

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES AND CENTRAL-CITY AND SUBURB DIFFERENCES

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Results of prior research indicate that central cities are likely to adopt progrowth policies, whereas suburbs have become increasingly “antigrowth.” This research further examines the city and suburb differences in economic development priorities at the city-administrator level. By utilizing survey data that targeted administrators of cities with a population of at least 5,000 in the state of Texas, this study tests four hypotheses that are derived from previous theories. Results show that there is a high level of consensus among city and suburb administrators regarding the importance of economic development and job creation. However, central-city administrators accord a greater level of importance to job creation and to a regional economy than do administrators in suburbs. Furthermore, the administrators’ perceptions of policy priorities are also conditioned by the structure of their local government.

Keywords: *economic policymaking; urban and suburban differences; government structure; city administrators*

In *City Limits*, Paul Peterson (1981) argued that the mobility of capital in the United States “forces” urban policymakers to devote particular attention to economic development. His argument engendered a number of criticisms from students of urban politics, perhaps the strongest of which was that Peterson emphasized the role of “economic logic” in American cities at the expense of “political logic.” This adverse reaction might have been anticipated in light of political scientists’ tendency to stress the relevance of group competition and interests in urban policymaking (see Swanstrom, 1988; for a spirited

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discussion of this issue see Sanders & Stone, 1987, and Peterson's, 1987, response). Various aggregate as well as case study analyses, however, support Peterson's policy typology and his emphasis on local developmental policy as the driving force in urban America.

Longoria's (1994) analysis of developmental and redistributive policy preferences among U.S. mayors supports Peterson's main argument, as does Saiz's (1999) examination of the spending priorities of mayors in eight democratic countries. Numerous case studies that test for the effectiveness of growth-control measures also support Peterson's thesis. As Ross and Levine (2001) state,

In a number of cities, including San Francisco, economic development has continued despite the apparent political victories won by antigrowth forces. Growth restrictions have often proven to be more symbolic than real; growth coalition members have been able to find various ways to counter or circumvent growth control. (p. 75)

Results of other studies make much the same point (see, e.g., Kerstein, 1993; Leo, Beavis, Carver, & Turner, 1998; Reichl, 1997; Warner & Molotch, 1995). Even when it does not initiate progrowth policies, a given local leadership may pursue growth because it finds itself essentially trapped by past progrowth decisions (see, e.g., Rigos & Paulson's 1996 analysis of development decision making in St. Petersburg; Bachelor's 1994 analysis of decision making in Detroit).

Although few people deny the relevance of group interests and competition, cities in the United States are heavily shaped by their economic needs. Yet one may ask the following: Is a policy preference for economic development (i.e., growth policy) equally reflected across various types of cities and among various types of policymakers? We test Peterson's thesis that there is a "unitary interest" on economic growth that compels cities to pursue economic development. To do this, we examine for differences in economic development priorities between central cities and suburbs. Previous work testing Peterson's theories surveyed elected officials. However, in testing for central-city and suburban differences, we extend Peterson's thesis to nonelected city officials. We survey city administrators to determine the extent to which the economic development priorities of these decision makers exhibit differentiation on the basis of the type of city in which they are employed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES OF CENTRAL CITIES AND SUBURBS

One research focus reflected in the literature on urban political economy concerns central-city and suburban differences. Results of prior research indicate that central cities are likely to favor progrowth policies, whereas suburbs have become increasingly antigrowth. This policy differentiation is based on two categories of variables. The first concerns geographic differences between central cities and suburbs. What we now refer to as central, or inner, cities once were entire metropolitan areas (MSAs); the central business district (CBD) of a central city now is typically the business center of the MSA. Though more people came to reside in MSA suburbs than in central cities during the 1990s, central cities continue to be “the geographical centers of MSAs, certain production sectors are concentrated there; CBDs are typically the focus of the MSA’s transportation system,” and about as much employment is located in central cities as in suburbs (Mills & Lubuele, 2000a, p. 221). The important location of central cities produces an “outward-oriented development orientation” that stresses regional economic and development challenges, while suburbs tend to focus more on strictly local concerns (Lewis, 2001; also see Maurer & Christenson, 1982).

