

COUNTY HOME RULE IN BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS;
AN EXAMINATION OF THE ISSUE-CENTERED
APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF COMMUNITY
POWER STRUCTURE

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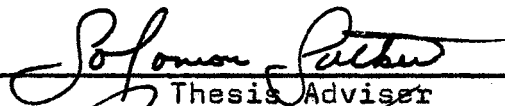
1960

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of
the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
May, 1964

JAN 6 1965

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PREFACE

In the past ten years the subject of community power has received a great deal of attention from sociologists and political scientists. Of the three basic approaches to community power studies (potential, reputational and issue-centered) the reputational has been most widely used.

There is a belief among some sociologists that the issue-centered approach yields more reliable information about community power structures, but the number of such studies is small in comparison with those utilizing the reputational approach. The purpose of this study is to present an example of the use of the issue-centered approach with special attention to the methodology involved.

Indebtedness is acknowledged to Drs. O. D. Duncan and Solomon Sutker for their guidance; to James McCrory, San Antonio News and Express for his evaluation of the writer's interpretations of some of the data; to all those San Antonio citizens who contributed valuable time to this study; and to my husband who read the manuscript many times and gave me editorial assistance as well as constant encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Problem and Need for Study

The purpose of this thesis is to present a detailed example of the use of the issue-centered approach in community power studies. The approach is used in the study of the county home rule issue as it developed in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, from October 1962, through March 1963. The study does not propose any answer to the stratification-pluralism controversy, nor does it attempt to describe the community power structure of San Antonio. It would not be possible to do either of these on the basis of the study of a single issue.

The need for such a study is predicated upon the existence of these operational problems of the issue-centered approach:

1. Very little is known about choosing salient, meaningful issues.
2. Very little is known about the relationship between the community political system and the community power structure.
3. Examples of this approach are limited in number, and the researcher must devise his own operational methods.

Review of Literature on Power Structure

Interest in the study of community power structures has reached fad proportions; and while numerous power structure studies have been and are being made, the validity of many such studies is being questioned on methodological grounds.¹

There are at the present time three basic approaches to power studies: (1) study of the potentials for power, based on inventories and influence of persons and organizations; (2) study of the reputed power or influence of persons or organizations as defined by the opinions of community members; and (3) study of the actual influence or power as shown by the parts played by persons or organizations in determining the outcome of an issue or project.²

The method often employed in establishing inventories of potential influentials in community power structures consists of listing various positions assumed or objectively defined

¹For a summary discussion of this controversy see Nelson W. Posby, "Community Power: Some Reflections on the Recent Literature;" Raymond E. Wolfinger, "A Plea for a Decent Burial;" and William V. D'Antonio, Howard J. Ehrlich, and Eugene C. Erickson, "Further Notes on the Study of Community Power," American Sociological Review, Vol. 27, No. 6, December 1962, pp. 838-854.

²William H. Form and Delbert C. Miller, Industry, Labor and Community (New York, 1960), p. 517.

as influential within the community, and then listing the names of those persons filling such positions.³

Reputed power or influence is established by asking certain "judges" within a community to nominate those whom they believe to be influential within that community; then the nominees themselves are interviewed in an effort to ascertain whether or not the nominees agree with the other nominations of the "judges" and also as some check on actual influential behavior.⁴

The issue-centered or decision-making approach to the study of community power structure "employs decisions as its reference point in seeking to understand the part played by persons or organizations in determining the outcome of a community issue . . . [and] involves a temporal sequence of complex social relationships involving various parts of the community power structure."⁵ By studying leadership personnel and behavior in several salient issues, it is possible to determine whether or not there is a high degree of overlap of personnel in the issue areas and whether or not decision-making

³For examples of this approach, see Form and Miller, p. 524; F. A. Stewart, "A Sociometric Study of Influence in Southtown," Sociometry, February, August 1947, pp. 11-31, 273-286; Samuel A. Stouffer, Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties (New York, 1955); and Robert S. Lynd, Middletown in Transition (New York, 1937).

⁴Most studies employing this method are based upon the work of Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill, 1953).

⁵Form and Miller, pp. 529-530.

procedures tend to be uniform.⁶ This information can then be used to postulate the existence and form (or lack thereof) of the community power structure.

The potential power approach is in disrepute at the present time because it is based on the assumption that power potential will be actively employed, and research has indicated this is not always the case.⁷ Reputational techniques have been described and employed extensively and have received the most attention of the three approaches. Issue-centered or decision-making techniques have received relatively little attention.

A great deal of controversy has arisen between those who advocate the reputational approach and those who prefer the issue-centered approach. Underlying this controversy is a basic theoretical difference in views about the nature of the community power structure itself. The reputational approach has been most frequently employed by those whom Nelson Polsby calls "Stratificationists" because they see community politics

⁶Of particular interest are leadership roles such as Initiation, Staffing-Planning, Communication and Publicity, Intra-Elite Organizing, Financing, and Public Sanctioning, described by George Belknap and Norton E. Long, "A Research Program on Leadership and Decision-Making in Metropolitan Areas" (New York, 1956).

⁷Form and Miller, p. 523, cite Robert O. Schulze and Leonard U. Blumberg, "The Determination of Local Power Elites," American Journal of Sociology, November, 1957, p. 290, and the finding that only two occupants of their potential power inventory were among the eighteen most frequently nominated or reputed influentials. Similar findings were reported by Stewart and Stouffer.

as a subsidiary aspect of the community social structure.⁸ Polsby further contends that the tendency of stratification-ists to find rather permanent community power structures dominated by at least moderately wealthy upper-middle or upper-class people is a result of the reputational method itself which generates self-fulfilling prophecies, promotes systematic misreporting of facts, and culminates in the formulation of ambiguous and unprovable assertions about the community power structure.⁹

Opposing the stratificationists are the "pluralists" who utilize the issue-centered approach because they "hold that power may be tied to issues, and issues can be fleeting or persistent, provoking coalitions among interested groups and citizens."¹⁰ They reject the a priori assumption that some group dominates every community--an assumption which does seem basic in the reputational approach.¹¹

There is, as D'Antonio, Ehrlich and Erickson have pointed out, no reason why the issue-centered approach must be tied to

⁸Nelson W. Polsby, "How to Study Community Power: The Pluralist Alternative," The Journal of Politics, 22 (August, 1960), p. 482.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 478. Among those whom Polsby cites as belonging in the pluralist camp are Robert A. Dahl, Norton E. Long, George Belknap, Raymond E. Wolfinger, and Harry Scoble.

¹¹See suggested questions for interviewing informants in Form and Miller, p. 526.

the pluralist viewpoint.¹² Because this approach studies the actual employment of influence or power, Form and Miller say "Almost all researchers would prefer this . . . approach were it not for the methodological problems which have prevented its widespread adoption."¹³ The problems cited at the beginning of this chapter concerning the difficulty of choosing a meaningful issue and the question of the relationship between the political system and the community power structure as a whole indicate the problems involved in postulating community power structures from issue studies. The fact remains that pluralists, who are presently a minority, have given issue studies the most attention. Consequently, the literature on community power study is replete with "how-to" material on the reputational approach, while issue researchers have been left for the most part to their own devices.¹⁴

Basic Assumptions

The assumptions which are basic to the use of the issue-centered approach and, consequently, to this study are:¹⁵

¹²Ibid., p. 853.

¹³Ibid., p. 530.

¹⁴Compare, for example, Form and Miller's Chapter 18 and Appendixes A through G, all of which deal with method, with Polsby's "Practical Recommendations," in "How to Study Community Power," p. 484.

¹⁵Polsby, "How to Study Community Power."

1. Power is linked to issues, and issues "can be fleeting or persistent, provoking coalitions among interested groups and citizens, ranging in their duration from momentary to semi-permanent."¹⁶

2. The close study of specific outcomes of several significant community issues, with particular emphasis upon leadership behavior, will reveal the extent to which a power structure exists within that community, since the same pattern is unlikely to reproduce itself in more than one area. The degree of overlap in decision-making personnel or organizations is presumed to indicate the existing power structure.

