

Dominant Regimes and the Demise of Urban Democracy

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Theorists of democracy assert that government is held accountable and responsive to citizens through the electoral process. Elections can offer citizens representative government, but only when certain conditions are met. I provide evidence that when elections become uncompetitive for long periods of time and political coalitions establish dominant regimes the distribution of government benefits changes. Examining twentieth-century political patterns in nine of the United States' largest cities, I find that dominant regimes establish electoral control, then target core supporters and powerful interests at the expense of the larger community.

Scholars of democratic theory argue that government is held accountable and responsive through the electoral process (Downs 1957; Key [1949] 1984; Mayhew 1974). Citizens select and are able to sanction representatives through elections. Ideally, the desire to keep their jobs ensures that politicians serve constituents in pursuit of larger vote shares. But this assumption only holds true when elections are competitive. Like firms that establish a monopoly, when politicians cease to worry about reelection they become free to pursue government policy that does not reflect constituent preferences. In this article I provide evidence that this danger is real. I show, as urban scholars have long argued, that urban regimes persist, enjoying long periods where incumbency advantage increases and turnover and turnout are reduced. I find that when elections become noncompetitive and political coalitions establish dominant regimes the distribution of government benefits changes in important ways. Examining twentieth-century political patterns in nine of the United States' largest cities, I find that dominant regimes target core supporters and powerful interests at the expense of the larger community.

American cities offer a unique laboratory for this investigation because they exhibit two types of dominant regimes—political machines and municipal reformers—that are said to be very different in terms

of their constituencies, their goals and platforms, and the institutions that they build (Banfield and Wilson 1966). Alternatively, I argue that machines and reform organizations should be considered different versions of the same political phenomenon—dominant regimes that endured multiple terms without serious opposition and concentrated municipal benefits on core constituencies. During these dominance periods municipal power and command over government functions are centralized in a single person or small group that has achieved monopolistic control over elections to the legislative and executive branches. I define dominance operationally as a single organization or faction controlling nominations and electoral outcomes for at least a decade.

Understanding the effects of dominant regimes has important implications for the study of twentieth-century city politics and democratic governance. Revisionist urban historians have argued that city machines dominated the minds of Progressive reformers more frequently than they dominated cities (McDonald 1985; Teaford 1984). I show that, although rare, machine and reform regimes *did* exist with negative consequences for some members of the community. More importantly, the literature on urban politics has continued to draw distinctions between machine and reform governments and is revised here to reflect the underlying similarities of these organizations. The

quest for power and the effects of dominance are similar across time and place. This has theoretical and methodological implications for the study of urban politics, from the kinds of assumptions scholars make about institutional changes to claims about differing political cultures. Further, contrary to a large body of urban politics research that finds no evidence for political logic in the distribution of government benefits (Koehler and Wrightson 1987; Mladenka 1980), I find that dominance does affect municipal policymaking regardless of the characteristics of the dominant regime. In all of these cities the distribution of benefits narrows. Political coalitions *are* able to monopolize government, even in a democratic system, and choose to reward fewer constituents when they solidify control.

This research can also help make sense of contemporary urban politics. While politicians may no longer be able to dump ballots in the river with impunity, they continue to employ strategies to reduce electoral competition. The need for unity, power, and centralization is as great today as it ever was. In his 2002 inaugural address, Nassau County, New York's first Democratic executive in 30 years, Thomas Suozzi, asked the people to "dismantle the culture of machine politics," arguing that in his administration "workers will be rewarded based upon their performance, not their political connections." Two years later Suozzi plead guilty to forcing a municipal employee into political service and was under investigation for accepting quid pro quo campaign contributions (Lambert and Domash 2004). That same year, in San Antonio, two council members were indicted for "running a corrupt political machine" (Robbins 2004). The *New York Times* argues that the New Jersey Hudson County Democratic organization "is one of the most formidable political machines in the nation . . . and it is only becoming stronger" (Hernandez 2003). As long as political coalitions continue to act strategically dominance remains a real possibility.

To substantiate these claims, I first present an explanation of the theoretical relationship between regime dominance and benefit distribution. Then I provide statistical and qualitative evidence that the cities included in this study witnessed identifiable periods of dominance. In the main portion of the article, I offer both quantitative and qualitative support for the theory that dominance depresses turnout and leads to concentrations of benefits for specific subgroups. I conclude with a brief discussion of implications of the argument.

Theoretically Speaking: How Competition Affects Policy Outcomes

Political scientists agree that elections play a fundamental role in keeping representatives accountable. Reelection-seeking politicians attempt to maximize votes (Downs 1957) and organize institutions that allow them to do so (Mayhew 1974). When political elites worried about reelection mobilize large numbers of voters, turnout is high because additional groups are encouraged to enter the political process, participation in governance is broad, and government provides benefits to many different groups in the community (Bueno De Mesquita et al. 2003; Keiser 1997; Morton 1987). Competitive elections provide an incentive for politicians to serve these goals. In short, the quest for reelection is the heart of representative democracy.

But not all elections are competitive. In fact, politicians will do what they can to ensure that elections are as uncompetitive as possible (Boix 1999; Cox 2001; Fiorina 1989). Municipal coalitions use a variety of tools to establish dominance. Machine organizations relied on strict control over nominations (Cohen and Taylor 2000), forcing patronage workers into political service (Wolfinger 1974), selective application of laws (Erie 1988), discarding or falsifying ballots, violence to keep voters from polls or to force their vote choice (Cox and Kousser 1981), elimination of opposition candidates, and gerrymandered districts (Simpson 2001). In reform cities, to establish dominance coalitions created nonpartisan slating groups (Davidson and Fraga 1988); purchased news outlets (Bridges 1997); implemented nonpartisan and at-large elections (Adrian 1959), suffrage restrictions (Keyssar 2000), registration requirements and candidate restrictions, and city manager charters; and annexed in the government's favor (Bridges 1997). Although there is not space here to fully explore these mechanisms, this list provides a sampling of the strategies coalitions use to gain and maintain control over offices in municipal executive and legislative branches. Coalitions use these tools to establish monopolies over the electoral process (Trounstine 2004).

