CHAPTER 10: UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS POLITICS AND POLICY OUTCOMES: DOES CLASS IDENTITY MATTER?

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DOES CLASS IDENTITY MATTER?

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Political influence in American policymaking has been a longstanding theme in urban politics. For years, Lasswell’s original query about “who gets what, when and how?” (1936) has inspired generations of scholars in interest group theory, community power, intergovernmental relations, and public organization theory. The research response has left political scientists well stocked with answers to the query, but the results remain incomplete from a larger social science perspective. Aimed at discovering the influence of actors engaged in the political process, most urban policy research (except a few like Dahl, 1961) generally overlook the indirect influence of anonymous social genre. The question raised by this book, then, may not be “does class matter?” but “in what form does it matter?”

Typically, we assume symbolic “actors” or identities are not of organized groups, and hence lack specific interest and direct political force necessary to sway public policymaking. The result is that such influence on policy outcomes is not usually considered. The oversight may be especially symptomatic in the study of social class. This chapter examines a little acknowledged thesis about an upper middle class (UMC) genre skewing a public agency’s outcomes in ways that favor some interests at the expense of others. The thesis argues that policy outcomes are indirectly influenced by the “systemic power” (Stone, 1980) of an UMC genre apart from the influence of political activities of UMC persons.

Given the qualitative nature of this relationship, the research offers a modest empirical test which links multivariate analysis with inferential reasoning. This includes developing (1) a multiple perspectives framework of policy outcomes (the dependent variables), (2) a demographic profile of the UMC (the independent variable), and three hypotheses linking the UMC with policy outcomes. Hypotheses are tested using controls for rival theses in a regression analysis of a nationwide sample of urban transit agencies.

Policy Outcomes From Multiple Perspectives

Before we propose connections between an UMC and policymaking, we first must ask about the meaning of “policy outcomes.” In a plural society, institutional theory envisions the public agency "as a going concern, taking account of relevant stakeholders, attending to long-run interests, being sensitive to the operative structure of authority" (Selznick, 1996, p. 272). Analyzing the agency's policy outcomes therefore involves a multiple-perspectives approach. However, with differences in perspective come
disagreements over the benefits of outcomes, making this approach even more essential
to policy analysis when "political actors... have significantly different expectations about
bureaucratic performance" (Gruber, 1987, p. 142).

Since a determination of "goodness" in agency results varies according to the
interests of different stakeholders, the study measures policy results from a comparative
perspective involving both administration-centered and external political-centered
outcomes (Boschken, 1994, 1992; Bozeman, 1988). The analytical structure imparts an
ability to compare policymakers' priorities in choosing who gets what (Levy, Meltsner
and Wildavsky, 1974), and reveals patterns of policy outcomes skewed to favor some
stakeholders more than others. The framework therefore differs from single-norm
analysis found in most studies of efficiency (e.g., Downs and Larkey, 1986),
effectiveness (e.g., Chubb and Moe, 1990), and innovation (e.g., Clark, 1994).

The framework's analytical focus is on outcome skewness and consists of indices
(the dependent variables) representing different types of agency performance. A
condition of skewness exists when an agency exhibits outcome emphases and de-
emphases which combined form an asymmetrical pattern of performance. The key
assumption is that with limited resources, an agency will not and cannot emphasize all
legitimate outcomes. For example, when caught in a paradox, one agency might skew
outcomes to favor bureaucratic efficiency, while another skews outcomes to emphasize
social program effectiveness.

Possible skewed patterns in this comparative framework are composed empirically
of three types of agency outcomes, each fostered by different stakeholder perspectives.
The first and second types -- labeled outcomes of strategic organizational effectiveness
and outcomes of operational efficiency -- are preferred by the agency's administrative
constituencies located at different levels within the agency. The third perspective --
labeled outcomes of social-program effectiveness -- is the principal interest of non-
market "user" constituencies.

The first of these, strategic organizational effectiveness, is most often associated
with a senior management focused on the vitality of the organization as-a-whole. With its
substantial professional stake in agency prominence, this constituency promotes its
economic status and overall budgetary growth (Niskanen, 1971). Moreover, senior
management is charged "with identifying new strategies and new projects that will add to
the organization's overall strength" (Doig and Mitchell, 1992, p. 21). Measures of this
outcome fit a standard of organizational effectiveness because they show "the ability of
an organization to exploit its environment to obtain resources, while maintaining an
autonomous bargaining position" (Mindlin and Aldrich, 1975, p. 382).

The second outcome category is operational efficiency, which is the domain of
management charged with controlling resources in daily matters. Operational outcomes
are about "efficient ways of bringing services to the public" (Doig and Mitchell, 1992, p.
21), and represent goodness in terms of minimizing cost-per-unit by "adherence to
engineering standards, accounting rules..." (Doig and Mitchell, 1992, p. 25). Included in
this are the costs of administration, service delivery, and facilities maintenance and
replacement.

