

We expect local elected and appointed officials to make, implement, and evaluate urban policy. In this chapter, we first provide a general overview of the public policy process, beginning with the observation that policymaking in the public sector tends to be democratic in nature and thus is typified by bargaining and compromise. This tendency has the effect of *lessening* the “rationality” (defined in the corporate sector as efficiency) of the process, but it enhances participation and input into the policy process (bringing accountability and responsiveness). Next, we examine three ways to look at public policy: as a generally stable, orderly process comprised of sequential steps or stages; as a disorderly, largely reactive process; and as a trifurcated process consisting of three basic types of policies—allocational, developmental, and redistributive.

In subsequent sections we identify and briefly differentiate the functions of local policymakers. We begin with chief executive officers—city managers and mayors—and, after examining the extant research on both, we discuss their interactions, manager/mayor relations. Next comes an introduction to the American city council, whose citizen-members give so much in the name of the public interest. Finally, we examine local bureaucrats’ involvement in the policy process. Collectively, in 2013, cities and towns across America employed about 10.5 million full-time government workers (with a \$50.9 billion payroll) to put out fires, pick up refuse, run water treatment plants, and provide a host of other services.¹

Section five of the chapter highlights the special role that citizens acting alone or through groups and neighborhoods play in local policymaking. This activity helps to define the very essence of democracy. The sixth section provides a brief summary of the chapter.

THE NATURE OF URBAN POLICY

At the outset, we should define the concept of *public policy*. James Anderson describes it as a “relatively stable, purposive course of action or inaction followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern.”² He goes on to add that public policies are those developed by governmental bodies and officials. When the question arises as to whether deliberate inaction by government constitutes policy, most would answer yes. Anderson, for example, includes “inaction” as part of the definition of public policy and emphatically notes, “Recall that public policy is determined not only by what government does do but also by what it deliberately does not do.”³ A conscious choice to take no action

thus can be considered as endorsing or perpetuating existing policy. Political scientists Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz offer the classic statement of government's process of deciding not to take an action (which they call "nondecision-making") in their book *Power and Poverty*—it is "a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena; or failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process."⁴

How does *policymaking* differ from *decision making*? As the quote from Bachrach and Baratz suggests, the two terms often are used synonymously, but a difference of scope or degree does exist. In a narrow sense, decision making is choosing among competing alternatives; policymaking goes beyond this to include, in David Easton's words, "a web of decisions and actions that allocate values."⁵ A *policy*, then, is a series of decisions that creates a comprehensive set of standards or guidelines for dealing with a subject. The line between basic policy and less comprehensive tactical or programmatic decisions may be difficult to draw in practice. But we can recognize the following distinction: "For those (actions) which have the widest ramifications and the longest time perspective, and which generally require the most information and contemplation, we tend to reserve the term policy."⁶ In short, as noted in Chapter 1, we think of policy as the response of a political system to the various supports and demands produced by its environment.⁷

Considerable agreement exists on one basic point about government policymaking: that it is not always a highly rational, scientifically based enterprise, but is, instead, essentially political in nature. This is not to suggest that systematic analysis has no place in the policymaking effort. We know, both from experience and from reading the literature, that governments at all levels expend considerable resources to improve their capacity for making informed choices—they hire analysts, retain consultants, and fund all kinds of sophisticated research in the quest for more effective policies. Sometimes the results influence major policy decisions significantly, as, for example, when a benefit-cost analysis results in the decision to go forward with a large public works project. Similarly, much of the focus of modern public management focuses on how to make government policies that are more efficient and effective.

Many times, however, the attempt to ensure more rational choices through analysis goes for naught, as a host of obstacles and/or unintended consequences interfere with the successful resolution of the problem. For example, in 1970, in the midst of the urban sprawl and suburbanization process in America, economist Anthony Downs noted that as soon as a major expressway was built, it quickly filled up with cars, leaving the community no better off than it had been before. This poor policy outcome occurred not because of bad planning, argued Downs, but because of a very rational response made by rush-hour drivers. This unintended consequence had been so automatic over the years that Downs formulated what he called the Law of Peak-Hour Traffic Congestion: "On urban commuter

expressways, peak-hour traffic congestion rises to meet maximum capacity.”⁸ Three and one-half decades later, little has changed—just ask the daily commuter in Los Angeles, Chicago, Oklahoma City, or Phoenix.

Policy experts Charles Lindblom and Edward J. Woodhouse say we are of a mixed mind about rational policy and the influence of politics: “A deep conflict runs through common attitudes toward policymaking. People want policy to be informed and well analyzed, perhaps even correct or scientific; yet they also want policymaking to be democratic and hence necessarily an exercise of power.”⁹ This conflict is evident, for example, in policymaking for economic development. Some contend that an effective development policy can be produced only through extensive fact gathering, planning, and analysis, after which the final decisions rest in the hands of a small elite group with close ties to the business community. Others worry about the lack of popular participation in such an approach. Later in this chapter, we hear more from Paul Peterson, a contributor to this debate, who believes that economic development policymaking is so vital to a community’s well-being that the local leadership will restrict the process to a few dominant interests, thus minimizing conflict among competing groups. First, though, we need to consider the steps in the policymaking process.

POLICYMAKING AS A RELATIVELY STABLE, ORDERLY SERIES OF EVENTS

Anderson’s definition, cited earlier in this chapter, characterized public policymaking as a “relatively stable” course of action. And even though that course of action, as Lindblom suggests, is not always highly rational because in the public sector we must, at times, satisfy potentially competing values (such as efficiency and responsiveness), we still can identify several steps or stages in the process.¹⁰ Briefly, these policy stages and the important issues or questions involved with each stage may be outlined as follows:

1. *Issue creation.* What gives rise to the problem? How does the issue get defined as a public matter?
2. *Agenda building.* How does the issue reach public decision makers? Who participates in the agenda-building process and how? What keeps problems off the public agenda?
3. *Issue resolution.* How do public officials respond to demands for problem resolution? How is the final policy choice made?
4. *Policy implementation.* What happens to the policy after it has been passed and given to the bureaucracy to be actually carried out? Are rules, regulations, or adjudicatory mechanisms needed to enforce the legislation? How are discretion and “decision rules” used by government officials in the implementation process? What outputs are associated with a policy?
5. *Policy outcomes, evaluation, and feedback.* What impact does the policy have on individuals or groups? Is the policy effective; did the policy reach its goals? Is the policy in need of change or should it be terminated?

Issue Creation

Political issues are created in various ways. Roger Cobb and Charles Elder emphasize the interaction of an initiator and a triggering device as the first step.¹¹ In the most common case, a person, organization, or group perceives an unfavorable distribution of resources and seeks government help to redress the imbalance. Such initiators may then search for allies or turn to the media in the hope of publicizing their cause. They may benefit from the help of a friendly officeholder who, for various self-serving reasons, wishes to adopt and push the cause of the aggrieved party. The critical step in issue creation may well be publicizing the issue—bringing the proposed solution of the problem to the attention both of those who are already aware of the problem and of those who will be concerned once they learn about it.

Triggering devices are largely unanticipated occurrences that create a problem requiring government response. External events—technological change, a natural disaster, or an unexpected human event (a riot or a sudden upsurge in violent crime or even a major court decision)—may give rise to a situation that stimulates a response by an affected group. The point is that a triggering mechanism and an initiator, such as an affected group, must converge to create a public issue.

Agenda Building

How does a problem or issue reach the public agenda, where some official response is expected? Not only must certain groups or powerful interests perceive the issue as a legitimate concern, but it also must be seen as an appropriate target for government action. This requirement may seem simple enough, but in fact one of the most effective strategies by those wanting to avoid official action is to argue that the issue lies outside the scope of government authority.¹² For example, those opposed to mandatory seatbelt or motorcycle helmet laws usually insist that these matters of “personal safety” should not be dictated by government policy.

Two factors seem especially important in determining who gets access to the public agenda. First, local officeholders have enormous discretion over which issues will be considered officially; they are not merely passive arbiters of problems brought to them by others. Elected officials, especially at the local level, frequently arrive at their own conclusions regarding the nature of local problems. As we discuss further later, city council members tend to see themselves not as politicians expected to respond to the pressures of group demands, but rather as nonpolitical “trustees” or “volunteers” who have been elected to pursue their own views of the public interest.

A second key factor in whether issues are placed on the public agenda is the nature of the proposing group. Some organizations have far easier access to public officials than do others. As might be expected, the more politically powerful or prestigious the group, the more likely its concerns are to find their way onto the action agenda. Elected officials also

are much more likely to grant access to groups with whom they share values and interests. Not uncommonly, the politically powerful groups and the groups with views similar to those of council members are one and the same. Business interests, in particular, are likely to fall into this category, for their commitment to growth and investment is often viewed as being in the interest of the larger community as well.

Issue Resolution

The resolution stage is where some final outcome occurs. Does the issue become resolved with the adoption of a new policy or modification of an existing one? Or is the matter disposed of in some other way—formally rejected, passed to some other level of government, or postponed for some time? How are these decisions made? Because decision making is considered in some detail in the next chapter, at this point we only sketch briefly the process by which such choices might be made.

