Executive Behavior and Decision Making in Small US Cities

by

P. Edward French

and

David H. Folz
Professor
Department of Political Science
The University of Tennessee
1001 McClung Tower
Knoxville, TN 37996-0410
Work: (865) 974-0802
Home: (865) 966-0008
FAX: (865) 974-7037
dfolz@utk.edu

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Bios

David H. Folz is a professor in the MPA program at The University of Tennessee Department of Political Science where he teaches courses in public management, research methods and state politics. His research has appeared in numerous journals including the *Public Administration Review*, the *State and Local Government Review*, the *Social Science Quarterly*, and the *American Review of Public Administration*.

P. Edward French, a former town manager is an instructor in the political science department at The University of Tennessee where he teaches courses in American government, public administration and public policy. His research has appeared in several journals including the *State and Local Government Review*, the *Public Administration Quarterly*, *Politics and Policy* and *Public Budgeting, Accounting and Financial Management*.
Abstract

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This study examines how chief executives in small US cities allocate their time, view their involvement in decisions related to the dimensions of the governmental process, who they consult in making decisions about local services, and the extent to which they perceive that their decisions are influenced by community interest groups. The study confirms that several differences exist among the different types of executives with respect to time allocation and role emphases. City managers spent more time on and perceived themselves to be more extensively involved in decisions related to local mission, policy, administration and management compared to mayors. Mayors and city managers exhibited different patterns of consultation with key stakeholders in making decisions about local services. City managers were more likely than mayors to engage in activities related to the city’s mission and policy, but they tempered that involvement with a more inclusive pattern of consultation.
Executive Behavior and Decision Making in Small US Cities

That politics and administration are intricately intertwined in local government decision making is obvious to contemporary practitioners and academics. The idea that there ever was or even should be a dichotomy between them has been convincingly refuted by numerous scholars (Bosworth, 1958; O’Toole, 1987; Montjoy and Watson, 1995; Newell and Ammons, 1995; Svara, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001). Nonetheless, the evolving literature on the politics and administration of local government continues to reflect an enduring concern for the values of democratic governance. Aberbach and Rockman (2000) characterized this concern as the uneasy nexus of politics, policy and expertise at the top of the bureaucracy. Lowi (1993, 1995) asserted that administrators may seek to acquire power without the constraints that limit their elected counterparts. Other observers suggested that public administrators should play an even more active role in the political process than they are otherwise inclined (Keller and Spicer, 1997; Fredrickson, 1996). While managers ignore the political dimension of their jobs at their own peril, neither practitioners nor scholars have reached a consensus about how best to achieve a proper “meshing” of politics and administration among elected and unelected officials to obtain “an optimal mix” that advances democratic governance (Aberbach and Rockman, 2000).

Svara (1999a, 1999b, 2001) explained how interactions between elected and appointed officials in council-manager cities may achieve an appropriate balance between the knowledge and expertise of professional administrators and the responsiveness of elected officials to popular preferences. His model of complementarity embraced an interdependent and reciprocal role for professional administrators and elected officials in shaping local policies and administration. Among mayor-council cities, he found that even though the separation of powers in that form of government typically spawns more conflict, executive mayors seek to “keep conflict in check”
through compromise and accommodation among competing community groups (Svara 1990, p. 213).

Dunn and Legge (2002, p. 406) described a “partnership model” for local governance in which administrators often have a significant impact on policy making while elected officials frequently have a great impact on administration matters. They found that this partnership model characterized the relationship that many local government managers have with council members but that considerable variation still occurred among cities in terms of “who should be responsible for what and in which circumstances” (Dunn and Legge 2002, p. 419).

More than a decade ago, Svara predicted an “increasing convergence of official leaders in the major forms of government” (1990, p. 227). Perhaps the patterns of complementarity and partnership with their overlapping roles, interdependency and reciprocal influence evidence the emerging fruition of Svara’s prediction. Hansell (1998, p. 15) observed, for instance, that citizens have a “difficult time telling the difference” between a mayor and a professional manager and “what difference form of government makes.”

