Introduction

American central cities have long faced problems associated with population losses and deteriorating economies. As middle-class citizens move to the suburbs and as shopping centers and industry join them, the city experiences considerable difficulty raising money to fund the services needed by its growing low-income population. Just as the dwindling middle class produces strains in the city’s economy, it also alters and reshapes the contours of the city’s politics. This was particularly true of the 1960s since the vast majority of the out-migrants was white and a large proportion of the growing number of low-income city residents was black. Cities that historically were dominated by the white elite were so changed demographically that the political status quo was threatened. Quick, effective remedies were necessary for the white elite to achieve political stability and to reduce the dangers confronting the established order.

A strategy traditionally employed by most cities and still available to some cities is annexation. Such a strategy works equally well for cities faced with an erosion of established power as for cities encumbered with declining bases of public revenue. For those cities surrounded by suburban municipalities, annexation is a useless device. Other cities, however, by expanding their boundaries to include unincorporated suburban areas, can acquire additional land, commercial/industrial enterprises, and people, all of which may generate new revenue to match their increased expenditures. Furthermore, additional population drawn from predominately white suburbs may represent new votes for a city faced with an increasing black population. This strategy has proven to be particularly useful in the South where, generally, the annexation laws are less restrictive than those in other parts of the country, where the cities are less likely to be hemmed in by other municipalities, and where racial politics over the years has been most acute.

After an eight-year effort to expand its boundaries, the City of Richmond, Virginia, on January 1, 1970, annexed twenty-three square miles and 47,000 people from Chesterfield County. At first glance, apart from the length of time
involved in the land acquisition, this 1970 Richmond annexation could be viewed as one of hundreds of municipal annexations since 1945. In fact, however, the boundary expansion was unique. It so captured the attention of public officials and academicians across the nation that it may now constitute the most celebrated municipal annexation in recent American history. Apart from the legal issues raised during the litigation following the annexation (U.S. District Court Judge Robert E. Merhige once classified the case as the most complex since the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*), and the questions which the case poses for urban planners, economists, and political and social thinkers, the annexation primarily reflects an intense power struggle between establishment whites and the city’s activist blacks. It is the politics surrounding the Richmond annexation that invokes such interest among scholars and the lay public as well.

This book constitutes a political analysis of the 1970 annexation. Specifically, this study explores the political rationale for annexation, the process by which the intent was converted into public policy, and the political actors involved in the process. Though the study of the annexation includes legal, economic, and urban planning issues, those issues are only peripheral to the central concern—power.

On the surface, Richmond’s absorption of territory did appear quite “ordinary,” though it should be noted that no two annexation cases are exactly alike. Nevertheless, properties common to most annexations seemingly characterized Richmond’s.

First, the city needed revenue because of a declining tax base. Like most older cities in the United States, Richmond was losing large numbers of its middle-class population to the suburbs. Jobs, too, were leaving. Industries interested in Richmond could not locate in the city given its lack of developable vacant land. This also meant that new residential development was hampered. It was argued that the additional land, improvements, and people generated by boundary expansion would produce the revenue to pay for increasing expenditures brought about by the city’s growing low-income population heavily dependent on public support.

Second, it was alleged that the public services in the target area were inferior to those in the city. The city contended that the target area, for example, provided virtually no public recreation, relied largely on volunteer fire service and on a small police force, supported schools lacking the diverse curricula of city schools, assumed little responsibility for garbage collection, charged
higher rates for water and sewerage services, and depended on a small un-
sophisticated planning staff ill-equipped to respond to a growing population
and economy. The city claimed that, in addition to reducing the cost of water
and sewerage services, it would institute new services and improve existing
services.

Third, a strong community of interest prevailed between the city and the
target area since many suburban residents were economically and culturally
tied to the city. Over half the residents worked in the city; also, city churches,
synagogues, museums, theatres, libraries, restaurants, parks, civic audito-
riums, and sports arenas served people in both jurisdictions. The problem,
however, was that the tax burden for maintaining the roads and services asso-
ciated with these city facilities fell on city residents.

In still other respects, the Richmond annexation could be considered “ordi-
nary.” The Census Bureau reports that annexations are more likely to occur in
cities with populations ranging from 20,000 to 250,000 than either smaller or
larger cities. Richmond fits the national pattern, given its preannexation popu-
lation of 202,359. Moreover, for many years annexation activity has been con-
centrated in the South and West. Again, Richmond conforms to the pattern.1
Finally, cities of 100,000 or more which increased their land area through an-
nexation by at least 50 percent did so usually through liberal annexation laws.
Such laws permit a city to annex without the approval of target area residents.2
Notwithstanding the changes made in Virginia’s annexation law during the
1979 session of the state legislature, special three judge courts still determine
annexations in Virginia. Consequently, whether a municipality annexes is a
question resolved judicially based on the merit of the case, not on the consent
of target area residents.

But it is not the “ordinary” attributes of the Richmond annexation that
command attention. Rather, it is the political intrigue involving some of the
most influential leaders of Richmond that gives the event such notoriety and
compels serious investigation.

The Richmond annexation case is a classic example of the continuing his-
torical struggle in parts of the South and other regions of the country between
the powerful white elite and growing numbers of central city blacks. In the
Richmond case, however, the struggle was made more dramatic by the tactics
employed by the white leadership and its ability to conduct its annexation
negotiations in secrecy for a period of five years. The small group of power-
ful individuals viewed the increasing numbers of black residents in the state
capital with alarm, fearing that an inability to stem the growing black population would result in a black-controlled city government.

The role of this Richmond oligarchy in the annexation process is the subject of this study. How annexation was employed as a political device to dilute black voting power provides insight into the deep-rooted racism that influenced the behavior of a few white city and state leaders. Moreover, the legal challenge to the annexation reveals the effectiveness of countervailing power generated by a poor black Richmonder. The annexation itself, plus the reaction to the annexation, triggered a series of significant events during the 1970s that affected the city and state alike. Specifically, during the seven years from 1970 to 1977, (1) Richmond was enjoined by the U.S. Supreme Court from holding local councilmanic elections; (2) the city shifted from at-large to ward representation; (3) the 1977 election produced the city’s first majority black city council and its first black mayor; (4) the city manager was fired in September, 1978; (5) the 1979 state legislature granted immunity from annexation to urban counties; and (6) the relationship between the city and its surrounding counties deteriorated. All six events are directly or indirectly related to the 1970 annexation. In short, the 1970 annexation is far from an ordinary example of municipal boundary expansion. It is instead a story of racial politics, city-state complicity in “protecting” the capital, and legal maneuvering in a revered city of the South.

