Mayoral Leadership in Council-Manager Cities: Preconditions versus Preconceptions

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The nature and types of leadership provided by mayors in council-manager cities have not been adequately developed in previous studies. A major shortcoming has been the tendency to measure the office and performance in terms of the executive mayor whose leadership, according to the innovator model, stresses policy innovation and implementation. Neither of these dimensions of leadership is appropriate to non-executive mayors who work with equals on the council and an appointed manager. This form does, however, offer opportunities for leadership in two areas: improving the coordination among the participants in the governmental process and guiding the development of policy. The study generates a comprehensive list of mayoral roles based on content analysis of open-ended interviews with leaders in the five large cities in North Carolina. These roles are used to form a typology of leadership. When the types of leadership provided by mayors in council-manager cities are redefined, the preconditions for effective leadership are reexamined.

The mayoralty in the council-manager form of government may be the most misunderstood leadership position in American local government. Dismissed as a figurehead or confused with mayors in cities where the position is a true executive office, nonexecutive mayors are commonly perceived to be doing less than they are or capable of doing more than they can. Often overlooked by citizens and scholars alike is the potential for the council-manager mayor to provide unique types of leadership, different from the executive mayor but appropriate to the form of government in which the office is located. The mayor’s conduct in office can strongly influence how well a council-manager government performs.

A shortcoming in much of the limited literature on council-manager mayors is a tendency to measure the office and performance in terms of the executive mayor. Although an occasional council-manager mayor might be considered to be an effective leader by this standard, it is unfair and inappropriate to set up the executive mayor as the norm. This and other preconceptions stand in the way of identifying the dimensions of the office and the leadership roles that the mayor may fill, some common to any city government, but most distinct to a form in which the mayor is chairman of the governing board rather than chief executive officer.
Depending on how these roles are filled, mayors display different profiles of leadership. The literature suggests that only by achieving de facto chief executive status does an incumbent become a "real" mayor, yet rarely will the preconditions be favorable for such leadership. This study offers an alternative view of the nature of the mayor's office and identifies a type of leadership which in comprehensive and consistent with the basic features of council-manager government. The preconditions for this kind of leadership are reasonable and readily, if not easily, attainable.

This study is based on interviews with mayors, council members, managers and department heads, and community leaders in the five large cities in North Carolina between 1982 and 1983.1 In one of those cities, Greensboro, the author has studied a succession of five mayors who served since 1965. As in almost all studies of council-manager mayors, the data to be analyzed have been collected only in cities with this form.2 When comparisons are made, they are to the executive mayor as developed in the literature. Such an approach is warranted until there is a clear conceptualization of the office in council-manager cities which can guide true comparative research. In this paper, a model of mayoral leadership is derived inductively from content analysis of responses to questions concerning what mayors do, as perceived by themselves, those with whom the mayor works, and observers of city government.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The office under investigation is part of a larger package of institutional arrangements which have been promoted by the reform movement through the National Municipal League. Central to the proposed changes in city government structure was unifying and strengthening the executive, either through a stronger mayor in its initial formulation of a "model charter" for cities, or since 1915 by means of the council-manager form of government (National Municipal League, 1964). The chief executive officer in this form is the appointed manager. The mayor is a member of the council and typically has no formal powers other than to preside over the council and be recognized as ceremonial head of the city.

1 The cities included in the study are Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh, and Winston-Salem, all cities over 100,000 in population. Open-ended interviews were conducted with the mayor; three or four council members; the manager, assistant manager for operations, and heads of the department of planning and budget; leaders of the Chamber of Commerce, League of Women's Voters, and NAACP; and the city hall reporter from the newspaper. Respondents were promised anonymity. Since there are several cases of unanimous response within a particular city, it is not possible to identify the cities by name without violating the promise of anonymity.

2 Among the studies to be reviewed in this article, only Kotter and Lawrence (1974) analyze data from mayor-council and council-manager cities. Abney and Lauth (1982b), in their study of executive influence over line agencies, treat the mayor-council mayor and the city manager as comparable executive officers.
Reflecting the limited scope of the office and the primacy of undiluted executive leadership in the reform scheme, Kammerer (1964) and Booth (1968) assessed the impact of direct election of the mayor on the manager's authority, the former arguing that the practice threatens the manager and the latter concluding that it makes no difference.

Since 1970, four major studies of council-manager mayors have gone beyond formal charter provisions to define the dimensions of the office and the sources on which leadership is based. Two of these examine the office from the strong executive perspective (Pressman, 1972; Sparrow, 1984), and two reflect the norms of council-manager cities in analyzing mayoral performance (Boynton and Wright, 1970; Wikstrom, 1979). A fifth includes council-manager cities in a general study of mayoral leadership (Kotter and Lawrence, 1974).

In the first category are two valuable case studies of individual mayors. Pressman's study of a reluctant mayor in one city—Mayor Redding of Oakland—has strongly colored perceptions of the office. When leadership is displayed, it will be largely "hortatory in nature," given the characteristics of the form (p. 523). Sparrow demonstrates that broader leadership is possible if the system is transformed. He charts the creation of a "new municipal chief executive model" (p. 5) by Mayor Pete Wilson of San Diego.

