that changes in governmental structure are more important to blacks in gaining council seats than socioeconomic resources or organizations. Knowing that government structure is important to blacks in terms of political participation and few national organizations exist in rural counties, and that rural politics are value laden and personal, it is expected that


post-consolidated rural counties are more likely to exhibit low rates of black active registered voters. Thus, taken collectively, the above studies suggest the fifth proposition to be examined: (P5) Post-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by lower rates of active registered voters than pre-consolidated rural southern counties.

**Post-Consolidation, Rural Government, Public Office, and Voting**

Government reformers and consolidation advocates believe that local communities would be better served with reductions in the number of elected officials. Thus, citizens have passed more than forty referenda in the United States with the expectation that merged governments will have an impact on selected aspects of local politics. The anecdotal and empirical consolidation literature suggests that the considerable number of elected officials is negatively associated with democratic outcomes in local governments. Thus the voting record of so many elected officials that must be followed and examined contributes to the inefficient use of the electorates’ time. Still, a number of scholars have argued that information acquisition of the public is essential to democracy.74 On the other hand, scholars have also argued that it should not be the responsibility of the government to educate the electorate on their democratic preferences or responsibilities.

In addition to eliminating elected officials, the consolidation literature also suggests that local representative government is negatively impacted by the number of appointed officials. Thus multiple public offices may seem confusing for many rank-and-file citizens and negatively result in inappropriate policy preferences. However,

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studies have indicated that the policy choices of elected officials are more often in line with those of the electorate than those of non-elected officials. Still, consolidation proponents have perceived that many public offices increase government red tape, lead to political corruption, engenders discriminatory public policies, and promote uncooperative governmental operations. In a recent study of tourism and rural regional development, Lankford found that elected and appointed officials were significantly at odds regarding policy preferences for their respective communities. In a study of black elected councilmen in Nashville-Davidson County, Grier found that two out of six black city council representatives supported city-county consolidation in 1962 and that only one black councilman representing the sole black community that had an increase in services was the one located in the former unincorporated suburbs of Davidson County. Still, elites within the NAACP, Urban League, League of Women Voters, media outlets, and business groups have argued that consolidation could increase political accountability with fewer appointed offices. Furthermore, Carr and Feiock, found that consolidation to some degree improved lines of communication from public officials to the public regarding accountability and Martin’s analysis of consolidation in Jacksonville-Duval County yielded similar results.


Voting is a third democratic outcome that has been associated with consolidation and political participation. Researchers have found mixed results in examining electoral voting in post-consolidated governments. Seamon and Feiock examined election results for 33 years prior to and after the consolidation of the city of Jacksonville and Duval County, Florida in 1968. The authors found that “the results indicated that consolidation reduced the average turnout by 17.6% and high turnout by 18%.” The authors concluded “that consolidation in Jacksonville reduced popular participation.” Also Hagan in her comparative analysis of consolidations in Nashville-Davidson County, Jacksonville-Duval County, and Louisville-Jefferson County found that voter participation levels fell in the three consolidated areas under investigation.

On the other hand, some studies have found increases in voter participation as a result of consolidation. Stefko, in an examination of consolidation in Jacksonville, Indianapolis, and Louisville found that voter participation actually increased in the post-consolidated governments. Moreover, public choice theorists and economists Kelleher and Lowery examined political participation in jurisdictions ranging in population from 117 to 2,500,000. The authors concluded that “Citizens in smaller communities may

78. Ibid.

79. Seamon and Feiock, “Political Participation and City/County Consolidation,” 1749.

80. Ibid., 1752.


82. Joseph Vincent Stefko, Minority Political Influence and Consolidated Metropolitan Governments (Buffalo, NY: State University of New York at Buffalo, 2003), 111.

share common values and find it easier to vote, but they do not turnout any more than citizens in larger communities.” Nevertheless, it is important to remember that rural politics are value laden and oriented; thus, even when governments attempt to consolidate or merge in rural counties, maintaining the fundamental political culture and personal relationships of the area are vitally important in any political conflict. For example, Wiggins in a case study of government reform in Mahaska County, Iowa (pop. 23,602) concluded “that the participants in the battle, especially the proponents of change, desire to minimize open conflict.” Furthermore, Wiggins indicated that conflict was resisted in that “several proponents stated that they didn’t want to get people mad.”

Not annoying your neighbor in rural political battles is just one component that could affect voting and voter turnout. Voter turnout rates are influenced by factors associated with the individual and factors associated with an individual’s environment. A number of researchers have noted that socioeconomic factors are associated with turnout and that education is the best predictor of voter turnout. In addition to education, researchers have noted that registration laws have had mixed effects upon voter turnout. On the other hand, Brady, Verba, and Schlozman have argued that registration laws are not very important in terms of voter turnout. Nevertheless, there appears to be a general consensus that institutional factors are important in terms of the voter turnout rates of the

84. Ibid.


86. Ibid., 87.

less educated and the poor. Thus, it is reasonable to predict that in view of reductions in the number of public offices and SES factors associated with voter turnout that mixed results should be found regarding voting in post-consolidated governments. Therefore, taken collectively, the above studies suggest the sixth proposition to be examined is that: (P6) Post-consolidated rural southern counties are more likely to have lower rates of votes cast for county-wide races than pre-consolidated southern counties.

Post-Consolidation, Rural Government, Incumbency, and Electoral Races

As with public officials, the consolidation literature suggests that incumbency is negatively associated with democratic outcomes in local governments. Feiock and Carr contend that “Although institutional changes have collective effects, they also have redistributive consequences for individuals and groups.”88 One of these redistributive benefits within consolidated governments is for citizens to have in power elected officials that share their ideological views. Research reports indicate that blacks and business people have supported urban consolidations in an effort to gain political access, increase public infrastructure, and encourage economic growth.

Some studies have found a fairly consistent relationship between political boundary changes and electoral competition. Political parties have used boundary changes to maintain political power in municipal and county governments. Democrats in southern counties utilized at-large elections to maintain their dominance over blacks.89 In changing political lines to encompass a larger government and electorate, local


communities also increase the cost of running for and operating public offices. Still, changing political boundaries also improve political access. Since improved political access provides knowledge of local political systems, reductions in the political marginalization of communities of interests is likely to foster greater electoral competition. On the other hand, public officials may remain in office for many years if they are able to meet the demands of the electorate. In rural areas, county commission posts do not pay a substantial amount of money, but may require a substantial amount of time in meeting rural residents within large districts. U.S. Census Bureau reports have noted that many rural residents commute to metropolitan areas for employment. This commuting results in a selective pool of the electorate able to engage in the day-to-day operations of holding a low-paying public office.

Elected officials are not the only professionals that may be impacted by low wages. Doescher, Skillman, and Rosenblatt noted that “Of the 2,050 rural counties in the U.S., 1,582 (77%) are primary care health professional shortage areas.” Among the many issues facing rural professionals, the authors concluded are “Low compensation, rising malpractice premiums, professional isolation, and limited time off.” More locally, Stewart-Webster Hospital, a medical facility serving an area encompassing rural consolidated governments recently closed. With low pay and long commuting distances,


93. Ibid.
few citizens may be moved to become elected officials. Thus, it is reasonable to expect
the seventh proposition to be examined: (P7) Post-consolidated rural southern counties
are more likely to be characterized by higher rates of incumbency than pre-consolidated
southern counties.

As noted earlier, Temple, Savitch, and Vogle have indicated that in post-
consolidated reports that boundary changes have significant political impacts.94 These
changes affect the demographic composition of communities, application of community
ordinances, and most importantly, the politics of an area. Although rural counties may
not exhibit the political conflict of urban areas, these communities are nonetheless not
monolithic organisms. For instance, in a study of political leaders and households in
eight rural Alabama counties, Molnar and Smith found that elected officials seemed to be
more concerned with community-wide perspectives whereas the electorate was more
concerned with services impacting their day-to-day living.95 Nevertheless, elected
officials in rural southern counties may remain in office longer and increase voter turnout
if they promote majority policy preferences. Consequently, the eighth proposition to be
examined is that: (P8) Post-consolidated rural southern counties are no more likely to
exhibit higher rates of competitive elections than pre-consolidated counties.

94. David G. Temple, Merger Politics: Local Government Consolidation in Tidewater Virginia
(Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, Institute of Government, 1972), 18; H. V. Savitch and Ronald

Post-Consolidation, Rural Government, and Race/Ethnicity

In assessing the impact of city-county consolidation upon political participation of specific communities of interest, blacks by far have been one of the most studied of the post-consolidated political actors. In researching the impact of consolidation upon blacks, scholars have tended to focus on three areas: (1) black vote dilution, (2) black political elites and rank-and-file voters, and (3) black elected and appointed office holding. Critics and researchers have argued that consolidation dilutes black voting strength. Black voting strength has been historically conceived of as the number of voting age blacks within a political jurisdiction or as the number of blacks within a county in comparison to the population of whites and other minorities. In regards to the relationship between consolidation and black voting strength, two schools of thought have dominated the literature.

First, studies have indicated that whites may have employed consolidation to control developing black influence or power within local governments. In interviews with elected officials throughout the city of Nashville and Davidson County, Kentucky, prior to the 1958 referendum, Booth found that interviewees listed “Negroes and integrationists loss of representation in city government” as a potential consequence of consolidation. Additionally, Booth noted that a number of the respondents viewed consolidation as a mechanism for preventing blacks from becoming a majority on the Nashville council “and even, perhaps, a Negro mayor.” Similarly, Temple’s

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97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
comparative analysis of consolidation in the Tidewater Region of Virginia noted that “An increasing black population in former Newport News, Virginia undoubtedly contributed to promerger pressures at work on whites in that city” and that “the growing Negro population of Newport News might soon win control of the municipal government.”

Some analysts have discounted the full implications of racial motivations for consolidation. In Virginia, Temple found numerous instances of vote dilution by party affiliation and race and argued that although referenda in the 1950s and 1960s were contextually unique, they were nevertheless primarily “exercises in maintaining the political status quo.” Similarly, Stefko concluded that consolidation did not occur to specifically thwart black political ambitions in a comparative study of consolidation. Furthermore, studies have also indicated that consolidations have been under taken for economic development, government efficiencies, and other socioeconomic reasons. Still, Martin reminds his readers that “there could be no doubt that the strong support for consolidation developed among segments of the white population in Duval County because of a fear that Negroes might one day control city government.”

