Textbook Municipal Reform*

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In *City Politics*, Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson explained the municipal "reform ideal" and sketched the "typical community" in which it was "nearly realized in practice", Winnetka, Illinois. Winnetka was a very affluent suburb of Chicago. There residents agreed that local government should provide schools, parks, and libraries efficiently and honestly. Local politics was a quiet matter, with civic associations nominating those "best qualified to serve" to run in nonpartisan elections. Once elected, city council members left municipal administration "entirely in the hands of the city manager." (Banfield and Wilson, 1966, 140). This was also the picture provided by Robert C. Wood in *Suburbia, Its People and Their Politics* (1959), and it has served as the textbook model of municipal reform government. Political scientists and historians have agreed that the suburbs provided a lasting home for reform government, and that in the period since World War II, "the city-manager system did not significantly influence big city government and politics" (Lotchin, 1981, 3).

Yet in 1960, as Banfield and Wilson were writing about Winnetka, nearly every big city in the southwest also had nonpartisan city manager government. The region's small towns had nearly all adopted reform charters in the Progressive era (Bridges, 1992) and continue to boast reform institutions to this day. For the thirty years following the second world war (and for some cities starting sooner and ending later), these cities displayed a distinctive style of local politics and government, Big City Reform. In this essay I provide a portrait of Big City Reform, surveying politics in Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, San Jose, San Diego, Albuquerque, and Phoenix\(^1\) in the 1950s, and examine three elections close to 1960. The decade 1950-60 was the heyday of Big City Reform, as political arrangements organized at the close of the second world war were securely in place, and not yet challenged by the disaffections of subsequent decades.

I also provide election returns for the seven cities from 1945 to 1975. The portrait of Big City Reform presented here fairly represents politics in these cities for the whole of this postwar period, and alongside the suburban ideal, Big City Reform should serve as the textbook prototype of reform government and politics.

The central achievement of Big City Reform, I argue, was the creation of political communities that looked much like Winnetka in metropolitan areas that were more diverse, and for governments that were substantially more ambitious. The institutions of local politics, ambitions of the leaders of Big City Reform growth machines, the desires of their middle class residents, and the near exclusion of other residents from participation and representation, worked together to create political orders of almost unassailable strength and durability. Big City Reform bears an eerie resemblance to politics in Winnetka. Prominent citizens or nonpartisan slating groups (NPSGs) nominated civic leaders to run in nonpartisan elections; Anglo, middle-class voters were their core political constituents; municipal administration was in the hands of the city manager and his professional employees. This likeness rested on altogether different foundations. Suburban politics as described by Wood rested on homogeneity, affluence, and high participation. The political community of Big City Reform did not come so naturally.

Big City Reform flourished where leaders wrote the rules to restrict political participation and inflate the Anglo, middle class plurality in the electorate. The Anglo middle class was the favored constituency not because their working class fellow citizens were self-regarding or abided corruption happily, but because the political wish list of the middle was short, and admitting other social groups posed the threat of redistribution (cf. Miller, 1981). Greater social diversity than the suburbs fostered a longer and more complex list of demands on local government. In addition to the low taxes, schools, parks, and libraries (as well as paving, sewers, light, and water) desired by all the city's neighborhoods, there were demands for low income housing and eased special assessments from the less advantaged. Communities of color campaigned against police brutality and for open housing, voting rights, desegregation, and access to public employment. The organization of local politics insulated politicians and government from these demands.

The first section below, "Writing the Rules", describes the organization of political life in Big City Reform. In big reform cities there were high barriers to voting and participation, and local institutions also discouraged voting. The result was very low participation in local elections, compared to big cities with parties, concurrent elections, and district representation on the city council. The second section, "Winning the Game", explores who supported incumbents in big reform cities. I show the inflated presence (compared to their proportion of the population) of Anglo middle class and affluent voters in the electorate, and the diminished presence of working class and poor voters, and people of color. The subsequent section, "Delivering the Goods", shows how local government organized a “growth community”, allying the ambitions of Big City Reform growth machines with the desires of government’s most reliable supporters at the polls. A concluding section, "Textbook Municipal Reform", offers some reflections on who got what from Big City Reform, the setting in which it thrived, and the causes of its demise.
WRITING THE RULES

Political leaders in big reform cities wrote the rules to win the game of local politics. Stanley Kelly has argued that “Those in power” might construct an electorate “to a size and composition deemed desirable” by writing the rules of registration to keep unwanted voters from the polls (Kelley et. al., 1967, 375). Writing about participation and mobilization in national politics, Steven Rosenstone and John Hansen emphasized the importance of politicians’ efforts to mobilize voters, and concluded that the “strategic choices of political leaders . . . determine the shape of political participation” (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993, 36).