3. It is not necessarily true that some group dominates in every community.

Definitions of Terms and Concepts

It is necessary to define, at the operational level, the concepts of power, influence, and community power structure as they are used in this study. This section also clarifies certain terms of a local nature, peculiar to San Antonio and Bexar County.

Following the lead of Robert Agger, the terms "power" and "influence" are used interchangeably.¹⁷ Power is viewed

¹⁶Ibid., p. 478.

¹⁷Robert E. Agger, "Power Attributions in the Local Community: Theoretical and Research Considerations," Social Forces, Vol. 34, May 1956, p. 73.

here as "the capacity to mobilize the resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general 'public' commitment has been made or may be made."¹⁸ Decision-making is the process of exercising this capacity.

Community power structure is defined as: "the network of influences among persons and organizations involved in community issues."¹⁹ This definition places no restrictions on the shape of the structure which may range from Long's "ecology of games"²⁰ which describes a power structure of intersecting games with little unified community-wide leadership, to Form and Miller's pyramidal "Model A," in which community power is autocratic, centering in one person.²¹

Among the local terms used in subsequent chapters are the words "Anglo" and "Latin." Because of the political situation in San Antonio, it is necessary to distinguish between whites of Latin-American descent and other whites. The word "Anglo" is commonly used locally to refer to non-Latin whites and is employed here in that sense. Those of Latin-American descent refer to themselves as "Mexicanos" or "Latinos," but are called Latins in this study.

¹⁸Talcott Parsons, "The Distribution of Power in American Society," World Politics, Vol. 10 (1957), p. 140.

¹⁹Form and Miller, p. 434.

²⁰Norton E. Long, "The Local Community as an Ecology of Games," American Journal of Sociology, 64, November 1958, pp. 251-261.

²¹Form and Miller, p. 538.

For convenience, three organizations are referred to only by initials following their original introduction in the text. The first of these is a national organization, the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations, PASO. It is an outgrowth, in Texas, of the Viva Kennedy Clubs of 1960. Before the PASO name was adopted, the organization was called MAPA-- Mexican Association for Political Action. PASO is a misleading name, because membership is an individual, dues-paying matter, and open to any individual, Spanish-speaking or not, interested in minority causes. Membership has been estimated to be 20,000 in Texas.²² The other two are informal organizations set up for the purpose of influencing the form county home rule in Bexar County should take. One, the Bexar County Home Rule Association (BCHRA) advocated amendment to the State Constitution and was dominated by conservatives; while the other, the Citizens' Committee for County Home Rule (CCCHR), wanted home rule under existing legislation, and was supported by the Latin-American and Negro voters.

Hypotheses

There are three hypotheses to be examined in this study.

They are:

1. The issue-centered approach, utilizing interviews, observation of events and reading of newspapers and other

²²"The Other Texans," Look, Vol. 27, No. 20, October 8, 1963, p. 75.

published material, will reveal reliable information about a community power structure because conclusions are based on actual behavior rather than subjective opinions of past or potential behavior.

2. Selection of a political issue area may be based on the Rossi theory which states that under partisan electoral laws, when officials are professionalized, when either the majority of the electorate favor the underdog party or when the parties are balanced in strength, then the political institutions and public officials assume a position of importance within the power structure of the community.²³

3. The six levels of saliency proposed in the Form and Miller "test of involvement by issue or decision saliency" are useful in ascertaining the importance of an issue. These levels are: (1) decision of routine administration; (2) adaptative decision caused by ecological forces; (3) introduction of new instrumentalities or new rules; (4) maintenance of institutional or associated authority when status quo is threatened; (5) increase of authority in some institution or association; (6) existence of established authority challenged by revolt.²⁴ The assignment of a certain saliency level depends upon the extent

²³Peter H. Rossi, "Power and Community Structure," Urban Government A Reader in Politics and Administration, ed. Edward C. Banfield (New York, 1961), p. 420.

²⁴Form and Miller, p. 531.

to which the issue under consideration threatens to change the existing power structure.

Decisions to install a traffic light, pick up garbage on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and to install a drinking fountain in City Hall are of Level 1 (routine administration) saliency. They do not affect the power structure and are made under existing rules.

The extension of city services into new areas, the paving of streets previously unpaved, opening of branch libraries are examples of Level 2 (ecological adaptation) issues. They reflect to some extent the interests of the citizens benefited as well as ecological necessity.

The Level 3 (new instrumentalities or rules) category includes such decisions as new building codes, increases in wages or salaries of city employees, and creation of a committee to attract tourists or beautify the downtown area. At this level decisions may benefit certain special interests and be the result of a specific group's agitation, but change usually is not at the expense of some other group in terms of power, nor great enough to arouse much, if any, opposition.

Level 4 (maintenance of status quo when threatened) comprises those decisions designed to strengthen the existing power structure in the face of declared and threatening opposition. Examples of such decisions are change from mayor-city council to city manager form of government, removal of city government from partisan politics, legal

maneuvering to circumvent anti-discrimination laws and drastic reduction in length of ballot. Changes at this level are the result of growing dissatisfaction with the status quo on the part of outgroups such as labor, racial or ethnic minorities, or the opposing political party.

Examples of Level 5 (increased authority and control) decisions are repeal of poll tax, election of a partisan candidate to a non-partisan city council, forcing elections on issues favoring the "outs" through use of petitions, recall and referendum. At this level decisions can result in a change in the balance of power, or may only give the outgroups a foot in the door. Regardless of the degree, success of the "outs" means a change in the power structure.

Level 6 (revolt) decisions such as freedom marches, sit-ins, or violence between strikers and non-strikers may be preludes to Level 4 or Level 5 decisions. They are of a higher level because they have the potential power to temporarily disorganize the existing power structure. Although the community is the focal point of Level 6 action, this action usually reflects forces beyond the community as in the case of race or labor riots.

CHAPTER II

THE METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Review of Literature on Methodology

The discussion of methodological literature is confined to two problem areas: the selection of an issue and the actual method of studying that issue.

The selection of a political issue in a particular community may be justified by the theoretical scheme recently proposed by Peter H. Rossi to explain the variations in community power structures.¹ The general thesis underlying this scheme is that "the pattern taken by the power structure of a community is a function of the kind of political life to be found therein [because] the political institutions of a community are the ultimate locus of the decisions that are binding on the total community."²

Rossi advocates viewing community political life at two semi-independent but related levels: one, "a set of governmental institutions manned by officials and employees with defined functions and spheres of influence"; the other, the

¹Rossi, pp. 418-421.

²Ibid., p. 416.

electorate.³ At the institutional level, Rossi proposes that there are certain structural characteristics which determine the ability of the institutions "to develop an independence of their own and also indicate the extent to which conflicts within the community are manifested in the political realm or in some other fashion."⁴

The first of these characteristics is professionalization of official roles, which ranges from part-time mayors and councilmen to professionally-trained officials such as city managers. Rossi concludes that "in communities where local officials exercise their functions on a part-time basis and where the qualifications for incumbency are not exacting, the incumbents are less likely to segregate their official roles from their other roles and hence extra-official considerations are more likely to play roles of some importance in their decisions."⁵

Electoral rules are a second important structural characteristic to be considered because enduring political alignments are a function of these rules. Whether they are partisan or non-partisan is extremely important, because "non-partisan electoral rules discourage the development of enduring political

³ Ibid., p. 417.

⁴ Ibid., p. 418.

⁵ Ibid., p. 417.

alignments by reducing the advantages to candidates of appearing on slates, whereas partisan elections facilitate cooperation among candidates and the drawing of clear lines between opposing slates of candidates."⁶

A third important characteristic concerns the length of the ballot itself. Short ballots "tend to reduce organizational importance by lowering the benefits to candidates of cooperation with each other," while a long ballot, of course, would have the opposite effect.⁷

At the second level, the electorate has two aspects important in evaluating the salience of political issues. The first of these is the degree of political homogeneity within the community. As Rossi sees it, "the more unequally the community is divided, the less likely are open political struggles to be the major expressions of clashes of interest and the more likely is decision-making to be a prerogative of a 'cozy few.'"⁸

The second characteristic of the electorate, political crystallization, is described as "the extent to which the lines of political cleavage within the community coincide with major social structural differentiations." When political lines coincide with class and status differentiations, they tend to persist in time, and community conflicts are likely to take a

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 418.