In echoing Martin’s observation, a number of consolidation case studies in Georgia seem to support the notion that whites have attempted to utilize consolidation to dilute black voting strength. For example, during consolidation efforts between the city of Columbus and Muscogee County, blacks were not represented on early committees

99. Temple, Merger Politics, 45.
100. Ibid., 60.
102. Martin, Consolidation: Jacksonville-Duval County, 22
although they were more than 35 percent of the county’s residents. In fact, Dupree indicated that no blacks were appointed to the Columbus-Muscogee consolidation committee during deliberations. Similarly, in early efforts to consolidate the city of Athens and Clarke County and the city of Augusta and Richmond County, Georgia, black representation was marginalized. These two areas are also home to the state’s flagship University of Georgia and the nationally known Masters Golf Tournament, both institutions which have had racist and sexist past policies.

The second school of thought regarding black vote dilution deals with empirical studies that have found that black voting strength has been reduced in every consolidated county. Prior to the 1957 two-tiered federated system of consolidated government formed between the city of Miami and Dade County, Florida, blacks were increasing in Miami. According to the 1960s U.S. Census Bureau, in the old city of Miami, blacks made up 22.36 percent of the population in comparison to only 14.68 percent county-wide. Similarly, in 1950 non-whites made up 31.4 and 20.0 percent of the population of the city of Nashville and Davidson County; however, by the 1962 consolidation, non-whites represented 37.9 and 19.2 percent of the population of the city of Nashville and Davidson County. Thus, according to political scientists Savitch and Vogel, “By combining with the mostly white suburbs, the proportion of African Americans was cut


from nearly 33% to 15%” in the new Metro government.\textsuperscript{106} In a retrospective comparative analysis of consolidations, Sammis concluded that “minority representation has diminished in virtually every example of consolidation. In almost every suburban jurisdiction, Whites were now the majority.”\textsuperscript{107} More recently, in Georgia, the cities of Macon and Payne and Bibb County, consolidated their local governments. The Macon-Bibb consolidation resulted in the black population being cut from 69.9 percent of Macon’s population to 52.5 percent of the county-wide population.\textsuperscript{108} In contrast, the political influence of whites increased significantly from 28.6 percent of Macon’s population to 44.1 percent in the new consolidated government.\textsuperscript{109} In sum, anecdotal and empirical data have indicated that from a position of voting strength, blacks have been political and social net losers.

Beyond research on black voting strength, a second major area of research regarding blacks and consolidation has been the behavior of black political elites and rank-and-file voters. Mixed findings have been found in studies of consolidations regarding black elite support. In \textit{Nashville Metro: The Politics of City-County Consolidation}, Hawkins utilized survey data to examine a number of hypotheses related to the 1962 consolidation. Hawkins found that a schism between old black leaders and progressive black leaders may have been a factor in the rejection of consolidation in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 767.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 777.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Davidson County in 1958 but an acceptance of consolidation in 1962. Similarly, blacks in Jacksonville were split between the so called “oldline Negro” leaders aligned with the political machines of Jacksonville against progressive educated black professionals. Consolidation in Jacksonville-Duval appeared to have had the blessing of black elites that headed civic and social groups such as the Urban League, NAACP, and the Jacksonville Voters League of Florida. Still, other researchers have found smaller pockets of black elite support for consolidation. In a study of black elected councilmen in Nashville-Davidson County, political analysts Barbara Grier found that two of out six black city council representatives supported city-county consolidation in 1962.

Some studies have indicated that rank-and-file blacks have also been mixed in their support of and opposition to consolidation. Booth noted that in the 1958 consolidation attempt between Nashville and Davidson County that blacks “in both of the districts which had Negro representatives on the city council voted against the plan by 51 and 58 percent.” In contrast, Wicker noted that blacks were unified in their support of consolidation between the city of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina in 1971. Similarly, in an analysis of Jacksonville-Duval County, DeGrove asked “How


111. Martin, *Consolidation: Jacksonville-Duval County*, 160.


and why did it happen and how has it worked?" The author argued that “Many in the Black community supported consolidation, even though the Black community knew that the consolidation would dilute their voting strength from forty percent of the population to a little over twenty percent.” In sum, consolidation attempts are contextually unique and black support by political elites and rank-and-file voters have been mixed.

Clearly, then, while prior research has shown that both black voting strength and black voting behaviors (i.e., elite, rank-and-file) have been influenced by consolidation, much less is known regarding the impact of consolidation upon black appointed and elected officials within urban and rural counties. A number of early consolidation studies readily acknowledged the importance of black political representation in merging local governments. Consolidating local governments are more likely to reflect changing community demographics and ideological aspirations than previously established decentralized governments. Yet, the political implications of changes in the number of rural BEOs have generally escaped the scrutiny of political scientists.

Studies have indicated that black appointed officials have increased as a result of successful urban consolidations. Although Lipsky in Street-Level Bureaucracy; Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service (1980) have reminded political scientists of the importance of bureaucrats, an empirical void still exists regarding black appointed

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116. Ibid.

officials within consolidated governments. \(^\text{118}\) Nevertheless, DeGrove noted positive impacts upon black representation in consolidated bureaucracies. He found that in Jacksonville-Duvall that “Blacks have been added to the fire department for the first time, and more blacks have been recruited in the law enforcement area. All leaders interviewed stressed the great success in drawing blacks into the political system by appointing at least one black to every advisory board.” \(^\text{119}\) Campbell, Gillespie, and Durning noted that in Augusta “Black elites sought to broaden the prospect for increased minority participation in the consolidated government” and as a result, an office of minority affairs was added to the government as a condition of blacks supporting consolidation. \(^\text{120}\)

In addition to increased appointed black officials, proposed consolidations were to have net positive impacts upon black descriptive representation. \(^\text{121}\) For example, Lyons in a study of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, found that although the majority of government boards elected members at-large, the consolidation “proposed district boundaries that had been gerrymandered in such a way to assure that three rural residents and three black residents would probably have been elected to the consolidated


\[\text{119. DeGrove, The City of Jacksonville, 93.}\]


Similarly, McArthur noted that careful consideration was taken to increase BEOs in Nashville-Davidson and that “provisions for the metropolitan council were subjected to a kind of racial gerrymandering to assure the election of several blacks to the council, and that the first council contained five black members.”

Martin noted that “three of fourteen proposed districts would contain Negro majorities” in Duval County if passed by the voters.

Some studies of consolidations, however, have indicated that the number of black officials have been negatively impacted by consolidation. According to Lotz, “Prior to the adoption of metropolitan government in 1947, there was no black representation on the County Commission (Dade) or on any of the city commissions” and that electoral participation for blacks and Latinos was made even more difficult with city-county consolidation as a federated structure. The author also noted that although the consolidated government made provisions for part district and part at-large boundaries, the consolidated charter was later changed in 1963 to “provide for all nine county commission members to be elected at-large.”

Moreover, Stowers in an examination of Miami-Dade indicated that it was not until 1993 that “only one minority (black or Cuban)


124. Martin, Consolidation: Jacksonville-Duval County, 161.


126. Ibid., 53.
group member had ever been elected to a seat on the commission without first being appointed to a vacancy." 127 Further, the author noted that it was not until the at-large system of election in Miami-Dade County was overturned that four blacks and six Hispanics were finally elected to the thirteen-member consolidated government.

In contrast to the negative experience in Miami-Dade, researchers have generally concluded that black descriptive representation has increased in the majority of urban consolidations. In Jacksonville-Duval, DeGrove noted that “the place of blacks in the post-consolidation political system is viewed by both black and white leaders as a vast improvement over pre-consolidation” and that even black elected officials who opposed the consolidation said “that blacks have more political power than ever before under consolidation.” 128 McArthur noted that “even more noteworthy is the fact that two black council members were elected to represent districts with White majorities” in the Nashville-Davidson consolidation. 129

Summary

In sum, black voting strength has been negatively impacted by consolidation as with previous attempts by southern whites in changing political boundaries. On the other hand, the numbers of BEOs and black public officials have increased as a result of earlier successful consolidations. Nevertheless, Pitkin’s idea of black descriptive representation in post-consolidated governments has also led to a political paradox for blacks, a


quagmire that has already been identified earlier by Tobe Johnson and others. On the other hand, the evidence seems clear that black public appointed and elected officials have increased as a result of successful urban consolidations, especially through the terms enshrined, if only momentarily, in initial consolidation charters. Thus, taken collectively, the above research suggests the ninth proposition to be examined that: (P9) Post-consolidated rural southern counties are more likely to have higher rates of black elected officials than pre-consolidated rural southern counties.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Although all designs can lead to successful case studies, when you have the choice (and resources), multiple-case designs may be preferred over single case designs. Even if you can do a “two-case” case study, your chances of doing a good case study will be better than using a single-case design.\(^1\)

Research Design

The preceding chapters covered the background of this study and related literatures. This chapter presents the research design, methodology, and methods that were utilized to answer the research question: How has city-county consolidation impacted minority political participation within rural southern counties? The research question was answered utilizing mixed methods research. This approach was supplemented with a multiple-case study design that utilized documents, interviews, and archival records. The use of theoretical propositions guided the methodology and methods of interpreting, collecting, and analyzing the evidence. A mixed methods approach was deemed the most advantageous methodology for examining minority political participation within consolidated rural southern counties.

The present chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the study presents an overview of the research design. In the second section, the study presents the

methodology of the dissertation. In the final section, the study provides the research methods.

In the *Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*, Schwandt defines methodology as “a theory of how inquiry should proceed.”

Research methodology guides the inquirer into his or her examination of events around them and/or under their control. More specifically, research methodology may be specific to a social idea or theory of how the world should or actually operates (i.e., Black Feminism, Marxism, or political economy). Researchers also utilize methodology as a guide to support their research agenda.

The present study was based on a mixed methods approach in examining consolidation within rural southern counties. Mixed methods research may be defined as “the collection or analysis both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study in which data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research.”

The mixed methods approach offers a number of disadvantages and advantages to studying rural consolidation. Some authors have asserted that the approach “loses its flexibility and depth, which is one of the main advantages of qualitative research” in studying subjects. Additionally, the approach may require researchers to “reduce their sample size for the design to be less time-consuming, which may affect statistical


procedures.”⁵ On the other hand, researchers have noted advantages to mixed methods research. Mixed methods to a limited degree allow researchers to side-step thorny philosophical issues and concentrate on the research question(s) at hand. Side stepping philosophical concerns have led Tashakkori and Teddlie to assert that “We believe that mixed method designs will be the dominant methodological tools in the social and behavioral sciences during the twenty-first century.”⁶ Additionally, the mixed methods research is well suited for the triangulation of multiple sources of data. Finally, and most importantly, the uses of mixed methods “convey the needs of individuals or groups of individuals who have are marginalized or underrepresented.”⁷ Indeed, the voices of rural blacks and women seem to be absent from the consolidation literature. With disadvantages and advantages well known and researched, the mixed methods approach seems well suited as a framework for the examination of minority political participation within consolidated rural southern counties.