Both administration-centered outcomes differ from one another in managerial
function and motivation, and both are contrasted with the third outcome category of
social-program effectiveness. Bozeman's distinctions between "economic" and "political"
sources of agency legitimacy (1988) offer a way to contrast this third outcome. From an extra-market perspective, social programs provide results that seldom would arise from market transactions. Natural market demand fails to result because either (1) those who want such outcomes do not have the means to pay, or (2) the costs and benefits of such service outcomes cannot be meaningfully related to each other by a market transaction.

Since not all political demands are legitimate and worthy of governmental response, criteria for social-program effectiveness usually are determined by legislative mandates and interagency agreements. Examples of legitimated public demands range from transit services provided to the handicapped under the Americans for Disabilities Act to broader programs promoting economic development and mobility for the urban poor.

By threading together the above three policy-outcome categories (henceforth called Outcome I, II and III, respectively) into a multiple-perspectives framework, we make possible a comparison of government policymaking according to different patterns of outcome emphasis and de-emphasis. This forms the basis on which to ask why such variance in skewed patterns occurs across localities.

The Upper Middle Class Thesis

UMC influence on politics has drawn a large social science following even though many disagree over the existence and meaning of "class" in America. To contemporary policymakers and scholars studying an UMC, this class genre exhibits certain central tendencies that are distinct albeit empirically elusive. Robert Reich, for example, summarizes the UMC as "the glass-tower people" -- those institutionally influential types who are economically ascendant, college educated and professionally employed (in Farney, 1994, p. 1). Stone (1980) theorizes about a similarly-defined "upper stratum" that holds an indirect and impersonal influence on policymakers through systemic power. Clark (1994a) benchmarks a compatible profile (but adds age) which aspires to a "New Political Culture." Brint (1994) outlines activities of a "matrix" of "educated professionals" defined by their "employment situation."

Over the last century, writings have reinforced a continuity in these contemporary visions of an upper middle class. With regard to high and rising income, Riesman saw fiscal resources taking on increased social meaning as society moved away from a "scarcity psychology" toward an "abundance psychology" (1961, p. 19; 1964). Maslow (1954) predicted that as basic wants are met, surplus resources free individuals to "self-actualize" and pursue symbolic goals. Veblen (1948) saw as far back as the 1920s a "leisure class" engaging in "conspicuous consumption."

A college educated UMC is seen as equally persistent, especially after WWII. As the repository of institutionalism, the contemporary university setting provides a particular instruction that prepares a person simultaneously in functional expertise and institutional protocol (Waldo, 1948; Kerr, 1963; Scott and Hart, 1979). Nourished by this conceptual knowledge of institutions and science, the UMC acquire a common language, set of referent symbols, code of conduct, and awareness of institutional processes not shared for the most part by non-UMC.

As Professionals, the UMC are characterized as society’s “general staff” (Veblen, 1948, p. 440), whose principal role is to apply their education to continuously inventing
new appliances and to managing organizational resources (Whyte, 1958; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1979; Brint, 1994). To accomplish these roles, they are granted titles, positions and other symbols of distinction suitable for those in charge of organizational methods and technologies (Veblen, 1948; Whyte, 1958; Teisman, 1961, Scott and Hart, 1979).

This socioeconomic profile is seen connected to the intensity with which the UMC (1) exhibit "other-directedness" (Riesman, 1961) toward each other rather than emulating other social groupings, and (2) seek "associational position" (Stone, 1980) by belonging to an organized influential social genre (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Why should such membership matter? Riesman says without aristocratic ancestry or a psychological "gyroscope" to establish influential position, behavior protocol or community connection, UMC persons must acquire status and approval through continuous "responsive contact" with each other (1961, p. 23). All people seek social group identity, but the UMC is set apart by a preoccupation with "the process of striving itself..." (p. 21).

Why, then, is a UMC genre not more distinct empirically? Partly, it may be that striving to appear influential does not require verbal contact. Social psychology research shows that individuals "interact" with others in a similar social position even when they have no direct communications (Lazer, 1995; Burt, 1987). Using non-verbal cues, the formation of anonymous groupings is based on the exhibition of structural equivalence in socioeconomic status (SES). The term defines "a measure of an individual's status, where individuals are sensitive to what other individuals of similar status are doing, believing, etc." (Lazer, 1995, p. 4). This involves prior consensus on "prototypical characteristics abstracted from the grouping" (Turner, 1985). The UMC's economic ascendancy, university education and professional status are convenient for determining structural equivalence because they are openly displayed without reliance on verbal communications. These symbols of institutional achievement demonstrate equivalence in influential position rather than material "look-a-likes."

