City Managers Under Fire: How Conflict Leads to Turnover

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Abstract:
To evaluate the influence of turnover among city management professionals, data were gathered and analyzed in a study that followed the careers of 133 city managers in Florida since 1986. In contrast to previous studies, conflict was found to be a frequent cause of turnover among those city managers who left their positions during the study period. The type of conflict involved made a difference. Situations involving policy or style disagreements between a manager and the city council were more likely to cause turnover than conflictual conditions emerging from disagreement among council factions. However, other factors, such as electoral changes in council composition and opposition by a popularly elected mayor, were found meaningful. More concern for conflict and conflict-management skills among city management professionals and educators may help solve areas of conflict.

Abstract:
The council-manager form of local government is supposed to reduce conflict in city governance and increase cooperation between the executive and the legislature. Because the city council is responsible for hiring and firing the city manager, as James Svara puts it, "there is no question about who has ultimate authority, and thus there are few battles to protect prerogatives" (1990, p. 54). The council's clear authority over the executive they appoint also frees council members from the pressure to compete with an elected executive for public support. Chester Newland sums it up this way: "The great strength of council-manager government has been precisely in the combined presence of those two qualities: a powerful council, oriented to community brokerage, and a coordinated executive framework, characterized by diverse expertise and professionalism and free of narrow factionalism" (1985, p. 8).

Nevertheless, conflict does occur in council-manager cities, and, as we will show, conflict has been a frequent cause of managerial turnover in at least one state's municipalities. These cases of conflict-generated turnover permit us to examine what ""went wrong" with the anticipated relationship between council and manager. More constructive management of conflict depends in part on a fuller understanding of the ways council members and managers generate and deal with conflicts.

Conflict in city governance can be harmful. Council members or managers who pursue selfish, personal objectives may divert city resources or delay city action at the expense of public well being. Even conflict over what constitutes good public policy harms the community if it prevents action on pressing public problems or results in the departure of an effective city manager. Similarly, the firing of competent, public-spirited managers because they refuse to violate laws or professional ethics, or because of petty jealousies, costs the city the effective executive leadership which that manager provided.

Conflict in city governance is not necessarily bad for public policy, of course. Conflict among council members may reflect authentic, diverse policy demands of a heterogeneous citizenry. Conflict between the council and the manager may arise as managers assert their professional values and judgment in the face of council opposition. When conflict leads to vigorous discussion of public problems, thorough exploration of options, and

creation of mutually beneficial solutions, better public policy results. Nor is firing the manager necessarily bad for public policy or urban governance. managers who ignore legitimate council policy directives or who are inept or irresponsible need to be replaced. The elected council has the authority and responsibility to fire the manager, and, in such cases, it needs to exercise its authority.

Council-manager conflict has received relatively little scholarly attention. The collaborative view of council-manager relations presented by theorists of the manager plan has been buttressed by reports that most managers leave office not because they are "under fire," but for professional advancement. For example, Roy Green reports that "all but approximately 15%" of the managerial changes reported by International City Management Association members in 1984 were for "career advancement, . . . salary advancement, . . . desire to manage a larger government," or "desire for a new experience" (1987, p. 9). Similarly, Daniel Barber states that most managers appointed in 1986 who left previous city management positions did so for "personal challenge, . . . normal career advancement . . . monetary considerations," or "family considerations" (1988, p. 697). Although Harmon Zeigler and his colleagues (1985) devote considerable attention to the management of conflict by managers in the early 1980s, they discuss managers' career patterns only in terms of advancement and do not explore the relationship of conflict to turnover.

In contrast, we recently reported that managers in certain high-conflict situations were twice as likely as other managers to leave office (DeHoog and Whitaker, 1990). Moreover, these managers accounted for about half of all turnover among the managers we studied. Our findings parallel those reported by Gladys Kammerer and her colleagues (1962) three decades earlier, which suggested that conflict may be a common reason for managerial turnover.