⁸Ibid.

political form, reinforced "by the double factors of differential association and connection with important interests."⁹

To summarize:

(1) When the lower status or class levels have a political party representing them which has a chance to get into office, there is the possibility that public office can become one of the important sources of power.

(2) Under partisan electoral laws, when officials are professionalized, when either the majority of the electorate favor the underdog party or when the parties are balanced in strength, then the political institutions and public officials assume a position of importance within the power structure of the community.¹⁰

The selection of an issue involves not only the issue area, but also the saliency of the issue. The race for the office of dogcatcher in a large city is not likely to activate many elements of the community power structure. Recalling Form and Miller's six levels of saliency, Level 4, maintenance of institutional or associated authority when status quo is threatened, and Level 5, increase of authority in some institution or association are the ones most likely to be encountered. Although the authors do not fully discuss

⁹Ibid. Rossi grants that it is not possible at the present time to conclusively categorize community power structures on the basis of political characteristics just described, because proper weights have not yet been devised. It is possible, however, to make an educated guess on the basis of this hypothesis: "in communities with partisan electoral procedures, whose officials are full-time functionaries, where party lines tend to coincide with class and status lines and where the party favored by the lower class and status groups has some good chance of getting elected to office, community power structures tend to be polyolithic rather than monolithic."

¹⁰Ibid., p. 421.

the various levels, according to the adaptation in this thesis, a safe procedure in issue selection would be not to choose an issue at a level lower than Level 4 nor at Level 6.

Polsby is probably the best source of information regarding the actual use of the issue-centered approach. Under the heading of "Practical Recommendations" he makes these four suggestions: (1) pick issue areas as the focus of study; (2) be able to defend the importance of the chosen areas in the community; (3) study actual behavior; and (4) study the outcomes of actual decisions.¹¹

In his "issue area" work in New Haven, Polsby listed these observation methods: (1) lengthy formal interviews with citizens; (2) observations at meetings and public events; (3) daily first-hand observation of city officials for almost a year by a graduate student; (4) reading and clipping newspapers; and (5) informal contacts and interviews.¹²

Methodology Used

The actual collection of data on the issue of home rule closely followed Polsby's New Haven methods. In general, the most satisfactory procedure consisted of:

I. Gathering Community Background Material

¹¹Polsby, "How to Study Community Power," p. 484.

¹²Polsby, "Three Problems in the Analysis of Community Power," American Sociological Review, 24, December 1959, p. 796.

- A. Reading and clipping newspapers for an extended period (as long a period as practicable), paying particular attention to election results, community issues, and seemingly prominent people
 - B. Attending public meetings when newspaper stories seemed inadequate
 - C. Conducting judicious informal interviewing
- II. Choosing the Issue Area (Validation of Importance of Political Issue Area)
- A. Studying the form of the city government to ascertain degree of professionalization of officials
 - B. Consulting census figures for ethnic and occupational profiles of the community
 - C. Ascertaining whether elections were partisan or non-partisan and whether the long or short ballot was used
 - D. Studying past election results together with the population analysis for evidence of political crystallization
- III. Determining the Saliency of the Issue (Assigning One of Form and Miller's Six Levels of Saliency)
- IV. Following the Issue
- A. Clipping newspapers
 - B. Attending pertinent meetings, including "closed" meetings

- C. Conducting formal interviews with those involved in the issue, using a standard schedule supplemented by open-end discussions when possible
- D. Conducting informal interviews with reliable informants

The choice of an issue in the political issue area was based upon a consideration of the political characteristics of San Antonio and Bexar County in the light of the Rossi scheme. Pertinent information about the form of city and county government could have been obtained by consulting the city charter and the State Constitution. However, a college textbook on Texas government and pamphlets recently published by the League of Women Voters proved to be reliable secondary sources in this study.¹³ Information about the electorate came from two principal sources. Statistics about the heterogeneity of the electorate came from the U. S. Census. Past election results were obtained from newspapers.

Assigning a level of saliency was a matter of judgment. The conclusion that county home rule was of Level 4 or 5 importance was based primarily upon knowledge of the local political situation. The fact that in Bexar County liberal Democrats controlled most county offices while conservative

¹³ Wilbourn E. Benton, Texas: Its Government and Politics (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1961); League of Women Voters: Key to the City (San Antonio, 1961); Citizen's Handbook of Bexar County (San Antonio, 1951); and Texas Constitutional Review (Waco, 1955).

political elements were working on a plan to remove county government from party politics pointed to Level 4 saliency, since Level 4 issues are concerned with moves to maintain the status quo in the face of threatened opposition. However, there was the possibility that the proposed home rule charter would give more power to county officials, perhaps at the expense of city officials. In this case, the issue would be of Level 5 saliency. In addition, the fact that the matter was given extensive coverage in all three local newspapers--many front page stories, as well as at least four editorials--was considered an indication of local interest.

A number of tools were used in following the issue. The most valuable of these were the local newspapers. San Antonio is one of the few large cities in the United States with two large competing newspaper companies, one a Hearst affiliate, the other recently purchased by a Texas publishing company. This competitive situation has resulted in complete and relatively unbiased coverage of local news. In fact, this observer was specifically cautioned against bias by the political reporter of the non-Hearst paper while covering the county convention on home rule. In a one-newspaper community a researcher would need to check thoroughly before relying too strongly on newspaper coverage.

Because it was convenient to do so, newspapers were clipped for a period of eighteen months, even though the home rule issue

appeared only during the last six months of the observation period. By reading and clipping throughout the entire period, it was possible to note voting habits and trends, become familiar with people and issues, and get a fairly good picture of the local political climate. This background was of considerable help in understanding the specific issue of county home rule. This long period of observation also provided time for evaluation of the work of different reporters and columnists, and to separate the reliable ones from those who leaned toward sensational and irresponsible items. Accuracy of reporting was determined by comparing the extent of coverage of a given event by political reporters of opposing papers; attending meetings and reading their subsequent newspaper accounts of those meetings; and by reading editorials, then checking for reflections of editorial slant in these reporters' news stories.

Reporters or columnists who seem to be conducting personal vendettas had to be approached with caution. For example, one prominent local columnist made it a practice to print a hearsay item one day, then retract it the next. This indicated either a lack of diligence in checking facts or the deliberate act of writing a false item with the intention of retracting it later. The same reporter periodically attacked, by innuendo just short of libel, certain local figures for no apparent reason other than his personal antagonistic feelings.

Because of the uniquely thorough newspaper coverage in San Antonio, it did not seem necessary to personally attend

a great many meetings while conducting this study. Had almost every detail of pertinent meetings not been reported in the three San Antonio newspapers (two are published by the same publisher), much more legwork would have been required. Not only was it of importance to know what meetings were held by whom, and what was said, but also the very presence of certain key figures was at times significant.

The writer did attend the county convention which was the climax of the county home rule issue. In addition to the advantages of first-hand observation, personal attendance was of value for two important reasons. First, it was possible to compare personal observations with those printed in the newspapers, both in the matters of accuracy and completeness. Not only were the published accounts found to be accurate, but also much more complete than a non-press member could have gathered. For example, during the more violent periods of the convention, newspaper reporters were observed in the midst of the hasslers, furiously scribbling quotable quotes which appeared in the next editions.

Secondly, opportunities to make contacts, to pick up informal information, and, in general, "get the feel" of the situation present themselves when the observer is in actual attendance.