For the most part, the writings talk about these SES characteristics as interlaced dimensions of a core profile which empirically distinguish a UMC from non-UMC (e.g., Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). At various times, other attributes have been prominent as well, including religion (i.e., WASP), mobility, consumption patterns, age and ethnicity. But, their lack of empirical salience over time in defining structural equivalence makes them peripheral to the core profile defined here.

What then, is the connection of a UMC genre to policy outcomes? Stone (1980) theorizes that the UMC exercises an indirect influence that "is completely impersonal and deeply embedded in the social structure." (p. 981). The mere presence of the UMC genre in a "diamond-shaped distribution" (p. 983) of socioeconomic status may be sufficient as a systemic power to affect policy outcomes. Therefore, the proportion of UMC in an agency's service population should approximate the visibility of the UMC's non-verbal display of influential position. The following hypotheses associate this proportion with emphases in the three different policy outcomes:

Strategic Organizational Effectiveness (Outcome I)

Why the UMC genre promotes emphasis on organizational vitality in public agencies involves a two-step logic. First, UMC motives are defined by organizational
values which promote administrative processes as a way-of-life (Whyte, 1958). As "a vast complex of interlocking management systems, sharing a common set of values" (Scott and Hart, 1979, p. 5), organizations offer "a distinctive employment situation for the majority of professionals" (Brint, 1994, p.12) and provide an arena-in-common for expressing "associational position" (Stone, 1980, p. 982) and measuring structural equivalence.

Second, public organizations in this "interlocking" allocation system represent an extension of the field of business (Wilson, 1941), and play an instrumental role in a UMC lifestyle. "Free markets thrive, not in splendid isolation, but in a context of large and productive business and government organizations," the latter which provides "effectiveness of infrastructure and public goods" (Simon, 1995, p. 404). Although clouded by current anti-government sentiment of the median voter, to be against healthy public organizations is inconsistent with the faith and investment the UMC has made in the trappings of organizational culture: higher education, administrative protocol and professional competence.

Hence, we deduce from these arguments:

**H1:** The greater the proportion of UMC in an agency's service area population, the greater the emphasis an agency will place on performance stressing strategic organizational effectiveness.

**Operational Efficiency (Outcome II)**

The UMC is painted as having subordinate concern for efficiency by virtue of the group's achieved material security and fiscal abundance. While seemingly counter to happenings in the Progressive Era, this pre-WWII period is characterized by Reisman's "scarcity psychology" (1961) where a professional UMC had not yet replaced the robber barons and other nouveau riches as influentials in American institutions. With the spreading of affluence after WWII, Riesman characterizes UMC ambience as driven by an "abundance psychology" where respect for the proficiency of work is subdued by a "cult of effortlessness." Other works as well sketch a psychology involving a worthiness in sacrificing efficiency for "higher order" symbolics. These include Clark and Goetz's NPC influence on urban growth (1994); Brint's post WWII rise of the "educated professional" (1994); Maslow's hierarchical pursuit of "self-actualization" (1954); and Veblen's "conspicuous waste" by a "leisure class" (1948).

Hence, we deduce from this:

**H2:** The greater the proportion of UMC in an agency's service area population, the more likely the agency will deemphasize operations efficiency in favor of strategic (higher order) outcomes.

**Social-Program Effectiveness (Outcome III)**

Social program effectiveness raises a perplexing question. Why should welfare programs matter to the UMC except from fiscal and employment standpoints? With few
exceptions, the UMC is seldom very cognizant of its "use" of or dependence on most specific services like transit. Although traditional class theory might argue the UMC are "social trustees" (Brint, 1994) who accept "noblesse oblige," a more plausible answer is that the UMC's urban habitat serves as another non-verbal means to calculate the structural equivalence of social position in interurban comparisons. Hammond, for example, points to the UMC's metropolis as a "nonverbal medium for the communication of moral reputation, social rank, and other significant qualities of self" (1992, p. 258).

Due to this, the UMC becomes more concerned about the overall quality and character of the urban area which taxes support (Clark, 1994, p. 27). Urban planning research shows symbolic considerations including public accouterments (prominent airport, arts and entertainment, reputable schools, modern mass transit) are more important than economic issues in UMC voting (Hahn and Kamieniecki 1987). Gottdiener supports this connection, saying that "the urban image must be read...as an outcome of a class society propelled by powerful forces of development and change" (1986, p. 216). Social programs that address UMC quality of life matter because living in a formidable "world class" urban area adds stature in the quest for positional influence and structural equivalence.

Hence, we deduce from this logic:

H3: The greater the proportion of UMC in an agency’s service population, the more likely the agency will emphasize social-program effectiveness.