Two patterns of conflict may lead managers to leave office: conflict among political factions for control of the city council and conflict between the manager and a (more or less) united council. The first pattern involves systemic conflict among members of the council. In this conflict pattern, the council is divided into (typically two) factions. If their struggle for control of city policy making expands to include the manager, it may lead to the manager's departure. In the second pattern, the behavior of the manager (or the council) becomes a major issue. Because the council is the manager's legal superior, unresolved conflict between the council and the manager can readily lead to the manager's departure from office. In this article, we explore how conflicts lead to managerial turnover and examine, in particular, how managers' styles of behavior influence conflict and turnover.

Anthony Downs (1967) identifies basic differences in managers approach to their work which we expect to influence their approach to conflict. Of his two self-interested types, "climbers" are focused on their own career advancement to the exclusion of other goals, and "conservers" are focused on keeping what they have with the least expenditure of effort. Downs describes three other more public-spirited types as well. "Zealots" are strongly committed to achievement of some particular policy. "Advocates" are more pragmatic and take a broader view, typically focusing on the well-being of their agency and its overall mission. "Statesmen" take a very broad view of the public interest and lack focus because of their sense of loyalty to generalized ideas of the public.

Managers' role orientations may help in understanding how and why they leave office. Climbers and zealots may be particularly likely to have conflicts with councils when their narrow interests are opposed by council members. Conservers and statesmen are likely to have friction with councils which are more oriented to change, but may work very well with more complacent councils. Advocates are likely to conflict with councils when their professional judgments differ from council practices.

Advocates should be the type most likely to avoid being drawn into council conflicts. Their active espousal of views based on professional norms can help them maintain a position independent of council factions. This style is described by Svara as the "responsible professional." Svara describes this style as follows:

Despite the temptation to wield power and the risk of being victimized by the council, the manager can maintain the middle ground between subservience and self-serving autonomy and still sustain a positive relationship with the council. The manager's unique role entails providing professional leadership without independent political power resources, on the one hand, or political dependency on all elected officials or the mayor, on the other (1990, p. 175).

The Data for This Study

This study built upon our previous study mentioned above. In that project we followed the careers of 133 city managers who responded to a survey of all 200 managers in Florida in early 1986. of the 133 managers we studied, 33 were no longer in office by May 1988, a turnover rate of about 25 percent for the two-year period. (1) Using the managers' responses to the 1986 survey, we sought to account for those departures. We found that 16 of the 33 managers who left office reported patterns of conflict which apparently placed them at particularly high risk for leaving office (Table 1). Almost half of the managers who reported their communities had unstable politics were no longer in office two years later. This finding was consistent with the hypothesis that managers were more likely to leave communities in which there were marked changes in groups controlling city government. Conflict among contending city council members ("commissioners" in Florida) seemed likely to have forced these managers from office. Also, the departure rate was quite high (71 percent) among those who reported their communities had very stable politics, but who said they lacked full confidence of their councils and disagreed with them on the manager's policy role. In these cases, conflict between the manager and council, rather than conflict within the council, seemed likely to account for managerial turnover. Compared to these "high-risk" situations, turnover rates were considerably lower for other managers.

Our study was inconclusive, of course. It presented no data about the managers' departures themselves. It relied instead on correlations between departures and managers descriptions of their situations before they left office.

To determine why these managers actually did leave office, we interviewed the former managers and elected officials in each of the 33 municipalities where we noted managerial turnover between 1986 and 1988. For each municipality, we attempted to locate and interview both the manager and the mayor who had been in office at the time of the manager's departure (see grey box).

Overall, there was a high level of agreement between managers and mayors in their accounts of managers' departures. In only six of the 29 cases in which we had two informants did the manager and mayor offer different explanations for the manager's departure. In each of these cases, we reviewed both respondents' comments carefully to determine which explanation to accept as the more credible, basing our conclusions about why these managers left office on both entire interviews. (2)

Altogether, 61 percent of the managers in our study were pushed from office: they were fired, pressured to resign to avoid being fired, or fled from an intolerable situation. (These latter managers resigned without pressure, but without any other job to go to. The four who fled were out of work an average of eight months.) Only 18 percent left for advancement, and 21 percent left for retirement or family reasons.