Big City Reform provides excellent cases for these arguments. The political community of Big City Reform was the product of institutional arrangements that posed high barriers to voting. The rules included obstacles to voting, of which difficulty registering to vote, the poll tax, and the literacy test were most important. There were also less formidable but effective deterrents, for example, the siting of polling places. Barriers to descriptive or geographical representation, especially citywide elections, discouraged voting. Voting was also discouraged by nonpartisanship, nonconcurrent elections, and the noncompetitiveness of elections. At the same time, civic leaders worked diligently to bring Anglo middle class fellow citizens to the polls.

Southwestern cities and states erected high barriers to registration and voting. Arizona, for example, required registration four months in advance of primary elections and six weeks before general elections; in addition, Phoenix required annual registration for municipal elections. New Mexico and California also required registration substantially before election day. In Texas the poll tax served as registration, payable annually between October 1 and January 1 for the subsequent election season. In addition, both Texas and Arizona has literacy tests. Difficulty of registration posed more problems for lower class residents; the poll tax and literacy tests were aimed particularly, and effectively, at racial minorities.

The institutional arrangements of municipal reform also discouraged turnout. In 1962 the staff of the Municipal Year Book polled 729 cities over 25,000 population; 574 sent usable returns reporting votes cast in their most recent municipal election. The returns were examined by Eugene C. Lee (1963), Robert R. Alford and Lee (1968), and Ruth B. Dixon (1966). Each of these authors found that the institutional arrangements of reform politics were without exception associated with significantly lower turnout: nonpartisan elections exhibited lower turnout than partisan elections (30% versus 50%) (Dixon, 1960,13); manager and commission cities (27% and 38%, respectively) had lower turnout than mayor-council cities (50%), nonconcurrent elections brought lower turnout (29%) than concurrent elections (50%) (Lee, 1963,83).

Findings about the effects of rules on turnout in cities meant that aggregate data contradicted well known relationships between individual characteristics and turnout.
For example, although among individuals education is positively associated with voting, among cities those with less educated populations had higher turnout. Alford and Lee observed that "the . . . correlation of registrants voting with education is the opposite of the well known individual correlation" and "cities with highly ethnic populations and less educated populations have higher voting turnout" (Alford and Lee, 1968, 882). The same was true of income. Although more affluent adults are more likely to vote than those with lower incomes, cities with less affluent populations had higher turnout. Dixon found "no relation at all between the proportion of people of high social status a city contains and the proportion voting in local elections" (Dixon, 1966, 53).

The large data set of the City Managers Association included many small cities and suburbs. To create a picture of Big City Reform, I collected the numbers of votes cast in municipal elections from 1946 to 1975 for Phoenix, Albuquerque, Austin, Dallas, San Jose, San Antonio, and San Diego. Each of these cities had nonpartisan city manager government and nonconcurrent elections. Four cities -- San Antonio, Phoenix, Albuquerque, and Dallas -- also had strong nonpartisan slating groups (NPSGs). Data were also collected for three cities termed here "Machine Descendants": New York, Chicago, and New Haven. Machine Descendants all had strong party organizations, substantial patronage resources, and concurrent elections. Another difference between Big City Reform and the Machine Descendants is that the former all had citywide elections for city council members, while the latter had district representation on the city council.

Turnout -- that is, percent of all adults voting -- from 1946 to 1975 is shown in Table 1. The differences between the reform cities and the machine descendants are dramatic. In Phoenix, Albuquerque, and Dallas average turnout was below twenty per cent over the whole period (and only 10.8% in Dallas), while New York, Chicago, and New Haven averaged, respectively, 43.6%, 54.3%, and 57.3% of adults voting in municipal elections.

