

# ELECTORAL FRAUD: Causes, Types, and Consequences

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■ **Abstract** This article reviews research on electoral fraud—clandestine and illegal efforts to shape election results. Only a handful of works classify reports on electoral fraud to identify its nature, magnitude, and causes. This review therefore looks at the larger number of historical works (as well as some ethnographies and surveys) that discuss ballot rigging. Its conclusions are threefold. First, fraud takes on a panoply of forms; it ranges from procedural violations of electoral law (that may or may not intend to distort results) to the outright use of violence against voters. Second, even when ballot rigging is an integral part of electoral competition, it is infrequently decisive. Fraud, nevertheless, undermines political stability because, in close races, it can be crucial. Third, political competition shapes the rhythm and nature of electoral fraud. Efforts to steal elections increase with inequality, but competitiveness—which institutions help to shape—determines the ballot-rigging strategies parties adopt.

## INTRODUCTION

“The illusion of transparency” (Gueniffey 1993) is responsible for the scarcity of scholarship on the operation—and corruption—of balloting procedures. For decades, researchers assumed that electoral laws straightforwardly converted preferences into outcomes, a notion that encouraged many social scientists and historians to use election results to identify the social bases of political parties. Yet, as social choice research demonstrates (Riker 1982), the procedures for converting votes into political power can distort the meaning of the general will and, worse still, produce a collective choice that violates the preferences of many citizens. Indeed, the opportunities generated by voter registration, polling station operation, and tallying procedures often lead parties to stuff the ballot box, an outcome that can wreak havoc with more sociologically minded views of politics.

If, as a first approximation, we define electoral fraud as clandestine efforts to shape election results, it becomes clearer why scholarship on electoral fraud is so uncommon. No one who stuffs the ballot box wants to leave a trail of incriminating evidence. Fraud is also difficult for social scientists to study because the most

abundant sources for studying fraud—from first-hand accounts to partisan denunciations of electoral shenanigans—are not “objective.” These obstacles, however, are not insurmountable. Indeed, once we recognize that important areas of human activity are typically beyond the gaze of the social scientist, yet nevertheless are studied (e.g., crime and human sexuality), there is no reason to suppose that fraud is empirically intractable.

In this review, I critically assess the handful of studies that discuss the types, magnitude, and determinants of electoral fraud. Like entomologists, historians and some social scientists concentrate on cataloguing and describing fraudulent activities. Historians, in fact, have been among the few analysts to move beyond the anecdotal or prurient interests of so many chronicles of the electorally illicit—accounts that titillate and amuse us. Several historians and social scientists have also explored what I call the ethnography of electoral fraud. The ethnographers of fraud help us understand what separated right from wrong to the people who participated in fraud-tainted elections. Understanding justifications for activities that the contemporary observer condemns (perhaps too easily), the anthropologists of fraud try to make sense of the dilemmas that fraud posed to its perpetrators, its audience, and its observers.

I also survey efforts to assess the consequences or the magnitude and causes of electoral fraud. Efforts to assess the role of electoral fraud in politics range from claims that fraud is an isolated, random event to claims that ballot rigging was rampant in, for example, the United States until the 1960s. Understanding the extent of fraud is indispensable for deciding whether it merits systematic attention. I then examine the handful of accounts that conjecture why and how it happens. Finally, I classify hypotheses about the causes of fraud.

Selecting work for review was difficult for two reasons. In the first place, social scientists and historians have not written much about electoral fraud. I found fewer than two dozen articles with titles that contained such terms as electoral fraud, electoral corruption, vote buying, or ballot box stuffing. I found a slightly larger number of legal texts on fraud and vote buying, which are typically normative discussions of what should be considered illegal electoral behavior. In the second place, a great number of articles and books refer to electoral fraud in very general terms. Indeed, it is hard to study any democratic or quasidemocratic system of the past 200 years without acknowledging that governments or their rivals resorted to less than transparent methods to alter the results of the ballot box.

I therefore base my review on articles and books that analyze ballot rigging from an empirical perspective. By “empirical,” I mean any effort to document and theorize about the types, magnitude, and spatial distribution of ballot rigging. Though electoral fraud plagues political systems around the world, I only found research about the countries of the Americas, Asia, and Europe and available in English, French, and Spanish. I also discuss books and articles that have important things to say about electoral fraud, even if their subject matter revolves around clientelism, political parties, elections, or the operation of the formal political arena.

## WHAT IS ELECTORAL FRAUD? HOW DO WE STUDY IT?

Common sense initially suggests that an activity is fraudulent if its perpetrator wants it hidden from the public gaze. Manifestly fraudulent behaviors—such as coercing voters at the polling station to cast ballots for party X or filling the ballot box with votes for party X—are things that only its victims want publicized. Even procedural violations, such as a polling station opening late and closing early or failing to advertise its location before election day, sound like fraud because the accused would prefer that no one learn of these facts. Both blatantly coercive acts and voting irregularities are also fraudulent because they can throw election results.

There is a fine line between fraud and political pressure. To take a particularly glaring example, landlords are not guilty of electoral fraud when all their retainers vote for their party. Regardless of whether peasants have been duped into voting in favor of the landlord's party or wish to avoid the reprisals associated with voting against their employer, these activities are not really fraudulent, even if they are morally reprehensible. Even if we can demonstrate that retainers voted against their own interests, we cannot call this fraudulent unless a law has been broken.

So, in addition to being concealed and potentially affecting election results, an act is fraudulent if it breaks the law. Indeed, parties go out of their way to do things in the dark precisely because they are doing something wrong before or on election day. They are taking advantage of the legal machinery of the electoral process to steal an election they believe they cannot win fairly. A key advantage of a legalistic conception of fraud is that it permits assessing the location of the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable political activity. Indeed, ethnographers of electoral fraud need to juxtapose what citizens and parties believe is morally reprehensible with what is legally possible to understand why, at particular places and times, many activities are no longer deemed appropriate to win an election.

There are six sources for the study of electoral fraud. The first two are "objective"—that is, not partisan in inspiration, even if they are, like any source, imperfect reflections of reality. One largely unexploited source of information is scientific surveys. Cornelius (2002) identifies the social and partisan correlates of vote buying from surveys of the 2000 Mexican election, the one in which the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was defeated after 70 years in power. To my knowledge, only a research team at the Latin American Social Sciences Faculty (Aparicio 2002) in Mexico City has also used surveys to make sense of electoral fraud. A second and similarly underused method is ethnographic. Like pollsters, ethnographers use interviews to make sense of electoral law violations. Schaffer (1998, 2001) is one of the few political scientists to sit with villagers in developing countries to plumb their views of democratic practices; he has done this in Senegal and the Philippines. Schedler (2002b) also uses in-depth interviews to gauge the attitudes of Mexicans toward what is known as "electoral alchemy."