Racial Politics in Virginia

In order to fully understand the intricacies of the role of race in the Richmond annexation case, it is important to place it within the wider context of the traditional role of race in Virginia politics. Richmond may be viewed as Virginia in microcosm, and V. O. Key, Jr.’s statement that “of all the American states, Virginia can lay claim to the most thorough control by an oligarchy” may also be an apt description of political rule in Richmond. Oligarchic rule represents both upper-class hegemony over lower/middle-class whites and racial hegemony of whites over blacks. The effects of this class-racial hegemony were captured in Key’s observation that:

Political power has been closely held by a small group of leaders who themselves and their predecessors have subverted democratic institutions and deprived most Virginians of a voice in their government. The Commonwealth
possesses characteristics more akin to those of England at about the time of the Reform Bill of 1832 than to those of any other state of the present-day South. It is a political museum piece.4

Though Key’s statement is less true now than it was when he initially made it in the 1940s, the differences might be arithmetical rather than exponential, for the chief characteristics of black-white relations, structured inequality, and the dynamics of insider-outsider politics remained just as prevalent in the 1970s as they had been in the nineteenth century. If one of the assertions stated here is correct, that is, that there are both class and racial dimensions to Virginia’s oligarchic leadership structure, then it is necessary to examine what contributed to the oligarchy’s staying power. One probable answer is the politics of paternalism. On one hand, the oligarchy promised the white population that it would hold the line against attempts by blacks to force wide-scale political and economic changes, thus insuring a continuation of white dominance in these areas. On the other hand, it sought out black leaders and promised them piecemeal gains if they would legitimate white oligarchic control. It promised the black leadership that it would hold the line against attempts by some whites to take away gains already won by blacks, but it would only do so if blacks agreed not to force certain issues that were divisive on racial grounds. Therefore, the oligarchy attempted to assuage both groups and to convince both that it represented their best interests.

No matter what rationale it gave and no matter how much it played its own racial-class cards, the oligarchy supported the ideology of white supremacy. This ideological component of racial politics in Virginia was just as evident in the nineteenth century with the legalization of the Black Codes, slavery itself, and post-Reconstruction Jim Crowism, as it is true of the more recent use of literacy tests, poll taxes, and the white primaries to exclude blacks from the voting booths. In fact, the oligarchy’s need to legalize and hence structure racial inequality is indicative of the fact that blacks themselves never accepted their inequality as divinely inspired or as being unchangeable and never ceased, therefore, to challenge the system whenever possible. White leadership wanted the politics of paternalism to govern black-white relations in general and black-white political relations in particular. Black leadership recognized and accepted certain aspects of that paternalism and accommodated itself to that structure as a necessary strategy. Black leaders were afraid of the larger white population and assumed that it had no choice but to gain and
maintain contacts with the white oligarchy. This process permitted the most obvious features of the class and racial status quo to be maintained.

Virginia’s particular brand of oligarchy and paternalism was unlike the racial politics of states in the lower South where trenchant race-baiting was more prevalent, a feature most scholars attribute to the lower states’ basically rural economies and high black population. The ideology of race supremacy in Virginia has never resulted in elite-sanctioned lynching as was the case in the lower South. The oligarchy’s “velvet glove” approach to both the lower- and middle-class white population and to the entire black population has always been shaped by a code of “gentlemanly” behavior that was almost “royalist” in tone and appearance. This leadership has cared no more for the vast white population than it has for the collective black population since its perception of its role, in addition to being oligarchical, has been aristocratic.

The ideology of white supremacy was used to insure that oligarchic rule would be free from competition by blacks. It is in the political sphere that the black challenge to this ideology is most pronounced. This is understandable in view of the constitutional guarantees supporting voting and citizenship rights. Blacks, therefore, have sought to use their national constitutional rights to seek redress for the denial of their rights by state and local politicians. They have more readily challenged white political dominance than economic dominance since the law sanctions black political participation and since effective challenges to the economic status quo first require the political mobilization of the black population.

The annexation conflict can be viewed as an extension of the historic role of white leadership. The logic of this leadership reads thusly: under no circumstances should blacks be allowed to acquire power over whites and, if such an event seems inevitable, whites should use whatever powers, legal or illegal, necessary to stem the tide. Thus, some of the tactics used in the annexation dispute parallel similar tactics used during the era of Massive Resistance following the Supreme Court Decision of 1954. The oligarchic-aristocratic leadership, having a stake in the status quo, could not espouse a politics of universalism. Consequently, undergirding its highly parochial political style was the ideology of white elitism.
City-State Ties

Richmond occupies a special place in Virginia politics. This privileged position obviously stems from Richmond’s role as the state capital. Of equal significance (or, of greater significance, at least for those tenacious Virginians still clinging to the nineteenth century) is the role Richmond assumed as the capital of the Confederacy. For Virginia, indeed for the whole of the South, Richmond was a major economic and political power during and long after the Civil War, and that memory of Richmond’s past still shapes the perception many Virginians hold of Richmond today.

As Virginia’s “special place,” Richmond and its politics are inextricably entwined with the state. Consequently, a challenge to Richmond’s political order constitutes, by definition, a challenge to the state’s.

The percentile growth of the city’s black population due, in part, to the loss of its white population constituted such a challenge during the 1960s. Compounding the problem of this demographic shift was the increasing black unrest in the nation’s largest cities. The 1968 riots in Washington, D.C., just an hour and a half away on Interstate 95, were observed with alarm by state and local leaders alike. They believed that the urban unrest was like a cancer that would eventually afflict Richmond and provide a fertile ground for the emergence of black power. Racially paternalistic, they believed that blacks lacked sufficient knowledge and experience to govern local communities. The riots, therefore, were viewed as shocking examples of the blacks’ lack of self-control and moderation. Black-run cities, they assumed, would encounter financial problems due to overspending and poor management. In addition, they charged that black politicians in black-controlled cities would seek vengeance on white populations by destroying the symbols of white supremacy. The legislative record suggests that many state legislators believed that Richmond’s monuments to Civil War heroes were particularly vulnerable to angry blacks bent on wholesale destruction. In the final analysis, however, these white leaders were less concerned about war memorials than another, more important matter. Many believed that, should blacks become politically dominant, nothing less than Richmond’s and Virginia’s “way of life” was in jeopardy.