Methods

Methodology and methods are fundamentally different terms within the research enterprise. As previously mentioned, methodology may be viewed as an overarching framework in which research methods are executed. In contrast, according to Schwandt,

⁵ Schwandt, Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, 32.


research methods may be defined as the “procedures, tools, and techniques of research.”

Creswell and Clark indicated that the research methods are important because “they guide the methods decisions that researchers must make during their studies and set the logic by which they make interpretations at the end of studies.”

Case study design fit well within the tradition of mixed methods research. According to Yin, “the case study, like other research strategies, is a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures.” A case may be defined “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.” Case studies have been of great importance to political scientists and other researchers in examining consolidation. First, case studies have allowed researchers to make in-depth analyses of political “how and why” questions related to consolidation. For example, Rowley said that “case studies are one approach that supports deeper and more detailed investigations of consolidations.” Similarly, as compared to cross-sectional designs, Easton noted that case studies “use a variety of evidence from different sources, such as documents artifacts, interviews, and observations.” Finally, because so few consolidations have been successful, case

8. Schwandt, Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, 12.


11. Ibid., 3.


studies have been viewed as an appropriate approach because of the lack of large-n cases necessary for statistical studies.

Some researchers have noted important weaknesses in the case study approach. Unlike experimental studies, case studies lack control over political events and the injection and control of independent and dependent factors. Additionally, researchers have indicated that special skills may be needed in analyzing case data in comparison to mathematical analyses in quantitative studies, which is advantaged by years of math in primary and secondary settings. Yin noted that “the analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies.” Still, few political phenomena are under the experimental control of researchers and case studies have allowed researchers to take a holistic approach to understanding consolidation and its attendant consequences for elites and rank-and-file residents.

To further strengthen the advantages of case studies, the multiple-case study design was employed for several reasons. First, most recent studies of urban consolidations have employed the multiple-case method. Additionally, unlike single-case designs, multiple-case designs are more appropriate for descriptive or explanatory studies where research is beyond the exploratory stage. Indeed, Soy argues that multiple-case studies provide the “detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships.” Lastly, multiple-case designs collect data across organizations with the objective of comparing and replicating political issues and understanding. Thus, studying pre- and post-consolidated rural counties as a group in

various contexts would also allow some comparison to previous comparative urban studies.

**Study Population Selection Strategies**

The case selection strategies include the context and cases, recruitment and human subject protection, the sample selection, and sample size. The following sections outline the details of the selection strategies.

**Population Size and Selection**

No local or national databases exist regarding rural consolidated governments. Eligibility criteria were based principally on two principles essential to multiple case studies: commonality and variability. Based on commonality and variability of variables, the cases had (1) consolidated within the past ten years, (2) been described as a rural county, and (3) entailed a substantial black population. The study employed Google alerts to identify articles with the terms “consolidation,” “city-county,” “rural” and “merged.” Counties were examined for date of consolidation referendum. Much like previous comparative studies of urban counties, rural counties were not statistically or randomly selected. After the initial screening of the counties, demographic variables were collected. This included population size, median household income, race/ethnicity, poverty level, and other relevant variables. An initial media evaluation of consolidation efforts throughout the U.S. resulted in a preliminary list of consolidated rural counties, which occurred principally in Georgia.
Context and Cases

In 2012, there were 42 city-county consolidated governments in the United States and more than 55 percent of them were located within southern states. Georgia led the nation in the number of consolidated governments followed by Virginia and Louisiana. As noted in a previous section of the study, blacks and women have been historically marginalized politically in the state of Georgia. More recently, local high school students in Wilcox County, Georgia, held their first non-racially segregated high school prom. Also, earlier studies have indicated that political boundary changes have been used as mechanisms for suppressing black political and economic development.

As of 2010, more than 683,000 Georgians resided within eight consolidated counties (see Table 3.1). Political scientists, consultants, and citizens have long called for additional understanding of political impacts of consolidation within non-metropolitan areas. This dissertation responds especially to the needs of working-class interests by examining consolidated rural southern counties over the period of multiple and various electoral cycles.


Table 3.1. Consolidated counties within Georgia by date of consolidation, 1970-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Counties</th>
<th>Year Consolidated</th>
<th>2010 Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Muscogee</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>189,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>Clarke</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>116,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augusta</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>200,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statenville</td>
<td>Echols</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston/Weston</td>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macon/Payne</td>
<td>Bibb</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>155,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Consolidated Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>683,308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: www.naco.org 2011*

**Study Population**

Three rural counties within Georgia were the focus of the study. The counties under consideration exhibited a number of similarities and differences. The three rural counties are situated in the southeastern portion of the state (see Figure 3.1). All three counties are located in Georgia House District 148.

Figure 3.1. Map of rural consolidated counties within Georgia, 2013.
The three counties are separated by three Georgia senate districts in which Chattahoochee is located in the 15th, Quitman in the 12th and Webster is in the 14th.

The three counties are located in the West Central Georgia Regional Hospital District.

The three counties are located in the 7th Physical Health District, the 6th DHR Service Area, and the 8th State Service Delivery Region. The three counties are currently located in the U.S. Congressional 2nd District. Only one of the three counties is located in a metropolitan statistical area. Beyond state level data and relationships, Table 3.2 lists a number of descriptive information on the three counties, including total and minority populations, VAP, educational attainment, poverty, and median household income.

Table 3.2. Comparison of demographic characteristics in Chattahoochee, Quitman, and Webster Counties, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Chattahoochee</th>
<th>Quitman</th>
<th>Webster</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>11,267</td>
<td>2,513</td>
<td>2,801</td>
<td>9,687,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Population</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Population</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minority Population</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population with High School Degree</td>
<td>93.%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population with College Degree</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons Below Poverty</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Owned Firms</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Owned Firms</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Voting Age Population</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Voting Age Population</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>$51,089</td>
<td>$25,708</td>
<td>$28,912</td>
<td>$49,347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(S = Suppressed; does not meet publication standards; F = Fewer than 100 firms)

Source: 2007 U.S. Census
All of the counties are considered rural, with populations below 15,000. All of the counties have black populations of nearly 20 percent and two of the counties have percentages of blacks above the state average. All of the counties have black VAP above the state’s average. Additionally, only one of the counties had a significant show of black businesses. On the other hand, all of the counties had female owned firms nearly equal to that of Georgia’s average female business. Two of the counties had populations with a college degree substantially below the state’s average. All three counties had poverty levels above the state’s average. In terms of population changes, two of the counties seem fairly stable and one has seen a continuous decrease in the number of residents.

Data Collection Strategies

Researchers have noted that the data collection phase of case studies may be wrought with issues. Consequently, experienced and novice researchers should follow a number of steps to improve the quality of data collected. In fact, Yin argued that researchers should evaluate their skill level, establish a case study protocol, and conduct a topic related pilot study before embarking on case studies, especially multiple-case studies. To increase the reliability and validity of the study, a number of steps were taken based on ideas by Yin and others. First, in preparing for the case study, the researcher specialized in research methodology as a subfield within political science. Secondly, the researcher prepared numerous academic papers related to government boundary (i.e., municipal incorporation and consolidation). Finally, the researcher conducted a number of pilot studies related to consolidation, political participation, and race. These pilot studies were presented at public administration and political science conferences for
academic and professional feedback. With the aforementioned precautions having taken place, a number of techniques were used in collecting the multiple-case study evidence.

**Document Review**

A substantial amount of aggregate-level data for the study was obtained from the Georgia Secretary of State’s Office (SOS). Major functions of the SOS include “supervising and monitoring elections and providing campaign finance disclosure; managing and preserving public records; providing educational programs about the capitol, and licensing, monitoring, and registering professionals and businesses.”

Additionally, the SOS covers state historical data, corporations, elections and various professional licensures. Documents were also obtained from local governments, which included commission minutes, budgets, ordinances, and management reports. Research documents do have a number of disadvantages. These documents may suffer from editing and as Yin has indicated “should not be accepted as literal recordings of events that have taken place” or “unmitigated truths.” Nevertheless, by utilizing SOS election data from various years, a time-series dimension was added to the research effort, which was essential for comparative research. The study also included the use of paid newspaper online subscriptions to various legal organs within the rural consolidated counties.


Archival Research

Archival research has been viewed as an essential and unobtrusive component in case study research and democratic societies in general. Maidabino noted that “archives have an important role in ensuring national and cultural memory, scholarly research and ensuring an enshrined democracies entitlements of the governed.”\(^{21}\) Although important to case-study research, Yin advised researchers to be cautious regarding “the condition under which it was produced as well as the accuracy of the archival evidence” and that “most archival records were produced for a specific purpose and audience.”\(^{22}\) Nevertheless, as with Maidabino, the present dissertation also saw the value in archival research in examining consolidated counties and thus utilized a plethora of archival records. These records included local government budgets, maps of geographic areas, and census data. Additional sources of data for the study included local courthouses and the Internet. These sources provided data on county and municipal elections for the years 1980 through 2009. They also provided demographic information on candidates.

Field Notes

Field notes were crucial to the dissertation in answering the principal research question. Indeed, a number of researchers argue that field notes enhance the quality of data obtained in qualitative studies. Field notes may be defined as the data produced by the researcher in observing subjects or populations. Field notes have numerous disadvantages such as being time consuming and highly subjective. On the other hand,\(^{21}\) Yin, *Case Study Research*, 82.\(^{22}\) Ibid., 96.
field notes are advantageous in that they are generally manageable by a single researcher and may provide support for remembering salient events. Thus, the current study made considerable use of field notes and had them scanned and transferred to electronic formats for future analyses.

**Interviews**

Finally, semi-structured personal interviews were important to the case-study enterprise. A purposeful and snowball population of key informants was selected for interviews. There were a number of disadvantages and advantages to these interview processes. The interviewees were not representative of residents and their responses were not generalizable to larger populations. Nevertheless, purposeful and snowball interviews allowed the researcher to interview populations that have yet to be studied. These individuals came from the public, private, and non-profit sectors of the local communities. The interviews were held at the convenience of the informant and were mindful of their time. A consent form for participation was obtained from all participants and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study with the use of pseudonyms—non-identifying names. No monetary compensation will be provided for participation in the study. The study used open-ended questions for eliciting information from key informants for “his or her insights into certain occurrences.” Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was taped recorded for data accuracy. All interviews were transcribed for further clarification and additional probing. Human subjects were protected by having the study proposal sent to the Department of Political Science of the

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School of Arts and Sciences and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Clark Atlanta University.