Departed managers who had described their 1986 situations as what we called "high-risk" were more likely than others to have been pushed from office (Table 2). However, more than half of those whose 1986 situations appeared from their descriptions to be "low risk" and who had left office by May 1988 were also pushed from office. Advancement accounted for similar low percentages of departures among both risk groups. Retirement, however, was more frequent among the low-risk group.

How Conflict Leads to Turnover

Managers who left office had generally experienced considerable conflict. Only three of the 33 managers in this study experienced little or no conflict preceding their departure from office. Each of these retired for reasons of

age or health. They and their mayors reported no conflicts in the council or between council and manager. Each of these three managers was a conserver, and each had a council which was satisfied with that style. Managers who experienced conflict were much more likely to be fired, to be forced to resign, or to flee (Table 3).

Conflict does not always lead to turnover, of course. For example, almost half of all managers who described themselves in "high-risk" conflict situations in 1986 were still in office two years later. (See Table 1.) Moreover, conflict was not the major reason for changing jobs for a third of the 30 managers who reported conflict prior to their departure from office. What kinds of conflicts produced turnover?

Conflict Between Council and Manager

Conflict appears to have been the primary reason for the departure of all nine managers in our study who were in conflict with their councils. Council conflict with the manager could include disagreement over policy or the manager's style. Similarly, the manager might take issue with council members' behavior or their policy positions.

Managers' behavior became an issue and led to their departure in five of the cases studied here. One manager, classified as a misfit, was described by the mayor as abrupt and arrogant, as lacking support from department heads, and as procrastinating on assignments. Another misfit manager "managed by crisis," surprising the council by announcing decisions during council meetings and was seen as inflexible. Furthermore, this manager refused to move, preferring to commute a long distance home each weekend. The manager gave the impression that the town was too "blue collar" and too "Haitian" to be a suitable residence. A conserver manager was forced from office because "he attempted to play the role of father figure to commissioners." This manager was described as "unbending" and "patronizing." A charge of sexual harassment from an employee crystallized council dissatisfaction in this case. Two managers classified as advocates also left because of conflict with their councils. One gave as the reason a dislike of the social aspects of the job. The mayor agreed, saying that the manager "did not mix with the community." Another advocate had full council support in taking a "progrowth leadership role." Despite the council's support, this manager tired of the tension with the council over personal style. The manager, feeling like "a bull in china shop" and "not suave enough to suit council," resigned without having located another position.

Four other managers we studied left office because of policy conflicts with the council. One, a climber, resigned when the council refused to enter an employment contract. The other three were fired or forced to resign. In one case, the council favored more growth than the manager thought desirable. In addition to opposing the council's progrowth stance, this zealot manager was too fiscally conservative for the council and opposed hiring black administrators as the council directed. This manager was fired by the council. Another manager was dismissed after insisting on holding public hearings on major zoning variances when the council wanted to avoid public discussion and simply approve the requests. This statesman said it was difficult to get the council to follow state and federal regulations and mandates, while the mayor described the manager's policy relations with council as a "painful experience." In another city, the advocate manager was forced to resign after the council blocked the manager's attempt to stop police solicitation of contributions from condominium owners in the city.

No type of managerial role orientation was particularly associated with conflict between a council and a manager. Rather, this type of conflict appeared to be related to a lack of congruence between the council's and the manager's expectations.

Conflict in the Council

In contrast to conflict between managers and their councils, conflict among council members did not necessarily force managers out of office. Conflict in the council led to involuntary managerial turnover only when the manager became identified with one faction and that faction lost control of the council. The majority faction either fired the manager or pressured him to resign under threat of firing.

Nine of the managers we studied left office because they lost support of the council majority. In six of these cases, an election changed the balance on the council, bringing a faction opposed to the manager into control. Popularly elected mayors played a key role in five of these new majorities and led the opposition to the manager. In the sixth case, the election shifted the council from conservative to "radically liberal," according to the manager. The popularly elected conservative mayor retained office, but was unable to prevent the new majority from removing the manager, who had been closely identified with their conservative predecessors. Most of these managers appear to have been unaware of the impending shift in council control. Only two of the six had indicated in the 1986 survey that local politics were unstable subject to change in political control. Managerial style was of little consequence when the manager was identified with a losing faction. Five of these managers were advocates, while one was a misfit.