Previous research has broadened considerably our understanding of the patterns of interaction between local executives and city councils. This study focuses on one aspect of local governance that has received comparatively less attention, namely whether there are any differences in how contemporary mayors and city managers approach their roles and make decisions that appear to have implications for the values of responsiveness and accountability. More specifically, this study explores how different types of local chief executives view their roles in the governmental process and how they reach decisions about issues that arise in local governance. As Svara (1990, p. 80) explained, “the behavior of officials is crucial to fashioning the governmental process for better or worse.” By comparing how mayors and city managers
work within and around the constraints of their governmental structure, this paper seeks to
discern more clearly how each type of executive deals with the demands of their jobs. This type
of comparison is predicate to understanding how each type of executive may attempt to balance
politics and administration.

The explicit purpose of this study is to ascertain whether city managers differ in any
important respects from elected mayors on several of the dimensions that relate to how they
fulfill their responsibilities as chief executive. Svara (1999c) suggested that important
differences may exist among mayor-council cities with and without an appointed city
administrator or CAO (referred to as a “chief administrative officer” in this study).
Frederickson, Logan and Wood (2003) confirmed a pattern of increased use of appointed
professional CAOs among mayor-council cities. Following these findings, we examine mayoral
behavior among cities with and without a CAO and compare the behavior of these executives
with that of city managers in council-manager cities.

We examine first how local chief executives allocate their time among activities related
to policy and administration and how contemporary chief executives’ role emphases compare to
previous research findings (e.g. Newell and Ammons, 1995). Using Svara’s (1990) framework
of the governmental process, we compare how mayors and city managers perceive their level of
involvement in activities related to the mission, policy, administration and management of their
locality. Then we focus on one particularly important facet of decision making by mayors and
city managers that pertains to whom they consult in making decisions about issues related to
local services and programs. Finally, we compare how each type of chief executive perceives his
or her decisions to be influenced or shaped specifically by the involvement of local interest
groups.
These comparisons seek to answer several specific questions that should inform subsequent analyses of how contemporary local executives “mix” or balance the political and administrative dimensions of their jobs. For instance, are there differences in how contemporary mayors and city managers allocate their time and emphasize particular roles? Have these role emphases changed over time? Do mayors and city managers differ in the extent to which they perceive their level of involvement in the dimensions of the governmental process? Do mayors and city managers exhibit different patterns of consultation in making decisions? To what extent do local chief executives perceive that local interest groups shape or influence their decisions? Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for the larger question of and continuing debate about executive responsiveness and how local chief executives mix local politics and administration.

Why Study Small Cities?

This study examines the behavior and decision making among mayors and city managers in a national sample of small US cities (2,500 to 24,500) for several reasons. Previous research on local government executive leadership has focused almost exclusively on larger cities and on the behaviors of either city managers or mayors. Few studies have examined both mayors and city managers, and none has explicitly focused on smaller municipalities.

A 1985 survey by Newell and Ammons (1995) compared the behavior of both city managers and mayors, but their target population only included officials in cities larger than 50,000. They reported that both mayors and city managers in large cities spent the majority of their time on activities related to management rather than policy; however, city managers spent significantly more of their time on both their management and policy roles than did mayors (Newell and Ammons, 1995). Other studies of larger municipalities indicated that city managers
have become more involved in goal-setting and policy formation (Kearney and Scavo, 2001; Svara 1985, 1990, 1999b) and that local interest group politics have become more pervasive and intense (Beierle and Cayford, 2002; Rich, Giles and Stern, 2001; Benest, 1991).

Little is known about the extent to which contemporary mayors and city managers in smaller municipalities may differ from their counterparts in larger jurisdictions. Few studies have examined how executives in small cities view their roles and reach decisions on issues related to local services and programs. Does the increased level of community activism observed in larger communities also affect how small city executives make decisions about local services and programs? Finally, we think it is important to examine the patterns of executive behavior and decision making in those cities in which approximately a third of the US urban population resides, that employ two-thirds of all city managers and which employ the largest number of professional administrators.2

**Data and Methods**

The data for this study are derived from a mail survey that was sent to a random sample of 1000 chief executives in US cities with populations between 2,500 and 24,500 during the fall of 2000. In 1999, the ICMA identified a total of 5,202 cities in this population range (ICMA, 1999). A random sample of 1,000 of these cities was selected using two stratification criteria: region and form of government. The four geographic regions were Northeast, South, Midwest and West. Form of government included only those cities identified as having either a mayor-council or council-manager form. Cities with other forms were not included in the target population.

