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Black Balance of Power in a Metropolitan Southern County: Fact or Fancy?

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In a recent study Joe R. Feagin and Harlan Hahn suggest a list of conditions that minority groups must fulfill to maximize their political strength.¹ Among these are “. . . the acquisition of political experience, the development of seasoned political leaders, the protection of legal safeguards, and a willingness to engage in a gradual rather than swift capture of political influence”² In the same vein, Feagin and Hahn also suggest that the rules of a democratic political system predicate that there be: “(1) a large number of minority voters; (2) high voter registration and turnout; (3) nearly maximal cohesion or unanimity in the choice of candidates; and (4) a divided vote among majority electors.”³ Moreover, in an electorate where a minority comprises a sizable proportion of the total but lacks, by definition, a majority, it is clear that its chances of electoral success on questions that seriously divide the electorate are greatest when it effectively exercises a balance of power at the polls.

This study will examine the electoral behavior of Durham County, North Carolina during the decade of the 1960's in the light of the criteria posited by Feagin and Hahn and will observe: (1) what trends, if any, developed during that time; and (2) when and under what conditions the black electorate successfully exercised a balance of power and thereby achieved the electoral results it desired. In so doing, the study will examine all elections for national office 1960—1970 inclusive, three gubernatorial elections, and ten county referenda. It will also examine County Commissioner balloting in 1968 and 1970 and the Durham city mayoral elections of 1971, elections in which black candidates were on the ballot.

¹ Joe R. Feagin and Harlan Hahn, “The Second Reconstruction: Black Political Strength in the South.” *Social Science Quarterly*, LI (June, 1970), pp. 42-56.

² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³ *Ibid.*

THE DURHAM COUNTY SETTING

Durham County is located in the piedmont region of North Carolina at the northeast end of an area known as the "piedmont crescent."⁴ The county arose after the Civil War as the site of new industrial enterprises, those being tobacco and textiles.⁵ In addition to these and other industries, the county also is the site of Duke University and North Carolina Central University. The latter is state-supported and is a predominantly black institution. The black proportion of the county's population always has been considerable. In 1890 blacks comprised 33.8% of the total, in 1920 35%,⁶ in 1960 32%,⁷ and in 1970 32.6%.⁸

"Black capitalism" today is a fashionable phrase and is thought to be, at least in some quarters, relatively novel. In Durham, however, it has been practiced for decades, particularly in the fields of insurance and banking. In 1898 the North Carolina Mutual and Provident Association was founded, evolving in 1919 into the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company.⁹ In the intervening years the company prospered and today it is generally considered the largest black-owned business in the United States.¹⁰ Other black businesses include the Mechanics and Farmers Bank and the Mutual Savings and Loan Association.

The development and success of these black-owned business enterprises have had a distinct impact on Durham County as a whole as well as on its black citizens. Very importantly, financially independent and secure middle and upper class blacks have emerged, along with the faculty of North Carolina Central University, to provide articulate and effective leadership for the black community.

In their study of four southern communities, Matthews and Prothro analyzed black leadership in terms of two objectives: first, their ability to instill morale in and to gain wide consent from their followers and, second, their effectiveness in attaining group goals. Such leaders in their "Piedmont" county, that is, Durham County, ranked highest on both measures. Perhaps this is because, as Matthews and Prothro state,

⁴ Preston W. Edsall and J. Oliver Williams, "North Carolina: Bipartisan Paradox," Ch. 8 in William C. Havard, ed., *The Changing Politics of the South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972, pp. 366-423, esp. p. 400.

⁵ William Kenneth Boyd, *The Story of Durham: City of the New South*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1927.

⁶ Boyd, p. 283.

⁷ U. S. Bureau of the Census. *U. S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC (1)-42, 1961. Based on statistics contained in Table P-1, p. 14.

⁸ U. S. Bureau of the Census. *U. S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1970. Census Tracts*. Final Report PHC (1)-61, 1972. Based on statistics contained in Table P-1, p. 1.

⁹ Boyd, pp. 286-88.

¹⁰ William R. Keech, *The Impact of Negro Voting: The Role of the Vote in the Quest for Equality*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1968, p. 15.

“their feelings about the past and present of race relations are more nearly those of the Negro common man than is true in any other county” even though they are “by far the most socially and economically privileged” of the four groups of black leaders studied.¹¹

This effective and articulate black leadership emerged in political form as the Durham Committee for Negro Affairs, founded in 1935.¹² More will be said about this organization later, but at this point several comments are in order. First, the Committee provides clear-cut voting cues to black voters on candidates and referenda through endorsements. Second, it accordingly provides and distributes sample ballots to black voters as they arrive at the polling places on election day. Third, it stresses the importance of bloc voting and over the years has elevated this tactic to the status of a tradition. Fourth, the consequence has been a highly cohesive black vote in accordance with its stand. Keech found that in the period 1949—1967 the vote in the black precincts averaged 91% in favor of the DCNA endorsee.¹³ Fifth, the Committee also stresses registration and turnout but, as will subsequently be shown, its success in these efforts has not been as great as in achieving a high degree of cohesion among those blacks who do register and turn out to vote. Finally, with black voters comprising 27% of the Durham County electorate, as they did in 1970, it is obvious they are a most important force to be reckoned with when running for office or promoting a referendum proposition.