Charles Lindblom argues that policy is determined largely on the basis of interaction among contending interests.¹³ How does one group or interest gain the upper hand—in other words, exert sufficient control or influence to achieve its objectives? Lindblom specifies the following methods of resolution:

- *Persuasion.* In many instances, one participant may be able to show another why the desires of the former will benefit the latter. We should not underestimate the power of persuasion.¹⁴
- *Threats.* Although not commonly used, threats may be resorted to by some groups. A threat may be as simple as telling officials that if they take a particular course of action, the group will feel compelled to oppose either their reelection or some action that the officials support.
- *Exchange.* The adoption of a mutually beneficial arrangement is a widely used political tactic. Officials frequently engage in “logrolling” (supporting another’s project or proposal in direct exchange for that person’s support of one’s own project). Money is perhaps the most common medium of exchange, even in politics—not for bribes as such, but to buy influence, access, or services; as an organizational resource, money can work miracles.
- *Authority.* Public officials occupy positions of considerable authority, which can be an important resource. Their positions can enhance persuasive power and provide access to jobs and money, which may influence the actions of others.
- *Analysis.* The use of systematic analysis also can be listed among the influences shaping the final decision. It may provide just the ammunition needed by one side or the other to push its case. Certainly a well-conceived, accurate, and timely study may tip the scales on a closely contested issue. As Lindblom says, analysis is an indispensable element in politics: “It becomes a method of exerting control.”¹⁵

Policy Implementation

The implementation stage is where administrators and the bureaucracy enter. Policy is inevitably modified, molded, and influenced by administrative implementation. We address bureaucratic behavior more completely later in this chapter, but we should note at this point that in large public organizations, policymaking, as Lindblom puts it, “rests overwhelmingly in the hands of the bureaucracy.”¹⁶ Administrative officials exercise an enormous amount of discretion in determining how policy is carried out. Bureaucrats also significantly impact policy by developing decision rules—devices to simplify and expedite decision making and reduce uncertainty. Finally, administrators are frequently the source of much of the analysis and advice that informs the policy choices made by legislators and the chief executive.

Two other features of policy implementation merit consideration. First, the implementation process may also be affected substantially by the need for coordination among fragmented agencies or with other governments, or even by the need to bargain with employee groups to secure the cooperation needed to ensure policy success. Second, within the context of systems theory, policy implementation represents an *output* of the political system. For example, after the council passes an ordinance, funds are expended to deliver a good or service (an output), or a rule or regulation (an output) is formulated by the administrative agency to ensure compliance with the new ordinance.

Policy Outcomes, Evaluation, and Feedback

The policy process does not end with implementation. Classic case study implementation analyses by Frank Levy, Arnold Meltzer, and Aaron Wildavsky in Oakland, California, and Robert Lineberry in San Antonio, Texas; integrative “third generation” implementation theory offered by Malcolm L. Goggin and his associates; and more recent scholarly research on bureaucratic rulemaking by Barry Bozeman and Cornelius Kerwin all suggest that policy implementation is associated with policy outcomes.¹⁷

Many public policies make a difference in the lives of ordinary citizens on a daily basis; policies have impacts. These impacts or outcomes *must* be evaluated to gain useful feedback about the nature of the policy itself. Is the bureaucracy, for example, delivering the policy in an efficient fashion? If not, perhaps a change in administrative practices or procedures is required. Is the policy reaching its intended legislative goals—that is, is it effective? If not, perhaps the policy can be modified to better meet such goals. Or, as James Lester and Joseph Stewart Jr. note, perhaps policy termination is necessary.¹⁸ Questions such as these can be answered through properly designed and executed program evaluations. Finally, in a democracy we expect public officials to be accountable and responsive to the people. Systems theory *requires* a feedback loop by which the people can evaluate the adequacy of all stages of the policy process.

Even though a series of policymaking stages can thus be identified, the policy process is often not quite as stable, orderly, and rational as urban leaders would like it to be. This is particularly true when one examines policymaking in large cities, where sometimes the

process appears chaotic—characterized primarily by a pattern of government reaction to a series of ever-changing external forces.

REACTIVE POLICYMAKING

In *The Ungovernable City*, political scientist Douglas Yates presented a rather complete, even entertaining, description of urban policymaking that emphasized its nonsequential and disorderly nature.¹⁹ His basic point was that, given the level and range of demands placed on big-city officials and the instability in the local political environment, the prospects for orderly agenda building, planning, and implementation are very slim. Why? Yates insisted that a number of structural characteristics of urban government create a distinctive situation that makes comprehensive, systematic policymaking impossible. Without listing all of these characteristics, we might note that Yates emphasized service delivery as the basic function of urban government. Services are tangible, visible, and even personal in their impact; in many instances, they can be divided so that people in need receive more than others do. But citizens and an array of community organizations constantly press their service demands on the mayor and the urban bureaucracy, neither of which has the formal power or the resources to respond effectively to all these demands. This lack of administrative authority can result from the presence of independent boards, uncooperative and independent jurisdictions in the metropolitan area, and/or bureaucratic resistance and autonomy.

Yates went on to stress how fragmented authority creates chaos in urban policymaking, calling this unstable political free-for-all “street-fighting pluralism,” which he defined as “a pattern of unstructured, multilateral conflict in which many different combatants fight continuously with one another in a very great number of permutations and combinations.”²⁰ Because the demands from this unrestrained battle are not filtered, channeled, assigned priority, or otherwise mediated by formal political representatives, they create a constant stream of new and often bewildering issues for urban decision makers. In effect, urban policymaking becomes a reactive procedure by which the official leadership sets its agenda in response to the most dramatic problems and the loudest complaints. Yates compared the situation to a penny arcade’s shooting gallery, where more targets than can be hit continually keep popping up on all sides.

This reactive model purports to describe politics in such major cities as Boston, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, and New York. In small or medium-sized cities—where fewer groups are involved, events are less pressing, and the degree of uncertainty and instability is lower—the model may not fit as well. But even in a slower-paced community, policymaking may at times be perceived as essentially reactive.

TRIFURCATED POLICYMAKING: ALLOCATIONAL, DEVELOPMENTAL, AND REDISTRIBUTIVE POLICIES

In his book *City Limits*, Paul Peterson challenges both the more traditional, open systems approach to understanding urban policymaking discussed earlier and Yates’s model of urban policymaking, with its emphasis on fragmentation and street-fighting pluralism.²¹

Peterson agrees with the assumption of both models that bargaining and compromise among contending interests may determine many of the most visible actions taken by city governments. But these *allocational policies* are not the most vital actions taken by the city. Above all, he says, the city is committed to protecting and promoting its economic well-being. To that end, it must pursue what Peterson calls *developmental policies*—decisions designed to further growth and expansion of business interests in the city. These issues are not subject to the ordinary pull-and-tug of pressure politics. Instead, they tend to be settled through highly centralized decision-making processes dominated by business and professional elites. Conflict is minimized, and the process is closed to outsiders. The result is a quiet drama “where political leaders can give reasoned attention to the longer range interests of the city, taken as a whole.”²²

The quest to improve the city’s economic base may lead to measures that have adverse consequences for certain groups. For example, Peterson asserts that *redistributive policies* designed to benefit the poor do not promote the long-term economic welfare of the community, and, therefore, local officials should avoid them. Redistribution, he believes, should be dealt with at the national level, not by city governments. But surely local groups, such as minorities or the poor, will raise such a ruckus that city officials will be forced to deal with them? Not necessarily, according to Peterson. He insists that political party and group activity is so limited at the local level that community elites are largely free to concentrate on the city’s economic growth. In effect, Peterson’s model postulates that when a community’s most vital interests are at stake, local policymakers act to further the long-term good of the city.

As urban politics scholars Bernard H. Ross and Myron A. Levine note, “Peterson’s view of the limits of city politics has proven quite controversial.”²³ The economic determinism of the model is simply too much for some. Empirical observation of the actions of local officials show that they do care about and pursue policies that benefit poor individuals and neighborhoods—that is, local leaders do engage in redistributive policies. They also note that the business community in a city is not a monolithic entity; businesses are not always united behind developmental projects. There may be competition among businesses representing different sectors of the economy—wholesale, retail, manufacturing, tourism—or among businesses that serve different parts of the city or metropolitan area—central business district, strip malls, megamalls, neighborhood boutiques, and so on. In the final analysis, Charles C. Euchner and Stephen J. McGovern suggest that Peterson “has overstated . . . [his] case.”²⁴ Still, “Peterson’s theory remains valid as it points to an extremely strong and important tendency in municipal affairs: Cities tend to cater to the needs of the business community and of tax-paying, upper- and upper-middle-income residents.”²⁵

Perhaps we can better understand the process of policymaking if we examine the roles of those who officially are charged with formulating urban policy—chief executives, city council members, and local bureaucrats.

CHIEF EXECUTIVES

Urban chief executives, whether they are mayors or city managers, invariably play a prominent role in the policy process. Research by public administration scholars David Ammons and Chardean Newell found that these officials worked hard: mayors in mayor-council and commission cities put in an average of sixty-six hours a week and city managers report an average workweek of about fifty-six hours.²⁶ More recently, a 2009 International City/County Management Association (ICMA) survey of city managers reports that 53 percent of the city managers who responded worked between 50–59 hours a week, with another 28 percent reporting a work week of 60–69 hours. The mean hours among the 369 managers who provided a finite number of working hours was 55.1 hours per week.²⁷ Much of the growth of executive power has come about unintentionally and despite traditional fears of executive authority. But cutbacks in federal funds, fiscal stress, and the demands of modern public management have made strong executive leadership indispensable.

MAYORS

Perhaps David R. Morgan and Sheilah S. Watson best summarize the nature of the American mayor when they note:

Every U.S. city has a mayor. There the similarities end. Incumbent officeholders differ markedly in their personality, style, energy, and effectiveness. More than this, the offices themselves reflect considerable variation. Some mayors are elected directly by the people; some are not. Some possess the veto power while others do not; appointment power fluctuates significantly—all of which may advance or impede the capacity of the mayor to offer productive policy leadership.²⁸

As discussed in Chapter 3, a mayor's powers are most restricted, of course, in the council-manager system, wherein the mayor's office is often, but not always (as we will see), largely ceremonial. Under most mayor-council plans, chief executives are not officially members of the legislative body and cannot vote except to break a tie. A large-scale 2011 ICMA survey involving about 3,500 cities, for example, reports that in mayor-council plans, mayors are members of the council in only 45 percent of the cities.²⁹ In 57 percent of the cities, they can vote only to break a tie, and they cannot vote on any issue in another 16 percent of the cities. Mayors in council-manager cities, in contrast, ordinarily are members of the council (in 90 percent of the cities) and cast votes on all issues (in 70 percent of the cities). Mayors in both forms of government generally preside over council meetings. But veto power is rare among council-manager mayors (in 14 percent of cities), whereas a majority (56 percent) of mayors in mayor-council communities have that power.