The three hypotheses compose a thesis that UMC influence occurring as an anonymous agent causes a skewed or asymmetrical pattern of outcomes consisting of emphases on strategic organizational effectiveness (Outcome I) and social-program effectiveness (Outcome III), and a deemphasis on operational efficiency (Outcome II).

Rival Theses

Implying that class does not matter, research on urban policy outcomes seldom includes a UMC genre as an independent determinant (e.g., Pagano and Bowman, 1995; Feiock and West, 1993). If represented at all, the UMC is treated either (1) as issue-defined political actors directly involved (e.g. political entrepreneurs, interest groups), or (2) as demographic variables randomized with others describing the agency's surrounding social and physical environment. Hence, a central question is: does the UMC genre operate independently of variables used in past research? To examine the UMC thesis in this context, four rival theses are incorporated in the model.

The most central is the "political actor" thesis, which targets the direct influence of high-status individuals and interest groups (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Clark and Ferguson, 1983; Lowi, 1969), community conflict and power structure (Stone, 1989; Peterson, 1981), political competition and entrepreneurship of elected officials (Clark and Goetz, 1994; Doig and Hargrove, 1987; Feiock and Clingermayer, 1986), and intergovernmental exchange (Boschken, 1997; Shepsle and Bonchek, 1997; Agranoff and McGuire, 1993).

While predicted outcomes vary by type of actor investigated, the common denominator for all is direct use of political power as the causal agent of policy outcomes.
For example, when the locus of power lies outside the agency (i.e., in Mayors, dominant community group, or interagency network), the agency will be less likely to emphasize its bureaucratic prominence (Outcome I). The thesis is a central rival because it argues that since UMC persons are politically more active than others (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995), UMC influence is most likely to be from individuals and not an anonymous source.

Other rival theses speak of urban structure determinants describing physical form and general social makeup of a city as preconditions in policymaking. Although not involving identifiable actors, urban structure presents agencies with "non-negotiable" opportunities and limitations on policymaking. What these preconditions predict as policy outcomes, however, varies by rival thesis.

One is the "underclass" thesis (Clark, 1994a; Lineberry, 1977) which argues policy outcomes are distributed according to class distinctions typically measured by race or ethnicity. Describing a "double standard," the thesis assumes a zero-sum allocation where "them that has, gets" (Lineberry, 1977, p. 61). For government, this is likely to result in white preferences for lower taxes and reduced spending on programs that benefit the city's underclass. Focused on the powerlessness of lower classes, the thesis operationalizes the underclass determinant as a politically-passive precondition of poverty demographics.

A second urban structure rival is the "resource-availability" thesis which has two components - native wealth of the urban area and intergovernmental funding opportunities (Dye, 1992, pp. 315-316; Schneider, 1989; Clark and Ferguson, 1983). The thesis holds that public agencies spend money to emphasize Outcomes I and III according to the level of economic resources made available from local tax receipts or intergovernmental sources.

The third structural rival is the "urban spatial form" thesis (Cervero, 1991; Timms, 1971; Burgess and Bogue, 1967). It argues that physical configuration of urban activities determines the level and proficiency of public expenditures. Contrasting configurations range along a scale between a monocentric pattern of urban activity (center-peripheral) to a polycentric (sprawl) pattern. The thesis holds that a monocentric pattern facilitates emphases on organizational effectiveness (Outcome I) and operational efficiencies (Outcome II) because high densities allow an agency to achieve deeper market penetration, more concentrated use, and economies of scale.

Methodology

The research was designed to test the hypotheses with data from standard nationwide reporting systems. It employed a cross-sectional sample of 42 urban transit agencies operating transit systems in larger metropolitan areas (i.e., with at least 500,000 population). They were identified from the FTA's directory of transit agencies (UMTA, 1988). These agencies were selected because most are statutory public enterprises which pursue multiple policy outcomes and because transit is a visible infrastructure component of the urban environment. Data are specific to each transit agency and the population within its jurisdiction, and are from the U.S. Census and the annual Section 15 reporting system compiled by USDOT's Federal Transportation Administration (FTA). Section 15
reporting is mandated for federal funding and contains uniform self-reported data on agency finances, costs and service levels.

As components of outcome skewness, three continuum-scaled dependent variables operationalize the agency performances contained in the policy outcomes framework. Each variable is an indice consisting of multiple measures commonly used in transit and is calculated from FTA data (see note to Table 1 for detail). Since any one year is subject to unrepresentative distortions, five years of data (1987-1991) were averaged for individual measures. This procedure, however, does not eliminate the possibility that the averages are atypical of longer time frames.