Data Analysis Strategies

Operationalizing the Core Concepts

The longitudinal and temporal aspects of this dissertation provided pre- and post-consolidation political data which were compared to determine the potential political impacts and/or influence of merging southern rural local governments upon black political participation. As stated earlier, data were obtained from the Georgia SOS and other documents for the three rural counties that have consolidated within Georgia over the past ten years. Data were collected for at least eight years prior to and after city-county consolidation. The totals for each variable prior to consolidation were compared to totals for each post-consolidated variable to determine whether an increase or decrease in the post-consolidated variable had occurred. Additionally, percentages were calculated for each pre- and post-consolidated variable and pre-consolidated variable percentages were compared to post-consolidated variable percentages to determine whether an increase or decrease in the post-consolidated variable had occurred. It was expected that most of the black political participation proxies would experience a decrease in their respective totals and percentages. The major assumption guiding this expectation was that consolidated southern rural local governments negatively impact black political participation and that changes in the post-consolidation period were due to changes in the political behaviors of black and white actors in the post-consolidated counties. Data were
not analyzed using parametric or non-parametric tests. Lastly, statistical tests were not used because of the small population sizes of consolidated rural counties.

**Predictor Factors**

In studying the influence of black political participation in pre- and post-consolidated rural southern counties, a number of political proxies were employed. The study utilized voter registration and election data from the Georgia Secretary of State Office for the years 1990 through 2012. *Pre-consolidation* and *post-consolidation* refer to the years prior to and after the consolidation of the city and county governments (see Table 3.3). The use of voter registration data collected by a state agency has a number of advantages. First, the information is objectively collected and does not rely on subjective aspects of the researcher. Furthermore, registering takes some effort and desire on the part of the individual, thereby excluding individuals who do not wish to actively engage in the political process but may skew data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Pre-Consolidation</th>
<th>Year Consolidated</th>
<th>Post-Consolidation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: Author

This study used a number of conceptual definitions employed in the consolidation literature of urban politics to conceptualize political participation within pre-and post-rural southern counties. When considering impacts of consolidation upon the electorate,
changes in the political participation of citizens occurs at the individual and aggregate level of politics. This dissertation was concerned with principally operationalizing political participation at the aggregate level. Table 3.1 provides the dates of the counties that were examined within this study.

**Outcome Factors**

The first measure of political participation in pre-and post-consolidated counties was the number of active registered voters. *Active registered voters* were defined as the frequency of total voters registered by November of each study year. According to Nimmo and Ungs, voter registration may be defined as “the requirement of many states that in advance of elections day an individual must provide evidence that he possesses the qualifications for voting, place his name on a registration list, and on voting day establish that he has conformed to local election rules.”24

Registering and voting have often been considered the simplest tasks of political participation. Nevertheless, even registering requires citizens to engage in opportunity costs associated with voting. This includes taking the time to visit an election office or to register online or at the local driver services office. For the purpose of measuring political participation, however, changes in registration laws were not considered in this study and the number of active registered voters were calculated and compared across counties. The study only utilized total active voters registered by November of each study year. This variable was used to test whether the political participation in the county had decreased or increased under consolidation. Given that voters strategically decide

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when to vote and voting is not compulsory in Georgia, mixed results in the political participation of citizens were expected.

The second measure of political participation in pre-and post-consolidated counties was the number of votes cast in county elections. *Number of votes cast* was defined as the frequency of votes cast in mayoral and county commission elections. Local elections offer citizens an opportunity to vote for residents that are close in proximity to one’s values and beliefs such as neighbors, friends, and even family members, which are important constituencies and support in rural counties. Furthermore, citizens are able to vote for policies that they may view as having direct impacts upon their quality of life. For the purpose of measuring an additional dimension of political participation, the number of votes cast in local elections was calculated and compared across local governments. The total number of votes cast included races for all elected offices for a particular election year. Further, the total votes cast were of primary elections and not run-off elections because of the dominance of registered Democrats in rural areas of Georgia and because of researcher resources and time constraints. Given that voters are aware of local politics and rural politics are local, relative stable or stagnant numbers should be found in the political participation of rural voters.

Next, political participation in post-consolidated counties were measured in terms of the number of *votes cast in federal elections*. Researchers have indicated that American voters seem mixed in their preferences for voting in federal elections. A number of researchers have noted that presidential elections often garner more political participation and the attention of citizens than local elections. Further, political scientists have found that voter participation often decrease in mid-term or off-year elections for
U.S. senators and congresspersons. For the purpose of measuring pre- and post-consolidation federal political participation, the number of votes cast in federal elections was calculated and compared across counties for presidential and mid-term elections. The present study only utilized votes cast in primary elections for all federal races and did not include run-offs or general elections. This variable tested whether political participation in federal-level elections was impacted by local boundary changes.

The final measure of political participation in pre- and post-consolidated counties was the number of votes cast in subnational elections. The elections of constitutional officers have been viewed as important to citizens in their states. Governors and attorney generals are important in the establishment of public polices at the state level. For the purpose of measuring pre- and post-consolidated subnational political participation, the number of votes cast in state elections was calculated and compared across counties for various constitutional officers. As noted with federal elections, the study only utilized votes cast in primary elections for all state elections and did not include run-offs. This variable tested whether political participation in state-level elections was impacted by local boundary changes. Given that state politics is more likely to be on the minds of the electorate regardless of government structure, increase in the participation of citizens should be apparent.

**Control Factors**

Additional variables used in the study consisted of race and gender of voters and elected officials. The variable race/ethnicity consisted of black, white, Hispanic, and others. The variable gender consisted of males and females.
Data Analysis

The analysis of case study data can be a daunting task. Yin noted that “analyzing case study evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined in the past.” Nevertheless, the author suggested developing a strategy based on “the theoretical propositions that led to the case study” as a good way to set the stage for analyzing the data. This dissertation utilized such a strategy by developing theoretical propositions to be examined. Research propositions were further strengthened through the use of a time-series analysis of the data. According to Yin, a time-series technique “can follow many intricate patterns” over time. The study also utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows 19.0 in order to produce frequency distributions and measures of central tendency. Additionally, the study used Ethnography, a software package for analyzing qualitative data. The data were also displayed in matrices as suggested by other scholars. In following a case study protocol suggested by Yin and others, the author established an electronic database of material on the cases under consideration and this database will be locked in a space within Clark Atlanta University’s Department of Political Science for at least five years.

Bias Control

In conducting case studies, many research biases may enter into the picture and should be dealt with immediately. Yin noted that “case study investigators are especially

25. Yin, Case Study Research, 105.
26. Ibid., 108.
27. Ibid., 109.
prone to this problem because they must understand the issues and exercise discretion.”

In this, researcher bias was addressed in a number of ways. Researcher competence in the study was addressed by the fact that the researcher has a proven track of presenting a number of earlier papers on the topic of consolidation within Georgia. The researcher was objective in the potential outcomes from the study by discussing the data with colleagues and public administrators associated with rural and urban consolidations. More importantly, the researcher used triangulation within the study to reduce biases. Triangulation may be defined as “asking questions in different ways at various points in the interview or seeking data through a variety of techniques to validate a conclusion.”

Nevertheless, researcher biases could appear in the study. Indeed, Houser stated that “research conducted in an interpretive manner in a natural setting has inherent bias that is expected and accepted in qualitative research as long as it is not careless or excessive.”

**Summary**

Utilizing a mixed methods research and a multiple-case study design, this chapter reviewed the study design, sample population, data analysis, and biases. Triangulation of the data was a very important element in this study that included the use of interviews, archival records, and newspaper articles. The chapter also covered the researcher’s previous experiences and subjectivity as a researcher within this study. The results of the study are presented in Chapter V.


CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A mixed methods approach using case-study data and an interrupted time series design was undertaken to narrow the gap in knowledge of political scientists regarding political impacts of city-county consolidation. More specifically, using data from the Georgia Secretary of State’s Office and other sources, the study examined the potential political impacts of consolidation upon minority political interests (e.g., voter registration, votes cast, office holding) within three consolidated rural southern counties. This chapter explores how rural black and female citizens have participated in selected aspects of their respective political systems before and after a successful consolidation referendum. Although citizens may attempt to influence policymakers, express political views, participate in political organizations, and engage in mass protest, the present chapter is concerned principally with analyzing available aggregate data on political choices made by rural residents within pre- and post-consolidated governments.

To better understand potential political impacts of consolidation upon minority political participation, Sections 4.1 and 4.2 describe briefly the nature of political participation within the pre-consolidated municipalities and counties. Section 4.3 compares pre- and post-consolidated counties along selected aspects of political behavior. Next, Section 4.4 examines active registered voters within pre- and post-consolidated
rural counties. Finally, Sections 4.5 and 4.6 describe electoral participation at the federal and subnational levels within pre- and post-consolidated counties.

Section 4.1: Comparing Three Pre-Consolidated Special Purpose Governments

This section reports evidence regarding municipal votes cast, incumbent electoral participation, elections contested, and candidate race and gender by municipality and year for pre-consolidated municipalities using a frequency distribution table. The results do support P1A that pre-consolidated rural southern municipal governments were characterized by low rates of voter participation. Table 4.1 shows that votes cast for city councils races within the pre-consolidated municipal governments were low.

Table 4.1. Total council members, offices for elections, and votes cast by pre-consolidated city, 1992-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Council Members</th>
<th>Offices Up for Election</th>
<th>Votes Cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4,720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

As noted in the table, the highest number of votes cast in Preston was 5, compared to 1,561 and 1,080 votes cast in Cusseta and Georgetown, respectively. Relative to
previous municipal elections, the votes cast in municipal elections within the pre-consolidated governments showed no discernible patterns. For example, from 1993 through 2001, votes cast in Cusseta steadily decreased, as compared to a stagnant 5 votes in Preston from 1992-1999 in which no municipal elections were held resulting in default votes for each candidate for public office. The reduction in the number of elected officials as a result of city-county consolidation is thought to have positive and negative impacts upon the political participation of rank-and-file citizens. This section reports evidence regarding county votes cast, incumbent electoral participation, elections contested, and candidate race and gender by municipality and year for pre-consolidated counties using a frequency distribution table.