In cities adopting the mayor-council form of government, 30 percent employ a full-time mayor, and this is most likely to happen in cities with at least 250,000 or more residents. The mayor is usually elected directly by the people (in 96 percent of the cities), does not

face term limits (in 91 percent), and serves a four-year term (46 percent) or two-year term (33 percent). Increasingly, and most noticeably in medium- to large-sized cities, mayors are receiving help in managing the city from one or more chief administrative officers (CAOs). The method of selecting these officials varies. In 14 percent of the mayor-council cities, the mayor makes the appointment. In 60 percent of the cities responding to the 2011 ICMA survey, the council (39 percent) or the mayor and council working together (21 percent) selected the CAO. In another 24 percent of the jurisdictions, the CAO was nominated by the mayor and approved by the council. Most mayors are male (87 percent) and white (96 percent). Regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity, mayors are more educated than the populations they represent.³⁰ In 2009, the average nationwide salary for a mayor was about \$51,918. In mayor-council cities the mean salary was \$63,241; in council-manager cities the comparable figure was a little more than \$33,500 a year. In cities with 500,000 to one million residents, the average salary is \$65,595; in cities with populations greater than one million people the mean salary is \$156,481.³¹

The Prerequisites of Mayoral Leadership and Political Entrepreneurship

In a seminal article on the critical importance of the role played by American mayors in responding to the “urban crisis,” Jeffrey Pressman argued that formal authority is only the foundation of the resources essential to mayoral leadership and political entrepreneurship.³² Pressman listed a number of other institutional characteristics that are also necessary:

- Adequate financial and staff resources within the city government
- City jurisdiction over key policy areas—education, housing, redevelopment, and job training
- Mayoral jurisdiction within the city government in these key policy fields
- A full-time salary for the mayor along with sufficient staff for policy planning, speech writing, and so on
- Vehicles for publicity, such as friendly newspapers or television stations
- Political support groups, including a party, that can be mobilized to support the mayor’s goals

As this list suggests, institutional barriers can substantially affect a mayor’s capacity for leadership. But the personal qualities of the mayor are often of equal or greater importance. The pluralistic, dispersed nature of local government demands political leaders who can accumulate personal influence to supplement their limited formal authority.³³

Recent Research on Mayors

As Melvin G. Holli suggests, historically we have learned about the American mayoralty from “monographs, urban biographies . . . and studies of single cities and their mayors.”³⁴ While this literature is rich in detail, informative, and at times even entertaining,

it is also journalistic, anecdotal, and impressionistic—findings can't be generalized beyond the single city and mayor studied. In recent years, a growing number of scholars of urban politics and management have conducted studies that examine the American mayoralty from a more empirical, systematic, and comparative perspective. As such, their findings are more able to be generalized, and the studies are less impressionistic and more scientific. A brief review of a few of these studies will provide a flavor of this important and developing research on the American mayor.

Research by P. Edward French and David H. Folz is particularly interesting because it attempts to discover whether differences exist in executive behavior and decision making between mayors and city managers in small U.S. cities (those with populations between 2,500 and 24,500).³⁵ Historically, urban studies have focused on big cities such as New York, Boston, or Chicago, or on a group of central cities that define what are called "metropolitan areas." These six hundred or so central cities must contain at least 50,000 residents and are where the vast majority of Americans live. But there are also over 5,000 cities in the United States with populations of less than 25,000 that have rarely been studied systematically. French and Folz selected a random sample of 1,000 of these cities and, by conducting two mailed surveys, secured a database that included about five hundred city managers and mayors. Their findings suggest that city managers in small communities, like those in big cities, spend more of their time on management and on policy than do mayors.³⁶ This finding does not hold true, however, in those small cities in which the mayor is aided by a chief administrative officer (CAO). In these cities, the mayor spends about the same amount of time as the city manager does on policy activities. And in small cities in which the mayor does not have a CAO, the mayor spends about the same amount of time on management activities as does a big-city mayor. In terms of the four dimensions of the governmental process—mission, policy, administration, and management—both mayors and city managers believe that they are more extensively involved in mission and policy activities than in management and administrative activities. But city managers reported involvement in all four dimensions of the governmental process at levels that were higher to a statistically significant degree than those reported by mayors—and this difference held true regardless of whether the mayor was aided by a CAO or not. Research findings also suggest that "city managers are more likely than mayors to consult with key stakeholders before they reach a decision that affects a local service or project," and that "there were no statistically significant differences in how mayors and city managers rated the perceived level of influence that members of interest groups have on shaping their decisions" across six policy areas.³⁷

Research by Zoltan L. Hajnal focuses on the election of black mayors: "The first and most obvious [lesson that can be drawn from this study] is that black representation does matter."³⁸ Hajnal used a pooled sample of the American Election Study over eight years to assess changes in white attitudes and policy preferences of whites under black mayors. His findings suggest that "although white Republicans seem largely immune to the effects of black incumbency, for Democrats and independents an experience with a black mayoralty

tends to decrease racial tension, increase racial sympathy, and increase support of black leadership.”³⁹ On the other hand, John P. Pelissero, David B. Holian, and Laura A. Tomaka use an interrupted time-series design to determine whether the election of a city’s first minority mayor (black or Latino) has any short- or long-term impacts on city fiscal policies. They did not find significant changes in city revenues or spending per capita during a twenty-one-year period as a result of electing a minority mayor.⁴⁰

CITY MANAGERS

In council-manager cities, the mayor has extremely limited formal power and is forced to exercise political leadership by facilitating and coordinating the work of others. The original theory of this plan implied that the city council collectively would provide the initiative and leadership in policy formulation, and that a full-time professional administrator, the city manager, would then be employed to conduct the daily administrative activities of city government under the overall guidance of the council. In this way, the administration of city government would be divorced from politics and policymaking—a task that would be left primarily, if not solely, to the elected mayor and council. Indications are, however, that the plan has never, even in its early stages, worked in this idealized fashion. In recent years, overwhelming evidence has shown the prominent role city managers play in all four dimensions of the governmental process: helping to determine the *mission* (purpose and scope) of government, initiating and formulating *policy* recommendations, *administration* through policy and program implementation, and *management* through the day-to-day control of human, fiscal, and information/technology resources.

Public administration scholar John Nalbandian argues that today’s complex urban environment compels city managers to become involved in community politics.⁴¹ As appointed officials, though, managers had best avoid direct involvement in local elections. Their political role takes another form, and it extends beyond merely advising the council. Modern city managers have become full-fledged brokers, building coalitions and negotiating compromises among competing groups.

Who Are They?

Survey data show that local managers are an elite group that is unusually homogeneous with respect to gender, race, age, education, and experience. In 2009, for example, the ICMA surveyed all appointed city managers and chief administrative officers (CAOs) in jurisdictions with a population of 10,000 or more (a sample size of 1,960). After follow-up reminders, 22 percent or 427 of the managers responded. Although the data that follows is not exclusively for city managers operating in council-manager cities, the survey results do represent the general pool of managers who serve as city managers and CAOs.⁴²

The 2009 ICMA survey reported that 89 percent of local managers were male—a change from 95 percent in 1989 and 99 percent in 1974, indicating that gender diversification is taking place in the city/county management profession, albeit slowly. The authors of the

report, Jerri Killian and Enamul Choudhury, note an inverse relationship between population size and female city managers, with women chief executives being found in smaller (10,000 to 24,999) jurisdictions. In a series of articles, Richard Fox and Robert Schuhmann studied women as local managers using a survey conducted under the auspices of the ICMA. They provide a demographic profile of women serving as local managers. Of the total 410 women serving in the United States at the time as local chief administrative officers, 257 responded to the ICMA survey.⁴³ About 87 percent of the women serve as local managers in cities with populations of 25,000 or less. The mean age of the women responding to the survey is 47.9 years. The representative female local manager is highly educated when compared to her gender group generally. For example, she is nine times more likely to have a master's degree than is a woman in the general population (35 percent versus 4 percent). Most of the women local managers are white (92 percent). The average time spent in their present position is about six years, but over half (51 percent) of the local managers indicate they have been in their present position four years or less. In terms of political ideology, 37 percent of the women self-identify as liberals, 35 percent as conservatives, and 28 percent as moderates. The greatest motivator for women administrators is their commitment to public service—seven in ten women identified this commitment as the primary reason they chose to be a local manager.

In another article, Fox and Schuhmann note that, compared with men, women city managers are (1) more likely to incorporate citizen input in their decisions, (2) are more likely to emphasize the importance of communication with citizens and with elected and appointed government officials in carrying out their duties, and (3) are less likely to see themselves as policy entrepreneurs and more likely to see their role as that of manager and facilitator. They note, "Women in this study were more likely to value citizen input and would prefer to be in the middle of a 'web' of interactions rather than to be on top of the hierarchy."⁴⁴

Finally, Fox and Schuhmann contend that the slow inclusion of women into the field of city management may, in part, be explained by the mentoring experiences of women city managers, who are significantly more likely than men to rely on female mentors.⁴⁵ Also, significantly fewer women than men indicated that they had had male professors who mentored them. This gender divide presents an obstacle, since women have fewer choices and opportunities to meet women in high-level positions and in educational institutions.