Beyond providing interesting details of the trials and triumphs of two mayors, however, both studies suffer from preconceptions about the nature of the office and the form of government which may not be warranted. First, they accept the innovator model—drawn from mayor-council cities (Dahl, 1961; George, 1968; Cunningham, 1970)—as the norm for mayoral leadership and, therefore, assume that the "normal" council-manager form does not provide the opportunity for mayoral leadership. The effective mayor, as entrepreneur, sets goals, builds coalitions, and influences the council, bureaucracy, and public to act according to the mayor's preferences. In most cities, mayors have to augment their limited formal assets to acquire leverage over other participants or to induce support. This is particularly true, they argue, in council-manager government. "Without governmental jurisdiction, staff, and financial resources," Pressman writes (p. 522), "it is hard for any mayor to direct, or even influence, the actions of others." Influence is based on personal resources "in spite of structure" (p. 521). Sparrow as well stresses the need for the "informal incremental pyramiding of power" (p. 4). Wilson's leadership was based on "adroit accumulation of political, policymaking, and administrative power" culminating in de facto control over the selection of the manager (pp. 5-6). Only by tapping resources outside the formal structure or altering the form, it appears, is leadership possible. The studies give no attention, however, to the possibility that the formal
authority normally available to elected officials in council-manager government will provide the basis for influence.

Second, the approach in both studies is mayor-centered and distrustful of professional administrators. If the mayor does not activate the lethargic city government or give it direction, no other elected official will. The manager, they suggest, will manipulate the council, pursue a personal/professional agenda, and take cues from outside influentials, but will not provide leadership responsive to elected officials or supportive of their exercise of democratic control. The manager, Pressman observed, "may be responsive to citizen's preferences because he deems it to be a wise policy to act in such a manner" (p. 523), but his superior resources gave the manager "domination" of the governmental process (p. 515). Sparrow suggests that managers generally seek to promote the growth of the city because in the process their "personal worth" increases through "larger and more professional staffs, an increasing tax base, and greater influence" (p. 4). The manager was responsive to the council in San Diego only so long as it supported growth, and staff resisted a change in policy. Only when Wilson secured the appointment of a manager who was willing to settle for a scope of responsibilities limited by the mayor's activities was political control achieved. An implication of this approach is that leadership cannot be collective, either exercised by the mayor and manager or the council as a whole.

Finally, and underlying the other preconceptions, is the presumption of conflict within the governmental process. Sparrow viewed power in San Diego as a hydraulic system "whereby decrease in the manager's power would result in increased mayoral power," (p. 6) and Pressman's analysis of Oakland also rests on a zero-sum conception of power.

These conditions can not be assumed to be invariant in the urban governmental process. Although presumably appropriate to the cities studied, they are not supported by the other studies of council-manager governments nor do they square with the characteristics in the North Carolina cities under investigation.

The other major studies do not fall into the same conceptual traps. Boynton and Wright and Wikstrom demonstrate that the form of government does not preclude leadership. Boynton and Wright (1971) investigated patterns of partnership between the mayor and manager. The preponderance of "collaborative or team relationships" (p. 33) in 45 large cities indicates that cooperative relationships between elected and appointed officials are common, and clearly contradicts an assumption of inherent conflict in relations among officials. They identified three significant spheres of activity in city government—legislative, public, and bureaucratic. The mayor's significance derives from the dominant role he
typically plays in the first two and the unusually close relationship he has to the third because of his extensive interaction with the manager.

Wikstrom (1979, p. 273), in a study of 41 cities in Virginia, identifies five leadership roles, all of which draw upon essential features of the form if the individual uses the opportunities inherent in the office to the fullest. These are (1) presiding over the council and representing the city, (2) facilitating constructive interaction between the council and manager, (3) providing leadership to the council, (4) providing political leadership, and (5) realizing goals. Almost all mayors in Virginia at least provide council leadership, and 38% also provide political leadership. They do not operate alone, however. Wikstrom concludes, reminiscent of Boyton and Wright, that council-manager government has evolved into “teamwork governance; mayors and managers need and depend upon each other” (p. 275).

There are minor shortcomings in this study. Wikstrom does not define the leadership roles with sufficient clarity. He treats the policy role as the ultimate form of leadership, rather than considering the possibility that this aspect of leadership may be inextricably bound to the other leadership roles. Considering the mayor as a multifaceted leader would have been more appropriate in view of his findings. Furthermore, he suggests that when the mayor's policy role expands and he becomes more broadly involved in administrative matters, the council-manager form resembles a “skew version of the mayor-council with a CAO [chief administrative officer] form” (p. 275).

This observation implies that effective mayoral leadership alters the form of government. With similar reasoning, George (1984) identifies a trend toward the emergence of a “strong-mayor, council-manager” form of government, and Sparrow concludes (1984, p. 8) that “the city manager is losing power.” It has not been demonstrated, however, that extensive mayoral leadership necessarily shifts the basic character of the form of government, or that the mayor must transform the system in order to acquire leadership. Furthermore, the conclusion ignores the considerable shifts in roles and attitudes among all officials: not only are mayors more policy conscious, in addition council members are more activist and oriented to constituency services (Heilig and Mundt, 1984), and managers are more assertive, politically sensitive, and professionally competent. Still, the form of government appears to have retained its basic character.