Consistent with other authors' findings that aggregate demographic characteristics contradicted the relations of individuals' characteristics to turnout, Machine Descendant turnout is higher despite the presumed disabilities of populations more heavily foreign-born, poorer, and less well educated (see Table 2). Over the whole period, in Chicago proportionately three times as many adults (more than half) voted as in Phoenix (less than twenty per cent): four times as many adults voted in New York as voted in Dallas (44.8% vs. 10.8%); three times as many adults voted in New Haven as in Albuquerque (59.4% vs. 18.5%). In these homes to Big City Reform, politics was simply not as prominent in the lives of most people as it was in the northeast. The young David Greenstone, having written a Report on Politics in Detroit for Edward Banfield's City Politics project, was next sent to San Diego.
There he was taken aback by ". . . an extraordinary lack of interest in local politics among the citizenry" (Greenstone, 1962, II-6).

**WINNING THE GAME**

A closer look at municipal contests circa 1960 reveals the coalitions supporting reform regimes. Three elections, two prototypic good government triumphs, and one with a very strong insurgent candidacy, show the popular base of Big City Reform support and opposition. The typical reform victories are Sam Mardian's election as Mayor of Phoenix in 1959, and the success of the Albuquerque Citizen's Committee ticket in 1962. The more closely contested election is from Austin in 1961.

Mardian's victory in 1959 was overwhelming, as Mardian received 29,027 votes while his opponent, Russell Kapp, garnered 11,742. Readers of the Phoenix Gazette probably found the campaign wholly predictable. The Gazette ran a series of articles explaining how the Charter Government Committee (CGC) came to office as a reforming group, curing the many ills of local government in the 1940s (a characteristic headline: "First Charter Candidates Cleaned Up Political Mess"). The Gazette also gathered quotes from the city's former mayors, endorsing the CGC ("Charter Policy Best Way, Claim Phoenix Mayors"). Opposition criticism of the CGC, offered gently as the Kapp campaign insisted on its own support for the city's charter, was ridiculed as echoing the song, "Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better." (Phoenix Gazette Oct 30, 31, Nov. 1-3, 1959) In the wake of victory, with 68.5% of the vote in his favor, Mayor-elect Mardian thanked the voters by declaring the election "a tremendous vote of confidence for ten years of progress and prosperity for Phoenix under the Charter Government administrations" (Phoenix Gazette November 11, 1959, 10). Charter Government’s claim to widespread voter support was well grounded: of more than eighty precincts, only three went to Mardian's opponent.

In Albuquerque the Citizen's Committee (ACC) fielded almost a thousand volunteers to get out the vote for its sixth electoral contest. The ACC slate of Westfall, Heilman, and Brown was endorsed by the Albuquerque Journal. The occupations of the three men -- an engineer, a realtor, and a businessman -- represented, in the Journal's view, the ideal skills for a city commission. The ACC was opposed by challengers with varied constituencies. Clarence Davis was an incumbent on the commission (but not an ACC supporter), with a constituency in the affluent, Anglo Heights. Larry Felicetti and Fred Chavez were politicians from the low income, Hispanic Valley, the second supported by the GI Forum. Another Valley politician, Ulivarri, campaigned against Valley support for municipal bonds. Opponents denounced the ACC as a vehicle of vested interests, and reported on its large campaign fund, "much of it collected from local contractors." The opposition platform pledged to recruit new industry, raise wages of municipal employees, and
of course support city manager government. The Albuquerque Citizens' Committee won all three seats by comfortable margin. The least popular ACC candidate received 10,990 votes, while the most popular of the challengers received 6,232 votes. After the election ACC officials declared a "great victory . . . . that shows the confidence of the people in the future of Albuquerque" (Albuquerque Journal, April 1, 1962, pp. 1,2; April 2, 1962, pp. 1,5.)

Although the Citizen's Committee won, it did so only by gaining large margins in affluent and middle class neighborhoods. Elsewhere the ACC won pluralities, but less than half of votes cast. In the Hispanic North Valley the ACC claimed only 33.4%, and in the lower income Hispanic South Valley 41%, of the votes cast. The other Valley votes were scattered, but their totals suggested that an attractive candidate might have carried the Valley and perhaps placed a commissioner on the city council.

In contrast to the Phoenix and Albuquerque contests, the Austin runoff in 1961 was a fiercely contested and very close race, decided by 68 of 20,664 votes cast. Emma Long and Bob Armstrong were competing for a seat on the city council. In the general election, Long received more votes but, lacking more than 50% of the votes cast, was forced into the runoff. Long was well known to Austin voters. First elected to the city council in 1948, Long made herself the champion of ordinary residents, an opponent of subsidies to developers and utilities, and a supporter of civil rights. Long opposed telephone rate hikes; supported municipal employees' demands for wage improvement; secured legislation to subsidize less affluent homeowners' assessments for street improvements and then stretch out payments of the homeowners' share; supported integration of public places and later, a fair housing ordinance.