Additional sources for examining political participation within pre-consolidated municipal governments may be found in examining incumbent participation within local races.\(^1\) The results support P2A that pre-consolidated rural municipal governments were characterized by high rates of incumbent electoral participation (<30 percent).

Indeed, in 100 percent of the municipal elections, an incumbent was present at least 30 percent of the time. In the years preceding consolidation, Cusseta and Georgetown had similar incumbent percentages with ranges of 38-60 and 40-60, as compared to Preston’s range of 30-60 percent. The results slightly support P3A that the pre-consolidated municipalities were characterized by low rates (above 30 percent) of contested elections.

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Table 4.2 shows that 50 percent of the municipal elections had an incumbent present at least 30 percent of the time. However, in terms of specific contested municipal races, Preston appeared to have been the least competitive of the pre-consolidated municipalities. In fact, prior to consolidation, Preston’s races were marked by three municipal elections in which candidates were not presented with a challenger.

Table 4.2. Percentages of races with incumbents and races contested by pre-consolidated city, 1992-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Races with Incumbents</th>
<th>% Races Contested Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal*, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

A major area of concern, in regards to voter participation, has been the impact of city-county consolidation upon the influence and/or power of minorities. This section reports evidence regarding gender and racial candidate participation using a frequency distribution table. An analysis of data by gender provides support for P4A that pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities were characterized by low rates of female candidate participation as defined as 30 percent or higher. Indeed, only 33 percent of the
municipal races had a female candidate present at least 30 percent of the time. In the years preceding consolidation, Georgetown had the lowest percentages of female candidates for municipal offices with a range of 0-14 percent, as compared to Cusseta’s and Preston’s similar ranges of 25-42 and 20-40 percent (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Election percentages of female and black candidates by pre-consolidated city, 1992-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Races with Incumbents</th>
<th>% Races Contested Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusseta</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal*, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

Although few women seem to have participated in pre-consolidated municipal elections, the greatest electoral disparity seemed to have been along racial lines. An analysis of data by race provides support for P5A that pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities were characterized by low rates (> 30 percent) of black candidate participation. For example, as noted earlier, whereas women candidates had an overall range of 0-42 percent participation within the pre-consolidated municipalities, black candidates’ range of participation was 0-25 percent. Moreover, 0 percent of the
municipal races had a black candidate at least 30 percent of the time as compared to 33 percent for women running for city council. This finding was surprising considering that blacks comprised nearly 50 percent of the county population in Quitman and Webster Counties and only about 25 percent in Chattahoochee County (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Commission members, offices for elections, and votes cast by pre-consolidated county, 1992-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Commission Members</th>
<th>Offices Up for Election</th>
<th>Votes Cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17,567</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal,* and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

Section 4.2: Comparing Three Pre-Consolidated County Governments

The results of the frequency distribution table provide support for P1B that pre-consolidated rural southern counties were characterized by low rates of voter participation. Table 4.4 shows that votes cast for county commissioners within the pre-consolidated counties were mixed. As noted in Table 4, the highest number of votes cast
in Webster was 1,720, compared to 3,048 and 3,091 votes cast in Chattahoochee and Quitman Counties, respectively. Relative to previous county-wide elections, the votes cast within the counties showed no discernible patterns. For example, Chattahoochee and Webster experienced increases and subsequent decreases, whereas, Quitman witnessed a general decline in county voting behavior over the study period.

Proponents of consolidation have argued that local elections are in efficient and are costly to maintain in regards to having a single regional body. However, little is known regarding the competiveness of urban or rural county-wide elections prior to consolidation. This section reports evidence regarding the percentage of races with incumbents and races contested in the three pre-consolidated rural counties by county and year using percentage table data.

The results support P2B that pre-consolidated rural southern counties were characterized by high rates of races with incumbents. Table 4.5 indicates that prior to consolidation, all of the races within Chattahoochee, Quitman, and Webster Counties were marked by high (<30 percent) incumbent electoral participation. In the years preceding consolidation, Webster County had the highest percentages of incumbents in commission races with a range of 75-100 percent, as compared to similar percentages in Chattahoochee (67-100) and Quitman (66-100) Counties. On the other hand, in terms of electoral competitiveness for county commission positions, the results do not support P3B that pre-consolidated rural southern counties were characterized by low rates of contested races.
Table 4.5. Percentages of races with incumbents and races contested by pre-consolidated county, 1992-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Races with Incumbents</th>
<th>% Races Contested Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

Table 4.5 also shows percentage of races with incumbents and races that were contested by county and year for pre-consolidated counties. Webster’s (20-50%) commission races appeared to have had fewer contested elections than pre-consolidated commission elections in Chattahoochee (67-100) and Quitman Counties (66-100).

A major area of concern has been the impact of city-county consolidation upon the influence and/or power of blacks. An analysis of data by race provides support for P4B that pre-consolidated rural southern counties were characterized by low rates of black candidate participation. The following table shows the percentage of races with black candidates by pre-consolidated county and year. In fact, black candidates were
present in only 20 percent of the pre-consolidated municipal elections in which they represented 30 percent or more of the candidates (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Election percentages for minority candidates by consolidation period, 1992-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Black Candidates</th>
<th>% Female Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal*, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

Although few blacks seem to have participated in pre-consolidated commission elections, the greatest electoral disparity seemed to have occurred along gender lines. An analysis of data by gender provides support for P5B that pre-consolidated rural southern counties were characterized by low rates of female candidate participation. In the years preceding consolidation, Chattahoochee and Webster Counties had similar percentages of female candidates with ranges of 0-20 and 0-17 percent, respectively. Quitman County had zero females running for county commissions seats in the period prior to consolidation. For example, as noted earlier, whereas black candidates had an overall
range of 0-50 percent participation within the pre-consolidated counties, female candidates’ had a range of 0-20 percent.

**Section 4.3: Comparing Pre- and Post-Consolidated Rural Southern County Governments**

In contrast to discussions of pre-consolidated municipal governments, this section compares votes cast, incumbent electoral behavior, elections contested, and candidate race and gender by consolidation status and year for pre- and post-consolidated counties. Advocates of consolidation argue that consolidation increases political accountability and reduces conflict amongst governmental bodies. Consolidation has been proposed as a tool for removing corrupted and unresponsive political leaders. The results do not support P6A that post-consolidated counties are more likely to have lower county-wide vote totals than pre-consolidated counties.

Table 4.7 shows that post-consolidated counties accounted for a total of 20,296 votes for county commissioners whereas earlier pre-consolidated counties accounted for 17,567 (see Table 4.4). Moreover, the total number of commission seats and offices increased in the post-consolidation period having an impact upon the number of voters engaged in politics.

Proponents of consolidation have argued that local elections are inefficient and are costly to maintain in regards to having a regional legislative body. Yet, little is known regarding the competitiveness of urban or rural county-wide elections post-consolidation.
Table 4.7. Commission members, offices for elections, and votes cast by post-consolidated county, 2003-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Commission Members</th>
<th>Offices Up for Election</th>
<th>Votes Cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,0760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20,296 (+15.53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Unopposed default is one vote per candidate
Source: The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

The results do not support P7A that post-consolidated counties were more likely to be characterized by higher rates of incumbent electoral participation than pre-consolidated counties. Indeed, although both types of counties had high incumbent presence, pre-consolidated counties did not have many races that had incumbents present at least 50 percent of the time (see Table 4.6) whereas post-consolidated counties had four elections.
In terms of contested elections, the results also do not support P8A that post-consolidated rural southern counties were characterized by higher rates of contested elections than pre-consolidated counties. Table 4.8 indicates that in the post-consolidated counties a small percentage of the races did not have a challenger present, whereas pre-consolidated counties did not have any races where a county commission seat was not contested (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.8. Percentages of races with incumbents and races contested by post-consolidated county, 2003-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Races with Incumbents</th>
<th>% Races Contested Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal*, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

The impact of city-county consolidation upon the influence and/or power of blacks to some extent have not been examined in rural southern consolidation efforts.
This section reports evidence comparing racial candidate participation within pre- and post-consolidated counties using a frequency distribution data. An analysis of data by candidate race provides support for P9A that post-consolidated counties are more likely to have higher rates of black electoral candidate participation than pre-consolidated rural southern counties.

Table 4.9 shows that in at least 42 percent of the races for commission seats that black candidates were present at least 30 percent of the time. On the other hand, black candidates were present only 20 percent of the time in pre-consolidated commissioner races.

Table 4.9. Election percentages for minority candidates by post-consolidation period, 2003-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Black Candidates</th>
<th>% Female Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal*, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division
In terms of gender, an analysis of data by candidate gender does provide support for P10A that post-consolidated counties are more likely to have lower rates of female electoral candidate participation than pre-consolidated rural southern counties. Again, Table 4.9 above shows that in at least 33 percent of the post-consolidated races for commission seats that a woman was present at least 13 percent of the time. On the other hand, female candidates were present only 30 percent of the time in pre-consolidated commissioner races at least 14 percent of the time.

Section 4.4: Active Voter Before and After City-County Consolidation

Voter registration has been seen as a critical component in the allocation of influence, power, and resources amongst citizens in democratic societies. This influence may be altered or suppressed by the creation of a regional government. Opponents of urban consolidations have argued that consolidation hampers political participation. Yet, little is known about the impacts of consolidation upon voter registration as a form of political participation in rural consolidated counties. This section reports evidence comparing active voter registration data between pre- and post-consolidated counties using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution tables. The results do not support P11A that post-consolidated counties would have a lower total of active registered voters than pre-consolidated counties. Table 4.10 indicates that post-consolidated counties accounted for 19,380 active registered voters for the study period, whereas pre-consolidated counties accounted for 18,286.