The next three information sources are partisan. One consists of the memoirs left by the participants or the victims of electoral chicanery. Like ethnographic accounts, memoirs often sacrifice statistical representativeness for detailed

coverage of fraud of particular places and times. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's (1992) tale of how he personally witnessed his rivals in the Georgia Democratic Party stuff the ballot box against him is a marvelous example of this genre. A second partisan source consists of the denunciations of fraud that parties file with political authorities. Historically, parties sought legal redress of violations of electoral law with legislatures. According to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century constitutional doctrine (Lehoucq 2002a), executives ran elections and legislatures certified their results—an institutional framework that often placed losers in the paradoxical position of seeking justice from their aggressors. Bense, <sup>1</sup> Anderson (2000), Charnay (1964), and Lehoucq & Molina (2002) study complaints filed with the U.S. Congress, Imperial German Reichstag, French National Assembly, and Costa Rican Congress, respectively. A third partisan source consists of newspaper accounts, a body of information that Cox & Kousser (1981) use to understand electoral corruption in late-nineteenth-century rural New York.

A final source of information consists of the reports of organized civil society. As international electoral observation took off in the last decades of the twentieth century (Middlebrook 1998, Pastor 1999), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), with domestic and international funding, have often displaced parties as poll watchers. Although NGOs may be more impartial than parties (then again, no one really knows) in monitoring activities on election day, their increasing visibility deprives parties of a principal—and unrecognized—function, as I explain later in this review. The Mexican Civic Alliance organized more than 18,000 observers to monitor more than 10,000 polling stations in 1994, an effort that has generated a voluminous record (Calderón Altzati & Cazés 1996, Cazés 1996).

## TYPES OF BALLOT RIGGING

It is hard to find a book on unreformed political systems that does not refer to electoral fraud. Pre-reform systems are polities that do not meet minimal democratic standards, that is, they restrict franchise rights to something less than all adults of age 18 or older and civil liberties are unenforced. More important, elections are imperfectly administered in unreformed systems—which leads to outcomes whose credibility ranges from nonexistent to partial. Notable accounts of unreformed systems that, to some extent, analyze electoral fraud include books by Botana (1979) and Sabato (2001) on Argentina, Anderson on Germany (2000), Basadre on Peru (1980), Graham on Brazil (1990), Hanham (1959) and Seymour (1915) on England, Hoppen (1984) on Ireland, Kousser (1974) and Perman (2001) on the U.S. South, and Varela-Ortega on Spain (2001a,b). Much of this work suggests that fraud was commonplace, even if relatively few authors try to classify and count acts of ballot rigging. I begin by discussing the works that refer to electoral fraud in the most general terms before moving on to more systematic efforts.

<sup>1</sup>Bense RL. 2002. *The American Ballot Box: Law, Identity, and Voting, 1850–1900*. Unpublished manuscript.

Both Kousser (1974) and Perman (2001) rely on legislative records, newspapers, and census records to relate how the Democratic Party in the 11 states of the former Confederacy deprived African Americans and poor whites of their suffrage rights through the end of the nineteenth century. Even though the Republican Party added the thirteenth (1865), fourteenth (1868), and fifteenth (1870) amendments to the Constitution to ensure the suffrage rights of recently emancipated slaves, the planter-dominated Democratic Party gained control of southern governorships and legislatures to enact poll taxes and other restrictive procedures to eradicate the electoral base of their Populist and Republican opponents. Kousser (1974) tells this story particularly well, with abundant examples of the Democratic Party's use of fraud and violence to regain control of southern politics.

Students of U.S. politics, nevertheless, have not written systematic accounts of ballot rigging, even though irregularities continue to plague U.S. elections (National Commission on Federal Election Reform 2002). Bensel's (2002) study is an exception. Based on the appeals losers filed with the U.S. House of Representatives during the heyday of the public ballot (1850–1900), Bensel shows that the most common allegations of fraud involved either intimidating or using violence against undecided or opposition voters and/or questioning whether voters met suffrage requirements. In urban areas, citizens cast party-supplied ballots in precincts that their party and/or ethnic group controlled. Population densities necessitated multiple polling stations in the nineteenth-century urban United States, an administrative fact that allowed rival parties and factions to capture precincts that parties made safe for their followers and dangerous for their adversaries. In a rural community, peer pressure could replace blunter forms of intimidation to ensure results at its sole polling station.

A rare and pioneering study of rural New York examines why parties went from paying citizens to vote to paying them to stay at home on election day (Cox & Kousser 1981) after this state adopted the Australian Ballot—the use of a single, government-supplied ballot—in 1890. Another paper documents how a Court of Common Appeals judge disenfranchised some 1700 voters or 26% of the electorate in Adams County, Ohio in 1910 for having sold their votes for prices ranging from a drink of whiskey to \$25 (Gist 1961, p. 77), some 20 years after Ohio residents got Australian Ballots. The overall absence of scholarship nevertheless is notable because Congressional and Judicial archives contain a wealth of evidence about these activities (Argersinger 1992). Unlike in many other democracies, legislative bodies still certify election results in the United States, a process that has produced a record of contested House elections and recounts (Garber & Frank 1990).

Historians have produced studies that shed light on pre-reform political systems in several Latin American countries (Annino 1995, Malamud 2000, Posada-Carbó 1996, Sabato 1999). In his review of electoral corruption in Latin America between 1830 and 1930, Posada-Carbó (2000) lists the research that examines how governments and parties stuffed the ballot box. The author draws attention to how commonplace fraud was and how little we understand it. In an all-too-general analysis of Guatemalan elections, Sloan (1970, p. 78; see also McDonald 1967)

also points out that “electoral fraud has never been studied carefully,” even though “the case for choosing the revolutionary path of development is partly dependent upon proof that the electoral system is corrupt.”

In his own work on Colombia, Posada-Carbó (1994, 1997, 2000) uses newspapers, party pamphlets, and period publications to show how Colombian conservatives and liberals were organized into political machines and that fabricating votes was an integral part of electoral strategy. Graham (1990) shows that the constitutional monarchy of nineteenth-century Brazil had a political life remarkably similar to that of nineteenth-century England. An electorate consisting of “50.6 percent of all free males, 20 years or older, regardless of race or literacy” voted for parliaments that governed alongside Brazilian emperors (Graham 1990, p. 108). Graham shows that cabinets took elections very seriously because they needed to maintain the parliamentary majorities necessary to enact the federation’s laws. As a result, elections were contests among regional power brokers, where fraud and violence determined who occupied legislative and other elected posts.