In Austin's close election, incumbents left nothing to chance. Not only were the rules written to hinder voting in communities likely to be unhappy with incumbents, but also, polling places were more convenient for communities likely to support Austin's incumbents. Turnout differences were key to Armstrong's victory: if the turnout of poor voters had matched the turnout of affluent voters, Long would have won by the comfortable margin of 489 votes. Of course, in Austin in 1961 that insight had all the wisdom and futility of the observation that if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. Long retired from politics in 1959, and tried to return in 1961 (the election examined here). Although Long lost in 1961, she won in 1963, and remained on the council until 1969 (Orum, 1987, Chapter 8).

Election returns for these three elections were examined to discover the demography of the electorate, support for incumbent regimes, and the sites of opposition to them. As shown earlier, turnout was (relative to the Machine Descendants) low in each of these cities. Only Albuquerque just squeaked above 20% turnout, Phoenix and Austin were well below. Although the available information is imperfect, it does allow estimates of turnout in different income groups (see Table 3). These estimates suggest that turnout was highest in affluent neighborhoods within each city. This is hardly surprising: the association of income
and propensity to vote is an axiom of twentieth century elections in the U. S. Nonpartisan elections exacerbate these class differences (Greenstone, 1962, II 22-3; Hawley, 1973, Ch. 4). And in these environments of generally very low turnout, class differences had significant effects on the shape of the electorate. In Phoenix and Austin turnout in affluent neighborhoods was more than double the turnout of working class and poor neighborhoods.

Differences in turnout were reinforced by differences in support for incumbents. Everywhere, support for incumbents varied with income: the poorer the voting community, the less support it offered the incumbent. In the context of low turnout, the preferences and participation of affluent and middle class voters made them the overwhelming presence in the winning electoral coalition. Affluent neighborhoods housed 14% of Phoenix residents, yet delivered 20% of the total vote for the winner. In Albuquerque comparable neighborhoods housed 19% of the population and provided 30% of the winner’s votes. And in Austin affluent areas were home to only 15% of the city’s population, yet provided Armstrong with fully 35% of the votes he received.

The three elections described here are examples of regimes of sustained political ascendancy. Emma Long’s career of two decades of opposition in office was unmatched in the urban southwest. In Big City Reform environments, the costs of mounting citywide campaigns, and the requirement of gaining more than half the votes cast in the whole city, proved insurmountable barriers to most challengers. These costs, combined with the popularity of incumbents with the electorate, meant local politics was not very competitive. Nonpartisan slating groups (NPSGs) governed without effective opposition (Fraga, 1988). In Dallas the Citizen’s Charter Association elected all but 25 of the 182 city council members between 1931 and 1969, and lost only one seat on the council between 1939 and 1959 (Barta, 1970, 131) Every member of the city council in Phoenix from 1949 to 1975 was a nominee of the Charter Government Committee (Luckingham, 1983, 319). In Albuquerque the Citizens' Committee controlled city government from 1954 to 1966 (Cline and Wolf, 1967). In San Antonio Good Government League nominees won 77 of 81 council races between 1955 and 1971 (Johnson, 1983, 240).

**DELIVERING THE GOODS**

Why were these governments so popular with voters? Across the southwest Big City Reform governments in the postwar era managed triumphs of building, management, and expansion. Urban leaders promoted, promised, and delivered growth. Big City Reform also delivered low taxes and scandal free government, and libraries, parks, and good schools to their core constituents.
Southwestern cities grew dramatically in both population and area. Between 1950 and 1960 the populations of Austin and Dallas grew by fifty percent; Albuquerque and San Jose doubled, Houston and San Diego nearly so; Phoenix quadrupled in numbers. Population growth reflected both regional migration and the annexation of surrounding areas by city governments (see Table 4). One Phoenix official explained the city's goal: "We wanted to avoid the St. Louis model, where suburbs strangle the city . . . . We didn't want white flight, or brain drain, or whatever you call it, so we annexed" (Luckingham, Phoenix, p. 162).

By 1960 San Antonio and Dallas were almost twenty times their area in 1950; San Diego, near the bottom of the list, merely doubled. This meant that in Phoenix, for example, by 1960 nearly three quarters of the population resided in communities that had been outside the city limits in 1950 (Luckingham, Phoenix, 162).