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the three outcome indices are provided in Table 1. The indices have significant associations, indicating the skewness pattern is composed of interrelated components. The two inversely (negative) related associations represent tradeoffs by the industry as-a-whole in emphasizing different performance outcomes. The most significant tradeoff is between strategic organizational effectiveness and operations efficiency \((r = -0.56)\). While an agency could try to emphasize strategic organizational effectiveness (Outcome I) by striving to be efficient (Outcome II), the correlations show a tradeoff as the industry-wide rule. The other tradeoff is between social program effectiveness and operations efficiency \((r = -0.38)\). Together, they give basis to asking whether the UMC genre matters in explaining this pattern.

\[\text{TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE}\]

As the independent variable, the UMC genre is operationalized by a factor consisting of four discriminant SES components. Choice of a factor fits the thesis that policy outcomes are influenced by the whole UMC profile and not individual components. It is supported statistically by a principal components analysis which determined a single factor (eigenvalue of 3.14, accounting for 80 percent of the four-component variance). The four components were operationalized using 1990 Census data corresponding to agency jurisdictions. The components are (1) **High Income** (percent of households with 1989 income above $75,000 -- a figure more than twice the national mean), (2) **Income Change** (percent change in household income 1989 over 1979, which captures upward economic mobility), (3) **College Education** (percent of individuals with four or more years of higher education), and (4) **Professional Status** (percentage of individuals having careers in professional or managerial positions).

Control variables were included in regressions to represent rival theses. For the political actor thesis, past research includes numerous variables. As an alternative to arbitrary selection among actor-specific variables, a surrogate strategy was chosen which held the potential for estimating direct power for most types of political actors. However, the imprecise nature of surrogates may lead to underestimates of political power relative to the more specific UMC factor. To reduce the potential effect of random measurement error in assessing the political actor thesis, the strategy called for two surrogate forms.

In the first, agencies were assumed to be influenced by powerful political entrepreneurs when operating in a partisan arena of limited competition. Pressman (1972)
characterized prerequisites of mayoral power that include strong one-party dominance. Feiock and Clingermayer (1986) found that strong political entrepreneurs emerge when elections persistently reflect a dominant party. Consistent with this research, the political actor thesis is represented in part by a variable called party dominance.

It is measured by a three-point scale dummied from 1988 and 1992 presidential election results. The scale was determined by whether a party won both elections and by how much. For example, a condition of dominance required that a party win both elections by more than 55 percent. The variable is not a perfect surrogate because although political entrepreneurs seldom emerge as strong political actors when inter-party competition is high, the dominance of one party enables but does not assure the emergence of strong entrepreneurs (Grimshaw, 1996). Hence, the dummy variable should be read as less likely/more likely to involve a powerful political entrepreneur.

For the second form, most uses of political power were assumed to be channeled through an intergovernmental (IG) process (Boschken, 1997; Agrnoff and McGuire, 1993; Schneider, 1989). "In the public realm, federalism and separation of powers imply a plurality of targets for political activity" (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995, p. 7), where politicians, bureaucrats and interest groups interact to couple their individual preferences with focal-agency policy making. Hence, the thesis is represented by IG surrogates measuring a focal agency's fiscal and statutory autonomy in an intergovernmental arena.

Effects of IG autonomy on policy should be inverse to political actor power because the greater (the focal agency's autonomy, the higher the barrier of access for external actors (Feiock and West, 1993; Sharp, 1991). A restated political actor thesis, for example, predicts that when the focal agency holds high IG autonomy, it will extend its political reach and regional prominence (Benson, 1975, p. 232; Niskanen, 1971).

Three IG variables are used as proxies of political actor power. The first, called revenue autonomy, is the percent of agency revenues generated from user fees or dedicated sources (e.g., a permanent transit tax). Both sources provide high budgetary discretion to the agency. The second, called capital autonomy, is the percent of an agency's capital funding sourced in a like manner and not dependent on annual legislation or IG negotiation. The third, called IG interaction, operationalizes Niskanen's "bureaucratic autonomy" (1971). It is the product of two measures: scope (number of IG actors involved in focal-agency policymaking) and intensity (percent of those having veto authority over focal-agency policymaking). Data for the first two IG variables are from FTA Section 15 reports. The third is from a survey of transit agency officials and records.

Three controls were included to represent the urban structure theses. Using 1990 Census data extracted for transit district populations, they are race ("percent white persons" in the population), average income (1989 mean household income), and cross commuting (percent of workers commuting between a residence and a workplace neither of which is located in the urban core). Cross commuting reflects variance from a center-peripheral pattern of urban activities.