Often working hand-in-hand with the DCNA is *The Carolina Times*, a black weekly newspaper founded in 1919. In 1965 the newspaper had an average circulation of 23,716 copies.¹⁴ The 1960 and 1970 censuses respectively reported the presence of 9,105 and 11,799 occupied black housing units in Durham County;¹⁵ thus, it is quite plausible that the *Times* is regularly present in almost every black home in the county.

In sum, Durham County blacks meet the general conditions posited by Feagin and Hahn. The Durham Committee for Negro Affairs, now in existence for 40 years, constitutes a seasoned and experienced political vanguard for the black community. More importantly, its leadership is accepted, as Matthews and Prothro have affirmed, and it has a widely-distributed community mouthpiece in the form of *The Carolina Times*.

¹¹ Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, *Negroes and the New Southern Politics*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1966, pp. 197-99. Matthews and Prothro's "Urbana" and "Piedmont County" are, without doubt, Durham and Durham County respectively. This conclusion is shared by Keech, p. 18.

¹² Keech, p. 26. In 1972 the name was changed to the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Blacks.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁴ William F. McCallister, ed., *Ayer Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, 1965. Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer and Son, Inc., p. 796.

¹⁵ Final Reports PHC (1)-42 (1960) and PHC (1)-61 (1970), Tables H-3.

Being financially independent, this leadership is not dependent on white toleration or patronage and is not, therefore, subject to the threat of white economic sanctions; indeed, the clienteles of the black businesses outlined above are almost entirely black. In sum, the analysis that follows essentially is an examination of the electoral effectiveness of the DCNA in the 1960's.

Another contributing factor is the protection of legal safeguards. As the late V. O. Key pointed out in his classic study, North Carolina is different¹⁶ and Durham County is part of that tradition. It has been years since systematic and widespread efforts were made to stifle black participation in the political processes of Durham County.¹⁷ Moreover, Durham County was not one of 28 North Carolina counties that came under the jurisdiction of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.¹⁸

Finally, blacks have indeed been willing "to engage in a gradual rather than swift capture of political influence." The Durham Committee for Negro Affairs had been in existence for 10 years when, in 1945, the first black ran for the Durham city council. The first successful such candidacy did not occur until 1953. Beginning in 1963, blacks tried to add a second seat on the council and succeeded in 1967, making two blacks on a council of 13.¹⁹ They did not run a candidate for the Board of County Commissioners until 1968 or for Mayor of Durham until 1971.

POPULATION AND REGISTRATION CHANGES 1960—1970

Durham County's 1960 population of 111,995 increased to 132,681 in 1970 for a gain of 18.5%.²⁰ The black population rose from 35,862 to 43,239 for a gain of 20.6% but the black proportion of the total population rose a negligible 0.6% from 32.0% to 32.6%. At the same time the growth rate of the white population was somewhat less, rising from 75,965 to 88,979 for a gain of 17.1%.

In keeping with these trends (or the lack thereof), the white and black proportions of the county electorate did not change significantly between 1960 and 1970. As Table 1 shows, the white proportion of the

¹⁶ *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Vintage Books, 1949, pp. 205-10.

¹⁷ Keech, p. 26. As a matter of fact, in 1970 a black was elected Chairman of the Durham County Board of Elections. For a study in stark contrast, see the examination of Forrest County, Mississippi by James W. Silver in *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 2nd edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966, pp. 105-06.

¹⁸ *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. XXIII, no. 12, March 19, 1965, p. 431.

¹⁹ Keech, p. 47.

²⁰ These and subsequent population statistics are either taken from or are based on data in the respective census reports already cited, Tables P-1.

TABLE I. Registration 1960-1970

	1960		1970		Change 1960-1970	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	39843	76.2%	39280	72.8%	- 563	- 1.4%
Black	12439	23.8%	14568	27.0%	+2129	+17.1%
Total	52282		53848		+1566	+ 3.0%

electorate declined from 76.2% to 72.8% while the black rose from 23.8% to 27.0%. In the same vein, Table 1 also shows that total registration rose by 1,566 or 3.0%, that white registration declined by 563 or 1.4%, and that black registration rose by 2,129 for a gain of 17.1%.²¹

Interpreted, however, in terms of the percentage of voting age persons registered, both whites and blacks lost ground between 1960 and 1970.²² The increase in black registration did not keep pace with the increase in black VAP's and the proportion consequently declined from 63.4% to 62.7%, as indicated in Table 2. The white percentage of VAP's registered, however, dropped even more markedly, from 84.2% to 73.8%.²³

Table 2 also shows that the percentage of white VAP's registered exceeded that of blacks in both 1960 and 1970 but that the margin by which the white percentage exceeded the black decreased during the decade, declining from 20.8 to 11.1 percentage points. Thus, even

²¹ In 1970 Durham County computerized its registration system and it became possible to group voters by race and precinct. For years the County has had six clearly identifiable black precincts which, in 1970, were, in sum, 96% black and which contained 18% of the total county electorate. Since the total electorate was 27% black that same year, the black precincts should have contained approximately two-thirds of the total black electorate. Using the 1970 data, the sum of the black registrations for the six precincts is 9,672. Multiplying this by 1.5 yields 14,508 for the county-wide total. The computer listed 14,568 registered blacks, indicating the extrapolation was in error by only 60 persons or 0.4%. Prior to 1970, breaking the electoral data down by race was impossible. The 1960 data used in this study were, therefore, obtained by using the process just outlined. Using data published in the May 28, 1960 edition of the *Durham Morning Herald*, p. 6-A, the total registration for the same six black precincts was 8,293. Multiplying this by 1.5 yields 12,439 for the county-wide black total. At the same time, total registration was listed as 52,282. Subtracting 12,439 then gives 39,843 for the white total.

