

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: AN EXPLORATION OF
INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURS, PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS, AND
SELECTIVE INCENTIVES**

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family for all their loving support: my husband, Brad for believing in me, even when I did not believe in myself; my son David and his beautiful wife, Lourdes, and my son Michael and his beautiful wife, Ann, for cheering me on; and finally for my grandchildren, Basil and Mia, who possess all the positive exuberance of the future. I thank you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Section 1.01 Local Constitutional Change	2
Section 1.02 Constitutional Rules and Constitutional Rule Change	3
Section 1.03 Revolutionary Change in Local Constitution Studies	7
Section 1.04 Actors in the Constitutional Change Process	13
Section 1.05 Impact of Constitutional Change	17
Section 1.06 Need for Extension in the Theory Constitutional Change	18
End Notes	21
CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	22
Section 2.01 Institutions and the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IAD)	23
Section 2.02 Constitutions	26
Section 2.03 Charters as Constitutions	27
Section 2.04 Institutional Maintenance and Change	30
Section 2.05 Nested Institutions and Municipal Charter Change	31
Section 2.06 Charter Change as Constitutional Change	32
Section 2.07 Institutional Entrepreneurs as Institutional Change Agents	33
Section 2.08 Collective versus Selective Incentives for Constitutional Change	35
Section 2.09 Demanders of Status Quo	38
Section 2.10 Institutional Neutrals	39
Section 2.11 Actors in the Local Constitutional Setting	40
Section 2.12 A Model of Constitutional Change in Local Governance	47
End Notes	59
CHAPTER 3 METHODS	60
Section 3.01 Definition of Attributes in Constitutional Change	61
Section 3.02 Case Study Analysis	69
Section 3.03 Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Local Constitutional Change	70
Section 3.04 QCA Data Measurement and Model Operationalization	78
End Notes	

CHAPTER 4 CONSOLIDATION OF CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS: ATTEMPTS	
IN FIVE CITIES	81
Section 4.01 Macon-Bibb County, Georgia	81
Section 4.02 Athens-Clarke County, Georgia	91
Section 4.03 Jacksonville-Duval County, Florida	105
Section 4.04 Tampa-Hillsborough County, Florida	108
Section 4.05 Pensacola-Escambia County, Florida	119
Section 4.06 Conclusion	122
 CHAPTER 5 BOOLEAN ANALYSIS OF CITY - COUNTY CONSOLIDATION	
ATTEMPTS	124
Section 5.01 Boolean Analysis of Procedural Safeguards	124
Section 5.02 Boolean Analysis of Support for the Proposed Consolidation Charter	126
Section 5.03 Boolean Analysis of Opposition to the Proposed Consolidation Charter	131
Section 5.04 Boolean Analysis of Support for and Opposition to the Proposed Consolidation Charter	134
Section 5.05 Boolean Analysis of Rules and Actors	138
Section 5.06 Community Context of Consolidation	153
Section 5.07 Conclusion	155
 CHAPTER 6 LOCAL CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE HISTORY – NINE CITIES	158
Section 6.01 Florida Cities	158
Section 6.02 Georgia Cities	172
Section 6.03 Conclusions	179
 CHAPTER 7 BOOLEAN ANALYSIS OF LOCAL CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE	181
Section 7.01 Electoral System Rules	181
Section 7.02 Direct Democracy Rules	200
Section 7.03 Allocating Authority Rules	216
Section 7.04 Conclusions	232
 CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSIONS	234
Section 8.01 Institutional Analysis and Development Framework	234
Section 8.02 The Constitutional Competition Model	235
Section 8.03 Transaction Resource Theory	236
Section 8.04 The Constitutional Competition Model	238
Section 8.05 Constitutional Rules	240
Section 8.06 Actors in the Campaign for Rules	241
Section 8.07 Actors and Rules in Consolidation	242
Section 8.08 Actors and Rule Safeguards in the Constitutional Setting	243
Section 8.09 Context of Community in Consolidation	245

Section 8.10 Continuum of Constitutional Change	246
Section 8.11 Implications: Agenda Setting and Rule Crafting in Local Constitutions	246
Section 8.12 What We Have Learned	247
APPENDIX A BOOLEAN ANALYSIS OF CONSOLIDATION	250
APPENDIX B BOOLEAN ANALYSIS OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE	257
APPENDIX C COPYRIGHT PERMISSION	278
REFERENCES	280
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	317

LIST OF TABLES

2.01	Constitutional Rules	54
3.01	Case Study Cities	61
3.02	Consolidation Cases	62
3.03	Constitutional Rules	63
3.04	Indirect Measures of Actors for Charter Transformation	67
3.05	Community Context	69
3.06	Observed Cases of Consolidation through Referendum	73
3.07	Consolidation Truth Table	74
3.08	Working Consolidation Truth Table	75
3.09	Direct Identification of Actors in Consolidation and Composite Models for QCA	78
4.01	Consolidation Cases	81
5.01	Consolidation Rules with “Don’t Cares”	125
5.02	Consolidation Supporters with “Don’t Cares”	128
5.03	Consolidation Rejection Model of Supporters without NAACP with “Don’t Cares”	128
5.04	Consolidation Acceptance Model of Supporters without NAACP with “Don’t Cares”	130
5.05	Consolidation Opposition with “Don’t Cares”	133
5.06	Consolidation Supporters and Opposition with “Don’t Cares”	136
5.07	“Don’t Cares” and Consolidation Supporters and Opposition Without NAACP	137
5.08	Community Context and Consolidation	154
6.01	Clearwater Constitutional Change Attempts	160
6.02	Jacksonville Constitutional Change Attempts	162
6.03	Miami Beach Constitutional Change Attempts	164
6.04	Pensacola Constitutional Change Attempts	167
6.05	Tampa Constitutional Change Attempts	170
6.06	West Palm Beach Constitutional Change Attempts	172
6.07	Athens Constitutional Change Attempts	174
6.08	Atlanta Constitutional Change Attempts	176
6.09	Macon Constitutional Change Attempts	179
7.01	Logical Combinations for District Representation Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	183
7.02	Logical Combinations for District Representation Referenda with “Don’t Cares”	186
7.03	Logical Combinations for Number of Districts Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	189