In three other cases, managers were fired when a member of the council was persuaded to abandon support for the manager and join the opposing faction. In two of these cities, some members of the council were strongly opposed to the manager. As soon as they were able to convince enough of their colleagues that the manager should be replaced, they fired the manager. Both cities had popularly elected mayors. One supported the manager; one opposed the manager. In both cities, the managers were advocates. In the third city, the mayor supported the manager until the manager "became the issue" between the two factions on the council. The mayor described this manager as outspoken and uncompromising, as airing "dirty linen in public," and as a "numbers person" who could not relate well to people. We classified this manager as a misfit. In all three cases, bitter personal animosities developed between council factions, and the manager appeared to have been personally disliked by hard-core opponents, regardless of the manager's role orientation.

Council conflict could also lead to managerial turnover when the manager, becoming so frustrated or exhausted by the conflict, decided to leave without having located a new job. Two managers with divided councils fled office when the conflict in the council became intolerable. Both were advocates who "burned out." One had for some time successfully negotiated between the contending council factions. This manager was, according to the mayor, "even-handed" with a style that was "low key, mild-mannered." Making it clear that the council set policy, the manager worked hard to implement the council's plans. Finally, however, the manager decided that it was time to change after being insulted by a particularly domineering member of the council. This manager was unemployed for six months. The other manager who fled because of constant conflict in the council attempted to provide leadership to a "directionless" council. This manager resigned after council members rejected the manager's pay and reorganization plans and failed to provide their own alternatives. This manager also remained unemployed for six months. Advocates may be particularly likely to burn out because their drive for professional advancement and responsibility creates high expectations which are more easily frustrated.

Conflict in the council did not always lead to involuntary termination or flight, however. All six managers we studied who left for advancement had also experienced considerable frustration with council conflict. Unlike the managers who fled, each of these managers was able to locate an attractive new position before resigning. These job changes occurred when they did primarily because of the attraction of the managers new opportunities, although dissatisfaction with the conflict in their councils or with an elected mayor also contributed to these managers' decisions to seek employment elsewhere. All six were advocates. In addition, two managers who retired (both conservers) and two who left office for personal, family-related concerns (both advocates) also experienced considerable conflict in their councils before their departures, although that conflict did not appear to have been the critical reason for their decisions to resign. Age, family illness, and the wishes of spouses were more important factors in these decisions.

Altogether, 21 of the 33 managers we studied experienced considerable conflict among members of their councils before they left office. However, that conflict appears to have been the reason for the manager's departure in just over half of these cases (Table 3). Eleven managers, who experienced council conflict, were fired, forced to resign, or fled office. Ten other managers, who experienced council conflict, stayed in office until they found more attractive positions, retired, or had family problems which required their resignation.

Involuntary Turnover in Cities with Divided Councils

The divided councils that forced managers from office generally differed from those that managers continued to serve until they chose to leave in two notable respects: 1) managers were much more likely to be fired or forced to resign in the seven cities where an election changed the balance of the council; and 2) managers were much more likely to be fired or forced to resign in the nine cities where they were opposed by the mayor (Table 4).

Clearly, when elections return a majority of members opposed to the manager, the council may well exercise its authority, force the manager out of office, and appoint someone the new majority views as more amenable to their wishes. Six managers in this situation were fired or forced to resign. Only one located a better position and resigned for advancement. The council's legal authority to hire and fire the manager by majority vote was the basis for the relationship shown in the left panel of Table 4.

The way in which the mayor's opposition led to the manager's firing or forced resignation was not so obvious, however. Kammerer and colleagues provided a plausible explanation, which they developed for their finding that managers had shorter tenure in cities where the mayor was popularly elected. They attributed this shorter tenure to "the elected mayor's base of power, which is 'independent' of the council, and from a presumed leadership role that voters, as well as a separately elected mayor himself, may impute to such an office" (1962, p. 57; see also Kammerer, 1964, and Booth, 1968). They suggested both that elected mayors may be more likely to oppose the manager (to see him or her as a rival leader) and that elected mayors may be more able to build popular support for their opposition to the manager. Our data support both those propositions (Table 5).