---

Table 4.10. Descriptive statistics for active voters by pre/post consolidation periods, 1996-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural Pre-Consolidated Counties</th>
<th>Rural Post-Consolidated Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1,828.6</td>
<td>1,938.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>1,542.5</td>
<td>1,480.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>545.8</td>
<td>682.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>1,247 – 2,613</td>
<td>1,344 – 2,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>18,286</td>
<td>19,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division, 1992-2010

Prior to city-county consolidation, the three counties had a median active voter registration of 1,543, compared with a post-consolidated median of 1,481. The standard deviation of active voters for post-consolidated counties was 683 compared to 546 for pre-consolidated counties. The range for pre-consolidated counties was 1,247-2,613 compared to 1,344-2,958 for post-consolidated counties. Thus, contrary to the findings of others, the aforementioned results do not confirm previous results of some urban consolidation studies that city-county consolidation negatively impacts political participation, at least as defined by active voter registration statistics in rural areas.³

Voter registration seems to have been unimpeded by merging rural governments and electoral systems. The following chart shows totals for active voters by county and consolidation period. The number of active voters prior to consolidation in these data

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ranges from a low of 3,958 in Webster to a high of 9,330 in Chattahoochee, compared to post-consolidated active voter ranges of 4,237 in Webster to a high of 10,878 in Chattahoochee (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Total active voters by county and consolidation period, 1996-2012. Source: The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

There were considerable variations in ranges of active voters across the counties before and after city-county consolidation. In all but one of the counties, the registration rolls showed an increase of more than 7 percent in the number of active voters. These changes amounted to percentage differences of 16.6%, -6.6%, and 7.0% for Chattahoochee, Quitman, and Webster Counties, respectively. Chattahoochee County, with an increase of 16.6 percent in active voter registrants, was a leader in the post-consolidation registration period.
Opponents of urban consolidations have argued that blacks would be negatively impacted by consolidation. Yet, little research has been conducted on black voter registration rates in urban or rural consolidated counties. The results do not support P12A that black active voter registration is negatively impacted by rural consolidation.

Table 4.11 reports that changes in the political participation level between black and white active voters were mixed in the first two years following the consolidation of the counties. Indeed, black active voter registration increased in Webster, decreased in Chattahoochee, and remained stagnant within Quitman.

Table 4.11. Percentages of active voters for pre/post consolidated counties by race, 1996-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black %</td>
<td>White %</td>
<td>Other %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

Opponents of urban consolidations have argued that women and children would be negatively impacted by consolidation. Changes in the political participation level of female and male active registered voters were mixed in the first two years of the post-consolidation period.
Table 4.12 shows percentages of female and male active voters by county and year for pre/post consolidated counties. The results do not support P13A that post-consolidated counties would have lower percentages of female active registered voters than pre-consolidated counties. In Chattahoochee and Webster Counties, female and male active voters remained the same. On the other hand, in Quitman, female registrants increased whereas male registrants decreased.

Table 4.12. Percentages of female and male active voters by county and year for pre/post consolidated counties, 1996-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female %</td>
<td>Male %</td>
<td>Female %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal*, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

Changes in the political participation level within groups of female active voters were more mixed than that between men and women in the first two years of the post-consolidation period. Table 4.13 shows percentages of black and white female active voters by county and year for pre/post consolidated counties. In two of the post-consolidated governments white women active voters increased, compared to black women active voters decreasing in two of the post-consolidated governments.
Table 4.13. Percentages of active voters for pre/post consolidated counties by gender and race, 1996-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Black Female</td>
<td>% White Female</td>
<td>% Black Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Albany Herald, The Stewart-Webster Journal, and Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division*

**Section 4.5: Federal Elections, Voter Participation, and City-County Consolidation**

Urban scholars have noted decreases in the political participation of urban residents upon city-county consolidations. Although limited knowledge is available regarding the impact of consolidation upon the political participation of rural residents in federal elections, it is expected that political participation of rural residents in national elections will not be impacted negatively by consolidation. Figure 4.2 shows total votes for presidential elections by county and consolidation period. The results support P14A that Consolidation does not have a negative impact upon voter preference for national politics over local politics.
In all three of the post-consolidated counties, the number of presidential votes exceeded the pre-consolidated counties. The percent change in presidential votes from pre-consolidated Chattahoochee to post-consolidated Chattahoochee was 40.3 percent, and in post-consolidated Quitman and Webster Counties, presidential votes exceeded pre-consolidated votes by more than 33 percent in each county. This finding is in contrast to other researchers that have found negative political participatory rates from previous urban city-county consolidations.4

Increase political participation in presidential voting has been consistent in the post-consolidated rural counties. Table 4.14 shows percent changes for presidential elections by county and consolidation period. The table shows that there have been more increases in presidential voting than decreases since the three counties consolidated.

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Table 4.14. Presidential elections for pre/post consolidated counties by selected years, 1996-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee (2003)</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>-2.6%</td>
<td>96/9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman (2006)</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster (2008)</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>9.02%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division, 1992-2012

In 2004, for example, 31.4 percent more residents voted in the presidential election in post-consolidated Chattahoochee, as compared to only a 17.7 percent increase from 1996 to 2000. Quitman and Webster Counties also showed significant increases in post-consolidation presidential voting. Prior to consolidation in 2006, Quitman’s residents had increased their presidential voting by 5.1, compared to a 15.9 percent post-consolidated increase in 2008. In Webster County, the change in presidential voting in the consolidated county was approximately twenty-three percentage points higher.

In keeping with the theme of examining federal elections, how have congressional elections been influenced by rural city-county consolidation in Georgia? Figure 4.3 shows election totals for the 2nd Congressional District by county and consolidation period. In all but one of the post-consolidated counties, the number of congressional votes exceeded the pre-consolidated counties. The percent change in congressional votes from pre-consolidated Quitman to post-consolidated Quitman was -6.7 percent, and in post-consolidated Chattahoochee and Webster Counties, congressional votes exceeded pre-consolidated votes by more than 41 percent.
Section 4.6: Subnational Elections, Voter Participation, and City-County Consolidation

Do voters in pre- and post-consolidated rural counties vote in similar ways for sub-national officials as they do for federal officials? How are gubernatorial elections affected by city-county consolidation in rural Georgia? Figure 4.4 presents election totals for gubernatorial elections for Chattahoochee, Quitman, and Webster Counties prior to and after city-county consolidation. In all three of the post-consolidated counties, the number of gubernatorial votes exceeded those of pre-consolidated counties. The percent change in gubernatorial votes from pre-consolidated Chattahoochee to post-consolidated Chattahoochee was 30.2 percent, and in post-consolidated Quitman and Webster Counties, gubernatorial votes exceeded pre-consolidated votes by more than 25 percent.
How have secretary of state elections been affected by city-county consolidation in Georgia? Figure 4.5 presents election totals for secretary of state elections by county and consolidation year.

Figure 4.5 Total votes for secretary of state elections by county and consolidation period, 1998-2010.
Source: Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division
In all three of the post-consolidated counties, the number of secretary of state elections votes exceeded those of the pre-consolidated counties. The percent change in secretary of state votes from pre-consolidated Chattahoochee to post-consolidated Chattahoochee was 92.8 percent, and in Quitman and Webster post-consolidated counties, secretary of state votes exceeded pre-consolidated votes by more than 26 percent.

How are attorney general elections affected by city-county consolidation in rural Georgia? Figure 4.6 presents election totals for attorney general elections for Chattahoochee, Quitman, and Webster Counties prior to and after city-county consolidation. In all three of the post-consolidated counties, the number of attorney general votes exceeded the pre-consolidated counties. The percent change in attorney general votes from pre-consolidated Webster to post-consolidated Webster was 53.2 percent, and in Chattahoochee and Quitman post-consolidated counties, attorney general votes exceeded pre-consolidated votes by more than 34 percent.

Figure 4.6. Total votes for Attorney General by county and consolidation period, 1998-2010.
Source: Georgia Secretary of State
How have labor commissioner elections been affected by city-county consolidation in Georgia? Figure 4.7 presents election totals for labor commissioner elections by county and consolidation period. In all three of the post-consolidated counties, the number of labor commissioner votes exceeded the pre-consolidated counties. The percent change in labor commissioner votes from pre-consolidated Webster to post-consolidated Webster was 51.5 percent, and in post-consolidated Chattahoochee and Quitman, labor commissioner votes exceeded pre-consolidated votes by more than 31 percent.

![Figure 4.7. Total votes for Labor Commissioner by county and consolidation period, 1998-2010.](source)

How have state school superintendent elections been affected by city-county consolidation in Georgia? Figure 4.8 presents election totals for state school superintendent elections by county and consolidation period.
Figure 4.8. Total votes for state school superintendent by county and consolidation period, 1998-2010.
Source: Georgia Secretary of State: Elections Division

In all three post-consolidated counties, state school superintendent votes exceeded those of pre-consolidated counties. The percent change in state school superintendent votes from pre-consolidated Webster to post-consolidated Webster was 25.4 percent, and in post-consolidated Chattahoochee and Quitman, state school superintendent votes exceeded pre-consolidated votes by more than 36 percent.

**Summary**

The merging of urban governments has numerous political consequences for communities of interests. Nevertheless, few studies have examined the political impacts of consolidation upon citizens, especially blacks and women, within rural southern counties. This chapter presented the findings of a descriptive multiple-case study of pre- and post-consolidated rural southern local governments within the state of Georgia.

It was found that a number of proxies of political participation may be impacted by city-county consolidation within three of Georgia’s rural consolidated counties. First,
pre-consolidated municipal and county elections were characterized by a high degree of incumbent electoral participation and a high degree of electoral competition. Additionally, black candidates were more often present in county-wide races than municipal races. On the other hand, women were more often present in municipal elections than those for boards of commissioners.

A second set of consolidation findings related to political participation compares electoral activities between pre- and post-consolidated rural counties. First, post-consolidated counties accounted for more total votes cast in county commission elections than pre-consolidated counties. Additionally, post-consolidated counties offered citizens more opportunities to be engaged in politics. Second, pre- and post-consolidated counties had similar rates of incumbents present in elections for county commission seats. Third, in terms of race, black candidates had a higher rate of electoral participation in commission races than women. Lastly, in terms of gender participation of candidates, slightly more female candidates were present in pre-consolidated elections than post-consolidated elections.

A third set of findings related to political participation between pre- and post-consolidated rural southern county governments revolve around active voter registrations. First, the post-consolidated counties had higher a higher total number of active registered voters than pre-consolidated counties. Second, and surprisingly, black active registrants experienced a mixed change in their registration numbers from the pre- to post-consolidation period. Finally,

A fourth set of findings related to active voter registration between pre- and post-consolidated rural southern county governments. First, it appears that political
participation does not decrease significantly in consolidated rural governments.

Secondly, one of the interesting findings of this chapter is mixed results that have been found among blacks and women regarding active voter registration as a proxy of political participation.

A fifth set of findings related to political participation between pre- and post-consolidated rural southern county governments and national and subnational elections. First, it appears that political participation in subnational elections has not been significantly impacted by consolidation. Indeed, in each of the post-consolidated elections for subnational office, each position increased in political participation of county residents.

A sixth set of findings related to political participation between pre- and post-consolidated rural southern county governments and national and subnational elections. The potential impact of rural consolidation upon political participation at the federal level was mixed. In the post-consolidated counties, voting for the U.S. president increased, whereas in congressional elections voting was mixed with two post-consolidated counties having totals higher than two pre-consolidated counties. Nevertheless, voting in national elections far exceeded votes cast for subnational elections (gubernatorial, labor commission, secretary of state, or school superintendent).