I define a *political coalition* as an organized set of interests or groups in a community that works together to nominate and elect politicians to office to influence "government policies, policy stands, projects, graft, appointive government jobs, and other valued things officials . . . have access to and give out" (Mayhew 1986, 4). A coalition that seeks to govern a

city for an extended period of time requires support from a set of core constituents to win elections and a set of elites to maintain power. These governing coalition elites may be private actors or public officials at higher levels of government who hold key resources needed to govern. According to regime theorists, without the cooperation of these elites, either tacit or overt, elected officials remain severely constrained in their ability to govern (Hunter 1980; Keiser 1997; Stone 1989). The groups included in any one coalition may be determined by a range of factors including historical circumstances, economic considerations, racism, class or ethnic divisions, and compatibility with other member group's preferences (Axelrod 1970; but cf. Wright and Goldberg 1985).

Once elected, coalitions face a scarcity of resources (benefits and policy options). Because they are driven to maximize their share of the spoils (Riker 1962), coalitions should prefer to minimize votes to the smallest number that will retain control of government. This is likely to be especially true at the local level where restraints on government revenue and expenditure are heavy due to federal and state demands and requirements for balanced budgets.¹ Since a large electoral coalition is more expensive to maintain than a small one, the most efficient strategy for maintaining low-cost reelection is to limit the number of coalition members to a minimum winning size, thereby minimizing beneficiaries. Politicians might trim their coalitions by repressing turnout of unwanted groups or simply paying selective attention to their supporters.

Aside from affording each member a greater share of government largesse, smaller coalitions are also less expensive to maintain. Reducing or stabilizing expenditure on constituents' demands increases the likelihood of balancing city budgets (Fuchs 1992). Additionally, low-turnout elections are more predictable. Political leaders have an easier time ensuring that voters will cast ballots for their candidates if there are fewer voters to consider (Pinderhughes 1987). Having fewer groups in a coalition also reduces the potential for competing demands that may splinter the coalition in the long run. However, a minimizing strategy makes

future elections riskier because it lowers the hurdle for a potential challenger. So we should only see movement toward minimum-winning size when coalitions are entrenched in government and competition has been severely reduced. During the dominance period turnout of eligible voters should decline as coalitions trim their membership.

As they become more secure, coalitions can spend less time focusing on reelection and can devote more time and energy to increasing their share of the spoils of office (Cox 2001; Key [1949] 1984). Since resources are limited and many policy and funding choices at the municipal level are zero sum, some groups will win and others will lose. The core group needed by the dominant coalition to maintain political control bargains for a share of government benefits. Other constituents may join the coalition (politicians prefer to have them), but only for the most inexpensive or symbolic benefits. Thus, dominance should have consequences for the distribution of benefits. I argue that decreased competition should mean that benefits become increasingly concentrated toward the governing coalition elites and core coalition members rather than all electoral coalition members. Hence, all voters are not winners in these political systems.

There is a long tradition of studying power structures and dominant regimes in city politics, making this a good place to look for their effects. Urban scholarship tells us that powerful political machines dominated northern and eastern cities of the United States throughout the age of industrialization. Machines were a turn of the century phenomenon where a political party captured the local governing apparatus and centralized power in a given jurisdiction. Machines maintained power by trading divisible benefits for votes. They were hierarchically organized institutions, often supported by working class immigrant constituencies, and frequently associated with corruption.

Municipal reformers were born with the first machines as their archrivals. In the South and the West, municipal reformers ably captured the levers of government in urban areas. These men argued for business-like control of government, making politics and partisanship irrelevant. Reformers claimed to be the "best" people to run cities and pursue economic development. They are associated with a rise in efficiency, and clean and open systems of government and were often supported by white, upper, middle-class, and small business constituencies.

I argue that while machine and reform coalitions had different standard operating procedures (and a different base), they had similar effects on the electoral

¹Scholars have offered both theoretical (Groseclose and Snyder 1996) and empirical (Hinckley 1972) evidence in opposition to Riker's theory by primarily focusing on the federal level. These works tend to evaluate situations in which the building of coalitions is a repeated game and thus argue that maintaining oversized coalitions is less costly in the long run. If competition ceases to have a meaningful effect on the behavior of politicians the incentive to reduce the size of the coalition may remain. Further, since the constraints on budgeting are heavier at the local level, it is unclear whether or not these models would predict similar oversized coalitions in cities.

process and urban policy. By combining these regime types into a single analysis I show that both sought to dictate nominations for political office, control majorities in the legislative and executive branches, and affect the distribution of municipal benefits.

Defining the Data

To define periods in which coalitions successfully achieve dominance and then focus governance toward a core group of supporters, I collected data on nine American cities. The cities were selected in an attempt to cover a wide range of differing characteristics and a well researched body of secondary literature. A thorough explanation of the case selection is offered in the accompanying appendix available at <http://www.journalofpolitics.org>. Five of the cities, Chicago, Kansas City, New Haven, New York, and Philadelphia, represent quintessential machine politics (Erie 1988; Wolfinger 1974; Zink 1930). The other four, Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, and San Jose, represent big-city reform politics (Bridges 1997). The collection of nine cities represents diverse regions of the United States, and each was listed as one of the nation's 50 largest cities at some point during the twentieth century. The cities differ on important demographic characteristics like median income and age, percent white, and total population. Finally, the cities' dominance periods represent a variety of time spans, reducing the possibility that some unidentified trend was the actual cause for the similar political patterns during the reign of dominant coalitions. For each of the nine cities, I collected available election data for the period 1900–90 including candidate totals and registration figures where possible.² This captured long periods before and after a coalition achieved dominance in each city. For three of the machine cities, Philadelphia, Kansas City, and New York, I collected additional election returns prior to 1900 to provide sufficient data before the implementation of dominance. The dates of the dominance periods and the years for which election results were attained are presented in Table A1 the online appendix.