In a study of the 1872 election in Peru, Mücke (2001) shows that parties struggled to gain control of town squares, where winners held elections. Losers, in turn, would organize their own polling stations in squares of lesser importance. Rival polling stations often squared off against each other, and did little to collect the votes from all voters. Indeed, the idea of an impartial polling station receiving the votes of all citizens seemed to be the farthest thing from parties’ minds. Both then forwarded their results to parallel provincial boards, which would each then send them to Congress, in which partisan majorities certified the results they found most acceptable. Basadre (1980), the great Peruvian historian, describes how electoral fraud prompted legislators to reform laws to make it harder to steal elections.

Ballot rigging is an integral part of Argentine political history. Argentine historians typically argue that electoral fraud has been pervasive (Ferrero 1983). Tjarks (1963) relates how, in the 1876 elections in the Province of Salta, government forces and their opponents surrounded polling stations with militias to prevent their rivals from voting, purchased votes and polling station officials, and purged the electoral rolls of rival voters. Using legislative records, newspapers, and private correspondence, Sambrucetti (1980) mentions that parties packed the electoral rolls, set up parallel polling stations, bought votes, and destroyed opposition ballots in the 1886 elections. Both also discuss government parties’ use of their legislative majorities to dismiss allegations of fraud to certify the vote. The accounts of Tjarks (1963) and Sambrucetti (1980) also suggest that, in Argentina, packing the electoral registry with the names of ineligible males was a key source of fraud. In a society receiving massive numbers of immigrants from the Old World, parties faced powerful incentives to register any male aged 18 years or older (all of whom possessed suffrage rights), regardless of whether he had become a naturalized Argentinian. According to Botana’s (1979) classic study of the Argentine conservative order between 1886 and 1916, fraud permitted provincial governors to deliver the requisite votes so that their party could maintain control of the

presidency, the Chamber of Deputies, and the provincial legislatures (which appointed the members of the federal Senate).

Vote buying was the key source of fraud in nineteenth-century England (Hanham 1959, O'Gorman 1989, O'Leary 1962, Seymour 1915) and Ireland (Hoppen 1984). Even after the 1832 Reform Bill, which outlawed many of the districts with less than a handful of registered voters, English grandees used their parliamentary influence to maintain what were known as the rotten boroughs. The continuation of public voting allowed landlords to control the behavior of their retainers in the counties, the largely rural constituencies, without overt fraud. In the urban boroughs, the enfranchisement of an increasing number of voters fueled a market of votes, an outcome that did not begin to decline until after the establishment of the secret franchise in 1872 in England and Ireland. Along with small district size and the casual enforcement of anticorruption laws (until 1868, the English House of Commons reviewed petitions to nullify electoral results, few of which it ever endorsed), rampant electoral corruption began to dissipate after the dismantling of the public franchise and the enactment of anticorruption Acts.

Vote buying is a major issue in several Asian political systems as well, even if specialists complain about scarcity of evidence for the market of votes. Rigger (2002) cites a survey that found more than two thirds of voters and politicians in Taiwan believed candidates offered favors and/or cash to vote on election day. The consensus among specialists on the island, Rigger notes, is that vote buying declined in the 1990s, which she attributes to growing electoral competition and the urbanization of Taiwanese society. Callahan (2000, Callahan & McCargo 1996) and Hicken (2002) discuss the centrality of vote buying in Thailand. Before the 1997 constitutional reform, Thai voters cast as many ballots as there were seats in their plurality districts. Hicken argues that a "surplus" of votes encouraged citizens to sell votes to the highest bidder. Both Callahan and Hicken contend that vote buying has declined since 1997, when Thailand adopted a mixed-member electoral system (400 single-member, plurality seats plus 100 seats selected in a nationwide district through proportional representation) and an independent electoral commission that aggressively prosecuted vote buyers and vote sellers.

Several historians use complaints filed with the Reichstag to make sense of nineteenth-century German elections (Anderson 2000; Fairbairn 1990, 1997). In her study on Imperial Germany, Anderson (2000) uses the election "scrutinies" or audits (*Wahlprüfungen*) that parties filed with the Reichstag between 1867, when the German Empire established suffrage rights for men 25 years or older, and 1912, the last elections held before the Kaiser's abdication. She seeks to understand how "the Germans experienced their new franchise" (p. 18). This is an important point: Anderson's book does not classify acts of fraud to understand how and why votes were fabricated. Her key finding is that Germans did not complain about bribery, physical force, or the falsification of results on election day. Without providing any hard numbers, she claims that electoral complaints condemned the Catholic hierarchy, landlords, and factory owners for using "influence" on voters. And "influence" ranged from the pressure of the congregation on each of its

members to the threat of eviction that landlords used against retainers and the possible dismissal that capitalists used against their employees. Much of the controversy surrounding electoral misconduct, Anderson's book suggests, revolved around ways of using procedural violations of electoral law to overturn election results, especially since the Reichstag considered employer pressure to be a "private matter" until 1912 (Anderson 2000, p. 233)—11 years after the Reichstag replaced party-supplied ballots with the Australian Ballot to safeguard the privacy rights of voters. Fairbairn's work is consistent with Anderson's portrait; his research on the 1898 and 1903 Imperial elections indicates that "many election protests involved purely technical errors by officials untrained for their tasks, quirks of human behaviour, and opportunistic allegations by candidates who had narrowly lost elections" (Fairbairn 1990, p. 817).

Spanish historians have produced the largest national historiography that discusses ballot rigging as part of the post-Francoist effort to come to terms with the failure of earlier republican experiments in Spanish history (for reviews, see Dardé 1996, Tusell 1991, Varela Ortega 2001a,b). Varela Ortega's (2001a,b) study, in particular, of restoration Spain between 1875 and 1900 describes how the central government and locally based strongmen (*caciques*) manipulated voting returns. Varela Ortega's book is particularly noteworthy because it combines a narrative of the election cycle with a listing of violations of electoral laws. He shows that the government and the *caciques*, which often opposed each other, tried to gain the upper hand before election day by purging the electoral rolls of the names of opposition citizens, a process that the establishment of universal suffrage for men 25 years or older in 1890 did not thwart. According to Varela Ortega, there was little fraud in most (largely rural) districts, because collusion between the government and *caciques* cooked results in favor of mutually agreed-upon candidates. In more competitive districts, fraud included stuffing ballot boxes with false votes; ballot substitution; preventing opposition voters from casting ballots; locating polling stations in disagreeable places, such as a hospital's infectious wards; having citizens vote repeatedly or on behalf of deceased, nonexistent, or opposition voters (this practice when done collectively became known as *escuadrillas volantes* or "flying squads"); and, during the tally of the vote, falsely claiming that rival candidates had withdrawn from races (Varela Ortega 2001a, pp. 478–79).