Annexation was the city’s solution to the “problem.” The state, too, at least its courts, supported the city’s annexation strategy. A special three judge court, the members of whom were selected by the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, was responsible for determining whether the city would annex. The
use of this judicial procedure in municipal annexation is distinctive of Virginia. Most states require popular approval of annexation. But in Virginia, at least prior to 1979 (when certain counties were granted immunity from annexation), a city was required to file a suit against the county that included the area sought by the city.6 The court was to hear testimony from city and county expert witnesses and then base its decision on such factors as the city’s need for land, the target area’s need for services, the community of interest existing between the city and the target area, and the city’s ability to finance the annexation should the court grant land to the city. The annexation court that ruled on the Richmond case, however, was particularly responsive to political cues. The court veered sharply from precedent and gave little attention to the factors that normally shape its decision. Rather, the basis for its decision was an out-of-court agreement made privately by two local politicians. The agreement clearly favored Richmond’s white oligarchy which, as our research reveals, was more concerned with satisfying its own immediate political needs than with the problems such gratification would ultimately pose for the city.

Richmond’s oligarchy desired to implement the annexation before the next council election and its tenuous position was strengthened considerably by the annexation court’s adoption of the private settlement between Richmond and Chesterfield. This obviated the need for the court to make an independent evaluation and also enabled 47,000 people (97 percent of whom were white) to become city residents and participate in the 1970 councilmanic election which was less than a year away. When the election was held, it came as no surprise when the white political organization retained its control of the city council. The critical issue is that the state’s judiciary was closely allied with the city in the annexation controversy. More than local interests was at stake. Concern was mounting that, unless direct action was taken, the former capital of the Confederacy might fall for the first time in its history to a majority black city council.

The state legislature also played a key role. Before the annexation court’s decision, the General Assembly was concerned that the negotiations between Richmond and Chesterfield officials regarding city boundaries were moving too slowly, or, worse, were leading to a stalemate. Consequently, the General Assembly initiated a move to amend the state constitution so as to empower itself to unilaterally expand the boundaries of the state capital once every ten years following the decennial census.
The problem, however, was that Chesterfield officials remained jealous of their local power and were not anxious for the state to encroach on their prerogatives by mandating, through constitutional amendment, a state solution to Richmond’s “problem.” Yet, they knew that the state was prepared to act unless the county got serious about seeking a compromise with the city. Some city officials, meanwhile, knew that the county was under pressure to negotiate and wanted to capitalize on the county’s vulnerable position. By the same token, these same city officials knew that the process of amending the constitution was lengthy and that even if the constitution were changed, it would be too late for the 1970 councilmanic election. The county, therefore, wanted to take advantage of the time pressure under which the Richmond politicians were operating. Each jurisdiction was vulnerable and, at the same time, could exercise some leverage with its counterpart. The consequence was that a compromise agreement was struck which then was ratified verbatim by the annexation court and upheld by the state supreme court. Annexation removed the immediate need for the state to intervene, but had it not been for the willingness of the state to intercede, the annexation might not have concluded in the fashion that it did.

**Countervailing Power: Curtis Holt**

Curtis Holt stands at the center of the Richmond annexation dispute. To understand his role in this drama is to understand the dynamics of intraracial as well as interracial politics. On one hand, Holt, who was viewed as the “working-class hero” by many blacks, sought to challenge what he viewed as the conciliatory views of Richmond’s middle-class blacks. Of equal importance, his opposition to the racially exclusive practices of the white power structure was of long standing, going back before the oligarchy contemplated annexation. Beginning in the middle fifties, Holt worked closely with the Richmond Crusade for Voters, the major black political organization, and the state/local branches of the NAACP to contest black exclusion from the political process.

Though Holt gained considerable prominence by fighting white-dominated city institutions, he was no less persistent against other black individuals or black institutions whom he charged with being less than faithful to the black cause. In fact, Holt proved to thousands of poor blacks like himself that the
exercise of raw power by whites could be checked and checked effectively without the aid of the black bourgeoisie. In an interview with a local Richmond newspaper, Holt suggested that one reason for his decision to fight for deannexation was the fact that he lost the June 1970 councilmanic election. First of all, Holt rejected the bipartisan stance and what he viewed as the political bargaining of the Crusade which resulted in its endorsement of several white candidates who were supported by Richmond United, an organization based in the newly annexed area. Richmond United, in turn, also endorsed several Crusade Candidates.

Holt finished 17th in a field of twenty-eight councilmanic candidates. He was incensed by his defeat: “I thought my constitutional rights had been violated. I thought that I should have won the election, and so I knew the only thing that could have stopped me . . . had to be the annexation territory.” Although it is highly questionable whether he would have been elected if the annexation had not occurred, Holt did file two suits for deannexation. One suit contested the annexation on constitutional grounds and the other challenged the annexation on statutory grounds, namely, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, covered such activities as municipal boundary expansion.

Holt also entered the 1972 councilmanic election (though the U.S. Supreme Court later enjoined the city from holding the election), but his campaign was given a severe blow when he was not endorsed by the Crusade. The fact that the Crusade had endorsed two white candidates (also supported by the rival white organization, which, in turn, endorsed two Crusade Candidates) was bitterly denounced by Holt: “The power structure is only using the middle-class blacks to continue to isolate the grassroots blacks [in order] to keep the city running in the hands of the power structure.” Unlike the Crusade and the NAACP, which opposed at-large representation and supported a ward system that would guarantee a fixed number of seats for blacks, Holt would be satisfied with nothing less than deannexation. He equated the ward system to a system of “separate castles.”

