4 Challenging the Machine–Reform Dichotomy

Two Threats to Urban Democracy

Jessica Trounstine

One of the classic themes in the study of urban political history is the clash between the Boss and the Reformer. According to traditional accounts machines dominated local politics through party organizations, created corrupt and inefficient government, and were supported by immigrant masses who had been bribed into loyalty.[1] Municipal reformers on the other hand sought clean government run by experts and supported by a knowledgeable, decisive electorate, which would allow elected officials freedom to pursue growth and development.[2] Yet, despite these important differences, machine and reform coalitions shared many more characteristics than the conventional wisdom would suggest.

The machine–reform dichotomy has been a subject of debate since reformers first began penning critiques of machines at the turn of the nineteenth century.[3] In these accounts machines epitomized corrupted democracy and reformers the cities' white knights. A second generation of scholarship challenged these early normative claims. Theorists such as Robert Merton argued that machines dominated for extended periods of time because they provided integral social functions such as the provision of welfare, the creation of informal networks between business and government, and the centralization of power.[4] Simultaneously, a new generation of scholarship on municipal reform reanalyzed the movement as an effort by businessmen and the middle class to regain governing authority. To achieve this goal reformers sought to disenfranchise poor, working class, and immigrant voters.[5] Then scholarship deriding machines reemerged while reform was reinterpreted as a complex, multifaceted movement.[6] More recently urban historians have suggested that machines dominated the minds of reformers more frequently than they dominated cities. However, even in revisionist accounts machine and reform politicians tend to be analyzed in opposition to one another and frequently at one historical moment.

Studying political machines and municipal reform side by side and over time allows us to see how alike they were. After coming to power, both types of coalitions sought to prevent durable shifts in governing authority by biasing political institutions in their favor.[7] In approximately 30

percent of America's largest cities the result was the elimination of effective competition and the domination of governance by a single coalition for multiple terms.[8] During periods of dominance, with reelection virtually guaranteed, machine and reform coalitions became less responsive to the populations they governed.

The development of dominance in machine and reform cities exemplifies the importance of timing and the processes of path dependence and positive feedback emphasized by scholars of American political development. The period during which a coalition established governing authority significantly affected (or attenuated) its options for biasing the system. The demographic and economic makeup of a city, the prevailing distribution of authority, and institutional setting made some strategies more attractive and successful than others.[9] Over time, dominance became self-reinforcing. The presence of biased institutions coupled with smashing electoral victories and low turnout discouraged challengers from attempting to enter the political fray at all. Ultimately though, the inflexibility in the structures and strategies of dominance undermined the ability of incumbents to maintain power as dissatisfaction became widespread among city residents and elites. Once a coalition became reliant on specific mechanisms to prevent shifts in governing authority, it became increasingly difficult for the coalition to choose any other path. In many cases a regime's inability to change its tactics ultimately led to its defeat.

In this chapter I show that both machine and reform politicians sought to increase the certainty of reelection by advantaging incumbents at all stages of the voting process. The strategies that these coalitions used allowed them to maintain dominance for long periods of time while excluding large segments of the population from the benefits of municipal governance. I begin by laying out a theoretical framework for understanding the similarities between machine and reform politics. Then I provide historical evidence of the various mechanisms each type of coalition relied upon to preserve power. Finally, I explain the effects of dominance: incumbents were reelected with near certainty and large segments of the population were denied access to municipal services and benefits. The divergent characterizations scholars have offered of machine and reform politicians can be reinterpreted as alternative means to achieve the same goal—a durable shift in governing authority.

A Theory of Dominance

As is the case in the sporting world, the institutions that govern political contests have the potential to determine which contestants are most likely to win elections, what skills and strategies will be most valuable, and who gets to participate. Thus, political institutions vary in the degree to which they ensure competitive elections and responsiveness to voters. Some institutions, biased institutions, simultaneously decrease competi-

tion (increasing the probability that incumbents will retain power) and decrease the need for incumbents to be responsive to voters. We should expect politicians to favor institutions that advantage them and to select strategies that enhance their chances of victory given the context in which they run. These strategies might consist of being responsive to voters or they might be the implementation of biased institutions.

If a coalition chooses to enact or rely on bias to insulate its governing authority it selects from among a number of options that can be categorized by the decision points in a democratic electoral system—generating preferences regarding government performance (information bias), translating preferences into votes (vote bias), and converting votes into seats (seat bias).[10]

Information bias refers to a system in which the government has a systematic advantage in controlling information about its record of performance and thus, citizen's preferences. State-controlled media and low information elections (e.g. nonpartisan elections) are examples of such mechanisms. In essence, information bias suggests an advantage for incumbents in the dissemination of information about government activity and available alternatives.

Vote bias describes a systematic advantage for incumbents in the way votes are cast. When a coalition uses government resources (for example, patronage employees) to promote the organization of its supporters or inhibit the organization of its opposition, it is engaging vote bias. Mechanisms such as poll taxes, registration laws, and vote fraud are other examples of this type of bias. Additionally, this category includes barriers to competition for challengers, such as lowering officials' pay or physically intimidating candidates. Barriers to competition bias outcomes toward the governing regime because voters have no other options.