The second category of variables used to differentiate central-city and suburban economic development priority differences concerns social changes associated with metropolitan growth. Demographic change is certainly one of the most important factors examined by scholars of urban political economy (David & Rosenbloom, 1990; Quigley, 2000). Central cities disproportionately have larger minority populations, and the recent wave of immigration has resulted in more newcomers to major urban areas. Though there has been migration of minorities to suburbs, suburban areas continue to have comparatively higher levels of White population and wealthier residents (Frey, 1995). This demographic pattern places tremendous pressure on city administrators to create new jobs. By contrast, relatively well-to-do residents of suburbs become involved in issues related to growth control, believed necessary to maintain quality of suburban life at an acceptably high and sustainable level (Davis, 1990; Thomas, 1998). Policymakers in jurisdictions with more high-status residents per-

ceive a greater level of conflict over growth, which may restrain growth (Donovan & Neiman, 1992); local government is more likely to respond to the preferences of those who organize and participate, and who tend to be wealthier and more professional (Hajnal & Clark, 1998).

As noted above, in examining for central-city and suburb economic development priority differences, we extend Peterson's thesis to nonelected city officials. Prior empirical tests of Peterson's theories have surveyed elected officials (though see Donovan, 1993, who surveyed economic development officials). Our study seeks to enhance understanding of Peterson's theories by extending analysis to nonelected administrative positions, in particular to that of city manager (as discussed in the following section, city managers make up a large majority of our survey respondents). As ostensibly nonpolitical actors, city managers presumably have an incentive to make decisions on the basis of professional norms and training. From this perspective, we might expect little differentiation in policy preference among these administrators, regardless of the type of city in which they are employed. However, though traditionally considered an administrative position, the idealized version of city manager as a simple executor of policy has given way to a more multifaceted view. A city manager is understood to perform a "semi-administrative role." These city administrators are described as performing a role that is part administrative, part policymaking, and part political (though not partisan or electoral).

As administrators, city managers reflect a pronounced concern with city fiscal conditions, budget development, and intergovernmental relations (Morgan & Watson, 1992; Zeigler, Kehoe, & Reisman, 1985). In the areas of administrative responsibility, fiscal issues, and city infrastructure, city managers are governed by professional norms sufficiently strong to counter potential differences in job perception stemming from demographic differences among individual managers (see, e.g., Fox & Schuhmann, 2000). A frequently referenced survey of city managers, however, found that more than half of the respondents identified policymaking as their most important role (Ammons & Newell, 1989). There is, in fact, a good deal of shared policymaking responsibility between mayors and city managers (Morgan & Watson, 1992). Though city managers for the most part do not advance sub-

stantially “new” policy proposals, in the absence of leadership by elected officials city managers can come to play an entrepreneurial role in policymaking (Teske & Schneider, 1994). The policymaking role of city managers across cities varies, but there is evidence that city managers assume a particularly pronounced leadership role in smaller cities and suburbs (Ruhil, Schneider, Teske, & Ji, 1999), due to the part-time nature of elected positions. Though not engaged in partisan or electoral politics, the modern city manager is not immune from community and local interest-group concern. According to Nalbandian (1992), “City management has become a politically active profession” (p. 139), and “city managers are commonly seen today as brokers, negotiators, and consensus builders in a community” (p. 152).

Given the multifaceted role of the modern city manager, it is reasonable to infer that various community values, such as the weight attached to economic development, and the political and economic interest of various community actors, such as a local chamber of commerce, enters into the city manager’s decision-making “field of vision.” Furthermore, to the extent that city managers are policy promoters, their own attitudes and priorities are potentially very relevant. City administrative officeholders, such as city manager, have substantial influence regarding economic development decisions. The challenges that these types of key local administrators perceive their city to face structures their decision making. The manner in which these decision makers interpret their city’s circumstance influences the types of development proposals they will support and what kinds of projects they, and ultimately their city administration, will pursue. Because city managers, and potentially other types of city administrators, are not necessarily impervious to larger community concerns, and given the pronounced policymaking role that can be played by these types of officials, it becomes appropriate to consider the attitudes of nonelected officials in an examination of Peterson’s theories.

All that we have said, however, is not meant to suggest that professional training and the administrative basis of office and job duties are irrelevant to our investigation. Our findings will be interpreted within the particular context of nonelected city administrators. Due to the

emphasis city managers place on city fiscal issues (noted above), we might expect a good deal of focus on economic development generally. (We might also find differences between different types of city administrators. For instance, city economic directors may reflect a greater economic perspective, and therefore be more concerned with the idea of a regional economy, by comparison to city managers.) Within this context, however, we expect attitudinal differences between central-city and suburban administrators to emerge. Our primary interest is in determining central-city and suburban differences. Though not lacking in importance, of secondary interest is a rank order of development issues of concern to city administrators. Accordingly, our study provides a “conservative” test of central-city and suburban differences. If we find significant economic development priority differences between central-city and suburban administrators, we have confidence that the central-city and suburban dichotomy is, in fact, a robust distinction.