Just as Rosa Parks’s role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott is seen in its fullest dimensions when coupled with the leadership and direction of Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Curtis Holt’s role in the Richmond annexation dispute cannot be adequately analyzed without knowledge of the alliance that Holt forged with a Richmond white lawyer whose assistance Holt sought after several black lawyers and several black
organizations turned down his request for legal assistance. Both Mrs. Parks and Holt are examples of how single individuals, though powerless against the institutional power of whites, have become, through other agencies and other individuals, heroes to a large segment of the population. These individuals in fact become very important fighting symbols for an entire people—both Mrs. Parks, who was portrayed as a quiet but dignified fighter who refused to budge and thus disobeyed what she thought was an unjust law, and Holt who challenged both white oligarchic power and what he viewed as black middle-class power. Both cases demonstrate that individuals, often in alliance with powerful spokespersons and groups, can make a difference in the outcome of conflicts between the powerful and the powerless. It is safe to say that even those with institutional power are never always as powerful as their positions and status might suggest. Conversely, these examples also demonstrate that those lacking institutional power are never quite as powerless as their positions and status might suggest. In the case of Holt, we see an example of what some sociologists call “dual alienation”—alienation from the prominent black civil rights groups and alienation from the white-dominated political system. He was not, however, alienated from what he called “grassroots blacks.” It was to this group that Holt looked for confirmation of his raison d’être.

Legal Complexity

The legal battles fought over the 1970 Richmond annexation are considered by many observers, including attorneys in the U.S. Justice Department, as the most complex, prolonged, and far-reaching of any legal action triggered by municipal boundary expansion. For the Richmond power structure, the Holt suits quickly became much more than minor irritants. They had the potential to radically change the city’s political landscape. What in past years involved fairly simple and straightforward strategies designed to maintain the political status quo now required, given the sophisticated legal challenges that Curtis Holt mounted against the city, equally sophisticated legal responses. The long cycle of action-response-reaction that characterized the sequence of events in the courts was emotionally draining on both the participants and the observers. The information generated by the tedious research undertaken by attorneys for each side of the suits and by consultants versed in urban and regional planning, economics, and public administration, plus the lengthy depositions and courtroom hearings was comparable to that of a small library. The legal
battle was made more complicated by the intricate routes traveled by the litigants and the fact that the routes at different points crossed each other, ran parallel to each other, and diverged at right angles. Journalists covering the cases over the years were hard pressed to summarize the proceedings in an intelligible fashion, as each year one case either became more complicated or else was set aside as another equally complex case was begun.

The litigation began in February 1971 when Curtis Holt initiated his first suit contesting the annexation on constitutional grounds, and concluded over five and a half years later in November 1976 following a second Holt suit and a suit brought by the city. Litigation over annexation led to a U.S. Supreme Court order suspending local elections in Richmond that lasted five years and enabled the 1970 council, which was to serve until 1972, to continue in power for almost seven years. The arguments surrounding the various suits were presented to six different judicial bodies, the U.S. District Court in Richmond, a three judge district court in Richmond, a three judge district court in Washington, D.C., a Special Master in Washington, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court. The city expended close to a million dollars in legal fees to the attorneys representing the city and attorneys opposing the city.

Holt’s first suit (Holt I) against the city was successfully argued before the U.S. District Court in Richmond. The city, however, was successful in overturning the decision in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Holt’s response was an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, but the high court denied the writ.

Prior to the termination of the first suit, Holt brought a second suit (Holt II) against the city. Holt II was stayed by the federal court, though not before the Supreme Court had enjoined further city council elections. What prevented Holt II from moving forward was a suit which the city filed.

The city’s suit was itself complex, notwithstanding the confusion which was generated by the combination of the city’s suit, Holt I, and Holt II. The city’s suit was brought before a special three judge District Court in Washington which referred it to a Special Master for hearings and recommendations. Upon receiving the recommendations of the Master, the Washington court ruled against the city. The city appealed to the Supreme Court where, by unanimous vote, the justices held that there was racial motive for the annexation. The Court also ruled, however, that, given single-member council districts (Richmond had developed such a plan) and justifiable reasons such as economic or administrative benefits reaped by the city from the annexed
area, the city could retain the annexed area. But, the city had to prove that such justifiable reasons existed and, moreover, had to revert to ward representation. The Supreme Court returned the case to the Washington District Court to determine whether verifiable reasons did exist. The Washington Court, once again, referred the case to the Special Master. The Master found that the city could prove that it received economic and administrative benefits from the annexed area and recommended, therefore, that the city retain the area. The Washington Court agreed with the recommendation of the Master and affirmed the annexation.

After conferring with members of the city’s black community and deciding that appeals and other legal action were only delaying the reinstatement of councilmanic elections, Holt did not appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. With single-member districts, the black population could be assured of at least four predominately black districts within the nine district plan and possibly a fifth given its 40 percent black population. Hence, with ward elections, blacks could capture four and possibly five seats on city council. It was conceivable that blacks, for the first time since Richmond’s founding, could acquire a council majority and thus elect their own mayor.

With the city’s suit resolved, the injunctions against elections were lifted and local elections were called for March 1, 1977. Furthermore, Holt II, which was stayed pending the outcome of the city’s suit, was withdrawn by the Richmond District Court upon request of both the city and Curtis Holt. The legal battle ended on March 8 when a majority black council took office. During the first session of the newly elected council, Richmond’s first black mayor was elected.

Other Contested Annexations in the United States

That the 1970 Richmond-Chesterfield annexation was contested on racial grounds is not uncommon in the post-Voting Rights Act era. As noted earlier, the events leading up to the annexation, the ripple effects of the annexation, and the intricate, protracted litigation triggered by the annexation do cast the Richmond case in a special light. Nevertheless the fact remains that since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, Richmond’s annexation of twenty-three square miles from Chesterfield County was only one of 244 municipal annexations challenged under Section 5, which requires designated localities or all localities in designated states to clear annexations with the
U.S. Justice Department. To put this figure in proper perspective, however, it should be pointed out that the 244 contested annexations represented only 3 percent of the total number of annexations (7,249 as of this writing) that had to be submitted to the attorney general for review. In other words, 97 percent of the submitted annexations were approved. As Table 1 indicates, fifteen of the thirty-three communities recorded multiple annexations. Rome, Georgia, for example, had a package of sixty annexations that was challenged in 1975, a “banner year” in that over the eight-year period (1971–1978) for which the most recent data are available, eight of the twenty-five localities (36 percent) had annexations contested in that year alone.