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3 The new orientation of managers is reflected in the most recent handbook for managers written for the International City Management Association (1983) by Wayne F. Anderson, Richard J. Stillman II, and Chester A. Newland, which provides much more sophisticated treatment of the manager's political as well as organizational roles than previous publications in the series of Green books. The profession's broadening range of concerns has been expressed in a new Declaration of Ideals (Public Management, August, 1984) for the city management profession to accompany its long-standing Code of Ethics.
The final study allows for a mayor to have impact based on the range of his interactions and the quality of his ideas and places less emphasis on his power over other officials. In 20 cities, including seven with council-manager form, Kotter and Lawrence (1974) analyze mayoral behavior in three processes: agenda setting, network building, and task accomplishing. They argue that the "scope of the mayor's domain"—those areas in which the mayor "behaves as if he has some responsibility"—is determined more by the nature of the mayor's agenda-setting activities than by the assignment of formal responsibility (p. 61). Also, mayors can establish a broad network of relationships regardless of formal powers. Task accomplishment will, however, largely be limited to an "individualistic" approach, in which the mayor works on tasks by himself, unless he has the formal control over the bureaucracy or supportive staff (typically absent from council-manager government), or unusually great entrepreneurial capacity. Thus, their framework leads to conclusions similar to those of Pressman and Sparrow: leadership is likely to be limited unless the mayor has rare personal characteristics. A conceptual approach which does not include task accomplishment would be more relevant to council-manager mayors. Furthermore, their emphasis on the need to build networks fails to recognize the inherent potential for mayors in this form to handle communication and facilitate cooperation, starting with the close relationship to the manager.

It is conceptually possible for the internal process of city government to be characterized by cooperation rather than conflict as the normal condition. Axelrod (1984) has shown that cooperation can evolve in any setting, and the cooperation possible in council-manager systems goes beyond the self-interested accommodation he describes. Interactions in the council-manager form may approximate Barnard's (1938) concept of organizations as cooperative systems. When Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio (1985) recently called upon council-manager cities to create "models of concensus" for decision making, he was not being naive according to this reasoning. He was seeking to promote the potential for cooperative relationships in this form of government.

Major sources of conflict inside government are separation of powers, which is not present as a line of cleavage in council-manager governments (Newland, 1985), and tension between those who make up the permanent membership of the administrative organization and the transient elected officials over it. Widely divergent perspectives are not likely, since councils normally pick managers who reflect their point of view about

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Among the seven mayors studied, only one—Erik Johnson, Mayor of Dallas 1964-1971—displayed a comprehensive type of leadership based on fostering a goal-setting process for the city and active network building. Of the other six, four were "minimum" mayors and two had limited impact as "individualist/personality" type leaders (Kotter and Lawrence, 1974, ch. 7).
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programs and administrative style (Flentje and Counihan, 1984). Managers, despite their influence over policy, are "responsive and accountable" to community values as conveyed by the council (Loveridge, 1971, p. 173). Friction is reduced when responsibilities are divided in a way that limits interference by one set of officials in the activities of the other. A dichotomy-duality pattern of dividing responsibilities has been observed in the North Carolina cities included in this study (Svara, 1985).

Although elected officials are largely responsible for setting the mission and broad goals for city government while managers handle the management systems of the city, the officials share responsibility for the formulation of middle-range policy and its implementation. Cooperation is typically sought, if not always achieved, in many council-manager cities. In this context, the unique nature of the mayor's position comes into focus: the mayor is the single most important agent of cooperation in relations among officials.

The nature of mayoral leadership in council-manager cities has not been fully elaborated in previous research. This will not happen as long as the chief executive mayor is held up as the norm, and interactions within city governments are interpreted exclusively in terms of a conflict model of the governmental process, as certain studies have done. Other studies have begun to fill in the distinctive forms of partnership and leadership displayed by mayors in this form of government. The office needs to be redefined by examining the characteristics of the form of government and analyzing the role definitions offered by those who occupy the office and who work with or observe the mayor.

LEADERSHIP ROLES IN COUNCIL-MANAGER CITIES

The council-manager mayor is analogous to the chairman of the board, important but not crucial to the operation of the organization. The executive mayor with considerable formal power, some control over resource allocation, and extensive public recognition often becomes the driving force in a mayor-council government. The resources and contribution of the "chairman" mayor are more difficult to discern.

Long-term research in Greensboro indicates that mayors have opportunities for two kinds of leadership beyond traditional ceremonial functions. During the last twenty years—despite relative constancy in conditions and governmental structure—different mayors have realized neither, one, or both of these opportunities. One of these is a coordinative component in which the mayor pulls together the parts of council-manager government to improve their interaction. The mayor occupies a strategic location shaped by his special and close relationship with the council, manager/staff, and public. Unlike Kotter and Lawrence's approach, which stresses building and maintaining a set of relationships, the mayor's
distinctive interaction with the participants provides a network which is readily available to him if he chooses to use it. The mayor, by virtue of his favored position, is able to tap into various communication networks among elected officials, governmental staff, and community leaders. Although they can and do interact with each other independently, the mayor can transmit messages better than anyone else in the government because of the breadth of knowledge and range of contacts he is likely to have. In so doing, the mayor has a unique potential to expand the level of understanding and improve the coordination among participants in the governmental process.