In the merging of municipal and county governments, a number of potential negative and positive political impacts may flow from the creation of a regional governing authority. However, few studies have examined political consequences of regionalization in rural southern counties. Thus, citizens are unable to adequately weigh
the net benefits and opportunity costs of city-county consolidation, in view of the
thousands of dollars committed to researching such an important topic.

The next chapter is the conclusion. While aggregate analyses suggest a number of
relationships, these findings must be tempered with caution and a discussion of individual
level and environmental data.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to examine the potential political impacts of city-county consolidation upon black political interests within three rural southern counties within the state of Georgia. Over the last three decades, southern states have accounted for more than sixty percent of city-county consolidation referenda. Interestingly, Georgia currently has more consolidated governments than any other state. The consolidation efforts in Georgia have been similar and different in a number of respects to consolidations nationally. Similarly, consolidations in Georgia have been advocated for based on expected gains in government efficiency, improved business processes, and political accountability. On the other hand, consolidations in Georgia, unlike many earlier consolidation attempts (i.e., Jacksonville, Florida and Nashville, Tennessee) have involved smaller populations. For example, according to the 2010 Census, the successful consolidation vote within Bibb County affected slightly less than 157,000 people. Moreover, consolidations in Georgia have involved substantial black populations. Prior to consolidation in Bibb County, blacks comprised nearly 68 percent of the city of Macon’s and nearly 53 percent of Bibb’s populations. Finally, Georgians have also consolidated governments with populations under 25,000. In view of race relations in the United States, the South being a leader in the city-county consolidation movement, and the lack
of empirical studies of the political impacts of consolidation, the present study was
guided by the following research question: How have black political interests been
impacted by city-county consolidation within rural southern counties?

The political impacts of consolidation upon black political interests have been of
concern for many decades; however, some scholars and advocates of consolidation have
been able to take the high road in articulating the need for government reform in terms of
fiscal responsibility, economic growth, and government efficiency. These arguments
have dominated the consolidated literature for economists (i.e., public choice theorists),
public administrators, and political scientists. The shifts in political power resulting from
consolidation, especially within rural counties, have not gained as much attention from
consolidation researchers. A number of studies in the 1970s and more recent studies of
consolidations in Florida and Tennessee have examined the political impacts of
consolidation upon black political participation within metropolitan areas. In contrast to
earlier studies of urban consolidation, little to nothing is known regarding the nature of
political impacts of city-county consolidation upon race and gender within rural southern
counties. This present study is an attempt to fill some of the scholarly voids in the
consolidation literature regarding rural counties, race, and political participation.

This analysis has found that merging local rural city and county governments may
have a number of political impacts upon aggregate black political interests within rural
consolidated southern counties; however, these political impacts are not direct, nor found
in the direction often cited in the urban consolidation literature. By attempting to answer

Small Georgia County: A Contingency Perspective of City-County Consolidation,” Public Administration
Quarterly 24, no. 2 (2000): 175.
the dissertation’s major research question, this study has made a number of important contributions to the government reform literature in general, and specifically government reform resulting in the merging and dissolving of local political institutions.

This study explores the potential political impacts of city-county consolidation upon black and female political interests within three rural consolidated counties in the state of Georgia. A major argument of this study is that social context matters and that gender and race are impacted diversely by consolidation within rural southern counties. Data were collected and analyzed utilizing a multiple case study design within the context of a mixed-methods research approach. With an eye toward the validity of this study, multiple levels of analyses and triangulation were employed to compare racial and gender aggregate political participation within pre- and post-consolidated counties for federal, state, county and municipal elections. This study also examined aggregate electoral political participation of candidates. The data included information from the Georgia Secretary of State’s Office, 2000 and 2010 Census data, geographic databases, Internet searches, local county election offices, newspaper archives, and personal interviews. Results of this study were calculated using frequency distribution and percentage tables, charts, and graphs. The findings from this dissertation point to a number of conclusions, implications, and areas for future empirical studies.

**Summary of Findings**

Before discussing the specifics of this dissertation, it is notable that a number of findings from this study distinguish it from previous consolidation studies. First, this study included three rural governments, a major advance in the area of city-county
consolidation research. Second, the data were collected from consolidations that were fairly recent with information readily available over the Internet. Third, to the researcher’s knowledge, this study was the only study to examine pre- and post-consolidation returns for state and federal elections. Finally, and most importantly, this is the first study to examine the political participation of both blacks and women within pre- and post-consolidated municipalities and counties—a fact that has been missing from previous studies and reports of rural and/or urban consolidation successes and failures.

When analyzing the political impacts of consolidation upon minority political participation within pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities, this analysis has indicated that pre-consolidated rural southern municipal governments were characterized by a number of important individual, aggregate, and contextual factors. First, this analysis noted that pre-consolidated municipalities were found to have low rates of voter participation and low rates of contested elections. Second, the study finds that pre-consolidated municipalities had high rates of incumbents running for re-election. Lastly, and most importantly, the study found that white males and females more often ran for council seats than black males or females within the pre-consolidated municipalities. Although being black within rural municipalities is not a marker for low candidate participation, it may be that a number of individual and contextual factors may account for low black candidacies within pre-consolidation municipalities. National and
international studies of political participation have found that the size of city, county, and voting districts have an impact upon minority political participation.\(^2\)

This study’s findings cannot indicate the extent to which black political participation within the pre-consolidated municipalities is influenced by individual, historical, or community level factors. Although black electoral participation was low in the pre-consolidated municipalities, there appears to have been no significant factors accounting for differences in the percentages of blacks running for municipal offices. However, one might argue that the low percentages of blacks participating in rural municipal elections may reflect the low pay and time commitment needed for rural governance. In fact, many residents within the counties under study commuted to nearby metro areas for employment, while still living within their home counties. Additional research on political participation within pre-consolidated municipalities could be utilized to provide further understanding of black political participation in post-consolidated governments.

The results of the analyses also indicated a number of significant findings in the study of pre-consolidated rural southern counties. As with the pre-consolidated municipalities, the study found that pre-consolidated counties were characterized by low rates of voter participation and low rates of contested elections for county commission seats. Further, the pre-consolidated counties had higher rates of incumbent county commissioners running for their old offices than council persons running for pre-

consolidated council seats. In contrast to the pre-consolidated municipalities, white and black males were candidates twice as often for commission seats than female candidates.

The findings regarding gender and racial candidate participation at the pre-consolidated county level cannot be explained away simply or accounted for easily in the present study. Indeed, a number of factors might have had an influence upon women and blacks running for pre-consolidated county commission seats. Nevertheless, prior studies of gender and elected office have found that women as caregivers face the added burden of family responsibilities which may constrain their political ambitions for higher levels of public office.\(^3\) One might also argue that female candidates could have been influenced by their perceived idea of discrimination that women may or may not have experienced in running for local office. Lastly, on the racial side, because blacks occupy residential areas outside of many cities and towns, the geographic concentration of blacks within political limits outside of rural towns and cities may provide for greater electoral success at the county level.

The previous sections were concerned with the politics of pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities and counties. This section reports on findings from a comparison of rural pre-consolidated and post-consolidated counties. The present analysis is believed to be the first contribution to this understanding. In terms of general political participation between the pre- and post-consolidation periods, post-consolidated counties experienced a 23 percent increase in the number of county seats available. Furthermore, the post-consolidated counties had 25 percent more commission seats up for elections

than pre-consolidated counties. Perhaps the latter findings may have been the result of
the change in the government structure of the counties under study. Prior to
consolidation, Webster County had four county commissioners and Chattahoochee
County had three county commissioners. It is notable that post-consolidated county
commission elections had fewer female candidates than pre-consolidated county-wide
elections. This study’s findings suggest that female candidates were far less likely than
white male or black male and/or female candidates to run for a county commission seat in
the post-consolidated counties. This finding is similar to other reports and news articles.
In fact, the Macon Telegraph noted in an observation of the new consolidated
government that “The racial mix is five white members and four black members, but the
biggest split is along gender lines. District 3 Commissioner-elect Elaine Lucas is the lone
woman on the team.”
On the racial and gender side of the study periods, black women
and men in the post-consolidated periods were present at least 80 percent of the time for
county commission seats up for election whereas women were present at least 30 percent
of the time.

This study provides no direct link between consolidation and minority electoral or
mass political participation. Whether rural consolidation definitively accounts for
changes in the political participation of blacks and women is another matter for future
scholars. Seeing that blacks have continued to increase their presence in the South and
that most consolidation efforts seem to increase minority representation, it appears
reasonable that black men and women would at least experience greater electoral

4. Phillip Ramati, “New Macon-Bibb Commissioners getting set for transition,” The Telegraph,
new-macon-bibb-commissioners-getting.html.
participation in consolidated governments. This finding is consistent with previous studies of urban consolidations in which more black men and women were elected and appointed to new governing bodies. It would be fruitful to know to what extent consolidation charter provisions increase the ability of citizens to be elected by race, in comparison to other demographic factors such as gender, given the county’s historical discrimination against women.  

In looking at the competitive nature of the pre- and post-consolidated counties, new insights into consolidation were found. Surprisingly, the findings indicated that the pre-consolidated counties were more competitive than the post-consolidated counties, and the present analysis is a major step forward to this understanding. Elections for county commission seats that had incumbents in the races at least 50 percent of the time resulted in pre-consolidated county races with incumbents running 100 percent of the time, in comparison to incumbents running 90 percent of the time in post-consolidated county-wide races. Also, contested elections, for county commission seats were contested 84 percent of the time in pre-consolidated counties, and 78 percent of the time in post-consolidated counties. Although political participation may be enlarged or constrained for various demographic groups, incumbency and electoral competition remained higher for post-consolidated commission elections. These findings are consistent with previous evidence given on redistricting and electoral competition. A number of researchers of

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redistricting at the international, federal, state, and local levels have found that
redistricting has resulted in incumbency protection.6

In addition to examining aggregate elected seats and incumbency data for pre- and
post-consolidated local governments, this study also examined data for county voter
registration rates. No known study of rural city-county consolidation has examined voter
registration was found in the consolidation literature. Political scientists know little
regarding the potential political impact of consolidation upon black and white voter
registration rates within rural southern consolidated counties. Analyses for political
impacts of consolidation upon black active voter registration rates suggest that
consolidation does not negatively impact the number of black active registered voters.
Indeed, post-consolidated black active registered voters were slightly higher than pre-
consolidated black active registered voters. In contrast, in terms of gender, female active
registered voters were slightly more prevalent in the pre-consolidation periods than the
post-consolidated periods. Overall, as noted in Chapter IV (Table 4.10), the number of
active registered voters within the post-consolidated counties was higher than the number
of those within the pre-consolidated counties demonstrating prima facie that rural
southern consolidations have not negatively impacted active registered voters within
consolidated rural Georgia.