Civic Alliance of Mexico uses reports of more than 1870 observer teams of a stratified sample of rural polling stations to produce a comprehensive portrait of election-day irregularities and legal violations in 1994, the first time in Mexico that an independent court and administrative system ran an election (Calderón Alzati & Cazés 1996, pp. 169–89). These observers note that more than two thirds of the polling stations witnessed the arrival of citizens whose names were not on the electoral rolls (and who possessed electoral identification). They also find that more than a third of the voting precincts could not maintain the secrecy of the ballot and that parties or electoral authorities pressured voters in a quarter of the polling stations. The observers report numerous procedural violations, including



that more than a third of the polling stations opened after 9:00 a.m. and that results were not posted outside the polling station after officials and party observers tallied the vote in 6% of these stations. Civic Alliance also finds that 7.5% of the voting precincts had voters whose thumbs were not dipped in indelible ink; staining thumbs is a common way of distinguishing voters from nonvoters and thus preventing voters from casting more than one ballot per election. What distinguishes Civic Alliance's work from previous efforts is that it presents a classification of acts of fraud and quantitatively measures them, objectives necessary to a more systematic understanding of electoral fraud.

Lehoucq & Molina (2002) use the petitions to nullify electoral results parties presented to Costa Rica's unicameral Congress between 1901 and 1948 to provide a comprehensive listing of electoral fraud. Table 1 catalogs the charges parties made in more than 123 petitions, from which we extract 1131 complaints (and to whose total the authors add 235 accusations made during the tally of the vote). Accusations range from the procedural (e.g., opening or closing polling stations out of schedule) to the hardcore (e.g., stealing ballot boxes) to expelling voters or poll watchers from the voting precinct. Table 2 lists the charges parties lodged against polling stations, which rise from 30% of all complaints filed between 1901 and 1913 to 68% of all accusations during the 1940s. I include these tables to summarize the types of fraud that incumbents, parties, and machines seem to perpetrate everywhere, not just in prereform Costa Rica.

These tables reveal that the petitions denounce increasingly blatant acts of fraud through time. Table 2 indicates that the absence of formal requisites and questions about whether voters met suffrage requirements fell from 74% to roughly 36% of all accusations lodged against polling stations between the 1910s and the 1940s. Table 1 reveals that acts of coercion against voters and polling stations went from ~10% to 15% between these periods. These trends suggest that parties increasingly began to condemn more blatant types of electoral fraud, a process fueled by electoral reform and, in particular, the shift from a public voting system where parties supplied voters with ballots to one where voters cast Australian ballots in secret.

Under the heading of the nature of fraud, I also want to mention several examples of ethnographic research, efforts that depict the nature and meaning of ballot rigging. To date, one of the best works in this genre is Aziz-Nassif's (1987) fine study of the 1986 Governor's race in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua. Trained as an anthropologist, Aziz-Nassif describes a highly controversial election, one that the opposition claimed the PRI stole from them. Aziz-Nassif pays careful attention to pro- and antigovernment understandings of their behavior, apparently interviewing many of the participants before and after election day. His account reflects the moral outrage that both left and right felt about the PRI's control over yet another election. Aziz-Nassif describes how a broad antireform coalition formed to contest the PRI's hegemony. He relates that PRI manipulation of the electoral arena included a biased voter registry, the pre-election reform of state electoral law to deprive opposition parties of poll

**TABLE 1** Accusations of electoral fraud by type and time period in Costa Rica, 1901–1946 (in percentages and numbers)<sup>a</sup>

| Accusation   | Time periods  |                |                |                | Total          |
|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|  | 1901–1912     | 1913–1923      | 1925–1938      | 1940–1946      |                |
| 2nd-stage elector excluded                               | 2.8%<br>(4)   |                |                |                | 0.3%<br>(4)    |
| 2nd-stage elector not qualified to vote                  | 7.8%<br>(11)  |                |                |                | 11.9%<br>(11)  |
| Formal requirements for 2nd-stage election were violated | 5.6%<br>(8)   |                |                |                | 0.6%<br>(8)    |
| 2nd-stage elections held outside of official time period | 0.7%<br>(1)   |                |                |                | 0.1%<br>(1)    |
| Authorities did not take an electoral census             | 0.7%<br>(1)   | 0.2%<br>(1)    |                |                | 0.2%<br>(2)    |
| Official coercion against 2nd-stage electors             | 0.7%<br>(1)   |                |                |                | 0.1%<br>(1)    |
| Official coercion against voters                         | 0.7%<br>(1)   | 10.9%<br>(48)  | 5.5%<br>(20)   | 11.3%<br>(33)  | 8.2%<br>(102)  |
| Official coercion against polling station                | 3.5%<br>(5)   | 0.9%<br>(4)    | 0.8%<br>(3)    | 4.8%<br>(14)   | 2.1%<br>(26)   |
| Nonofficial coercion against voters                      |               | 0.2%<br>(1)    | 0.8%<br>(3)    |                | 0.3%<br>(4)    |
| Official intimidation against voters                     |               | 0.3%<br>(3)    | 1.4%<br>(5)    | 2.8%<br>(8)    | 1.3%<br>(16)   |
| Nonofficial intimidation against voters                  |               |                | 0.3%<br>(1)    | 3.4%<br>(10)   | 0.9%<br>(11)   |
| Officials show favoritism toward a party                 | 45.1%<br>(64) | 3.9%<br>(17)   | 5%<br>(18)     | 3.1%<br>(9)    | 8.7%<br>(108)  |
| Elected official not qualified for post                  | 2.1%<br>(3)   | 1.4%<br>(6)    | 1.6%<br>(6)    |                | 1.2%<br>(15)   |
| Purchase of votes  |               | 2.3%<br>(10)   | 13.7%<br>(50)  |                | 4.8%<br>(60)   |
| Liquor distributed on election day                       |               | 1.1%<br>(5)    | 2.5%<br>(9)    | 2.4%<br>(7)    | 1.7%<br>(21)   |
| Accusations against polling stations                     | 30.3%<br>(43) | 73.5%<br>(325) | 65.1%<br>(237) | 68.7%<br>(200) | 65%<br>(805)   |
| Unknown  |               | 2.9%<br>(13)   |                |                | 1.1%<br>(13)   |
| Other  |               | 2%<br>(9)      | 3.3%<br>(12)   | 3.5%<br>(10)   | 2.5%<br>(31)   |
| Total  | 100%<br>(142) | 100%<br>(442)  | 100%<br>(364)  | 100%<br>(291)  | 100%<br>(1239) |

<sup>a</sup>Source: Molina & Lehoucq (1999).

