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Role and Adaptation in Local Government: An Analysis of Gallatin County

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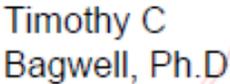
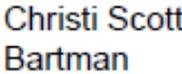
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AN ANALYSIS OF GALLATIN COUNTY

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ROLE ADAPTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

AN ANALYSIS OF GALLATIN COUNTY

of

American Public University

by

Eric Bowers

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Public Administration

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Charlestown, WV

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the men and women of the Bozeman and Gallatin County Commissions. Without their leadership and presence in the community, the Gallatin Valley would not be near the amazing place to live that it is has become. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my wife Kate, who has exhibited remarkable patience throughout this process of my professional development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of the Bozeman and Gallatin County Commissions who participated in this work. While their time is precious in a community that often demands more of its public servants, they selflessly dedicated the time and energy to make this work meaningful academically and personally.

To each of my professors at American Military University, thank you for your active support of your military students. Your understanding of our complex and often stressful work environment makes the achievement of professional development possible.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
ROLE ADAPTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AN ANALYSIS OF GALLATIN COUNTY

By

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American Military University, April 25, 2015

Charlestown, WV

Professor Timothy Bagwell, Thesis Professor

This study seeks to expand on existing research regarding local government's role in community building which has largely focused on larger metropolitan areas.

This study examines the perceptions of local government leaders in how they view their role within the community as civic leaders both collectively and individually. The overall purpose of this study is to examine the changes and adaptations in local government. Survey responses from members of the Gallatin County and Bozeman City Commissions are analyzed. Additionally, a brief analysis of online information resources is also conducted to determine the posturing of local government in whether policy or the policy making process is emphasized. Analysis of online resources and survey responses indicates that both organizational and individual role adaptation among city and county government officials is dynamic, and that these adaptations are a reflection of proactive community engagement as well as policy development. Both the county and city commissions exhibit high levels of policy process orientation.

Keywords and Acronyms:

County Commissions, City Commissions, community engagement, policy development, and role perception.

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Introduction

Considered to be a founding father of the study of public administration, Woodrow Wilson once remarked that politics and administration should be separate in order for a “professional bureaucracy” to govern independently from elected officials. Wilson saw bureaucracy as a collective of technical experts who would inform and ultimately train the elected official, thus bureaucracy in Wilson’s view maintained a legitimate claim to power in governance. Because Wilson viewed republican self-government with a considerable measure of distrust, he tended to view the vote as being a vehicle by which there was an illusion of change being advertised. Wilson proposed a dichotomy of politics and administration to not only provide the necessary expertise and experience to government, he also favored the separation because he saw bureaucracy as a vehicle through which the electorate could be educated (Fry & Raadschelders, 2008).

While Wilson’s postulates on politics and administration still have their place in academic circles, Wilson’s views by modern standards have become rather archaic. Modern government in many instances embraces the old adage that “good politics is good policy.” Wilson provided the starting point from which the relationship between the general public and administration was understood. But more than 100 years of constant reinvention and reinvigoration of political mechanisms has dramatically changed the relationship between the elected official and the voter. Wilson’s proposal of a political and administrative

dichotomy is simply not possible. Power relationships have been completely changed to the point where bureaucracy has also become a vehicle of political influence. From street level bureaucrats who provide police protection and emergency response capabilities to the people who execute policy in those same cities, there is an unmistakable discretionary nature to the way in which government behaves. This is a direct function of politics and administration being present in such a way where it is sometimes hard to tell one from the other (Shafritz & Hyde, 2012).

With the intermingling of politics and administration being established, what does the relationship between the voter and the elected official look like? Dennis Hays, an administrator for Wyandotte County in Kansas City, Kansas found himself in a very public role when he announced negotiations between the county and Speedway Corporation for the building of a new NASCAR racetrack. While Hays had often thought of himself as a behind the scenes administrative facilitator, he found himself in front of a crowd of news reporters and cameras when he was charged with announcing the negotiations. As the process of getting the track built went along, he also found himself listening to the inputs from the community at large through town hall meetings and open forum discussions. Hays was not just an administrator at this point, he was also a “community builder.” While he had a duty to carry out the policies laid out before him, he now also had the duty to reconcile the will of the community with that of a large business which had the potential to bring jobs and economic development to his city and county (Nalbandian, 1999). In essence, Hays was thrust into a situation

which forced him to change the way he viewed his role within the constructs of the county government. He was no longer the bureaucratic expert that Wilson would have preferred. Instead, he was the delivery mechanism for the message that engaged the community in a political process. The conditions were such that Hays had to adapt his role to fit the situation.

The idea of role adaptation is not reserved just for community building. With the basic assumption that the administrator is strongly networked to the community and other formal actors within the community (such as the large business, corporation, or interest group etc.), the administrator can also find themselves adapting their approach to fit a role which serves to limit the influence of the voter and the general public. This happens when the administrator engages in “dark networking” where the administrator engages more with the politically motivated or powerful entities. While the administrator or elected leader is most thought of as being the provider for the common good, when dark networking occurs there is a tendency toward inequality because of a negative role adaptation (O’Toole & Meier, 2004). Public sentiment has generated a preconceived notion of big government as being characterized by this type of practice, but the sentiment could very possibly be projected onto a smaller government in certain cases.

What is more noteworthy however is that even in the case of Dennis Hays and any given case involving dark networking, there is one theme in common: the elected leader or administrator is adapting their role to fit the situation. Whether there are active negotiations or interactions occurring with the

community or a back room hearing is being conducted regarding the award of a building permit for a business that the general populous is strongly against (for instance, a chemical manufacturing plant that is positioned very close to an elementary school), role adaptation and change is present in the process.

Furthermore, both the elected official and administrator must still maintain their publically visible roles as well which underscores role adaptation as being dynamic.

The idea of role change has been studied in many capacities. As a leading sociologist in the development of role theory, Goffman (as cited by Broderick, 1998) proposed that social interactions are guided by the role that each party in the interaction adopts. Furthermore, the boundaries of future interactions between the same entities are defined by the behaviors that are enacted. When roles are changed, the types of behaviors that are expected or negotiated also change. This idea can be easily related to the idea that politics affects policy, and that the administrator or elected official must reanalyze their own role when the role of an actor who influences them changes.

It is at this point that the questions and suppositions central to this study be discussed. The usage of role theory as well as the intertwining of politics and administration will both play central roles in the following discussion. More importantly, this study seeks to expand upon existing literature which has examined role change in government. Existing literature is limited to the study of larger communities and metropolitan areas mostly as a function of datasets being easily accessible for larger cities. This study will seek to expand the findings of

existing literature to a community where both urban and rural populations are present. While metropolitan cities such as Oklahoma City and Indianapolis are largely focused on urban issues, the community central to this study has experienced both urban and rural growth which creates a different dynamic for government officials and the roles that they adopt for a given situation.

The focus of this study centers on the city government of Bozeman, Montana and its parent government of Gallatin County. The community was selected based on several factors, to include the author's familiarity with the individuals in office. The Gallatin Valley and Bozeman also provide an excellent case study of a smaller community where urban growth is occurring in the midst of agriculturally centered outlying communities.

Proposed Research

There are three questions that are central to this study:

1. How do government officials view their individual roles within the community?

In order to fully explore role adaptation and its origins in the Gallatin Valley, a range of research questions must be considered. The first and most obvious of these questions is simply how government officials view their role within the community. In exploring role identity, the importance of "process versus policy" will be paramount. Nalbandian (1999) highlights the example of a Washington State city planner who defines his actions by the inputs he receives from the citizens of the city. The city planner explains that legitimacy of government is maintained through a participative approach that encourages

citizens to be active in local politics. This influences the role that the individual accepts for themselves within the context of their operating environment. Once a role has been negotiated and accepted by the actor within the given context, the actions and event outcomes are affected as well. Role acceptance in essence defines the limits of a given actor which also constrains outcomes.