The formal interview schedule used in this study was short because lengthy interviews seemed unnecessary since there was to be no attempt to postulate the power structure

of the community. The schedule consisted of six questions which could be covered in about twenty minutes. They were designed to ascertain the actual behavior of those reported in newspaper articles to be prominently involved, and to discover whether or not others, unknown to the observer, had also been involved. The interviews also served as a check on the assumed saliency level of the issue.

The questions used were:

1. When and how did you first learn that county home rule was an active issue in Bexar County?

2. What action did you take?

3. What was the basis of the conflict between the two factions involved?

4. How important do you personally think the issue was?

5. Would there be any reason for an important person in San Antonio to try to influence the outcome of the issue without its being known that he did so?

6. Do you know of any instances in which this happened? Describe any such instances.

Following the formal interview, open-end discussion was encouraged when the interviewees seemed willing to devote more time to the discussion.

The formal interviews were conducted as the last step in the study so objective observations and those of the participants could serve as cross-checks on one another. There is another advantage to this timing which should not be underestimated. The more knowledgeable the interviewer is, the less

likely he is to accept the superficial platitudes with which some interviewees attempt to satisfy their interrogators.

Because of the limited scope of the study, it did not seem necessary to interview a large number of people. The original plan called for ten interviews to be divided as equally as possible between leaders of the two factions, with one or two spaces reserved for people who seemed to be uncommitted. It was felt that this number of interviews would be sufficient unless the answers obtained were more widely divergent than could reasonably be accounted for by partisanship. In this case, more interviews would be necessary.

The actual selection of persons to be interviewed was made from a list compiled from newspaper articles about the home rule issue. The ten people chosen appeared, from news stories, to be leaders in the home rule issue and at least one other area of political activity. These ten people were chosen for interviews (names given are fictitious):

1. Faye Merchant--chairman of the Bexar County Home Rule Association (BCHRA), and prominent member of the League of Women Voters

2. Manuel Reyes--prominent supporter of Citizens Committee for County Home Rule (CCCHR), County Commissioner, and State Chairman for Political Association of Spanish-Speaking People (PASO).

3. John Barnes--arbitrator between the BCHRA and CCCHR in early stages of the issue, president of a leading businessmen's organization.

4. Roy Clifford--uncommitted to either side until day of the county convention, Negro political leader

5. Bernard Levin--very active in BCHRA, County Commissioner

6. Joe Martin--quiet supporter of CCCHR (attended meetings, but said little), local head of large union

7. George Jackson--proposed by BCHRA to chair the charter-writing committee, college president

8. Fred Gilbert--supporter of BCHRA, organizer and former chairman of the Good Government League

9. Allen Garcia--chairman of the CCCHR, State Executive Secretary of PASO, employee and political advisor of Commissioner Reyes

10. Ed Green--supporter of BCHRA, prominent Republican

Later developments made two substitutions necessary. Dr. Jackson was unable, perhaps due to the press of academic duties, to schedule an interview any time in the two-month period allotted for interviewing. A BCHRA supporter, Mr. Bob Redfearn was substituted. Mr. Redfearn also headed the Research and Planning Council. After the interviews were begun, the name of Mr. J. D. Sanders, a nationally-known local businessman, was mentioned several times, and it seemed advisable to substitute him for Mr. Green. Although Mr. Sanders was most courteous and offered to see the interviewer on the first call, other commitments interfered, and eventually time ran out before the interview could be made. Thus the original list of ten names was reduced to nine.

Most of the informal interviewing took place during the twelve months prior to the appearance of the home rule issue, and the purpose at that time was to supplement the information being gathered from the newspapers. Informants were asked to express their opinions about what people and organizations were influential in San Antonio, and were encouraged to discuss the general political situation. After work was begun on county home rule, discussions were confined to that subject and conducted with one political reporter and those formal interviewees who seemed willing to continue talking.

In the beginning the selection of informal interviewees was haphazard--which probably accounts for the generally unsatisfactory results obtained. Two were interviewed in connection with the writing of another paper, others were acquaintances, friends, and friends of friends. Among those interviewed were a Negro publisher, an author of several books about San Antonio and Texas, two lawyers (one Anglo and one Latin), a dentist, two downtown store owners, and three active members of the League of Women Voters. With the exception of the author and one member of the League of Women Voters, all of these people were natives of San Antonio.

The informal interview was approached with caution because the results could easily turn out to be a collection of unusable miscellaneous and misleading fact and fancy. Very little of the material gathered in this manner was ultimately utilized because there was no way to show it was anything but a collection of different opinions.

This observer made the serious error of equating "informal" with "uncontrolled." As a result, informants were selected more on the basis of availability than knowledgeability. The number of interviews was small and confined, with the exception of the author and publisher, to personal acquaintances. Also, there was undoubtedly bias in the questions since no schedule was consistently followed.¹⁴ Finally, it appeared that the parochialism inherent in each informant's occupation, political beliefs, race, and social status biased the information obtained. The most stunning example is that not one person suggested a Latin as an influential of any magnitude, large or small. Such uncontrolled interviewing exposes the observer to the danger of inadvertently picking up a prejudice of which he will later have to divest himself.

¹⁴See Polsby's discussion of the importance of question form, "How to Study Community Power," p. 476.

CHAPTER III

COUNTY HOME RULE IN BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

San Antonio and Bexar County

San Antonio and Bexar County comprise a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area as defined by the Bureau of the Census, and the population of the area was 687,151 in 1960. Bexar County is approximately eighty-eight per cent urban, San Antonio's 1960 population being 587,718 and other urban communities totaling 25,600.¹

San Antonio is so situated geographically as to be the natural outlet and trading center for a large agricultural area, the Rio Grande Valley. Until 1940, the local economy was based upon commercial activities, but since 1940, the city has become increasingly dependent upon the burgeoning military installations surrounding the city. By 1962, the combined payroll for military and civilian workers at these installations totaled \$343 million, plus local purchases of \$53 million, contributing well over one-third of the annual billion dollar economy.² Retail and wholesale trade and

¹U. S. Bureau of Census, U. S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960 Census Tracts, Final Report HC (1)-134 (Washington D. C., 1962), p. 13.

²Air Force Times, March 13, 1963, p. SW9.

service businesses are the most important local economic activities, with manufacturing and agriculture providing supporting strength.³ The city's dependence upon the federal government is a source of some concern to those civic leaders who are well aware of the consequences for San Antonio should peace ever be declared, and serious efforts are being made to diversify the economy, principally by building up the tourist business and by making San Antonio a medical and research center.

The racial and ethnic composition of the population is of considerable importance in San Antonio's political structure. Using the Census report of the number of Spanish surnames as an approximation of the Latin population, 41.4 per cent of the population is Latin.⁴ The Negro population is 7.1 per cent of the total. County-wide, these percentages are 37.4 and 6.6, respectively (see Table II). The power implications for a Latin-Negro coalition are obvious, and, in fact, these two groups are major factions in a local political combine, the Democratic Coalition. The Anglo majority is even smaller than these figures indicate because most of the 55,000 military personnel in the area cannot vote in Texas.⁵

³Table I, page 30, shows the occupational breakdown for San Antonio and Bexar County according to the 1960 Census.

⁴U. S. Bureau of Census, p. 13.

⁵Air Force Times, p. SW9.

TABLE I

OCCUPATIONAL COMPOSITION OF POPULATION OF SAN ANTONIO AND
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS, BY MAJOR INDUSTRY, 1960

Industry	San Antonio		Bexar County	
	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Total</u> : All Industries	140,104	100.00	153,072	100.00
Construction	13,699	9.78	15,278	9.98
Manufacturing				
Durable Goods	7,069	5.04	7,795	5.09
Non-durable Goods	13,903	9.92	14,850	9.70
Transportation, Commu- nications and Public Utilities	12,171	8.69	13,159	8.59
Wholesale and Retail Trade	44,569	31.81	48,460	31.66
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	9,638	6.88	10,975	7.17
Educational Service	8,849	6.32	10,070	6.58
Public Administration	30,206	21.56	32,485	21.23

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book
(Statistical Abstract Supplement), U. S. Government
Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1962, p. 568.