To determine the beginning and end points for the predicted dominance period, I conducted in-depth analysis of all nine cities' histories. First I took note of

time periods where a single organization appeared to have strong control over the nominations process either within a party or city-wide. Secondly, I recorded narrative evidence that during these periods, the same organization maintained majority control over elected and appointed offices *city-wide*. Alternatively, I might have determined as other scholars have (Keiser 1997), a priori levels of competition and turnout that signified the presence of a dominant coalition. I elected not to do this because these electoral characteristics are the result of dominance, not the cause. Thus, they are incomplete indications of the existence of a dominant regime. When a boss or cabal runs city politics we expect low turnover and little competition. But the inverse is not also true. An incumbent might enjoy a wide margin and high probability of victory without the presence of an organized regime assisting in that election or dictating government activity. Further, when a regime is truly dominant, incumbency advantage could be meaningless if the organization consistently replaces office holders with others who are more faithful. For this reason the best data would track the faction each candidate belongs to, measure the success rate of these factions, and determine which, if any, was dominant in the executive and legislative branches for a substantial period. Given the lack of municipal election data, I rely instead on rich urban historical research to determine sets of years that might be dominance periods and then analyze municipal benefit distribution in relation to these periods. Fortunately there is a high degree of consensus among historians regarding the periods in which organizations were *most* powerful.

The historical literature on political machines and machine politics is well developed and provides clear examples of dominant regimes. For example, Erie offers a concise chart determining the presence of a strong political machine in each of eight cities for the twentieth century; defined as city-wide power centralized in the hands of a party boss who commanded large electoral majorities, controlled local offices and agencies, remained in power for at least a decade, and exchanged patronage jobs and welfare services for votes (1988, 18–19). I used this chart to determine the start and end dates for machine dominance in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Similarly, in a study of traditional party organizations, Mayhew suggests periods of machine control. Of Kansas City he says, "... Pendergast's... Democratic machine dominated politics in the 1920s and 1930s. It... reached out like Jersey City's Hague machine to take over the state government during the New Deal. But a reform group won power in Kansas City in 1940..."

²For machine cities only general elections for mayor are included in the analysis. Reform city data includes primary and general election returns for city council members and mayors when they had this position. San Jose's manager faced a vote of confidence and is treated as an election for the seat.

(1986, 100).³ These types of analyses, along with individual accounts of city organizations (e.g., Larsen and Hulston 1997; Dahl 1961) provided the precise dates of the dominance periods.

In the South and West, scholars (Bridges 1997; Davidson and Fraga 1988; Mayhew 1986) suggest nonpartisan slating groups (NPSGs) dominated government. Of San Antonio's NPSG Mayhew explains, the "Good Government League, a business and professional organization, dominated postwar municipal elections until its demise in the mid-1970s. It filled all but four of 81 nonpartisan council openings from 1955 though 1971" (1986, 136). For Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, and San Jose the start of the dominance period is marked by the formation of a well-organized NPSG that ends when the NPSG is dissolved or the group is said to have lost control over government. As Mayhew's comment suggests, the definition of dominance in the literature assumes control over elected offices. Additionally, scholars attribute policy goals and political programs to these NPSGs. Bridges argues the "leaders of newly formed nonpartisan slating groups promised efficiency and lower taxes, clear lines of authority and administration" (1997, 111). In combination these characteristics qualitatively define an organized group of political actors controlling government activity through the electoral process.

The following section verifies this definition empirically. First I show that dominance periods had identifiable electoral characteristics. During dominance, regimes won reelection by larger margins and more consistently, and turnout was lower compared to periods before and after dominance. Then I test the policy consequences of regime dominance showing that the proportion of municipal budgets allocated to different categories of expenditure changes.

As a measure of competitiveness in each election I use the *Margin of Victory*; the percentage of the vote gained by the loser with the highest total subtracted from the percentage of the vote gained by the winner with the lowest total. To capture changes in coalition size I use a *Turnout* variable constructed as the number of ballots cast in a given election divided by the total number of eligible voters in the city. Eligible voters

include all persons of voting age (males only prior to 1920). I include noncitizens because naturalization of immigrants is a method of increasing the size of the electoral coalition (Erie 1988).

The regressions incorporate a number of control variables to account for alternative hypotheses where appropriate, including the number of *Candidates* running for each seat, the number of *Incumbents* running, *Turnout* of eligible voters in each election, the *Nonwhite* population of the city, and the total *Population* of each city. I add a trend variable representing the *Year* that the election was held and a variable representing the type of *Seat* for which the election was held. Finally, I include a dummy variable indicating whether the city is classified as *Machine* or reform.⁴

For each hypothesis I provide narrative evidence of dominance to give life and depth to the regression analyses. In the interest of space I only provide examples from two cities where powerful regimes governed for nearly 30 years, Chicago and San Jose.

Are the Qualitative Definitions of Dominance Verified?