Returning to our profile of local managers based on the 2009 ICMA survey, we find that almost two-thirds of the city managers (63 percent) are 50–64 years old, with 30 percent in the age group 35–49. Reflecting little change over many years, by 2009, 95 percent of the city managers were white. Unlike previous surveys, however, in 2009 respondents were asked a separate question about their ethnic identity. Thirteen percent of the managers self-identified as Hispanic. The typical manager had served in his or her present position for 6.8 years (an increase over prior years) and had spent a total of 15.2 years as a local government executive, an increase of nearly 5 years over prior data. This 26 percent increase

in average tenure in a position and the approximate 50 percent increase in average tenure in the profession both bode well for a profession that has been characterized as “serve and move.” Job stability is now greater and should serve as an even stronger incentive for young people to enter the city management profession. However, as the average 6.8 years’ tenure in position suggests, few city managers were spending too long in one city. Research on “long-serving” city managers (defined as at least 20 years of service in the same city) by Douglas J. Watson and Wendy L. Hassett finds that most of these managers serve in smaller cities (populations under 30,000) that are relatively homogeneous, politically stable, and committed to the principles of the reform movement.⁴⁶ These managers are well-educated and committed to public service and to “their communities, their staffs, and the elected officials for whom they work.”⁴⁷

The survey also found that local managers were a well-educated group: 20 percent held a bachelor’s degree, 73 percent had a master’s degree, and 6 percent had an earned doctoral degree. Over the past several decades, academic areas of study for local managers have shifted substantially from engineering to preparation in public administration and business management. “Since the 1950s the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has identified the MPA [Masters of Public Administration] as the appropriate academic preparation for those pursuing a career in city management.”⁴⁸ Fifty-one percent of the respondents in the 2009 ICMA survey held a MPA degree. In 2009 the average city manager/CAO earned about \$106,000. In cities with populations of over 50,000, the city manager/CAO, on average, was more likely to be paid about \$154,000; in cities with populations between 100,000 and 500,000 the average salary was about \$184,000; in America’s big cities with 500,000 or more residents the mean salary for city managers is over \$210,000.⁴⁹

What Do They Do?

According to the official position of the ICMA, the following four essential responsibilities rest with city managers:

- Formulating policy on overall problems
- Preparing the budget, presenting it to the council, and administering it when approved by the council
- Appointing and removing most of the principal department heads in city government
- Forming extensive external relationships to deal with overall problems of city operations⁵⁰

In addition, most city charters charge managers with the responsibility for executing policy made by the city council.

In a classic study, political scientist Deil Wright contends that city managers’ duties can be grouped into three basic categories: managerial, policy related, and political.⁵¹ Executing

policy, budgeting, and controlling bureaucracy through appointment and removal are the key elements of the *managerial role*. The *policy-related role* involves managers' relationships with the council and mayor. In the *political role*, the manager is called on to negotiate not only with officials at other levels of government, particularly the state and federal level, but also with a bevy of nongovernmental groups and individuals throughout the community.

In Wright's survey of city managers in forty-five large cities, respondents were asked to indicate how they in fact allotted their time among the three basic roles and how they would like to allot their time. Survey results show that city managers said that they spent 60 percent of their time in the management role, 21 percent in the policy role, 16 percent in the political role, and 3 percent doing "other" tasks. They preferred, however, to spend less time in the administrative role (46 percent) and more time in the policy role (19 percent), the political role (19 percent), and their "other" role (9 percent). Most managers apparently wanted to spend more time interacting with the council and the larger public.

Twenty years after the Wright study, research by Charldean Newell and David Ammons found that the gap between what city managers do and what they want to do had narrowed.⁵² Their sample of 142 city managers in cities with populations of 50,000 or more found that city managers devoted about half their time (51 percent) to administrative activities, 32 percent to the policy role, and 17 percent to the political role. Moreover, these actual role allocations matched almost perfectly their preferred role allocations. Based on the 2009 ICMA survey that included almost 400 city managers and CAOs discussed above, Jerri Killian and Enamul Choudhury report findings similar to Newell and Ammons in terms of actual time managers spent in their management, policy, and political roles. The 2009 study does depart, however, from the earlier Newell and Ammons study in terms of how managers prefer to allocate their time. The urban leaders desired to spend slightly less time in their management role and strongly wished to increase the amount of time they spend in their political role.⁵³ A more recent study by David Ammons examines role similarities and differences between city managers and chief administrative officers (CAOs, also frequently called "city administrators") using survey data secured from persons who have served as both.⁵⁴ First Ammons discusses the debate surrounding whether city managers serving in council-manager municipalities and city administrators who provide broad administrative leadership in mayor-council cities are functional equivalents. Although he notes many similarities and differences, he defers offering a definitive response to this question to the conclusion of his article. Next, he reports the mean percentage of time devoted to the management, policy, and political roles for 275 executives when they were in their positions as city managers and when they served as CAOs. The time allocations are remarkably similar. When they served as city managers, the city executives declared they spent 53.2 percent in the management role, 29.0 percent in the policy role, and 17.9 percent in the political role. In their city administrator positions, the time allocations were 53.8 percent in the management role, 26.9 percent in policy role, and 19.0 percent in the political role. After a thorough analysis of perceived differences and similarities among those who served

as both city managers and city administrators across a number of administrative, policy, political, job complexity, and career progression questions, Ammons concludes: “[O]n several key dimensions—particularly on matters of budget and human resource management—they [survey respondents] reject the assertion of role equivalence. On these important dimensions, the city manager’s influence and authority are perceived to be greater.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ammons asserts, “Professionalism tends to be advanced by the appointment of a city administrator and advanced even further by the appointment of a city manager.”⁵⁶ Research also shows that attitudes of city managers regarding role importance attitudes vary according to municipal, structural, and city demographic characteristics.⁵⁷

Finally, in terms of what city managers do, James Svava argues that the three-role typology offered by Wright and later used by Newell and Ammons should be “reconceptualized” into four roles: mission, policy, administration, and management.⁵⁸ We agree; these “dimensions of the governmental process” are discussed further later in this chapter.

Even in an urban world less chaotic than the one depicted by Yates’s model of street-fighting pluralism, city managers must play a complex policy role perhaps undreamed of by their early predecessors. In fact, many see the city manager engaging in behavior that was traditionally reserved for elected politicians. The manager, in the words of James Banovetz, must operate as a “catalyst in the formulation of urban policy, ‘brokering’ or compromising and satisfying the multitudinous and conflicting demands made by special interest groups.”⁵⁹ Perhaps Camille Cates Barnett, who holds MPA and PhD degrees and is a former city manager of Houston, Austin, and Dallas, Texas, is prototypic of the new breed of city managers. Admitting that as a city manager she was a “facilitator” and “negotiator,” she notes, “I think it’s abdicating for a manager not to tell people what she thinks. But you don’t ever want to upstage your council people.”⁶⁰

MAYOR-MANAGER RELATIONS

The relationship between mayor and manager has been the subject of considerable attention among urban scholars and practitioners.⁶¹ The original council-manager plan envisioned a modest role, at best, for the mayor, but this expectation probably was unrealistic. Even in many smaller communities mayors have been known to exercise considerable influence on a host of municipal affairs. In fact, a classic study of several small communities in Florida revealed that an activist mayor—especially one who has been popularly elected—can pose a threat to a manager’s tenure.⁶² More recent research by Gordon Whitaker and Ruth Hoogland DeHoog confirms this finding.⁶³ In addition, these researchers aver that contrary to some findings, conflict is a frequent cause for turnover among city managers. They argue that city managers should attempt to better understand the role of conflict in community politics and should be better trained in conflict resolution techniques.

Still, with cooperation, the relationship between mayors and managers can and should be mutually beneficial. James Svava, for example, contends that the mayor in the

council-manager plan plays a unique, albeit ambiguous, role in city affairs.⁶⁴ Svava creates a seven-category mayoral leadership typology based on combinations of twelve roles (activities) performed by mayors in North Carolina. He concludes that the mayor is the “stabilizer” in the council-manager plan: “He will be more or less central, more or less public, more or less assertive as conditions warrant. . . . Effective [mayoral] leadership is built upon strengthening the other participants in the governing process rather than controlling or supplanting them.”⁶⁵

David Morgan and Sheilah Watson draw on a national survey to analyze the way in which mayors and city managers often work together.⁶⁶ They find that in large cities, especially, the two officials often form teams or create partnerships, although the mayor took the lead in most cases. Among smaller communities, mayor-manager collaboration also appeared, but with somewhat less frequency. Here, the city manager was a bit more likely to emerge as the dominant leader of the mayor-manager team. Finally, the authors comment on the prevalence of what they call “caretaker” governments. In about a third of all cities, neither the mayor nor the manager possesses abundant power regardless of the frequency with which they interact. Consequently, neither official has sufficient authority to affect municipal policy decisively. Large council-manager cities, however, had far fewer caretaker regimes than did smaller communities.

THE CITY COUNCIL

Although the need for executive leadership remains crucial, representative government mandates an active policymaking role for the legislative branch. Who are these people at the municipal level? And what are they doing?

The first large-scale ICMA survey of cities in the twenty-first century allows for a better understanding of city council members.⁶⁷ The average council size in the United States is six members. Of the more than 25,000 city council members who responded to the survey, 22 percent were female, up from 10 percent in the 1970s. Sixty-seven percent of all survey cities reported that at least one female serves on the council. Political scientists Susan MacManus and Charles Bullock, the authors of the ICMA study, suggest that the “biggest obstacle to women’s election is their reticence to run. Female candidacy rates still lag behind those of their male counterparts.”⁶⁸ Most council members (87.5 percent) were white, a modest change from the mid-1980s when the comparable percentage was 93.6 percent. African Americans represented about 5.6 percent of the council members, Hispanics approximately 2.6 percent, and Native Americans, 4 percent. In terms of age, serving on a city council tends to be the province of older citizens: 87 percent of the council members were forty years of age or older; of all council members, 27 percent were sixty or older, and 22 percent were retirees.