I am grateful to Mrs. Anna Meyer, clerk of the Durham County Board of Elections, for making the 1970 registration data and much of the electoral data used in this study available to me.

²² The numbers of white and black voting age persons (21+) in 1960 and 1970 were computed from data given in the respective census reports cited above, Table P-2, p. 17 for 1960 and Table P-5, p. 25 for 1970.

²³ I am aware that 1960 registration data for the county are presented in U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Report*, vol. I, *Voting*, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1961, pp. 278-79. I was, however, unable to establish the source of these data and felt compelled not to use them in this study because of questionable validity. For example, the report indicated that 98.1% of voting age whites were registered. Other statistics seemed somewhat more accurate but I chose to rely on my own computations throughout.

TABLE 2. Voting Age Persons Registered 1960-1970

	1960			1970		
	Number VAP	Number Registered	Percent	Number VAP	Number Registered	Percent
Entire County	66930	52282	78.1%	76328	53,848	70.5%
Whites	47296	39843	84.2%	53104	39,208	73.8%
Blacks	19634	12439	63.4%	23224	14,568	62.7%
Margin of White over Black			20.8%			11.1%

though the white majority remains sizable in terms of both the total county population and the county electorate, blacks did gain ground in their potential electoral strength over the decade from 1960 to 1970, *but* this gain resulted not from an increased rate of registration on their part but from a decreased rate of registration on the part of whites. It is true, then, that Durham County blacks, in spite of the efforts of the Durham Committee for Negro Affairs, are sacrificing a portion of their electoral potential simply by not registering at rates comparable to those of whites.

TURNOUT AND VOTING 1960—1970

Six of Durham County's 38 voting precincts are predominantly black.²⁴ Combined, they were 96% black and 4% white in 1970. The following analysis represents a comparison of turnout rates in the six black precincts and in the remaining 32 white precincts.²⁵ In all cases the total registration base was the current figure for that time, varying from election to election.

Let us first examine turnout in general elections. In North Carolina gubernatorial elections coincide with Presidential elections and Table 3 shows that in those three instances the turnout of the two groups was virtually equal. In the three remaining "off-year" elections, however, the white and black turnout rates were virtually equal only in 1962 with whites exceeding blacks by a fairly sizable margin in 1966 and 1970.

The five County Commissioners are elected at-large in the November general elections also. In 1968 two blacks were on the ballot and in 1970 one. Their presence does not seem to have motivated blacks to turn out in greater numbers to support them. Indeed, black turnout

²⁴ They are precincts No. 10—Whitted School, No. 11—Hillside School, No. 12—Pearson School, No. 13—Burton School, No. 17—Fuller School, and No. 34—Pearsontown School No. 2.

²⁵ The registration data for the 32 white precincts revealed them to be, in sum, 88% white and 12% black. I am aware that the presence of black voters in these precincts dilutes the purity of these data as indicators of white turnout but since only relative comparisons need be made here these voters are not factored out. At the subsequent stage of the analysis dealing with balance of power, greater preciseness is called for and a correction factor will be introduced.

TABLE 3. Turnout in General Elections 1960-1970

	White	Black		White	Black
1960	64.9%	62.0%	1966	50.5%	40.0%
1962	41.3%	41.9%	1968	83.2%	83.7%
1964	80.7%	80.4%	1970	43.3%	36.2%

actually was less in 1970 than in 1966 or 1962 when no black candidates were running. And, since white and black turnout rates were virtually equal in 1960 and 1964 as well as in 1968, it would seem that national and state balloting are the primary attraction rather than the presence of black candidates for local office.

In the same vein, a black was running for mayor of Durham in the municipal elections of 1971. In the primary, white turnout was 21.2% while the black was 23.7%. The general election amounted to a runoff between the black candidate and a white opponent. White turnout in this instance was 40.8% while blacks turned out at the rate of 41.3%. In these two municipal elections, then, the black turnout rate exceeded the white but only by a small fraction. In sum, the presence of black candidates on the ballot does not seem to induce blacks to turn out to vote at rates higher than those of whites. They behave similarly to voters across the country in that Presidential and gubernatorial elections have the greatest attraction for them. As long as this pattern prevails, then, it would seem that blacks are sacrificing potential political strength in at least two ways: (1) being a pre-determined minority, they need to turn out at rates significantly higher than those of whites, and (2) the failure of blacks to turn out in greater proportions when black candidates are running may constitute a rather effective discouragement to prospective black candidates in the future.