Two follow-up mailings were sent to non-respondents after the initial fall 2000 mailing. By early 2001, responses were received from 509 local officials for a return rate of about 51
To help assure comparability, responses were verified as being completed by a mayor (in mayor-council governments) or a city manager (in council-manager governments). Responses by aides or assistants were excluded from the analyses. The profile of characteristics of the chief executives involved in this study appears at the end of this article. The representative nature of the survey responses permits generalization to the population of cities in the target population range with a 4.5% error margin at the 95% level of confidence.

Following Newell and Ammons (1995), Svara (1990, 1999a), Mouritzen and Svara (2002), and Dunn and Legge (2002), our null hypotheses are that no significant differences exist between city managers and mayors with respect to: how they allocate their time among a “policy” role and a “management” role, the extent to which mayors and city managers are involved in the four dimensions (mission, policy, administration, and management) of the government process, the extent to which they consult with various constituencies in making decisions about government services, or the extent to which they perceive local interest groups to influence their decisions about services and programs.

Variables

To facilitate comparison of role emphases and time allocations with the earlier findings by Newell and Ammons (1995), respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of time that they devoted to activities related to a “policy role” and a “management role.” The illustrative activities related to the policy role included proposing policy, developing policy and council agendas and council relations. The illustrative activities related to the management role included staffing, budgeting, and coordinating departments.

A four-point scale was used to ascertain executives’ level of participation in the four dimensions of the governmental process. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had
“1 = no involvement,” “2 = low involvement,” “3 = moderate involvement,” or “4 = high involvement” in the particular activities related to mission, policy, administration and management. Mission involvement was measured by a question that asked about the extent to which the respondent was involved in the development of the municipality’s goals and mission. Policy involvement was measured by a mean score computed from three questions that asked respondents, respectively, to indicate their level of involvement in developing, proposing and formulating various types of local policies. Involvement in administration was measured by computing the mean score from three questions that asked respondents to indicate their level of involvement in supervising policy implementation, coordinating departmental staff, and reviewing decision recommendations. Management involvement was measured by a score computed from three questions that asked respondents to indicate their level of involvement in hiring/firing staff, managing service contracts, and reviewing budget issues.

The pattern of consultation in decision making by executives was measured by asking respondents to indicate whether they usually consulted with any of four groups (the city council, department heads, private consultants, or the public) in making decisions about issues related to any of six local services or functions: economic development, public safety, public transportation, solid waste disposal, parks and recreation, and public housing. A circled response for any group for a service was coded “yes = 1.” If a group was not circled for any service, it was coded “no = 2.” Accordingly, a lower score for consultation with a group on a particular service indicates that the executive was more likely to consult with that group in the process of making a decision about an issue related to that service or program.

Finally, the extent to which municipal executives perceived their decisions about local services to be influenced or shaped by the participation of local interest groups was measured by
questions that asked respondents to indicate, for each of the six services/functions described above, whether local interest groups typically had “1 = no influence,” “2 = minor influence,” “3 = moderate influence,” or “4 = major influence” on their decisions about issues related to each service or program area.

**Role Emphases and Time Allocation of Municipal Executives**

In 1965, Deil Wright examined how city managers in 45 cities with populations larger than 100,000 perceived that they allocated their time among different roles (policy, managerial and political). His work was the first to document the extent to which city managers were involved in activities that ranged beyond those related to management per se (staffing, budgeting, coordination, supervision and evaluation). Wright (1969) found that city managers played a significant policy role that he described as including activities related to control over the council’s agenda, policy initiation and policy formulation. Newell and Ammons (1995) followed this work with a 1985 survey of chief executives and principal assistants in cities with more than 50,000 people. They compared mayors among mayor-council and commission cities with city managers and found that city managers devoted significantly more time than mayors to activities related to either a management or policy role.

While some ambiguity remains in the range of activities that could be included under the broad umbrellas of policy and management, this study followed, as closely as possible, the descriptions of such activities employed by Newell and Ammons (1995). Respondents were offered examples of the kinds of activities related to a policy role and a management role and asked to estimate the amount of time they devoted to each in 1999. Table 1 compares the mean time that mayors and city managers in large and small cities reported that they devoted to activities related to a policy role and to a management role. The columns for “all mayors” and
“city managers” for small cities in 1999 contain the data that are generally comparable to that collected by Newell and Ammons in 1985 for big city executives.

