


Articles

# The Corruption-Incompetence Nexus: Analysis of Corrupt US Mayors

Barry Bozeman <sup>a</sup>, Jiwon Jung  <sup>b</sup>

Keywords: Corruption, Incompetence, Political incompetence, Executive officials

<https://doi.org/10.52372/jps37201>

Vol. 37, Issue 2, 2022

The paper seeks to develop some preliminary ideas about the relation of corruption and incompetence, two different but perhaps related instances of political and administrative failure. We pose a corruption-competence nexus and suggest that corruption and incompetence are related in predictable ways. Indeed, in extreme cases of incompetence, incompetence often enables corruption due to a variety of factors including the inability to monitor corruption or to select quality advisors. We further suggest that a variety of factors mitigate the relation of incompetence and corruption, including level of political authority and impact, size of political and business networks, and availability of professionalized and empowered public service. To further examine the corruption-incompetence nexus, we use simple typology (e.g., corrupt-competent or corrupt-incompetent) to help organize and, to some extent, explain the forms of relationship between incompetence and corruption in the organizational setting. Four cases of U.S. mayors' performance are evaluated to better understand the propositions.

When reflecting on sundry ills of government, pundits and ordinary citizen-critics sometimes have a difficult time deciding whether corruption or incompetence is a greater curse. This sort of deliberation has given rise to a number of interesting discussion questions, ones that fuel dinner conversations or water cooler discussions among bored office workers. One such question: "Would the US have been better off or worse off if Richard Nixon had been incompetent rather than, as history shows he was, a clever, competent, flawed and sometimes hateful individual?" Another good discussion question: "How could Ulysses Grant could be such an effective and largely selfless General but also preside over one of the least successful and most corrupt Presidential Administrations." One can only imagine the range of such questions that will emanate from the contradictions and missteps of the Trump Administration, but emerging critical literature has begun to compile some new incompetence-corruption riddles (e.g. Frum, 2018; Wolff, 2018; Zuckert, 2018).

The current paper seeks to develop some preliminary ideas about the relation of corruption and incompetence, arguing that the two are not entirely distinctive maladies in the mind of the ordinary people but, instead, ones that stand in dynamic relation to one another. The corruption-competence nexus is explored and it is argued that the effects of incompetence on corruption change as a function of a number of variables, including the level of authority and impact, size of political and business networks, and the of-

icial's relationship to advisors, their number, their characteristics and, particularly, the extent to which the official listens to others' advice. We propose that at the more extreme levels of incompetence, the likelihood of corruption increases greatly owing to calculations of corrupt or potentially corrupt individuals. In other words, those who have a "demand" for corruption opportunities will court corruption because they will assume that there is less likelihood that corruption will be competently identified or addressed.

To help highlight some possible relationships between corruption and incompetence, we examine instances of documented corruption among four US mayors, developing a simple typology to help organize and to some extent explain the forms of relationships. After laying out ideas about a corruption-incompetence nexus, we turn our attention to the cases of mayoral corruption. Finally, a concluding section suggests the necessity of re-thinking ideas about corruption, especially in light of the new realities of contemporary US politics.

## Mayoral Corruption in Context

Corruption is a concept with some considerable shared meaning, specifically that it involves a deviation from certain standards of behavior, especially legal standards. However, what criteria are used to establish the standards of deviation is a rather disputable and complicated area (Lancaster & Montinola, 1997). Legality of the act is, of course,

<sup>a</sup> Center for Organization Research and Design (CORD), School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University, E-mail : [bbozeman@asu.edu](mailto:bbozeman@asu.edu)

<sup>b</sup> **Corresponding author:** Center for Organization Research and Design (CORD), Graduate School of International Relations, International University of Japan, E-mail : [jjung@iuj.ac.jp](mailto:jjung@iuj.ac.jp)

one important criterion, but in some cases, entirely legal acts nonetheless are counter to the public interest and result in highly negative public reactions and public opinion (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2017; Sunstein, 2007). For example, for many years so-called Jim Crow laws that legalized racial segregation were perfectly legal in southern states of the US, despite public outcry from many segments of the U.S. population. Jim Crow Acts provide an example of what Bozeman and colleagues (2018) call “deep corruption,” an instance where individuals in power bend the law for corrupt purposes. However, the vast majority of acts of political corruption, including the ones examined here, are “venal corruption.” Venal corruption refers to the types of bad behaviors found in all walks of life and all sectors of enterprise, such as bribes, kickbacks, illegal nepotism, and outright theft. Venal corruption has these characteristics: (1) when uncovered, the bad behavior is usually easily agreed upon because it leaves evidence; (2) venal corruption is by its definition illegal; (3) it almost always benefits directly, and sometimes solely, the malefactor who perpetrates it.

The four cases of mayoral corruption examined in this paper are all straightforward venal corruption, in most cases bribery. Mayors are well-positioned for venal corruption but not for deep corruption. Mayors’ power tends to be localized and temporary and their networks tend to be insufficiently expansive to wreak the havoc needed for deep corruption, which seems more often the preserve of Presidents, Governors, and non-elected political actors with long-term access to both financial and political resources needed to make wholesale changes in democratic political structures. Mayoral corruption seems more in the George Washington Plunkitt-style: “I seen my opportunities and I took ‘em” (Riordin, 1963).

### Competence and Incompetence

We are among those who agree that the topic of political officials’ incompetence is not given sufficient attention by scholars (Philp, 2017). There are a great many problems in studying competence of political leaders. First, citizens’ views about competence often depend on whether the politicians have adopted a policy that the voter likes or not (Groseclose, 2001; Mondak & Huckfeldt, 2006). A particularly interesting factor is the relationship between citizens’ overall value for government action, of any sort, and their views about competence. In the United States, a substantial proportion of the electorate agrees that “the government that governs least, governs best.” Thus, someone who is viewed by many as incompetent – unable to get anything done – may be viewed by limited-government advocates as an excellent official who meets the standard to “govern least.”

Perhaps more problematic is the fact that though we often seem to think of competence-incompetence holistically, there are actually many relevant dimensions of both corruption and incompetence (Hogan, 1994). In some cases, this competence multiplicity is clear enough such that, for example, President Lyndon Johnson’s body of work on domestic policy is widely lauded but his work on foreign policy is not. However, it is not easy or common for historians

or public affairs experts to dissect the many processes and skills related to being a President or governor, or mayor (Ferreira da Silva & Costa, 2019). Skills such as, say, interacting with the media, coping with new ideas, getting the best work from staff, and inspiring public confidence, response to uncertainty or crisis might be the dimensions of practical competence of the executive officials, while important elements of the effectiveness of any political executive may be a distinctive skill, ones not necessarily closely related.