The second opportunity is guidance in the initiation and execution of policy, which may be done through the coordinative dimension or separately. The mayor not only channels communication but may also influence and shape the messages being transmitted. More dramatic techniques may be employed to raise issues and put forth proposals, but the mayor runs the risk of alienating the council whose support is needed to be effective. This mayor is constrained by the formal weaknesses noted in other studies, but he has great potential to guide other officials toward the accomplishment of goals favored by the mayor.

Drawing from interviews since 1982 with and about the mayors of the five largest cities in North Carolina, it is possible to isolate eleven distinct roles that a mayor may or may not perform. Mayors, council members, and community leaders were asked, using open-ended questions, to describe the responsibilities and roles of the mayor in their city. Content analysis was used to categorize responses. It is a testament to the diffuseness of the job that there is such variation in how the job is perceived, once one goes beyond formal responsibilities. The roles and percentage of respondents who mentioned each are listed in table 1. The relative frequency of references to the roles varies greatly, since some roles separated in analysis may be viewed as blended, some roles are not observed by certain participants, and some roles are absent in certain cities. The object of research at this stage is to identify a comprehensive set of roles for the mayor's office, whether or not they are generally perceived. The eleven roles can be grouped into five dimensions of leadership, major areas in which a mayor may make contributions to the functioning of city government. Whether he engages in the roles is a separate question which provides the basis for distinguishing among types of mayor leadership, which are addressed in the next section.

5 The five mayors are all directly elected for two-year terms. They preside over the city council and vote on all matters, with the exception of Charlotte. There, the mayor has limited voting authority and has the power to veto actions of the city council.
### Table 1

**Dimensions and Roles of Mayoral Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>A. Ceremony and Presiding:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>1. Ceremonial tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>2. Spokesman for council</td>
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<tr>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>3. Presiding officer</td>
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<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>B. Communication and Facilitation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>4. Educator: informational and educational tasks vis-a-vis council, manager, and/or public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>5. Liaison with manager: promotes informal exchange both ways between the council and the manager and staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>6. Team leader: coalescing the council, building consensus, and enhancing group performance.</td>
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<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>C. Organization and Guidance</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>7. Goal setter: setting goals and objectives for council and manager, identifying problems, establishing tone for the council.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>8. Organizer: stabilizing relationships, guiding council to recognition of its roles and responsibilities, defining and adjusting the relationship with the manager.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>9. Policy advocate: developing programs, lining up support for or opposition to proposals.</td>
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<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>D. Promotion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>10. Promoter: promoting and defending the city, seeking investment, handling external relationships, securing agreement among parties to a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>11. Directing staff: Giving orders to staff, directing the manager, expediting action by staff.</td>
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\[ n=58 \]

Typically perceived by observers of council-manager government is the mayor's responsibility for a variety of *ceremonial tasks*, representing the city, and appearing at many and various meetings, dinners, and other special occasions. The mayor also serves as *spokesman for council*, enunciating positions taken, informing the public about upcoming business, and reacting to questions about the city's policies and intentions. This activity, though commonplace, may be merged with other ceremonial and representational activities in the minds of many observers;
it was identified as a separate role by fewer than one fifth of the respondents. In these two activities, the mayor builds the extensive contact with the public and the media which can be a valuable resource in performing other roles. As Boynton and Wright (1971, p. 32) observed, the mayor’s “unique relationship to the public provides him with leadership resources not available to any other . . . actors.” As representative and spokesman, the mayor also becomes an important channel for citizen input. Wikstrom (1979, p. 274) found that 66% of the mayors in Virginia spent more than three (and 16% more than ten) hours per week dealing with citizen inquiries and complaints. In addition, the mayor serves as president at meetings, a role mentioned by half of the respondents. In so doing, he sets the tone for meetings and may exert mild influence over the timing and outcome of deliberations.

These traditional roles, sometimes perceived to be the full extent of the job, are important for establishing the relationships with the council and the public. The mayor also sends signals to staff about his attitudes toward them in his public conduct. This public demeanor can influence the nature of that key relationship. Some mayors never move beyond ceremony and presiding. For other mayors, additional activities that build on these foundation roles were also identified by respondents.

The mayor contributes to higher levels of communication and facilitates action by officials. Beyond the straightforward transmission of council views to the public, the mayor may also serve as an educator. Although only mentioned by 10% of the respondents, this role is conceptually distinct from spokesman or advocate (defined below). In his relations with the council, public and media, and/or manager and staff, the mayor, without promoting a favored position, identifies issues or problems for consideration, promotes awareness of important concerns, and seeks to promote understanding across the city by exchange or information.