Sixty-four percent of cities in the 2001 survey elected council members by means of at-large elections, compared to 14 percent using ward- or district-based elections and 21 percent using mixed elections. An ICMA study reporting electoral systems used in 2006 in about 4,000 cities show only modest changes in the use of electoral systems took place

between 2001 and 2006. Sixty-six percent of the governments report the use of at-large elections, 17 percent employ ward/district elections, and 17 percent prefer a combination of at-large and district elections.⁶⁹ Finally, a 2011 ICMA survey showed that 66 percent of the cities used at-large elections, 17 percent employed a ward/district election system, and 17 percent employed a combination of at-large and ward/district (mixed) method of electing council members—the very same percentages as were reported in 2006.⁷⁰ As noted in Chapter 3, previous studies suggest that minorities fare better in district-based and mixed-election cities, whereas women do slightly better under the at-large formats.

Returning to the ICMA 2001 survey findings, few jurisdictions (9 percent) set term limits for council members. And those that did so tended to be cities with populations above 50,000 (so-called central cities) and cities located in the ICMA-defined Mountain region, consisting of the states of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. Of the cities using at-large elections, about 60 percent employed four-year terms of office, and another 22 percent used a two-year term. Of the cities electing council members from districts or wards, 61 percent used four-year terms and 31 percent used two-year terms. Most cities (83 percent) staggered elections to ensure continuity, stability, and organizational memory on the council. Most councils met either once (20 percent) or twice (69 percent) a month. Similar to the U.S. Congress and state legislatures, more than half the cities (58 percent) had standing committees; the percentage in cities with populations above 250,000 was 75 percent. Finally, the urban reformers had apparently been successful in their efforts to promote the use of nonpartisan ballots to—theoretically anyway—remove politics from local government. In 2013, 80 percent of cities selecting their council members by ballot were using nonpartisan ballots.⁷¹

In a study commissioned by the National League of Cities in 2001, James Svara reports survey results from 664 council members serving in cities with populations of 25,000 or more.⁷² Svara's findings provide useful information not included in the larger ICMA study. He notes, for example, that, compared to their fellow citizens, council members are generally well-educated. Seventy-five percent of the responding city council members had a college degree, and 40 percent had professional or graduate degrees. The average age of those serving on city councils was fifty-four. About 40 percent of the city council members reported their occupation as "manager or professional," while 21 percent were business owners, 21 percent were retired, 3 percent were "house spouses," 2 percent were blue-collar workers, 1 percent were clerical workers, and the remaining respondents were classified as "others."

Although council members in American cities are more likely than not to run on nonpartisan ballots, partisanship and political ideology are still part of what defines a council person. Svara reports that across all cities, 38.3 percent reported that they were Democrats, 30.9 percent were independents, and 30.8 percent were Republicans. Significant differences in partisanship existed by race, age, size of city, and ballot type.

According to survey data, most council races are not close contests. Almost half (45 percent) of council members reported winning by large margins, and 19 percent had

run unopposed. Only 11 percent of the respondents said that their election was close. Fifty-six percent of the council members planned to run for another term, and about one in three (28 percent) expressed interest in running for a higher office.

Council members were almost evenly divided in terms of years of service across categories used in the study. Twenty-four percent had served 0–2 years; 22 percent, 3–5 years; 28 percent, 6–10 years; and about one in three (29 percent) reported 10 or more years of service. A typical council member receives only modest compensation for services rendered, and salaries vary considerably by size of city and form of city government.

For example, in large cities (of 200,000 or more residents) 73 percent of the council members received \$20,000 or more per year and 35 percent earned more than \$40,000 per year; in contrast, in small cities (having 25,000 to 69,999 residents), less than 2 percent of council members received \$20,000 per year. Council members in cities using the mayor-council versus the council-manager form of government are more likely to receive higher levels of pay. On the other hand, the time devoted to serving on a city council is significant regardless of the size of the city: the average city council member works on council-related matters twenty hours per week in small cities, twenty-five hours per week in medium-size cities (having 70,000 to 199,999 residents), and forty-two hours per week—a full-time job—in big cities.

Why do council members run for office? When provided a list that contained a variety of reasons for seeking office and asked to mark those that applied to them, about 80 percent of the respondents said they had run “to serve the city as a whole.” The second most often cited reason for running was to “serve my neighborhood” (51 percent). Only 3 percent saw serving on the council as a stepping-stone to higher office.

Svara’s research on city councils suggests that there is significant variation based on form of city government—mayor-council versus council-manager. Research by Timothy Krebs and John P. Pelissero captures many of these major differences, as shown in Table 4.1.⁷³ Most of the characteristics shown in the table are fairly straightforward, but two of them require some elucidation. First, “representational style” refers to the classic discussion in political science about the role of a representative—should she act based on her own best judgment (a trustee role) or vote according to her constituents’ desires (a delegate role). The second characteristic that may require a bit of explanation is “policymaking role.” In cities operating under the council-manager form, council members are more likely to be part-time and either non-paid or low-paid, and they often defer or respond to the expertise of the city manager and the professional bureaucracy—thus, they are given the policymaking label of “respondents-adopters.” The mayor-council form of government is more often found in larger cities, which are more likely to have legislative committees and full-time, paid council members. These big-city councils are likely to be large bodies—thus increasing the chances of differences in attitudes about what constitutes “good” policy. Their members are likely to be elected from districts or wards and to feel obligated to “take care of their own”—a politics that often results in a

Table 4.1 Common Characteristics of City Councils under Two Forms of Government

Characteristics	Mayor-Council Governments	Council-Manager Governments
Size of council	Larger	Smaller
Nature of work	Full time	Part time
Compensation	Higher pay	Lower or no pay
Meeting	More frequent	Less frequent
Party roles	Partisan and nonpartisan	Nonpartisan
Representational method	District	At-large
Committees	More	Fewer
Staff	More	Smaller
Diversity	More	Less
Representational style	Delegates	Trustees
Constituency service	More casework	Less casework
Policymaking roles	Advocates-adopters	Respondents-adopters
Conflict	Higher	Lower

SOURCE: Reprinted with permission from Timothy B. Krebs and John P. Pelissero, "City Councils," in John P. Pelissero, ed., *Cities, Politics, and Policy: A Comparative Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2003), pp. 169–195.

policymaking role called "advocates-adopters." Still, caution is required: as Krebs and Pelissero note, "If we have been able to learn one thing [from this study], it is that city councils in the United States are not all alike."⁷⁴ Generalizations are possible, but for every generalization, there is an exception to the rule.

COUNCIL-MANAGER RELATIONS

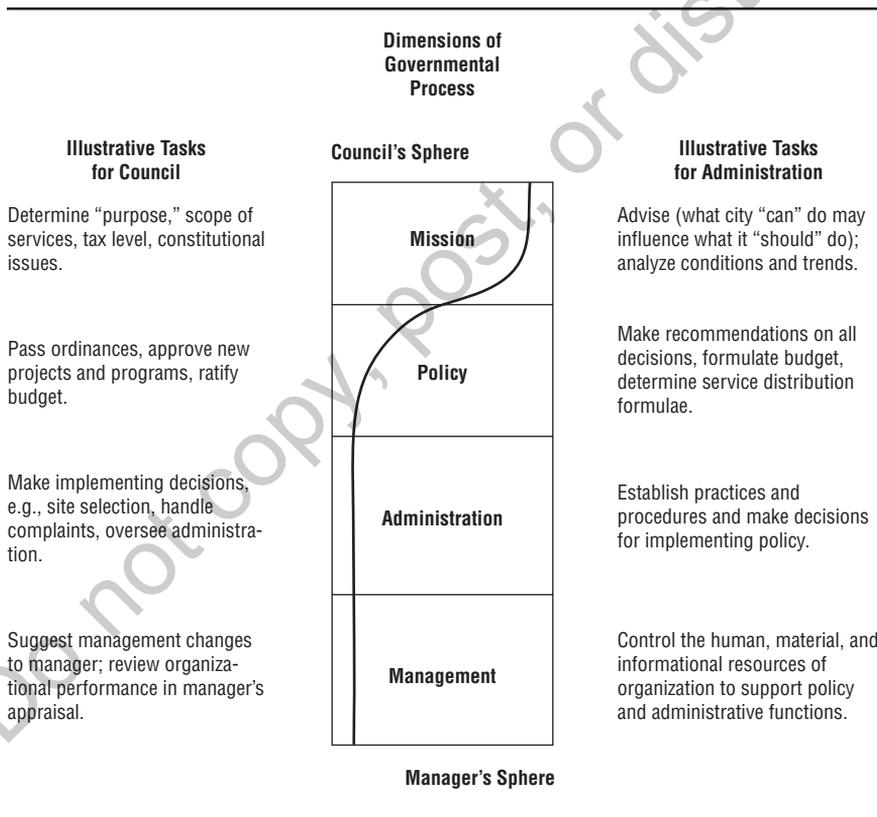
Almost from its beginnings, the correct relationship between manager and council has been the subject of study and debate. For example, a symposium in the journal *State and Local Government Review* focused on "Conflict Management and Resolution in Cities," with the goal of "examining how interactions between council members and city managers can be managed to foster elective working relationships."⁷⁵

Although the council-manager government appears, in theory, to support the almost total separation of policy and administration—the so-called politics-administration dichotomy—even the plan's early proponents saw the need for managerial involvement in policymaking. Or, as John Nalbandian so aptly reminds us: "It has been acknowledged for a long time that city and county managers play a prominent role in policymaking. It can be no other way."⁷⁶ Today, the debate essentially centers on the proper spheres of responsibility of the council and the manager. In the mid-1980s, James Svava offered what many consider a classic study to sort out this relationship.⁷⁷ His model remains, in our opinion, as instructive today as when first published.