The final step in the electoral process is the translation of votes into seats. This type of bias has been extensively studied in the literature on apportionment and representation particularly with regard to the US Congress.[11] The system's seat bias is determined by the degree to which the share of seats won exaggerates the share of votes won in favor of the incumbent coalition. Measures that create or increase malapportionment, gerrymandering, or reserved seats in the government's favor increase the incumbent coalition's probability of retaining governing authority. Additionally, the elimination of districts in legislative elections can increase incumbents' advantage when used in combination with voting restrictions. In this case at-large elections offer a substantial advantage to the incumbent coalition because all seats represent the same limited electorate. Table 4.1 displays strategies that have been used to increase the probability of incumbents maintaining governing authority in American cities.

Two bundles of strategies have been common in American history. Machine coalitions achieved control primarily through the use of government resources for political ends while reform coalitions dominated

Table 4.1 Biasing strategies

Information bias	Vote bias	Seat bias
Media control (ownership, regulation)	Vote bribery	Annexing in government's favor
Suppression of voluntary associations	Obscure polling place sites	Gerrymandering
Control over judicial system/prosecutors	Use of government resources to prevent opponent organization or enhance incumbent organization	Malapportionment
Low information elections (e.g. nonpartisan)	Impairment of election monitoring	Decreasing size of legislature
	Disqualification of candidates	At-large elections
	Candidate requirements (signatures, thresholds)	Increasing appointed offices
	Low pay for office holders	
	Violence keeping voters from polls or forcing vote choice	
	Electoral falsification (ghost/repeat voting, inflating totals, discarding ballots)	
	Registration requirements	
	Suffrage restrictions (literacy tests, poll taxes, language or race requirements, citizens only)	
	Assassinating/threatening/ imprisoning opponents	

government by relying on rules that limited the opportunity for dissenters and minority populations to participate in elections.

The strategies selected and relied upon by machine and reform organizations differed because they faced different institutional constraints and political contexts. In short, the timing and location of dominance mattered a great deal. Machines lacked home rule, were frequently thwarted by state officials of opposing parties, and sought power in cities with large, diverse populations of working-class and poor voters, many of whom were first and second generation immigrants. A reliance on patron-

age for winning reelection made sense in this environment. Reformers benefited from flexible city charters, supportive state governments, and more homogeneous communities in which opponents to reform platforms could be excluded from the electorate through suffrage restrictions and vote dilution.

The following sections provide a more in-depth analysis of each type of bias used by governing coalitions in Chicago, New York, New Haven, Kansas City, Philadelphia, San Jose, Austin, San Antonio, and Dallas. The first five cities were dominated by machines and the latter four cities by reform regimes. The following discussion is organized by biasing category (information bias, vote bias, and seat bias) and by coalition type (machine or reform).

Controlling Information

Machines sought to control information to shape voters' preferences using a number of different mechanisms. For example they placed organization loyalists in official positions that held investigative authority such as local-level prosecutors, grand juries, or state attorneys general. When investigations did occur, machines used control over city agencies to destroy evidence, provide extended leaves to potential witnesses, and otherwise prevent prosecutorial cooperation. The machine's relationship to the criminal underworld was sometimes utilized to kill informants.[12] Another mechanism of information control was influence over the news media. Machines attempted to achieve favorable news coverage by bribing editors or reporters, contributing heavily in advertising funds, or by offering publishers or editors public jobs. Libel suits against papers were also used to control the presentation of harmful information. In a few cases machines resorted to murdering investigative reporters.[13]

Reformers used less obviously corrupt methods for controlling information and shaping the preferences of voters in favor of their incumbent organizations. At the turn of the century, many reform organizations secured the enactment of nonpartisan local elections, arguing that parties should be irrelevant to urban administration. Because reformers argued that they had identified the most appropriate approach to good government, political institutions that made governance conflictual, such as parties, served to stymie progress. One reform leader argued the purpose of the nonpartisan movement was "to unite decent voters in an effort to take the city government out of politics."[14] By "politics" reformers meant "patronage and selfish intrigue of those who lived on the public payroll and were therefore considered hindrances to community development."[15]

In converting elections to nonpartisan contests, reformers sought to minimize divisions in the electorate and among elites. The lack of party cues to assist voters in the formation of preferences resulted in systems biased in favor of candidates with independent wealth or fame and

incumbents, advantaging reform coalition members.[16] Additionally, the less structured environment for competition in a nonpartisan system served to decrease interest and knowledge among constituents, making it difficult for challengers to activate opposition to the incumbent regime.[17] Without parties to train new leaders and teach voters political skills, nonpartisan elections increased the probability that membership in the incumbent organization was the only path to access the system.