Also relevant to this research question is Ho's (2002) analysis of electronic information outlets. Ho's overall conclusion is that network building and external collaboration are linked with governments that are less traditional in their approach to information presentation through electronic means. Where information is organized by its function for the user and not the provider, there may be applicability in how the physical government itself behaves within the community. An analysis of Gallatin County and Bozeman City government electronic information resources coupled with Ho's perspective will aid in answering this question.

2. Has government function changed in favoring either the policy or policy process perspective?

This question is linked to the first, and seeks to link role adaptation with actual organizational or structural change within the local government.

Quantifying the perspectives of participants regarding their perceptions of citizen engagement in local politics will aid in answering this research question. At a deeper level, the perspectives of participants regarding the participation levels of people in rurally oriented areas of the community will aid in answering how the local government views its role. Furthermore, the use and presence of middle

managers within the structure and function of the local government will also be important to note. Middle managers may be identified both with traditional and reformed governments, but the role that they take on will be important in identifying whether or not middle managers are oriented more towards community building or policy enforcement (Morgan, Bacon, Bunch, Cameron, and Deis, 1996). Liao and Zhang (2012) focus on the role of city managers in moderating local budget concerns between government officials and citizens. Their points are linked very well with an analysis on what the role of the middle manager is in the community, but their points also echo the primary question in this study which is how each person views their role within the local government and how that role changes and is negotiated.

Because the city and county both utilize the commission form of government, power and influence are distributed more evenly according to structure. Seniority and experience may shift that power in certain instances, but structure may serve to directly influence an actor in favoring either the creation and enforcement of policy or the policy process. An exploration of the activities of elected versus appointed positions will shed light on how power dynamics play out, and it will also illuminate potential role adaptation as well. Organizational behaviors will also come into play in addressing this question. Organizational theory will be of key importance which will be addressed in the theory section.

3. How has economic development influenced role change among local government officials?

The third research question is concerned with how economic development has influenced the role of city and county government officials. Nalbandian (1999) stipulates that active engagement with the community by government positively affects economic development and performance, which also positively impacts the performance of governing institutions. The need and desire for economic viability in the community drives much of what local government does in terms of policy development and enactment. McCabe, Feiock, Clingermayer, and Stream (2008) focus on the effects of city manager turnover affecting economic change, and how high rates of turnover affect long term development within a given community. Bozeman is an interesting case when using the work of McCabe, Feiock, Clingermayer, and Stream as a point of perspective because the city managers represent a diverse set of talents and experiences. The current city manager is not native to the area and has a largely academic background, while the assistant city manager is a native to the area and has experience that is mostly in emergency management. While one individual has been in office for a time period that covers pre-recession in 2004 to the current day, the other has only held the assistant city manager position for two years. The senior city manager has witnessed marked economic downturn and growth, which lends credit to McCabe, Feiock, Clingermayer, and Stream's observation that high turnover rates are often linked with economic growth. Observing the activities of the city managers with this frame of reference in mind will help inform how economic factors have influenced the city's managers in recent years.

This work will again provide a linkage back to the larger question of role adaptation, and it will also reference economic undertones that directly influence the activities of upper and middle level city and county managers. While the community of Bozeman has been growing steadily, the population has also become increasingly diversified. Because community diversification is often a precursor to a higher degree of conflict regarding economic policy, the city or county manager must consider their role and how they must adapt in order to preserve continuity of policy expectation and the wishes of the populous (McCabe, Feiock, Clingermayer, & Stream, 2008). Previous research has focused on urban areas that experience economic strain as a result of disadvantaged minority populations. While the city of Bozeman and its parent government of Gallatin County are largely homogenous in terms of ethnic and racial populations, the area is diverse in terms of socioeconomic status. While smaller communities which surround Bozeman have been directly associated with farming and agriculture for over 150 years, the city of Bozeman itself has attracted small and large tech companies, which has in turn created a diverse job market. The so called “tech jobs” have attracted out of state residents which has stimulated urban development and growth. Rural populations and industry stand in stark contrast to the rapidly growing tech companies in the Gallatin Valley, which paints the picture of a diverse socioeconomic makeup. In the context of this study, this is where the application of policy ingenuity and role adaptation is truly understood in local government.

Significance of Research

While this work is smaller in scale and semi-exploratory in a potential call for further research, the study does have potential impacts for local government officials and administrators. The study seeks to highlight the dynamic that is typical of many growing communities that are smaller in size. While people move to the city and bring with them the demand for more urban infrastructure, rural residents still demand the same services they had previously enjoyed. Established families in rural settings may bring a sense of seniority to the discussion, as they may have been in the area for an extended period of time as is the case with the community of Bozeman. This study may highlight effective management methods or techniques which are better suited to smaller governments, and potentially to local governments that are forced to “do more with less.” Lastly, the study might serve as a lens through which city managers and administrators might view their work with a broader sense of community in mind. A focus on citizen engagement through alternative communications such as social media outlets or community driven social meetings may give the administrator a sense of the direction the city needs to go in to better serve the people. This may be more altruistic, but the study will at least provide a frame of reference especially for the young administrator with little experience.

Literature Review

The question of how government officials have altered their roles over time has been researched in multiple ways. Some have chosen to analyze how formal structures of government have changed in response to citizen engagement

and protest. Others have chosen methods that focus on the interactions that occur between the public and government through indirect means. With regard to role adaptation and change and the reasons for it, the literature offers a wide variety of theories and hypothesis that will provide a comprehensive view of why and how government officials view their roles in a given way. Much of the literature that is utilized in the study provides perspective into additional areas that are linked to role adaptation and change.

The “E-Initiative”

The question of how government officials have seen their roles change has been researched in multiple capacities. One such study conducted by Ho (2002) involves the delivery of front line administrative functions, and how information is being advertised more through electronic means. Within this “e-government initiative,” there is a dichotomy of how information is portrayed. In more traditional governments where a Weberian model (or traditional) is emphasized, information is organized by its administrative origins. Governments that have adopted alternative approaches to information presentation and usage organize electronic information by its usability and function for the customer. Portal designs that offer “one stop shopping” fall under this categorization.

Ho’s study sheds light on how role change is reflected by highlighting alternative ways that government engages with the public. The compartmentalization of information that enables individuals to quickly find answers to questions regarding city ordinances or public services shows that government is choosing to focus on the customer as the entity that measures

performance. Civic leaders that provide guidance to their administrators regarding a customer focused e-initiative might be thought of as identifying with a less centralized process of government because citizen participation is valued at a higher level.

A key weakness of Ho's study is that the study involved cities that would all be considered large metropolitan areas. Generalizing the findings regarding role change and e-initiative to smaller communities requires further inquiry, which is a driving factor in why a smaller community was selected for this study. Ho (2002) also states that larger cities "may be more innovative" because they operate in environments that demand more innovation. Larger cities may require more innovation due to their size and composition by socioeconomic makeup, but smaller communities that deal with both urban growth and agricultural economic emphasis must also find innovative ways to deliver public goods and services. Larger cities and metropolitan areas may require federal intervention and funding depending on the severity or priority of the situation which may or may not be the case in smaller cities. Smaller communities may also suffer from a lack of experience and talent in various administrative functions, which may lead to the need for hiring outside help in making local government more viable. For this reason, a city or county manager might be hired.

Local Government Structure

Choi, Feiock, and Bae (2013) argue that changes in local government prior to the 1960's reflected a true change initiative that was designed to promote the needs of specific groups. After that period, the authors argue that change in

government was more or less symbolic, often being attributed to a perceived crisis that was framed to be received as such. Their study analyzes trends in the adoption and abandonment of council-manager government formats, and attempts to capture the context in which government formats change. The impact of the presence of minority populations is discussed at length, with a general hypothesis being presented that cities with large minority populations tend to favor a more centralized government format.