Furthermore, is competence about inherent abilities, or is it a matter of outcomes? In our view, outcomes alone do not suffice as a competence concept. Bad outcomes occur for a variety of reasons that may have little to do with the abilities or preparation of public officials, factors such as poor goals, insufficient resources, others’ resistance, and, of course, substituting one’s corrupt aims for public interest aims. Both corruption and competence are matters of degree and are best viewed as multidimensional concepts. However, in the case of corruption one does have certain indisputable markers such as indictments and convictions. To be sure, criminality does not entirely conclude the debate, as seen by the fact that more than a few politicians have been elected while behind bars. Still, criminal convictions provide some tangible evidence of our conception of corruption. By contrast, that of competence is to a large degree in the eye of the beholder.

The difficulties of conceptualizing and measuring the competence of politicians have been well noted and described in the study of voting decisions and the voters’ perception of the candidates’ traits (Funk, 1996; McGraw, 2003; Philp, 2017). The few studies focusing on competence tend to have limited external validity (Franchino & Zucchini, 2014; Mondak & Huckfeldt, 2006). Despite the many challenges to studying the competence of politicians, we can take some solace that consensus judgments often emerge. For example, *US News* (Soergel & Tolson, 2014) developed a list of the 10 worst US Presidents, a list including such unsurprising figures as Herbert Hoover, Ulysses S. Grant, and Millard Fillmore. Most of us can, perhaps, come up with a reasonable ostensive definition of incompetence; we feel we know it when we see it (Hendry, 2002) but ostensive definitions are quite limiting for research and theory purposes.

For present purposes, we consider competence in terms of multiple standards. First, we rely on the lexical definition: “the quality or state of having sufficient knowledge, judgment, skill, and strength as for a particular duty” (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Second, since all the individuals considered in this case are mayors of medium-large cities, we rely on judgments of standard media outlets, especially those from their respective hometowns. Finally, in cases where these mayors have won awards or accolades, we consider those as indicators of competence.

### Toward A Theory of Corruption-Competence Nexus

Let us begin our exposition of the corruption-competence intersection by noting that it is possible to observe any combination of corruption and competence. The most

corrupt person can be utterly competent (including even in his or her execution of corruption) or completely incompetent. The most competent person can be not at all corrupt or completely corrupt. However, most persons are, ipso facto, not at the extreme of either attribute. While the variance in competence is presumably great, not entirely unlike a normal curve, the variance in corruption would be presumably quite different.

At this point, we have no particular insight into the distribution of competence or corruption among elected officials. However, we suspect that the distributions for elected officials are different from those for the general public, perhaps as there are selection effects to the extent that certain values or traits to seek for elected office or be successful to get into the office are correlated with competence or corruption. Regarding competence, if competence is related to education, the educational level of elected officials, especially big-city mayors, well exceeds the median for the U.S. population. According to the U.S. census, among adults 25 years of age and over 36% have a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census, 2020). But among mayors, nearly all have a bachelor's degree, and it is quite common to have graduate degrees, especially law degrees.

Gauging possible selection effects regarding corruption is much more difficult, in part because most citizens' opportunities for corruption are much less than is the case for elected officials, but also because those who run for political office tend to have a different psychological profile than the general citizenry. Research shows that elected officials tend to have higher degrees of agreeableness, extroversion, and social desirability and lower degrees of conscientiousness (Caprara et al., 2003; Dynes et al., 2019) which are not independent of corrupt or counterproductive behaviors (Girodo, 1991).

Given a hypothesis of the competence and corruption distribution in a continuum in theory, for us to develop and embellish the relationship between corruption and incompetence further, it is perhaps a useful simplification to consider the corruption-incompetence relationship as a typology. The most basic sort of typology is presented below, with just four categorical types:

- I. Not Corrupt, Competent;
- II. Not Corrupt, Incompetent;
- III. Corrupt, Competent;
- IV. Corrupt, Incompetent.

As given in the example of rating 10 worst US presidents in *US News* (Soergel & Tolson, 2014), we can consider for illustration, how to place a President within which box of the category. For example, is Ulysses S. (US) Grant in the Corrupt/Incompetent Box? Or did he simply have a bad fortune, owing to incompetence, to preside over corruption and would thus be better placed in the Not Corrupt/Incompetence Box?

### **The Attenuated Corruption-Incompetence Relationship: Propositions**

The thesis of this paper is that incompetence and corruption are related in predictable ways, and knowledge of these relationships can help our understanding of corrup-

tion and its determinants. However, the relationship cannot be fully understood in absence of the knowledge of several mitigating factors existing in the playing fields of the purveyors. Therefore, we hereby suggest several mitigating factors to better conceptualize the relationship between incompetence and corruption.

**Authority.** If one is at the political or hierarchical apex, the "demand for corruption" is likely to be greatest. Corruption (and incompetence) can occur at any level, from the President, to state governors, agency heads, and down to the lowest levels of public administration. In addition to highly visible corruption among those at the top of political hierarchies, we also have instances of clerks and administrative assistants abusing purchasing cards, falsifying procurement records, and such (Jancsics, 2013; Rosenblatt, 2012; also see Graycar & Villa, 2011). The crimes and types of malfeasance differ at various points in political hierarchies, chiefly because those in higher authority positions have a more opportunity-rich environment (Osipian, 2010; Waite & Allen, 2003). Those in the highest positions not only are likely to have a greater number of formal policy and administrative transactions with a greater number of collaborators, enterprise clients, and would-be clients with a greater discretionary power to evaluate or choose among them (Decarolis et al., 2020); but, assuming a normal distribution of the propensity for corruption, they come into contact with a substantially larger number of potential collaborators in corruption, many of who are solicitous enterprises.

**Proposition 1-1.** *The frequency and intensity of corruption are a function of demand and opportunity.*

**Proposition 1-2.** *Individuals in higher levels of political or administrative authority have a greater 'demand for corruption' and, ceteris paribus will engage in corruption more often solely as a function of demand and opportunity.*

Proposition 1-1 is a simplification but a useful one in advancing the theory. We assume here that propensities for morality and ethical behavior are best viewed as randomly distributed in public office, that public employee janitors are no more or less corrupt than mayors and MPA (Masters of Public Administration) alumni are no more or less corrupt than Masters of Engineering degree holders. This assumption allows us to avoid the imputation of moral traits and attribution fallacies. This does not suggest that all people are equally moral or equally corrupt, only that these attributes are widely dispersed.