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables. The UMC factor is significantly intercorrelated with average income and marginally associated with cross commuting (collinearity diagnostics for the models show a condition index of 39). The UMC's association with average income is probably due to the high income
component of the UMC factor. The UMC's association with cross commuting is probably
due to most UMC living in suburbs, greater proportions of which are found in
nonparametric urban areas (Cervero, 1991). Except for average income and cross
commuting which are associated (r = .57), none of the other controls are intercorrelated at
the .01 level. Collinearity is examined further in the discussion section.

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**TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**

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**Results**

Table 3 reports results of OLS regressions for the three UMC hypotheses. Each
model, identified as Outcome I, II and III, includes the UMC factor and seven control
variables. Regression statistics support Hypothesis 1 which argues a UMC genre
encourages emphasis on strategic organizational effectiveness. The UMC factor is the
most significant variable in the model (signif t = .005), and is in the predicted direction
(beta = .81, t = 3.0). IG revenue autonomy is also significant (signif t = .02), but three
others are, at best, only near significance -- party dominance, intergovernmental
interaction and average income (signif t = .17, .13 and .11, respectively).

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**TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE**

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Regression statistics do not support Hypothesis 2, regarding deemphasis in operations
efficiency (Outcome II). The UMC factor is unstable (signif t = .43), but could be
interpreted as UMC indifference to efficiency. Full-model significance is due instead to
IG fiscal variables: revenue autonomy (beta = .62, t = 4.0, signif = .0003) and capital
autonomy (beta = -.29, t = -1.9, signif t = .07).

Regression statistics provide strong support for Hypothesis 3, dealing with
emphasis on social program effectiveness. The UMC factor is significant (signif of t = .02)
and is in the direction predicted by the hypothesis (beta = .64, t = 2.4). Most controls
are significant or near significance as well. Race (% white) is equally significant to the
UMC factor (Signif of t = .02) and consistent with the underclass thesis. Capital
autonomy is significant (beta = .30, t = 2.0, signif t = .05), but contradicts the political
actor thesis. Average income is near significance (signif t = .08) but contradicts the
wealth thesis. Revenue autonomy and cross commuting are not significant for social
programs (signif t = .16 and .21, respectively).

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**Discussion**

Along side its better known rivals, the UMC thesis appears to matter a great deal
and in accordance with the literature. Especially when compared with political power
variables, the UMC factor is more significant in explaining variance in two out of the
three policy outcomes composing the skewed pattern. Only for Outcome II (operations
efficiency) is direct use of political power more significant. Although the research did not include a great number of variables subsumed under urban structure, of those considered, the influence of race in de-emphasizing Outcome III (social program effectiveness) and average income in de-emphasizing Outcomes I and III are the only ones of comparable significance to the UMC factor.

Although the evidence seems to support the importance of an independent UMC thesis, this conclusion might not be shared by advocates of more traditional arguments. Since the UMC factor seems to be intercorrelated with some control variables (i.e., average income, and cross commuting), a question remains about whether the rival theses have indirectly accounted for the influence of the UMC genre. For this to be true, two conditions must exist. First, a control variable with which the UMC is statistically associated must significantly affect a policy outcome. Second, that control must operate as a route of UMC influence on the outcome.

Applying the first condition, the UMC factor is intercorrelated only with household income ($r = .85$) and cross commuting ($r = .40$). Of these two, neither is significant as a determinant of policy outcomes, although income is near significance for social-program effectiveness. Ordinarily, one could leave the discussion with these results if it were not for the possible effects of model collinearity caused by the intercorrelation of the UMC factor and income. Given this, the wealth thesis would argue that the UMC is accounted for in the simpler proposition that local personal income generates tax receipts for public expenditures. Since UMC influence is accounted for by its association with income, the desire for parsimony would side with the wealth thesis because offers the more direct explanation of policymakers counting tax revenues?

However, the results cast doubt on average income as a route of determination for the UMC for two reasons. First, even though the UMC factor has a strong bivariate association with Outcome I ($r = .42$) and Outcome III ($r = .46$), average income has no association with any of the performance outcomes at the .01 level. Second, in regression models, average income is only very marginally significant in Outcomes I and III (signif $t = .11$ and .08, respectively), but has a negative influence, opposite that of the wealth thesis and the UMC factor.

The inclination, then, is to see income’s significance as a fluke of collinearity. To examine this issue, regressions for Outcomes I and III were rerun, first without average income and then with income but without the UMC factor. When income is removed, the UMC factor diminishes only slightly in significance for Outcome I from .005 in the original model (see Table 2) to .009. In Outcome III, the decline in significance is greater (signif $t$ moves from .02 in the original model to .13). On the other hand, when the UMC factor is removed, average income (which was near significance in the original Outcome I and III models) becomes insignificant (signif. $t = .29$ and .92, respectively). This leads one to suspect the UMC factor is important in explaining variance in policy outcomes (especially for organizational effectiveness) with or without average income, but average income is not essential when the model contains the UMC factor. Moreover, as a weaker variable orbiting the UMC’s influence, income’s negative influence on Outcomes I and III can be explained as an artifact of collinearity.