As liaison with the manager, the mayor links the two major components of the system—the legislative body and administrative apparatus—and can facilitate communication and understanding between elected and appointed officials. The mayor increases the manager’s awareness of council preferences and can predict how the council will react to administrative proposals. Although the manager must maintain positive relations with each member of the council, the mayor-manager interaction is an efficient way to exchange information. Despite the benefits that can be derived by filling this role, however, and its accessibility to the mayor, the liaison role is not necessarily filled. Over 70% of the respondents perceived the mayor to have a closer relationship to the manager than other council members, but only 29% cited liaison as a part of the mayor’s performance.
Finally, 29% identified the mayor as a *team builder*, one who works to coalesce the council and build consensus. Wikstrom (1979, p. 275) found that “practically all mayors take the lead in promoting consensus when the council is divided over policy matters.” Promoting cohesion is conceptually distinct from taking the group in a particular direction. The mayor as team leader seeks to promote full expression, help the council work through differences expeditiously, and encourage the council to face issues and resolve them decisively. Several managers noted that it is much easier to work with a council that operates in this fashion.

The roles considered so far have been concerned with communication and coordination, whereas the next group of roles involves influencing the direction of city government affairs and the content of policy. As *goal setter*—a role identified by 29% of the respondents—the mayor establishes goals and objectives for council and manager, identifies problems, and sets the tone for the council. Some mayors keep track of a set of key objectives so that the council and manager orient themselves to accomplishing these priority items. Thus, this role may encompass the accomplishment as well as the setting of goals. Similarly, Wikstrom (1979, p. 275) reports that 56% of the mayors in his study considered themselves to be primarily responsible for ensuring that the manager implements policies of the council.

In addition, the mayor may be active as an *organizer* and stabilizer of the key relations within city government. Although mentioned in only 14% of the interviews, the activities classified as organizing do not fit into any other role. The mayor guides the council to recognition of its roles and responsibilities. If the council has standing committees, the mayor can use appointments and assignments to advance his view of how the council should be operating. He helps to define the pattern of interaction between council and manager, monitors it, and makes adjustments in order to maintain the complex sharing and separation of responsibilities between the council and manager.

The mayor is uniquely situated to control that relationship and better able than any other official to correct it, if change is needed. For example, the mayor may advise the manager to bring more matters to the council or fewer; he may intervene with a council member who is intruding into operational matters; or he may seek to alleviate tension between the council and staff before a serious rift develops. The mayor may also undertake to augment the council’s capacity for information and decision making vis-à-vis the manager. Some of Wilson’s changes in San Diego were designed to enhance the role of both mayor and council.*

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*The introduction of a committee system with consultants hired for each committee "enabled the council to develop, independent of the city manager, its own information, to draft ordinances, and to undertake special studies" (Sparrow, 1984, p. 6). In addition, the budget was reviewed by a fiscal analyst in the mayor’s office and committee staff.*
Carolina cities, the mayor often handles these organizing and stabilizing activities informally and in private. Indeed, a number of respondents noted that the mayor's ability to make such adjustments out of the glare of publicity is one of his greatest resources with sunshine laws that limit private deliberations among elected officials.

Finally, the mayor was perceived to be a policy advocate by 33% of the respondents. As an active guide in policy-making, the mayor develops programs and lines up support or organizes opposition to proposals. In these activities, the mayor most closely resembles the executive mayor's public persona as the city's problem solver. In addition, the mayor may influence policy choices of other actors. Wikstrom (1979, p. 274) reports that two-thirds of the managers informally discuss major issues with the mayor before submitting a proposal to the council. The same proportion of managers "sensed that council members usually followed the policy posture of the mayor." Thus, the mayor's role in advocating and shaping policies may be based on all the other roles, or pursued to the exclusion of others.

Conceptually distinct from the preceding are the mayor's activities in promoting and defending the city. This was the most commonly mentioned role—by 36%—beyond the foundation roles. The mayor may be involved in external relations and help secure agreement among parties to a project. For some mayors, the promoter role is a simple extension of ceremonial tasks. Others are active initiators of contacts and help develop possibilities for the city. As official representative, the mayor has extensive dealings with officials in other governments and may serve as a key participant in formulating agreements with state or federal officials, developers, and others who seek joint ventures with city government. The mayor may also take the lead in projecting a favorable image of the city and seek to "sell" others on investment in it. This role has contributed to the emergence of the mayor as a central figure in council-manager government (George, 1984).

Finally, 10% of the respondents mentioned activities that involved directing staff: issuing orders, requesting reports, and monitoring the performance of certain department heads. These actions, unlike those discussed in the previous dimensions, may constitute interference with the prerogatives of the manager and contradict the norms of the form of government. The mayor's activities in administration, Boynton and Wright (1971, p. 31) note, may "conflict with," "displace," or "complement the manager's activities."

Care should be taken to distinguish between administrative actions that are part of the extensive traffic between elected officials and staff and those which constitute executive control. Mayors and councils are involved in complaint handling, oversight, making and implementing
decisions, adjusting program regulations, and occasionally efforts to steer services to particular recipients (Abney and Lauth, 1982a; Greene, 1982; Svara, 1984). Furthermore, councils also contribute to decisions concerning management and operations. Thus, the mayor deals with administrative and management matters in the coordinative and guidance roles already discussed. For example, when a mayor seeks information from the manager and staff “on behalf of solicitous councils” regarding the “implementation and success of a policy,” a common occurrence according to Wikstrom (1979, p. 275), he may be filling the liaison, goal setter, or organizer role, depending on how he handles the inquiry. The actions encompassed by the role of directing staff are limited to direct interaction between the mayor and staff to receive specific products, such as reports, or to produce specific results, such as change in the performance of a department. Defined in this narrow way, mayors are rarely perceived to be active in administration.