7.04	Logical Combinations for Number of Districts Referenda Model with “Don’t Cares”	192
7.05	Logical Combinations for Number of Seats Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	195
7.06	Logical Combinations for Number of Seats Referenda with “Don’t Cares”	197
7.07	Logical Combinations for Initiative Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	202
7.08	Logical Combinations for Initiative Referenda with “Don’t Cares”	204
7.09	Logical Combinations for Referendum Rule Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	206
7.10	Logical Combinations for Referenda on Referendum Rule with “Don’t Cares”	209
7.11	Logical Combinations for Recall Rule Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	211
7.12	Logical Combinations for Recall Rule Referenda Model with “Don’t Cares”	214
7.13	Logical Combinations for Direct Election of Mayor Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	218
7.14	Logical Combinations for Direct Election of Mayor Referenda with “Don’t Cares”	220
7.15	Logical Combinations for Mayor Appointment Power Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	223
7.16	Logical Combinations for Mayor Appointment Rule Referenda Rejection Using “Don’t Cares”	225
7.17	Logical Combinations for Mayor Appointment Rule Referenda Acceptance Using “Don’t Cares”	226
7.18	Logical Combinations for Mayoral Veto Power Full Model with “Don’t Cares”	228
7.19	Logical Combinations for Mayoral Veto Power Referenda with “Don’t Cares”	230
A 5.01	Consolidation Rules	250
A 5.02	Consolidation Supporters	251
A 5.03	Consolidation Supporters without the NAACP	252
A 5.04	Consolidation Opposition	253
A 5.05	Consolidation Supporters and Opposition	254
A 5.06	Consolidation Supporters and Opposition without the NAACP	255
A 5.07	Consolidation Community Context	256
B 7.01	District Representation Full Rejection Model	257
B 7.02	District Representation Full Acceptance Model	258
B 7.03	District Representation Rules Referenda	259
B 7.04	Rejection of Number of Districts Full Model	260
B 7.05	Acceptance of Number of Districts Full Model	261
B 7.06	Number of Districts Referenda Model	262

B 7.07 Number of Seats Full Model	263
B 7.08 Number of Seats Referenda Model	264
B 7.09 Initiative Full Model	265
B 7.10 Initiative Referenda Model	266
B 7.11 Referendum Rule Full Model	267
B 7.12 Referenda on Referendum Rule	268
B 7.13 Recall Rule Full Model	269
B 7.14 Recall Rule Referenda Model	270
B 7.15 Direct Election of Mayor Rule Full Model	271
B 7.16 Direct Election of Mayor Rule Referenda Model	272
B 7.17 Mayoral Appointment Power Rejection Full Model	273
B 7.18 Mayoral Appointment Power Acceptance Full Model	274
B 7.19 Mayoral Appointment Referenda Model with Procedural Safeguards	275
B 7.20 Full Model Mayoral Veto Power	276
B 7.21 Mayoral Veto Referenda	277

LIST OF FIGURES

2.01	Hierarchy of Rule Authority	24
2.02	Nested Institutions Embeddedness of Change	25
2.03	Continuum of Charter Change	33
2.04	Constitutional Change in Local Governance	47
8.01	Constitutional Competition in Local Governance	239

ABSTRACT

This dissertation extends research in local governance constitutional change in a new direction and integrates several models of institutions to explain patterns of municipal charter change. This approach presents a new understanding of institutions, actors, and change in the municipal charter. One of the most important implications of this study is that multiple perspectives on the dynamics of local governance can be incorporated into a testable theory. This interconnection provides a comprehensive and dynamic perspective of the competition for governance rules.

This study differs from other studies of local constitutional change in five ways. First, the study concentrates on change in the most embedded level of the local institution, the local constitution. Second, it builds on Maser's (1998) transaction resource theory of local constitutional change by incorporating selective incentives for maintenance or change and including rejected proposed rules. Third, the study views all forms of charter change as constitutional change which allows the theory to include both charter revision and the more radical city-county consolidation as a continuum of local constitutional change.

Fourth, the study integrates entrepreneurs and demanders of the status quo into the theory of competition for governance rules and procedural safeguards, extending Ostrom's Institutional Analysis Framework (1990). Finally, it moves entrepreneur studies to the constitutional level and argued that actors try to induce change in order to lock their preferences into the system.

Two methods are used to provide empirical evidence of maintenance or change in the system. The first method, case studies allow in-depth explorations of complex entities for evidence of dynamics, but can be difficult in comparing multiple complex systems. The second method, Qualitative Comparative Analysis, a Boolean method, integrates complex multiple characteristics of system complexity with in-depth characteristics of diverse entities to explore the phenomenon.

The central findings of the study focus on the choice of rules and the actors. In proposed consolidation charters, the electoral system rules that provide a safeguard for representation will be supported by minorities. Property owners, farmers, and business groups support rules that reduce the costs of government and protect their access to the governance structure.