Growth was building as well as expansion. City governments improved airports, expanded and upgraded sewers and water systems, built highways, and extended roads, water, electricity, and sewers to new outlying communities. Government's growth agenda benefited the usual suspects rounded up for growth coalitions (downtown real estate, banking, and retail interests as well as construction industries) and also big players more prominent in the southwest than elsewhere: suburban developers and outlying retailers. Control of local government was critical for these members of the governing coalitions because success for developers at building new residential communities required government annexation of land, provision of permits, utilities (electricity, water, and gas), paving, drainage, and sewers. Local government in the southwest was dominated by developers long before the postwar period, but the incredible growth of the thirty postwar years raised the stakes of controlling government.

Municipal governments assisted developers who were creating communities in the empty spaces far from the center. For example, in Austin city government provided streets and utilities, water and wastewater service in new subdivisions. When

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SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1962, Table 6).
development outpaced the city’s ability to provide these amenities, forcing developers to build streets and utility connections, city government repaid developers “five times the revenue from new customers for ten years, or until the developer’s costs were totally recouped” (later this was reduced to twice the revenues until costs were recouped) (Stanisewzski, 1977, 36-8, 48). The same subsidies also benefited affluent and middle class communities, lowering housing prices for new home purchasers. These benefits were critical to the governing coalition and, in conjunction with the provision of collective goods like libraries, pools, parks, and schools, created an electoral coalition supporting local government. Together, southwestern growth machines and their middle class supporters formed a “growth community” in the postwar period.

Big City Reform governing coalitions were not without their stresses. In several cities and there was conflict between outlying commercial interests and downtown business interests. The prominence of outlying commercial interests stalled or stymied plans for urban renewal to rebuild downtown’s in each of these cities. From a city hall perspective, this was the down side of having annexed the suburbs: downtown real estate and financial interests were challenged in their dominance of local government by outlying interests, and downtown suffered as a result. In San Diego for example, there was continuing controversy about downtown versus suburban priorities (Greenstone, 1962, II 23-4, V 5-27). Similar tensions plagued business coalitions in Albuquerque (Wood, 1980, 229), and Phoenix (Luckingham, 1989, 197-8). By contrast, there was greater agreement on investment in airport improvements, utility extension to new communities, roads and highways, and of course, annexation.

Annexation sometimes leapfrogged older, poorer communities, which remained outside city limits. In Phoenix, poor African American and Hispanic communities close to downtown remained outside city limits until the end of the 1950s, while affluent new developments or areas targeted for residential further from the center were annexed. In Albuquerque some poor neighborhoods near downtown were annexed about 1960, but others remain outside city limits to this day. In 1960 Albuquerque looked like a socket wrench, and the hole was the poor community neighboring downtown. One implication of these annexation patterns is that even the greater affluence of southwestern cities (as reported in the census) should be understood as an artifact of political decisions about annexation.

For poor communities one consequence of remaining outside city limits was exclusion from municipal water and sewerage. South Phoenix, a poor and largely African-American community outside the city, was served by the independent East Broadway Water Company. Only between midnight and 5 AM was there sufficient water pressure in South Phoenix; at other times the taps were dry or nearly so. While city residents paid $2.00 monthly for 13,500 gallons of water, residents of South Phoenix paid $5 to $7.50 per month for the little water they got. Beginning in 1948, the community petitioned Phoenix for annexation, and for the city to condemn the East Broadway Water Company (Arizona Sun, May 21, 1948, 1). In March 1962
South Phoenix, now inside the city limits, was still campaigning to be rid of the East Broadway Water Company (Arizona Sun, January 25, 1962).

Phoenix was not alone in failing to provide the most basic services to communities of color. In Albuquerque, former Mayor Louis Saavedra recalled, in the mid-1960s ". . . we could see outhouses . . . a stone's throw from outside City Hall. And even with all this great scientific [expertise] that many of these persons brought to politics they couldn't see their way to bring the least improvements to the center city . . . whereas they were quite eager to . . . extend utilities and other services to the perimeter” (Bridges, 1994). In Albuquerque and in San Antonio, poorer Mexican-American communities lacked drainage, and heavy rainfalls flooded many homes (a problem not fixed in either city before the 1980s). In Austin as late as 1969 the first priorities of communities designated for Model Cities funds were paving and drainage (Smith, 1970, 51).