These results therefore leave advocates of urban structure theses hard pressed for arguing against the UMC factor’s independent significance. Statistics aside, though, one might still expect proponents of the political actor thesis to argue UMC influence is
reflected in political research because its effect on policy outcomes must be associated with individuals making direct use of political power. But, does the UMC genre act through individuals to affect outcomes, or does it indirectly influence as an impersonal anonymous agent? Could there a connection between the two?

A case could be made for a connection between the UMC and political entrepreneurs, and could be understood in one of two ways. In the instance of direct visible action, we know UMC individuals engage in political activity more than others and that UMC participation is principally limited to making political contributions and contacting government officials (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). This would suggest the impact of elected officials on policy outcomes is mostly a UMC phenomenon of direct and visible proportions.

The second interpretation accepts the causal route as an indirect manifestation of UMC presence but also requires involvement of direct political activity. Stone (1980) implies that the UMC influences a city's politics and cultural image by its systemic power. Pagano and Bowman (1995) add that elected leaders crystallize a vision for world class status which "is tied to the city's image" (p. xiv). Hence, combining these interpretations, elected political entrepreneurs would adopt a vision consistent with the UMC, at least where one-party dominance provides an unobstructed opportunity for "credit claiming" (Feiock and Clingemeyer, 1986). This argument does not hold up well under the results, however. A strong correlation does not exist between the UMC and party dominance (r = .32) and the latter is not near significance for any policy outcome.

Another connection could involve interest groups and concurring governmental actors. This study did not consider interest group variables as UMC proxies because they are distinguished by their issue-specific nature (e.g., environmentalism, handicap access, abortion rights), and few could be characterized as representing the UMC qua monolithic UMC (as does the UMC factor). Nevertheless, assuming that a UMC could exist as a distinct, forceful and single interest group or entrepreneurial voice, two conditions probably would have to prevail.

First, to operationalize a set of monolithic UMC interests, its membership would want to act on its professional organizational norms by seeking influence through an institutional intergovernmental process. In a few key instances, the process might only involve direct relations with the focal agency. But, to effectively manage its influence across a wide urban policy landscape, the UMC would want to capture a few agencies with broad intergovernmental authority, such as the EPA, rather than numerous specialized operators. Second, for these UMC "sentry" agencies to be powerful intergovernmental actors in focal-agency policymaking, the transit agency would have to possess limited autonomy.

On this scenario, analysis of the IG autonomy variables shows two results. First, in a principal components analysis, the UMC factor is orthogonal to all IG variables thus indicating no causal route. Second, while the UMC factor is very significant in regressions, it does not show corresponding influence through the IG surrogates for political-actor power (i.e., the IG variables are either less significant than the UMC factor or have an effect opposite the UMC's influence). Hence, even though UMC individuals certainly operate through interest groups and politicians for specific interests, Stone seems to be correct: the influence of an UMC genre is "completely impersonal," and
manifested as "systemic power [which] is not a general form of upper strata dominance through agenda control" (1980, p.989).

Inferences

Even if all rival theses are refuted, one issue remains. Although the results indicate an anonymous UMC matters in skewing outcomes, they do not map how one could more precisely infer the power of the upper middle class. As an old issue in urban research, class power yields no easy or definitive answers. Nevertheless, pointing to socioeconomic stratification, Stone (1980) sees an indirect and anonymous route involving the UMC's systemic power: "Because the [UMC] are strategically advantaged, their extraordinary influence is not so much exercised as it is selectively manifested in the predispositions and behavior of public officials" (p. 990). But, if influence is the central feature of the UMC ambiance, how does the cuing process happen based on non-verbal exchange?

One plausible extension to Stone's sketch is a process involving the social construction of UMC by policymakers. The theory "refers to the cultural characterizations or popular images of persons or groups" (Schneider and Ingram, 1993, p. 334), and stems from cognitive psychology (e.g., Tajfel and Turner, 1986). With Stone's descriptions of political influence (1980, p. 980), social construction points to policymakers designing agency outcomes to "fit" what they "anticipate" stereotype "target populations" want (Schneider and Ingram, 1993).

To Berger and Luckmann, however, two kinds of social constructs result in policy deliberations -- images derived from the "face-to-face situation" with political actors, and ones from "remoter forms of interaction" where cognition of individuals or organized groups is not apparent (1966, p. 30). In this latter instance, they say cognition is of "anonymous" characterizations of a "category" (i.e., the UMC genre) rather than of individually-known actors with which the agency interacts. "[A]nonymity may become near-total with certain typifications that are not intended ever to become individualized" (p. 33).