To analyze the effect of dominance on municipal governance I begin by verifying electoral conditions associated with dominant regimes. I use regression analysis here to provide a quantitative definition of the dominance period while controlling for other factors. If reform and machine organizations actually controlled the governing apparatus, during the dominance period competition should decline. The first column of Table 1 presents the results from an OLS regression of the margin of victory in each race on the dominance period.⁵

During the dominance period the average margin of victory in elections increases by nearly eight percentage points. This holds controlling for changes in turnout, whether or not an incumbent is running, the number of candidates per seat, and for potential differences between machine and reform cities. Equally important, the dominance period reduced competition in both machine and reform cities. Restricting the analysis to each regime type substantiates this claim; both types see a significant increase in the margin of

³This quote suggested that 1939 should be the final year of dominance for the Kansas City machine. To find the start date I culled historical scholarship on the Pendergast organization. Scholars agreed that during the early 1900s the Democratic Party was factionalized between two wings, the Goats and the Rabbits, until in 1914 Pendergast subsumed the fights by divvying up patronage among the leaders. From this point on, the Democratic Party operated as a single nominating organization. Thus 1914 began the dominance period for Kansas City in my analysis.

⁴Adding a control for the type of election (primary, general, or primary with no run-off) did not change the conclusions.

⁵Adding fixed effects for cities does not change the conclusions of the analysis.

TABLE 1 Competition and Incumbency Advantage During Dominance

	Margin of Victory <i>OLS Regression</i>	Incumbent Candidate <i>Logistic Regression</i>	Incumbent Party <i>Logistic Regression</i>
Dominance Period	.076* (.015)	-.231* (.117)	-.729* (.362)
Incumbent*Dominance Period		.803* (.284)	1.632* (.515)
Incumbents Running (OLS)	.047* (.010)	1.735* (.179)	1.417* (.263)
Incumbent Candidate (Logits) Candidates per Seat	-.035* (.004)	-.051 (.030)	-.111 (.115)
Turnout of Eligible Voters	-.629* (.070)	.312 (.492)	.062 (.932)
Year	.001* (.000)	-.007* (.003)	.000 (.004)
Machine/Reform	.043 (.040)	-.826* (.245)	
Population (millions)	.017 (.009)	-.023 (.052)	-.026 (.061)
Seat	-.028 (.021)	-.286* (.130)	
Constant	-1.840* (.720)	13.105* (4.953)	-.845 (6.936)
F-Test/Chi ²	39.50*	340.62*	96.45*
Adjusted./Pseudo R ²	.23	.124	.171
N	1,037	1,983	410

Figures are coefficients with standard errors in parentheses * $p < .05$.

victory during the dominance period.⁶ When local coalitions dominate governance they successfully reduce competition in elections.

These results begin to suggest that both machine and reform regimes were able to dominate the system. But margin of victory represents only one element in the quest for supremacy. Reelection of the dominant coalition is a second and perhaps more telling piece of evidence of the success of their efforts. I test the possibility of increased incumbency advantage with two logistic regressions, first using each candidate's incumbency status as a proxy for membership in the dominant coalition, and second using membership in the incumbent party as the proxy. Because reform

cities have nonpartisan elections and keep no records of the organization to which a candidate belongs, this regression only includes machine cities.

The results presented in the second and third columns of Table 1 suggest that incumbents and incumbent parties have a higher probability of winning during the dominance period. I use Clarify software (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003) to simulate the effect of dominance on the probability of winning. Over the entire time period incumbent candidates and incumbent party candidates do well, but they do even better in dominance periods. In reform cities, incumbents increase their probability of winning from 82% to 89% during the dominance period. In machine cities incumbents increase their probability of winning from 67% to 78%. For incumbent parties the effect of dominance is even more striking. Dominant coalitions increase their probability of reelection from 63% to 81%.

Scholars define machines in part by their longevity and resistance to competition, and the data support this claim. Since 1931 in Chicago the Democratic Party has won every mayoral election, and Daley's organiza-

⁶The coefficients on the control variables fit with traditional explanations on electoral competitiveness. When an incumbent runs and the number of candidates is small, the margin of victory is larger. Turnout has a powerful negative effect on the margin. Adding a variable that measured total population change over five- and ten-year periods to account for changing city size was insignificant and did not change the other results. Additionally, I find that incumbents won by larger margins during the dominance period (see online appendix Tables A2, A3, and A4).

TABLE 2 The Effect of Dominance on Turnout of Eligible Voters

	OLS Regression on Election Returns	
	Turnout of Eligible Voters	Turnout of Eligible Voters
Dominance Period	-.060*	-.042*
	(.008)	(.008)
Incumbents Running		.007
		(.005)
Margin of Victory		-.120*
		(.015)
Candidates per Seat		.003
		(.002)
Population (millions)	-.002	-.001
	(.004)	(.004)
Year	.001*	.001*
	(.000)	(.000)
Machine/Reform	.285*	.271*
	(.011)	(.011)
Constant	-.991*	-1.067*
	(.334)	(.320)
F	286.43*	190.05*
Adjusted R ²	.619	.653
N	703	703

Figures are coefficients with standard errors in parentheses * $p < .05$.

tion raked in ever higher shares of the vote after consolidating power. The effects of reform regime consolidation are similar. Like their machine counterparts, reform candidates won repeatedly, with landslide victories. Following the organization of San Jose's Progress Committee in 1944, until 1967, only a single council member was elected who opposed the dominant regime. Coalitions *do* successfully dominate the electoral arena: they win reelection more often and with larger margins of victory. Given the long time periods governed by dominance, these results may mean that outcomes are clear well in advance of election day.

Declining Participation is a Consequence of Dominance

When coalitions establish dominance there is a cost to their communities. Whether the governing coalitions are classified as reform or machine, voters are less able to affect governance and policy when regimes dominate the system. Once safe in office, dominant regimes turn their attention away from elections and reduce the size of their electoral coalition, targeting some voters while ignoring others.