Let us now turn to turnout in the ten county referenda of the decade by examining Tables 4 and 5. Three of the referenda, the 1966 hospital bonds and the hospital and airport bonds of 1968, coincided

TABLE 4. Turnout in County Referenda 1960-1970

	White	Black
1960 school bonds	22.8%	26.7%
1961 metro charter	34.3%	16.8%
1964 school bonds *	66.7%	65.4%
1966 hospital bonds *	50.5%	40.0%
1968 school bonds	28.9%	17.0%
1968 library bonds and permissive levy	24.1%	12.2%
1968 hospital and airport bonds *	83.2%	83.7%
1969 1% local option sales tax	28.4%	15.9%

When the referendum coincided with a general election or with a primary, total reported turnout was used (*). In other instances turnout was computed by adding the positive and negative votes.

TABLE 5. Voting Rates in Referenda that are Concurrent with General or Primary Elections

	White		Black	
	* Percent of Total Turnout Actually Voting in Referendum	** Effective Referendum Turnout	* Percent of Total Turnout Actually Voting in Referendum	** Effective Referendum Turnout
May 1964				
School Bonds	56.8%	37.9%	31.6%	20.7%
November 1966				
Hospital Bonds	85.3%	43.0%	68.0%	27.2%
November 1968				
Hospital Bonds	74.3%	61.8%	55.7%	46.6%
November 1968				
Airport Bonds	71.4%	59.4%	49.2%	41.2%

* Computed by dividing the sum of positive and negative votes by total reported turnout.

** Computed by dividing the sum of positive and negative votes by the total registration figure for that time.

with a November general election and a fourth, the 1964 school bonds, coincided with the May Democratic gubernatorial primary, a primary that culminated a particularly vigorous campaign.²⁶ Since the 1968 hospital and airport referenda were concurrent, three rather than four sets of turnout are at issue here and Table 4 shows that in two instances (1964 and 1968) white and black turnout were virtually equal while in the third (1966) white exceeded black by 10.5 percentage points. However, these observations are misleading because not all voters who voted in the general elections or in the primary voted in the referenda held along with them. Table 5 shows this to be true in both the white and black precincts but much more so in the black. For these four referenda the average white effective turnout was 50.5% while the black was 33.9%. Thus, there are voters in both groups who vote in the general election but do not vote in the referendum held at the same time. This problem is worse among blacks than whites and thereby weakens the voice of blacks in such referenda.

Of the six remaining referenda, those which did not coincide with a general or primary election, five sets of turnout are at issue because the library bonds and permissive levy referenda of 1968 were concur-

²⁶ See Edsall and Williams, pp. 387-89.

rent. These referenda occurred at "odd" times like January or March²⁷ and Table 4 shows that in four of the five cases the black turnout rate was roughly half that of whites while in the remaining instance (1960 school bonds) black turnout exceeded white by 3.9 percentage points. Put another way, for these five sets of turnout the white average is 27.7% while the black is 17.7%.

It is obvious, then, that general and primary elections have a "pulling" effect in that voting participation in referenda that coincide with them exceeds that in referenda which occur as special elections. For both the white and black precincts the ratio of the former to the latter is approximately two to one. It also is obvious that in both types of referenda the white turnout rate exceeds the black by a significant margin. In sum, we see again that Durham County blacks have sacrificed electoral potential, in these instances simply by not voting at rates comparable to those of whites.

Let us now turn to referendum voting in the decade from 1960 to 1970 by examining Table 6. We already have observed that the registration statistics of the six predominantly black precincts revealed them to be 96% black and 4% white in 1970 and that blacks comprised 27% of the total county electorate that same year. The six black precincts, however, contained only 18% of the total county electorate and we may conclude, then, that they contain approximately two-third's of the total

TABLE 6. Effect of Black Vote on Referendum Outcome

<i>Referendum</i>	<i>Countywide vote</i>	<i>Vote in the Black precincts</i>	<i>Vote in the White precincts</i>	<i>Revised white vote</i>
1960 school bonds	67.3%+	18.1%+	78.2%+	86.3%+
	32.7%-	81.9%-	21.8%-	13.7%-
1961 metro charter	22.2%+	13.9%+	23.2%+	24.4%+
	77.8%-	86.1%-	76.8%-	75.6%-
1964 school bonds	51.5%+	23.3%+	55.6%+	60.4%+
	48.5%-	76.8%-	44.4%-	39.6%-
1966 hospital bonds	37.0%+	12.5%+	41.2%+	45.1%+
	63.0%-	87.5%-	58.8%-	54.9%-
1968 school bonds	44.6%+	19.8%+	47.4%+	51.2%+
	55.4%-	80.2%-	52.6%-	48.8%-
1968 library bonds	43.1%+	74.1%+	39.1%+	34.3%+
	56.9%-	25.9%-	60.9%-	65.7%-
1968 library levy	39.2%+	68.7%+	35.3%+	30.8%+
	60.8%-	31.3%-	64.7%-	69.2%-
1968 hospital bonds	64.4%+	87.3%+	60.7%+	57.1%+
	35.6%-	12.7%-	39.3%-	42.9%-
1968 airport bonds	47.1%+	79.8%+	42.3%+	37.1%+
	52.9%-	20.2%-	57.7%-	62.9%-
1969 sales tax	60.3%+	31.4%+	63.7%+	68.2%+
	39.7%-	68.6%-	36.3%-	31.8%-

²⁷ The 1% local option sales tax referendum occurred in November of 1969 but since 1969 was an odd year no other elections were held at that time.

black electorate. This is reflected in the fact that the registration data of the 32 white precincts reveal them to be 88% white and 12% black.