**TABLE 2** Accusations of fraud against polling stations by type and time period, 1901–1946 (in percentages and numbers)<sup>a</sup>

| Accusation   | Time periods  |                |               |               | Total          |
|--|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
|  | 1901–1912     | 1913–1923      | 1925–1938     | 1940–1946     |                |
| Inappropriate exclusion of voters                                | 11.6%<br>(5)  | 3.7%<br>(12)   |               |               | 2.1%<br>(17)   |
| Party observer expelled or threatened                            | 4.7%<br>(2)   | 8.9%<br>(29)   | 10.6%<br>(25) | 12.5%<br>(25) | 10.1%<br>(81)  |
| Absence of formal requisites                                     | 48.8%<br>(21) | 56.9%<br>(185) | 35%<br>(83)   | 10.5%<br>(21) | 38.5%<br>(310) |
| Voter cast more than one ballot                                  | 2.3%<br>(1)   | 3.1%<br>(10)   | 5.9%<br>(14)  | 3%<br>(6)     | 3.9%<br>(31)   |
| Voting booth in an inappropriate place                           | 2.3%<br>(1)   | 3.1%<br>(10)   | 3.4%<br>(8)   | 1<br>(2)      | 2.6%<br>(21)   |
| Elections held outside of official time period                   | 4.7%<br>(2)   | 2.8%<br>(9)    | 2.1%<br>(5)   | 9.5%<br>(19)  | 4.3%<br>(35)   |
| Voters did not meet requirements (too young, not citizens, etc.) | 26%<br>(11)   | 12.3%<br>(40)  | 0.8%<br>(2)   |               | 6.6%<br>(53)   |
| Voters prevented from casting ballots                            |               | 1.2%<br>(4)    |               |               | 0.5%<br>(4)    |
| Number of votes inflated   |               | 2.5%<br>(8)    | 7.2%<br>(17)  | 10%<br>(20)   | 5.6%<br>(45)   |
| Number of votes exceeds number of voters                         |               | 0.6%<br>(2)    |               |               | 0.2%<br>(2)    |
| Elections were not held  |               | 0.9%<br>(3)    | 0.8%<br>(2)   | 1%<br>(2)     | 0.9%<br>(7)    |
| Votes not received   |               | 0.6%<br>(2)    | 0.4%<br>(1)   |               | 0.4%<br>(3)    |
| Substitution of votes was permitted                              |               | 3.1%<br>(10)   | 9.3%<br>(22)  | 18.5%<br>(37) | 8.6%<br>(69)   |
| Location of polling stations changed on election day             |               | 0.3%<br>(1)    |               |               | 0.1%<br>(1)    |
| Voters were intimidated  |               |                | 0.4%<br>(1)   |               | 0.1%<br>(1)    |
| Ballots were altered   |               |                | 3.4%<br>(8)   |               | 1%<br>(8)      |

(Continued)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

| Accusation  | Time periods |               |               |               | Total         |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|   | 1901–1912    | 1913–1923     | 1925–1938     | 1940–1946     |               |
| Votes were annulled   |              |               | 1.7%<br>(4)   | 4.5%<br>(9)   | 1.6%<br>(13)  |
| Number of ballots exceeds number of voters                        |              |               | 3.8%<br>(9)   | 7%<br>(14)    | 2.9%<br>(23)  |
| Electoral identification was rejected                             |              |               | 3.4%<br>(8)   |               | 1%<br>(8)     |
| Electoral identification not demanded of a citizen                |              |               | 0.4%<br>(1)   |               | 0.1%<br>(1)   |
| Number of ballots does not equal number of identification cards   |              |               | 0.8%<br>(2)   |               | 0.2%<br>(2)   |
| Ballots substituted   |              |               | 0.4%<br>(1)   | 2%<br>(4)     | 0.6%<br>(5)   |
| Electoral identification removed                                  |              |               | 2.1%<br>(5)   | 3.5%<br>(7)   | 1.5%<br>(12)  |
| Ballots removed   |              |               | 0.4%<br>(1)   | 1%<br>(2)     | 0.4%<br>(3)   |
| Ballot box altered  |              |               | 1.3%<br>(3)   | 5%<br>(10)    | 1.6%<br>(13)  |
| Voting was public   |              |               | 6.4%<br>(15)  | 6%<br>(12)    | 3.4%<br>(27)  |
| Vote tally conducted by unauthorized individuals                  |              |               |               | 2%<br>(4)     | 0.5%<br>(4)   |
| Electoral documentation not surrendered for legislative elections |              |               |               | 1.5%<br>(3)   | 0.4%<br>(3)   |
| Electoral documentation opened before election day                |              |               |               | 0.5%<br>(1)   | 0.1%<br>(1)   |
| Electoral documentation collected by unauthorized individuals     |              |               |               | 0.5%<br>(1)   | 0.1%<br>(1)   |
| Wrongfully counted absentee ballots from other provinces          |              |               |               | 0.5%<br>(1)   | 0.1%<br>(1)   |
| Total   | 100%<br>(43) | 100%<br>(325) | 100%<br>(237) | 100%<br>(200) | 100%<br>(805) |

<sup>a</sup>Source: Molina & Lehoucq (1999).

watchers at all voting tables, and the certification of the results by the state legislature (where only the PRI had Representatives) instead of by an impartial electoral tribunal.

In his exploration of 81 open-ended interviews with poor Mexicans before the 2000 elections, Schedler (2002b) shows that respondents had much more ambiguous views regarding vote trading than images of pliant clients portray. Many of them expressed misgivings regarding public authorities and parties that exchange individual benefits for political support. Although they find it acceptable that parties promise to improve social conditions—universalistic goods, according to Schedler—many disapproved of candidates who trade votes for money or benefits. In Senegal, although community leaders and government officials spoke of the “traditional African” virtues of public voting, Schaffer (1998) finds that voters preferred the secret ballot because it allowed them to vote their conscience and to remain on good terms with members of their family, fellow villagers, and, of course, local notables and public officials. Most Senegalese, therefore, welcomed the 1988 reform that reintroduced the mandatory use of (secret) ballot boxes. The colonial French had established this practice in 1914 in urban areas, and it cost them the election of the colony’s representative in the mainland’s National Assembly.

Through in-depth interviews with 139 registered voters randomly selected from four areas of Barangay Commonwealth, Quezon City, Philippines, Schaffer (2001) also shows that many respondents also disapproved of vote trades—explicit promises to vote for X in exchange for Y—or undeniable acts of corruption (Rose-Ackerman 1999). They, however, expressed empathy for individuals who made such deals. They also find nothing controversial about politicians promising to make people’s lot better as long as there is no explicit quid pro quo for their support. Distinguishing between what Rose-Ackerman calls bribes (payments to voters with a quid pro quo) and tips (payments with no formal payback) is, in fact, the objective of a handful of lawyers (Karlan 1994, Hasen 2000) and two social scientists (Kochin & Kochin 1998), who concede that, if politics is about the exchange of support for goods, then it is not easy to argue that vote trades are morally wrong. According to Schaffer, the failure of middle- and upper-class reformers to understand these distinctions dooms their efforts to create a political consensus to uproot corruption from Filipino political life.