HYPOTHESES

As noted in the previous section, the differences between central cities and suburbs suggest that Peterson’s economic development argument may be most applicable to central cities. To sum up, literature regarding geographic, social, and economic differences between central cities and suburbs posits that central cities tend to be located at the centers of MSAs and have policy concerns that differ markedly from those of suburbs, given the traditionally higher levels of working-class residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities in central cities. Accordingly, we test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Central-city administrators are more likely than are suburban administrators to view economic development as important.

Hypothesis 2: Central-city administrators are more likely than are suburban administrators to perceive the importance of policies that increase the likelihood of creating jobs.

Hypothesis 3: Central-city administrators are more likely than are suburban administrators to perceive the importance of policies that contribute to a sound regional economy.

Hypothesis 4: Central-city administrators are more likely than are suburban administrators to perceive the importance of policies that affect the views of nearby local governments.

Null findings might be expected if the central-city and suburban dichotomy distorts the real situation. Given recent changes in suburban areas, and the reality that in some cases the effectiveness of growth-control initiatives may be no greater in suburban communities than in cities (Kerstein, 1993; Logan & Zhou, 1990), the prediction that central cities will reflect Peterson's economic development logic whereas suburbs will reflect an antigrowth orientation may not necessarily hold. Some suburban areas have come to experience problems traditionally thought of as city maladies. Key among these is the problem of population growth. Population growth rate is associated with facilitating economic development (Donovan, 1993), and during the 1990s, suburban population growth was double what it was in cities (Ross & Levine, 2001, p. 4). In addition, there has been increasing differentiation among suburbs (Harrigan & Vogel, 2000, p. 313). There is variation among suburbs in terms of the emphasis placed on exclusivity through practices such as zoning. Some suburbs, especially inner-ring suburbs, exhibit enthusiasm regarding economic development and intergovernmental cooperation. An emphasis on job growth and high technology sector is increasingly found in ever more distant "technoburbs" and "exurbs" (Atkinson, 1998; Fishman, 1987).

THE SETTING

Our study investigates how city administrators in the state of Texas perceive the importance of economic development. Texas provides an appropriate setting to study the perceptions of city administrators because of the relative independence in economic development policymaking it allows its local governments. As one comparative study of states indicates,

Texas has not rushed to deal with problems of growth by enacting a state plan or centralizing planning and regulatory powers at the state level. Instead, in keeping with the *laissez-faire* political culture domi-

nant there, it prefers to place land use issues in the hands of local governments. (Burby & May 1997, p. 76)

Given minimum state intervention, Texas is an ideal place to use survey data to reflect the views of city administrators regarding local economic development priorities. Also, cities in Texas overwhelmingly tend to be council-manager cities. Thus, the city managers in our study can be expected to take on a policymaking role.

Though its heritage may be of cattle drivers, oilfield workers, and Texas Rangers, Texas is a populated, ethnically diverse (and diversifying) urban state. Predominantly a rural state prior to the middle of this past century, Texas today is home to mostly urban dwellers. Texas has been majority urban since 1950: Between 1940 and 1950 the urban population in Texas grew from 2.9 to 4.8 million while the rural farm population shrank from 2.1 to 1.3 million. This is a trend that has continued. Texas now has more metropolitan areas than any other state. According to the 2000 census, Texas is the second most populous state, with a population of nearly 21 million. Between 1990 and 2000 the state's population increased by 3.9 million, for a growth rate of nearly 23%. This far outpaced the national rate of 13%. A major factor contributing to the population growth rate in Texas during the 1990s was the state's growing economy. This may have had a particularly pronounced impact on the migration of ethnic and racial group minority members to Texas. The 2000 census shows Texas to have an ethnically diverse, diversifying, and growing population. The state's Hispanic population increased by 54%, from 4.4 million in 1990 to 6.7 million in 2000. Though as a percentage of total state population the African American population remained relatively constant at slightly over 11%, only two states, Florida and Georgia, attracted more African Americans during the 1990s than did Texas. In fact, according to the 2000 census Texas is home to the second highest African American population at 2.4 million, just behind New York state's 2.9 million. In addition, the percentage of the state's population that is Asian increased from 1.8% in 1990 to 2.7% in 2000.