The most pronounced form of administrative direction is assuming control over the manager. If the mayor chooses the manager and defines the scope of the office, as Sparrow claims happened under Wilson, the mayor becomes the de facto executive officer with the manager acting as an administrative officer to the mayor. The role of selecting the manager can be added to the eleven identified by the respondents in North Carolina to form a comprehensive list of potential roles.

**Types of Leadership**

What kind of mayoral leadership is provided by an incumbent depends on which roles the mayor performs and how well he handles them. There is infinite variety in the combinations of activities pursued by individual mayors, but certain general types have emerged from this and previous research. Mayors develop a leadership type for themselves by the way they combine the five dimensions of leadership. In figure 1, the twelve roles are used as an ex post facto inventory of the scope of leadership provided by the mayors in the five North Carolina cities. The proportion of respondents mentioning activities associated with each role provides a profile of the salient aspects of leadership in each city. For comparison, a column is added to reflect the roles filled by Mayor Wilson of San Diego, as inferred from Sparrow’s description.

It is apparent that the performance of more demanding roles is not evenly distributed among the cities. The mayor may invest so little in the office and define its scope so narrowly that he simply is a caretaker—a uniformly underdeveloped type of leadership.7 This was the kind of

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7 Maier (1966, p. 37) uses caretaker in the same way. Kotter and Lawrence (1974, ch. 7) classify the “ceremonial pattern” as the “minimum” mayor, and consider the “caretaker”
Figure 1

Activities and Leadership Types of Council-Manager Mayors

Proportion of Respondents Noting That Mayor Engaged in Role in Five Study Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLES</th>
<th>CITY:</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. SELECTS MANAGER</td>
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<td>11. DIRECTS STAFF</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<td>10. PROMOTES CITY</td>
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<td>9. ADVOCATES POLICY</td>
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<td>XXX</td>
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<td>8. ORGANIZES R'SHIPS</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
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<td>7. SETS GOALS</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>6. FORMS TEAM</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>5. LIAISON W/MGR</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. EDUCATES</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>3. PRESIDES</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
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<td>XXXXX</td>
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<td>2. SPOKESMAN</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. CEREMONIAL TASKS</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
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</tbody>
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CITY:  
- A: n = 14
- B: n = 13
- C: n = 12
- D: n = 13
- E: n = 6

Types of Leadership and Roles Filled

CARETAKER: No roles fully developed

ACTIVIST/REFORMER: Roles 1-3, 7-10

SYMBOLIC HEAD: Roles 1-3

DIRECTOR: Roles 1-10

COORDINATOR: Roles 1-6

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Roles 1-12

PROMOTER: Roles 1-3, 10

(1) For study cities in North Carolina, each X represents that 10 percent of the respondents mentioned that activity in response to an open-ended question, "What are the responsibilities and roles of the mayor in [name of city]?"

(2) * indicates that this activity was attributed to the mayor of San Diego by Sparrow (1984).

(3) In this city, seven interviews were conducted before the inclusion of the question concerning the mayor.
leadership provided by Mayor Redding of Oakland as described by Pressman. For most mayors, the presiding and ceremonial tasks are inescapable because legally required or an integral part of the job. A mayor who fills these roles actively but performs no others can be called the *symbolic head* of government. The mayor in city C demonstrates this type of leadership: he was perceived to be filling virtually no other roles. Although such mayors preside and attend to the interactions with the public, their narrowly defined leadership does not address division within the council, and the manager’s influence is likely to expand. Mayor Redding’s limited leadership and the manager’s extensive influence in Oakland presumably were mutually reinforcing, although it is also possible that individual council members will intrude excessively in the manager’s sphere in this situation.

If the next set of roles is performed as well, the mayor becomes *coordinator*. Pursuing these activities effectively contributes to a smoothly functioning council-manager government with strong elected leadership. The council does not necessarily work together well, nor do the council, manager, and public necessarily interact smoothly without coordinative leadership from the mayor. The coordinator is a team leader, keeps the manager and council in touch, and interacts with the public and outside agencies—all contributing to improved communication. He helps to achieve high levels of shared information, but since he is weak in policy guidance, he contributes little to policy formulation (at least, no more than any other member of the council.) The coordinator is not a complete type of leadership since the organizing and guidance roles are not part of the mayor’s repertoire. The mayor in city E represents this type in part. He is perceived as providing liaison with the manager, although the perception of his team leadership is less common.