This overview suggests that electoral fraud is commonplace in many political systems. Furthermore, there are many clandestine ways to increase vote totals, ranging from procedural violations to outright coercion on election day. The study of Costa Rica indicates that parties used some combination of at least 47 different types of fraud (Lehoucq & Molina 2002). Though there may not be an infinite number of ways to rig electoral results, the techniques for manipulating the vote are varied and artful. This review also points out that blatant types of fraud—including the use of intimidation or the stealing of ballot boxes—do not comprise a majority of fraudulent acts. Most efforts to fabricate votes are mundane; they

involve surreptitious efforts to increase vote totals. Finally, this survey suggests that electoral fraud incenses parties and citizens. There is a normative dimension to electoral fraud that makes it more than simple violations of electoral law; in many places, the accusation of fraud has become part of the discourse of democratic movements, an accusation that refers to the desecration of civil liberties and liberal democratic principles.

## THE MAGNITUDE AND CONSEQUENCES OF ELECTORAL FRAUD

How common is electoral fraud? How important is it? Although much of the research on unreformed electoral systems paints a rough portrait of ballot rigging, only a few of these studies try to assess its weight in electoral competition. This is an important issue because certifiers of electoral returns often dismiss allegations of fraud by claiming that legal violations do not affect results.

Both Schedler (2002b) and Schaffer (2001) cite surveys that ask citizens whether they were offered benefits for their votes. Schedler draws on work by Cornelius (2002), whose post-election survey of a panel of Mexicans finds that 26.1% of respondents received gifts from parties or candidates in the 2000 elections. Cornelius uses several statistical models to show that PRI operatives were much less successful than either of the main opposition parties in nailing down vote trades, perhaps because electoral safeguards allowed voters to take advantage of the PRI's largesse and vote their consciences. According to an unpublished report (cited in Schaffer 2001), 10% of Filipinos say a party offered them a gift before the May 2001 election day. As in contemporary Mexico, vote buying showed that it was not often effective: Only 38% of the Filipino poor mentioned voting for the candidate that offered them money.

As all these authors recognize, however, these surveys do not permit inferring whether vote buying occurs. Vote buying involves an explicit *quid pro quo* for votes, an exchange that only seems to proliferate when parties can ensure that voters or their agents cast ballots in prearranged ways (Lehoucq 2002b). Depending on how the question is phrased and how voters are approached (via telephones, face-to-face on the street, in their homes, etc.), surveys can generate contradictory findings. Three surveys of Mexican voters in 2000 found that some respondents—estimates ranged from 4.7% to 26.1%—felt pressure or got something of value for their votes (cited in Cornelius 2002, p. 17). Fine-tuning questions and improving sampling techniques will go a long way toward making surveys a highly useful means of understanding the nature and dynamics of electoral fraud.

Domínguez and McCann's study of Mexican public opinion is perhaps the most ambitious attempt to use surveys to determine the decisiveness of electoral fraud (Domínguez & McCann 1996, McCann & Domínguez 1998). They demonstrate that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the opposition probably did not win the

1988 general election, one that resulted in Carlos Salinas's controversial election to the presidency. By taking into account the preferences of nonvoters—who disproportionately favored opposition candidates—they suggest that Salinas would have won anyway, but perhaps by less than an absolute majority of the popular vote (Domínguez & McCann 1996, pp. 162–64). The PRI's nervousness on election night, when the central computer system mysteriously shut down—its concern that it would simply outpoll its rivals and perhaps lose the Federal District (where 1 out of 5 voters resides)—led to shenanigans that robbed the election result of legitimacy and ushered in a decade of electoral reforms. In a review of public opinion polls, Schedler (1999) shows that the share of respondents believing that fraud would mar elections went from over 50% in the 1988 elections to less than 30% in the 1997 midterm elections.

Another way to gauge the magnitude of fraud is to correct for the impact of ballot rigging on vote totals. The most creative and sensitive effort to assess the impact of fraud is Powell's (1989) statistical analysis of the 1868 Mississippi ratification election. In June 1868, 53.4% of the voters rejected the Republican-inspired constitution, a charter that threatened to bar former white (and Democratic) officials from ever holding office again. Powell uses regression analysis of the 61 counties to identify outliers—places with large shares of black registered voters who rejected the proposed constitution. By correcting results in these counties based on vote totals and approval rates in normal counties, Powell plausibly argues that the vote should have been 52.5% in favor and 47.5% against the constitution. Because the outlier counties tend to be the places with allegations of fraud, Powell (1989, p. 651) suggests that the “swing vote was the stolen vote.” King (2001) also uses ecological analysis of 32 counties to argue that South Carolinian Democrats stole the gubernatorial election from the Republican candidate, Daniel Chamberlain, in the 1876 elections.

Other statistical analyses of voting returns include Baum's (1991) analysis of the 1861 Texas secession referendum and Oberst & Weilage's (1990) study of the 1982 Sri Lankan referendum. Baum suggests that “apathy, intimidation, or possible ‘counting out’” may have caused underrepresentation of voters wishing to remain part of the United States in three counties of Texas. His paper implies, however, that fraud was not responsible for the 3 to 1 vote in favor of joining the U.S. Confederacy. Oberst & Weilage use simple tests of significance to demonstrate that the difference between the yes and no votes was far greater in the 16 (of 133) districts where there were allegations of fraud than in the districts with no such allegations. Although they do not claim that the government stole the referendum to ensure that parliamentarians could remain in office until 1989 (and thus inaugurate a semipresidential system), they show how t-tests can identify areas ripe for more intensive study.

These academic studies have their political counterparts. Hotly contested elections in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Eastern Europe often involve NGOs that organize a parallel count of the vote to generate an independent basis for evaluating the performance of authoritarian systems forced to hold elections. In

1994, Civic Alliance of Mexico fielded more than 10,000 observers, covering 1 out of 10 polling stations with their sample. Though their parallel vote count was within 1% of official returns, Civic Alliance documented numerous infractions of electoral law. According to their observers (Calderón-Alzati & Cazés 1996, p. 179), for example, 39% of Mexican polling stations violated the secrecy of the ballot, whether because some voters showed their ballots (18.58 of these polling stations) or someone saw for whom they voted (16.53 of the total). What is unclear from these reports is whether these and other irregularities constitute grounds to invalidate the results of the 1994 Mexican presidential or legislative elections.