The state's largest cities (Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio) rank among the most populous in the country, and during the 1990s some of these experienced a virtual population explosion. For example, Austin's population increased by

41%, while El Paso's grew by nearly 20%. The population of once rural counties within commuting distance of major cities such as Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin also experienced a population boom during the 1990s. Collin County (north of Dallas) experienced an 86% population increase since 1990. The result is that many formerly rural counties are becoming suburban areas. According to state demographer Steven Murdock, these trends are producing evidence of increasing segregation in Texas, with Hispanics and African Americans settling in central cities and Anglos settling in suburbs.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

Our survey, conducted during February and March 2000, targeted administrators of Texas cities with a population of at least 5,000 (i.e., cities granted a home-rule charter). Though the mean population was slightly higher, surveyed cities were generally reflective of all metropolitan-area Texas cities with a population of at least 5,000 ($N = 213$; for surveyed cities, mean = 64,727; for all, mean = 59,149; among both groups, range = 5,035-1,892,153). We received responses from 137 officeholders in such cities that were located within census-designated metropolitan areas.¹ Of these respondents, 136 provided a job title. More than 77% of respondents gave as a job title city manager ($n = 95$) or assistant city manager ($n = 10$). Almost 12% gave as a job title economic development director ($n = 14$) or assistant economic development director ($n = 2$). Most of the remaining 11% of respondents identified themselves as holding an administrative position—finance director, administrative services director, industrial specialist, and community relations manager. Three of the respondents were mayors. We decided to include this small group in our subsequent analysis as a way to provide some, though admittedly limited, point of comparison (we will continue to use the term *city administrator* throughout to refer to our group of respondents).

To test Hypothesis 1, respondents were asked the following: "Generally speaking, how important to your city's administration is economic development?" Respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance based on a scale from 1 (*very important*) to 7 (*not important*). In the following analysis, this importance score (y) is reversed

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Control Variables
and for Dependent Variables by City Type

	M	SD	Range	n	<i>t</i>
Importance of economic development	6.2	1.4	1-7	124	
Job creation	7.8	2.6	1-10	117	
Contributing to regional economy	5.0	2.7	1-10	115	
Views of nearby local governments	2.0	1.7	1-10	115	
Importance of economic development					
Central city	6.5	1.2	2-7	20	1.18
Suburb	6.1	1.4	1-7	104	
Job creation					
Central city	9.3	1.2	5-10	16	2.56***
Suburb	7.5	2.7	1-10	101	
Regional economy					
Central city	6.1	2.7	2-10	16	1.92*
Suburb	4.8	2.7	1-10	99	
Nearby governments					
Central city	1.8	1.6	1-7	16	0.71
Suburb	2.1	1.7	1-10	99	

* $p < .05$, one-tailed test. ** $p < .01$, one-tailed test. *** $p < .001$, one-tailed test.

(through 8-y): The higher the score, the higher the level of importance given to economic development (mean = 6.2, range = 1-7, see Table 1).

To examine city administrators' policy preferences, respondents were asked to rank their priorities according to the following: "Please rank the following ten considerations in order of importance to your city's administration in attracting new development and responding to development project proposals." Respondents were asked to rank order items, with 1 being the most and 10 being the least important. To test Hypotheses 2 through 4, we adopt the importance scores associated with 3 of the 10 items: "likelihood of creating jobs for your city's residents" (Hypothesis 2), "contributing to a sound regional economy" (Hypothesis 3), and "views of nearby local governments" (Hypothesis 4).² For purposes of our analysis, the score on each of these items is reversed (through 11-y) so that a higher score reflects a greater level of importance. As reported in Table 1, job creation ranked high among city administrators (mean = 7.8, range = 1-10), contributing to a regional economy ranked as somewhat less impor-

tant (mean = 5.0, range = 1-10), and the views of other local governments ranked relatively low (mean = 2.0, range = 1-10).

Our analysis includes a series of control variables, identified by previous literature as potential determinants of policymakers' development priorities. These controls address the potential association between the economic policy concerns of city administrators and the demographic characteristics of cities, the specific office held by the responding city official, the presence of a progrowth coalition, central-city status, and the structure of city government. Given the likely responsiveness of city managers (who make up the majority of respondents) to community concerns, a city's ethnic and racial composition may have relevance. African Americans tend to prefer city policies that mitigate the worst effects of traditional economic development and tend to favor redistributive policies, though this preference may be most pronounced among Blacks that reside in central cities (Banks, 2000; Sigelman & Willnat, 2000). Thus, administrators in cities with relatively large Black populations might be expected to emphasize job creation. There is relatively less literature on Hispanic populations in the context of local economic development. Accordingly, to avoid unwarranted assumptions about the influence of different minority populations, in the following analysis we test separately for impact of African American and Hispanic populations (across all surveyed cities, mean percentage Hispanic = 26.1, range = 2.7-96.4; mean percentage African American = 9.4, range = 0.3-53.0; mean change in Hispanic population 1990 to 2000 = 107.0%, range = -7.7-546.3; mean change in African American population 1990 to 2000 = 131.7%, range = -33.8-2177.8).