We found that popularly elected mayors were more likely to oppose the manager. In the 21 cities with councils divided by conflict, more than half of the popularly elected mayors opposed the manager, but none of the mayors chosen from the council did so. For mayors, popular election clearly related to opposition to the manager, supporting Kammerer's contention that rivalry is more likely when the mayor is elected directly by the voters.

We also found that cities whose mayors were both popularly elected and opposed to the manager were also more likely to elect a new council majority opposed to the manager. A faction hostile to the manager came to power by election in 67 percent of the cities with popularly elected mayors who opposed the manager. This compared to a similar election-based shift on the council in only 13 percent of the cities whose popularly elected mayors did not oppose the manager, and no such shifts in the cities where the mayor was not popularly elected. While each of these cities had divided councils, elections were likely to change the balance on the council only in cities with elected mayors who opposed the manager. This outcome suggested that elected mayors attracted votes not only for themselves, but also for council candidates who shared their views.

Interestingly, mayors were less likely to build a coalition opposed to the manager among existing council members. Only one (popularly elected) mayor was able to convince enough colleagues on the council to abandon their support for the manager and to vote for dismissal. Another (popularly elected) mayor reluctantly joined the manager's opponents in voting to fire the manager after the manager carried outspokenness "too far" and called a leading citizen a liar in the press. A third manager was dismissed despite the support of the popularly elected mayor. However, all the council members who voted to fire this manager were defeated in the next election, while the mayor and the candidates the mayor supported were elected. This result underlines the conclusion that elected mayors' leadership in council-manager cities is more likely to involve winning voters' support for like-minded candidates than it is to consist of winning support from council members from opposing factions. These mayors appeared to exert their leadership chiefly through electoral politics, rather than through coalition-building among members of council.

Professional Advancement and Other Voluntary Turnover

Twelve managers who left office in cities with divided councils resigned while they still had the support of a majority of the council. They, rather than their councils, decided when and how they would leave office. How did these managers deal with councils divided by conflict? Did those who advanced manage differently than those who fled, left for family reasons, or retired? To answer this question, we explored their role orientations.

The six managers who left for advancement were all advocates: active, professional administrators who showed considerable initiative in developing policy and directing city operations. All but one had MPA degrees, and all were members of ICMA. Although two of them had previously served as manager in another city, four were in their first manager position. In 1986, their average age was 41. These advocates had in common technical expertise and good interpersonal skills, although some relied more heavily on technical competence and others on their human relations talents.

The two managers who left for family reasons and the two who fled office out of frustration in attempting to meet the competing demands of a divided council were also advocates. All but one of these managers had an MPA, and all were ICMA members. Only one had been a manager before. Their average age in 1986 was 44. Like those who left for advancement, they approached their work as responsible professionals.

In contrast, the managers who retired were conservers: quiet, unassertive managers who made little effort to develop new policies or to provide strong leadership. Neither had an MPA nor experience elsewhere as a city manager, although one was a member of ICMA. Both were long-time residents of the cities they served. Average age of the conservers in 1986 was 61. They got along by going along and by avoiding council controversies.

Advancement was clearly related to an advocate role orientation. Managers who left to advance their careers were more likely to provide leadership to a divided council. These advocates also tended to be younger, more professionally educated managers.

Subsequent Careers

Do managers who leave office involuntarily subsequently follow different career paths from those who choose how and when they leave? Is dismissal so painful that managers leave city management, or are fired managers stigmatized and less employable in city management? Only about one-third of the managers we studied were still employed as city or county managers or assistants in 1989 (Table 6). One-fourth of the managers who left office had retired. (In addition to the five managers who left office in order to retire, three who were fired also entered retirement.) Others were employed either in public agencies or in the private sector some were unemployed or unable to be traced.