The most powerful reform weapon in shaping the preference of voters was control over the local media. Newspaper editors and owners were the leaders of the reform movement in many cities. In San Jose, San Antonio, Dallas, and Austin, reform-owned newspapers refused to report stories that challenged the dominance of the local elites.[18] The local papers in all four reform cities endorsed reform charters, and news stories about city hall tended toward unabashed editorializing. According to a review of city manager government in Dallas, the publisher of the *Dallas News* "threw the full weight of his paper behind" the movement.[19] Every day leading up to the charter election the *News* published a front-page article explaining some aspect of the proposed change and urged its adoption. On the eve of charter reform in San Jose, the *Mercury Herald* printed a front-page article that argued the election would reveal

> whether the people of San Jose want boss rule or popular rule; whether the jobs of city hall shall go to henchmen who do nothing for their pay but politics for their master, or to be clean capable men who are good citizens and are accustomed only to a fair wage for fair service.[20]

Everywhere, local news organizations shared the vision of the common good that reformers proposed to enact; but frequently only after reformers strategically purchased opposition news outlets. In Austin the leaders of the opposition owned the evening paper and reported anti-reform speeches in great detail.[21] This changed after reform leaders purchased the paper in 1924. In 1896, the San Jose Good Government League was organized to win control of the city for the forces of reform but failed in part because the city's newspapers published articles critically analyzing the reform plan. Such problems ended after reform leaders J.O. and E.A. Hayes purchased two of the city's three newspapers and ended printed opposition to the reform charter and candidates in the newly consolidated *San Jose Mercury Herald*. The editor of the *Herald* resigned after discovering that the new owners intended to impose an editorial policy with "political implications."[22] The Hayes family completed their news monopoly in 1942 when they purchased the town's third and last independent newspaper, *The News*. Two years later the reform coalition finally achieved dominance. By coordinating the support of papers, reformers were "shielded from criticism by enthusiastic and boosterish local mass media" and successfully biased the system in their favor.[23]

Biasing Votes Using Government Resources

The second stage of the voting process requires voters to translate their preferences into votes on election day. Coalitions can take steps to ensure that incumbent office holders are advantaged when ballots are cast by limiting the ability for residents or challengers to participate in electoral contests.

In order to bias outcomes toward their organizations, governing coalitions in many political systems focus on trading divisible benefits (such as public jobs) for support, thereby using government resources to engender loyalty to the incumbent regime and pay political workers. Patronage becomes an even stronger strategy for bias when the coalition uses the benefit coercively, threatening recipients with losing their jobs if they do not perform political functions, requiring that job holders pay a portion of their salary into party coffers, and/or using political appointees to further bias the political system through practices such as vote fraud and intimidation. When workers are assured of economic security if and only if they support the incumbent coalition they are extremely unlikely to engage in political opposition.[24] The loyalty generated by such uncertainty over maintaining one's job is likely to be even more dramatic when the employee has few options for work in the private sector. In this way, coercive patronage serves to bias the system in favor of incumbents.

Party-based coalitions in Chicago, Kansas City, New York, New Haven, and Philadelphia employed patronage coercively. In Kansas City nearly all machine leaders and workers held public jobs, some contributing up to 50 percent of their salaries to the party's campaign funds.[25] In Chicago Mayor Cermak pressured employees to contribute 1 to 2 percent of their salaries.[26] Later in the city's history, Mayor and Boss Richard J. Daley made certain that his patronage appointees would remain loyal to him by threatening their jobs and controlling which government decisions they made.[27] By using government resources to organize and maintain the coalition, machine organizations successfully biased electoral outcomes in favor of incumbent coalitions.

However, patronage was not sufficient to guarantee long-term dominance for urban coalitions because various factions and opposition parties used the same strategies. Shifting governing authority using patronage required that a coalition control *access* to patronage, often through relationships with higher levels of government. Where organizations had difficulty securing and/or controlling patronage, they did not survive without alternative electoral strategies. For instance in New York, anti-Tammany governors doled out patronage to various wings of the Democratic Party until the late 1890s. Tammany finally consolidated governing authority only after a new governor supportive of the organization channeled patronage to Tammany leaders at the turn of the century.[28]

Control over the bureaucracy through patronage workers also allowed coalitions in Chicago, Kansas City, New York, New Haven, and Philadelphia to control delivery of municipal benefits and application of city laws. New York's machine made sure that the city's attorney used the power of the office to go after political challengers or their supporters for violations of mundane city ordinances. Near election time "a general raid ... [was] made on the whole body of store keepers and others in the district, care, of course, being taken not to trouble any who are known to be of the right stripe." Storekeepers were then offered the option of settling their violations in exchange for their vote at the next election. Any fines paid by violators were funneled into the machine's reelection fund.[29]

Legal and illegal businesses knew that they needed the machine on their side to pass inspections, secure utility extensions, ignore closing laws, sell liquor during Prohibition, run lotteries, and so on.[30] A 1917 editorial in the *New York Times* explained Tammany's system:

> Bootblacks, pushcart men, fruit vendors, soda water stand and corner grocery keepers, sailmakers, dry goods merchants, and so forth, "all had to contribute to the vast amounts that flowed into station houses, and which, after leaving something in the nature of a deposit there, flowed on higher." ... The police was a collecting agency for Tammany Hall every day of the year.[11]

Such a system ensured that businesses would organize electoral support for the machine. Incumbent politicians, reliant on their patronage workforce, could use selective application of the law to enhance their probability of reelection.