The work of Choi, Feiock, and Bae serves as a point of comparison for Ho's work because it favors a perspective that views modern governmental change as being more a product of myth and ceremony. The study concentrates once again on larger cities, thus the results may not be generalized to smaller communities. However, the study still provides relevant discussion to the idea that role change can be present when government form is changed. Furthermore, their discussion of city managers provides a more concentrated view of what the role of a city manager is under a council-manager or mayor-manager framework. This discussion is especially important in assessing the presence of role adaptation when change in government form or action is occurring.

Cooptation and Community Engagement

O'Toole and Meier (2004) focus on the incorporation of community actors into the policy and program processes by utilizing Selznick's (1948) concept of cooptation. By calling for and allowing community organizations to be formed that augment government functions, the government would be seen as incorporating the wishes of the public thereby averting any threat that existed

external to the government. But O'Toole and Meier highlight the darker side of this relationship. While the government may be viewed as maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of the public, their incorporation of the aforementioned community organizations may have the purpose of simply supporting the government in an endeavor that would have been otherwise dismissed by the public. In essence, special interests are being served instead of the common good, even though the government is seemingly incorporating the public's wishes.

The work of O'Toole and Meier provides another point of comparison to other works because they highlight cooptation in a much different way. Whereas cooptation is seen as a way to avert a threat or uncertainty, in this case it is merely a way to preserve a regime's existing interests. In observing role change, this work will be beneficial because it provides a lens through which to view organizational practices that might be serving a special interest. While role change might be advertised in a certain light, role adaptation might actually be non-existent. Individual role perception directly affects the potential actions of an individual in government in whether or not they choose to engage in questionable activities that are beyond the vision of the public or their counterparts.

Middle Managers and Role Definition

Change in community attitudes driven by any number of external factors often has the potential to influence or change the role of the government official, elected or appointed. Likewise, when those roles change, the civic leader or administrator may find themselves being more inclined to support policy or the policy process. When policy is favored, the political actor favors more of a

dichotomy of politics and administration, especially in the case of a city or county manager. When process is favored, the incorporation of community interest is present. A disposition that favors policy is often thought of as being traditional whereas those who favor the policy process are identified with more progressive attitudes. This theme ties into the larger question of how one views their role, but it also highlights changes in government function.

Morgan, Bacon, Bunch, Cameron, and Deis (1996) focus on the role of the middle manager in the local government setting. They go to extensive lengths to defend the role of the middle manager, citing their role as being more than a “whipcracker.” The authors instead characterize middle managers as being the ones who enable and make strategic decisions. Additionally, the authors specifically cite their view that middle managers in local governments are often the ones that forge and maintain community relationships. They challenge traditional labels that are often applied to middle managers in local government by emphasizing their role within the larger community.

This work serves as a way to detect whether or not there is a change from more traditional roles to ones that are aligned with a more modern emphasis on community building. This is done through allowing policy to be directly influenced by the community long after election season is over. The definitions the authors use are skewed however, by the fact that all of them reside in the same community. Their collective experiences may provide a definition of the progressive middle manager that may be slanted more towards the extreme when in reality the real definition of the middle manager is more moderate in nature.

Even considering the potential bias of the work, there is still the opportunity to utilize the definitions of the authors to codify the roles of government officials. The definitions and explanations of community building may also be applied to elected officials in the case of this study, even though the emphasis of the article is placed on the appointed city manager position.

Public Participation and Local Budgeting

Liao and Zhang (2012) focus on the interaction between the general public and the city manager with regard to the creation of and debate over the city budget. The role of the public acting as a leveraging mechanism for the city manager is emphasized where the city manager often needs more resources from elected officials to execute various programs. By establishing a positive relationship with the public, the city manager is able to use the general public as a leveraging mechanism in gaining support from elected officials. This role, according to the authors, exists on a sort of sliding scale where the city manager adapts their approach to engaging the citizenry based on their relationship with elected officials. If their role in executing the local budget is met with little resistance, the city manager may find less of a need to engage the larger community for support. In essence, role change is fluid and is based on contextual elements.

This piece provides an excellent viewpoint into the role of the middle manager with specific regard to economic concerns. It also highlights how city managers may adapt their role in engaging the community, which also changes their overall function within the local government structure. When city managers

align with the community, they emphasize the policy process end of the continuum previously mentioned. In this role, their function identifies more with “community building.” Overall, this piece provides a well-rounded and relevant discussion on how city managers change their roles while simultaneously changing their function within the local government setting. When the city manager is adapting their role to a changing environment, so must their elected counterparts. If change is detected in one part of local government, it is reasonable to assume that there is also change occurring higher up in the power structure.

Community Building, the Economy, and Role Change

Communities that experience rapid growth or decay are often faced with scenarios that call for innovation in dealing with unique economic problems. The community of Bozeman and its surrounding areas has been dealing with rapid urban growth while the outlying communities maintain strong agricultural roots. With growing urban populations comes the possibility of economic development. While a focus on urban planning and measures which favor job creation may be the focus of a given political actor, maintaining the viability of the outlying agricultural communities must also take precedence. For this reason, economic influences must be considered in how they influence roles and role change. Additionally, Bozeman and its surrounding communities dealt with a much more harsh reality of the recent recession, as much of the economy in the area consists of small business.

Nalbandian (1999) describes role change in such a way that role change is seen from multiple facets. He provides the case of an administrator in the city of Kansas City who is charged with community relations regarding the building of a new NASCAR racetrack. The administrator finds that he is engaged more in “community building” for Kansas City, and that economic development is almost a byproduct of his efforts. Nalbandian goes on to say that when networking between administrators and the community is strong, citizens are more likely to engage with government which has a direct positive effect on economic development. Once networking becomes a priority for the administrator, they become facilitators for conditions that are favorable for economic development.

Nalbandian’s work blends many of the previously cited works on community building and networking, but it adds the economic piece to the equation. Nalbandian views the administrator as the facilitator, acting as a sort of mediator between the public and city leadership. This echoes the theme of the middle manager strategically engaging the community to affect positive change (Morgan, Bacon, Bunch, Cameron, and Deis, 1996). Nalbandian’s work augments the work of Morgan and others because he is highlighting the same theme of middle management taking on a non-traditional role in a different community. He does so by also providing observations that lend credence to how that role impacts economic development.

City Managers and Economic Development

McCabe, Feiock, Clingmayer, and Stream (2008) focus on the role of the city manager in economic development. The authors cite economic

development as a metric for evaluating the general effectiveness of the city manager, and that their careers often depend on such evaluations to continue. Because city managers work directly for the elected city leadership, they must adopt practices that lend favorably to their professional development and overall job security. Economic growth and success within the community is projected onto elected officials, who in turn project that onto the city manager who is often charged with directly supervising economic initiatives. As an aside to these observations, the authors state that turnover rates among city managers are directly affected by the success or stagnation of economic growth.

The “Undersupply” of City Councilmen

Doerner and Ihlanfeldt (2011) provide an interesting perspective that makes the argument for proactive cooptation where a city commission should establish multiple working relationships with external organizations. Doerner and Ihlanfeldt stipulate that local government is constrained by commission or council size, which limits policy and task accomplishment. The authors focus on the fact that resource scarcity may not be the reason for prohibitions being placed on the size of a give commission. Instead, Doerner and Ihlanfeldt state that the public may view a larger commission as being inefficient or unnecessary.

The structure of the Gallatin County Commission is noticeably smaller than that of the Bozeman City Commission. As a result, the divestiture of power at the county level would arguably be less than it is on the city commission. The power relationships at the county level may be altered as a result, causing county commissioners to behave and act in ways that might be more or less inclined

toward the policy process or policy enforcement. This phenomenon will most likely be assessed at the individual level.

County Expenditures and Commission Size

Bradbury and Stephenson (2003) propose that the size of a county commission is directly related to the level of spending that the county sponsors. This phenomenon is referred to as the “1/n” postulate” in the study. The theory’s basic presumption is that larger commissions will be more predisposed to allocating and spending more resources. While some discussion is given to commission size based on the number of subordinate districts that fall under the watch of the commission, the majority of the argument focuses on the size of the commission as being the largest predetermining factor under the 1/n theory.