Age (or ill health) was clearly a major factor in all the retirements. (3) If we eliminate from analysis managers who retired and those whose subsequent employment status we were unable to determine, we can see more clearly the relationships between type of departure and subsequent employment.

Surprisingly, type of departure had little or no influence on the rate at which managers remained in the profession. With the exception of managers who fled, about half of those employed in 1989 were still in local government management (Table 7). Managers who fled might be expected to be least likely to return to city management. All of them resigned in frustration without first locating another position. Yet these managers were most likely to have been managers again in 1989. The small number of cases makes generalization difficult, of course, but it appears that the managers who fled were frustrated with their relationships with particular elected officials, not with the job of city management. Interestingly, only half of the managers who left for advancement remained in local government management, although all but one

Managers who were fired or forced to resign were more likely to have gone into the private sector or to have been unemployed than managers who left for other reasons. They, rather than the managers who fled, appeared

to have been more often disillusioned with city management as a career. The managers behavior also seemed important in some of these career moves, however. Thus, although fired following an election-based shift in the council, the manager who was unemployed in 1989 had a "gruff, no-nonsense approach" which perhaps made it difficult for that manager to find another council to serve. Following dismissal after 1986, this manager served for several months as manager in another city but was again unemployed in 1989.

Three of the five managers who were forced from office and then went into private business had conflicts with their councils because of their behavior or management style. The other two were forced from office when an opposing faction was elected to control of the council. One of these was an advocate. Although having few regrets about the past city-management career, this manager was glad to be free of the media pressure involved in the job and did not expect to go back into public service. Another of the managers who went into private business was a conserver, who, according to the mayor, resigned to avoid a public airing of a sexual harassment charge. The other three, who were fired and went into private business, we categorized as misfits. None of them recalled city management with fondness or sought to return to that career.

Toward Less Conflict-based Turnover

Managers and elected officials share the opportunity to use conflict constructively and avoid conflict-based turnover. (4) The cases we have studied provide some evidence about how those opportunities are sometimes missed.

Where the council was divided by conflict, the manager was forced from office through expansion of the conflict. Most often, this occurred during campaigns for city council elections. Popularly elected mayors who opposed the manager were usually key actors in widening the conflict. Managers who avoided being drawn into the council conflicts did so by maintaining a posture of professional responsibility. Some of those we studied took a more aggressive lead in proposing policy options than others, but all who avoided being drawn into council conflicts took care to work across council factions rather than becoming identified with any one faction. Elected officials (particularly popularly elected mayors) who sought to identify the manager with their opponents could make it very difficult for managers to remain neutral. Managers who were at once skillful diplomats and adept administrators were most likely to stay outside council conflicts. A skillful manager could even help a divided council use their conflicts to identify new options and create better policy for the city.

Where the conflict was between the council and the manager, however, the manager could not avoid direct confrontation with the council. These conflicts arose because the council and the manager did not live up to each other's expectations. Either the council or the manager behaved in ways that were inappropriate to good council-manager governance. Councils should be able to expect the manager to provide effective leadership of the city government, while remaining responsive to legitimate policy direction from the council. Some of the managers we studied did not behave as professional city managers. They were arrogant, insensitive, or inept in dealing with the council or city employees, or they refused to carry out legitimate policies with which they disagreed. In other cases, it was the council which violated the manager's expectations of good government, by refusing to follow state or federal laws and regulations.

Professional education and training can help managers develop the awareness and skills required for effective city management. Councils can also take care to select and hire candidates who are well prepared for city management. Indeed, screening and selection of an appropriate manager may be the best way to avoid incompatible expectations about the manager's role. Periodic council-manager meetings to review the manager's performance can clarify expectations, too. Managers who are faced with councils that want to implement illegal policies can attempt to educate members of the council about the laws they are proposing to violate. Planning retreats and work sessions can present opportunities for the manager and council members to explore differences and work toward constructive resolution of conflicts.

There was no systematic relationship between managers role orientation and turnover. All types of managers encountered conflict that led to dismissal. Managers who approached their work as advocates were most likely to avoid being drawn into conflict in the council and to determine their own departure from office. Not all advocates were able to avoid involuntary termination, however. Some advocate managers were fired by councils who opposed the professional leadership the manager wanted to provide. Others were fired by councils led by elected mayors who saw the manager as a rival.