Two Cities in Texas

San Antonio and Houston will be cited as examples of contested annexations in other localities. Our rationale for selecting these two cases out of the more than thirty in Table 1 is as follows. They are the only cities on the list that can be called “national cities.” According to the 1980 census, Houston is the fifth largest, San Antonio the tenth largest. Both cities also present unique examples of a new configuration in ethnic politics—the introduction of the Mexican-American electorate. A look at Houston and San Antonio may provide insight into the growing cultural pluralism associated with the expansion of the Hispanic population and its concentration in the urban areas of the South, Southwest, and, indeed, the nation as a whole. In addition, Houston and San Antonio may be viewed as representatives of Sunbelt cities. As such they are in a position to give us some idea of the future direction of Sunbelt politics, and the relationship between the physical expansion of Sunbelt cities and the distribution of power within the cities. Lastly, in land mass and population, Richmond is closer to both cities than any of the others in the table. (Richmond is the third largest city on the list following Houston, first, and San Antonio, second.)

San Antonio

San Antonio was founded by the Spanish in 1718, and is generally not considered Southern when its cultural, economic, racial, and political traditions are compared to those of other cities in the South. Its population (nearly 800,000) is 55 percent Mexican-American, 36 percent Anglo, and 9 percent black. San Antonio’s 400,000-plus Mexican-American population has two major distinctions. It constitutes the largest concentration of persons of Mexican heritage
Table 1. Annexations Contested Under Section 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Contested Annexations Pursuant to Section 5 of 1965 Voting Rights Act</th>
<th>Year Annexation Contested</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alabama</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessemer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabaster</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Alabaster</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Fairfield</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Grove</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Georgia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinesville</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Monroe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Savannah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1979-1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Park</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Louisiana</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Providence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newellton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Shreveport</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mississippi</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Jackson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*McComb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
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<td>1975</td>
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<td>Mendenhall</td>
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<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Carolina</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumberton</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Rocky Mount</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Berne</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South Carolina</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>*McClellanville</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1974</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Texas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*San Antonio</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
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<td>Port Arthur</td>
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<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Virginia</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Richmond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersburg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynchburg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Objection later withdrawn by the attorney general

Source: Calculated from U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Complete Listing of Objections Pursuant to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (January 1, 1981).
outside of Mexico City and Los Angeles. San Antonio is also the only major American city in which Mexican-Americans are the majority.\textsuperscript{16} Prior to 1944, the City of San Antonio annexed territory at irregular intervals. However, annexations have occurred almost yearly from 1944 to the present. The first major annexation was initiated in 1952 when eighty square miles were added to the city, thereby increasing its size from seventy-five to 155 square miles. The size of this annexation prompted small cities and counties to demand remedies that would safeguard them against such annexations in the future.\textsuperscript{17} The Municipal Annexation Act of Texas, passed in 1963, circumscribed the annexation powers of the major urban areas by two major provisions. First, it stipulated that cities in any one year could annex up to “10% of its current area provided the area to be annexed lies within those cities’ extraterritorial jurisdiction.” Secondly, it allowed cities to carry over any unused allocations of the allowable amount for future years provided that “not more than 30% is annexed in any one year.”\textsuperscript{18}

Between 1952 and 1971 San Antonio annexed a total of forty-three square miles in relatively small parcels. In 1972, however, the city annexed sixty-three square miles. This was the second largest annexation in San Antonio’s history. (The annexation of sixty-three square miles exceeded the 10 percent allowable under the Municipal Annexation Act of 1963, but it was possible to do so since the act indicated that if a city had not annexed up to 10 percent of its land area in previous years, it could simply carry over the unused allocations for those years. San Antonio added its unused portion to cover its 1972 annexation.) Blacks and Mexican-Americans, citing provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, viewed the 1972 annexation as an attempt to dilute their votes since the city’s population was expanded by 51,417 people, 71.4 percent of whom were white; 24.4 percent and 4 percent were Mexican-Americans and black, respectively. The total number of the groups annexed was 36,749; 12,583; and 2,085 respectively. It was threatened legal action by one of the major land developers, however, that prompted the city council to rescind the annexation. The developer, who feared that the annexation would result in increased taxes for his land, cited irregularities in the measurement of some of the territories annexed. After the city rescinded the May 25, 1972, annexation with its sixty-three square miles, it proceeded to pass separate annexation ordinances beginning on September 11, 1972, which took in each of the rescinded areas separately. This strategy was used by the city because it hoped to avoid challenges to a collective annexation. If any one of the separate ordinances were
contested, the city could respond to that complaint without having each of
the separate areas contested. San Antonio was able to annex fifty-four square
miles of land by annexing separately. This contrasts to the sixty-three square
miles the city had annexed earlier.*

Immediately after rescinding the May 25, 1972, annexation, the city manager
appointed a task force to reexamine the annexation question. The task force
prepared a report for council which included a four point rationale of the city’s
annexation policies. According to the task force annexation was necessary
for the following reasons:

(1) To promote orderly growth. Annexation was deemed important for
securing developable land subject to the city’s land use policies and
zoning controls.

(2) To provide services. According to the task force, a central city re-
mains viable only when it is able to provide services and higher levels
of services than that provided by a smaller community. Small unin-
corporated areas of the county must depend on voluntary staff and
the county has a limited budget for police, fire protection, and road
maintenance.

(3) To maintain a sound fiscal position. As a city becomes a major
metropolis and a cultural center for the region, the many services
it offers begin to go beyond those serving its citizens. The city is,
therefore, placed in the position of providing services to its suburban
neighbors who utilize city facilities without contributing to the up-
keep and expansion of these facilities. Annexation has been a proce-
dure to protect the central city’s monetary base.

(4) To promote unified government. Fifty-eight governmental units in
Bexar County are surrounded by or contiguous to San Antonio. The
report refers to several jurisdictional problems relating to such phys-
ical and health issues as congested thoroughfares, traffic bottlenecks,
inadequate sewerage and water facilities.

These four reasons for annexation, as cited by the San Antonio task force,
were similar to the reasons presented by the proannexation advocates during
hearings in the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia.

*This information was conveyed by officials in the San Antonio Planning Department
and the city attorney’s office to the authors in telephone interviews, August 7–8, 1981.
Perhaps the only difference between the Richmond and San Antonio annexations is the cultural composition of the competing bloc votes. The fear of the white elite that precipitated Richmond’s annexation is mirrored in the statement by one of the San Antonio area judges when he stated that “we’ve got to put a stop to this thing of minority groups getting together and electing a man.” In 1971 with the combined Mexican-American/black vote emerging as a new majority voice in San Antonio, it was little wonder that San Antonio’s relatively recent stated goal of “using annexation as a rational tool of urban development” would raise the ire and fear of both Mexican-Americans and blacks who viewed massive annexations as attempts to dilute the growing power of a growing minority voice. These fears were not unfounded since Texas, like other Southern states, had engaged in policies that excluded blacks and other minorities from the political process through such practices as the all-white primary, literacy tests, the poll tax, and the annual voter registration statute. Thus, the political concerns of Mexican-Americans and blacks focused on the diminishing minority vote which would be inevitable under future annexations and the concomitant decrease in the ability of any minority to gain power at the local level under the at-large electoral system. The issue in the 1970s, therefore, ceased to be the right to vote, as it was under the previous exclusionary policies in the South. Rather, it was the issue of representation.