The developing neighborhoods encouraged by city governments were for families ready to purchase homes. Yet in the crush of post-war growth decent, affordable housing was hard to find. Immediately after World War II there was great demand across the country for low-income housing, especially for veterans; later, real estate inflation made buying a first home difficult. The Federal Housing Act of 1949 provided assistance to cities for building low-income housing, but creating local political support was tricky. In Phoenix the Housing Authority campaigned for more than a decade to build low-income housing, drafting plans that required no subsidy from the city’s general revenues. Facing strong opposition to low income housing from the Chamber of Commerce and the city’s press, the city council revoked the housing code in 1961, making the city ineligible for federal funds (Konig, 1983, 164-181). San Diego did not seek funds under the Housing Act, most leaders believing that -- absent slums of the sort common in the east -- existing housing was adequate (Greenstone, 1962); Albuquerque did not build low-income housing either before World War II or in the 1950s (Kinney Interview 7/94). Austin and Dallas were more generous in the provision of low-income housing, taking advantage of both the 1949 Act and subsidies from the earlier Wagner-Stegall Act (Orum, 132-4, 169-172, Fairbanks, GGM).

What collective benefits was local government able to deliver? The wish list Banfield and Wilson report for Winnetka -- parks, libraries, and excellent schools -- was secondary to the growth agenda. "There is no remaining bond money for a city hall building, parks, and recreation facilities, or a library," the Albuquerque Journal explained, even though previous bond issues were meant for them. All the money had been spent on utilities and paving (Albuquerque Journal, April 1, 1962, A14). Municipal governments did provide parks and libraries. Not only were these low priorities, but also, rapid growth made it difficult to provide amenities fast enough. Parks and libraries provided after 1950 were mostly targeted to government’s most reliable supporters.
The distribution of branch libraries shows both the challenge of providing amenities to keep pace with growth and the political logic of their location (see Table 5). Austin and New Haven, the smallest cities, have more libraries relative to the population than any of the other cities. Dallas, Phoenix, and San Diego had barely begun branch library systems in 1960. A surprising exception is San Antonio, which, despite its poverty, provided as many community libraries, relative to its population, as Chicago.

The sites of the reform city branch libraries show local government's solicitous posture towards its core constituency. All the cities have central libraries downtown. Once these were desegregated they were available as well as convenient to less affluent patrons living near the city's center (libraries in Phoenix and Austin were segregated by law). In addition, Austin, Phoenix, and Albuquerque each had one branch library in a community of color, Harmon (Phoenix) and Carver (Austin) for African-Americans and Griegos in the North Valley in Albuquerque. For African-American residents in several cities, inadequate and segregated library facilities were a source of complaint.

The remaining branch libraries were located to serve local government's strongest supporters. Five branch libraries in Austin were in affluent (1) or middle class (4) communities that provided large margins for Armstrong in 1961. (Median income figures) In Albuquerque, where the median income was $6626, neighborhood
branches (Griegos excepted) were in very affluent neighborhoods in the Heights, each in a census tract with median family income over $8000. In Phoenix in 1960 Charter Government administrations had yet to build their first branch library (the single branch library in Phoenix was in a lower middle class Anglo neighborhood, a remnant of earlier administrations).

Heywood Sanders (1993) has explained the anomaly of plentiful library branches in San Antonio. The city's relatively generous provision of libraries was a legacy of politics in the 1920s and 1930s. The oldest branch was Carver (1925), built for the African-American community, and testimony to the political skill of the city's most prominent Black politician. The 1930s the city built small branch libraries in low-income housing projects; in 1960 four of these remained. The first change in branch libraries under the city manager government organized in 1951 was closing the public housing branches, as well as three older branches, in 1962. The next year the first new branch library since 1930 was opened in a newer, Anglo, affluent community on the city's northwest side. The 1960 census count in the table, therefore, is a snapshot of a library system caught between two quite different regimes, one attentive to lower income constituents, and the other, Big City Reform, in which these residents were politically unimportant.

Big City Reform governments did provide neighborhood parks and pools. Phoenix built 48 smaller parks and 97 school playgrounds by 1960 (Kelso, 1960,29). Albuquerque required developers to set aside 4% of the land in new developments for parks (Wood, 1980, 177). This requirement bore fruit in the Heights, the rapidly expanding affluent and middle class section of the city. By 1960 more than fifty small parks and green areas were scattered across Heights neighborhoods. In the Valley there were no public parks other than school playgrounds. Family recreation was not the only object of municipal parks departments. Municipal golf courses were built everywhere, particularly for the pleasure of more affluent constituents, as well as to provide green space to their communities.