With respect to Proposition 1-2, several factors moderate the authority-corruption frequency relationship such as the level of discretionary power in the decision-making or that of distance and ties between the engaging stakeholders (Bandiera et al., 2021; Decarolis et al., 2020; Jancsics, 2013). Most of these factors, while significant, are too specific to be accommodated in the first steps of the theory developed here but are nonetheless worth acknowledging. In the first place, there are lower-level positions that, due to the nature of the work, provide greater corruption opportunities than might be supposed. Thus, for example, those who work directly in purchasing and procurement, even at a low level, would likely have greater demand and opportunity (Campos

& Pradhan, 2007; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). Perhaps even more important, corruption demand and opportunity are, to some extent, a function of the laws and administrative procedures in place in different sites. This mitigating factor is less significant in a theory, such as this one, that is largely confined to Western Democracies since the variance in such laws and procedures, while noteworthy, is not nearly so great as if we were attempting to provide a theory that could be generalized to all nations' governments at all levels of government. Even among the 50 U.S. states, entities that often provide for rich variation in policies of all sorts, government rules constraining ethical behavior are much more similar than different.

**Political culture.** While political culture is an extremely broad term, our current concern is for only certain aspects. Rather than reviewing the concept and its history, let us focus on those aspects relevant to the current theory-building effort. Inglehart (1988) discusses the civic culture component, which focuses on level of political satisfaction, interpersonal trust, and support for the existing political order. While this conceptualization refers to nations rather than organizations and institutions, it is nonetheless relevant to the context of our discussion, especially if we include certain aspects of organizational culture especially including the belief that one's organization and co-workers are ethical (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2014; Victor & Cullen, 1988).

**Proposition 2.** *The frequency and intensity of corruption are a function of perceived organizational-political culture, including trust, views about the ethics of co-workers (including both political and administrative superiors), and support of the political or authority regime.*

For example, if there is anything we know from the numerous accounts of police corruption, both historical and fictional, it is that an "everyone is doing it" climate is likely to lead to increased corruption with a lower risk of detection and punishment. At the most extreme levels, officials who are not engaging in corrupt behavior – the outsiders – can be made to feel that they are "suckers," not taking advantage of what they are "owed" (Campbell & Göritz, 2014). By the same token, we also know from this same institutional type that organizational cultures can be changed and can result in significant reductions of corruption (Hough et al., 2018; Stachowicz-Stanusch & Simha, 2013). In general, contemporary studies of corruption highlight the perspective that corrupt (or ethical) behavior is not best thought of as an individual moral imperative. While there is clearly a major role for individual responsibility, the predilections of the individual often are strongly influenced by the organizational or political culture the individual perceives (Gorsira et al., 2018).

A particularly important part of the effect of political culture on corruption is the professionalism of public administrators and, perhaps even more important, their temerity. We know from a number of instances of recent history that public administrators can be complicit in corrupt activities; but it is also the case that they can often be a bulwark against corruption, including corrupt acts performed by people at much higher levels of authority, per-

sons who may not even know of their existence, but persons whose commitment to the law, ethical guidelines or public interest proves indefatigable (Brewer & Selden, 1998).

**Proposition 3.** *The frequency and intensity of corruption are a function of the lack of a professionalized and empowered public service.*

The assumptions, definitions, and propositions presented thus far are a necessary prelude to understanding the primary relationship of interest here, the relation of corruption to incompetence, and, particularly, the assertion that at a certain point competence and corruption are roughly identical in their consequences.

**Proposition 4.** *Extreme incompetence is highly likely to lead to increased corruption, especially at high levels of executive political authority – presidents, governors, and mayors.*

Proposition 4 posits that extreme incompetence almost inexorably gives rise to increased corruption. The reasoning depends crucially on Proposition 1-1 and 1-2, that corruption is a function of demand and opportunity. The contention is that at the highest level of an executive office, there is perpetually a high level of demand and opportunity for corruption. While the distribution of potentially corrupt supplicants may not be greater for the mayor than, say, the administrators in the solid waste department, the ability of the highest executive to have broad and deep effects on a wide array of citizens and supplicants means that the supplicants who do have corrupt propensities are particularly likely to concentrate their attention and efforts on the highest executive authority and those immediately in the executive's inner circle. If the executive is very competent, or average competence, or even moderately incompetent, the distinction between corruption and incompetence remains distinct.

We also know that among public officials, the highest-level political executives typically have the greatest number of enterprise ties and generally the greatest number of persons routinely affected, often intensely, by their routine decisions (i.e. domain of impact). This is another way of saying with respect to corruption that they have both demand and opportunity; thus, if we accept Proposition 1-2, Proposition 4 flows from it.

For those executives who are extremely incompetent, those with little or no relevant experience or knowledge of the operations and requirements of their office, the ability to avoid the traps and hazards set for them by often more experienced and knowledgeable, and perhaps more corrupt, supplicants will be so sharply diminished that the executive will become a de facto pawn and enabler, presiding over corruption and perhaps not even knowing.

Another reason to suppose that corruption is different at the highest executive levels is that these political executives have the greatest ability to affect the dominant political culture. Their actions generate trust (or undermine it), increase commitment to the political regime (more specifically, their political regime) (or undermine it), and have major effects on both public employees' and citizens' political satisfaction.

Finally, political executives are, by definition, elected; and, at least in the U.S., all levels of electoral politics depend on political contributions, especially campaign funding. True, members of the legislative branch also depend critically upon campaign funding, but the level of corruption demand encircling legislators is likely to bear lesser impact coupled with the contributing amount than the level experienced by executives. To be sure, if we examine corruption convictions, there are many more among legislators. However, corruption and convictions are not the same (e.g. the ability to avoid detection and conviction is not random) and, of course, there are a great many more elected legislators than elected chief executives.

Several factors mitigate the corruption-incompetence identity as discussed in our propositions. We have mentioned one of the broadest ones – dominant political culture namely political satisfaction, interpersonal trust in the organization, and support for the existing political order. Another broad factor that can depict the political culture is the type and extent of anti-corruption laws, though the evidence of their effects is mixed (for an overview, see Ni & Su, 2019). A more particularistic factor of political culture that mitigates the relation of corruption and incompetence is the quality and especially the honesty of advisors and staff surrounding the executive and, equally important, whether the executive is disposed to listen to their advice and capable of acting on it. Extremely incompetent executives are sometimes saved from themselves if there is a strong and assertive political staff or an honest and competent professional bureaucracy (for more political-philosophical discussion, see Flaig, 2013). However, the professional bureaucracy is generally better at reacting to major breaches of ethics or corruption than it is at anticipating them.