While resource expenditures expressed as physical dollar amounts are not a chief concern of this study, the work of Bradbury and Stephenson serves to inform an analysis on actions taken by the city and county governments regarding resource usage. The city and county commissions are vastly different by makeup which puts the 1/n theory to test. The Gallatin County Commission consists of only three members, while the Bozeman City Commission consists of seven which also includes additional positions that are not present on the county commission. Bradbury and Stephenson may be focusing more on resource allocation and usage, but their work indirectly references role acceptance in how power is exercised through commission activities. Survey responses regarding economic conditions and locally sponsored assistance programs will provide linkages to this assertion.

Local Sustainability Indicators

Assessing public attitudes is a key characteristic of a policy process association, per Nalbandian's (1999) previously referenced work. However, a simple survey of public attitudes may be inadequate when the incorporation of public attitudes comes about through policy action or economic initiative. Holman (2009) details the work of multiple authors that leads to the conclusion where sustainability indicators must be incorporated by the governing body in order for long term meaningful change to be made that truly reflects the will of the public. A sustainability indicator might take the form of a study conducted by an external entity that focuses on the viability of allowing a certain business to establish roots in a given city. Another indicator might take the place of having a partnership with an external organization that evaluates a city's emergency management capabilities.

The presence of sustainability indicators goes far beyond the function of the organization or individuals that are assessing sustainability in a given area. These indicators can potentially serve as vehicles of community building if the inputs of the public are being incorporated into the makeup of the indicator's purpose. By actively using and soliciting the inputs of sustainability indicators, a local government serves to build its relationship with the public as well as accomplishing its duty in providing for the common good and delivering government goods and services. With this type of approach present, a policy process association is also likely present. While the concept proposed by Holman

and others is used to address a specific set of phenomenon, the concept also falls under the generalized concept of cooptation.

Methodology

The methodology for this study utilizes a questionnaire that is focused on qualitative responses. The questionnaire focuses on capturing the attitudes and beliefs of respondents as they are related to their perceptions of their role and the larger role of local government within the community. Survey questions will be directly linked to the research questions of the study, of which there are three. These questions involve individual perceptions of role identity, how they view government function as having changed or not (being either process or policy oriented), and how economic development has influenced the role of individuals within local government. The questions detailed in the survey are as follows:

1. Do you view your role as being more concerned with policy creation or policy enforcement? Why?
2. What types of tactics does the county employ engage communities in local political issues?
3. Do you think the community values actual policy enactment or being directly involved in the policy process? Why?
4. Has there been an observable increase in community participation in politics? Why or why not?
5. What challenges do you face in dealing with the demands of both urban and rural populations?

6. Do you view rural and urban parts of the county as being at odds? If so, how do you reconcile those differences?
7. How does the county preserve agriculture as a viable industry in the area while also encouraging other industries to come to the area?
8. Do you view politics and administration as being separate or are they intertwined?
9. Is the role of “community building” designated to a select person or persons, or is it approached collectively?
10. Assuming that Gallatin County/Bozeman has seen an increase in diversity, how if at all does that change your approach from a community leadership standpoint?
11. How have local economic conditions driven your engagement with the community?

Members elected to the city and county commissions were solicited for responses, as were the city managers. While the county does not employ a county manager position, the incorporation of the city manager is crucial in detecting role adaptation. The activities of the middle manager in local government may take a different function and form when contrasted with the activities being conducted by elected officials which may have more of a political emphasis or motivation.

An analysis of information outlets sponsored by local government will also be conducted, to include social media. The general organization of government websites as well as the information provided on them will be analyzed to determine whether or not the government identifies itself as being

more traditional (maintaining a focus on administrative function) or progressive (customer oriented). The survey also attempts to capture attitudes on social media and how the local government utilizes social media to engage with the community and incorporate citizen inputs.

Theoretical Framework

Operating under the basic presumption that change within a community regarding its population or basic structure represents a threat, it becomes necessary to examine how the local government counters those threats. Selznick (1948) offers the basic theory of cooptation, which focuses on eliminating external threats through the incorporation of other entities into an existing body's formal structures. The application of the theory exists in how local government incorporates the local community into feedback and decision making processes. With the community being diversified by urban and rural populations, local government must reconcile the differences in policy emphasis between the two populations through some type of negotiation. Cooptation focuses on the organizational level which in essence quantifies the collective level of role adaptation or change.

While Selznick provides the basic operational definition of the theoretical framework to be used, Jurik, Smith, Blumenthal, and Portillos (2015) provide an example of how cooptation is applied. In their study, the authors focus on a community that is attempting to reduce crimes rates through a juvenile rehabilitation program. The authors highlight the resistance of the justice system in embracing any kind of substantial change to legal structures, primarily due to

the legal system being policy and not process oriented (Nalbandian, 1999). In combating organizational and institutional resistance, Jurik, Smith, Blumenthal, and Portillos highlight the methods by which the community is incorporated into the discussion to affect positive change. This concrete example of cooptation provides the lens through which community relations with local government may be viewed.

Incorporating cooptation into the proposed study of Bozeman and Gallatin County provides a key tool for organizational analysis. While individual attitudes will also be considered, cooptation allows for an analysis of how organizational roles change collectively. The importance of distinguishing collective and individual role change exists in that collective change may be more reflective of community attitudes and policy goals. The utilization of an organizationally related theory will aid in this portion of the analysis.

Individual roles will be quantified through the use of basic role theory as it relates to service performance. Broderick (1998) presents role theory in such a way where social interaction is primed by the role that each party adopts. Broderick states that this basic definition can also be generalized to the organizational level, thus the theory is elastic in describing micro and macro level transactions. Broderick states that social behaviors in exchanges provide insight into the boundaries of social exchange and future possibilities of change. If roles are seen as elastic where relational aspects of the exchange are valued in addition to the service being provided, role change is not only possible but probable. Broderick's emphasis on the relational aspect of role theory will provide a sort of

litmus test in this study in determining the presence of role elasticity. Where there is the potential for change, individual roles as well as organizational roles are also likely to change.

A Hypothesis

The roles exhibited by the Gallatin County Commission will cover a wider range of behaviors when compared to those of the Bozeman City Commission.

Study Limitations

The scope and limited focus of this study constitutes the most notable limitation. Limited participation was also a problem due to time and availability constraints of each commission. Of the nine individuals solicited for survey responses, only four provided the data in a reasonable amount of time for a thorough analysis to be conducted. With a limited sample size the ability of to be related to existing literature and research may be slightly impacted. Furthermore, the data may not be generalizable to other communities due to the type of government structure that the Bozeman and Gallatin County governments operate under. However, it should be pointed out that the study is more exploratory in nature in determining whether or not studying smaller communities as an aggregate is needed. This study seeks to explore the prevalence of role change and what factors impact change. If it is determined that various factors are more prevalent than others, future research might seek to emphasize exploring the more pervasive factors in smaller governments and smaller communities. With a larger sample size and an approach that more easily quantifies respondent viewpoints

through statistical quantification and analysis, future research may be able to more fully quantify and analyze role adaptation and change in local governments.

Response and Analysis

Role Identity and Assignment

The first to respond to the survey solicitation was an individual elected to the Bozeman City Commission (Commissioner #1). Commissioner #1 at the time of the response had approximately five years total time as a member of the city commission, and an undisclosed number of years served on planning and advisory boards which report directly to the city commission. Commissioner #1 did not identify themselves with a particular political party. The second respondent was an individual that had served on both the city and county commissions over multiple terms (Commissioner #2). Commissioner #2 had just been elected to the county commission in 2014 after having served on the city commission for one term. Commissioner #2 at the time of response had been a resident of the Gallatin Valley for nearly 40 years, and was also a small business owner. Commissioner #2 also did not provide any political affiliation.