A number of analyses indicate that city population and population growth rate differentiate policy preferences and policy outputs among city leaders and cities. City size is found to be positively associated with economic development efforts (Green & Fleischmann, 1991; Maurer & Christenson, 1982). A variety of studies support the population size thesis: The larger the population, the greater the pressure for job creation (Mills & Lubuele, 2000b), the greater the need for a regional plan (Savitch & Vogel, 1996), and the greater the number of development programs adopted (Green & Fleischmann, 1991). Rapid population growth rate is associated with facilitating economic development, due to lower levels of controversy over policy adoption (Don-

ovan, 1993; across all surveyed cities, mean population change = 34.1%, range = -12.0-444.4). Other demographic factors that potentially influence policymakers' attitudes on economic development are the educational level (from the perspective of a match between job creation and available skills) and median income of the city's population (across all surveyed cities, mean percentage with 4 years of college = 7.0, range = 0.7-28.4; mean income = \$28,303, range = \$9,828-\$71,969).

We account for the potential influence of attitudinal differences among types of respondents. We employ three dummy variables to measure the distinct impact of two nonelected positions, city manager and city economic director, and the elected position of mayor. We control for the presence of a progrowth coalition. With a more active progrowth coalition, which includes business interest groups such as the chamber of commerce, city administrators may be more likely to view economic development generally as important. The presence of a progrowth coalition is measured as the level of importance city administrators accorded another of the above-referenced priority items: "chamber of commerce support for development" (mean = 4.2, range = 1-9). We also control for central-city status (coded 1 if a central city, $n = 25$, and 0 if not, $n = 112$).

The policymaking role of city administrators may be shaped by the structure of city government employed by a given community, though there may be something of an open question in this regard. According to Svara (1990), compared to mayor-council cities, "In council-manager cities, the manager and department heads are more likely to relate to each other as professionals with shared values. The structure promotes recognition of the manager's executive authority and division of labor among departments" (p. 184). However, with respect to the specific issue of economic development, a recent comparative study of 14 countries suggests that government structure has a very limited effect, if any. According to Mouritzen and Svara (2002, pp. 206-223), though the linkage between structure and influence is clearly evident in budgetary decisions, individual and community characteristics of city administrators (not government structure) have a considerable impact on economic development. Because it may differentiate between policy preferences, we include the structure of government as a control in our empirical models. (The predominant

form of city government in Texas is the council-manager system. Eighty-four percent of our surveyed cities employ a council-manager form of government, and 16% use the mayor-council system.) We further control for two additional city features: city council size (mean = 5.6, range = 2-14) and whether a jurisdiction is classified as a "city" (93%) or as a "town" (6%). ("Township" and "village" are also found in Texas. However, there was only one response from each of these two types of cities, and therefore, no dummy variable was used to measure these.) Finally, we employ several interactive terms to examine the extent to which government structure serves as a conditional effect in city administrators' decision-making process.

FINDINGS

The scores for our measures of economic development policy preference by city type, reported in Table 1, lend initial support to Hypotheses 2 and 3. In aggregate, central-city administrators accord a greater level of importance to job creation (mean = 9.3) and to a regional economy (mean = 6.1) than do administrators in suburbs (means = 7.5 and 4.8, respectively). As noted in Table 1, the difference in means between administrators on these two issues is statistically significant. City administrators are generally in agreement regarding the remaining two concerns. Administrators uniformly consider economic development to be important. With a fair degree of uniformity, city administrators also consider the views of nearby local governments to be relatively unimportant. Results of these descriptive findings and *t* tests regarding the differences between central-city and suburban administrators are confirmed by our multivariate analysis.

Results of multivariate analysis, reported in Table 2, indicate that city type has an independent influence on the economic development concerns of job creation (Equation 2) and contributing to a sound regional economy (Equation 3).³ Central-city policymakers are reliably more likely than are suburban policymakers to view job creation as important and to view economic development within the context of a regional economy (significant at the .05 and .01 levels, respectively). These findings substantiate Hypotheses 2 and 3.