Let us return to the question posed in the first section of the paper: Is it better to have a person in authority who is competent and corrupt or one who is corrupt, perhaps unwittingly, because so remarkably incompetent? Not an easy question to answer. The competent-corrupt person may have the advantage of providing effective services and providing public values in domains not wracked with corruption, although the possibility of deep corruption may be higher as being effective even in corrupt behaviors. However, the incompetent-corrupt may be likely to be more easily discovered in resultant corrupt acts and possibly limit the potential damages to the short term. We hope that the efforts of unrolling the relation between corruption and incompetence of the public officials and the mitigating factors that we should look for, despite its primitive development, help us not only be conscious about the corruption in political and bureaucratic context but understand how we should approach competence or incompetence of the people working in the public sector.

### **Corrupt Mayors: Four Mini-Case Studies**

As a first approach to getting some purchase on the relationship between political executives' competence and corruption, we examine the history of four mayors of large US cities, each convicted and sent to prison: Lee Alexander (Syracuse), Bill Campbell (Atlanta), Ray Nagin (New Or-

leans) and Kwame Kilpatrick (Detroit). While it is nearly impossible to develop universal agreement about politicians' competence, we argue and present some evidence that two of these, Alexander (Syracuse) and Campbell (Atlanta) could be construed as generally competent and two (Nagin (New Orleans) and Kilpatrick (Detroit)) as incompetent. After a brief review of their respective crimes and records as mayor, we consider what can be learned about the extent to which their illegal acts are related to their degree of competence. The chief focus of cases here is on the four mayors profiled below and the authors' best assessment of the degree of competence of each of the mayors based on the documented data ranging from the media reports and interviews and articles on the specific policy and programs to court hearings.

The chosen case studies have some common factors. While we cannot consider these "controls" given the case methods, it is at least somewhat useful to be able to compare along with some common themes. One obvious and important attribute is simply that all four cases involve elected U.S. mayors. The respective mayors faced formidable challenges, including an economic decline in Detroit and Syracuse, a weather disaster in New Orleans, and an infrastructure crisis in Atlanta. In other words, none of the mayors had a smooth path. Each of the cities was long controlled by the Democratic Party, both before and after the respective mayors' terms.

At the same time, there is sufficient variance to make the comparison interesting and useful. The most obvious is the size of the cities, with Syracuse being much smaller than the others. The longevity of the respective mayors' terms of office is noteworthy. While all are experienced public officials, experience as mayors varies from six years (Kilpatrick) to fifteen years (Alexander) which would tap into some of our discussions of mitigating factors in understanding the competence-corruption nexus.

Our interest here is in the relationship of corruption and incompetence, but a limitation is determining the level of competence of the respective mayors. Still, this should not limit our efforts to understand the concepts and relationships of the competence of public officials to corruption. For our analysis, let us make some provisional suggestions. By most accounts, the Syracuse mayor, Lee Alexander, would be deemed the most competent among the mayors examined here. He served longest, each time garnering strong electoral support as a mayor. His press reviews were highly favorable, in some cases even after his imprisonment. As one longtime member of the Syracuse Post-Standard opined, "Lee Alexander was a brilliant mayor whose self-destruction broke the city's heart" (Kirst, 2010). Perhaps even more notable, his successor, Roy Bernardi, a political opponent from the rival Republican Party and Syracuse Mayor from 1994 to 2001, spoke at Alexander's funeral and lauded his mayoral leadership. Finally, in 1977, Alexander was elected as head of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, an honor bestowed by hundreds of his peers.

In contrast, perhaps the easiest case to establish is Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick who not only had little praise from established media, no significant honors bestowed on him, and, most importantly, was engaged in significant substance abuse during his mayoral term. Had he been otherwise competent, any native ability might well have been hostage to

addictions. Mayors Ray Nagin (New Orleans) and Bill Campbell (Atlanta) are between these two extremes. As we see in the cases below, each had high performing periods and some accomplishments, but their records were uneven and their accolades, while receiving some, were few.

### Syracuse Mayor Lee Alexander

In the case of Alexander, the signs of competence are conventional ones – accolades from peers and identifiable accomplishments for the City of Syracuse.<sup>1</sup> He was politically adept, the first Democratic mayor elected for decades in heavily Republican Syracuse. Alexander was elected by his peers as the president of the US Conference of Mayors and was elected six times as president of the US National Conference of Democratic Mayors. He was sufficiently well regarded by his political colleagues as to be chosen as a candidate for the US Senate in 1974, though he lost the primary to former Attorney General Ramsey Clark. As noted in the *New York Times* articles (Boorstin, 1987a, 1987b) assessing Alexander's fall, his administration was "marked by solid progress. Schools and firehouses were built and the city was saved from the edge of bankruptcy."

Even as Alexander was widely hailed by many as the best mayor in the history of Syracuse, his style was not only flamboyant but controversial, and even before there was evidence of corruption some citizens and rival politicians had suspicions. He seemed to live beyond his means, with a flashy and expensive wardrobe, frequent first-class travel, his own limousine and driver, and legend it had it (correctly as it turned out) several affairs and a rocky marriage. However, not everyone was repelled by the mayor's flamboyance; some envied him in much the manner people envy more visible celebrities and others cared little about his lifestyle as long as he seemed to be delivering federal aid and jobs to Syracuse.

Alexander's crimes began to surface in 1986 when a routine IRS (Internal Revenue Service) audit of a man who had received large City of Syracuse contracts showed substantial business deductions that were nebulous but that under questioning were described as kickbacks to the mayor. Shortly thereafter a grand jury was convened and on July 16, 1987, Alexander was indicted by the Federal District Court in Syracuse on 40 counts of extortion, income tax evasion, racketeering, and conspiracy (Boorstin, 1987b). Alexander was charged with a scheme whereby he used the Syracuse Board of Estimate to develop more than \$1.5 million in kickbacks over a period of 16 years. The indictment included several businessmen and lawyers but also two "bag men," Henry Bersani, a former chairman of the New York State Thruway Authority and Demosthenes Stathis, Alexander's accountant and a close personal friend. Stathis was a lead witness against Alexander, testifying against him in ex-

change for a reduced sentence. Stathis was subsequently sentenced to seven years of a ten-year term; Bersani served 30 months. Six other men were convicted on conspiracy charges.

In January 1988, Lee Alexander pled guilty to racketeering and extortion, conspiracy, and income tax evasion. As a result of a plea bargain, he agreed to serve a 10-year prison sentence and forfeit \$1.4 million in illegal payments. He was released on parole in February 1994, after serving six years. He subsequently worked as a member of the wait staff at one of Syracuse's best-known restaurants. He died of cancer in December 1996. At the time of his plea bargain, Alexander stated "I never hurt the city." Apparently, many agreed. Alexander was the first person to ever lie in state at Syracuse City Hall and a black bunting was hung across City Hall columns, honoring his legacy. The incumbent Republican Mayor Roy Bernardi was a pallbearer and a long-time Republican opponent, James Tomey commented: "(H)e was a great mayor who did many things for this city. He really helped a lot of people and I think that's how he's going to be remembered" (Syracuse Herald Journal, 1996, p. 10).