TABLE II
 ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF POPULATION OF SAN ANTONIO
 AND BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS, 1960

Ethnic Group	San Antonio		Bexar County	
	No.	%	No.	%
White				
Spanish Surname	243,627	41.40	257,090	37.39
Other	300,870	51.49	382,666	56.00
Non-white				
Negro	41,605	7.10	45,314	6.60
Other	1,616	0.01	2,081	0.01

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, U. S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960 Census Tracts, Final Report PHC(1)-134, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1962, p. 13.

Political Structure

The political structure of San Antonio and Bexar County can be described in terms of Rossi's outline which describes the level of governmental institutions, including the degree of professionalization of officials, degree of partisanship of electoral rules, and length of ballot; and the level of the electorate, which includes the degree of political homogeneity and the degree of political crystallization.

As expected by Rossi in the case of a lower-class party potential majority, the business and professional community of San Antonio has effectively removed city government from party politics.⁶ In 1952, the voters approved a new council-manager city charter which provides that the only elected officials are the nine council members who elect one of their number to the office of mayor. The Good Government League, organized in 1955, has presented a successful non-partisan slate of council candidates before the voters in every election since its inception. This organization is dominated by the city's business and professional interests. Thus, while the city government is professional at the operational level, the policy-making councilmen are non-professional, part-time officials.

⁶Rossi, p. 421: "In communities where the lower class party has a clear majority there will be moves on the part of the business and professional community to introduce structural changes in city government to undermine this majority, as, for example, non-partisan elections, short ballot and the like."

The government of Bexar County is highly non-professional. All counties in Texas must follow one pattern of organization as set up by the State Legislature, maintain the same offices, and follow identical procedures, regardless of size, population, or other differences. Each county has forty-one elected officials, ranging from district judge to public weigher. The Commissioners Court is considered to be the governing body of the county and is made up of the county judge (chosen at large) and four commissioners, each elected by voters in his own commissioner's precinct. Duties of the Commissioners Court include policy-making and administration of county affairs, setting the tax rate (within limits set by the Legislature), approving bills, supervising county road maintenance, appointing employees and various boards, making provision for general elections, providing public buildings, maintaining eleemosynary institutions and sitting as a Board of Equalization. With the exception of the county judge, the commissioners are part-time untrained officials. County employees are not under a merit system.

Despite the fact that the Democratic Party in San Antonio and Bexar County has been traditionally and still is the party, county electoral rules are partisan. Partisanship makes the Democratic primary election an arena for deciding intermural disagreements.

There are, in effect, three parties in Bexar County: the growing Republican Party, liberal Democrats, and conservative

Democrats. There is a continuing struggle between conservative and liberal Democrats for control of the party organization. This contest is exemplified by activity in the area of Democratic county conventions. As stated, the population in both the city and county is closely divided between Anglos and those of Latin-American and non-white ancestry. This ethnic composition is reflected in political alignments which have resulted in the split of the Democratic Party into liberal and conservative factions.

Although conservative Democrats have managed to keep a tight grip on county conventions in most of Texas' metropolitan areas, in Bexar County the picture is different. At the Democratic County Convention held May 12, 1962, for example, "the potent combine of liberal-labor forces stamped out a conservative flicker almost as fast as it struck."⁷ Control of this convention was established in the election of the temporary chairman. The liberal nominee received 2,327 votes to the conservative's 623. Among the resolutions approved at the convention were: (1) condemnation of the poll tax; (2) condemnation of the practice of voting in the Democratic primary, then voting for Republican candidates in the general election (a practice popular among conservative Democrats); (3) condemnation of the John Birch Society; (4) endorsement of medical care for the aged under social security; (5) condemnation

⁷San Antonio Express and News, May 13, 1962, p. 1.

without qualification of racial discrimination; (6) endorsement of repeal of right-to-work laws.

While conservatives have lost control of the local Democratic party organization, they have still been able to muster enough votes to elect conservative candidates at the state and national level, and, occasionally, at the local level. Bexar County has been classified as a conservative county on the basis of votes cast for conservatives, with liberal candidates garnering an average of 45.3, 48.5 and 42.8 per cent of the total vote cast in local, presidential and state races respectively.⁸ It is questionable, however, whether at the present time Bexar County can be classified as conservative. The county's seven State Legislators are elected at large, and in November, 1962, general election every candidate favored by the liberals won.

The Republican party is gaining strength rapidly in Bexar County. The Republican candidate in the 1962 gubernatorial race received 41,730 votes; the Democratic winner received 61,819. Of course, many of those voting Republican were registered Democrats, but the last Republican Bexar County convention had over 800 delegates attending--a far cry from the days not long past when Republicans held clandestine meetings attended by eight or ten forlorn but stalwart members.

Republicanism in San Antonio, as in the rest of the South, has its roots in anti-New Dealism; and Barry Goldwater,

⁸San Antonio Light, March 25, 1962, p. 8.

not Abraham Lincoln, is considered the spiritual leader. Goldwater makes the party more palatable to many Texans because he is from the Southwest.⁹

The political-party situation in San Antonio has been summarized by a local columnist in this way:

The suggestion that conservative Democrats get into the Republican party has a great deal of merit. It must be clear to these conservatives that they can no longer win elections inside the Democratic party, in Bexar County, which is tightly controlled by the liberals and will stay that way. . . . Most of the conservatives detest the idea of surrendering local government to the liberals while they shift over to the Republican party. Yet more and more conservatives will "desert" to the Republicans, and it's only a question of time until the rest follow . . . they must see the inconsistency of believing in one set of principles and, at the same time, trying to dominate a party where the majority quite obviously believes something else.¹⁰

There is a high degree of political crystallization along class and ethnic lines in the liberal-conservative political cleavage. The Democratic Coalition is an effective liberal combination which includes the Latin American and Negro bloc votes, labor, firemen and policemen, some school teachers and some Anglo liberals.

Although it must be assumed that many of the conservative Democrats vote as they do because of tradition, and that some of the Republicans are "Yankee" imports, it would be

⁹For a detailed discussion of the political climate in Texas, see Willie Morris, "Texas Politics in Turmoil," Harper's, September 1962, pp. 76-87.

¹⁰Paul Thompson, San Antonio News, May 9, 1962, p. 1.

difficult to name a successful business or professional man who is not either a conservative Democrat or a Republican.

In summary, the city of San Antonio has a semi-professional government, with elected officials chosen by non-partisan rules on a short ballot--a situation favoring the conservatives. Bexar County government is non-professional, partisan, and elected on a long ballot--favoring the liberal majority. Newspapers commonly refer to the "City Hall Crowd" and the "Court-house Crowd," and it is well known that the two are enemy camps.

In view of these facts, the selection of an issue from the political issue area is, according to Rossi, justified for the following reasons:

(1) The racial and ethnic minority groups in San Antonio do have the liberal Democratic party representing them--a party which not only can, but does get into office. In such a case Rossi says public office can become an important source of power.

(2) Electoral laws are partisan, many city offices are professionalized, liberal and conservative factions are balanced in strength. Under these circumstances, Rossi says political institutions and public officials occupy important positions in the community power structure.¹¹

Furthermore, the county-home-rule issue is highly salient because adoption of home rule could mean gains for either the liberals or the conservatives, depending upon which faction controlled the charter writing. In terms of the Form and Miller test, the issue is either Level 4, maintenance of

¹¹See this thesis, pp. 13-16.

institutional or associated authority when status quo is threatened; or Level 5, increase of authority in some institution or association.

The County Home Rule Issue

For a number of years certain groups such as the League of Women Voters and the San Antonio Research and Planning Council have advocated amending the State Constitution in order to make county home rule easier to obtain and to eradicate the inconsistencies in the present amendment. Numerous obstacles would have to be overcome before this could be accomplished. Probably the greatest of these is the fact that any constitutional amendment must originate in the State Legislature. The voters of Texas do not have the power of initiative. The State Legislature is, as in many other states, pro-rural and anti-urban. It is entirely possible that the amendment was purposely designed to thwart any home rule attempts. In spite of the odds, advocates of a new amendment have been engaged in a campaign to interest and educate the electorate in such a change. Their strategy seemed to be geared to a long-range effort, with no plans to make county home rule an active issue until such time as there was a reasonable chance of success.