Beginning in 1914, the nine members of the San Antonio city council were elected at-large. Minority candidates labored under several disadvantages in this electoral system since winning at-large elections depended upon access to an ample supply of campaign funds and on the willingness of a white majority to cast its vote for minority candidates. One of the groups that exercised inordinate power in the at-large process was the Good Government League (GGL) which consisted of professional and business men. This group’s role in San Antonio paralleled the role of Richmond Forward or the Team of Progress (TOP) in Richmond. It was almost impossible for minority candidates to win elections without the support of GGL. There were three basic reasons for GGL’s power: (1) It possessed vast financial resources. From 1971 to 1975 it spent an average of $109,000 per election; (2) It represented itself as a nonpartisan, public-minded “team.” From 1965 to 1973, all the black council members were affiliated with GGL; from 1959 to 1973 of the twenty-three Mexican-Americans who won election, seventeen were affiliated with GGL; (3) Since election to city council required filing for a specific seat and receiving an electoral majority, the successful candidate either had to outspend GGL.
or become a part of its slate. Thus, the at-large election was seen by blacks and Mexican-Americans as an obstacle to equal representation.

Simultaneous with the establishment of the task force to reexamine the annexation issue, the opposition to annexation prompted San Antonio in 1973 to reexamine its city charter. Challenges to the at-large elections were initiated in a redistricting suit which culminated in a U.S. Supreme Court decision, *White v. Regester*, 1971. The high court held that multimember districts in Dallas and Bexar counties (San Antonio is in the latter) were unconstitutional in that they diluted the black and Mexican-American votes. But the decision referred specifically to the electoral processes of the counties and the urban center was yet untouched by the court’s decision. As a result of the *White* decision, there were pressures to make the ruling apply to cities as well as counties. San Antonio’s Charter Revision Commission proposed a charter change that would expand the city council from nine members to eleven, seven of whom would be elected from districts with the mayor and the remaining three members elected at-large. At that time the mayor was chosen from among the nine elected council members. These recommendations were presented to voters in the November, 1974, election. Voters rejected the single-member district plan, but approved the election of the mayor by at-large vote. Opposition to the single-member plan ran along racial and cultural lines with black and Mexican-American communities voting for the plan and Anglo communities voting against it.

Nevertheless, a single-member district system eventually replaced the at-large system in San Antonio, but only after pressure was exerted on the city from the U.S. Department of Justice. Citing provisions of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, the Justice Department said that some of the annexations which occurred from 1942 to 1972 had, in fact, diluted the black and Mexican-American vote. The Justice Department recommended that San Antonio adopt single-member councilmanic districts to insure that Mexican-Americans and blacks have the opportunity to attain political representation commensurate to their proportion of the total population. A single-member district plan would render San Antonio’s 1972 annexation unobjectionable and thereby reduce the power of the Anglo voting bloc. As it did in the Richmond case, the Justice Department reasoned that annexation was impermissible if it increased the power of the white voting bloc while simultaneously excluding other racial and cultural groups from city council membership. San Antonio’s city council accepted the Justice Department’s recommendation and placed
the charter revision plan before the voters in a special election in January, 1977. This new plan called for an eleven-member council, ten of whom were to be elected from single-member districts with the mayor to run at-large.\textsuperscript{27} This charter revision was approved by voters, 31,530 to 29,857. As in the previous charter revision election, voting went along racial and cultural lines with Mexican-Americans and blacks endorsing the plan and the more affluent Anglos opposing it. Single-member district representation, however, did not insure equal representation in San Antonio. As Ronnie Dugger stated: “Despite ‘one man, one vote’ court rulings, the two poorest districts, which have only two councilmen, have a total population of 161,000 compared to the 189,000 people in the three best-off districts, which have three councilmen.”\textsuperscript{28}

Ronnie Dugger’s statement notwithstanding, the first city elections in San Antonio following the adoption of single-member districts saw the emergence of a “minority-majority” council in which the heretofore minority group now composed the majority with five Mexican-Americans and one black. Four Anglos were on the council.\textsuperscript{29} This new “minority-majority” came from areas of San Antonio that had been largely unrepresented historically; thus, it represented groups with new and different voices, interests, and needs. There were some noticeable effects of the single-member district election:

1. Whereas six candidates in 1973 and 1975 filed for each of the at-large positions on the council, sixty-nine candidates and thirty-two candidates filed for the newly created ten single-member districts in 1977 and 1979, respectively;
2. Whereas 26.5 percent of all candidates during the years 1973–75 were Mexican-Americans, 40.6 percent of all candidates during the years 1977–79 were Mexican-American;
3. Whereas from 1955 to 1975, five of the six Mexican-American candidates who ran for city council resided in predominately Anglo areas, after the 1977 charter change, up to 85 percent of the Mexican-Americans resided in one of the six predominately Mexican-American areas.
4. Whereas in at-large elections candidates had to campaign in an area with a population of 700,000, candidates in single-member districts generally had to appeal to populations of 75,000.
5. Whereas, the at-large elections were expensive and thus helped to exclude minority racial and cultural groups, campaign expenses declined in the single-member districts.\textsuperscript{30}
Houston

Houston has recently emerged as the nation’s fifth largest city. Like San Antonio’s, Houston’s present corporate boundaries have resulted from massive and aggressive annexations begun at the turn of the century but greatly accelerated after World War II. Houston’s current 549 square miles resulted primarily from three annexation waves, one in 1949, one in 1956, and the last from 1957 to 1963 which increased the city area from seventy-four square miles in 1945 to 359 square miles in 1956. By early 1972 rapid annexations had increased the city’s size to 501 square miles. Finally, annexations in late 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, and 1977 pushed the total area to 549 square miles.