I first look at the effect of dominant coalitions on turnout. Does having a long-standing regime deter participation? Regression analysis of the turnout of eligible voters on the dummy variable for dominance period suggests that it does. The analysis presented in Table 2 shows that during the dominance periods turnout of eligible voters in city-wide elections declines by about six percentage points on average.

Since the earlier analysis suggested that competition also declined during the dominance period, it is possible that the relationship between dominance and turnout is spurious. The second regression in Table 2 shows that even controlling for incumbents running, the margin of victory, and the number of candidates per seat, turnout declines by about 4 percentage points during the dominance period.⁷ As dominant coalitions won by larger margins and increased their incumbency advantage, fewer voters were involved. In essence, these regimes could win reelection with only a small share of the eligible electorate voting them back into office.

There are competing explanations for these declines in turnout. Residents might not vote because,

⁷Adding a control for the proportion of the population that is *White* strengthens the negative effect of the dominance period to 5.8% (see online appendix Table A5).

as I contend, they are discouraged from participating, or alternatively because they are satisfied with the governing coalition. If the second were true we would expect those most satisfied with the governing coalition to drop out more rapidly than those dissatisfied. A precinct analysis in San Jose and a ward level analysis in Chicago suggest that the proportion of people turning out to vote declined more drastically in areas populated by *noncore* coalition members.

To conduct this analysis I singled out areas in each city that were part of the core coalition and areas that were excluded. The neighborhoods were selected using a combination of secondary source materials and census data. In San Jose the core areas, Willow Glen and Hester Hanchet, represent extremely stable, white, middle-upper class neighborhoods with very high proportions of homeowners. The excluded neighborhoods, East San Jose, North College Park, and the Gardner area, represent residents least favored by the regime. They have remained poor and working class with high numbers of nonwhite renters since the 1930s. For the analysis of Chicago I used the heavily African-American 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 20th wards to represent residents least favored by the regime and combined statistics from the working-class Irish and Eastern European ethnic 11th, 13th, and 19th wards for the core areas. Table 3 shows the pattern of turnout over time in the two types of neighborhoods.

The data suggest that turnout of registered voters deteriorated at a much higher rate in areas representing noncore coalition members. While turnout rates declined in the core areas, overall the rate remained quite stable. In both cities these areas averaged higher turnout rates than the city as a whole. One might argue that these patterns represent the greater sensitivity of low socioeconomic status voters to changes in competition. The column noting the mean margin of victory in each election suggests that the relationship is not so straightforward. In neither city is the turnout rate particularly responsive to competitiveness. It is also suggestive that in the earliest election for both cities the excluded neighborhood turnout rates were about equal to the rates in core neighborhoods. Once the regime collapsed, these areas again turned out at much higher rates.

To rule out competing hypotheses, one would ideally test the relationship between dominance and turnout while controlling for socioeconomic status. Unfortunately accurate data are not available at subcity levels. Instead a basic regression analysis comparing turnout in Chicago's fifty wards during the dominance period, controlling for the demographic makeup of those wards, offers support for the

TABLE 3 Turnout Varies with Regime Membership

	San Jose			Chicago		
	Excluded Turnout	Core Turnout	Mean Margin of Victory	Excluded Turnout	Core Turnout	Mean Margin of Victory
1938	47%	46%	1%	82%	95%	17%
1946	32%	36%	13%	49%	76%	43%
1958	20%	26%	59%	61%	78%	11%
1962	27%	36%	12%	28%	60%	32%
Total Decline	-20%	-10%		-54%	-35%	
			1931			
			1959			
			1963			
			1977			
			Total Decline			

theory (regression results available in online appendix Table A6). The independent variables in this regression are the percentage of residents in each ward who are of Irish, Polish, African-American, and German descent.⁸ To uncover the relationship between regime membership and turnout I also add a dummy variable for sub-machine boss Dawson's controlled wards. Dawson was the machine's most prominent organizer of black votes. If the theory is correct, African-American areas should have a negative relationship with turnout except for Dawson's wards, which should have a positive relationship. The results suggest that turnout of all eligible voters declined during the dominance period, from 57% to 48% on average; but that regime membership was an important component in determining this effect.⁹ As predicted, areas with high proportions of African-American residents had lower turnout, except where Dawson ruled. The highest African-American concentration areas had 44% turnout, compared to the lowest concentration wards that saw 54% turnout. However in Dawson's wards, with an average of 82% black residents, turnout averaged 57%. In comparison, the higher the Irish and Polish populations of the ward the higher the turnout of eligible voters. Moving from the minimum concentration of Irish residents to the maximum increases the predicted turnout from 49% to 68%. For Polish descendants the figure goes from 49% to 60%. Germans with the highest socioeconomic status of these groups were negatively affected by dominance, with 54% turnout in wards with low German concentrations, and 48% turnout in heavily German areas. This makes sense given that Germans were excluded from the Daley machine (Erie 1988), and counters a pure socioeconomic status explanation for turnout. Due to problems of ecological inference these results should only be taken as suggestive, but they contribute to this body of evidence that dominant regimes selectively mobilize supporters and ignore or perhaps even discourage others from participating in elections.

⁸These data were collected and generously provided by Robert Lineberry.

⁹All statistics are predicted values of the dependent variable using Clarify simulations. The variable of interest is set at minimum and maximum values. All other variables are set at their means except Dawson's wards, which are set at zero. Regression results are available in the online appendix.

Dominance Results in More Narrowly Distributed Benefits

Given that dominant regimes are able to reduce the participation of certain groups in the electoral arena, are they then able to exclude these groups from the services of government? To test this proposition, I analyze city financial patterns during periods of dominance. I find that machine and reform regimes followed similar logic in the allocation of municipal expenditures.