However, excessive corruption served to undermine a machine's authority if it became too offensive to voters or attracted the attention of higher levels of government. Successful machines were careful to use corruption to ensure loyalty, not to aggregate enormous wealth.[32] Properly controlled, patronage workforces could act as a strong deterrent to opposition, biasing outcomes in favor of incumbents using public funds.

Machines also profited from their skill in employing electoral fraud and repression. Stories abound of politicians at the turn of the century throwing uncounted ballots into the river, registering and voting on behalf of the dead or departed, and paying for individual votes.[11] Kansas City's Boss Tom Pendergast garnered 50,000 phantom voters in the late 1940s.[14] Between 1930 and 1934 the number of voters in the second ward went from 8,128 to 15,940 without a significant population increase.[11] In Richard J. Daley's first election for mayor, the *Chicago Tribune* published photographs of Democratic ward boss, Sidney "Short Pencil" Lewis, erasing votes cast for Daley's Democratic opponent in the primary. Daley's Republican opponent Robert Merriam sought to have Daley disqualified because of the fraud. But, the Democratic machine controlled

the Board of Elections, and the commissioner chastised Merriam rather than Lewis or Daley. The chief election commissioner charged: "Merriam is following Hitler's tactics which consisted of this—if you tell a lie often enough, people will begin to believe you."[36]

In addition to fixing the votes of people who arrived at the polls, machines preferred for their opponents to stay at home on election day, also enhancing the vote bias of the system. Gary Cox and Morgan Kousser argue that party workers turned from mobilizing supporters with illegal tactics to discouraging opponents with threats when the enactment of the Australian ballot made verifying votes too difficult.[37] Some machines avoided the problem by refusing to oil the voting machine lever for the opposition candidate. The squeak of an un-oiled lever immediately identified opposition supporters to the polling officials.[38] In other cases machines supported the passage of laws that legally limited the size of the electorate when it served their needs.[39] By constructing their ideal electorate through fraud and intimidation, machines biased the system in favor of their incumbent organizations.

Bosses also frequently frustrated their competitors' attempts to organize. Machines used threats and arrests, denial of meeting or parade permits, and selective enforcement of laws to limit insurgencies against their organizations. They relied on state laws that protected existing parties at the expense of new coalitions. For example, in Chicago, an independent needed 60,000 to 70,000 signatures to get his name on the ballot, compared with the regular party requirements of only 2,000 to 4,000. Next, the independent needed the machine-controlled Chicago Elections Board to approve the entire list of signatures.[40] In 1931 five minor candidates filed to run for mayor against the machine's founder Anton Cermak. As President of the County Board, Cermak controlled the Board of Election Commissioners, which declared the petitions of all five candidates illegal.[41] These rules worked as barriers to entry for challengers, thus favoring the machine's incumbent candidates.

Reformers Shape the Electorate with Institutions

Where machines used informal and extralegal tactics such as patronage ties, bribery, and threats to shape election outcomes in their favor, politicians in San Jose, Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio relied on legal mechanisms of bias that determined who had the right to cast ballots. Reformers proposed, lobbied for, and supported passage of suffrage restrictions at the state and local level including literacy tests, abolition of alien suffrage, registration requirements, poll taxes, obscure polling places, and measures that decreased the visibility or comprehensibility of politics such as non-concurrent, off-year elections.[42] Reform changes to city electoral and governing institutions had the effect of limiting opportunities for opponents to voice dissent and ensured that those who cast ballots shared reformers' demographics and policy goals.

In Austin only 37 percent of adults over the age of 21 had the right to vote in 1933 because of suffrage restrictions including the poll tax and literacy test.[43] San Antonio required property ownership for bond elections until 1969 and in tax elections until 1975.[44] In California mobile and migrant workers were the focus of increased residency requirements for voters in the 1870s.[45] In 1911 the Progressive legislature established biannual registration.[46] In 1894 California's Republican-controlled state house enacted a literacy requirement that barred from voting anyone who could not write his name and read the Constitution in English.[47] The *Los Angeles Times* applauded the amendment saying "here is one of the greatest reforms of our age . . . for the illiterate herd of voters will no longer haunt the polls on election day . . . and therefore the honest voter will have a chance to carry the election."[48]

Santa Clara County, where San Jose is located, implemented an additional four dollar poll tax in the late 1890s.[49] A local populist newsletter criticized the tax for its disfranchising effects on "free white men eligible for naturalization" meaning European immigrants and low-income whites. The article made clear it was *not* concerned about "Chinamen or negroes."[50] Such barriers to registration and voting significantly decreased the size of the electorate and especially impacted participation among poor and working-class residents and people of color.