In the sweltering southwest, public swimming pools provided recreation and relief. In Albuquerque three publicly developed swimming facilities (two pools and a “beach” on the Colorado River) were all for less advantaged communities. Phoenix had ten public pools in 1960, six in poor neighborhoods and four in middle class neighborhoods. Austin's government had built 21 pools by 1960, seven in the city's poor and lower middle class neighborhoods, six in its affluent neighborhoods, and eight in middle class areas.

Big City Reform governments did not directly control schools. School systems displayed similar patterns of participation and control by Anglo middle class parents, of which their own children were the major beneficiaries. Less advantaged children were not so lucky, and their parents’ protests brought little result in this decade.

Among community leaders there was a range of responses to inequities and lapses in public provision. Community leaders in San Diego were satisfied with the
performance of city government and unaware of its failings for some communities (Greenstone, 1962, V-62, VI-23). In Albuquerque the city manager was "sort of oblivious to minorities." In Phoenix, Charter Government leaders made overtures to the African-American community and insisted that their government made progress on issues of discrimination. In San Antonio, "a paternal sense of fairness" informed the GGL's aggregation of diverse interests; in Dallas an interventionist elite managed relations among disparate communities (L. L. Sanders, 1975, 16).

Low public awareness of inequities and differences seems to have been universal west of Texas. There were good reasons for this. Not only were poor communities outside city limits and at a distance from affluent neighborhoods, their tribulations did not appear in the dominant newspapers. In San Diego African American grievances were "not communicated" to their fellow citizens, as Anglo neighborhoods were "relatively sealed off from the Negro community" and the Mexican American community as well. In Phoenix the chairman of the Housing Authority despaired, "the northern half of Phoenix doesn't know how the southern half lives. The average Phoenician is interested [only] in his home, job, and recreation" (Konig, 1983, 172). The Texas cities were different. There Big City Reform governments actively managed race relations. While in cities west of Texas newspapers ignored Mexican-American communities, in Texas newspapers boasted the benefits granted African-American communities.

The provision of public amenities was not very high on the agenda of big city reform governments, and the services provided were targeted to government's strongest supporters. This seems to have been particularly true in Albuquerque and Phoenix, with their tiny library systems and smaller park systems. In those cities parks were better provided for middle class and affluent communities, pools for less affluent communities. Austin built more of everything and distributed it less equitably. The average voter, nevertheless, had good reasons to be contented: low tax rates (Bridges, 1997, 162), parks, libraries, good schools, neighborhoods well provisioned with paving, lights, and drainage, and government free of scandal. Average voters, in short, knew what good government was, knew they had it, and knew it was good.

**BIG CITY REFORM**

Municipal reformers wrote the rules of political life to win the game of local politics. Barriers to participation in politics were high, municipal boundaries sometimes excluded low income neighborhoods, and the political community thus created was significantly more affluent and Anglo than the metropolitan community of which it was a part. By comparison to Machine Descendant cities, electoral coalitions supporting Big City Reform were narrow, resting squarely on the shoulders of the WASP middle class.
The political leaders of Big City Reform promised, and frequently delivered, efficient administration of the delivery of common services, sustained economic growth, low property taxes, honest government, and adequate public services to most of the electorate. Small wonder these governments and the Good Government organizations that provided their officials were very popular with their small political communities. The successes of municipal reformers encouraged their opponents to compete on the same terms, but this was almost always a losing strategy. Big City Reform leaders were unbeatable at the polls because they delivered satisfactory goods and services to the great majority of voters, and the rules of local politics prevented retribution by the dissenters.

Paul Peterson has argued that there tends to be a popular consensus supporting the pursuit of growth because growth is in the interest of the whole community (Peterson, 1981). Others have argued that growth provokes conflict because growth involves costs as well as benefits and these are distributed unevenly (Logan and Molotch 1987). Big reform cities appear to have enjoyed nearly two generations of Petersonian consensus after the second world war, and so suggest the conditions under which Peterson may be right. In their small, select polities, Big City Reform governments created a "growth community" in which prosperity seemed to raise all boats. Doubtless the unprecedented national economic prosperity and rising incomes of the postwar decades served to increase the popularity of local government in the southwest and elsewhere. In the southwest, not only were developers made rich, but also the homebuyers in their newly constructed communities benefited materially (in lower housing costs) from the priorities of the growth machine. The same residents, of course, also enjoyed good schools, public libraries, parks, and pools. This was the common experience of residents in the Heights in Albuquerque, the north side of Phoenix, the west side of Austin, and comparable neighborhoods in San Diego, San Jose, San Antonio, and Dallas. Even in this prosperous era, however, the growth community was limited.