Theoretically, Bexar County can adopt county home rule which would give the electorate the authority to change the form of county government to a limited extent. Under the 1933 constitutional amendment, any county having a population

of 62,000 or more may, upon the approval of the electorate, adopt a home rule charter. The amendment stipulates that votes in charter elections are to be cast and counted separately in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county, thus making it possible for a small minority of voters to defeat such a charter. However, subsequent legislation was passed authorizing Bexar County to adopt a home rule charter upon approval by a simple county-wide majority. The procedure for getting a charter before the voters involves the presentation of a petition to Commissioners Court requesting the calling of a county convention of delegates from each precinct. Convention delegates then decide upon the number of appointees (from three to fifteen) to a charter-writing commission, elect the commission and its chairman. The commission is then charged with writing the charter to be presented to the electorate for approval.

In actual practice, it is almost impossible for a Texas county to write a valid home rule charter which would effect a real change in county government. During the thirty years in which the home rule amendment has been in effect, not one county has been successful in obtaining home rule. This is due not only to the difficulties posed by the provision for separate majorities in incorporated and unincorporated areas, but also to the inconsistencies in the amendment itself. One paragraph invests the county with the power "to create, consolidate or abolish any office or department, whether created

by other provisions of the Constitution or by statute . . . " while another states that no charter may "inconsonantly affect the operation of the General Laws of the State relating to the judicial, tax, fiscal, educational, police, highway, government."¹² In the opinion of W. E. Benton of Southern Methodist University, "It is doubtful that valid charter could be drafted under this amendment because of these two inconsistent provisions."¹³

On December 19, 1962, county home rule emerged as an active issue in Bexar County. On that date a prominent businessman, Jack Barker, presented Commissioners Court with a petition for a county convention to name a home rule charter-writing committee. No publicity of any kind preceded this presentation, but evening papers on that date carried a story presenting the views of the Research and Planning Council on home rule as presented by the chairman, Bob Redfearn. He stated that county government should be reorganized on a business-like basis, but that the necessary reforms could not be effected under the 1933 amendment. This statement drew sharp criticism from the man who first appeared to be the sponsor of the petition, County Commissioner Reyes. The Research and Planning Council chairman, said Reyes, "should be fired for misinterpreting the county home rule amendment."¹⁴

¹²League of Women Voters, Citizen's Handbook, p. 11.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴San Antonio News, December 19, 1962, p. 4.

Barker subsequently resigned as chairman of the Citizens' Committee for County Home Rule, the organization allegedly sponsoring the home rule petition. The structure of this organization remained obscure throughout the issue. It is doubtful that the CCCHR was ever a formally organized committee. No complete membership list was ever made available, and when interviewed, Garcia could not even remember the initials: "What did I call that thing?" The initials seemed simply to identify the current pro home rule faction and serve as a counterpart to the established Bexar County Home Rule Association. The BCHRA, organized in 1959, was made up of members from the Chamber of Commerce, the League of Women Voters, the Taxpayers League, the Business and Professional Women, and some others. In interviews a number of people quoted Barker as saying at the time of the presentation, "I don't know a damn thing about county home rule."¹⁵ In informal conversations, a County Commissioner and a political reporter both stated the belief that Barker's function was that of a respectable figurehead. After his resignation, the CCCHR chairmanship was assumed by Allen Garcia. Here was an instance when newspaper accounts were inadequate and interviews were a necessary supplement. On the basis of news stories alone, one would assume that as the original chairman of the CCCHR and bearer of the petition, Barker was an important leader, when in fact he was not.

¹⁵Unless otherwise qualified, "interview" throughout this chapter means formal interview.

The role played by Mr. Garcia in bringing the county home rule issue to the fore was a crucial one.¹⁶ By tracing his activities as revealed by interviews, it is possible to give a rather complete picture of the preparations which preceded the presentation of the petition.

Mr. Garcia stated in an interview with the writer that his interest in county home rule stemmed from his desire to provide a favorable climate for industry in the area, while at the same time maintaining a "reasonable" balance between inefficient, completely representational government and efficient non-representational government. In June of 1962, he began laying definite plans for attempting to get home rule for Bexar County under the existing amendment and statutes. He called upon Mr. J. D. Sanders, nationally-known businessman, and was able to convince him that it was possible to get some reforms now, rather than wait for complete reform which might come some years in the future with a constitutional amendment. Mr. Sanders' legal staff was consulted and returned a favorable opinion. The county's state representatives were contacted and asked their opinions as to the possibility of obtaining county home rule. Those who replied favorably were asked to write letters to that effect.

¹⁶ During the period under discussion, Garcia was known to the public as an employee and advisor of Commissioner Reyes. Following the county convention, Garcia left Reyes' employ to open a "research" office. He and the local head of the Teamsters Union led the successful bid by Latins for city council positions in Crystal City, Texas. (See Time, April 12, 1963, p. 25.)

By late October, Garcia had marshalled enough strength to begin negotiations with those who wanted county home rule only through amendment in the hope of getting some cooperation from them. Sanders, Garcia and Reyes called upon John Barnes, president of a powerful civic organization. This meeting was not reported in the newspapers, but was mentioned by three of the interviewees. No commitment was made. It was about this time that the rather nebulous CCCHR was created. There was some evidence that it was through Sanders that Barker was persuaded to chair the CCCHR and present the petition. However, this could not be verified because by the time this possibility came to light, neither man could be reached by the observer.

After the petition had been presented, Barnes called a meeting of interested parties on both sides of the issue. Among those most vigorously opposing Garcia were representatives of the Research and Planning Council who were adamant in their claim that it was impossible to obtain home rule without amending the constitution. It was obvious that the two factions could not agree upon anything except the desirability of home rule--and they could not even agree on what home rule meant. However, Barnes scheduled another meeting and asked each side to submit statements of their goals.

Garcia submitted a list of things he thought could be accomplished which included the right of the county to zone, regulate its own building codes, negotiate contracts, enact health regulations, establish a better park and recreation department,

and provide public services to unincorporated areas. These things are not as innocuous as they appear on the surface. The right to zone is a particularly potent instrument which could be used to set aside industrial areas and also to prevent annexation of county areas by the city. It was Garcia's contention that industry could be attracted by the guarantee of low county tax rates without the threat of annexation. When interviewed, he conceded that there were too many elective offices, but he did not want a completely professionalized government patterned after the city government.

The pro-amendment people wanted elimination of most elective posts in the county, professional management, and a merit system for county employees. None of those in this faction when interviewed were very interested in attracting any industry of the type which would provide jobs for blue-collar workers. When the subject of economic diversification was mentioned, they stressed tourism and a proposed medical center as examples of the "industry" most desirable for the area. The positions of both factions were reported in the newspapers.

Barnes stated in his interview that he had scheduled the meetings just discussed in an effort to bring about some cooperation between the two factions. However, the meetings seem to have had just the opposite effect. The pro-amendment people refused to even consider working under existing legislation, and Garcia refused to wait for an amendment which might be enacted at some future date.

The battle lines were drawn and precinct organization work began. All of those interviewed said they had participated in this activity which consisted of calling out the precinct leaders, holding meetings, sending out speakers, and convincing voters of the importance of attending precinct meetings. The organization of precincts was a crucial stage in the development of the issue because the ability to recruit a majority of disciplined delegates meant automatic control of the convention.