Using the legal challenges parties file regarding election outcomes is another way to assess the impact of fraud on election outcomes. Gómez-Tagle (1988, pp. 21–24) reveals that the share of impugned votes in Mexico's single-member legislative districts went from 46% in the 1979 elections to 62% in the 1985 elections. Renzato (1991, p. 126) points out that parties, on average, complained about results in five times more districts in Spain than in Italy between 1904 and 1914. On average, parties complained about results in more than a third of Spain's mostly single-member districts; in 1914, they filed complaints in nearly half of them. Similarly, Tusell (1970, p. 618) notes that this ratio remained steady until 1923 in Spain, even with the establishment of an Electoral Tribunal in 1907 to judge complaints about election outcomes (even as the Cortes remained the body that ultimately certified election results). Lehoucq & Molina (2002, p. 242) show that parties presented an average of nearly 6 petitions to nullify electoral results in each of the 20 elections held in Costa Rica between 1901 and 1948. In a different vein, Eisenstadt (2002) shows that the rule-of-law ratio—the ratio of street protests, or what he calls *postelectoral* conflicts, to electoral court cases filed by opposition parties—began to approach zero by the second half of the 1990s among Mexican states, suggesting that opposition parties began to trust autonomous electoral courts to resolve their disputes about the results from the ballot box.

Identifying the number of impugned races must be complemented with an analysis of the charges raised in the petitions to gauge the effects of this electoral litigation on the magnitude of fraud. On the basis of such an analysis, Lehoucq & Molina (2002, p. 22) conclude that three Costa Rican presidents—out of the 12 elected at four-year intervals between 1901 and 1948—owed their election to fraudulent practices. Even with very permissive assumptions about the extent of fraud, the proportion of impugned votes does not typically exceed the percentage of votes separating winners from losers. Yet, 20% of 12 presidential elections is not an insignificant share over a 50-year period. Though the constant accusations of fraud that accompany elections in unreformed systems exaggerate the impact of fraud, the fact that ballot rigging could be decisive suggests that its denunciation is justified.

Knowledge about the magnitude of fraud suggests that it is not always efficacious. The handful of surveys suggests that parties offer an array of promises, gifts, and even cash for votes, but that does not mean that vote buying always works.



Analysis of election results raises the possibility that outcomes can be fixed—that, given past performance or the behavior of voters, recorded outcomes do not always express the unfettered will of the people. Legal petitions indicate that parties will denounce an array of practices in the hopes of overturning unfair (or even fair) election returns. All three types of evidence suggest that complaints are not infrequently exaggerated; the 1988 Mexican survey and the legal data on Costa Rica suggest that fraud is usually not the cause of an electoral defeat. Nevertheless, ballot rigging can reduce turnout, contribute to cynicism, and therefore fabricate enough votes to tip the scales in one party's favor. Because electoral fraud can be decisive in close races, its ultimate cost may be that it undermines democratic stability. Regardless of whether fraud is decisive, it encourages incumbents and opponents to discredit elections and their outcomes. Precisely because it is so hard to determine the efficacy of ballot rigging, electoral fraud and its denunciation corrode the democratic body politic.

## THE CAUSES OF BALLOT RIGGING

If stuffing the ballot box can be decisive and acts of electoral fraud can be classified and counted, how can fraud be explained? Why do parties and machines rig ballot results? Though few studies explicitly analyze motives, the underlying argument seems to be that incumbents, parties, and machines will try to get away with anything to retain or obtain control of the state. Less consensus exists about the interests these agents protect. Some analysts underscore the importance of economic interests—landlords and industrialists come to mind—while others emphasize the role of partisan interests. In this section, I review the evidence about why parties fabricate fraud, which is even scarcer than the research on its magnitude and consequences.

Of the historical studies about fraud, Anderson's (2000) is the best exponent of the argument that economic interests perpetrate electoral fraud. She uses the German Imperial electoral audits to show how eastern *Junkers*, coal mine owners, and factory owners policed their peasants and employees to ensure that conservative parties won elections. Graham (1990), Hoppen (1984), Kousser (1974), and O'Gorman (1989) imply that landlords use fraud to ensure that the representatives elected from their districts maintain their class power.

Dardé (1996), Botana (1979), Tusell (1991), and Varela Ortega (2001a) suggest that partisanship explains the incidence of fraud. Botana argues that incumbent manipulation of the electoral system in Argentina preserved the conservative order's control of a political system until 1916, when the opposition Radical Civic Union won the general elections. The 1916 defeat of the conservative candidate was the result of the 1912 Sáenz Peña electoral law, which, among other reforms, had cleaned up the voter registry. Dardé surveys much of the Spanish historiography to identify economic and partisan motives of the *cacique*. Tusell (1991) and Varela Ortega (2001a) adopt a political angle, that of the local machine operator; the

cacique served his own interests as well as those of the local *grandees* and of the central government. Indeed, the *cacique* cut deals with landlords and government officials to obtain particularistic benefits (“pork”), such as roads, bridges, and related construction projects, useful for holding “his” voters together and therefore maintaining his power. Like other Spanish historians, they usefully distinguish between rural areas, where, because of some collusion between central government officials, landlords, and *caciques*, there was no effective political competition—and therefore no election-day fraud—and competitive urban areas, where all manner of electoral atrocities occurred (Varela Ortega 2001b).

Several studies of electoral fraud shed light on the relative importance of sociological and political factors. Using survey data, Domínguez & McCann (1996, pp. 164–70) argue that accusations were more common in competitive, typically urban, districts. Exit polls recorded fewer denunciations of voting irregularities as the share of the vote that incumbent PRI gubernatorial candidates obtained in districts increased (Domínguez & McCann 1996). Eisenstadt (1998) demonstrates that infractions of electoral law picked up in the 1980s and 1990s, precisely when the PRI’s decades-long domination of politics began to crumble (also, see Gómez-Tagle 1988, Molinar-Horcasitas 1991).

Three studies explicitly vary social structural and institutional factors to identify the determinants of electoral fraud. First, Eisenstadt’s (1999) analysis of more than 3000 municipal elections between 1989 and 1998 in Mexico reveals that post-election conflicts increased where political competition was more intense and where citizens had a tradition of engaging in collective action. He measures competitiveness as the ratio of the votes the two principal opposition parties receive to those of the PRI. Eisenstadt claims this variable performs better than the conventional indicator for competitiveness, the difference in votes between the first- and second-place winners (Cox 1988). Eisenstadt also uses an invaluable database from the federal Attorney General for Agrarian Issues. The relationship between collective agrarian conflicts per capita and post-election conflicts is positive.

Second, Trejo & Aguilar-Rivera (2002) show that election conflict in 803 municipalities (or approximately a third of all municipalities—those whose population is at least 30% indigenous) in Mexico during the 1997 federal elections is largely a function of sociological factors. They use ordinal probit models to show that procedural violations of electoral law and reports of intimidation in the organization of elections are negatively related to geographic dispersion. The models also demonstrate that voting irregularities are positively related to the monolingual share of the population, the effective number of ethnic groups, gender discrimination, and the effective number of religions. Their study, which also includes 10 focus groups, finds that an institutional factor also leads to election conflict. The use of customary law in local elections, a common practice in the State of Oaxaca, augments difficulties for voters using different procedures and rules in federal elections.