In addressing the first question of the survey which is concerned with the respondent being disposed more towards policy creation or policy enforcement, Commissioner #1 indicated the following:

Given the many hats that a Montana city commission must wear (legislative, quasi-judicial, and executive--either directly or through our city manager as that is our form of local government in Bozeman), it's nearly impossible to prioritize one of the two segments in the question more than the

other. Both are essential for clear and consistent government on one hand, while allowing for changing times or facts on the other.

Commissioner #2's response reflected many of the same attitudes.

As a County Commissioner it is my role to do both. Previous Commissions have established policies to provide a reasonable amount of predictability. As circumstances change each policy should be reviewed and possibly revised. If a current policy is valid then it is necessary to enforce that policy to provide predictability.

Both responses reflect the need for consistency and stability, but each also reflects the need for adaptability during times of change. As such, both commissioners exhibit a predisposition towards having multiple roles. Commissioner #1 refers to the nature of work that the city commission conducts acting as a legislative, quasi-judicial, and executive authority. Each area requires that the city and county commissions adapt their collective approach to a given situation. This type of perspective is similar to the aforementioned scenario that Nalbandian (1999) describes where a city administrator is both a community leader and administrative enforcer.

To further highlight role adaptability and its importance to the aggregate of both commissions, both Commissioner #1 and #2 specifically state that the role of community building is something that everyone at all levels within the government should be responsible for. While the mayor or assistant mayor might be the most visible member of the city commission at times, other members must also be willing to step into that role in order to facilitate community building.

Nalbandian's (1999) example again highlights the importance of a "top to bottom" approach where each administrator's role includes characteristics that foster community involvement and growth. That approach can also be extended to the so-called "street level bureaucrats," who are the individuals that provide services for public clients and interact with citizens face to face on a near daily basis. Michael Lipsky describes the street level bureaucrat as having a very high amount of discretionary power in affecting the lives of individual citizens. When the various transactions between the public and the street level bureaucrat occur involving the provision of public goods and services, the emphasis of community building rather than enforcing a given policy directly affects the nature of the transaction (Shafritz & Hyde, 2012). The street level bureaucrat may be politically motivated but may also be motivated by the larger issue of whether or not they are enabling a better situation for someone within the community by overlooking an overly stringent policy. Because internal policy often flows from the top down, the responses of both commissioners indicate that there is an emphasis on community building throughout the city and county governments.

Role adaptation as it relates to public engagement is also a phenomenon that was noted in the responses of Commissioner #1 and #2. In multiple instances, both commissioners stated that openness and transparency are emphasized through actual policy and practice to encourage public participation in local politics. Commissioner #1 indicated that he viewed openness as a primary objective for government where the transactions, policies, and day to day functions of local government are detailed through easily accessible means. Both

Gallatin County and Bozeman maintain robust websites that make accessing information quite easy concerning a number of areas to include meeting locations, minutes, and attendees. In brief, both the city and county meet the criteria for Ho's (2002) e-initiative which emphasizes an electronic interface that is tailored to the public, not the administrative owner of the information. Commissioner #2 indicated that in many cases, local media outlets are directly contacted regarding a particular policy or event so that transparency and awareness can be maximized. Commissioner #1 indicated that local organizations and businesses are often contacted to help host open forums and events where the public can talk with their elected and appointed leadership. In these types of engagements, the city (or county) is engaging in community building while simultaneously encouraging participation in local politics through visible and transparent means.

Community Involvement

The degree to which the public is involved in local policy making and political processes is arguably reflective of the efforts undertaken to emphasize and facilitate community building. It is then reasonable to assert that if the public is partially absent in local politics or there is a downward trend in political participation, the way in which elected and appointed officials address the public will potentially change in such a way to facilitate positive trends.

Commissioner #1 indicated that they thought local political participation within the City of Bozeman was roughly the same over a five year period, spanning back to the beginning of their elected term. Commissioner #2 however, indicated that they thought political participation in the county had markedly

decreased. Commissioner #2 cited difficulties in getting volunteers for advisory board positions to come forward as evidence for the decrease. While they did not provide a precise reason for the downward trend, Commissioner #2 provided a perspective that emphasized economic reasons for a reduced level of citizen participation. Where economic downturn often required people to focus more on remaining financially stable through additional jobs or income opportunities, many people “don’t have time to dedicate to serve in local government.”

Even though Commissioner #1 indicated they thought the level of participation had remained relatively uniform over an extended period of time, they still indicated the need for increased participation. Commissioner #1 expressed this sentiment through an online article that was written just after the 2012 election season. In the article, Commissioner #1 stresses the importance of competitive election races in finding talented and qualified individuals to fill various public offices. The commissioner further goes on to highlight the importance of elections in holding incumbents accountable for their records, and when necessary, providing some “disinfecting sunshine” by electing new leadership when it is needed the most (Mehl & Maxwell, 2013).

The importance of the article coupled with Commissioner #1’s statements on fostering robust political participation in addition to their views on the importance of openness and transparency in making government transactions known to the public suggest that there is a high degree of policy process emphasis present. While Commissioner #1 indicates in their survey response that the Bozeman City Commission must maintain a posturing that does not favor policy

enforcement over the policy process or vice versa, the commissioner's call for the community to engage by being actively involved in the election process is clear evidence that role adaptation is present. While Commissioner #1 may view themselves as being a chief sponsor of clear and transparent government through various procedural obligations, they are also engaging in practices which sponsor not only political participation through elections, but also the community building process. It would be reasonable then to conclude that Commissioner #1 views themselves as being the neutral entity that is concerned both with policy and process because they have placed a higher degree of valuation on transparency and fairness in government. This valuation might be explained by any number of hypothesis. But based on the testimonies of Commissioner #1 and the article cited above that makes a call for increased participation in politics from the general public to both run for office and to vote, it appears that the commissioner values political participation as a whole.

Both commissioners at some level value the incorporation of the general public in the political process at a higher level. In essence, they are emphasizing the coopting of the public to avert the primary threat of stagnation and inhibiting of responsible community growth. When this is coupled with the valuation of openness and transparency which is indicated by both commissioners, the question of whether "dark networking" is present might be considered. While political processes are typically viewed as having some degree of corruption or favoritism due to special interests being present, it would seem that on a basic moral level both candidates do not allow for dark networking to occur. The

commission structure that both the city and county employ diffuse power in such a way that special interests are given less power if they chose to lobby a certain party, because power resides in too many different places (O'Toole & Meier, 2004). While the potential for dark networking is always present, it seems that moral obligation coupled with the diffusion of power and an emphasis on transparency make it highly unlikely that a more clandestine form of cooptation is occurring in Bozeman and Gallatin County government.

Commissioner #1 indicated that they though the general level of political participation had been the same, yet they made it very clear through their online article that the general public needed to be more involved in local politics. This seems to echo Commissioner #2's response that the level of political participation had experienced a decline in the greater Gallatin area. Putnam (2000), Skocpol (2003), and Skocpol and Williamson (2012) all conclude in their research that younger generations, typically of college age, have shown a marked decline in general interest for politics both locally and nationally. Being that Bozeman is home to Montana State University which is home to nearly 15,000 students, it would be reasonable to suggest that the trend which Putnam and others have noted is taking place in Bozeman and Gallatin County as well. With Commissioner #2's viewpoint that there has been a noticeable decline in local political participation, the question of how they adapt their role and subsequent approach must be addressed.