Table 1 about here

Contemporary small city executives, like their big city counterparts of an earlier era, spend most of their time on activities related to their management role. Similarly, managers in small cities spend a significantly larger proportion of their time on both management and policy activities than do their small city mayoral counterparts as a whole. This finding corresponds to what Newell and Ammons (1995) reported. However, the managers in small cities spend a significantly larger proportion of their time on management activities than did their big city counterparts of an earlier era. Such a finding is not unexpected considering the larger support staffs typically enjoyed by city managers in large cities.

Among mayors, those in large cities devoted a larger proportion of their time to management-related activities than do contemporary mayors of small cities as a group. However, small city mayors without an appointed chief administrative officer spend about the same amount of time as big city mayors did on management activities. The mayors in small cities with a chief administrative officer (CAO) spend significantly less time on management activities.

As a whole, the mayors and city managers in large and small cities spend about the same proportion of their time, respectively, on policy-related activities. City size does not appear to affect how much time mayors and managers spend, respectively, on policy activities. The city managers in both population groups generally spend a higher proportion of their time (about 30%) on policy activities than mayors (about 25%). However, the time spent on policy activities for small city mayors with a CAO is not significantly different than the time spent by
city managers on policy activities. Thus, whether a mayor is supported by a CAO appears to be a more important factor than city size in affecting how much time a mayor spends on policy activities.

One might expect small city mayors to spend less time on policy and management activities than their city manager counterparts if they are just part-time chief executives. Our survey shows that about two-thirds of all mayors in mayor-council cities describe their positions as part-time. Yet, about one-half of the mayors without a CAO reported that their positions were full-time. Most of the mayors who reported that their jobs were part-time were those that had a CAO. That mayors with a CAO are more likely to be part-time yet spend more of their time on policy matters than do their counterparts without a CAO (who are more likely to be full-time) belies the assumption that the full or part-time nature of the mayor’s position explains the difference in the amount of time spent on policy activities by mayors and city managers.

These time allocation comparisons generally confirm the findings by Newell and Ammons (1995) that most local executives spend the majority of their time on management activities rather than policy activities and that city managers spend more of their time on both types of activities compared to mayors. The mean comparisons for the two groups of small city mayors also supports Svara’s (1999c) assertion that there are important differences among mayor-council cities that are served by a chief administrative officer or not. Employment of a CAO appears to allow small city mayors an opportunity to focus more on policy activities and to spend less time on management activities compared to mayors without a CAO.

These findings confirm that form of government is important for understanding how mayors and city managers allocate their time and choose role emphases, but it is also underscores the importance of knowing whether or not a mayor-council city is served by a professional
administrator. That mayors with CAO’s and city managers in small cities devote about the same time to proposing and developing and policy suggests that both types of executives equally value the importance of developing policies to address community needs and issues. Whether this level of executive policy involvement is “optimal” for democratic governance remains problematic, but it certainly does not suggest that appointed city managers place a different emphasis on their policy role, in terms of time allocation than do elected mayors who are supported by a CAO, even if most of these mayors serve just part-time (Aberbach and Rockman, 1988). How local chief executives allocate their time is just one indicator of the value they place on different roles. The next section examines how the different types of executives perceive the extent of their involvement in the various dimensions of the governmental process.

Executive Involvement in the Governmental Process

Svara’s (1990) model offers an explicit framework for comparing how mayors and city managers are involved in specific activities related to the mission, policy, administration and management dimensions of the governmental process. As described previously, a four-point scale was used to measure how municipal executives perceived their level of involvement in each of these four dimensions. Activities were listed in random order and did not appear under descriptive headings.

Table 2 shows the mean level of perceived involvement in each of the four dimensions of the governmental process for small city executives in the three groups. As a whole, all local executives generally perceived that they are involved more extensively in mission and policy activities than in administrative and management activities. City managers however reported a statistically higher level of perceived involvement for each dimension of the governmental process than did mayors with or without a CAO. Although the previous analysis indicated
that mayors served by a CAO and city managers spent about the same amount of time on policy activities, more city managers reported a qualitatively higher level of involvement and participation in these policy activities.

Table 2 goes here

Why are the perceptions of involvement in the dimensions of the governmental process different for city managers and mayors? Svara’s typology of leadership for executive mayors suggests one possible explanation. Among small cities, there may be fewer mayors that pursue a more activist “reformer” or “innovator” role and perhaps more individuals who assume a “figurehead,” “caretaker” or “broker” role (Svara, 1990 p. 104). Yates (1977) suggested that over time, mayors are more likely to become “caretakers” as other options are closed-off and that sustaining a more activist role may generate more conflict than the mayor is capable of resolving.