The suit filed against the city in 1973 was addressed largely to Houston’s at-large electoral system and the manner in which it diluted the black and Mexican-American vote. But this challenge, similar to the one directed earlier at the at-large system in San Antonio, was two-pronged in that, first, it questioned Houston’s massive annexations, especially those beginning in 1972. Secondly, the challenge targeted Houston’s city charter. A brief review of the vast population increases that accompanied Houston’s geographical increases will serve to highlight the concerns of blacks and Mexican-Americans.

The 1973 suit by blacks and Mexican-Americans argued that the net effect of all the annexations throughout the 1970s was the dilution of the minority vote. The city added 180,137 people to its population during the 1970s: 24,809 blacks (13.8 percent), 14,148 Mexican-Americans (7.8 percent), and 141,180 whites (78.4 percent). Had Houston not annexed those areas throughout the 1970s the population ratio would have been different: blacks, 26.1 percent, Mexican-Americans, 14.2 percent, and whites, 59.7 percent. The annexations of the 1970s, however, reduced the black percentage from 26.1 to 24.8, and the Mexican-American percentage from 14.2 to 13.5. In contrast, the white percentage increased from 59.7 to 61.7. The black and Mexican-American populations had been reduced by 1.3 and 0.7 percentage points, respectively. Together these figures represented a total minority population reduction of 2.0 percentage points. These reductions in the minority voting strength through annexations coupled with an at-large voting system, black and Mexican-American plaintiffs contended, had deprived minorities of present or future chances of ever having minority representation in city government in proportion to minority voting power. Though the annexations of the 1970s had included areas in which blacks and Mexican-Americans lived, the ratio of minority inclusion
was never close to the percentage of whites who lived in the areas annexed. Blacks and Mexican-Americans feared that if Houston continued to annex at the then present rate, it would soon run out of black and Mexican-American areas to annex. Thus, the result was the specter of white percentage increases with minority percentage decreases, further strengthening the voting power of the white population.\footnote{35}

In 1955, Houston, by popular vote, amended its city charter to place the city’s administrative functions in the hands of the mayor, thereby instituting a strong-mayor system. The voters also approved an amendment to change from the single-member system to an at-large system. Under this system the nine-member Houston city council consists of a mayor, who is also a council member, five councilpersons elected from districts in which they reside, and three persons who hold numbered positions. A majority vote is required to win a citywide election. One of the ironies of the vote to amend the city charter is that blacks endorsed it, perhaps believing that the at-large system could possibly enhance black voting strength.\footnote{36} But whatever advantages blacks may have envisioned with the at-large system were quickly negated by the huge inflow of whites due to a succession of annexations.

The Houston charter was still a source of debate shortly after it was amended. The city council appointed a charter revision commission in 1956; the commission recommended that the newly amended charter provision of 1955 be rescinded and that the city return to a form of single-member districts. More recently, in a 1975 “straw vote,” Houston citizens approved (by a margin of 53 percent to 47 percent) a plan to return to single-member districts. Despite these two pro-single-member district recommendations, the Houston city council steadfastly refused to reconsider the charter issue.\footnote{37}

In their class action suit, blacks and Mexican-Americans sought to enjoin future Houston city council elections under the multidistrict system. They made two central claims against the city:

1. Houston’s requirement of election by majority vote. This requirement worked against minority candidates since they had to receive over 50 percent of the vote in the first election or face a run-off which would then pit them against a single white candidate. The majority system prevented two blacks from being elected to the Houston city council. Both led in the first election but were overwhelmed by opposition white candidates in the run-off. Both candidates would have been elected under a plurality system. In the \textit{Graves v. Barnes} decision, a case involving at-large county elections, the United States
District Court decreed that “the majority system tends to strengthen the majority’s ability to submerge a political or racial minority in a multi-member district.” This suppression of minority voting power may be even more evident whenever there has been a history of racial stratification and discrimination in a locality. To support this latter assertion, the plaintiffs cited cases in which candidates in Houston election campaigns appealed to racial prejudice. For example, they pointed to a case in which a campaign flyer was passed out only in the white community; it included the pictures of the two candidates—one white, the other black. The black candidate had led in the first election, but was later badly beaten in the run-off. Under a single-member district plan, the plaintiffs reasoned, appeals to racial prejudice would have less impact on election results.

2. The unresponsiveness of the city to blacks and Mexican-Americans. The plaintiffs contended that at-large elections weakened and almost nullified the minority vote. Elected officials did not, therefore, feel an obligation to respond to minority needs since they could generally win without the minority vote. Ergo, the greater the majority voting—percentage became through the annexation of predominately white areas, the greater the potential unresponsiveness to minority concerns. Plaintiffs discussed the city’s unresponsiveness in these areas: (1) employment in city agencies; (2) appointments to boards and commissions; (3) support for low-income housing; (4) lack of adequate recreational facilities in minority areas; (5) the persistence of police brutality toward minorities; and (6) lack of expenditures for the development of minority neighborhoods. These and other problems existed, plaintiffs argued, because multidistrict apportionment had deprived the city of minority participation; hence, there were no minority spokespersons who could address the specific concerns of particular minority districts. Though under the present United States electoral process there is no legislative seat reserved exclusively for blacks or Mexican-Americans, the courts have reviewed the single-member district system as a possible remedy to the underrepresentation of minority citizens.

The United States District Court did not support the claim by plaintiffs that at-large elections were constitutional violations. In Greater Houston Civic Council v. Mann, Judge Frank Mann ruled that plaintiffs did not prove that (1) minorities were denied access to the process of slating candidates; (2) Houston’s multidistrict system was racially motivated; (3) Houston had been unresponsive to the needs of the minority community; (4) past discrimination
limited minority participation in the voting process; and (5) the at-large electoral system diluted or negated minority voting strength. Unlike Richmond, however, Houston was never confronted by plaintiffs seeking to deannex those areas whose incorporation into the city led to the dilution of minority voting strength. Rather, the Houston challengers wanted a change to single-member districts. On September 21, 1979, the Justice Department dropped its objection against Houston’s annexation when the city agreed to an electoral system in which nine councilpersons would be elected from single-member districts and five councilpersons would be elected at-large.