If my theory is correct, spending should be targeted toward governing coalition elites as well as the regimes' core constituencies, at the expense of goods that serve the broader electoral community. I find support for this claim by analyzing the proportion of machine and reform city budgets spent on three categories of expenditure representing elite demands, core constituency demands, and broader community demands.¹⁰

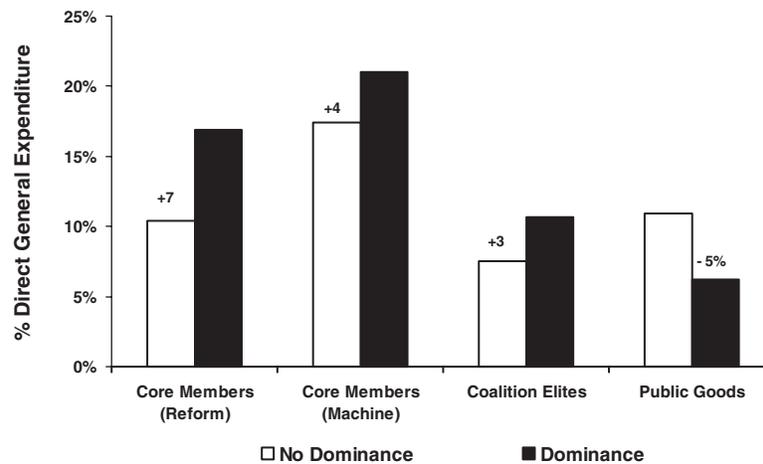
In this analysis I combine elections from the same year into single observations and merge this with city financial data gathered from the United States Census and the ICMA municipal yearbook from 1940 to 1975.¹¹ I use *Direct general expenditure* (DGE) standardized to constant 1982 dollars to measure total benefits provided by local governments and percentage of DGE spent on various fiscal categories to determine winners and losers of municipal benefits.

Admittedly there are no precise measures for expenditure on different types of voters that work both across time and place. I rely on the census data that exists and arguments made in the secondary literature to select the categories of spending. Reformers' core constituents were white, middle-class voters. To

¹⁰I also find dominant regimes reduce expenditure overall by about \$16 million. This confirms Erie's argument that consolidated machines retrench in response to demands of middle class and business constituencies, economic recession, and the reality of consistently strained municipal budgets. Reformers economized because "efficient" government was a significant policy platform. In a Prais Winsten regression of cities' direct general expenditure per capita, cities spent about \$6.20 per capita less during dominance periods even when controlling for revenue. This represents about a 10% decline in machine cities and a 15% decline in reform cities. Cities also collected fewer taxes during the dominance period (see online appendix Tables A7 and A8).

¹¹No standardized data are available pre-1942. The data are from the ICPSR file "County and City Data Book [United States] Consolidated File, City Data 1944-1977." For most financial categories this file provides one measure every five years. Because of the number of cities contained in this file I am able to analyze financial patterns for an additional seven cities for which I have information about dominance: Albany, Boston, Jersey City, Pittsburgh, Albuquerque, Phoenix, and San Diego.

FIGURE 1 Effect of Dominance Period on Spending Patterns



represent their demands, I use city spending on sanitation services—a major concern of homeowners (Bridges 1997). The base of machine regimes was working-class, white ethnic voters. I use the percentage of city budgets allocated to payroll expenditures to capture this group's preferences. Both types of regimes relied heavily on the business class to maintain stability and progress in their cities. For machine and reform regimes alike, the governing coalition elites included interests that could finance development and campaigns for office and block proposals that they perceived as threatening. I use expenditure on roads and highways, representative of pro-development spending, to capture spending for these elites (Peterson 1981). Finally to measure changes in spending on broader community goods I use expenditures in the categories of health and public welfare.

A simple analysis of expenditure patterns displayed in Figure 1 provides evidence that, compared to the periods before and after dominance, machine and reform regimes spent a larger share of their budgets on governing coalition elites and core constituents during dominance periods. Reformers increased expenditure on sanitation to serve their middle-class homeowner voters by about 6% during the dominance period. Machine regimes held sanitation spending virtually constant, but increased payroll expenditures by an average of 3% during the dominance period suggesting the importance of patronage resources for their working class voters. In contrast there was no difference in payroll expenditures during reform dominance periods. In both types of cities highway expenditures, supported by business and developers, increased during dominance periods by an average of 4%, and health and welfare declined by an average of 8%.

In order to more rigorously test these findings I regress each class of spending on a dummy variable for the dominance period and include a variety of controls to isolate dominance as a causal factor.¹² Other scholars have argued that functional responsibilities, fiscal capacity, and residents' needs are better predictors of government spending than political factors. I include *General Revenue* reported by the census to test the alternative hypothesis that capacity, not dominance, determines spending patterns. Because cities are subordinate to states and the federal government, a large portion of their revenue comes from intergovernmental transfers. When subventions are tied to specific purposes, expenditure patterns may reflect priorities of higher levels of government, not political demand. Additionally, extra income from the state or federal government may free up city funds for spending on redistributive functions. I include the percent of *Intergovernmental Revenue* to control for these possibilities. To account for the chance that shifting demographics may drive shifts in city spending I add a control for the percentage of the population that is *Non-White* according to the census. Because the census did not ask about Latino identity until the 1970s this measure likely excludes Latinos from the figure, an important consideration that might weaken the conclusions for the southern and western cities in the analysis. However, this control also helps to account for the possibility that the size of the needy

¹²I also reproduced this analysis using a factor analysis of margin of victory and incumbent success rate as an alternative definition of dominance. The patterns are identical though less significant in some cases due in part to a reduction in observations (see online appendix Tables A9–A12).