### New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin

Ray Nagin served as mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana from 2002 until 2010 and remains best known for his role in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, one of US history's most devastating natural disasters, exacerbated by various human-made disasters, including some presided over by Nagin. Nagin was not an unmitigated incompetent. For example, during his first term, New Orleans exhibited significant job growth and economic development and observers credited Nagin with a role in these positive developments. However, most assessments suggest that his impact on the New Orleans economy was modest and not sustained (e.g. Russell & Donze, 2010).

During his second term, however, he was roundly criticized for his post-Katrina policies, his handling of national media, and his contributions to negative images of his city (Donze, 2007). His more egregious mistakes after Hurricane Katrina were his back-and-forth on evacuation, first responding slowly to the crisis and then inviting evacuees back while a second storm was developing, an action stemmed only after the Bush administration and the federal leaders of the recovery effort provided strong warnings about the dangers of returning (Yardley, 2005). He was strongly criticized for sequestering himself at a luxury hotel and avoiding speaking to the dispossessed crowd at the Superdome, saying later that he did not have a megaphone and would not have been heard. He was also roundly criticized for failing to move dozens of school buses that were in the flood zone and became disabled, busses that could have

---

<sup>1</sup> A less conventional testament to Alexander's competence: the senior author lived in Syracuse for more than ten years of Alexander's mayoral regime and was well acquainted with many officials in the Alexander administration and with the specific accomplishments of the mayor, including in connection with economic development, political relations with the state and federal government, housing, parks and recreation and, the most political of city functions in Syracuse- snow removal.

been used for evacuation (see Brinkley & Brewer, 2006 for an overview of Nagin's role in the hurricane crisis).

Nagin's corruption was, much like Alexander's, of the unremarkable venal sort. After being indicted on 20 corruption charges, including wire fraud, conspiracy, bribery, money laundering, and tax evasion he was sentenced on July 9, 2014 to ten years in prison and ordered to provide restitution of \$585,000 in bribery proceeds. The bribes and kickbacks were related to payouts for city contracts. Apparently, the bribery began by Nagin's pressuring city contractors to steer money and services to his son's business and then directly to Nagin himself and his immediate family. Several others were convicted together including Greg Mefert, the deputy mayor, Frank Fradella, a disaster-construction firm owner, and Mark St. Pierre, a key technology vendor, all of whose sentencing was more lenient because of their contributions to the Nagin's case. Nagin began his incarceration on September 8, 2014 and was scheduled for release on May 2023 but sent home early due to COVID-19 concerns in April 2020. While it is difficult to predict responses to corruption, there are no early signs that the City of New Orleans or local politicians and citizens will have the forgive-and-forget attitude displayed by some Syracuse residents in the aftermath of Alexander's crimes.

### **Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell**

Mayor Bill Campbell served two terms as mayor of Atlanta from 1994 to 2002 after serving for 12 years on Atlanta's City Council. By most accounts, he accomplished a great deal during his first term, including modernizing the city's finance department, playing a major role in passing a voter-approved bond issue to pay for the infrastructure improvements needed for the 1996 Olympics, and addressing, albeit with mixed success, the city's severe water and sewer infrastructure problems (Blackmon, 2015). While his role in the drop in the Atlanta crime rate is not clear, it did happen during his term and some credited him at least in part. In a city known for comparative (compared to other cities in the South) racial harmony, he appointed a racially and politically diverse cabinet and, at least during his first term, worked effectively with Atlanta business leaders.

By most accounts (see Suggs, 2011), Campbell's most significant accomplishment during his tenure as mayor was the transformation of Atlanta's failing public housing, chiefly with new buildings and, especially, successful mixed-income development. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development graded Atlanta's public housing a perfect score of 100 at the end of Campbell's regime, following a score of 39 in 1994 shortly after he took office.

Campbell's personality sometimes got in the way of his effectiveness. Before becoming mayor, he had never been particularly popular with other City Council members and had a reputation for being a "showboat" and for being arrogant, not willing to listen to others (Blackmon, 2015). During his political career, his relations with local media were at best strained. His evaluation of political aides and top administrators appeared to be based primarily on the criterion of personal loyalty, once saying that he wanted colleagues "who would take a bullet for me." (Fears, 2006). The political culture that he was surrounded by or built upon

is less likely to be the one with a strong and assertive political staff and competent and professional administrators – which could have been, perhaps, a rescue rope if he was willing to listen to their advice.

On August 31, 2004, following a five-year investigation, Campbell was indicted on charges of racketeering, bribery and wire fraud charges. The indictment alleged that Campbell had solicited money from people doing business with the City and exchanged city contracts for travel and home improvements. Campbell often took trips to gambling casinos and the indictment alleged that the kickback money was in part used to support a gambling habit and related debts. Ten others were indicted, including Campbell aides and persons with business contracts with the city. Among the alleged payoffs was \$55,000 from a computer contractor who had a \$2 million contract with the city, about half designated for helping with the city's Y2K computer systems conversion. Campbell was also accused of receiving more than \$50,000 in kickbacks from owners of sex clubs in exchange for liquor licenses. One of the complaints in the case was from an owner who paid for a license but one that was not delivered by Campbell. The indictment further indicated that Campbell has solicited and received \$86,000 in illegal campaign contributions.

Campbell was convicted on March 10, 2006. However, he was acquitted on all four of the bribery and kickback charges and, instead, was found guilty on related charges of income tax evasion, including failure to report \$150,000 income. He was sentenced to 30 months in prison and ordered to pay \$60,000 in back taxes (CNN.com, 2006). When in prison, he voluntarily enrolled in a drug rehabilitation program (Dewan, 2008). After being released from prison in 2008, Campbell returned to Atlanta, residing in the city's Midtown neighborhood.

### **Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick**

In 2001, Kwame Kilpatrick was, at age 31, the youngest person to be elected as mayor of Detroit. He served six years, from 2002 to 2008, after serving the previous five years as a member of the Michigan House of Representatives.

There is little indication that, at any point in his career, Kilpatrick was an effective mayor. During his first year in office, he was alleged to have been an active participant in the "Manoogian Mansion party," a wild party that involved strippers, a party occurring at the mayor's official residence and protected by the mayor's police security team. Allegedly, the mayor's wife Carlita Kilpatrick arrived unexpectedly and physically attacked some of the strippers. While not a direct indication of incompetence, the incident reflected poor judgment that was little improved during the Kilpatrick administration.

During his first term, Mayor Kilpatrick was criticized for seeking to address the city's mounting budget problems by closing two popular city-owned facilities, the century-old Belle Isle Zoo and Belle Isle Aquarium. The City Council overrode the Mayor's funding veto and kept the property open. In 2005 it became the Belle Isle Nature Center and ultimately was taken over by the state and is now a state park.