An attempt was made to test this particular assertion, at least in part, by analyzing whether the mean scores for mayoral involvement were related to their length of tenure in their position as mayor. (The mean tenure for both mayors and city managers was about seven years). We assumed a rough correspondence might exist between involvement score quartiles and Svara’s four descriptive leadership roles. However, no statistically significant relationships occurred between mean involvement scores for mayors and their length of tenure.

An alternative explanation for the difference in reported involvement by mayors and city managers in the four dimensions of the governmental process may relate more particularly to the process that the different executives employ to make various types of decisions about local government services and programs. Following the work of Svara (1990), Ferman (1985), and Feiock and Clingermayer (1986), we hypothesized that mayors and city managers may have different patterns of consultation in terms of who they are likely to seek advice and input from in
the process of reaching a decision that concerns local services and programs. If city managers consult with and seek to include a broader array of stakeholders in their decision making process than do mayors, then perhaps this might help to explain why their perceptions differ in terms of their involvement in activities related to each of the dimensions of the governmental process.

**Patterns of Consultation in Decision Making by Municipal Executives**

With whom do municipal executives consult in making decisions about issues in local services and programs? Do any significant differences emerge in the pattern of consultation among mayors, mayors with a CAO and city managers? To answer these questions, local executives were asked: “With whom do you usually consult in making decisions in each of the following areas?” Respondents were asked to indicate whether they usually consulted with the city council, department heads, private consultants, or the public in making decisions about the six local services listed in Table 3. Respondents could circle any or all groups that they consulted for each service. Responses were coded “1= yes” and “2 = no.”

Table 3 goes here

The responses indicate that in making decisions about local services, municipal executives generally consult with the council, department heads, the public, and then private consultants in order of frequency. Differences emerge however in the frequency with which mayors and city managers reported that they consult with each of these groups. While few significant differences occurred in the mean consultation scores among mayors with or without a CAO, the pattern of consultation for city managers indicates that they are much more likely to seek input from and participation by the council, department heads and the public before they make decisions about local services and programs. The total mean consultation scores for city
managers are statistically different than those for mayors in three of the four groups (council, department heads, and the public).

City managers appear to be more likely than mayors to consult with key stakeholders before they reach a decision that affects a local service or project. Perhaps this broader and more consistent pattern of outreach helps to explain why city managers have a higher perceived level of involvement in the activities related to the four dimensions of the governmental process. Analysis of mean consultation scores and mean scores on involvement in the governmental process proved to be correlated at a statistically significant level for consultation with department heads and the public in the decision process. In other words, executives that usually consulted with the council and the public before making decisions also had a higher mean score on the level of perceived involvement in the activities related to the four dimensions of the governmental process.

Svara’s (1990, p. 221) research on large cities led him to conclude that “leadership is and should be collective in the council-manager form” and that “executive mayors need to rely less on power and confrontation and more on inclusive leadership.” Our findings suggest that city managers in small cities appear to recognize the value of outreach and forging partnerships among government and community actors to reach decisions about community services and programs. Svara’s advice for big city mayors seems equally applicable to their small city counterparts; they would do well to consider how to more effectively mobilize official and popular opinion in their decision process.

While differences exist in patterns of decision consultation among local executives, these do not necessarily capture the extent to which their decisions actually may be shaped by the feedback received from the members of the consulted groups. Whether differences occur in how
executives perceive their decisions on local services and programs to be shaped by members of local interest groups is explored in the next section.

**The Influence of Local Interest Groups on Executive Decisions**

Some scholars have suggested that “reformed” governments are “somewhat resistant to interest group influence” while others hold a contrary view (Abney and Lauth, 1998, p. 195; Northrup and Dutton, 1978). Recent research suggested that interest groups have become extensively involved in local policy making (e.g. Beierle and Cayford, 2002). However, Abney and Lauth’s (1986, p. 195) observation is still applicable: “the truth is that not much is known about how local interest groups influence local government policy.” This analysis examines how mayors and city managers perceive local interest groups to influence their decisions.