By 1900 San Jose and the Santa Clara Valley had already established their position as the agricultural heartland of California. Canneries and orchards employed large numbers of Chinese, then Japanese, and finally Mexican immigrants throughout the twentieth century. Chinese workers in particular were targeted for restriction from social and political life. Led by laborers and grangers from San Francisco, California's constitution was amended in 1879 to include a series of anti-Chinese provisions. Chinese were prohibited from voting, owning land, working in certain occupations, and municipalities were authorized to exclude Chinese from city bounds or to designate specific areas of the city where Chinese residents could live.[51]

The anti-Chinese movement found support in San Jose. The city's Chinatown was burned to the ground in 1887 and forced to relocate outside of the city. Community members largely believed the fire was a result of arson tacitly approved by the city council and mayor because the ethnic enclave stood in the way of downtown development. The fire department successfully saved every non-Chinese-owned business in the path of the fire but not a single Chinese-occupied structure. In a 1902 pamphlet entitled "Sodom of the Coast," leaders of the reform movement targeted gambling operations and graft centered in the Chinese community in an effort to overhaul the city government.[52] Throughout the first half of the twentieth century the reform-owned *San Jose Mercury Herald* printed articles in support of excluding Asian immigrants, preventing aliens from owning land, and warning of the "yellow peril."[53] Such anti-Chinese and

Japanese sentiment suggests that San Jose's leaders would have supported the state-level changes that narrowed the electorate.

In addition to state suffrage restrictions, San Jose reformers were likely aided by the fact that the laboring class worked seasonally and tended to leave the city after harvest. Elections were held when agricultural workers were not living in the city—late winter and early spring.[14] According to one source in 1939 the permanent agricultural workforce in San Jose was 3,000 people. During harvest season this ballooned to 40,000 workers.[15] Holding elections when the migrant workforce was not in residence excluded this segment of the community from direct political participation. Pickers and canners earned wages at the bottom of the city's pay scale, and given that the working class constituted the most vocal opposition to reform charters, it seems likely that reformers would have been aided by limiting their participation.[16]

Reform incumbents also benefited from institutionalized mechanisms that increased barriers to competition through charter revision and city ordinances. This legally biased the system in favor of certain types of people who were the most likely supporters of the reform agenda. Reformers decreased the pay for elected and appointed city offices and increased candidate qualifications through charter revisions. For example, in Austin council members were required to post $10,000 bonds before taking office in the early 1900s.[17]

These changes meant that office holders all worked other jobs that had flexible hours and/or had some independent source of wealth. The result was that city councils tended to be populated by upper-class professionals and small business owners, the same groups leading the reform movement. Between 1944 and 1980, a large proportion of San Jose's leadership community attended the local Jesuit high school, graduated from the local Jesuit college, and lived in one of two wealthy, white neighborhoods. They were part of a "good old boys network" of civic-minded men who "really cared about the city," but who were not representative of the entire community.[18] The changes reformers made to government erected barriers to enter the political fray, encouraged certain types of people to become active participants in governance and actively discouraged others, biasing outcomes in favor of reform candidates.

Machines and Reformers Insulate Their Seat Shares

In the final stage of the voting process, the translation of votes to seats, incumbent political coalitions often have immense power in biasing the system because they can insulate coalition members from challenges. In machine cities gerrymandering was used to bolster the chances of incumbent coalitions. For instance, during the 1920s New York's Boss Charles Francis Murphy drew district lines to dilute the votes of Italian neighborhoods. In the 1960s and 1970s, Daley's machine relied on

creative district line drawing to ensure that neighborhoods with black and Latino majorities were dominated by white, machine loyal representatives.[59]

Reformers in San Jose, Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio increased incumbents' probability of retaining control using different mechanisms. They implemented at-large elections, transformed elected seats to appointed ones, and used strategic annexations. By abolishing districts and choosing citywide elections, reform charters ensured that minority preferences, even those of substantial size, remained unrepresented in the city legislature. At-large elections also had the effect of shifting representation toward voters rather than residents. In a district system, regardless of the number of voters in a given area of the city, the area is assured of representation on the council. In an at-large election this is no longer the case. Thus, in reform cities where turnout had already been decreased through suffrage restrictions and registration requirements, it became even less likely that certain areas would be represented. Given the nature of the suffrage restrictions, these areas of the city tended to be low income, working class, and communities of color.

In many reform cities, the abolition of districts or wards generated some of the most vocal opposition and contentious argument against the reform charters. Opponents of Austin's 1908 reform charter argued that "under the aldermanic system the citizens are assured direct representation in the affairs of the municipality, and direct control over ward improvements. Ward representation is in line with the democratic doctrine of local self-government."[60] In 1924 Austin's reform charter passed by a tiny margin of twenty votes out of 4,906 ballots cast. Five of the city's seven wards defeated the charter, but the two wealthy areas of town passed it by a three to one margin. Because the election was citywide the supporters won.