Commissioner #2 has ties to the lands of Gallatin County as a long time cattle rancher. In their survey response, they cite the impetus for their initial

appointment to an advisory committee coming from their concern with city and county planning regarding land use and subdivision. An online news article from a local news affiliate in Bozeman stated that 2014 represented a record number of building permits being issued, and that the population of the city was predicted to grow to nearly 91,000 by 2050. With the city predicted to double in less than 40 years, Commissioner #2 chose to focus on where the problems would reside in the equation rather than focusing on economic growth and unemployment rates (ABC FOX Montana News, 2015). When responding to a campaign interview in 2014, Commissioner #2 indicated that an emphasis on infrastructure, facilities, and people needed to be emphasized so that growth could be dealt with in an appropriate manner. The commissioner also indicated that there should be measures undertaken to protect natural resources through the offering of more comprehensive water treatment plants which would potentially eliminate the need for individual septic tanks to be installed (Bozeman Daily Chronicle, 2014).

It is clear that Commissioner #2 has placed considerable value on land management and usage. Much like Commissioner #1, Commissioner #2 has a guiding impetus that helps explain their desire to be involved in government. That desire is manifested in attitudes and beliefs that guide various policy decisions. However, judging Commissioner #2's desire for policies regarding land use and septic systems in and of themselves is short-sighted, because there is a larger phenomenon in play. Commissioner #2 is also directly engaged in community building by framing the land use and growth problems in such a way that people are being offered a way forward before the issue is even being framed

as a problem. While growth and expansion through subdivision of lands may have already been framed as problematic from an aggregate perspective, Commissioner #2 views the bigger picture with the details in mind. They see the need for investment in community services, facilities, and the need to focus on having the capability to deal with growth rather than just letting growth happen. Facilitating growth through investment in community infrastructure indicates that Commissioner #2 exhibits a high degree of efficacy in both community building and role adaptation.

In drawing some conclusions regarding the views of both commissioners and their accepted roles in their elected positions, it would appear that their roles in practice are slightly different than those that they identify themselves with. Commissioner #1 identified very strongly with transparency and openness as did Commissioner #2. But through the practice of utilizing open forums such as community events, city hall meetings, commission hearings, and online engagement through electronic means, the role of both commissioners takes on much more of a community building emphasis. Some of that may be consciously done while at times the community building aspects of their actions may be a byproduct of existing policy and procedure. It is also likely that the values of community building have been internalized at the organizational level which is a possible indicator that community building is an institutional norm within city and county government. The Bozeman City Government website advertises Bozeman as the “most livable place,” which echoes the notion of community building as an

institutional point of emphasis. As a whole, both commissioners exhibit role adaptability through similar means.

Local Economics

The importance of responsible growth was a central theme of Commissioner #2's campaign for County Commissioner, as it was in their survey responses. With a growing urban center in the midst of the larger county setting which has strong roots in agriculture creates a potentially divisive dynamic that must be acknowledged and reconciled in some form by government. The attitudes of each commissioner in the previous section reflected many of the same basic beliefs. But when it came to economics and the potential rift over urban growth and preserving agricultural viability, there was a clear difference.

Commissioner #2 directly cited the recession of 2008 as a reason for the city's increased demand for services provided by government assistance organizations. The Human Resource Development Council and the City and County Health Departments were both cited as primary organizations that offered some relief from tough economic conditions in the Gallatin Valley during the recession period. Commissioner #2 also thought that the services provided by those agencies would expand in the future, regardless of economic growth or decay. These responses were also accompanied by references to Montana law (specifically the Right to Farm Act) that serve to preserve agricultural areas and the agricultural industry in the Gallatin Valley as well as the state. Commissioner #2 references the Right to Farm Act and a county voter developed growth policy which details the Growth Policy for the county that was democratically agreed

upon. The document is used to guide decisions on land use and development in accordance with the long term visions of the county and its voters. Commissioner #2 does acknowledge that landowners must be afforded the opportunity to develop their land to its economic potential, but the process by which that is accomplished incorporates a heavy amount of public input. Commissioner #2 indicated that land development and subdivision is often a subject of controversy among the residents of Gallatin Valley, thus the incorporation of the Growth Policy into land use decisions made by the Gallatin County Commission reflects a high degree of policy process orientation and a valuation of community building even in the midst of a booming economy.

In her description of sustainability indicators, Holman (2009) describes them as being a sort of benchmark that enables policy evaluation to occur at any time. The use of the Growth Policy by the Gallatin County Commission enables just that. Both the city and county commissions have dealt with or are dealing with affordable housing issues that are directly linked to community sustainability. The Bozeman City Commission's website details an entire initiative that is dedicated to the provision of affordable housing in the area at a higher rate than is currently present (Bozeman City Commission, n.d.). Likewise, the county is also dealing with the same issue in a much smaller community where there has been an influx of immigrant workers. Commissioner #2 directly refers to this problem with reference to the issue being rooted in disadvantaged socioeconomic populations. The Growth Policy as Commissioner #2 describes it is a document that enables projects like affordable housing while also limiting the

spoiling of open lands that are designated for public use. By coopting public input and incorporating that into the county's Growth Policy, the Gallatin County Commission has effectively given itself a sustainability indicator through which multiple housing projects and land use proposals can be evaluated.

Understandably, Commissioner #1 indicated that they did not view the urban and rural populations in the area as "being at odds." Commissioner #1 being on the Bozeman City Commission certainly changes the perspective and what areas are emphasized in order to facilitate responsible growth and development. Commissioner #1 does indicate that the city works with the county in developing long and short term goals. But those goals may overlap "only some or in part," indicating that the city may not be as close of a partner at certain times depending on what the issue is. In addressing how they work with the county, Commissioner #1 indicated that "saving time and money" is of importance, which may be interpreted as basic efficiency. While the open ended nature of each survey response limits the comparison of economic priorities between the commissioners, there is still a measure of disparity between the two responses.

The county, as Commissioner #2 points out, has coopted various organizations to assist in bringing the bottom socioeconomic sectors of the county up. The HRDC and County Health Departments providing assistance serve to keep the community a livable place for lower income individuals and families. The threat of economic downturn to the community is averted through the use of contingency plans that involve social and economic assistance, which is part of the county's long term plan according to Commissioner #2. Rural outlying

communities, that are in some cases nearly an hour from the urban center of Bozeman, were often forced to rely on external sources of assistance as their own city governments were unable to cope with the demands being placed on limited resources as a result of limited tax bases.

While Commissioner #2 indicated that they thought bolstering county infrastructure and leveraging local relief agencies was the way to deal with growth, the city went a somewhat different direction. In 2013, the Bozeman City Commission unanimously approved a plan to allow a development firm to build a hotel in the historic downtown sector of Bozeman on the site of the former local armory. One city commissioner (who declined to participate in the survey) indicated that having a hotel in the downtown area “had been one of our goals for a very long time,” implying that the commission had been targeting that particular type of development for the downtown area (Ricker, 2013). While the project was unpopular among many locals, the mayor indicated a much longer term strategic vision. The mayor (who also declined to participate in the survey) indicated that the hotel was a means to further inject life into the downtown area to keep it vibrant. The actions of the city commission may come as a surprise to some, but it shouldn’t be any surprise at all as the city of Bozeman has recovered well from the recent recession. To continue a trend of growth, recovery, and development, there was no better way to continue the positive trend than to allow the downtown area an additional means to be highlighted as a destination for tourism and economic development.

The comparison of Commissioner #2's priorities regarding social assistance and the Bozeman City Commissions' actions regarding the development of the downtown hotel project shows that each is adapting to the problems before them. Furthermore, each has chosen to coopt different types of organizations to counter specific problems. Instead of creating new policy to deal with economic problems in the city or county, each commission acts as the facilitator of change by allowing existing agencies or third parties to "fill the gaps." Nalbandian (1999) would likely label the actions of both commissions as being more oriented to the policy process, as both are engaged in cooptation of additional entities and organizations rather than acting in a more traditional hands-on approach through policy creation. While the actions of each commission are reflective of different valuations, they exhibit the same type of role adaptation in favoring a policy process perspective.