It seems unlikely that Kilpatrick, or anyone else, could have been reasonably expected to reverse Detroit's economic decline. However, it is notable that he was unable to show any financial improvement at all after crushing changes including cutting city workforce salaries by more than \$100 million, trimming the police force from 4,200 officers to 3,000, cutting bulk trash pickup, failing to repair roads and streetlights and presiding over the decline of the city's fire department and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) response teams (Austin, 2014).

In 2005, the mayor was roundly criticized for using city funds to lease a car for family use and for charges to a city-issued business credit card that include thousands of dollars spent on spas and massages, extravagant dining, and expensive wines. The mayor paid back \$9,000 of \$210,000 in charges. Scandals continued to plague the mayor, including a civil lawsuit filed against him by his ex-bodyguard and by former Deputy Police Chief Gary Brown, each related to the violation of the whistleblower laws (Baldas, 2017). In 2005, *Time* magazine named Kilpatrick as "one of the worst mayors in America." More recently, in its list of the five worst mayors in the history of Detroit, the *Detroit Free Press* named Kilpatrick as the very worst, ahead of two others who went to jail for corruption and income tax evasion and another who, while not sent to prison, was charged in a murder investigation (Austin, 2014).

The Kilpatrick regime would have been notable had there been no hint of corruption, but the legacy is of historical significance because it combines ineffectiveness and corruption (and for his being re-elected to a second term). In March 2008, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy announced a 12-count indictment against Kilpatrick and his chief of staff Christine Beatty, with both being charged for perjury, misconduct in office, and obstruction of justice. Kilpatrick resigned in September 2008 after being convicted of perjury and obstruction of justice and was sentenced to four months in jail, though released on probation after serving a little more than three months. This was only a prelude. On December 14, 2010, Kilpatrick was again indicted, this time by a federal prosecutor for extortion, bribery, and fraud. Others indicted at the same time included Kilpatrick's father, Bernard, the city chief of the water department, Victor Mercado, a Kilpatrick aide, Derrick Miller, and a city contractor, Bobby Ferguson. The indictment listed allegations of fraudulent schemes connected to soliciting bribes for the award of contracts with the city Department of Water and Sewage. The indictment alleged kickbacks of near \$1,000,000. On March 11, 2013, Kilpatrick was convicted on 24 federal felony counts including mail fraud, wire fraud, and racketeering. He was sentenced to 28 years in prison (Baldas, 2017).

## Discussion

Are there lessons to be learned from these four diverse cases of mayoral corruption? In comparing them, we see at least a few things common. Some of these commonalities are probably irrelevant. For example, all are Democrats. However, the vast majority of mayors of big US cities have long been Democrats. Other common points may have more meaning. For example, each of the mayors was an expe-

rienced politician before being elected. Even the youngest (of age 31), Kilpatrick, had five years of experience in the Michigan legislature. Perhaps the deal-making entailed in corruption is enabled by long-standing connections. Related, none of the indicted mayors was indicted alone. The one who served the longest in the mayoral position – Alexander – was involved in the largest monetary size and periods of corruption, hinting us of the networks of demand and opportunities built upon during his political and executive positions. Furthermore, all but one of the mayors ran on a "reform" platform, suggesting possibly that the political culture was not entirely unassailable even before the respective mayors were elected. The one exception is Bill Campbell, who was preceded by Maynard Jackson, a mayor who was never associated with any corruption scandal. It is also worth remembering that despite indictments, Campbell was not convicted of corruption but rather for tax evasion.

A common point among the cases, and a great many instances of mayoral corruption, is the focus on kickbacks and bribery related to city contracts (Anechiarico & Jacobs, 1995). Mayors preside over land deals, city contracts with vendors, public works, and, furthermore, have a web of supplicants, apparently some percentage of whom are dishonest, either soliciting business on the basis of bribes or acquiescing to politicians' demands for bribes. By the same coin, Pashev (2011) has also noted this upward shift of corruption from the middle (expert) to the high (political) level of public administration in structured networks of politics and business. The more recent cases of contracting and procurement fraud among officials and administrators of the Department of Defense and US Navy, respectively, are also chained in the formalized, structured political-business networks (Cavas, 2015; Rendon & Rendon, 2021).

Another related point is that one does not seem to find whistleblowers among private businesses doing business with cities. We have been able to find very few instances where investigations were initially based on contractors' reports of bribery solicitations. Thus, the business culture may in some ways be at least as important as a corrupt and suborning political culture, especially in the era of public contracts and government outsourcing.

*What about the relationships between corruption and incompetence?* First, and not unexpectedly, we can see that competent mayors can be corrupt (corrupt-competent) and incompetent mayors as well (corrupt-incompetent). Then, are incompetent mayors *more* likely to be corrupt? We propose that they are, with the mitigating factors we have identified and discussed, but only at the extremes. The case of Kilpatrick is perhaps such an extreme case (positioning him in the category of corrupt-incompetent). Nagin, by contrast, seems to have been more competent and had a better record in his first term than in the second. It is also the case that his most memorable show of incompetence was associated with his decisions and indecision during Hurricane Katrina, an event that would have proved a challenge for even the most able administrator. Kilpatrick's regime was beset with performance problems and scandal for the beginning and, most important, some feel that his incompetent leadership and personnel management was a major factor in Detroit's economic death spiral. Possibly, fiscal auster-



ity measures might have had a greater impact in stemming decline, had not Kilpatrick been enriching himself and his political cronies at the same time as he was making drastic cutbacks in public works and public safety. As a case-of-one, Kilpatrick is the best available evidence for the near inexorable tragedies ensuing when extreme incompetence meets corruption.

### Conclusions

Our prefatory discussion of corruption-competence nexus is just a few first steps to a better understanding of the relations of political incompetence and corruption. We've suggested that extreme incompetence of the executive officials is more likely to give rise to corruption; perhaps due to lack of sufficient knowledge or skill to achieve the ends they or their constituencies desire to have or lack of judgment or strength to notice and build the bulwark to put an end to the demands of corruption. Given the simple typology, we have focused on *corrupt* political executives to build a theory of understanding the relationship between *incompetence* and corruption.

One might ask: "Okay, extreme incompetence is strongly associated with corruption, but why does this matter?" If it is extreme incompetence we are talking about here, not garden-variety incompetence, what are the practical implications? One possibility is that the number of extremely incompetent people in positions of great authority has begun to increase. One reason is that the general dissatisfaction with professional (read: "experienced") politicians has led to the elevation of a significant number of persons with little or no experience. While inexperience does not always equate with incompetence, as suggested by cases reviewed here, the two are certainly related.