San Jose reformers abolished the ward system in 1915 to reduce the influence of certain districts.[61] The coalition displaced by San Jose's reformers had been able to control city government because it maintained strong support in the city's older, central wards. Reformers came to dominate the second and third wards. According to one observer, the latter was a "traditional stronghold of the better elements, with strict moral views and continued efforts to secure a government which they believe honest and impartial."[62]

In revising the charter, San Jose reformers lost in the central wards but won large numbers of votes in the second and third wards, as well as in newly annexed territory, thereby cinching the citywide victory. According to the political editor of the *San Jose Mercury News* the at-large system "served the interests of the folks who had established it, not the average person in town . . . [reformers] didn't want the small, parochial interests of more narrowly based groups to have any influence in politics."[63] At-large elections required more campaign funds, more extensive organ-

ization, and bigger mobilization operations in order to win and so tended to bias outcomes in favor of reform incumbents.

Reformers also benefited from the use of strategic annexation that maintained an electorate supportive of their administrations. As they grew, cities such as San Jose, San Antonio, Dallas, and Austin selectively expanded their city boundaries and chose not to annex particular outlying communities. San Jose's first planned annexation was a one hundred foot wide strip of land leading to the city of Alviso where San Jose hoped to build a port in 1912. Though the port was never built, San Jose did construct a technologically advanced sewage treatment plant on the site, which then became the tool by which other communities could be convinced to be annexed to the city. Given that annexation decisions were made in order to "grow and be able to pay the bill,"[64] poorer communities and undevelopable land were not priorities. San Jose reform leaders sought to "capture the cross roads which the administration told us were going to be the shopping centers of the future—where the sales tax would be."[65] Not surprisingly while San Jose had access to its treatment plant in Alviso, it did not annex the actual city, a poor agricultural community, until the late 1960s. When the annexation did occur it was in response to Alviso's attempt to annex the sewage treatment plant to its own borders.

San Jose annexed vast tracts of suburban land; incorporating 1,419 outlying areas by 1969. Yet, as of 2005 there were pockets of county land surrounded on all sides by the city of San Jose. Outside of the official city bounds, these areas have been excluded from participating in local governance. In other cities annexation decisions had a more direct and obvious political effect. San Antonio's annexation practices were challenged by the Justice Department under the Voting Rights Act in 1976 because they diluted a growing Mexican American population in the city.[66] Annexations created and maintained a community and electorate that tended to support reform goals. Had these excluded communities become part of the city, reformers might have lost elections. Thus, annexations biased the system in favor of incumbent reformers by determining whose votes translated into seats and whose views would not be counted.

Finally, reformers biased government toward the incumbent regime by transforming many elected positions into appointed offices. Reform charters eliminated popularly elected mayors or turned them into ceremonial heads and invested all executive power in city managers appointed by the council. The purpose of this change was to create a more efficient government. An editorial in the *Dallas News* urged voters to support the new charter by asking: "Why not run Dallas itself on business schedule by business methods under business men? The city manager plan is after all only a business management plan." The article goes on to explain: "[T]he city manager is the executive of a corporation under a

board of directors. Dallas is the corporation. It is as simple as that. Vote for it."⁶⁷

The elimination of elected leaders generated extensive controversy. In many cities municipal employees and labor organizations opposed reform charters and the strength of the city manager position because they did not feel that their interests would be protected. In San Jose the reform charter granted the city manager the authority to appoint all of the city's officials without approval from the council and the power to prepare the annual budget. At the same time the council served on a part-time basis, for very low pay, and was elected at-large in nonpartisan elections. The charter instructed councilors to interact with municipal employees "solely through the city manager." For further clarity, the charter explains: "[N]either the Council nor its members . . . shall give orders to any subordinate officer or employee, either publicly or privately."⁶⁸ As a result the manager had an enormous information and resource advantage over the elected legislators. Even if dissenting voices were elected in small numbers to the city council, the control of the city remained tightly bound to the reformist city manager and his administration. In Austin the first council elected following the city manager charter revision was unpopular with the voters because it was not responsive to their needs. One observer noted:

> The council that worked with Manager Johnson was not a repre-
> sentative body at all . . .. It was a super-managerial board. It refused
> to provide the type of political leadership necessary to keep the
> administration responsive to public opinion, and to maintain satis-
> factory public relations . . .. The council did eliminate "politics" in
> the sordid sense of the word by ending patronage . . . it also
> eliminated politics in the democratic sense of the word.⁶⁹

David Eakins explains the consequences of this drive to increase the competence of the political system: efficiency "both in theory and in practice meant heeding some citizens and not others . . . [and] the cost of greater efficiency was less democracy."⁷⁰ Eliminating politics resulted in an elimination of the pressure and ability to incorporate disaffected and disgruntled constituents. Such strategies of bias effectively insulated incumbent coalitions from shifts in public sentiment and protected their governing authority.

Bias Had Electoral and Distributional Consequences

When coalitions biased the system in their favor, they won. In every year between 1931 and 1979 the same faction of the Democratic Party controlled the mayoralty and the city council in Chicago. In Philadelphia the Republican organization dominated between 1860 and 1950, at times

winning more than 80 percent of the vote. Tammany Hall governed New York from 1918 through 1932; the machine's margin of victory climbing at virtually every election.

