

Lineberry R L. *Equality and urban policy: the distribution of municipal public services.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1977. 205 p.
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This study of the distribution of municipal services in San Antonio, Texas, finds that indicators of class, race, and political power do not correlate well with service advantage. Service distributions are more a function of bureaucratic decision-rules and the ecology of the neighborhood. [The SSC1® indicates that this book has been cited in over 120 publications.]

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The 1960s and 1970s were a time when we were certain that urban governments discriminated in their service delivery against minorities and the poor. The "other side of the tracks," we were sure, was given short shrift. Upon reading a case called *Hawkins v. Shaw* (1968), I became convinced that unequal services would become one of the hottest legal issues of the 1970s. It is useful to recall the climate then, when the "urban crisis" was on all lips. *Hawkins* held against a Mississippi community that operated a modern-day Jim Crow system of public services. Although the case was eventually sneered at in a footnote in a Burger court decision, it promised then to open up a deluge of litigation on behalf of poor and minority communities.

I was wrong. The use of the "equal protection clause" to force cities to equalize municipal services came to little. One reason is that social scientists were unable to find much, if any, discrimination in the distribution of streets, parks, libraries, police, fire, and other public

services. *Equality and Urban Policy* was one of the early studies containing this message. Municipal service distribution, we found, is far more likely to be a function of age of neighborhood and of bureaucratic decision-rules than of conscious discrimination. City bureaucracies do deliver different service packages to different neighborhoods. But an effort to equalize the workload of city employees (such as police officers) is a far more compelling explanation of these differences than conscious or accidental decisions to deprive the poor. Fortunately, there also appeared similar findings from other cities, for example, *Oakland*.¹

Frankly, in the climate of the 1970s, I was nervous about publishing this material. I was certain that I would be pilloried as a fellow traveler of Edward C. Banfield. Indeed, my efforts to publish encountered an unusual catch-22. My original application to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for funds had requested moneys to study three cities, Houston, San Antonio, and Oklahoma City. NSF let me have money to do one, San Antonio. When it came time to publish, though, I submitted the manuscript first to Princeton University Press. They let me know that it was unacceptable because I had studied only one city (an argument that presumably doesn't apply at Eastern university presses if the city you study is New Haven). I was pleased that Sage decided to publish the manuscript.

Although there have been some excellent critiques of the study,² I am not yet persuaded that the analysis was wrong in its fundamental thrust, i.e., that the distribution of urban services is a complex matter of public organizations, not a simple matter of discrimination against the urban underclass.

1. Levy F, Meltner A J & Wildavsky A. *Urban outcomes: schools, streets, and libraries.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974. 278 p. (Cited 95 times.)

2. Hero R. The urban service delivery literature: some questions and considerations. *Policy* 19:659-77, 1988.