A third incomplete type of leadership was found in the study cities, and a fourth (with two variants) can be defined even though it was not observed in pure form in these cities. The mayor in city D is a *specialized promoter*. This mayor provides effective guidance in that single role. Observers give him high marks for bringing together support from state and federal sources, drawing upon extensive political activities and governmental service prior to becoming mayor, and commitments from the private sector, with which he has strong occupational ties. The extraordinary contributions to promoting the city are not matched by effectiveness at activities in other roles. The specialized promoter leaves to be more active. This approach does not seem appropriate because the caretaker, who does not develop any dimension of leadership fully, would not project a positive image of the city and would make government less known and accessible to the public. Thus, the symbolic head in the typology presented in this paper would make a greater contribution, albeit a limited one, than the caretaker.
a vacuum of responsibility for tasks involving coordination, organization, and policy guidance. In city D, the manager must pay more attention to these activities. As indicated in figure 1, the mayors in cities A and B are also commonly perceived to be promoters, so this type of leadership does have to be a specialty. Indeed, hard times and increasing competition among cities virtually force this role on the mayor.

The fourth type is similar to Kotter and Lawrence’s (1974, pp. 112-15) personality-individualist mayor. The activist or reformer type emphasizes policy guidance and advocacy but neglects coordinative activities, especially team building, essentially going it alone. The activist wants to get things accomplished quickly, and succeeds by force of his personality and the presence of a working majority. Although influential, the activist is viewed by some members of the council (perhaps even his own supporters) as abrasive and exclusionary in his leadership. The tenure of this type of mayor is marked by successful policy initiatives along with friction and disgruntlement among the council members. Too much emphasis on the policy roles can induce a mayor to overreach his position and alienate the council. Such a mayor would then fall into the reformer type of leadership, which is possible for any mayor who ignores or maladroitly handles the tasks of coordination. Such mayors stress the policy enunciation activity, but are not very successful at securing acceptance of their ideas (Maier, 1966, p. 37).

The director is a complete type of mayor who not only contributes to smooth functioning of government but also provides a general sense of direction. A primary responsibility of the council is to determine the mission of city government and its broad goals. The director contributes significantly to consideration of broad questions of purpose. One former mayor observed that “my toughest job was keeping the council’s attention on the horizon rather than on the potholes.” The mayors in Cities A and B demonstrate this comprehensive type of leadership.

This mayor stands out as a leader in the eyes of the council, the press, and the public, and uses that recognition as the basis for guidance rather than control. He enhances the influence of elected officials by unifying the council, filling the policy vacuum that can exist on the council, and guiding policy toward goals that meet the needs of the community. Furthermore, he is actively involved in monitoring and adjusting relationships within city government to maintain balance, cooperation, and high standards. No one else can attack the causes of friction between

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8 The leadership of the mayor in city B, according to a few respondents there, is eroding in the “middle.” Although once proficient at team leadership which provided the basis for policy guidance, he has tended to concentrate more on the latter than the former. There is the risk that mayors after some time in office will forget that the council’s support is essential to their policy leadership.
the council and manager (which may be produced by failing of either party) or promote the constructive interaction that is needed for effective performance. This mayor does not supplant the manager's prerogatives or diminish his leadership, although this mayor is occasionally perceived to be directing staff. Wikstrom (1979, p. 274) has observed that "managers prefer a mayor who provides policy leadership and direction." This type of leader avoids trying to take over the manager's responsibilities. The organizer role is oriented toward enhancing the ability of the manager to function as the chief executive officer. In sum, although the director does not become the driving force as the executive mayor can be, he is the guiding force in city government.

The contrast is clearly seen in Sparrow's portrait of Wilson as a chief executive, a final type of leadership. In addition to the changes which augmented the role of the entire council, Wilson added a fiscal analyst in his office, handled certain federal programs (CETA, Model Cities, and General Revenue Sharing), and used his appointment power over council committees and members of boards and commissions to expand his control over policy formation and administration. The most striking change in power was acquiring the de facto ability to hire the city manager, presumably by driving out those who did not adjust to his leadership style and influencing appointments until he found those who did. Sparrow concludes that Wilson achieved through informal means the concentration of power in the mayor's office which the voters had refused to approve in a charter change in 1973. Wilson displayed comprehensive leadership across all roles, developing positive relations with the public and expanding the council's role. He strengthened not only his own office but the exercise of collective leadership by the entire council as well.

In sum, the analysis suggests that a mayor is able to fashion a unique type of leadership by the roles which he chooses (or happens) to develop. Certain types are cumulative, building on the successful exercise of more easily accomplished roles. To be a successful director or chief executive, it is necessary to maintain strong support from the council and the public, sustained by the performance of traditional and coordinative roles. The existence of incomplete types indicates that some mayors do not adopt more difficult roles—the ceremonial heads and coordinators—or experience the consequences of emphasizing higher ranking roles over lower ones—the activist, reformer, and specialized promoter. Such variation directs attention to the factors that influence adoption of different roles and success in filling them.

**Preconditions of Effective Leadership**

The resources needed to fill the mayor's office suggested in previous research fall into those formal and informal resources which determine
the nature of the office and those which define performance within the office. Among the former, Pressman (1972, p. 512) stressed financial and staff support for the mayor and salary to make the job full-time, extensive governmental functional scope and mayoral jurisdiction over those functions, backing from political organizations, and access to friendly media. Analysis of the North Carolina cities suggests different bases for a distinctive form of leadership which does not depend on a superior power position. Unless the mayor wishes to assume the chief executive type of leadership, there are resources available in the council-manager form to develop leadership in the areas of coordination and policy guidance. Thus, the strategic location occupied by the mayor becomes an important precondition in itself. Mayors with a clear conception of the job—its possibilities, interdependencies, and limitations—are more likely to be able to take advantage of this resource.