The effects of reform consolidation are similar. Like their machine counterparts, reform candidates won repeatedly, with landslide victories. In Dallas 86 percent of 182 city council members elected between 1931 and 1969 pledged allegiance to the Citizens' Charter Association. This nonpartisan slating group held a majority on the council every year except a brief period between 1935 and 1938. San Antonio's Good Government League won 95 percent of the eighty-eight council races between 1955 and 1971. Between 1944 and 1967 in San Jose seventy-five councilors were elected to office; seventy-two were members of the dominant coalition.

Additionally, turnout declined in both machine and reform cities as peripheral groups were demobilized by those in power and discouraged from participating by the lack of choices.[71] Given the long time periods governed by bias, these results suggest that outcomes were clear well in advance of election day, reinforcing the authority of the regimes. After insulating their coalitions from shifts in power, machine and reform organizations turned their attention away from a large, diverse electoral coalition.

Under machine dominance core coalitions were targeted for a disproportionate share of municipal benefits and others suffered. In Chicago African Americans were denied services, government jobs, and elected offices. Blacks made up 40 percent of the city population in 1970, but only 20 percent of the municipal workforce. In 1972 African Americans brought suit against Daley for discriminatory hiring practices and won.[72] As of 1974 Latinos made up only 1.7 percent of the full-time city payroll but composed about 10 percent of the population.[73] After 1976, when the machine was in its final stages of life, minorities' share of patronage positions grew; more than one-third of new hires were people of color.[74]

In addition to patronage, machines supported policies that benefited some groups of residents to the detriment of others. In many cities urban renewal represented the provision of benefits to core coalition members and city elites at the expense of peripheral groups. For every new building that was erected, a slum was cleared, displacing more than a million residents over the course of the federal program. These decisions were not made independent of the racial and ethnic makeup of neighborhoods. In New Haven alone Wolfinger estimates 7,000 households and 25,000 residents were moved to make way for urban renewal. As first Mayor Lee and then DiLieto pursued redevelopment, spending over $200 million of public funds, New Haven became the fourth poorest city in the country. By 1989 its infant mortality rate rivaled third world countries in some neighborhoods, and the citywide average was the second highest in the nation.[75]

While New York Italians heavily supported the Tammany machine in the 1920s they received the most menial of patronage positions—garbage men, street cleaners, and dock workers. Similarly, Chicago's African American community won few concessions from the consolidated Daley machine even after providing a large portion of the Democratic vote and the margin of victory in 1955 and 1963. Blacks demanded, but were refused, a halt to police brutality and discrimination, appointment to high-level political positions, and living wage jobs. "Mr. Mayor we would like to point out," the *Daily Defender* said, "that in comparison with other cities . . . Chicago is sadly lacking in the utilization of its finest and most well-qualifies [sic] Negro citizens in responsible positions in your administration."[76]

Similarly, under reform dominance those excluded from the governing coalition won little from municipal leaders. Because reformers had spent much energy and many resources separating politics from government, dissent was eliminated in the very structure of the city's institutions. By unifying the executive and legislative branches of government and making council seats at-large, all of those in power were beholden to the same constituency. Such a structure made it appear as though the cities were homogeneous and unified, but many cities with reform governments had large populations of poor and minority residents who did not always share reform views. Intense debates erupted over the placement of public works, the location of new roads and freeways, the provision of parks, libraries, and schools, and the role of labor unions in municipal government.

While reform coalitions maintained agendas that promoted growth and development, benefiting business and middle-class whites, they ignored the social needs of many residents and neglected the city's burgeoning physical problems.[77] One of the clearest examples of this pattern is seen in Southwestern annexation policies. As cities such as San Jose annexed new communities at the behest of developers, poorer communities closer to the center were not provided with basic municipal services. The Latino neighborhood known as the Mayfair district in San Jose flooded in 1952 creating a significant public health threat.[78] The same creek overflowed its banks again in 1955, 1958, and 1962. The year that the dominant coalition collapsed, 1979, the water district finally filed an application to protect the nearly 4,000 homes and businesses in the area from further damage.[79] In the early 1970s, residents of Alviso, a heavily Latino area, blocked a bridge demanding that crossers pay a toll to pay for needed repairs that the city of San Jose had refused to provide.[80]

Austin's 1969 Model Cities program first focused on paving and drainage in center city neighborhoods. Yet the predominately African American west side of Austin did not have paved streets in some areas until 1979.[81] Meanwhile, city government provided sewerage, streets, and utilities for all of the new developments. The busy annexation mill in San Antonio doubled the city's size between 1940 and 1950 but leapfrogged

over older, poorer, and more heavily Latino neighborhoods. During these years reformers promised Latino leaders that they would build drainage projects in return for support in bond elections. The bonds passed and the money was allocated, but the projects were never built.[82] As late as the 1980s, Mexican American communities in San Antonio were beset by flooding due to inadequate drainage systems.