What remains dim is how the UMC as an impersonal abstract is reified to the point it matters in policymaking. Part of the answer may lie in Stone's belief that policymakers favor UMC interests over others because this genre is perceived to hold a disproportional share of society’s "diamond-shaped distribution of opportunities and resources" (p.982). "Though they are the least numerous segment of the population, members of the upper strata possess resources strategically important to public officials [in furthering careers and agency growth]" (p. 984).

Stone contends, then, the UMC's influence on policymaking "flows more from the position they occupy than from the covert action they take" (p. 984). Just perceiving UMC presence and social position may be sufficient to create the unspoken influence of referent power. In concert, Berger and Luckmann conclude "Power in society includes the power to determine decisive socialization processes and, therefore, the power to produce reality" (1966, p. 119).

This raises a final point about the impact on policymaker perceptions. The powerful results for the UMC suggest it is a widely recognized genre, perhaps representing a predictable set of determinant public expectations. As a constant in a
metropolitan milieu otherwise seen as a chaotic state, this class genre may provide a stabilizing influence on those urban governments where UMC are a significant proportion of the metropolitan population. The genre offers a reliable context for policymaking, reducing uncertainty about political consequences for public officials having to make difficult policy choices.

If this stabilizing phenomenon exists, further research needs to delve into the social psychological origins of a UMC genre within the agency. Do bureaucratic structures and processes pose barriers to direct representation and foster more reliance on anonymous identities as political considerations? Is the "general public interest" derived from the UMC's systemic power or from the median voter? Is this reinforced by bureaucrats who are mostly UMC and aspiring to fulfill their own interests? Since living the UMC lifestyle gives policymakers knowledge about nuances, Lieberman believes the causal route more appropriately involves "political construction [which] asks not only how group identities arise in a political setting but also how and why they become politically relevant..." (1995, p. 440). In short, pursuing this line of inquiry reopens issues about the role of class structure and bureaucratic decision making.

References


Bozeman, Barry (1988), All Organizations Are Public (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass).


### Table 1
THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES OF PERFORMANCE SKEWNESS
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
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<th>3</th>
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<td>-.38*</td>
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N = 42  TWO-TAILED SIGNIFICANCE:  * = .01  ** = .001

OUTCOME I = Strategic Organizational Effectiveness
OUTCOME II = Operations Efficiency
OUTCOME III = Social Program Effectiveness

NOTE TO TABLE: Each outcome is an index of individual measures which meet criteria for that outcome "cell." Values for each measure are residuals of a bivariate regression controlling for size. The technique was used because (1) little disagreement is found over size as the most significant factor determining urban agency outcomes, and (2) regression residuals are more appropriate than ratio data since regression produces the best overall linear estimator of variance. Residuals for each measure within an outcome cell were then studentized to make them additive to an outcome index.

The indexes consist of the following measures along with their legitimating stakeholders:

Outcome I (administration-centered, strategic effectiveness) - market penetration (passenger trips/district population) shows domain dominance preferred by senior management; load factor (passenger miles/vehicle miles) shows user-validated service superiority preferred by senior management; and institutional growth (1990 revenue/1980 revenue, all sources) shows negative entropy preferred by senior management.

Outcome II (administration-centered, operational efficiency) - operations efficiency (operating expense/vehicle miles) shows cost control proficiency of production management; maintenance efficiency (maintenance expense/vehicle hours) shows cost control proficiency of maintenance management; and system efficiency (operations assets/vehicle revenue miles) shows use of capital proficiency of financial and engineering managements.

Outcome III (political-centered, social program effectiveness) - mobility for transit dependent (passenger miles/service area in square miles) measures access convenience to urban economic activities desired by dependent commuters (handicapped, working poor); non-commute service (off-peak vehicle miles/total vehicle miles) measures access convenience to social activities and welfare services needed by non-working handicapped, poor and elderly; and economic development contribution (annual capital investment/district population) measures economic development impact potential for the regional population.
Table 2  
UMC GENRE AND CONTROL VARIABLES  
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

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<td>.03</td>
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<td>7. 1989 Avg. Income</td>
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<td>.85**</td>
<td>.28</td>
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N = 42  TWO-TAILED SIGNIFICANCE: * = .01  ** = .001
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<th>OUTCOME II</th>
<th>OUTCOME III</th>
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R²           | .46       | .41       | .46         |
ADJ R²       | .33       | .26       | .33         |
F            | 3.5       | 2.8       | 3.6         |
SIGNIF F     | .005      | .02       | .004        |

OUTCOME I = Strategic Organizational Effectiveness
OUTCOME II = Operations Efficiency
OUTCOME III = Social Program Effectiveness