While consolidations seem not to negatively impact black or white active
registered voters, certain environmental and psychological factors may have had an

6. Richard Forguette and Glenn Platt, “Redistricting Principles and Incumbency Protection in the
U.S. Congress,” Political Geography 24, no. 8 (2005): 845; Bruce E. Cain and David A. Hopkins,
“Mapmaking at the Grassroots: The Legal and Political Issues of Local Redistricting,” Election Law
impact upon black active voters’ registration rates over the study periods. For instance, while changing the number of electoral seats seem to played no direct role in the number of black registrants within consolidated counties, the presence of black subnational constitutional officers (e.g., labor commissioner, attorney general) and the possibility of the first minority U.S. president (i.e., Barack Hussein Obama) may have been important elements of black active registered voters over the study periods. Indeed, the political participation of black elected officials at the state and national levels may have had the effect of “minority empowerment” within these communities as noted by Gilliam and Bobo in their research on black mayors. Although consolidation may dampen the spirits of black and white opponents, this study shows that specific subnational and federal environmental and psychological factors may work to overcome potential negative impacts from merging local governments. These results are consistent with previous research, and the notion that voters are more attentive to national and subnational issues. The electorate is often bombarded with the policies of subnational and national officials than those policies associated with local council persons, mayors, and/or county commissioners.

Are federal elections impacted differently by rural southern consolidations? Urban scholars have noted decreases in the political participation of urban residents upon city-county consolidations. However, limited knowledge is available regarding the political impacts of consolidation upon the political participation of urban and rural residents in state and federal elections. The present analysis is believed to be the first

study in supporting this understanding. When analyzing the political impacts of consolidation upon federal elections, this analysis has found that voter participation in federal elections has not been negatively impacted by consolidation within rural southern counties. Instead, presidential votes cast within the post-consolidated counties exceeded those cast in the pre-consolidated counties. In contrast, although votes cast for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Congressional District were mixed, post-consolidated counties accounted for an increase of nearly 32 percent more votes cast in congressional races than pre-consolidated counties. Lastly, does a difference exist in the political impacts of consolidation upon voter participation within subnational elections? The present analysis is believed to be significant contribution to the understanding of this question. As with federal elections, subnational elections appear not to have been negatively impacted by southern rural city-county consolidations. In all three of the post-consolidated counties, the number of gubernatorial votes cast exceeded those of pre-consolidated counties. Moreover, although votes cast for the majority of Georgia constitutional officers have witnessed a decrease over the last decade, post-consolidated elections for Georgia’s Secretary of State, Attorney General, Labor Commissioner, and State School Superintendent were all higher than votes cast in the pre-consolidated counties. Therefore, the political participation of citizens in pre- and post-consolidated rural southern governments found in this study appears to be similar to those from prior research.\(^8\)

The results of studying black political participation within pre- and post-consolidated governments have confirmed and extended the political science literature

regarding black political behavior in a number of ways. The findings lend evidence that even in the face of local government reforms, black and white citizens continue to vote more in federal elections than state elections. Black residents within rural and urban counties within Georgia have faced a number of political indignities. The forces against blacks in the South have resulted in political and economic marginalization. Further, blacks have often had to exert their political rights with the assistance of federal authorities. Indeed, a number of instances have been noted whereby black political activist often met with federal agents during the dead of night or early morning hours in fear of white retaliation.

Lastly, the study also supports the view that citizens often vote at higher rates for executive offices at all levels of governments even when faced with “radical” government reform. Although consolidation may alter the structure of political power within rural communities between blacks and whites, black political participation and the hope for a brighter future is often pinned with national legislation and federal authorities. Thus, it is understandable that black political participation regardless of government reform would remain high from the local to the national level.

In summary, it appears that rural consolidations have not had a negative role in the selected political behaviors of blacks in local, subnational, or federal elections. Most studies of consolidations have not examined the impact of consolidation upon state or federal elections. A number of factors may account for the negligible impact of consolidation upon state and federal elections. Since the passage of city-county

consolidations within rural counties were not undertaken to improve political participation in federal or state elections, an impact should not have been expected. Another reason consolidations may not have had political impacts on black political participation in federal or national elections has little to do with environmental factors: black voters, like other voters, have been instrumental in supporting candidates that reflect their cultural and demographic backgrounds for public office regardless of political jurisdiction. Relying on demographic factors alone has had some consequences for blacks supporting black candidates. A number of questions have been raised by researchers regarding the importance of substantive and descriptive representation of racial, ethnic, and gender groups. Do blacks fully benefit from blacks holding public office in most political contexts or could black interests be served just as well through white or Hispanic elected officials within consolidated governments?

**Implications**

There are a number of important implications that may be garnered for studies of city-county consolidation and local consolidation committees. First, city-county consolidation may be beneficial to blacks in that the more egregious forms and barriers of discrimination may be temporarily altered within rural communities in terms of voter participation. Second, with many more black mayors and councilpersons advocating for consolidation, an implication of the current study is that rural elite segments of the black community may stand to benefit more than blacks at large. This strategy is similar to ones utilized by elite blacks within post-consolidated urban counties. Third, the results suggest that blacks are acting as “strategic voters” more so than whites or women in
casting their support or opposition to rural consolidation. Lastly, the study has implications for those scholars and activists concerned with minority vote dilution and representative government. If blacks within rural areas are not necessarily impacted negatively by consolidation, can vote dilution remain a concern for public administrators and citizens?\(^{11}\)

**Delimitations**

Throughout this research, the results from pre- and post-consolidated governments have been compared in order to disentangle the political impacts of consolidation upon black political participation within rural southern counties. In a number of ways, post-consolidated political participation across communities of interests have exceeded pre-consolidated political participation. In some cases, political participation has also decreased in post-consolidated counties for various groups of voters. In order to fully appreciate the study’s findings, a number of limitations must be addressed. This study is a snap-shot of just one southern state in the Union; this study relied heavily on the use of aggregate-level data in comparing the rural counties: and, as a result, the aggregate-level data employed may have had the tendency to overlook political and ideological nuances. In this case the aggregate-level data were federal, state,


and local election and voter registration data. Indeed, the political participation of Barack Hussein Obama in presidential elections may have been an example of psychological individual-level data influencing post-consolidation findings. This study could have also benefited from rank-and-file or elite interviews regarding election periods and community political contexts. Another limitation of this study, as with many studies, involves the selection, coding, and analysis of consolidation information. The periods of pre- and post-consolidation were selected based on the time occurring between each consolidation effort. A final concern about the data is whether Georgia’s voter registration laws may have affected the electoral behavior of its black and white citizens. Researchers have noted that registration rates are often impacted by state laws. Recent research by Stallings investigating political participation in “three-large truly scale consolidations” noted that her findings may have been impacted by the type of election studied and the availability of municipal data.

**Ideas for Future Research**

The current research effort is only a beginning step in untangling the claims and propositions regarding political impacts of city-county consolidation within rural counties, especially consequences to racial and gender political and socioeconomic interests. Research is tentative in nature and thus the current dissertation may have raised more questions than provided answers. Nevertheless, future studies should include

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individual-level data from candidates for public office within consolidated communities. Also, future studies should account for contextual and/or environmental factors that may affect local political behaviors within pre-consolidated and post-consolidated communities. Hopefully, the importance of studying the impacts of city-county consolidation upon blacks and women has been demonstrated. Further, it is hoped that the present research adds to the knowledge base of political scientists, public administrators, citizens, and elected officials dealing with the complexity of merging rural local political institutions.

Conclusions

The major goal of this dissertation was to examine the potential political impacts of rural city-county consolidation upon black political participation within southern counties. While urban consolidation studies of political impacts have noted decreases in the political participation of blacks, this analysis of aggregate political behavior suggests that blacks are not significantly affected by rural consolidations within southern counties at least at the descriptive level, but much work needs to been done in understanding policy implications of rural and urban city-county consolidation. High political participation may be characterized by norm-compliance and community size.14

APPENDIX A

Summary Findings of Context and Environmental Propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of voter participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by high rates of incumbent electoral participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of contested elections.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of female candidate participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by low rates of black candidate participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1B</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by low rates of voter participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2B</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by high rates of incumbent electoral participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3B</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by low rates of contested elections.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4B</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by low rates of black candidate participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5B</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by low rates of female candidate participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
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Source: Author gathered data
### APPENDIX B

Summary Findings of Analytical Research Propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
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<td>P1A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of voter participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by high rates of incumbent electoral participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of contested elections.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of female candidate participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5A</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern municipalities will be characterized by low rates of black candidate participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1B</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by low rates of voter participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2B</td>
<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by high rates of incumbent electoral participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Pre-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by low rates of female candidate participation.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6A</td>
<td>Post-consolidated rural southern counties are more likely to have lower rates of votes cast for county-wide races than pre-consolidated southern counties.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Proposition</td>
<td>Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7A</td>
<td>Post-consolidated rural southern counties are more likely to be characterized by higher rates of incumbent electoral participation than pre-consolidated southern counties.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8A</td>
<td>Post-consolidated rural southern counties are more likely to exhibit higher rates of contested elections than pre-consolidated counties.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9A</td>
<td>Post-consolidated rural southern counties are more likely to have higher rates of black electoral candidate participation than pre-consolidated rural southern counties.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10A</td>
<td>Post-consolidated rural southern counties will have lower rates of female electoral participation than pre-consolidated rural southern counties.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11A</td>
<td>Post-consolidated rural southern counties will be characterized by lower total active registered voters than pre-consolidated rural southern counties.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12A</td>
<td>Black voter registration would be negatively impacted by rural consolidation.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13A</td>
<td>Female voter registration would be negatively impacted by rural consolidation.</td>
<td>Not Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14A</td>
<td>Consolidation does not have a negative impact upon voter preference for national politics over local politics.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15A</td>
<td>Consolidation does not have a negative impact upon voter preference for subnational politics over local politics.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Marando, Vincent L. “City-County Consolidation: Reform, Regionalism, Referenda and Requiem.” *The Western Political Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1979), 411.