TABLE 2
Multiple Regression Analysis: Importance of Economic Development and Policy Priorities

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable			
	Equation 1 Economic Development	Equation 2 Job Creation	Equation 3 Regional Economy	Equation 4 Nearby Government
Central city	-0.089 (-0.19)	1.284* (2.0)	2.11** (2.4)	-0.028 (-0.05)
Demographic variables				
Total population	0.032* (1.75)	0 (1.05)	0 (0.49)	0 (0.59)
% Hispanic	0.044* (1.71)	0.075* (2.16)	-0.036 (-0.76)	0.022 (0.74)
% Black	-0.023 (-0.29)	0.321** (2.72)	-0.134 (-0.83)	-0.04 (-0.39)
% change Hispanic	0.975*** (3.61)	-0.175 (-0.59)	0.05 (0.12)	0.703** (2.7)
% change Black	1.91 (0.364)	-0.165* (-2.17)	-0.066 (-0.64)	0.003 (0.52)
% college	-13.55*** (-4.0)	-22.6*** (-5.0)	-2.90 (-0.47)	-2.03 (-0.52)
Median income	-0.00 (-0.36)	-0.00003* (-1.88)	0 (-1.31)	0 (-0.31)
City officials				
Mayor	28.12 (1.5)	66.28** (2.66)	6.51 (0.19)	29.4 (1.37)
City manager	8.847* (2.07)	11.01* (1.85)	5.05 (0.63)	3.59 (0.7)
Economic director	0.455 (0.72)	-0.948 (-1.06)	3.34** (2.73)	2.25** (2.88)

(continued)

TABLE 2 (continued)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable			
	Equation 1 Economic Development	Equation 2 Job Creation	Equation 3 Regional Economy	Equation 4 Nearby Government
Structure of government and interactive terms				
Council-manager (CM)	24.75* (2.02)	33.17* (1.99)	13.43 (0.6)	9.61 (0.67)
Council size (CS)	2.59* (1.82)	3.02 (1.57)	1.73 (0.66)	0.902 (0.54)
CM * CS	-2.75* (-1.9)	-3.27* (-1.67)	-1.96 (-0.74)	-0.985 (-0.58)
CM * % Black	0.011 (0.112)	-0.345** (-2.91)	0.104 (0.65)	0.028 (0.27)
CM * % Hispanic	-0.043* (-1.67)	-0.10** (-2.81)	0.004 (0.08)	-1.22 (-0.4)
CM * Manager	-8.87* (-2.08)	-11.3* (-1.9)	-3.21 (-0.4)	-2.72 (-0.53)
CS * Mayor	-3.18 (-1.04)	-11.6** (-2.88)	0.052 (0.01)	-4.13 (-1.19)
Progrowth coalition	0.046 (0.655)	-0.266** (-2.71)	0.175 (1.3)	-0.028 (0.47)
City	2.23 (1.09)	9.284*** (3.32)	0.863 (0.23)	1.34 (0.55)
Town	1.07 (0.57)	10.53*** (3.94)	1.14 (0.32)	1.0 (0.44)
Intercept	-19.85 (-1.45)	-27.90 (-1.51)	-8.58 (-0.34)	-9.99 (-0.63)
<i>n</i>	95	105	104	104
<i>R</i> ²	.305	.567	.219	.263
<i>SE</i>	1.32	1.95	2.64	1.68

NOTE: Coefficients are unstandardized ordinary least squares regression values; *t* scores are in parentheses.
p* < .05, one-tailed test. *p* < .01, one-tailed test. ****p* < .001, one-tailed test.

Among the control variables that reliably influence the level of importance accorded job creation is the perceived presence of a progrowth coalition: Less emphasis given to job creation is associated with greater importance accorded the city's chamber of commerce. Demographic variables also have a statistically significant influence, with greater levels of education and median income reducing the pressure on administrators to create new jobs, and larger shares of Hispanic and Black populations enhancing it. The increase in Black population from 1990 to 2000, however, reduces the pressure on administrators to create new jobs, which suggests that recent Black migration to Texas cities actually may have helped fill job openings. Among city officials, city managers and mayors are most likely to be concerned about job creation. Government structure also has a statistically reliable influence. Administrators in council-manager cities, more than those in mayor-mayor council cities, are likely to be concerned with job creation. City government structure also has a pronounced conditioning effect. Among administrators in council-manager cities, larger minority populations as well as larger city councils are associated with less concern given to job creation. Furthermore, city managers and mayors in council-manager cities perceive less need to create new jobs. Finally, although council size has no reliable independent influence, in the setting of a larger city council, mayors become relatively less concerned with job creation.⁴

Only one control variable influences the level of importance accorded contributing to a sound regional economy (Equation 3). Economic directors are more likely than are other city officials to view contributing to a sound regional economy as an important economic development consideration.