Testing of the effectiveness of the black electorate in terms of possible balance of power, consequently, will be based on the assumption that blacks in the white precincts voted in the same proportions for and against the propositions as did those in the six black precincts. For each referendum, then, Table 6 contains four sets of data. The first is the total county-wide vote. The second is the vote of the six black precincts. The third is the vote of the 32 white precincts not corrected for the possible 12% black vote in them. Finally, the fourth is the re-calculated vote of the white precincts with the black vote in them removed according to the assumption outlined above.²⁸

From Table 6 several observations can be made. First, we may observe that, county-wide, four referenda resulted in approval of the proposition while six did not.²⁹ However, no stark trends across the decade are apparent: victories were won in 1960, 1964, 1968, and 1969 but one proposition went down to defeat in 1961 and 1966 and four in 1968.

The black precincts took a decidedly more positive view, however, toward the end of the decade. They supported only four of the ten propositions and all four of them were voted on in 1968. This change, however, resulted more from the substantive content and potential impact of the propositions than from an emergent positive tendency on the part of blacks *per se*.³⁰

We may also observe that the Durham Committee for Negro Affairs was successful in achieving a highly cohesive vote in the black precincts. Cohesion ranged from a low of the 68.6% vote against the 1969 1% local option sales tax to a high of the 87.5% vote against the

²⁸ To illustrate this process I will use data from the 1969 sales tax referendum.

Table 6	+		-		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
County-Wide	8651	60.3	5706	39.7	14357
6 Black Precincts	486	31.4	1063	68.6	1549
32 White Precincts	8165	63.7	4643	36.3	12808

According to the assumptions outlined in the text, 12% or 1537 of the 12,808 votes cast in the 32 white precincts were cast by blacks. Computing 31.4% of 1537 yields 483 black positive votes and 68.6% of 1537 yields 1054 black negative votes. Subtracting 483 from 8165 gives 7682 white positive votes and 1054 from 4643 leaves 3589 white negative votes or 11,271 white votes all together, of which 7682 is 68.2% and 3589 is 31.8%.

²⁹ Only a simple majority is needed for approval.

³⁰ See Keech, ch. IV and Winfield H. Rose, *Referendum Voting and the Politics of Health Care in Durham County, North Carolina*, unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Duke University, 1973. In general, the question can be reduced to whether the proposition had racial overtones or implications. If it did, the blacks saw themselves as probable losers and, therefore, voted against it.

1966 hospital bonds and averaged 99.1% on the whole. At the same time, they were slightly more cohesive in opposition than in support: the average of their six negative votes being 80.2% with that of their four positive votes 77.5%.

In testing the effectiveness of the cohesive black bloc in terms of a possible balance of power two perspectives can be brought to bear on Table 6. The first centers on whether or not the blacks actually changed the outcome and the second on whether or not they could have changed the outcome if they had voted opposite to the way they did and at the same rate of cohesion.

With respect to the 1960 school bonds and 1961 metropolitan charter referenda it is clear that the black bloc did not and could not have changed the final outcome because the white vote simply was too strong. Increased turnout and cohesion would have been of no avail. However, in the 1964 school bonds referendum the blacks almost defeated the proposition, their high negative vote bringing the total positive vote down to 51.5%. If they had voted oppositely they would simply have reinforced the white vote but if they had been more cohesive or if more blacks who voted in the primary had voted in the referendum at the same rate of cohesion they undoubtedly could have defeated the proposition by a narrow margin.

In the 1966 hospital referendum blacks brought the 45.1% white positive vote down to 37.0%. Hence, they did not reverse the actual white vote but since the white vote was fairly evenly divided they could have changed the final outcome by voting positively as cohesively as they, in fact, voted negatively. If they had done so they would have overridden the white vote and made the total vote 55.5% in favor and 44.5% opposed. Increased voting and cohesion would have increased black strength but would not have changed either the actual or hypothetical final result that did or would have occurred, given their existent turnout and cohesion. In other words, existent turnout and cohesion were sufficient to achieve either result, depending on the direction of the vote. The same is true with regard to the 1968 hospital referendum in which blacks again voted in the same direction, in sum, as whites but much more strongly. They raised the white positive vote from 57.1% to a county-wide total of 64.4%. Again, if they had voted negatively at the rate of 87.3% instead of positively they could have overridden the white favorable vote and defeated the proposition. In that case the total vote would have been 46.4% in favor and 53.6% against.

In the case of the 1968 school bonds referendum the strong negative vote of the blacks easily overcame the feeble white majority and defeated the proposition. If the blacks had voted oppositely they

simply would have reinforced the white favorable vote and increased turnout and cohesion obviously would not have affected the final outcome in either case.

In the two 1968 library referenda the blacks supported the propositions but not well enough to overcome the strong white negative vote. If they had voted in the opposite direction they again would have reinforced the white vote. However, in these instances the blacks again possessed a potential balance of power. Hypothetically speaking, if they had turned out to vote at the rate of 40% instead of 12.2% and if they had voted for both propositions at the rate of 80% instead of 74.1% and 68.7% respectively, both of which are reasonable possibilities, they would have boosted the total county-wide vote to a slight majority in favor of the bonds and to 49.5% in favor of the permissive levy.