TABLE 4 The Effect of Dominance on Targeted Benefits

	% DGE spent on Core Members	% DGE spent on Coalition Elites	% DGE spent on Public Goods
Dominance period	.033* (.013)	.024* (.008)	-.064* (.020)
Fiscal Capacity			
General Revenue	-.007* (.003)	-.006* (.003)	.010* (.002)
Fiscal Flexibility			
% Revenue Intergovernmental	-.133* (.067)	-.013 (.031)	.035 (.065)
Population Needs			
Population (millions)	.025* (.005)	.015* (.003)	.006 (.005)
% Non-White	-.266* (.124)	-.079 (.107)	.065 (.122)
5 yr Pop. Change	.105 (.114)	-.062 (.065)	.120 (.121)
Land Area	-.000* (.000)	-.000 (.000)	-.000 (.000)
General Controls			
Year	.004* (.001)	.002 (.001)	-.000 (.001)
Machine/Reform	.335* (.018)	-.057* (.017)	.032 (.024)
Constant	-6.67* (1.92)	-3.33 (1.80)	.474 (1.485)
Wald χ^2	865.52*	203.15*	2091.67*
R ²	.826	.258	.371
ρ	.158	.508	.610
N	111	96	96

Figures are coefficients with standard errors in parentheses * $p < .05$.

Note: Panel corrected standard errors reported.

population drives expenditure patterns. Another aspect of a city's need might be its size, both in terms of geographic area and total population. For instance, as a city expands and incorporates outlying areas, expenditures on new infrastructure might dominate. The regressions include measures of the city's *Land Area* in square miles, *Total Population*, and *Five Year Change* in total population to control for this possibility. The standard errors are panel corrected in all models and corrected for autocorrelation using the Prais-Winsten method when necessary.

For both machine and reform cities, the results in Table 4 suggest a clear view of expenditure. Regimes concentrate resources on governing coalition elites and core constituents at the expense of the broader public.

During dominance periods cities tend to spend about 2.4% more of their total budgets on the devel-

opmental category of roads and highways, preferred by developers and business interests. Regimes also spent a larger portion of their budgets on their core constituency by about 3.3% during dominance periods. Three percent of a budget may seem small, but this would reflect about a \$16.5 million increase in payroll spending in the average machine city and a \$4.7 million increase in sanitation spending in the average reform city.¹³ At the same time coalitions spent 6.4% less on health and welfare.¹⁴ As machine and

¹³The base used to calculate average expenditure for machine cities excludes New York City. If included the difference is much larger.

¹⁴These results should be interpreted with some caution because controlling for autocorrelation makes the public goods result insignificant at the 90% level. Autocorrelation is fairly high ($\rho = .61$). The Prais Winsten correction reduces the effect of dominance to 3% significant at the .12 level.

reform regimes became safe in office, they turned their attention away from the demands of a broad electoral coalition to serving the preferences of governing coalition elites and key coalition members. In their quest for reelection, and service of long-term dominance, governing coalitions win and the broader public loses.

Dominance Increased Benefits for Core Coalition Members

Qualitative evidence also suggests that when regimes successfully dominate the system they undermine democracy by excluding increasing numbers of residents from the benefits of municipal government. In machine and reform cities alike, dominant coalitions rewarded key members of their coalitions with divisible benefits and policy choices. In Chicago the Irish held the mayor's seat from 1933 until 1983 with one brief three-year hiatus. Into the 1970s the Irish held between one-quarter and one-third of the seats on the Chicago's city council, while they made up only about 2% of the total city population (Erie 1988). White ethnic constituencies also won overly large shares of patronage jobs, party positions, and appointments in machine cities.

Though reform coalitions did not rely on patronage for building their regimes, key elected and appointed municipal positions *were* focused toward core members. Up into the 1980s the overwhelming majority of those who served on San Jose's boards and commissions were part of an elite network that had existed for decades. Political jobs were dominated by a circle of white, middle-class men connected through the city's Catholic boy's high school and Catholic college. Two of San Jose's oldest, whitest, and wealthiest neighborhoods were home to *every* city council member throughout the entire reform period, 1944–79.

Reformers attended to a select few from the beginning of their regimes, focusing on their middle-class white constituents. They offered low, stable tax rates, efficient homeowner services, and clean government. An analysis of library building during San Jose's reform period exemplifies the beneficiaries of reform dominance. Between 1944 and 1962, the most powerful years of the reform administration, four libraries were built. All were nestled within the two white, wealthy, neighborhoods that produced all of the city's reform politicians.

Dominance Increased Benefits for Governing Coalition Elites

The biggest winners from reform governments were elite developers who were so powerful that city planning was often driven wholly by their preferences. In all of these cities the historical period with the most pronounced development and rapid growth was the dominance period. This is no accident—the leaders of these regimes were visionaries with long-term plans for their cities, making developers key members of the coalitions. One San Jose developer explained that during the reformers' reign he was the closest thing to a power broker that the city had ever had (Interview Charles Davidson, June 2003). Annexation decisions were based on requests submitted by developers—not on cost to existing residents or the city's ability to provide services to the new areas. Sewer lines were “planned” by sticking pins in a map when developers requested a connection and built when enough pins seemed to justify a new line. Reform coalitions also subsidized developers with public funds. San Jose's developers saved about \$700 per lot compared to neighboring Milpitas due to public funds offered for construction costs, less stringent construction requirements, and unusually low rates on service extensions to the developments in San Jose (Stanford Environmental Law Society 1970). Developers, city administrators, and business profited tremendously from these policies.

In machine cities too governing coalition elites and city officials benefited from dominance. As coalitions became entrenched, the more likely they were to earn a profit from their positions. Machines brokered deals where businesses provided benefits to politicians, like jobs for constituents, winter coal, or cold, hard cash in exchange for favorable policy decisions regarding business operations. One journalist wrote of the sheriff's position in Chicago, “Knowledgeable people had a rule of thumb at that time that if a sheriff couldn't step out of office four years later with a clear \$1,000,000 in his pocket, he just wasn't trying” (quoted in Cohen and Taylor 2000, 74).