City managers need to be prepared to help their councils handle conflict constructively. Conflict which arises through the defense of good government should not be avoided, but should be taken as an opportunity for reform. Focusing on problems, rather than on personalities, and looking for creative, complementary solutions to divergent definitions of public problems can make conflict constructive. Conflict management is an important part of city management, and managers need explicit training and support to improve their conflict management skills.

Method

In this study, we drew on three sources of information: the 1986 survey of managers on which our previous article was based, our 1989 interviews with managers who had left office within two years following the 1986 survey, and our 1989 interviews with the mayors who were in office when these managers left.

The 33 managers and cities in our sample well represent the 133 city sample of Florida municipalities that we reported on In 1990. The managers were overwhelmingly white, male, college educated members of ICMA. They served cities of all sizes and in all parts of Florida. The only difference of note is that the 33 who left were somewhat more likely than those who did not leave to have MPA degrees.

Although some might argue that Florida is not representative of the rest of the United States, we found no systematic relationships between managers' departures and city size, location in the state, growth rates, or district representation on council. Popular election of the mayor appeared to be the only characteristic of city structure related to turnover, and Florida is not unusual in the extent to which mayors are elected directly by the voters. Even if

Florida does, for some unknown reason, have more conflict (and turnover due to conflict) than the rest of this country so that this sample would not be useful for estimating rates of turnover because conflict, the sample still remains valid for investigating how conflict leads to managerial turnover.

Telephone interviews were conducted in 1989. We were unable to interview three managers and six mayors in the 33 cities. However, we were able to interview another member of the council instead of the mayor in five of these cases. Thus, we interviewed a total of 30 managers and 32 elected officials (hereafter referred to as mayor) from the 33 municipalities including two informants for 29 municipalities and only one informant for the other four municipalities. Following each interview, the interviewer coded the manager's style using Downs' classifications. The interviewers also wrote explanations for their selection of classification. In most cases, the independent classifications of the managers, based on mayor and manager interviews, were the same. In cases where they differed, we reviewed the explanation for each classification as well as both entire interviews to determine which category best represented the behavior of the manager. A few managers did not fit any of Downs' bureaucratic types. They appeared to have been out of place in city management, with unrealistic expectations about their authority and responsibilities. We classified these managers as "misfits."

The two sets of interviews permitted us to compare each manager's and mayor's account and interpretation of the manager's departure, Although a complex of reasons usually explain why a manager has left office, we asked our respondents to identify the most important reasons for each departure. We then reviewed their responses carefully to categorize departures on the basis of the primary reason for leaving. We were generally

very satisfied with the candor of the respondents, and our ability to compare two accounts for most of the cities increased our confidence in the reliability of these data.

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Notes

1. In addition to the 33 managers who left office, two of the responding managers died in office during this period. See DeHoog and Whitaker (1990), pp. 12-14 and notes 11 and 12, for a discussion of the sample. 2. In one city, the manager claimed he was forced to resign to avoid being fired, and the mayor said the manager was fired. We determined that this manager had, in fact, been fired. In another city, the manager claimed he was pressured to resign, and the mayor said the manager was not pressured, but "just got tired of administration." We concluded this manager had indeed felt pressured to resign. A third manager also said he had been pressured to resign, and the mayor claimed he did not know why the manager left. We decided this manager had been pressured as well. Two managers stated they had left for advancement, while their mayors said they had left because of pressure. Because both managers went directly into more attractive positions, we concluded that they resigned when they did primarily for career advancement. Another manager stated a desire to relocate for family rsasons, but the mayor said that manager was pressured to resign. Because this manager went directly to another city management position in the desired area, we decided the manager had resigned for personal reasons. 3. In 1986 the average age of the five managers who later resigned to retire was 61. The average age of the three managers who retired after being fired was 68. 4. For a discussion of the constructive use of conflict, see, for example, Argyris (1982); Fisher and Ury (1982); and Schwarz (1989).