City type has no reliable influence on either the level of importance given to economic development in general (Equation 1) or the views of nearby local governments (Equation 4). Hypotheses 1 and 4, therefore, are not confirmed.

Increased importance accorded economic development is reliably and positively associated with total population, as well as with Hispanic population and Hispanic population growth rate during the past decade. A city's educational level is inversely related to concern with economic development in general. Among city officials, city managers are most concerned with economic development, as are adminis-

trators in council-manager cities. City government structure has a strong conditioning effect. Among administrators in council-manager cities, there is less concern with economic development in both the context of a large city council and the context of a large Hispanic population. Also, city managers in council-manager cities are relatively less concerned with economic development.

Two control variables reliably influence the level of importance given to the views of nearby local governments (Equation 4). One is Hispanic population growth rate, which increases the importance accorded this concern. The other is the dummy variable testing if a respondent is a city economic director. As a group, economic directors place a comparatively good deal of emphasis on the views of nearby local governments when considering development proposals.

DISCUSSION

Peterson's economic development thesis has invited a new round of research interest in policy priorities of urban America. Our study investigated Peterson's theory from the perspective of the central-city and suburb dichotomy and from the perspective of nonelected city officials. Viewed contextually, our findings do not contradict Peterson's overall argument. That is, within the framework of economic development as an important policy concern, there exists patterned variation. It seems unreasonable to hold any theory to too rigid a standard, to disallow for any variation. A "unitary" interest on economic growth that forces cities to engage in economic development policies certainly allows for differences in emphasis attached to various specific policies, and it is reasonable that these differences will exhibit variation associated with observable characteristics among cities and city decision makers.

We asserted that the placement and role of central cities and suburbs within the urban environment produces differing economic development priorities among administrators. On average, city officials view economic development and job creation as important, as we would expect based on Peterson's argument (from this finding we might also infer the limited effect of any antigrowth movement among city administrators' attitudes toward economic development; see Ross

& Levine, 2001). Administrators in central cities, however, are somewhat more concerned with job creation than are those in suburbs. This makes sense in light of the traditional reliance of suburbanites on central-city employment and on the hesitancy of some suburban communities to support some types of industrial or other development that would produce jobs. Relative to economic development in general and to job creation, city administrators are less concerned with contributing to a sound regional economy and much less interested in the views of nearby local governments. The relatively lower level of emphasis on these two items makes sense in light of the fact that local economic development in the United States traditionally is a community-specific endeavor (Judd & Swanstrom, 2002). Central-city administrators, however, tend to be more interested than suburban administrators in the regional aspect of economic development. This supports the idea that central-city decision makers can tend to view their city as a regional economic engine at the center of an SMA.

Our findings support the viability of extending Peterson's thesis to city administrators. We found reliable variation in economic development priorities among city administrators, not only between central-city and suburban administrators but also between types of city officials. In part, this variation may be the result of professional training. For example, economic directors are likely to stress the importance of a regional economy and be concerned with the views of nearby local governments. To some extent, the nature of their job—the planning emphasis among city economic development directors, as opposed to city managers and mayors—may influence these city administrators' level of concern with developing “outgoing” policy orientations (Morgan & Watson, 1992). Those in the position of city economic director may hold a somewhat more regional view of economic development by comparison to city officials holding other types of positions. Other differences between city officials may have to do with political considerations. City managers reliably place greater emphasis on economic development in general and, along with mayors, on job creation. This highlights the obvious political incentive of elected mayors to keep citizens employed. What also may be reflected here is the political component that accompanies the ostensibly nonpolitical city manager. The attitude of city officials, however, is not determined solely by professional training or by politics. Regardless of the partic-

ular office, reliable differences in economic policy priorities exist between central-city and suburban administrators. Our findings show that the central-city/suburb dichotomy retains utility in the study of urban political economy and that economic policy priorities among administrators are responsive to their community. In our analysis, this dichotomy reliably differentiates between administrators regarding job creation and the importance of a sound regional economy, even with a series of controls for city demographic characteristics, government structure, administrative position, and the presence of a progrowth coalition.

Regarding our control variables, most associations are consistent with those found in prior studies. For example, in a study of city administrators in California cities, Lewis (2001) found that demographic factors such as population size, racial and ethnic composition, and employment were associated with concern with job creation. Meaningful differences among city administrators in Texas emerge regarding demographic variables measuring ethnic and racial composition, education, the perceived presence of a progrowth coalition, and structural characteristics of government. Minority population growth places pressure on city administrators to grow their local economy. Growth in cities' Hispanic and African American populations during the 1990s increased the level of importance accorded to economic development, and Hispanic population growth increased the importance of creating new jobs. A more educated, wealthier citizenry reduces the pressure on city administrators to grow their economies. Higher levels of education produce less emphasis on economic development in general and on job creation in particular; higher median income results in less concern with creating jobs. Our findings also suggest that to the extent city administrators perceive a vigorous job-producing private sector, in the form of a local chamber of commerce, they have less of an incentive to focus public efforts on various jobs creation programs. The perceived presence of a progrowth coalition, represented by the influence of a local chamber of commerce, is negatively associated with the importance placed on job creation.