Excluded Groups Suffered during Dominance Periods

While elites and core coalition members won benefits from dominant coalitions, other members of the community suffered because public expenditures declined during periods of dominance. Even offering votes to

the governing coalition did not guarantee a piece of the pie. The lack of competition generated by the consolidation of the machine meant that excluded groups and junior coalition partners had no power to bargain for increased benefits and representation. In machine and reform cities alike, dominant coalitions faced competing demands from poor and minority residents seeking integration, a halt to police brutality and discrimination, appointment to high-level political positions, public investment in jobs, housing, and welfare versus middle-class whites and business constituents who preferred low-tax, service-oriented policies and sought segregation in housing and education.

During the dominance period in Chicago (and elsewhere), these zero-sum conflicts were decided in favor of whites, the machine's core constituency. Using public funds, Chicago's Housing Authority became a veritable model for ghetto building, enforcing segregation, poverty, and racism. In many cities urban renewal represented the provision of benefits to core coalition members and governing coalition elites at the expense of excluded groups and junior partners. For every new building that went up a slum was cleared, displacing more than a million residents over the course of the federal program (Anderson 1964). While millions of dollars were spent pursuing urban renewal the poorest residents in machine cities became even poorer.

The same was true in reform cities dominated by a single governing coalition. 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 (Abbott 1987). One of the clearest examples of this pattern can be seen in Southwestern annexation policies. As cities like San Jose annexed new communities at the behest of developers, poorer communities closer to the center were not even provided with basic municipal services. In the 1960s when San Jose was the fastest growing city in the nation, Mexican Americans concentrated on the east side affectionately called one *barrio* *Sal Si Puedes*, "Get out if you can." It was here that Cesar Chavez began his career organizing the Chicano movement (Geilhufe 1979). In 2005, Buena Vista, a poorly developed, seedy section of town, surrounded on all sides by San Jose, was still not annexed to the city.

Many reform governments chose not to build low-income housing, even when federal funds were offered and demand was great. The lack of affordable housing in San Jose meant that low-income residents were often forced to move outside of city bounds. A report

by the California Builders Association found that increasing developer profits (not increased labor or land costs) contributed most to the skyrocketing home prices between 1967 and 1977. By 1977 the Santa Clara County housing task force declared that about 40% of households were in need of housing assistance. An ex-mayor of San Jose explained that developers were "very, very good at showing people the easy way to make a bad vote."¹⁵

Because of their excluded status and the lack of electoral competition, communities of color had no power to bargain for benefits. They had virtually no descriptive or substantive representatives in elected and appointed positions. By 1970 blacks made up 40% of Chicago's population, but only 20% of the municipal workforce. As of 1974 Latinos made up only 1.7% of the full-time city payroll (Belenchia 1982). In 1971 Latinos made up only 5.5% of San Jose's police and fire forces, but were 22% of the population according to the 1970 census (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984). This was in distinct contrast to other periods of these cities' histories where blacks and Latinos were incorporated into political coalitions that faced risky elections and offered shares of municipal benefits (Gosnell 1937; Pace 1977). But when the electoral system remained uncompetitive, excluded groups could not easily contest the hand that they were dealt.

Conclusion

The folklore of machine and reform dominance is well founded. Machine and reform organizations became invincible as competition declined and incumbency advantage increased. After coming to power by mobilizing voters and appealing to broad coalitions, machine and reform regimes began to entrench themselves in power. Like business firms operating in a highly competitive market, political organizations seek to create a monopoly. In the nine cities included in this analysis, they succeeded in doing just that.

Securing dominance made these governing coalitions less attentive to their electoral coalitions. Dominant coalitions targeted benefits of municipal government toward core members and powerful elites. Junior coalition partners and excluded groups suffered. They were provided symbolic benefits, ignored, and at times even attacked by dominant coalitions.

Although it is tempting to see these regimes as part of the past or unique phenomena, there are signs

¹⁵Mayor Tom McEnery, quoted in Cohen (1985).

that they persist today in ever-changing forms, sometimes with minority groups in the driver's seat as in Newark in the 1980s and 90s, or with a new constellation of business forces like Daley's modern Chicago organization. Further, there continues to be a strong propensity toward dominance in places outside of the United States. Research in comparative politics has tended to assume or argue that democracy produces responsive government (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). But I find that even in democratic systems, if competition can be sufficiently reduced, negative outcomes follow for some members of the community. The lesson that safe coalitions focus municipal benefits toward core voters away from the broader community is applicable in a variety of cases. Even in the urban politics literature scholars have overlooked the similarities between machine and reform organizations. Understanding that coalitions at the local level may be in pursuit of dominance regardless of their characteristics or stated goals should lead us to challenge assumptions about the beneficiaries of urban governance.

This research also urges us to investigate the strategies dominant coalitions use today at all levels of government. This research also recommends that we try to understand more about how to prevent the monopoly of political markets and encourage government to remain responsive to wide sectors of the population. Of course it is also possible that dominant regimes are not really devilish. Having governing organizations that are highly responsive to core constituencies might be exactly what we want in our cities, states, and nations. The trouble with this suggestion is the same trouble with a monopoly market, it is not *certain* that the monopolist will ensure its own success to the detriment of the populace, but we should take the possibility seriously. The regimes in the cities of this study systematically excluded ever larger portions of the population to the point where noncore voters had virtually no chance to influence elections or policy making. In these cases the drive to ensure reelection undermined representative democracy and limited the effectiveness of the electoral system.

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