The focus on economic vitality is not limited to the city limits of Bozeman, however. In response to the survey question, "What challenges to you face in dealing with the demands of urban and rural populations," Commissioner #2 responded with the following:

Gallatin County also has two communities that are somewhat removed from the main populations but have issues all their own. Big Sky is one of the most affluent communities in the US. Because of their location in an environmentally sensitive area they have concerns about infrastructure and its effect on the Gallatin River and surrounding scenic areas. West Yellowstone is another area that has concerns. West Yellowstone has a population of around

1600 people. However because they are a gateway to Yellowstone Park they must provide infrastructure to the 3 million visitors that pass through on their way to visit the park.

While Yellowstone Park is home to some of the National Park System's most notable land formations and landmarks, Big Sky is home to a premier ski resort in addition to a mass of backcountry trails and recreational areas that thousands of people flock to year round. Due to the attractive nature of the outdoor opportunities each area has to offer, Big Sky and Yellowstone Park account for a substantial portion of Montana's tourism dollars. It is in the best interest of the Gallatin County Commission to provide the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the 3 million visitors that frequent the area as the commissioner mentions. At the same time, Commissioner #2 also mentions the need for oversight of ecologically sensitive areas which poses a unique challenge for county government. A balance between economic viability and environmental management must be achieved through a specifically tailored approach. One objective cannot necessarily be more important than another as the people that live and work in the area value their jobs and economic stability while tourists and sportsmen value the open spaces and vast untouched landscapes. The presence of two objectives that exist at almost opposite ends of the policy spectrum force the county commission to carefully consider how to go about dealing with things like economic growth and wilderness preservation. While the Gallatin County Commission may have the benefit of the Bozeman City Commission dealing with

all issues within city limits, they do not have that same benefit when dealing with the outlying communities, such as Big Sky.

Because the community of Big Sky is somewhat remote relative to Bozeman which is the county seat, the Gallatin County Commission has created a number of advisory boards which allow for communication to flow through official means to affect change. These committees include but are not limited to the Big Sky Recreation and Parks Special District Committee, the Big Sky Tourism Committee, and the Big Sky Transportation District Committee (gallatin.mt.gov, n.d.). Similar committees do not exist for the Bozeman area, as the problems posed in Big Sky require a specialized approach as was alluded to previously. By the Gallatin County Commission co-opting the services of the cited committees in the Big Sky area, they are again exhibiting a high degree of role adaptation. The use of advisory committees also decentralizes power relationships, which empowers the community to affect its own change with the oversight and approval of the county commission.

From a theoretical perspective, the phenomenon of employing specialized community driven advisory committees represents a commitment on behalf of the Gallatin County Commission in allowing authority to flow vertically. Decentralized power structures allow the informal group a vehicle through which their views and desires can be quantified and acted upon through the advisory committees. More importantly, the county may be avoiding conflict and enabling meaningful action through the use of specialized advisory committees (Fry & Raadschelders, 2008). The very nature of maintaining a decentralized power

structure in and of itself suggests the potential for a high degree of role adaptation. When this is coupled with the use of specialized committees that are designed to deal with unique problems specific to a small area, the degree of role adaptation increases exponentially.

It is clear that both the city and county governments have coopted with organizations in combating a variety of economic problems. Whether those problems are related to further economic development or providing housing for lower income families, each government has adopted a strategy which reflects the need for change. Strategies related to assistance programs are complicated by the fact that Montana has very little state funding available to dedicate to those programs. Wohlenberg (1976) conducted a study in which it was shown that Montana is in the “low” category of fiscal ability in providing funding for state assistance programs. While the study is nearly 40 years old, the trends in economic development remain largely the same. This means that both the city and county must approach any problem with a high degree of sensitivity toward the preservation of any positive economic outcome. The equation is further complicated when communities like Big Sky present problems related to environmental protection, as the timber industry has many times attempted to raid the area of its natural resources. All these factors form a scenario that simply demands a high degree of role adaptation which is certainly present in both the city and county governments.

The “e-initiative”

Government more than ever before has embraced the ability to communicate with people through a host of electronic resources. While some portions of the general public may prefer more official sources, some may prefer platforms that they also use for other purposes. An example might be one person who utilizes the county’s website for viewing board meeting minutes to another person who sees the mayor making a post on Facebook about the previous evening’s county commission meeting. The way in which each person receives the information is essentially the same. The phenomenon worth noting is what types of communication are being used by government, and how the information is being displayed or portrayed.

Ho (2002) provides the proper perspective for analysis of on electronic methods of communication and presentation of information. Ho first describes the traditional Weberian model of government that involves a hierarchical structure of communication that flows in a “top down” manner. This method of communication is administratively inexpensive through “routinization and departmentalization,” (Ho 2002). That is to say, information is organized so that it is easily used and accessed by the agency that uses it the most. This also might be thought of as a functionally organizing information to mirror organizational structure (Selznick, 1948). On the other side of the spectrum, Ho (2002) describes a communication system where engagement with the public is the overall priority. Challenges associated with this system are present where there is an increased cost to the local government because getting the public to engage

often requires multiple attempts through sponsored communication channels. However, the advent of modern social media outlets and the use of them by government agencies has given government at all levels the ability to inject calls for participation into platforms that make it very easy to spur citizen engagement. Because outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram come with no financial cost to the administrator or elected official, the information is easily distributed to a selected audience. This arrangement directly challenges the aforementioned Weberian model because information function is no longer of concern. Instead of a centralized structure which directly impacts communication methods and departmentalization of information, the information is organized to enhance usefulness or public participation. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) focus on the customer in “re-inventing government” to deliver better services and products through administrative channels.

County electronic information posturing

Ho (2002) explores the content of various city websites in determining whether or not paradigm shift is taking place in city government. While paradigm shift is evidence of organizational change, it may also be evidence of role adaptation. Ho describes two models under the “portal design,” by which a paradigm shift is present in the presentation of online information. The first is the information oriented design where large amounts of information are made available on a single site. Budget plans, meeting minutes, public policies, and directories are examples that might commonly be found if this approach is being used. The second approach is the user oriented approach which takes the

information oriented approach a step further. This approach emphasizes organizing information according to its usefulness to different user groups. The most important distinction under this approach is that regardless of which user group is accessing the information, there is no perception of administrative or organizational boundaries.

Utilizing Ho's basic criteria for determining information orientation as being traditional or modern, a brief analysis of the Gallatin County and Bozeman websites was conducted. The eight areas of evaluation used by Ho were partially utilized in this analysis. The eight areas are orientation, process organization, management principle, leadership style, internal and external communication, mode of service delivery, and principle of service delivery.

When first arriving at the Gallatin County Website, www.gallatin.mt.gov, there is clear evidence that a user oriented approach is being employed. The center of the webpage incorporates sections that are broken down for residents, visitors, and website administrators. Seasonal information is also included that focuses on tax assistance, burn permits, road construction notices (as spring is often referred to as "road construction season" in Western Montana), and upcoming public hearings. Using the first of Ho's eight criteria, orientation, the presentation of information lends itself to user control and flexibility which according to Ho (2002) is linked to the e-government paradigm and modern government orientation.

The criteria of leadership style was also evidenced in website content. Each outlying community within the county has a link to their respective chamber

of commerce division, with each link emphasizing the area's posturing in fostering small business growth and development. Links to recent committee meeting minutes were highlighted in the center of the page, providing a direct link to the community in accessing recent activities of the county commission. While these two instances do not constitute an exhaustive analysis of items that are linked to leadership style, they do provide evidence that the Gallatin County Commission is a modern government in terms of paradigm orientation. Ho (2002) views a modern paradigm city government under the e-initiative as being "facilitative and entrepreneurial" in nature. The facilitative aspect is present through the direct advertising of committee meeting minutes, echoing the theme of openness that both Commissioner #1 and #2 emphasized in their survey responses. The use of commerce related information for each small community is of note, as the facilitation of economic growth (as was previously evidenced by the Bozeman City Commission's actions with the downtown hotel project) is not being confined to one community. Rather, the county takes on the stance that they can enable commerce in multiple communities regardless of their size.