Drawing on field observations in five large North Carolina cities in addition to other studies, Svvara developed a dichotomy-duality model of policy and administration in council-manager cities. He divided the basic governing responsibilities into four categories: mission, policy, administration, and management. Then he used a curved line to graphically depict the typical division of responsibility between council and manager in each area. The basic model is shown in Figure 4.1.

As briefly touched on previously in this chapter, *mission* refers to the organization’s broadest goals and most basic purposes. It encompasses such matters as the scope of services provided, levels of taxation, and fundamental policy orientations. As the figure reveals, mission remains the overwhelming responsibility of elected officials. The manager

Figure 4.1 **Basic Division of Responsibility between City Council and City Manager**



SOURCE: “Dichotomy and Duality: Reconceptualizing the Relationship between Policy and Administration in Council-Manager Cities,” by James H. Svvara, *Public Administration Review*, 1985, 45, 228. Reprinted with permission from *Public Administration Review* © by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), 1120 G Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20005. All rights reserved.

is not powerless even here, of course—she or he will make recommendations, undertake studies, and engage in planning—but mission lies predominantly in the council's sphere.

The term *policy* is narrowly applied here to middle-range issues and problems, the “redistribution” questions in Paul Peterson's formulation. The annual budget certainly reflects these mid-range decisions—which programs or services to expand or cut, whether to contract out to the private sector or to undertake a new service responsibility. Notice in Figure 4.1 that the curved line almost bisects this sphere, although slightly more space is given to the manager. Indeed, the city manager is expected to play a prominent role here, proposing and recommending a variety of policy measures. The council, of course, must ratify the budget, pass ordinances, and approve new service initiatives. But in many cities, the initiative for such activities lies with the city manager.

As we move downward to the areas of administration and management, the manager's sphere naturally expands. According to Svava, *administration* refers to the specific decisions and practices employed to achieve policy objectives. The governing body still has some influence here. It may choose to specify the specific administrative techniques to be used, or it may intervene in service delivery, perhaps in response to constituent demands or to ensure that some special need of a council member's ward is met. Finally, at the bottom of the figure we come to *management*, where we expect to find little council involvement. These are the very immediate actions taken by the city manager to control and allocate the organization's human and material resources. The council may play an oversight role here, offering suggestions or passing along citizen complaints, but the boundary between elected officials and administrators in the management arena is usually fairly clearly defined and widely acknowledged.

As Figure 4.1 shows, a dichotomy of sorts does exist, but only at the mission and management levels. In between, in policy and administration, considerable sharing of responsibilities is called for. Svava readily admits that this schematic does not apply to all council-manager cities. He identifies several variants to the model—the strong-manager model, where the line is shifted to the left, and the “council incursion” model, where the council frequently moves more prominently into the administrative sphere. In general, however, the model shown in Figure 4.1 represents a reasonably typical, if not ideal, arrangement by which councils and city managers both divide and share responsibility for the basic tasks of urban governance and management.

More recently, Svava has argued that the “myth” of the politics-administration dichotomy should be replaced by a model that he labels “complementarity of politics and administration.”⁷⁸ This interdependent (versus dichotomous) model suggests that policymaking should be—and in reality is—shared between elected officials (mayors and city council members) and administrators (city managers and local bureaucrats). Research by Sally Coleman Selden, Gene A. Brewer, and Jeffrey L. Brudney supports Svava's complementarity model. Based on a survey of about 1,000 city managers, these researchers found that while city council members possess considerable means to control city managers' actions

through evaluations, oversight, and even termination, most council members “opt for less complex solutions involving trust and role sharing.”⁷⁹

But it is important to remember that city managers do often find themselves thrust into the policy arena. Among the possible reasons are these:

- The failure of mayors and councils to play their idealized leadership roles
- The full-time nature of the manager’s job compared with the part-time involvement of council members
- The manager’s experience and/or specialized training in problem solving
- The staff specialists, technicians, and department heads available to assist the manager
- The manager’s role in preparing the city budget
- The manager’s position at the apex of an information network, which allows the manager to channel, control, and veto options offered by others

There are limits on the city manager’s domination of municipal policy. First, most managers are cognizant of the need to keep their councils satisfied, and they recognize that councils usually frown on too much policy activism. Second, even in the management profession, the dominant feeling is that managers should not publicly espouse a view contrary to a stated council position. Finally, in large council-manager cities, city managers frequently must share their policy role with the mayor. As noted earlier, Morgan and Watson report that mayor-manager “governing coalitions” are frequently found in larger cities. To the extent that such a situation prevails, these council-manager cities are not so different from mayor-council cities that employ a full-time professional administrator (CAO). One final note is in order. Regardless of how hard a local executive tries to develop an appropriate working relationship with his or her city councils, sometimes city manager turnover is the result of systemic changes in the local political and economic environment of the municipality. For example, in a recent pooled cross-sectional time series analysis of 143 U.S. cities with populations of 75,000 or more residents, Barbara Coyle McCabe, Richard C. Feiock, James Clingermyer, and Christopher Stream examine the impact of local “push” (e.g., turnover among elected council members and short-term economic change) and “pull” (e.g., a positive economic growth trend over time, large and fast-growing communities) factors that may explain city manager tenure.⁸⁰ Findings suggest that substantial turnover on a city council increase the likelihood of more city manager turnover. “By holding other factors affecting manager tenure constant, our empirical results demonstrate the powerful, direct, and independent effect of political change on city management tenure.”⁸¹ In addition, data show that communities that experience short-term economic declines or long-term economic growth have slightly higher manager turnover.⁸²

The case study provided in Box 4.1 explores factors that explain the impact of city councils on efforts to implement current administrative reforms.

BOX 4.1 Policy and Practice**CITY COUNCILS AND THE POLICY ADOPTION PROCESS**

As discussed in Chapter 1, in order to improve management capacity beginning in the early 1990s city officials throughout the United States began to “reinvent government.” Guided by a ten-point prescription of “good management principles” offered in David Osborne and Ted Gaebler’s popular book *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector*, mayors, city managers, and city councils undertook efforts to manage scarce resources more efficiently, effectively, and responsively. In their article titled, “What Influences City Council Adoption and Support for Reinventing Government? Environmental or Institutional Factors?” political scientists Timothy Krebs and John Pelissero attempted to isolate those variables that explain the adoption of reinvention strategies by city councils in a large sample of over 1,000 American communities.

Council support (originally coded as never, sometimes, and always) for eight reinventing policies were identified and placed in three broad categories—(1) *governmental operational efficiency reforms* (e.g., approval of programs to make the city more entrepreneurial and include funds to carry out the programs); (2) *service delivery reforms* (e.g., approval to contract a municipal service to a third-party vendor); and (3) *fiscal policy reforms* (e.g., approval for the use of enterprise fund). Based on the extant literature, the authors hypothesize that council support for the eight reinventing government initiatives can be explained by *institutional and environmental factors* and the *tenure of the administrator offering the proposal to the council*. Institutional characteristics included (1) *mayoral power* (based on a five-point scale that assessed whether the mayor prepared the budget, appointed department heads, was directly elected by the voters, had the veto power, and served the city on a full-time basis); (2) *ballot type* (partisan or nonpartisan elections); *electoral system* (at-large, district/ward or mixed); (3) *legislative capacity* (the city used or did not use standing committees), and (4) *state-level fiscal constraints* (measured by the number of state imposed restrictions on city revenue and expenditures). Environmental factors were (1) *city size*, (2) *percentage of minorities in the city*, (3) *median household income*, (4) *city economic health*, and (5) *percentage of local public workers that were unionized*. Finally, *administrator tenure or stability in executive leadership* (measured by years of service) was included as an explanatory variable.

Based on several statistical analyses, Krebs and Pelissero offer the following general findings:

- For seven of the eight reinventing government reforms, *institutional variables* were statistically associated with adoption of the reforms by city councils.
- The effect of *administrator tenure* on whether the council adopted reinventing policies was statistically significant for four reform activities, three of which defined the improve government operational efficiency category.
- *Environmental factors* were statically significant predictors of only three of the reinventing government initiatives.

In short, data show that institutional factors as compared to environmental or administrators’ seniority are more important predictors of city council’s propensity to adopt reform administrative programs. Moreover, “city councils,” in general, “are highly supportive of efforts by managers to reinvent government.”

SOURCE: Timothy B. Krebs and John P. Pelissero, “What Influences City Council Adoption and Support for Reinventing Government? Environmental or Institutional Factors?” *Public Administration Review* 70 (March/April 2010): 258–267.

BUREAUCRATS AND POLICY

Bureaucrats—the city staff and operating departments—participate prominently in policymaking, both in its formulation and in its implementation. In terms of the policy-making role of the bureaucracy, Charles E. Lindblom and Edward J. Woodhouse offer the following assessment:

Indeed, if it were possible to count all the policy-making acts in any political system—choices made, attempts at persuasion, agreements reached, threats and promises made, authoritative commands given or received—one would find that, so defined, policy making rests overwhelmingly in the hands of the bureaucracy.⁸³

Kenneth J. Meier agrees. He argues that bureaucracies, like legislative bodies, authoritatively allocate values and in doing so engage “in politics of the first order.”⁸⁴

Bureaucrats have become key policy figures for several reasons. First, they are the source of much of the technical and highly specialized information that is so essential for making decisions. Second, legislative bodies increasingly find it necessary to write laws in terms broad enough to permit flexibility in their application; this practice obviously increases the authority of those who implement the laws—the bureaucrats. Finally, many bureaucrats, especially at the urban level, are in constant contact with the public in a variety of situations in which judgment and discretion are necessary to resolve problems, disputes, and complaints.