A related phenomenon is the halo effects accompanying competence. For decades, there has been a presumption that persons who are apparently extremely competent in a

non-political domain will likely be competent in a political domain. Instances of such halo reasoning have brought mixed results: Dwight Eisenhower, Warren Harding, and Donald Trump come to mind at the Presidential level, but a great many more instances can be identified among governors, typically individuals who have had business success but no experience in government or electoral office, individuals such as Doug Ducey (Arizona) and Dennis Daugaard (South Dakota). This is not to say that "outsiders" are necessarily incompetent, some have performed quite well, but a lack of experience with any job is hardly an asset in any complex job and is presumed to be one only in politics.

Possibly, the decline of mass media will in the long run result in a greater number of incompetent elected officials. For decades, the endorsements of newspapers played a significant role in some elections. Nowadays, there are fewer newspapers, readership is less and, more to the point, trust in media is at a historical low even among those who bother to read political coverage and editorials. Increasingly, citizens obtain their information, including their news and opinion, from social media (Twenge et al., 2019), especially Facebook and from their friends and political and ideological bubbles providing opinions based on the consumers' political views (see Sunstein, 2018). Such an information environment reduces the diversity of information content and the role of diverse sources as more or less objective and, ultimately, care in the vetting of candidates. Quite possibly, for future political candidates, indeed for some current candidates, celebrity, and even notoriety, will prove more important than competence or probity. Perhaps, it is time for us to direct our thoughts to the ones that were once thought of as extreme and rare incidents which may have turned out to be not "abnormal" anymore.

Submitted: January 28, 2022 KST, Accepted: March 08, 2022 KST



## References

- Anechiarico, F., & Jacobs, J. B. (1995). Purging Corruption from public contracting: The solutions are now part of the problem. *New York Law School Law Review*, 40(1), 143–176.
- Austin, D. (2014, August 29). Meet the 5 worst mayors in Detroit history. *Detroit Free Press*. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/2014/08/29/5-worst-mayors-in-detroit-history/14799541/>
- Baldas, T. (2017, August 3). Kwame Kilpatrick won't get break from prison after all. *Detroit Free Press*. <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2017/08/03/kwame-kilpatrick-mayor-detroit-judge/536104001/>
- Bandiera, O., Best, M. C., Khan, A. Q., & Prat, A. (2021). The allocation of authority in organizations: A field experiment with bureaucrats. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(4), 2195–2242. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjab029>
- Blackmon, B. (2015, March). Bill Campbell: He could have been the one: Looking back at the mayor who defined 1990s Atlanta. *Atlanta*. <http://www.atlantamagazine.com/90s/bill-campbell-one/>
- Boorstin, R. (1987a). Eight plead guilty in Syracuse kickback case. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/18/nyregion/8-plead-guilty-in-syracuse-kickback-case.html>
- Boorstin, R. (1987b). From Syracuse's hope to an indictment. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/17/nyregion/from-syracuse-s-hope-to-an-indictment.html>
- Bozeman, B., Molina, A. L., Jr., & Kaufmann, W. (2018). Angling for sharks, not pilot fish: Deep corruption, venal corruption, and public values failure. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 1(1), 5–27. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvx002>
- Brewer, G. A., & Selden, S. C. (1998). Whistle blowers in the federal civil service: New evidence of the public service ethic. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 8(3), 413–440. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024390>
- Brinkley, D., & Brewer, K. (2006). *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*. Morrow.
- Campbell, J.-L., & Göritz, A. S. (2014). Culture corrupts! A qualitative study of organizational culture in corrupt organizations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 120(3), 291–311. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1665-7>
- Campos, J. E., & Pradhan, S. (Eds.). (2007). *The Many Faces of Corruption: Tracking Vulnerabilities at the Sector Level*. World Bank Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-6725-4>
- Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Consiglio, C., Picconi, L., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2003). Personalities of politicians and voters: Unique and synergistic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 849–856. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.849>
- Cavas, C. P. (2015, February 11). *3 Admirals censured in 'Fat Leonard' scandal*. Defense News. <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/navy/2015/02/10/navy-admiralsscandal-fat-leonard-gdma-flags-corruption-bribery-carrier-reagan-deployment-singapore/23167837/>
- CNN.com. (2006, June 13). *Atlanta's former mayor sentenced to prison*. <http://www.cnn.com/2006/LAW/06/13/mayor.sentenced/>
- Decarolis, F., Fisman, R., Pinotti, P., & Vannutelli, S. (2020). *Rules, discretion, and corruption in procurement: Evidence from Italian government contracting* (No. w28209). National Bureau of Economic Research. [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w28209/w28209.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28209/w28209.pdf)
- Dewan, S. (2008, March 5). Ex-Mayor of Atlanta Enrolled in Prison Drug Program After Denial of a Problem. *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/05/us/05campbell.html>
- Donze, F. (2007, February 11). *Many New Orleanians say they are still waiting for Mayor Ray Nagin*. Pelicans. <http://www.pelicansreport.com/showthread.php?39194-Many-New-Orleanians-say-they-are-still-waiting-for-Mayor-Ray-Nagin>
- Dynes, A. M., Hassell, H. J. G., & Miles, M. R. (2019). The personality of the politically ambitious. *Political Behavior*, 41(2), 309–336. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-018-9452-x>
- Fears, D. (2006, February 18). Drama of ex-mayor plays out in Atlanta courtroom Campbell, once seen as heir to pioneering black politicians, now fights federal racketeering charges. *The Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/02/18/drama-of-ex-mayor-plays-out-in-atlanta-courtroom-span-classbankheadcampbell-once-seen-as-heir-to-pioneering-black-politicians-now-fights-federal-racketeering-chargesspan/e25270e6-c89d-412d-b260-d7282d84955a/?utm\\_term=.9638726e7b2e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2006/02/18/drama-of-ex-mayor-plays-out-in-atlanta-courtroom-span-classbankheadcampbell-once-seen-as-heir-to-pioneering-black-politicians-now-fights-federal-racketeering-chargesspan/e25270e6-c89d-412d-b260-d7282d84955a/?utm_term=.9638726e7b2e)
- Ferreira da Silva, F., & Costa, P. (2019). Do we need warm leaders? Exploratory study of the role of voter evaluations of leaders' traits on turnout in seven European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(1), 117–140. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12273>
- Flaig, E. (2013). To act with good advice: Greek Tragedy and the democratic political sphere. In J. P. Arnason, K. A. Raaflaub, & P. Wagner (Eds.), *The Greek Polis and the invention of democracy: A political-cultural transformation and its interpretations* (pp. 71–98). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Franchino, F., & Zucchini, F. (2014). Voting in a Multi-Dimensional Space: A Conjoint Analysis Employing Valence and Ideology Attributes of Candidates. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 3(2), 221–241. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2014.24>
- Frum, D. (2018). *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic*. HarperCollins.