Mode of service delivery revealed a heavy emphasis on a user oriented approach. Under administrative services, a multitude of options was listed, but they were listed by function and not department. This clearly indicates a modern e-government orientation as Ho would suggest. Under the list of services offered, several direct the individual to a county website that allows for the population of a passport form, driver's license renewal form, or marriage license application online with a subsequent appointment made with the appropriate agency. This is

of note in several ways. First, the measure of efficiency achieved by eliminating the need for a phone call to the information's owning agency creates less administrative work for the agency, and it allows the user a degree of efficiency in getting exactly what they need in the shortest amount of time. Second, the need for more communications maintenance (i.e. a phone answering service with various extensions that go to a secretary's desk or answering machine) is eliminated through a simple web interface. Lastly, certain portions of the administrative services website direct the user to take certain actions based on the situation. Gas leaks, emergencies, child protective custody situations, domestic abuse victim assistance, and other scenarios that involve immediate risk are addressed where the individual is given clear direction. While emergency responders have their own resources available for aiding an individual in resolving an emergency or high risk situation, the county also augments those resources by recapitulating them.

In evaluating the county and its e-initiative status, Gallatin County exhibits a high degree of modern measures which puts the county's website squarely in the user and information oriented category. The linkages to role adaptation are seen where the county enables the free flow of communication, and the ease of use for community and county residents. Economic viability for the county is highlighted through the use of local chamber of commerce websites, while administrative functions are designed to save the user large amounts of time. The stereotypical all day visit to the local Department of Motor Vehicles or Licensing and Registration is eliminated as users are afforded the opportunity to

schedule their own appointments without waiting a single minute in a long line. Gallatin County does have an affluent tax base to draw funds from, but has chosen not to invest tax dollars into growing administrative oversight and size. Instead, as Commissioner #2 indicates, those tax dollars are used instead on bolstering assistance programs to better cope with growth problems. The general emphasis of the e-initiative has a considerable measure of efficiency injected into it, and Gallatin County has certainly taken measures to ensure that efficiency is being achieved where administrative services are concerned.

City electronic information posturing

The makeup of the website for the city of Bozeman echoes many of the same themes that are seen on the county's website, but there are a few differences which hint at viewpoints that are more traditional in nature. A portion of the city's website is dedicated to simply describing the functions of each branch of the city commission. For instance, under the header "Executive Branch," the tasks of the city manager are described. While it is possible that this information exists simply to highlight the need for the city manager, the presence of the information suggests a slightly traditional approach is still present in city government. The information is educational in nature, but it serves no purpose related to the delivery of administrative services. Descriptions of the legislative and judicial functions of the commission are also presented in a similar manner. The information in and of itself may suggest a more traditional posturing, but there is an alternative explanation that is directly linked to role identity and dynamic role adaptation. Commissioner #1 indicated that the city commission

behaves as an executive, legislative, and quasi-judicial body in their survey response, indicating that the commission takes on multiple roles at any given time. The presence of the information suggests that the commission is simply advertising those roles to facilitate a rapid change from one role to the next when circumstances require the change. While the orientation criteria might fall under the traditional regime at first glance, the presence of the information may have an alternative motivation.

A key difference between the Gallatin County Commission's website and the Bozeman city website is the presence of a frequently asked questions section that addresses the commission-manager form of government. The FAQ section addresses a multitude of questions to include what the city manager does, how they interact with the city commission, and whether or not the city manager can be fired. Reading through the descriptions leads one to believe that the city manager is highly engaged in community relations. The FAQ section also refers to the hiring of city employees and the oversight of their training by the city manager, highlighting the human resources duties that are assigned to the position. Additionally, the city manager is given a position that highlights their role in the policy process as being an advisory to the city commission when their inputs are solicited. The city manager in this case is obviously being given a high amount of responsibility in role adaptation. Focusing on the information on the website is again purely informative, but the information does not focus on processes. Rather, the information focuses on the person and the position. While there may be some creative interpretation in how Ho would view the information

and its utility, the general position is posited that the information allows for a facilitative open leadership arrangement, which falls under the e-government paradigm that Ho (2002) outlines.

After analysis of the city's website and the varying department's contents, it became apparent that information was more traditionally oriented according to Ho's model. However, when distanced from that model, the various functions of each city government member as they are explained on the website create a different picture. In an open letter to the community, the city manager advertises open lines of communication for anyone having questions or concerns, or for anyone desiring to "start or expand a business in Bozeman," (Kukulski, n.d.). While the format of the information on the website might suggest one thing (a more traditional approach or identity), the content itself suggests another. The City Manager in this case is taking on the role of an economic facilitator, and an engaging entity that is concerned with growing the community. Their own perception of their role does not necessarily concern simple managerial functions. The City Manager views themselves as the enabler of growth and development.

Ho's model allows for a framework to be developed under which web content can be classified. However, that model is limited in its capabilities in describing certain elements that are present in certain web content. The role that the City Manager assumes in their open remarks clearly goes against the surface content assessment that Ho's model focuses on. Additionally, the role that Bozeman's city manager identifies themselves with is in line with the continuum that Choi, Feiock, and Bae (2013) suggest where cities with larger minority

populations favor more centralized governments. Bozeman is a homogenous community by larger city standards, but it is also a city that has many mechanisms in place that enable the building of community. One of those mechanisms exists in the emphasis that the county provides where a collection of smaller communities is valued over a larger conglomeration in spite of large distances separating small towns and cities.

Conclusions

The presence of role adaptation is readily apparent in the responses of both commissioners as was evidenced in the survey response analysis. The necessity of role change is directly referenced through electronic means, and the posturing of various electronic media sources also makes role adaptation apparent. While the county and city differ slightly in the examples cited, both exhibit properties that give them the classification as being highly progressive and modern government bodies.

While many other communities fall under the watch of the Gallatin County Commission, Bozeman offers the best unit of analysis under the limited method of inquiry conducted here. The methods employed by both the city and county emphasize high amounts of government interaction with the community through various tactics. Those same tactics may be applied in other communities much smaller than Bozeman, as many outlying small towns have the same composition as Bozeman does. However, those same small towns often have alternative government arrangements that do not utilize the same commission-manager model. Even still, the tactics employed by the city and county to sponsor

growth and community involvement can be utilized by smaller communities as long as the role of the body of individual conducting the engagement is adapted appropriately. Official charter or policy may dictate the formal duties of a given position. But as was the case with the city manager, building communities often involves the informal expansion of one's role to accommodate growth and sponsor a positive community dynamic.

The initial discussion of a political and administrative dichotomy is contrasted by the posturing of both the Gallatin County and Bozeman City Commissions. Each have coopted various outside organizations which directly impacts the policy process and the physical execution of policy objectives. The absence of Wilson's dichotomy suggests at the very minimum the potential for role adaptation. In most instances, the county displayed a higher degree of role adaptation most likely due to the fact that the county deals with a wide array of issues pertaining to a larger spectrum of size in their subordinate municipalities. The Bozeman City Commission in comparison exhibits a lower degree of adaptability as the city deals with a more homogenous populations socioeconomically. The types of groups that are coopted tend to reflect that uniformity, as was evidenced by Commissioner #1's view that political participation had largely remained uniform during his extended tenure. Both individually and organizationally, both commissioners make it clear that administration and politics are intertwined at multiple levels. The brief analysis of externally coopted organizations indicates this, as do the individual attitudes of the commissioners via their responses.

A call for further research.

While this study involved a strictly qualitative approach, existing literature has captured the role adaptation and change phenomenon through large datasets that have focused on larger metropolitan areas. This study sought to explore the deeper concepts present in existing research, but the use of a similar statistical approach that has been employed in previous studies is warranted in smaller communities that mirror those in this study. Additionally, those smaller communities that utilize non-standard or lesser known forms of government and city management may augment or possibly even refute the findings of existing literature.

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