Newspaper coverage of precinct work was thorough, and there was no indication in news stories or in the later interviews that any of those local leaders reputed (in informal interviews and open-end discussions) to be influential exerted any pressure at this time. This reticence seemed puzzling and cast some doubt upon the saliency of the issue until an interview with Mr. Gilbert of the Good Government League revealed a logical explanation. It was his belief that no charter would ever be written by the charter-writing commission, and that there was no reason to bring up big ammunition until there was some real reason for doing so.¹⁷ He contended that "nobody ever heard of any of these people . . . none of the community will have anything to do with them . . . they don't know what they are doing." He further stated that

¹⁷This failure to act on the part of reputed influentials suggests that the temporal sequence of involvement as proposed by Form and Miller, p. 532, does not always hold true. In this issue, at least, the situation was under close surveillance by many who did nothing and were waiting it out until the last possible moment.

should a charter get written (an event he deemed unlikely) which did not meet the approval of the respectable business people of the community, it was certain that big money would then be poured into the opposition.

The following description of the development of the issue from January through March is based almost entirely upon news stories. Interviews, while not adding new knowledge about this phase, did confirm the accuracy of news reporting.

By the sixth of January, newspapers were labeling the home rule controversy a "feud." Aligned with the BCHRA were the City Council, Taxpayers League, League of Women Voters, Business and Professional Women, The Research and Planning Council, and later, the Chamber of Commerce and Junior Chamber of Commerce. These groups, while heartily endorsing the idea of county home rule, opposed the proposed convention and any attempt to secure home rule under existing legislation. On the other side were the CCCHR and the Democratic Coalition.

As January progressed, more and more liberal politicians declared themselves in favor of home rule under the 1933 amendment. On January 16, the district attorney, the state senator, and six of the seven state representatives were claimed as members of the CCCHR. In the same news release several important points came to public notice. First, Allen Garcia was named as the one "who is masterminding the current home rule drive."¹⁸ Secondly, Garcia released the contents of a

¹⁸San Antonio News, January 16, 1963, p. 13.

letter written to him by the district attorney in October of 1962, favoring home rule under the existing amendment. Finally, the political nature of the issue was mentioned by two CCCHR recruits. The district attorney said "proponents of alternative methods of approach do not like the political implications of this law . . . and seek a law more favorable to them politically." State Representative Morales stated that the present law has sufficient safeguards to prevent one group or one section of the county from dominating the government. "You can rest assured," said Morales, "of my cooperation in order to make County Home Rule a reality in Bexar County and at the same time preserve representative government in our community."¹⁹

Precinct conventions to name delegates to the county convention were set for January 26, and the convention for February 9. Each of the 172 precincts in the county was entitled to hold a convention to elect one delegate and one alternate to the county convention, and any precinct resident holding a current poll tax receipt was entitled to participate, regardless of party affiliation. While it was apparent that control of the convention and the eventual writing of a charter was directly dependent upon victory at the precinct level, it was equally obvious that the situation was most advantageous to the liberal forces. Using the election figures of the November 1962 general election and the votes

¹⁹ Ibid.

cast for gubernatorial candidates Connally (Democrat) and Cox (Republican) as indicators, conservatives dominated only fifty-two (29.7%) precincts. This, coupled with the fact that liberals have long had a strong precinct-level county organization, favored a CCCHR victory.

The conservatives were not willing to give up without a struggle. During the week preceding the precinct conventions, they put on a vigorous campaign for voter support. Under the leadership of the BCHRA and its chairman, Mrs. Merchant, numerous meetings were held all over the county. Emphasis was placed on the necessity for attending the precinct convention and in selecting a non-partisan civic leader as chairman of the county convention. The president of the League of Women Voters was appointed chairman of the "action committee." The stated goal of this committee was "to unite the efforts of all citizens, regardless of party affiliation behind a non-partisan campaign" to elect qualified charter-writing commissioners.²⁰ Among those holding positions on this action committee were present and former Good Government League city councilmen, the president of the Taxpayers League, the wife of a conservative county commissioner, and a Negro member of the City Planning Board. At no time did the BCHRA comment on its paradoxical position of trying to gain control of a convention to which it was unalterably opposed in the first place, and which it believed could not possibly bring about county home rule

²⁰ San Antonio News, January 20, 1963, p. 5.

with reorganization of county government along county-manager lines.

The CCCHR, in public statements, concentrated on the administrative advantages of home rule, not upon the possibilities of structural change. Under home rule, they said, "the county could issue bonds for sewer improvements, street improvements and other projects . . . set up building codes and regulate land use involving streets, air space and on-the-ground space."²¹ The district attorney did state in a speech to a Democratic gathering that some reorganization was possible under the present law, and that critics of the amendment might really "want to eliminate the influence of minority groups on county government."²² The CCCHR did not hold "educational" meetings as the BCHRA did, but seemed to rely on existing political machinery to deliver control of the convention into their hands. The meeting addressed by the district attorney was told by another speaker that Democrats should be able to control the conventions. "I know," he said, "the meetings are supposed to be non-partisan, but we want our people to get to their voting places early. We shouldn't have any trouble controlling them as we have in the past."²³

On the day following the precinct conventions, both the BCHRA and CCCHR claimed to be in the controlling position,

²¹San Antonio Express, January 23, 1962, p. 11.

²²San Antonio Light, January 25, 1963, p. 14.

²³San Antonio News, January 25, 1963, p. 6.

though the optimism of the BCHRA was rather difficult to understand. Of the seventy-four delegates claimed by the BCHRA (a convention majority required eighty-seven), eleven were doubtful since they were also claimed by the CCCHR which reported favorable results in ninety-two precincts.

The two weeks between the precinct and county conventions were busy ones for both sides, and charges and countercharges reached a fever pitch as each faction attempted to woo or strengthen its ties with precinct delegates. Caucuses were held by both sides for the purpose of instructing delegates in matters of procedure at the county convention. Various political figures began to see the possibilities of taking advantage of the situation.

Roy Clifford, a Negro leader, asserted that the thirteen delegates from Negro precincts were uncommitted, and that Negro leaders would discuss the matter with both sides before reaching a decision. "We intend to do what is best for our people," he said.²⁴ Assuming Clifford could deliver the thirteen votes as he claimed, he actually was in a good bargaining position--one which the Negro community had used to advantage in years gone by.

A former Democratic chairman and currently a county official, Jack Downs charged, in a statement to the press, that turning the charter writing over to the BCHRA would be like

²⁴San Antonio News, January 30, 1963, p. 12.

"the American patriots getting the King of England and the British Tories to write the Declaration of Independence."²⁵

The Mayor of San Antonio stated that the proposed charter-writing committee could not possibly write a workable charter, but seemed to contradict himself by saying home rule under the existing set-up would retain some officers as deadwood.

The League of Women Voters withdrew official support from the BCHRA because the committee was moving into a phase of political action.

A Democratic Coalition meeting attended by several labor and Negro leaders and representatives of PASO gave the CCCHR its support and urged that the district attorney be chosen as chairman of the charter-writing commission. A committee was appointed to propose a list of sympathetic members for the commission. The names of those on this committee were not published, and it can be assumed that they were responsible for the nominations which appeared later at the convention.

The County Convention opened at 10 a.m., Saturday, February 9, with a pitched battle for the temporary chairmanship. Both sides had anticipated this struggle as there were no set rules for opening such a meeting, nor for certifying credentials until after the election of a temporary chairman. The certification was particularly critical because seats were being contested in eight precincts, and the temporary

²⁵San Antonio Express and News, January 27, 1963, p. 6.

chairman had the authority to appoint the five-man credentials committee. When a physical contest among members of the two factions for possession of the microphone threatened to get out of hand, Mrs. Merchant and the district attorney agreed to compromise and work together in conducting the convention until the election of a temporary chairman. Nominated for this post were Commissioner Levin and the district attorney. Since Levin had been prominent in the BCHRA and the district attorney in the CCCHR, the votes cast for the position would plainly indicate the relative strength of the two groups. The outcome, 102½ for the district attorney and 64½ for Levin, spelled a handsome victory for the CCCHR. The rest of the convention was a formality. Dr. Jackson, the BCHRA's choice for permanent chairman nominated, and Levin seconded, the district attorney as permanent chairman, and he was elected with only three or four dissenting votes. A motion to appoint fifteen people to the commission was passed, and a nominating committee was appointed. Within forty-five minutes the committee returned with mimeographed ballots containing thirty names from which the delegates were to select fifteen. The selection was made and the convention adjourned.