Third, in a study of 1300 accusations of ballot rigging between 1901 and 1946 in Costa Rica, Lehoucq & Molina (2002) discover that institutional as well as sociological factors explain the rhythm and spatial distribution of accusations of

fraud. Slightly less than half of the accusations of fraud took place in the three poorest and least populated provinces, which never contained more than 25% of the electorate. Social differentiation was much more pronounced in the periphery, where laborers were often completely landless and worked on large cattle or banana estates. In contrast, citizens of the four central provinces—where most voters resided—tended to live in tightly knit, highly literate communities capable of organizing themselves to protect their civil liberties. Nevertheless, Lehoucq & Molina (2002) argue that the structure of electoral competition was equally—if not more—responsible for regional distributions of electoral fraud. Unlike most races in the center, most elections in the periphery were single- or double-member districts whose seats went to the parties that only needed to obtain one more vote than their rivals. In the center, in contrast, proportional representation typically allocated seats among parties because most races involved parties competing for three or more legislative seats at a time. Unless the quotient—the number of seats divided by the number of valid votes—was small and/or the number of impugned votes was large, parties stood little chance of ever electing one of their members to Congress. Parties, in other words, faced incentives to commit and, most importantly, to denounce acts of fraud precisely where voters were disproportionately poorer, less literate, and more ethnically discriminated against.

The paucity of findings makes it harder to generalize about the causes of fraud than about its nature or magnitude. Though the study of Spain and one study of Mexico (i.e., Domínguez & McCann 1996) suggest that fraud is more common in urban than in rural areas, this conclusion has to be qualified. Ballot rigging may be less common in rural areas because political or economic domination makes it pointless to complain about fixed results. The urban bias in reports, in other words, seems to be a product of an incumbent monopoly. Civic Alliance's finding (Calderón Altzati & Cazés 1996, Cazés 1996) that violations of the secret ballot are more common in rural polling stations suggests that local machines use subtle techniques to control voters, tactics that electoral observation picks up in an increasingly competitive electoral environment. Existing studies also indicate that properties of electoral laws—district size and electoral formula—can increase the uncertainty of political competition, the factor through which social and political variables shape the nature and frequency of ballot rigging.

## CONCLUSION: DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research on electoral fraud tells a consistent story. First, fraud takes on a panoply of forms. It ranges from procedural violations of electoral law (that may or may not intend to distort results) to the outright use of violence to intimidate voters and poll watchers. Moreover, only a minority of the accusations involves blatant types of fraud. Second, ballot rigging does not appear to be decisive most of the time. The colorful history of vote fabrication probably exaggerates its role in determining election outcomes. Fraud, nevertheless, undermines political stability

because, in close races, it can be decisive. Even when elections are not competitive, ballot rigging robs elections of credibility and therefore prevents the consolidation of democratic institutions. Third, political competition shapes the rhythm and nature of electoral fraud. Efforts to steal elections increase with social inequality, but political competitiveness—which institutions help to shape—determines the ballot rigging strategies parties adopt.

Studying electoral fraud is not easy because it is supposed to remain clandestine. Yet, analyzing ballot rigging is far from impossible. There is a wealth of legal material about the nature and incidence of ballot rigging. In virtually all places, parties filed complaints about election returns with legislatures until the late nineteenth century. By the beginning of the twentieth century, electoral tribunals or commissions began to run elections and to judge the complaints parties filed about them (Lehoucq 2002a). Whatever the system a country uses (or used), candidates and parties therefore generate the detailed legal trail that researchers, to date, rarely exploit. Indeed, most of the historical work on elections refers to such materials but almost never tries to classify, count, and analyze them. True, these petitions cut both ways: They exaggerate as well as denounce acts of fraud. Carefully used, though, accusations of fraud provide a wealth of information about ballot rigging—how it worked, how extensive it was—and help shed light on what it means to its targets and its plaintiffs.

Surveys can also uncover the facts and the causes of electoral fraud. To date, only a handful of surveys cover ballot rigging. Questions need to focus on activities deemed fraudulent and to encourage respondents to report how they are cajoled, pressured, or bought. Focus groups or even more ethnographic research techniques can also reveal how citizens react to clandestine efforts to shape election outcomes and even participate in them.

Future studies of electoral fraud need to be theoretically focused. Researchers tend to select countries and time periods for idiographic reasons or on the dependent variable. The study of country X for country X's sake, however, can lead researchers to neglect issues that are causally important. For example, Dardé's (1996) effort to come to grips with a history of controlled rural elections or fraudulent urban ones in Spain pushes him to focus on cultural limitations. That the existing research emphasizes the impact of sociological and institutional factors—and that, to date, there is no systematic study of ballot rigging for Spain—suggests that students of this case may not be choosing the best approach to make sense of electoral fraud in Spain. Similarly, picking cases on the dependent variable can prejudice efforts to distinguish actual from spurious causes. A study limited to places with charges of fraud runs the risk of producing conclusions that do not hold true for districts with no such reports. Comparison between countries or of districts within a country is a research strategy useful to overcome the selection bias problem (King et al. 1994).

I end this review with several hypotheses worth investigating. The first is whether majoritarian electoral laws encourage higher levels of ballot rigging and election litigation than more proportional systems. If seats are allocated on a first-past-the-post basis, parties may commit—and denounce—ballot rigging because a

relatively small number of votes may determine an election outcome. To the extent that majoritarian systems encourage personal as opposed to party-centered campaigns, first-past-the-post systems may generate additional incentives for candidates, for example, to buy votes and for voters to sell them (Hicken 2002). The cases for which we know the most—England, Germany, Ireland, Spain, and the United States—uphold this claim; all of these cases used plurality to allocate seats among candidates. The study of Costa Rica adds further support to this hypothesis: Plurality districts generate more accusations of fraud than proportional-representation ones. Majoritarian formulas such as the Thai multiple-seat, multiple-vote plurality system or the Taiwanese single-nontransferable vote (Grofman et al. 1999) also appear to be linked with high levels of vote buying in both countries.

Electoral systems that dampen turnout may simultaneously encourage fraud. Many electoral authoritarian regimes (Schedler 2002a)—systems where incumbents hold elections but manipulate laws for partisan advantage—hinder voter registration or prevent opposition parties from observing the electoral process or the tally of the vote in order to reduce turnout. If rates of voter participation fall, then fabricating a handful of votes may be sufficient to retain power, a fact that opposition or regional parties may exploit as elections become more competitive. This claim, I should add, dovetails with the previous hypothesis. As Cox (1999) points out, proportional systems increase turnout more than majoritarian laws because the expected utility of a vote cast for a third party is greater in the former than in the latter systems. Thus, plurality electoral laws may decrease turnout so that the impact of stealing votes becomes greater. Finally, both hypotheses are part of the broader theory that political competition fuels ballot rigging. Indeed, only the existence of anticorruption legislation and nonpartisan electoral commissions can thwart competition from propagating all manner of strategies for winning elections.

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