- Funk, C. L. (1996). The impact of scandal on candidate evaluations: An experimental test of the role of candidate traits. *Political Behavior*, 18(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01498658>
- Girodo, M. (1991). Drug corruption in undercover agents: Measuring the risk. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 9(3), 361–370. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2370090310>
- Gorsira, M., Steg, L., Denkers, A., & Huisman, W. (2018). Corruption in organizations: Ethical climate and individual motives. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci8010004>
- Graycar, A., & Villa, D. (2011). The loss of governance capacity through corruption. *Governance*, 24(3), 419–438. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0491.2011.01535.x>
- Groseclose, T. (2001). A Model of Candidate Location When One Candidate Has a Valence Advantage. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(4), 862. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2669329>
- Heidenheimer, A. J., & Johnston, M. (Eds.). (2017). *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts* (3rd ed.). Transaction Publishers.
- Hendry, J. (2002). The principal's other problems: Honest incompetence and the specification of objectives. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), 98–113. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4134371>
- Hogan, R. (1994). Trouble at the top: Causes and consequences of managerial incompetence. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 46(1), 9–15. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.46.1.9>
- Hough, M., May, T., Hales, G., & Belur, J. (2018). Misconduct by police leaders in England and Wales: An exploratory study. *Policing and Society*, 28(5), 541–552. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1216989>
- Inglehart, R. (1988). The renaissance of political culture. *American Political Science Review*, 82(4), 1203–1230. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1961756>
- Jancsics, D. (2013). Petty corruption in Central and Eastern Europe: The client's perspective. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 60(3), 319–341. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-013-9451-0>
- Kirst, S. (2010, December 28). *Syracuse: In the eye of this beholder*. Syracuse.com. [https://www.syracuse.com/kirst/2010/12/syracuse\\_in\\_the\\_eye\\_of\\_this\\_be.html](https://www.syracuse.com/kirst/2010/12/syracuse_in_the_eye_of_this_be.html)
- Lancaster, T. D., & Montinola, G. R. (1997). Toward a methodology for the comparative study of political corruption. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 27(3/4), 185–206. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1008274416350>
- McGraw, K. M. (2003). Political impressions: Formation and management. In D. O. Sears, L. Huddy, & R. Jervis (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 394–432). Oxford University Press.
- Merriam-Webster. (2022). Competence. In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/competence>
- Mondak, J. J., & Huckfeldt, R. (2006). The accessibility and utility of candidate character in electoral decision making. *Electoral Studies*, 25(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2005.02.006>
- Ni, X., & Su, X. (2019). Institutional anticorruption in China: Effectiveness on bribery incidence. *Public Administration Review*, 79(4), 538–551. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13007>
- Osipian, A. L. (2010). Corrupt organizational hierarchies in the former Soviet Bloc. *Transition Studies Review*, 17(4), 822–836. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11300-010-0174-y>
- Pashev, K. V. (2011). Corruption and accession: Evidence from public procurement in Bulgaria. *Public Management Review*, 13(3), 409–432. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2011.553270>
- Philp, M. (2017). Conceptualizing political corruption. In A. I. Heidenheimer & M. Johnston (Eds.), *Political Corruption* (pp. 41–58). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315126647-4>
- Rendon, J. M., & Rendon, R. G. (2021). Analyzing procurement fraud in the US Navy. *Journal of Financial Crime*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jfc-09-2021-0207>
- Riordin, W. L. (1963). *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics*. EP Dutton.
- Rose-Ackerman, S. (1999). *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences, and Reform*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenblatt, V. (2012). Hierarchies, power inequalities, and organizational corruption. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 111(2), 237–251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1204-y>
- Ruiz-Palomino, P., & Martínez-Cañas, R. (2014). Ethical culture, ethical intent, and organizational citizenship behavior: The moderating and mediating role of person–organization fit. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 120(1), 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1650-1>
- Russell, G., & Donze, F. (2010, April 25). Mayor Ray Nagin leaves office without fulfilling his promises: To rid city hall of corruption and launch recovery zones. *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. [https://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2010/04/mayor\\_ray\\_nagin\\_was\\_elected\\_to.html](https://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2010/04/mayor_ray_nagin_was_elected_to.html)
- Soergel, A., & Tolson, J. (2014, December 31). The 10 Worst Presidents. *US News*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/special-reports/the-worst-presidents/slideshow/the-10-worst-presidents?int=news-rec&slide=10>
- Stachowicz-Stanusch, A., & Simha, A. (2013). An empirical investigation of the effects of ethical climates on organizational corruption. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 14(Supplement 1), S433–S446. <https://doi.org/10.3846/16111699.2012.744345>
- Suggs, E. (2011, May 4). Ex-Mayor Bill Campbell Resurfaces. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. <https://www.ajc.com/news/local/atlanta-mayor-bill-campbell-resurfaces/zbXUxK29wZ9juUSUUt3FN/>
- Sunstein, C. (2007). If people would be outraged by their rulings, should judges care? *Stanford Law Review*, 60(1), 155–212.
- Sunstein, C. (2018). *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton University Press.

- Syracuse Herald Journal. (1996, December 30). Lee Alexander Remembered. *Syracuse Herald Journal Newspaper*, 10.
- Twenge, J. M., Martin, G. N., & Spitzberg, B. H. (2019). Trends in U.S. Adolescents' media use, 1976–2016: The rise of digital media, the decline of TV, and the (near) demise of print. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(4), 329–345. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm000203>
- U.S. Census. (2020, March 30). *U.S. Census Bureau releases new educational attainment data*. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/educational-attainment.html>
- Victor, B., & Cullen, J. B. (1988). The organizational bases of ethical work climates. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 33(1), 101–125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392857>
- Waite, D., & Allen, D. (2003). Corruption and abuse of power in educational administration. *The Urban Review*, 35(4), 281–296. <https://doi.org/10.1023/b:urre.0000017531.73129.4f>
- Wolff, M. (2018). *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*. Henry Holt Publishing.
- Yardley, W. (2005, September 20). Mayor suspends flow of people to New Orleans. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/20/us/nationalspecial/mayor-suspends-flow-of-people-to-new-orleans.html>
- Zuckert, C. (2018). Trump as a Machiavellian Prince? Reflections on Corruption and American Constitutionalism. In M. Sable & A. Torres (Eds.), *Trump and Political Philosophy: Patriotism, Cosmopolitanism, and Civic Virtue* (pp. 73–87). Palgrave Macmillan.