To ascertain the extent to which municipal executives perceive their decisions about local services to be influenced and shaped by the participation of members of local interest groups, mayors and city managers were asked to rate “the level of influence that any local interest groups have on their decisions” as these related to several types of local government services. We consider this self-report measure to be one indicator of the relative responsiveness of executives to an important community stakeholder (Rich, Giles and Stern, 2001; Abney and Lauth, 1998; Stivers, 1994). The response choices (coded 1 thru 4) were “no influence,” “minor influence,” moderate influence,” and “major influence.” The six services for which executives were asked to rate the level of interest group influence on their decisions are listed in Table 4.

Table 4 goes here

For all six services or programs, municipal executives as a whole perceived that members of interest groups have between a minor and moderate influence on the decisions they make about local government services. The analysis of means indicated however 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 on any of the local services.

Based on earlier research (Grimes, Bonjean, Lyon, and Lineberry 1976), one might expect popularly elected chief executives to report a higher perceived level of influence of interest groups on their decisions about local service issues. That no significant differences emerged between mayors and city managers suggests that local interest group members are equally likely to influence or shape executive decisions regardless of the type of chief executive in their community. In this respect, city managers appear to be no more or less responsive than are mayors to the these members of the local electorate.

These findings suggest that although differences in decision making style or mode exist between mayors and city managers, these differences do not result in a differential level of perceived impact or influence that the interest group stakeholders have on the decisions made by these executives. For example, while city managers are more likely than mayors to consult with members of the public in the process of making their decisions about local services, both types of executives perceive local interest groups to have about the same level of influence or impact on their actual decisions. It appears that managers are inclined to employ a more inclusive, consultative decision process as a way to contain, balance or reconcile local political demands and pressures with professional concerns and values. On the other hand, mayors appear to be less inclined to engage particular government and community actors in their decision process, perhaps assuming that these different perspectives are reflected in their decisions by virtue of being popularly elected. Of course, there may be a difference in how local stakeholders actually
perceive their level of influence on the decisions made by a manager or mayor who employs a more consultative decision process, but that issue is beyond the scope of this study.

**Conclusion**

The dimensions of executive behavior and decision making among small city chief executives examined in this study indicate that mayors and city managers differ in how they allocate their time among roles, the extent of their involvement in the activities integral to the governmental process and their patterns of consultation with key government and community stakeholders in decisions about local services and programs. However, the decisions reached by both mayors and city managers do not appear to be influenced or shaped to any different extent, as reported by the executives themselves, by members of local interest groups that have a stake in those decision outcomes.

That differences exist among executives in different forms of government in large cities has long been recognized. This study confirms that many of those same differences also occur among executives in the nation’s small cities. City managers in small cities clearly spend more of their time on management and policy than do mayors (except for mayors who have the support of a chief administrative officer), but there is little evidence that city managers, over time, have placed any different emphasis on policy than did their big city counterparts some 15 years earlier.

City managers can be expected to be more involved, compared to mayors, in all of the dimensions of the governmental process. This behavior can be explained at least partly by the broader array of groups with whom managers appear to consult regularly in the process of reaching their decisions about local services. Yet, there is no evidence to suggest that either city managers or mayors perceive that their decisions are actually influenced or shaped to any
different extent by the participation of interest group members. This finding suggests that both types of executives perceive themselves to be equally receptive or responsive to community stakeholders.

City managers regularly face the charge that they are “too powerful.” This study confirms previous research findings that city managers are extensively involved in all of the dimensions of the governmental process, including activities related to mission and policy that one might presume to be the primary domain of the elected official. However, this research shows that city managers appear to temper their involvement in these activities with a high level of consultation that may serve to insulate them from the risk of being perceived within their cities as “too powerful.” We speculate that elected officials in council-manager cities may tolerate or even expect their city manager to be extensively involved in local mission and policy activities as long as the manager is not or does not appear to be self-serving. Perhaps the observed pattern of more extensive consultation by city managers may be just the most apparent strategy used to deflect local critics.