The limited political community of textbook reform lived alongside the more diverse communities of big southwestern cities. The best example of the division between the political community and the social community is the exclusion of lower income neighborhoods, especially communities of color, from annexation by city governments intent on growth and annexation. From the perspective of the diverse metropolitan community, many citizens were less well served than public officials claimed, because some neighborhoods were entirely excluded, because local government was neither as frugal nor as committed to the good of the whole as it claimed to be, because the collective benefits government distributed were targeted to the government's core constituents, and because the agenda of local government was limited, excluding low income housing, fair employment practices ordinances, and amenities or even basic services for minority neighborhoods. The uneven benefits Big City Reform distributed and the close ties between local government and growth's major beneficiaries provoked historian Arnold Hirsch to comment that the Good Government organizations of southwestern cities might more credibly
have been called on one hand Rapacious Land Developers and on the other Businessmen United for Minority Repression.

The civic statesmen of big city reform would have given a different account of themselves. Looking over the postwar period, these leaders could claim to have planned and managed unprecedented growth. Civic statesmen recruited industry, saving their cities from post-war recession; they also coordinated the gargantuan effort of building and capital investment to provide homes, roads, water, and electricity for their rapidly growing populations. Aggressive annexation meant their cities were not plagued by the "500 governments" of frostbelt cities and suburbs; annexation also kept city finances on a firm footing. More, under their aegis public schooling was upgraded and modernized; parks, pools, and golf courses were built, libraries provided, airports expanded, tax rates controlled. Not only did Big City Reform governments provide quality services and amenities to their core constituents, they also did so without scandal at the top of the municipal hierarchy or patronage at the bottom.

For all the strengths of Big City Reform, even in 1960 there were intimations of vulnerability: restriction of developer subsidies in Austin, insurgency in the Heights in Albuquerque, and racially polarized voting everywhere. Racially polarized voting was testimony to dissatisfactions that eventually required abandonment of citywide elections. The pullback of developer subsidies showed that the financing of the growth community was not viable in the long run. Small insurgencies in Anglo middle-class neighborhoods suggested that annexation’s ambitious reach was overextending local government’s service-providing grasp. In 1960 these challenges were not even dimly visible to the leaders, and most of the residents, of Big City Reform.
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NOTES

1. For this study I chose the largest city manager, nonpartisan cities in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Arizona, and Texas (Census of 1990). I added Austin, mainly because of the excellent extant literature and library resources. This is close to a complete set of big reform cities in the southwest, with only Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Fort Worth, Oakland, and Long Beach outstanding. In other regions reform arrangements were swamped by partisan activity or racial politics. The only plausible case of Big City Reform outside the southwest is Toledo, Ohio. I have elsewhere explored the regional cast of municipal institutions (Bridges, 1992).

2. The elections were chosen as follows. Of the seven cities surveyed here, two (San Diego and San Jose) have not kept voting returns for polling places, so elections could not be studied. Three (Dallas, San Antonio, and Dallas) are in Texas. Of these, Austin is both the smallest and has the best secondary literature, making it the best case for my purposes. Phoenix and Albuquerque also kept election returns by polling place. Limits on the available data shaped the creating of relatively homogeneous voting areas. Phoenix retained voting information by precinct as well as a map of the city’s precincts. These are not coterminous with census tract, which are larger. Austin and Albuquerque kept voting information by polling places; although the addresses of polling places are listed, the precinct boundaries are unknown. Polling places were grouped using census tracts. Albuquerque and Austin were about the same size, but Albuquerque had 95 polling places, while Austin had only 37; this meant that inferences about where people voting in Albuquerque were much more difficult (more polling places made it less obvious where people voting). These limits on information put a premium on contiguity of sections, making them less homogeneous than if politicians and the bureau of the census had conspired on boundary lines (as they did in New York). Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population and Housing, 1960. Census Tracts, Final Report PHC (1)-4 (Albuquerque); PHC (1)-11 (Austin), PHC (1)-117 (Phoenix). Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1961.