Although, bureaucrats “are central to policy formulation,”⁸⁵ most observers would probably agree that bureaucrats have their major effect on policy during the implementation phase.⁸⁶ We can identify two principal means by which they exert their influence: through the development of decision rules that guide administrative behavior, and through the exercise of discretion in dealing with people at the street level.

BUREAUCRATIC DECISION RULES

First, to understand how and why bureaucrats develop decision rules, we must understand something about the psychological needs of bureaucrats themselves. In a classic study of bureaucratic decision making in the city of Oakland, California, Frank Levy, Arnold Meltsner, and Aaron Wildavsky observe that, like most of us, bureaucrats want to work within a relatively secure, stable organizational environment. To keep their relationships as predictable and orderly as possible, bureaucrats rely on what the Oakland study calls the “Adam Smith rule.” This decision rule, in keeping with its *laissez-faire* orientation, says: when a “customer makes a ‘request,’ take care of him in a professional manner; otherwise, leave him alone.”⁸⁷ Bureaucrats employ the Adam Smith rule, coupled with a heavy reliance on professional standards, as a way of routinizing and stabilizing the decision-making process.

Levy and his colleagues demonstrate how bureaucratic decision rules affect the operation of several city departments, beginning with libraries. There, the Adam Smith rule would dictate that new acquisition funds be allocated to those branches with the highest

circulation: the more books the patrons take out, the more money their branch receives. In the street department, the rule would require that money be spent to repair streets primarily on the basis of complaints received. On the surface, these decision rules sound reasonable and defensible, but, as the Oakland study points out, they often harbor a hidden allocational bias. In the case of libraries, certain low-circulation branches, particularly those serving low-income and minority populations, thereby failed to obtain the resources to provide new materials to serve the changing needs of their customers. In the street department, evidence suggested that concentrating resources on heavily traveled roads tended to benefit well-to-do commuters (including those living outside Oakland), while poorer citizens were left with few street improvements.

BUREAUCRATIC DISCRETION

Some public employees also affect policy implementation through the exercise of discretion in their daily dealings with the public. Michael Lipsky calls these people “street-level bureaucrats”—a phrase that would apply to the officer on the beat, the classroom teacher, and the welfare caseworker.⁸⁸ Lipsky argues that these bureaucrats operate under considerable stress owing to inadequate resources, threats (physical and psychological) or challenges to their authority, and ambiguous job expectations. Accordingly, they develop mechanisms or defenses for reducing job-related stresses.

Unfortunately for many of those with whom these officials interact (especially low-income and minority groups), their stress-reducing efforts often take the form of routinized responses to client or public demands. For example, stereotyping and other forms of racial, gender, or class bias may come to play a significant part in bureaucratic behavior. Such bias or discrimination may not be overt or even intentional; it may simply be institutional.⁸⁹ One way to address this problem is by ensuring a representative bureaucracy—that is, the demographic make-up of those who constitute public bureaucracies should mirror that of the general local population in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, and so on. Since different social groups have different socialization patterns, values, mores, attitudes, and behaviors, a representative bureaucracy can help to overcome race-, gender-, or class-based biases. A significant literature has developed that supports the positive impact of a representative bureaucracy.⁹⁰ Other defensive bureaucratic devices involve attributing responsibility for all actions to the clients—blaming the victim—or, conversely, assuming that the clients are so victimized by social forces that they cannot be helped by the service being offered.

At the street level, no group exercises more discretion than the police officer on the beat. As a presidential crime commission acknowledged in the 1960s: “Law enforcement policy is made by the policeman.”⁹¹ The reason is simple: officers are confronted with so many offenses that they cannot arrest everyone involved; instead they use their discretion, particularly in matters of maintaining order.

In short, bureaucratic discretion is a powerful policy implementation tool in the hands of street-level bureaucrats. Problems arise from the use of defensive psychological

mechanisms. A distortion of reality can make bureaucrats less effective in performing their jobs as a result of institutional discrimination, blaming the victim, or producing a work environment defined by hopelessness. On the other hand, bureaucratic discretion allows the local worker on the street latitude to “bend the rules,” “to go above and beyond the call of duty,” and to challenge operating procedures and organizational cultures that are in need of changing. What we have here is a case of the proverbial two-edged sword; which side of the blade is used is dependent on the “discretion” of the street-level bureaucrat.

CITIZENS’ INFLUENCES ON CITY GOVERNMENT

Citizens can make their voices heard at city hall in several basic ways. The most obvious and widely employed means is voting, but several other options are available as well: organizing or joining some group or political party, and contacting city officials with complaints or requests for services.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

The first and perhaps most significant thing we can say about municipal elections is that most Americans do not vote in them. A 2014 research study shows that average voter turnout is at 21 percent, a general decline over ten years.⁹² Average for what—big cities, small cities, all cities? Since over 35,000 cities and towns in the United States hold their elections at different intervals and at different times of the year, calculating an “average” is not something the academic community has ventured to do. Elaine Sharp does note that one recent national survey reports, “Only 35 percent of respondents indicated that they always vote in local elections.”⁹³ The comparable figure for respondents who said they always vote in national elections was 58 percent. Similarly, Sharp points to research that, at that time, showed a 47 percent turnout in Chicago and a 53 percent turnout in the Cleveland mayoral race. But turnout rates for school board elections “can run as low as 10 to 15 percent—and sometimes even lower!”⁹⁴ Therefore, the basic generalization about turnout in local elections is that it is distressingly low.

Obviously, local elections are not as exciting or dramatic as national contests, and the stakes seem seldom as high. Perhaps Charles Adrian and Charles Press said it best many years ago:

The principal reason for apathy in municipal elections, in fact, is likely to be a pervasive consensus; that is, there may be widespread agreement in the community as to the kinds of persons who are wanted in public office, as to expenditure levels, and as to public policies. Under such circumstances, little incentive exists for any but the most conscientious voter or the chronic dissenter to go to the polls.⁹⁵

What difference does voter turnout make? In a democracy, elections provide a vital mechanism for controlling the political system, shaping policy alternatives, and expressing community values. But in whose interests? Not those of the entire community it seems.

Research repeatedly shows that those who do not vote have less education and income than do members of the active electorate. Thus, the lower the turnout, the more likely the election will reflect the preferences of the well-to-do. Some might argue that the politically active should have more to say about community affairs—certainly, local officials are especially sensitive to the preferences of the attentive public. Still, we should remember that the election process reveals only a partial picture of the values and preferences of the whole city.

Voter participation is affected significantly by the characteristics of the municipal government itself. As noted in the previous chapter, “reformed” governmental practices, such as at-large and nonpartisan elections, scheduling of municipal elections at times different than national and state elections, and the council-manager form of government “have come at a price. Turnout in local elections is typically lower in cities with such reform-style institutions than it is in cities with unreformed governing institutions.”⁹⁶ Similarly, after acknowledging the many positive gains in urban management associated with the reform movement, Ross and Levine also lament that one of the movement’s legacies is that it “diluted the power of lower-class and minority voting groups.”⁹⁷

What factors influence citizens to re-elect mayors? The answer to this question, at least in one city, is discussed in Box 4.2.

BOX 4.2 Policy and Practice

ELECTIONS AS ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS: THE CASE OF NEW YORK CITY

How do citizens evaluate the performance of American mayors? When mayors run for reelection, do citizens reward them for their accomplishments and punish them for their failures? How do citizens assess mayoral performance between elections? When pollsters ask them whether they approve of the way their mayor is handling his or her job, do their responses depend on the quality of city life? In short, to what extent do citizens hold mayors accountable for what happens on their watches?

In a well-executed and methodologically sophisticated article, political scientists R. Douglas Arnold and Nicholas Carnes attempt to answer these questions for four New York mayors (Ed Koch, David Dinkins, Rudy Giuliani, and Michael Bloomberg) using 150 citizen approval polls administered between 1984 and 2009 (across 319 months). The specific question asked in the polls was: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way [the incumbent] is handling his job as mayor of New York City?” Approval varied significantly for each of the mayors during their terms, from a low and a high of 29 to 75 for Koch, 26 and 70 for Dinkins, 34 and 82 for Giuliani, and 23 and 75 for Bloomberg.

The researchers explained variations in the mayors’ approval ratings using five variables. To assess the impact of the health of the local economy they created a *New York City economic misery index* using unemployment and inflation rates. *Homicide rates* measured the impact of local crime on mayoral approval. *Number of people employed in the city* (i.e., size of the New York City workforce) served as a surrogate measure for the quality and quantity of municipal services. A *reelection variable* assessed the impact on approval ratings

Box 4.2 Policy and Practice

when incumbent mayors ran for another term. Finally, a *mayoral defeat indicator* determined the effect on approval ratings of losing an election.

Based on the authors' time-series analyses, findings show mayoral approval ratings

- were negatively associated with increases in homicide rates in the city,
- were negatively related to increases in the city's economic misery index,
- were unrelated to the "size of the city workforce" variable,
- increased when an incumbent mayor ran for reelection,
- increased in the final two months in office for a mayor who lost his reelection bid, and
- like U.S. presidents and state governors, declined the longer the mayor served.

In short, "The preceding analyses find strong evidence that New Yorkers hold mayors accountable for changes in local conditions." Does this finding hold true regardless of whether the person providing the approval rating was black or white? Based on additional analyses, Arnold and Carnes find the answer to this question is "yes." "No important differences in how blacks and whites react to changes in the economy, crime, and services are evident. . . . Blacks and whites held mayors responsible for changes in local conditions in roughly equal measure."

Finally, the study showed for all four mayors that voter approval ratings as expressed in public opinion polls were closely related to how New Yorkers voted at the polls. For example, in late 1981 and late 1985, Mayor Koch held approval ratings of 71 percent and 61 percent, respectively, and he was reelected easily with 75 percent of the vote in 1981 and 78 percent in 1985. When his approval rating fell to 43 percent in 1989, he lost his primary race with only 42 percent of the vote.