We consider it an important finding that government structure has not only an independent effect on economic development priorities but has such a pronounced conditioning effect as well. Officials in council-manager cities place more emphasis on growth than do simi-

lar officeholders in mayor-council cities. Administrators in council-manager cities are more likely to rank the importance of economic development and job creation highly. Regarding its conditioning effect, the council-manager system acts to reverse the otherwise positive influence of council size, minority population percentage, and office. We speculate that this is due to a greater emphasis placed on professionalism and a reduced emphasis placed on politics engendered by this form of city government. This explanation is compatible with the original intent of municipal reformers to have city government operate according to professional business principles and to distance the administration of city government from politics. The relationship between economic development attitudes of city officials and the structure of city government certainly bears further investigation.

CONCLUSION

We collected our empirical data through surveying city administrators in the second largest state, Texas. Our findings substantiate two of our four hypotheses. In attracting new development and responding to development proposals, central-city administrators in Texas are more likely than are suburban administrators to perceive the importance of job creation. Central-city administrators are also more likely than are their suburban counterparts to perceive the importance of contributing to a sound regional economy. At this point, we can speculate that the reason that not all of our hypotheses are confirmed is because of the rather disparate nature of modern suburbs in the United States, as discussed above. With this said, it is important to note that given the disparate nature of modern suburbs, the central city/suburban distinction continues to be an important one. This distinction exhibits explanatory power. Similarly, it is important to note that these differences emerge among nonelected city administrators. Our investigation into the economic development priorities of city administrators, we believe, provides an intriguing extension of Peterson's economic development argument.

Our findings suggest, of course, the influence of professional training. For example, economic directors are most likely to emphasize regional economy and the views of nearby local governments. The

findings, however, also indicate that perceptions of urban administrators regarding policy priorities are influenced by various factors.

One finding has particular relevance for urban administrators who seek to be most responsive to minority populations. For the most part, differences in the perception of city administrators stem from variation in cities' social and economic characteristics. However, our findings show that administrators' attitudes are also conditioned by the structure of their local government. The pressure that minority populations, especially Hispanic populations, exert on city administrators to develop their economy and create jobs is reduced when administrators work in the context of a council-manager form of government.

This conditional effect of city structure is especially relevant because urban administrators are likely to be sensitive to the form of local government (see Svava, 1990). Recent data from the International City Management Association reveal that over one sixth of U.S. cities engaged in efforts at structural reform between 1982 and 1996 (Renner & DeSantis, 1998), and cities with growing Hispanic populations have exhibited a tendency to adopt the council-manager form of government (Simmons & Simmons, 2003). We can only speculate whether movement toward the council-manager form of government reflects a desire to diffuse increasing pressure to grow a local economy. It does appear to be the case, though, that the council-manager form of government will not assist city administrators in their efforts to respond to the economic concerns of minority groups.

NOTES

1. A list of Texas cities with a population of at least 5,000 was obtained from population estimates for January 1, 1999, from *Estimates of the Total Populations of Counties and Places in Texas for July 1, 1998 and January 1, 1999*, The Texas State Data Center, The Texas State Population Estimates and Projections Program, August 1999. A list of city administrators was obtained from the *1999-2000 Texas City Officials Directory and Buyer's Guide*, Texas Municipal League, 1999. Though not utilized in the present analysis, we also surveyed administrators in rural communities with a population of at least 5,000. We received responses from 53 of these.

2. The other items were effect on traffic, conformity with your city's general plan, chamber of commerce or other local business support for the project, downtown redevelopment, cost to your city of providing additional municipal services, likelihood of generating new tax revenue, and likelihood of improving community aesthetics (the item order varied across survey instruments). Our study, and in particular the question formatting, was inspired by Lewis's (2001) study of city administrators' attitudes in California toward economic development.

3. The number of cases varies across equations because on occasion a respondent did not assign a value to a given question or item or, specifically regarding the item list, assigned the same value to multiple items. In these instances, the question/item response was coded as "missing."

4. Because of the small number of mayors in our sample, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting mayoral findings.

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