Svara observed that the mayor-council form experiences more conflict while the council-manager governments are typically more cooperative (Svara 1990, p. 211). The different patterns of consultation by mayors and city managers in small cities appear to support this conclusion. At least in terms of their decision process, city managers appear more inclined to practice the politics of cooperation by including a broader array of groups in their decision process while mayors are inclined to consult less often and with fewer groups. While the narrower and less frequent consultation pattern exhibited by mayors in making decisions does not necessarily equate with more conflict, it seems reasonable to presume that it certainly holds the potential for more conflict.
The differences in decision making style among mayors and city managers do not necessarily suggest that one approach is superior to the other. As evidenced by these findings, a cooperative or conflictive decision process may still yield a comparable level of impact that stakeholders have on the actual decisions reached by executives. The politics may still be different for mayors and city managers, but their level of responsiveness to the interests that have a stake in their decisions is not. Nonetheless, it is apparent that cities whose chief executive is a city manager enjoy a great deal more attention to the issues related to all of dimensions of the governmental process and are much more likely to engage matters related to local mission and policy. That distinction remains an important difference among the behavior of different types of local chief executives.
Table 1. Executive Time Allocations Among Policy and Management Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Newell &amp; Ammons (1985)</th>
<th>All Mayors</th>
<th>Mayors No CAO</th>
<th>Mayors w/CAO</th>
<th>City Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>26.84</td>
<td>23.68</td>
<td>30.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>37.14</td>
<td>43.41</td>
<td>30.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Mean Level of Executive Involvement in the Dimensions of the Governmental Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Mayors, no CAO</th>
<th>Mayors w/ CAO</th>
<th>City Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.81*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.75*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total means</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.75*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistically significant difference at the .05 level.
Table 3. Patterns of Consultation in Municipal Executives’ Decision Making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Program</th>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Dept. Heads</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Consultants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Mayor w/CAO</td>
<td>City Manager</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.09*</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.20*</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.25*</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Waste Disposal</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Housing</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.22*</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Means</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.21*</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = statistically significant difference at the .05 level
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area</th>
<th>Mayors no CAO</th>
<th>Mayors w/ CAO</th>
<th>City Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Waste Disposal</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Housing</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total means</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Endnotes


2. These calculations are based on data in the ICMA’s Municipal Yearbook (1999) for cities with populations of 2500 or larger and data in Table 38 of the 2000 Statistical Abstract of the US.

3. The target population consisted of mayors in mayor-council cities and city managers in council-manager cities. It does not include CAOs in mayor-council cities or mayors in council-manager cities. The distribution of the target population and the responses received by region and form of government are shown below:

| Region | Mayor-Council Cities | | | Council-Manager Cities | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|    | Target Population | Survey Returns | Target Population | Survey Returns |
|    | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| NE  | 900 | 32.5 | 67 | 24.9 | 518 | 21.3 | 51 | 21.3 |
| S   | 748 | 27.0 | 74 | 27.5 | 830 | 34.2 | 80 | 33.3 |
| MW  | 935 | 33.7 | 65 | 24.2 | 638 | 26.3 | 64 | 26.7 |
| W   | 190 | 6.8  | 63 | 23.4 | 443 | 18.2 | 45 | 18.7 |
| Totals | 2773 | 100.0 | 269 | 100 | 2429 | 100.0 | 240 | 100.0 |
| By form | 2773 | 53.3 | 269 | 52.8 | 2429 | 46.7 | 240 | 47.1 |
4. Selected Characteristics of Responding Chief Executives in Small Cities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Mayors without CAO</th>
<th>Mayors with CAO</th>
<th>City Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-white</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bachelor’s or less</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master’s or more</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party preference</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or none</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean tenure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>56.07</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. The code for the four-point scale used to measure involvement in activities related to each of the four dimensions of the government process was: 1 = “no involvement,” 2 = minimally involved,” 3 = moderately involved,” and 4 = “highly involved.” The level of involvement in their locality’s Mission was measured by a question about their “participation in the development of goals for the city.” The level of involvement in Policy was measured by computing a mean score for three questions that asked respondents about “developing policy,” “proposing policy” and “formulating budget policy.” The level of involvement in Administration was measured by computing the mean score for three questions that asked respondents about “implementing policies,” “coordinating municipal departments,” and “making administrative decisions and recommendations.” The level of involvement in Management was measured by computing a mean score for three questions about “staffing decisions (hiring and firing),” “managing service contracts,” and “reviewing departmental budget issues and problems.” The types of activities in each of the four dimensions are generally comparable to Svara’s (1990) measurement of activities for each of the dimensions.

6. The statistically significant product-moment correlations were -.235 for consultation with department heads and -.449 for consultation with the public and the perceived level of involvement in the four dimensions of the governmental process (based on the mean for all four dimensions). These associations indicate that the executives who usually consulted with department heads and the public in making decisions also had a higher mean level of perceived their involvement in all activities related to the governmental process.