Many studies stress the importance of personal qualities in determining the inclination of individuals to seek leadership and their ability to exercise it. Energy, resourcefulness, contacts and connections, ability to communicate, a clear sense of purpose, and the ability to keep sight of broad goals while making specific choices are important for leadership in any setting. These qualities must be channeled, however, into appropriate role behavior. In council-manager governments, the foundation roles—ceremonial and presiding activities, education, liaison, and team building—support goal setting, organizing, policy advocacy, and promotion. The highly committed, assertive, and impatient mayor may jump into the higher level roles without developing the others, but runs the risk of having only short-term success or being an isolated reformer.

If the mayor is inclined to fill the roles that make up the director type of leadership, other preconditions for leadership follow. The mayor must be effective at working with others and delegate certain responsibilities to them. Inclusiveness, sharing of information, facilitation of the expression of divergent views, and ability to resolve differences are important traits for the mayor to have in his dealings with the council. The relationship with the manager requires tact, respect, ability to share authority, and trust in the manager's commitment to advance the goals of the city and to achieve the highest performance from government as a whole. The mayor is not necessarily the counterweight to an autonomous professional.

Finally, mayors need to be flexible and capable of shifting the emphasis they place on different roles. More than any other official in this form of government, the mayor is the stabilizer who acts in those areas in which contributions are needed at a given time. He will be more or less central, more or less public, more or less assertive as conditions warrant. He will
constantly monitor and at times adjust the line of division between responsibilities of council and staff in order to maintain effectiveness. He needs to be able to accommodate inconsistency and help others understand the need for it, as the manager is given wide discretion in one area and the council is highly involved in program formation and implementation in another. Through all the fluid shifting of responsibilities, the mayor’s firm sense of purpose can provide the bearings for all participants.

IMPLICATIONS

Council-manager mayors can contribute substantially to the performance of their governments and the betterment of their communities. The position is not a pale imitation of the executive mayor’s office in a mayor-council city, but rather a unique leadership position that requires distinctive qualities. Preconditions for leadership include opportunities for coordination and policy guidance present in the form, personal resourcefulness and drive, and, at the same time, self-restraint, commitment to enhance the position of other participants in the governmental process, and flexibility. The lesson for mayors from this research is that effective leadership is built upon strengthening the other participants in the governing process rather than controlling or supplanting them.

The San Diego case demonstrates that it is possible for the mayor to move beyond coordinative and guidance roles to acquire control over other actors in the system. Sparrow (1984, p. 8) asserts that such leadership “has become the preferred form.” Two questions arise: whether this is an efficacious strategy for other council-manager mayors, and whether it is preferable. It is not likely that such a leadership type will be sustained permanently without formal changes in the legal position of the office, such as those which Wilson originally sought. For every mayor who successfully sustains sufficient council support to chart an independent course and significantly supplant the manager, it seems likely that many will wind up “reformers”—isolated and ineffective. The director type of leadership is comprehensive as well, and also more compatible with the form of government, and thus likely to be more easily achieved and more stable.

Even if possible, the creation of executive mayors in this form may not be desirable. The council-manager plan differs from governing arrangements based on separation of powers. The strengths and weaknesses of each form are topics which extend beyond the scope of this discussion, but certain consequences of a shift toward greater mayoral influence may be suggested. The emergence of mayor-centered systems
of governance in council-manager cities is likely to produce greater conflict between the council and the mayor and create ambiguities about the lines of authority between each set of elected officials and the manager. The experience of mayor-council cities suggests that dependency on a single leader chosen through the electoral process to provide broad-ranging leadership can lead to poor performance as well as spectacular success. The council-manager government may be less capable of resolving conflict or coalescing divergent interests, because it lacks a single leader who can forge compromises, a weakness noted by Banfield and Wilson (1963). If this form has a mayor who provides comprehensive leadership (without assuming executive control), however, a council-manager city has the advantages that accrue from blending the distinct talents of elected officials and professional administrators and may evidence greater consistency in governmental performance. There are a host of other potential differences in proactivity, responsiveness, effectiveness, equity, and efficiency between the forms of urban government. The advantages concerning quality of leadership, however, are not one-sided.

The roles and leadership typology presented here provide the framework for further case studies and comparative research on this important office. Mayors, council members, and administrators can be surveyed using this comprehensive inventory to determine the extent of activity in each role and the effectiveness of performance. The type of leadership can be determined by examining the range of roles filled. Beyond cities, the approach can also be used in studying similar positions in other governments with governing board-appointed executive form of organization. This form is used extensively in counties, and almost exclusively in school and other special districts. The presiding officer of these various boards may fill any number of the roles identified for mayors. Such studies will expand our understanding of non-executive political heads of government whose leadership is based on coordination and policy guidance.

REFERENCES