Conclusions

In both machine and reform cities coalitions selected strategies to ensure reelection that had long-term effects on the political arena. Securing dominance made governing coalitions less attentive to the broader public. When the electoral system became uncompetitive, groups outside of the dominant coalition could not easily contest the hand that they were dealt. Biased systems allowed dominant organizations to reduce the size of their electoral coalitions, conserve resources, and reward key players. Secure from threats to their governing authority, coalitions directed benefits of municipal government toward core members and coalition elites at the expense of peripheral groups. First Jews and Italians, and then blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans were limited from participating in the political process and from receiving equal shares of government benefits. The lesson for American political development is clear—those in power can be expected to build defenses against durable shifts in governing authority, and when they succeed, as both machine and reform coalitions did, portions of the population are likely to suffer.

Notes

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3. Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York: Hill and Wang Publishing, 1957; originally published in 1904).
4. Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1957).
5. Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1964).
6. On machines see Steven Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840–1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). On reform see John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973); Kenneth Finegold, *Experts and Politicians: Reform Challenges to Machine Politics in New York, Cleveland, and Chicago* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); James Connolly, *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism: Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900–1925* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

7. By institutions I mean rules, structures, and procedures for creating, implementing, and enforcing collective action.

8. Jessica Trounstine, *Political Monopolies in American Cities: The Rise and Fall of Bosses and Reformers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

9. For further explanation see ibid.

10. For a similar argument see Gary W. Cox, "Public Goods, Targetable Goods and Electoral Competition," unpublished typescript, 2001.

11. See for example Gary W. Cox and Jonathan N. Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Bernard Grofman, W. Koetzle, and T. Brunell, "An Integrated Perspective on the Three Potential Sources of Partisan Bias: Malapportionment, Turnout Differences, and the Geographic Distribution of Party Vote Shares," *Electoral Studies* 16, no. 4 (1997): 457–470; Gary King and Robert Browning, "Democratic Representation and Partisan Bias in Congressional Elections," *American Political Science Review* 81, no. 4 (1987): 1251–1273.

12. V.O. Key, "Political Machine Strategy Against Investigations," *Social Forces* 14, no. 1 (1935): 120–128.

13. Ibid.

14. "Tired of Bossism," *Los Angeles Times* June 30, 1888, p. 1.

15. Harold Stone, Don Price, and Kathryn Stone, *City Manager Government in Nine Cities* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1940), p. 268.

16. Charles R. Adrian, "A Typology for Nonpartisan Elections," *Western Political Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1959): 449–458; Brian Schaffner, Matthew Streb, and Gerald Wright, "Teams without Uniforms: The Nonpartisan Ballot in State and Local Elections," *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (March 2001): 7–30.

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19. Stone, Price, and Stone, *City Manager Government in Nine Cities*, p. 267.

20. Quoted in Valerie Ellsworth and Andrew Garbely, "Centralization and Efficiency: The Reformers Shape Modern San Jose Government," in David Eakins, ed., *Businessmen and Municipal Reform: A Study of Ideals and Practice in San Jose and Santa Cruz* (San Jose: Sourisseau Academy for California State and Local History, San Jose State University Original Research in Santa Clara County History, 1976), p. 14.

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27. Mike Royko, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago* (New York: Signet Press, 1971).
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31. "The Golden Prime of Tammany," *New York Times* October 28, 1917, p. E2.
32. Dick Simpson, *Rogues, Rebels and Rubber Stamps: The Politics of the Chicago City Council from 1863 to the Present* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); Martin Shefter, "The Emergence of the Political Machine: An Alternative View," in Willis D. Hawley et al., eds., *Theoretical Perspectives on Urban Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976).
33. A search of the *Chicago Tribune* for articles containing the words fraud, election, and mayor turned up 334 articles between 1849 and 1950.
34. Alan Reitman and Robert B. Davidson, *The Election Process: Voting Laws and Procedures* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1972).
35. It is likely that the surge of Democratic popularity brought many new voters into the electorate; however, this ward was predominately African American, and blacks did not abandon the Republican ticket in large numbers elsewhere until 1936. (See Larsen and Hulston, *Pendergast!*)
36. Clay Gowran, "Merriam Charges Election Board Bias: Rips Holzman as Spokesman for Opponent," *Chicago Tribune* February 27, 1955, p. 1.
37. Gary Cox and Morgan Kousser, "Turnout and Rural Corruption: New York as a Test Case," *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 4 (1981): 646–663.
38. Erie, *Rainbow's End*.
39. Erie argues (ibid.) that because city governments had limited resources an expanding electorate made retaining office tenuous. He provides examples in places such as New York and Pennsylvania where machine leaders supported suffrage restriction in order to limit demands on their organizations.
40. Royko, *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago*.
41. Gottfried, *Boss Cermak of Chicago: A Study of Political Leadership*.
42. It is important to note that suffrage restrictions were not confined to states and cities where reformers came to monopolize cities. All of the states that housed political machines had at one time or another limited the right to vote to certain groups (whites, property holders, men, etc.). The point here is that reformers benefited from these restrictions because their political opponents were denied the opportunity to participate in elections.
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70. Eakins, *Businessmen and Municipal Reform*, p. 3.
71. Trounstine, *Political Monopolies in American Cities*.
72. Erie, *Rainbow's End*.
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