Compared with the library referenda, in the airport referendum of 1968 the white favorable vote was higher and the blacks were more cohesive. Consequently, the blacks more nearly approached success in that they raised the white positive vote of 37.1% to an overall 47.1%. In this case, however, effective turnout (41.2%) and cohesion (79.8%) exceeded or virtually equalled the levels hypothesized above but, given their actual rate of turnout, if the blacks had supported the airport bonds as cohesively as they did, in fact, support the hospital bonds, they would have raised the county-wide vote to 48.9% in favor. Thus, realistically speaking, in this instance blacks almost but did not quite possess a balance of power.

The blacks opposed the 1969 sales tax and brought the white favorable vote of 68.1% down to 60.3%. If their turnout rate had been 40% instead of 15.9% and if they had voted against the proposition at the rate of 80% instead of 68.6% they would have lowered the final positive vote to 53.5%. Realistically speaking, in this instance, then, the blacks did not possess a balance of power. Finally, if the blacks had voted oppositely they would have reinforced the white vote rather than changed it.

In sum, the blacks defeated one proposition (1968 school bonds) and could have changed the outcome of two others (1966 and 1968 hospital bonds) by voting oppositely at the same rate of cohesion. In these instances, then, they did in fact possess a balance of power and they exercised it. In three other instances (1964 school bonds and 1968 library bonds and levy) there was a realistic hypothetical possibility of their possessing a balance of power but they did not exercise it. Finally, in four referenda (1960 school bonds, 1961 metro charter, 1968 airport bonds, and 1969 sales tax) they did not possess and there was no realistic hypothetical possibility of their possessing a balance of power.

In conclusion, let us examine Table 6 for achieved preference by comparing columns two and four with column one. We may observe that the blacks saw their preference achieved in four of the ten referenda. They thwarted the white majority once (1968 school bonds) and majorities of both whites and blacks agreed three times (1961 metro charter, 1966 and 1968 hospital bonds). Finally, the majority thwarted the black in the remaining six referenda.

In partisan elections the blacks have been more successful in achieving their desired result, as Table 7 shows. Of 16 such elections we may observe that their preference was the county-wide preference on 15 occasions, the lone exception being the 1962 Senatorial contest.³¹ Whites, on the other hand, were similarly successful only eight times.

We already have observed that turnout was higher in general elections than in referenda. Table 7 shows that, in addition, the cohesion of the black vote in partisan elections is considerably higher than in referenda, the average of the former being 89.2% as opposed to 79.1% among the latter. Moreover, in 15 of the 16 elections the blacks supported the Democratic candidate, their Democratic vote averaging 87.9%.

The white majority, on the other hand, supported the Democrat in the four Senatorial races and in the first four House races (but in 1966 only by a small fraction). They supported the Republican in the House races of 1968 and 1970 and not once did they support the Democratic candidate for President or Governor. It is apparent, then, that the white majority supported the Democrat only when he was a traditional, Southern Democrat of the "old school." Otherwise, they supported the Republicans or in the case of the 1968 Presidential election, George Wallace by a plurality. In this instance, the combined Nixon-Wallace vote among whites totalled 82.9%.

Assessing the impact of the cohesive black bloc in terms of a balance of power can be done more straightforwardly in the case of partisan elections than in referenda. From Table 7 it is clear that in all Presidential and Gubernatorial elections as well as in the 1968 and 1970 U. S. House races the black bloc provided the Democratic candidate's winning margin in the county and in so doing possessed and exercised an effective balance of power. Moreover, in the 1966 House contest the white vote was so evenly divided that it again is clear that the blacks possessed a balance of power. In addition, the same is true of the 1964 House race when the white vote was only 56.6% for Kornegay, the black vote was 96.4% for Kornegay, and black turnout was 80.4%. The only

³¹ Senator Sam Ervin never enjoyed great popularity among Durham County blacks due to his stand on civil rights issues.