SOURCE: R. Douglas Arnold and Nicholas Carnes, "Holding Mayors Accountable: New York's Executives from Koch to Bloomberg," *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (October 2012): 949–963.

Elections are only one means by which citizens affect local policy. Participation in party or group activity may represent an even more direct means of exercising influence.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND INTEREST GROUPS

As noted, a supermajority of city elections today are nonpartisan. There was a time when political parties played a powerful role in local politics—sometimes as handmaidens to the local political machine—but the changing social and economic character of many cities, coupled with the successful efforts of urban reformers, has dealt a deathblow to most big-city machines. The major vehicles for accomplishing that objective were the introduction of nonpartisan ballots, the direct primary, and adoption of the merit system in personnel management.

Most ordinary citizens probably see the diminution of party influence at the local level as a plus; not all scholars would agree. In political scientist Bryan Jones's words, "Political parties are the mainsprings of mass democracy."⁹⁸ Unlike most other organizations interested in public affairs, parties are committed to getting out the vote. Moreover, each party

makes some attempt at addressing issues and developing some agreement on those issues among candidates running on its label. Granted, parties in this country have never been very successful in inducing elected officeholders to adhere to their platforms or programs. But many political scientists believe that the alternative is worse—elected officials pursuing the dictates of their own consciences without regard to consequences or unconstrained group influence.

Organizing like-minded citizens or joining an active interest group represents a popular means by which citizens make their wishes known to city officials. Which groups at the local level are particularly visible and important? One way to determine this level of efficacy is to ask local representatives what they think. In the 2001 National League of Cities survey of city council members discussed above, council members were asked to identify the groups they believed it was important to represent. The groups identified—“listed in rank order based on the proportion of all council members who considered representation of that group to be very important”—were these: neighborhoods (68 percent); the elderly (37 percent); racial minorities (26 percent); women (24 percent); ethnic groups (21 percent); business (21 percent); municipal employees, “other,” and environmentalists (each at 17 percent); labor unions (8 percent); realtors/developers (7 percent); and political parties (4 percent).⁹⁹ When council members were asked which local groups they believed had a great deal of influence on council decisions, once again the top-rated group was “neighborhoods” (54 percent), followed by business interests (28 percent), the elderly (24 percent), realtors/developers (16 percent), municipal employees and racial minorities (each at 14 percent), women and “other” (each at 13 percent), environmentalists (10 percent), ethnic groups (9 percent), labor unions (8 percent), and political parties (7 percent).

Several observations can be made about group influence. First, although business is usually acknowledged as the most powerful interest, its role differs among cities and among issues within a single city.¹⁰⁰ Labor, conversely, rarely commands much influence in municipal politics; its interests normally lie at the state and national levels. The city council perspectives reported above indicate that neighborhoods are not only what they believe it is important to represent, but are also believed to be the most influential group impacting city council decisions. Historically, the demands made by neighborhood groups and homeowners have been narrowly focused on discouraging city policies and actions that would adversely affect their particular slice of the community—“Not in my backyard” (NIMBY) has been a frequent rallying cry.

But this parochialism may be changing. Nowadays, neighborhoods are making fewer claims on city governments; instead, they are looking to city halls for partnerships. As Jeffrey Katz reported “community-based development organizations had built nearly 125,000 units of housing in the United States—mostly for low-income residents. They had developed 16.4 million square feet of retail space, offices, and other industrial development.”¹⁰¹ Neighborhoods are asking that city governments empower them; instead of confrontation, neighborhood representatives seek collaboration. Government in Dayton,

Ohio, for example, “runs on citizen power”: seven area councils called “priority boards” working with city officials help to determine how not only Community Development Block Grants but also city-generated CD funds are to be spent.¹⁰² According to Rob Gurwitt, by the early 1990s, similar neighborhood empowerment activities were under way in cities such as San Antonio, Denver, Phoenix, Indianapolis, Richmond (Va.), Santa Clarita (Calif.), Minneapolis, and Portland (Ore.).¹⁰³

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (REDUX)

As noted in Chapter 1, and as Nancy Roberts tells us, “Citizenship participation is the cornerstone of democracy. . . . Direct democracy keeps community life vital and public institutions accountable.”¹⁰⁴ Using the words of Enlightenment and social contract theorist Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Professor Roberts also warns of the consequences of not taking seriously the right to participate in our government: “As soon as public service ceases to be the main business of the citizens, and they prefer to serve with their pocketbooks rather than with their persons, the State is already close to its ruin.”¹⁰⁵

Fortunately, with advances in technology it has never been easier for people to connect with government. Instead of “We the People,” James Scott at the Truman School of Public Affairs at the University of Missouri calls electronic participation “‘E’ the People.”¹⁰⁶

Professor Scott studied the extent to which the websites of the principal cities in the 100 largest metropolitan statistical areas, as defined by the 2000 U.S. Census, facilitated public involvement in government. He found that the city portals (with over 3,000 web pages on 100 websites) “offer surprisingly rich and diverse information for interested users.”¹⁰⁷ The sites, for example, included real-time traffic and transportation updates, Internet-based interactive mapping programs, city services available for various population subgroups (e.g., youth, families, and seniors), city organizational structures, the historical and cultural background of the locality, and key issues facing the city. Most of the sites allowed citizens to interact directly with appointed and elected city officials via e-mail or comment forms. About 60 percent of the cities posted their council agendas on the web and more than 50 percent provided the minutes of these meetings online. Over 80 percent of the big cities also included on their web page links to different charities, religious organizations, arts and culture groups, and voluntary associations. This “horizontal communication,” according to Scott, leads to greater local social capital and civic engagement.¹⁰⁸ The research also found that most cities’ web pages support direct democracy activities. The municipalities “run rather extensive programs designed to recruit, prepare, motivate, and manage public-service volunteers. These programs include neighborhood watch and beautification, mentoring, foster grandparents, and arts and culture specialists.”¹⁰⁹ Many of these volunteers serve on city boards, commissions, and task forces that make significant policy decisions. Another broad-based survey of public participation in U.S. cities also found the extensive use of the Internet to communicate with citizens.¹¹⁰ Of the 249 high-level city leaders responding to the survey, 39.8 percent “strongly agreed” and another 41.8 percent “agreed” (for a total of 81.6 percent) that they used the Internet as a

citizen participation mechanism. Only two other citizen participation mechanisms scored a higher use, public hearings (96.9 percent) and community or neighborhood meetings (87.4 percent).¹¹¹ Surely, it seems, professor Scott is correct in his assessment that “web technology will likely redefine the relationship between citizens and government and help foster more engaged citizens.”¹¹²

CITIZEN CONTACTS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the daily course of events, a number of people call, write, or visit city hall—to complain about such problems as uncollected trash, or loose dogs, or an unusually large pothole in a nearby street. Or they may be seeking some sort of information—where to go to receive a health service or how to inquire about employment. In the past few years, considerable attention has been devoted to the nature of these contacts with local government.

Who are these people? Two characteristics heavily influence individual citizens’ contact with local government: social class and need. As with voting, better-educated and more affluent citizens are the most likely to understand the system and to feel comfortable contacting local officials for a variety of purposes. But need for service may be even more critical, according to several studies.¹¹³ Some local agencies distribute their services in response to observed demand, which apparently relates more to citizens’ perceptions of the need for service (in the form of complaints) than to their income or education.¹¹⁴

What do these people want? Urban scholar Elaine Sharp’s study of citizen-government contacts in Kansas City revealed that citizens have quite high expectations about the problems local government should solve, particularly in the areas of community services and public safety.¹¹⁵ Responses to the question, “What do you think is the most important problem that you have in your neighborhood?” most frequently concerned what Sharp calls community services (flooding, trash piles, barking dogs); next were safety problems (crime, fear of walking the streets at night); social problems (undesirable neighbors, unsupervised juveniles) were least often mentioned. More important, people tended to think local government should do something about these matters—especially service and safety problems. A public ethic has evolved in this country, according to Sharp, that not only encourages the translation of personal problems into demands for public service but also fosters the expectation that city government is indeed responsible for resolving most of these problems. Sharp’s concern is that these heightened citizen expectations may lead to disappointment and disillusionment whenever city hall fails to deliver as expected.

SUMMARY

Public policymaking at any level will always remain something of a mystery. So many potential groups can be involved and external conditions can vary so greatly that the process can be extraordinarily difficult to comprehend. And yet, as with any other enigmatic but important process, we continue to try. In this chapter we have considered the basic stages of community policymaking, emphasizing the political nature of the process. No matter how much we crave rational and efficient policy, the nature of democratic

policymaking—with its heavy reliance on bargaining, negotiation, and compromise—virtually guarantees a messy process whose outcomes seldom satisfy everyone. Some scholars even offer formal descriptions of policymaking that stress the reactive role played by public officials and agencies, a process that one expert calls street-fighting pluralism. Others contend that where policy affects the city's most fundamental interests, business elites dominate the process to promote the economic well-being of the community.

No matter what form it takes or what impact it has, policy is made by people. At the urban level, the official policymakers include the chief executives, city councils, and bureaucracies, as well as the citizens acting at the ballot box, organizing in interest groups, or living in their neighborhoods. Policy initiation and leadership must come from somewhere; increasingly, the chief executive, whatever the form of government, is playing a more visible and vigorous policy role. Executive leadership often emerges because legislative bodies, especially those composed of amateurs working part-time, find it difficult either to acquire the expertise or to devote the time necessary to cope with ever more complex issues. The career civil service also plays a prominent role in policymaking and policy implementation. Understanding the various ways in which bureaucratic influence operates has become increasingly important.

Finally, we cannot forget the people. Citizens influence local government in a number of ways. They vote, but generally not in the same numbers as turn out for state and national elections. Citizens also participate through interest groups, neighborhood associations, via city web pages, and by contacting local government officials.

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