One of the added highlights of the Houston annexation dispute was the spirited debate among Houston-based scholars over the issue of racial polarization and the method by which an “index of polarization” could be computed. Polarization is, in general, a situation in which “the electorate votes along racial lines.” This dispute was not, however, trivial. Those who claimed little or no polarization between blacks and whites supported the annexation and the at-large electoral system. Those who argued that polarization between blacks and whites was high supported the single-member district plan. The polarization issue loomed large in both the San Antonio and Houston cases because polarization was seen by many as a major barrier to electoral success of minority candidates. Given Texas’s historic institutional racism which was similar to the institutional racism found in the surrounding Southern states, it was no wonder that blacks and Mexican-Americans interpreted the massive and aggressive annexations of the 1960s and 1970s as racially motivated. In San Antonio the white population feared that it would be swamped by the Mexican-American vote and hence lose control of city government. The recent April 1981 mayoral election in San Antonio must have confirmed the worst fears of Anglos in that city, for San Antonio became the first major city to elect a Mexican-American mayor. The polarization between Anglos and Mexican-Americans became a major issue in the election, but the recent population distribution which saw the rise of a Mexican-American majority in the city was a factor that could not be rescinded on the appeals to cultural chauvinism and discrimination. Accounts of a long history of discrimination against blacks and Mexican-Americans in both San Antonio and Houston gave credence to the claims of plaintiffs in both cases that race, indeed, was central in the annexation policies of the two cities. In both cases, as a result of litigation, the cities altered their electoral systems. Each city settled the dispute without unreasonable delay by adopting the single-member district
plan rather than going the way of Richmond which fought its case to the U.S. Supreme Court only to see its municipal elections suspended for a total of seven years. Both cities offer interesting case studies in the politics and sociology of ethnic voting and the politics of ethnic coalitions. The ethnic makeup of both cities makes them different from most municipalities in other states of the “Old Confederacy” in that the traditional polarization characteristic of the latter localities was applicable only to blacks and whites. The emergence of the Mexican-American adds a new component, a new variegated cultural dimension and its accompanying images of “brown power,” an idea that parallels the “black power” concept of the late ’60s and ’70s. The emergence of the Mexican-American majority in San Antonio with the election of its first Mexican-American mayor (the first ever in a major city) provides us with an opportunity to analyze the dynamics of Hispanic cultural styles on American urban politics. In the cases of Houston and San Antonio, we are witnessing the diversification of politics and the degree to which the black and Mexican-American populations are able to forge a workable coalition that would offset the predominate political and economic power of the cities’ white population. Now that future annexations seem less likely in the case of both San Antonio and Houston, the very power whites sought to negate—the black and Mexican-American vote—is a reality that must be sought and, in many cases, courted if the large urban centers are to remain as workable political and economic entities. Also, the emergence of “Sunbelt power” and the pivotal roles of Houston and San Antonio in Sunbelt politics add yet another dimension to the future of both cities as regional and national urban centers.

**Data Sources**

The basic research for this study of the Richmond-Chesterfield annexation covers the years 1961 to 1978. Data were collected through (1) interviews, (2) court records, (3) election returns, (4) census reports, (5) newspaper accounts, (6) government documents, and (7) secondary materials. The authors conducted structured interviews with most of the principal actors in the annexation dispute: former city council members, leaders of major black organizations, officials of Chesterfield County and other state and local political figures. Court records were scrutinized in order to assess the rationale for the positions taken by key disputants in the cases.

The use of election returns was essential in demonstrating the voting
strength of blacks and whites and enabled the authors to analyze the city’s voting trends, a crucial issue to each side of the racial conflict. Census data revealed population trends in the city and the surrounding counties and provided the empirical support for the proannexation arguments. News coverage by local black and white newspapers was analyzed in order to locate key personalities in the dispute as well as to assess the tone and logic of the arguments presented for and against annexation. Government documents were examined because they provided the legal framework and justifications for the antiannexation suits. Finally, the social history of Richmond and Virginia was researched by consulting books, articles, and monographs.

Summary of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter Two provides an overview of demographic and political change in Richmond during the years following the Second World War. Attention is also given to the political climate of Virginia during the same period with particular emphasis placed on Massive Resistance and the emergence of the Crusade for Voters. In addition, the chapter explores the 1961 attempt by Richmond and Henrico officials to merge the two jurisdictions. The racial implications of the merger campaign are studied together with the move by the city to annex a portion of Henrico and Chesterfield counties after the merger effort failed.

Chapter Three is divided into two major sections with each section focusing on the Richmond-Chesterfield annexation. In the first section, the Henrico annexation case is explored, including the reasons underlying the city’s rejection of the annexation court award. Attention is then drawn to the Chesterfield case and the initial slow pace of the suit as Richmond and Chesterfield officials sought to settle the dispute out of court. As the black population continued to grow and as the Crusade for Voters became more effective in registering blacks for elections, the city’s attempts to annex accelerated. The interconnection between state and local oligarchs is analyzed as is the common cause made by local and state officials to perpetuate a capital city controlled by the white elite. Section two of the chapter begins with the year 1969, when the Virginia General Assembly passed a proposal to amend the state constitution that would empower the state to enlarge the capital city’s boundaries once every ten years, the negotiations between the mayor and the Chesterfield County board chairman (which led to the drawing of the so-called “Horner-Bagley Line”), the decision of the Chesterfield annexation court, and the
appeal of the annexation decision to the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals. Finally, section two examines the formation of a new political alliance, the Team of Progress, and concludes with an analysis of the 1970 council election.

Chapter Four charts the growing opposition to the Richmond annexation in the federal courts. Charging that the annexation was primarily racially motivated and designed ultimately to dilute the black vote, grass-roots organizer Curtis Holt, Sr., challenged the annexation on the basis of the Fifteenth Amendment and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This chapter also examines the city’s efforts to acquire approval of the annexation from the U.S. Department of Justice and its later move to seek a declaratory judgment from the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. Considerable attention is given to the role of key individuals and organizations in the litigation surrounding the annexation and the legal strategies fashioned by the city and its opponents. Chapter Four concludes with an analysis of the ripple effects generated by the annexation, including the shift from at-large to single-member district representation, the 1977 councilmanic election resulting in the election of the first majority black council and Richmond’s first black mayor, and the changes in state annexation law which stemmed in large part from the 1970 annexation and the omnipresent acrimony between Richmond and her neighboring jurisdictions. Attention is also focused on the racial conflict which continues to characterize Richmond politics and the factionalism which is most pronounced on the Richmond City council.