TABLE 7. Effect of Black Vote on Partisan Elections

	<i>Countywide vote</i>	<i>Vote in the black precincts</i>	<i>Vote in the white precincts</i>	<i>Revised white vote</i>
Presidential				
1960: Kennedy (D)	57.4%	80.1%	52.0%	48.2%
Nixon (R)	42.6%	19.9%	48.0%	51.8%
1964: Johnson (D)	60.0%	97.5%	49.5%	43.0%
Goldwater (R)	40.0%	2.5%	50.5%	57.0%
1968: Humphrey (D)	38.6%	95.5%	26.5%	17.1%
Nixon (R)	29.6%	2.9%	35.4%	39.9%
Wallace (AI)	31.6%	1.6%	38.0%	43.0%
U. S. Senate				
1960: Jordan (D)	71.6%	84.6%	68.5%	66.3%
Hayes (R)	28.4%	15.4%	31.5%	33.7%
1962: Ervin (D)	68.6%	39.2%	73.3%	77.9%
Greene (R)	31.4%	60.8%	27.7%	22.1%
1966: Jordan (D)	69.5%	94.6%	64.6%	60.1%
Shallcross (R)	30.5%	5.4%	35.4%	39.9%
1968: Ervin (D)	64.4%	91.5%	61.6%	57.5%
Somers (R)	35.6%	8.5%	38.4%	42.5%
U. S. House				
1960: Kornegay (D)	70.3%	83.6%	67.3%	65.2%
Robb (R)	29.7%	16.4%	32.7%	34.8%
1962: Kornegay (D)	74.4%	86.4%	71.4%	69.3%
Robinson (R)	25.6%	13.6%	28.6%	30.7%
1964: Kornegay (D)	68.5%	96.4%	61.4%	56.6%
Green (R)	31.5%	3.6%	58.6%	43.4%
1966: Galifianakis (D)	61.9%	94.3%	55.7%	50.5%
Steele (R)	38.1%	5.7%	44.3%	49.5%
1968: Galifianakis (D)	54.7%	95.5%	46.9%	40.2%
Steele (R)	45.3%	4.5%	53.1%	59.8%
1970: Galifianakis (D)	54.8%	95.9%	47.9%	41.3%
Hawke (R)	45.2%	4.1%	52.1%	58.7%
Governor of North Carolina				
1960: Sanford (D)	54.5%	82.4%	48.1%	43.4%
Gavin (R)	45.5%	17.6%	51.9%	56.6%
1964: Moore (D)	56.5%	91.2%	47.5%	41.6%
Gavin (R)	43.5%	8.8%	52.5%	58.4%
1968: Scott (D)	54.4%	97.5%	45.7%	38.6%
Gardner (R)	45.6%	2.5%	54.3%	61.4%

instance in which blacks clearly did not possess a balance of power was in the 1962 Senatorial election.

It remains for us to examine the three remaining Senate races and the two remaining House races. In each of these five cases black turn-

out and cohesion equalled or exceeded the levels hypothesized in the referenda analyses presented earlier. Consequently, we now will examine only the results that would have occurred if the blacks had voted exactly opposite to what they did but at their given rates of cohesion and turnout. Table 8 reveals that in only two of these five elections did the black electorate possess a balance of power. In sum, in 12 of the 16 or 75% of the partisan elections under examination the cohesive black bloc possessed and exercised a balance of power in that without their vote the candidate preferred by the blacks would not have carried the county.

We may also observe from Tables 7 and 8 that the lowest white Democratic vote when the blacks were not a balance of power was 65.2% (1960 U. S. House) and that the highest white Democratic vote when the blacks were a balance of power was 60.1% (1966 U. S. Senate). Thus, with some variation due to cohesion and turnout, we can say that the point at which cohesion of the white vote renders a black balance of power impossible lies between these parameters. Table 6 reveals the comparable interval in referendum voting, 62.9% (1968 airport bonds) to 57.1% (1968 hospital bonds). That the boundaries of the latter interval are lower than those of the former is, of course, due to the already-observed lower black turnout and cohesion in referenda. In other

TABLE 8. Selected Elections with Black Vote Reversed

	<i>Actual Countywide Democratic Vote</i>	<i>Democratic Vote if Black Vote Had Been Reversed</i>
1960 U. S. Senate	71.6%	51.6%
1966 U. S. Senate	69.5%	45.8%
1968 U. S. Senate	64.4%	47.5%
1960 U. S. House	70.3%	51.4%
1962 U. S. House	74.4%	52.7%

words, lower black turnout and cohesion in referenda permit the white electorate to be slightly less cohesive and still hold sway. On the other hand, the blacks were able to exercise an effective balance of power more often in partisan elections than in referenda because their cohesion and turnout were higher and because the white vote was more evenly divided.

The final question that this study will examine is the effectiveness of the black bloc in electing black candidates for positions on the County Board of Commissioners and for mayor of the city of Durham. As alluded to earlier, in 1968 two blacks were on the Commissioners' ballot. They were Asa T. Spaulding, retired president of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, and J. C. Scarborough. Both,

of course, were endorsed by the Durham Committee for Negro Affairs and *The Carolina Times*. The black precincts voted 82.9% for Spaulding and gave him 32.1% of his total vote. At the same time, they voted 86.9% for Scarborough and gave him 40.5% of his total vote. Nevertheless, Spaulding was elected and actually led the ticket whereas Scarborough came in sixth and consequently lost. The highest percentage of total vote that the black precincts gave any other candidate was 15.3%; thus, a considerable amount of "single-shot"³² voting for the black candidates occurred. Single-shot voting, however, obviously is not enough to elect blacks. Even though he received fewer black votes than Scarborough, Spaulding led the ticket and won because he obviously was able to attract more votes from the white electorate than Scarborough.

In 1970 Spaulding was the only black to make the race. The black precincts supported him at the rate of 83.9%, gave him 23.5% of his total vote, and he came in second. Being an incumbent Democrat whose victory was virtually certain, single-shot voting was not as necessary as it had been in 1968 and the blacks supported the other four Democrats, all of whom won, at rates almost as high as that for Spaulding.

In 1971 Spaulding decided to run for mayor of Durham, the incumbent white mayor, R. W. Grabarek, having announced his decision not to seek re-election. He was opposed in the primary by two whites. The results of that primary are given in Table 9.³³ The table shows that Hawkins' support was virtually entirely white whereas Spaulding continued to attract biracial vote.