Although newspaper coverage of the convention was accurate and quite thorough in many areas, some additional information was gathered through personal attendance by this observer. Only final votes were reported, not the precinct by precinct roll call votes. A record of precinct voting enabled the observer to compare voting behavior at the

convention with that of past elections and confirm the fact that traditional voting patterns were being maintained.

Also missing from news stories was the information that the nominating committee did no nominating that day. After the voting and while the ballots were being tabulated, the writer was given a mimeographed list of fifteen candidates' names by a delegate. This list was a duplicate of those carried into the convention by CCCHR delegates. All of the candidates on this list were elected with totals ranging from 112½ to 88½ (the latter was for the district attorney who confused the delegates by begging them not to vote for him).

Finally, eavesdropping revealed the reason behind the seemingly gracious gesture of Dr. Jackson's nominating and Levin's seconding the district attorney for chairman. A small group which included Mrs. Merchant, Dr. Jackson and Commissioner Levin decided that perhaps if they gave in gracefully at this point (following the election of the temporary chairman), they could secure some positions on the commission--a naive hope in view of the pre-arranged ballot.

While the final approval of a county home rule charter rests with the electorate, the issue of whether or not an attempt to obtain home rule under present legislation was settled at the county convention. Acting as though he had never heard of potential or reputed influentials, Mr. Garcia has led his forces to victory.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Review of Purpose and Design of Study

It will be recalled that the purpose of this study was to present an example of the issue-centered approach to the study of community power. The problems of selecting meaningful, salient issues and the methodology of studying such issues were the focal points in the study of the county home rule controversy in San Antonio, Texas. These hypotheses were examined:

1. The issue-centered approach utilizing interviews, observation of events, and reading of newspapers and other published material will reveal reliable information about a community power structure because conclusions are based on actual behavior rather than subjective opinions of past or potential behavior.

The first step was the gathering of community background material. Sources of data included informal interviews, newspapers, U. S. Census Reports, pertinent magazine articles and books, textbooks, and local publications. Of particular importance was information gathered about population characteristics, voting behavior, and form of government.

Utilizing the background information, the second step was the selection of the county home rule issue. The choice was

justified on the basis of the Rossi theory and Form and Miller test.

Finally the issue was followed through newspaper articles, formal interviews, informal interviews, and personal attendance.

The most satisfactory sources of information were found to be newspaper articles, formal interviews, and attendance of meetings. The informal interviews were for the most part unsatisfactory because they were uncontrolled. One exception was the information and advice received from a political reporter.

2. Selection of a political issue area may be based on the Rossi theory which states that under partisan electoral laws, when officials are professionalized, when either the majority of the electorate favor the underdog party or when the parties are balanced in strength, then the political institutions and public officials assume a position of importance within the power structure of the community.

There is a high degree of political crystallization in San Antonio along class and ethnic lines. The Democratic Coalition which controls county government is a combination of Latins, Negroes, labor, and other smaller factions powerful enough to carry any election, provided it does not splinter. Opposing this Coalition are the conservative Democrats and the Republicans who together control city government through the Good Government League, an organization of business and professional people. The county home rule issue split the electorate along these traditional lines, and the Democratic Coalition prevailed.

3. The six levels of saliency proposed in the Form and Miller test of involvement or decision saliency are useful in ascertaining the importance of an issue. These levels are: (1) decision of routine administration; (2) adaptative decision caused by ecological forces; (3) introduction of new instrumentalities or new rules; (4) maintenance of institutional or associated authority when status quo is threatened; (5) increase of authority in some institution or association; (6) existence of established authority challenged by revolt.

Special Problems

Two problems arose during the study which seem to be peculiar to the issue-centered approach to community power study. The first of these was the time expense. One of the selling points of the reputational approach has been that it is economical of both time and money. The issue approach does not appear to have this virtue. While the necessary statistics for background material could conceivably be amassed in a few days, on-the-spot coverage of an issue could take months. If the issue is followed after the fact, one tool is lost, and another impaired. One cannot attend past meetings, and interviewees have an annoying habit of forgetting details in a very short time. Study of the home rule issue covered (not including background work) a period of five months. Considering Polsby's admonition that more than one issue area must be covered in a community power study in order to ascertain

whether or not an overall decision-making pattern exists, the problem becomes apparent.¹ The solution of following several issues simultaneously is probably not practical since it would be unusual for a community to be faced with several concurrent highly salient issues. There seems to be no way around a considerable time expenditure.

The second problem concerns the dynamic nature of salient issues, particularly in the political area. Political victories are not necessarily permanent, and it is sometimes difficult to decide at what point in time (if ever) a political issue has been decided. A case in point is this study. When the liberals won control of the county convention and the charter-writing committee, the issue appeared to be settled in their favor. Subsequently, however, conservative elements began a series of legal maneuvers to block the special election and thus prevent the issue from going to the people.

This problem will be most acute in studies of communities such as San Antonio, having evenly divided politically crystallized electorates. This writer suggests that even though issue outcomes are not necessarily permanent in such communities, the behavior patterns revealed in issue studies are still reliable.

Conclusions

The first hypothesis was confirmed. The alignments of organizations and persons in the home rule issue were

¹Polsby, "How to Study Community Power," pp. 476-478.

traditional ones and represent at least a semi-permanent structuring of power in San Antonio and Bexar County. This is evidenced by the consistency of voting behavior, whether the issue is the election of a governor, a state representative, or county home rule.

The research methods proved to be satisfactory because they produced a high percentage of accurate information and a minimum of extraneous or subjective material. Though time-consuming, the methods are simple and easy to handle. Although this study relied heavily on newspapers, the relative value of formal and informal interviews, attendance of meetings, and newspaper reading must be assessed in each community. The high quality of news reporting and presence of competing newspapers made heavy reliance on this source possible in San Antonio.

The second hypothesis also was confirmed. The importance of political institutions and political issues was evidenced by the large number of important organizations which became involved, including many of a non-political nature. It was also evident that the issue had implications in other areas, particularly in the economic and social areas. The goals of the CCCHR were economic as well as political, and the fear that minorities would lose representation under a new amendment was often expressed.

The third hypothesis was also confirmed since the six levels of saliency were useful in ascertaining the importance

of the home rule issue in San Antonio and Bexar County. Plainly, the issue was at least Level 4, since a charter favorable to the liberals would strengthen their present hold on county government, and also diminish the possibility of success for the Conservatives' home rule plan. If it could have been demonstrated that the liberals wished to increase their authority, this issue would have been of Level 5 saliency. One would ordinarily assume that home rule implies an increase in authority, but the peculiar provisions of the 1933 amendment make this a moot point. Also, increased authority in the community would not necessarily be at the expense of those in the community, but rather those at the state level who now directly control the county.

Had the BCHRA faction initiated the issue, it clearly would have been of Level 5 saliency. Inasmuch as the BCHRA viewed the action taken by the CCCHR as a countermove, it seems reasonable to assume that from their point of view the issue was highly salient, and a definite threat to their declared plans.

Actually, it is sufficient for the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate high saliency. The actual level is not so important as the fact that the issue was of sufficient importance to involve elements of the community power structure.

Implications

The victory of forces representing the interests of ethnic minorities in San Antonio, rather than those of the business and professional community suggests that power is not confined to the reputed influentials in every community. In the opinion of the writer, a reputational power study of San Antonio would never have revealed the power held by Mr. Garcia. Even if he had been named by a "judge," he would have been eliminated after the nominee interviews because in the reputational method, interaction and mutual choice among nominees determine individual power ratings.

If issue-centered studies are to be of any value, they must be comparable. Standardization of issue selection is particularly important. The interrelationship of various issue areas, the method of choosing meaningful combinations of areas, and agreement upon clearly-defined saliency criterion represent problem areas in the approach.

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