TABLE 9. 1971 Municipal Primary Election

	<i>Direction of Black Vote</i>	<i>Percent of Total Vote Contributed by Black Precincts</i>	<i>Division of Total Vote</i>
Spaulding	92.1%	38.9%	48.7%
Jacobs	1.4%	9.6%	3.0%
Hawkins	4.7%	2.0%	48.3%

Since no candidate received a majority, Spaulding and Hawkins faced each other in the general election two weeks later in which Hawkins defeated Spaulding 54.9% to 45.1%. The distinction of being the first black elected mayor of a major southern city was thus left to Maynard Jackson in Atlanta.

³² See Keech, p. 32.

³³ Five of the six black precincts lies within the city limits of Durham, No. 34 being the exception. This analysis is, therefore, based on the behavior of these five precincts.

In this election the black precincts supported Spaulding at the rate of 93.6% and gave him 39.3% of his total vote. Comparable rates for Hawkins were 5.2% and 1.8% respectively and it is plausible that these votes (154 all together) were cast by the handful of whites who lived in the black precincts. We see again, then, that Spaulding's support was biracial whereas Hawkins' was not.

In one sense it was, of course, the power of sheer numbers that defeated Spaulding. We already have observed that in the primary white turnout was 21.2% while the black was 23.7% and that in the general election white turnout was 40.8% while the black was 41.3%. Thus, black turnout increased by 17.6 percentage points whereas white rose by 19.6%. Moreover, 40.8% of the white electorate obviously is a larger absolute number than 41.3% of the black, as Hawkins' final vote amply demonstrates: his vote rose by 114.5% while Spaulding's rose by only 75.2%. Thus, it would seem that a number of whites were willing to support a black as one of five members of the Board of County Commissioners but were not willing to accept him as the city's elected executive. Nevertheless, approximately 60% of Spaulding's final vote came from white precincts, a fact that speaks well for both him and for the city's white voters.

In another sense it was, however, the failure of the blacks to exercise a balance of power that defeated Spaulding because they, in fact, possessed such a potential. The obvious point that blacks must turn out to vote at rates higher than whites in order to maximize their electoral potential already has been made and Spaulding's defeat in 1971 is an example of what results when they fail to do so. Hypothetically speaking, if the behavior of the white electorate had remained unchanged and if black cohesion had remained 93.6% for Spaulding, a black turnout rate of 66.9% would have made Spaulding the victor.

In sum, we already have observed that the presence of black candidates on the ballot does not induce blacks to turn out to vote at rates appreciably higher than whites. Moreover, the experience of the elections just analyzed shows that: (1) Blacks who do turn out and vote support the black candidate at high rates of cohesion and contribute an indispensable portion of his total vote. (2) A black candidate cannot win without a considerable amount of white support. In 1968 Spaulding was able to garner such support but Scarborough was not. (3) It is easier for one black rather than two to be elected to a five-member board of county commissioners.³⁴ (4) Even though Spaulding received

³⁴ In 1968 when Spaulding and Scarborough were two of the five Democratic nominees a Republican was elected. In 1970, however, when there was only one black Democratic nominee, the Republican was defeated for re-election by a white newcomer.

white support in every instance, the total white electorate seems willing to accept one black among five county commissioners and two among 13 city councilmen but, at the same time, is not willing to accept a black as the city's single executive officer. And finally, (5) be that as it may, the blacks possibly could capitalize on white voter apathy and elect such an official if they were not as apathetic themselves.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

After laying the theoretical groundwork and sketching the political culture of the area, this study has examined the electoral behavior of Durham County, North Carolina in the 1960's with emphasis on assessing the role of the black electorate in terms of a balance of power. At this point there is no need to recapitulate all of the findings made. Rather, it is sufficient simply to observe that a black balance of power is indeed a fact and not a fancy, in spite of the fact that blacks do not register and turn out to vote at rates comparable to those of whites, when and/or because blacks vote at high rates of cohesion whereas the white electorate divides itself more evenly. For the former the Durham Committee for Negro Affairs undoubtedly is responsible; for the latter it, no doubt, is thankful. Yet, the black balance of power that exists occurs more often in state and national elections, when Durham County obviously is not the total electorate, and less often in local elections and referenda. Thus, its policy impact is limited on both fronts.³⁵

The fact remains, however, that in elections such as local referenda the blacks are a force to be reckoned with. While they could strengthen their position through increased registration and turnout, they did possess or could have possessed a balance of power in six of the ten such elections examined in this study. The process by which white political leaders have come to terms with this has been slow and painful but they have come to terms with it. The DCNA has thus become able to bargain with the "establishment" because the establishment knows that while black support does not ensure victory, black opposition renders defeat much more likely. Moreover, black leaders have the advantage over the white in that the black vote is more cohesive, manageable, and deliverable whereas the white vote is fragmented, uncertain, and undeliverable. Not knowing how much support they will actually receive from the white electorate, white leaders must accommodate the black perspective if they want the proposition they are putting forward to have a realistic chance of countywide approval.³⁶

³⁵ See Keech, Ch. IV, for an elaboration of this point.

³⁶ These conclusions are developed more fully in my dissertation, cited in footnote 30 above, and by Jeanne Fox in *Regionalism and Minority Participation*, Washington, D. C.: Joint Center for Political Studies, 1973, Chapter 2.