This article explores three theoretical and methodological problems in the comparative study of public administration: (1) the relations of parts of the administrative system, usually the focus of inquiry, to the administrative system as a whole, usually the object of theoretical inference; (2) the connection between universals of organization theory and variabilities in the environment of organizations and administrative systems; and (3) the link between distinctive levels of analytic focus—structures, actions, and actors. These broad theoretical and methodological problems anchor a more specific analysis of (1) links between bureaucracies, bureaucrats, and politics; (2) the ideas of centralization, planning, and coordination; and (3) the notions of bargaining, mediation, and subgovernments.

COMPARATIVE ADMINISTRATION
Methods, Muddles, and Models

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The central method of the social sciences is comparison. The more complex the elements of comparison, however, the more profound the challenges to attaining conceptual consistency in analysis. Cross-national comparison of the complex organized systems that we call

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public administration presents us with one of these formidable challenges. Comparison in this regard is formidable because (1) public administration examines complex organization, and complex organization, by definition, resists singular or simple characterization, and (2) the political environments in which public administrative systems exist are also complex and polymorphic.

Thus, the main focus of this article is to explore some of the central ambiguities relating to the comparative analysis of public administration and administrative systems, particularly those relevant to the relationship between national bureaucracies, policymaking, and the political environment of public administration. Although the issues we point to are ones that we believe have universal relevance, our principal empirical referents are the administrative systems of the Western (advanced capitalist) states. The reasons for this are twofold: (1) we know these systems and the literature dealing with them best, and (2) the forms in which certain issues that we discuss arise allow for a more comparable framework of discussion. To a considerable extent, for reasons that may need little further elaboration, the U.S. administrative system serves frequently to anchor our discussion. Nonetheless, the methodological and conceptual ambiguities that we discuss are ones of broader application to the study of comparative administration.

Three central areas of conceptual ambiguity that we focus on are as follows: (1) the relationship between bureaucracy and politics, with emphasis on the levels of relationship and alternative meanings of "politics"; (2) problems of detecting the existence of coordination and planning functions and their relationship to the concentration or dispersion of authority; and (3) problems of defining levels of bargaining and mediation across political systems and of linking modes of bargaining and mediation to the existence of subsystemic or semiautonomous domains of influence (commonly referred to as subgovernments).

These conceptual ambiguities in cross-national comparisons of administrative systems are influenced, even if indirectly, by three methodological ambiguities inherent in complex systemic comparison. The first of these methodological ambiguities is that of the parts and the whole (micro and macro features of systems). The question it raises is whether there is sufficient homogeneity within national political contexts to talk meaningfully about national administrative systems as appropriate units of analysis.

The second issue is closely related to the first. It concerns the problem of joining together universalistic theoretical concepts of decision making in organizations with varying environmental influences. Organization theories and concepts, especially those related to decision making, are essentially micro in their focus. Although they do not deny the existence of variation in political environments, they tend to deemphasize broad environmental influences as central determinants of organizational processes and behaviors. A key issue here is not whether organizational logics are important to the exclusion of environmental influences or vice versa, but rather which may provide the best analytic building blocks for research and theory. It is natural, of course, for the comparativist to seek system-level explanations and to focus on system-level variations. It is equally natural, however, for the organizational analyst to conclude that organizational processes display remarkable uniformities across settings that we define a priori as different.

The third methodological ambiguity complicating the comparative analysis of public administration is that of defining and relating appropriate units of analysis—actors, structure, and behavior. Among the first two of these analytic units—actors and structures—comparability is always problematic to some degree, not only across nations but often within them. In regard to the third unit of analysis, behavior, neither the Weberian language of command, coordination, control, and precision nor the counterlanguage of bargaining, mediation, politics, and politicization adequately covers the entire compass of administrative behavior. All of these behaviors occur in administrative settings. The problem thus posed for comparativists is threefold: First, it is necessary to specify accurately for any system the sources of monitoring and control and also the mechanisms of bargaining and mediation that inevitably exist; second, it is essential to conceptualize effectively the differences *and* invariances in the sources of control and mechanisms of bargaining across systems; and third, it is necessary also to conceptualize the effects of various types of control and bargaining systems on actual administrating performance.

Our analysis of the ambiguities of comparative administrative study begins with discussion of the three perplexing methodological issues just outlined. We then proceed to discuss the conceptual ambiguities specified—the relationship of bureaucracy to politics, the problems of connecting coordination functions to the con-

centration or dispersion of political authority, and, finally, defining levels of bargaining and mediation across political systems and defining their relation to semiautonomous domains of influence within governments. In dealing with these problems of comparative analysis, we recognize that we are apt to provoke more questions than provide resolutions; a clear sign in social science that we stand in the middle of a muddle.

THREE METHODOLOGICAL MUDDLES IN THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

THE PARTS VERSUS THE WHOLE

A former American civil servant and present professor of public administration once observed that the only thing U.S. civil servants have in common is the source from which they draw their salary checks (Seidman, 1980). Although this was intended to be a significant statement about the American federal executive, it is at least equally a statement about the problem of assessing any "system" of public administration. Looked at closely enough, most system-level generalizations begin to vaporize. Students of complex organizations especially have struggled with the notion that complexity itself produces large variations within organizations of norms, skills, perspectives, and priorities (Simon, 1976: 198-219, 309-314). What is true for a single department, agency, or firm is naturally compounded across the entire administrative organization of the state.

Even when selection or indoctrination processes are designed to produce a relatively homogenous (or at least communal) set of perspectives among administrative officials, the operational consequences of complexity are pervasive and, by definition, complex. The operational consequences of complexity generate a variety of role-related perspectives and priorities that are summed up in the notorious Miles' Law: "Where you stand depends upon where you sit." Richard Rose (1976a) notes, more generally, in casting a skeptical eye toward management techniques for reducing complexity and enhancing efficient management, that governments have no

single objectives to which they are committed or that at least can be comprehended by any observer. Instead, they are committed to multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives not easily summed up in a simple hierarchical scale of priorities.

In dealing with the question of whether the parts of a system are so diverse as to resist a common conceptualization, suppose we employ an analogy from statistics. In doing cross-systems analysis of administration, the problem is whether for any "system" we have a high or low coefficient of variability. If we can characterize systems very well by their central tendency (or average characteristics), we are probably safe in making overall comparisons. Under these circumstances, we would have a low coefficient of variability. On the other hand if the central tendency is overwhelmed by diversity, then clearly any overall comparison or contrast properly would be suspect. The central problem of cross-systems comparison is how to distinguish the conditions under which there is greater variation across than within systems. Frequently, the situation with which we are confronted is the opposite of this. This opposite situation would be similar to having a high coefficient of variability in which the central tendency (or mean) is low in relation to the dispersion (or standard deviation) around it.

This rather formalized way of stating the problem is helpful to its conceptualization, but it needs some concrete points of reference. Functionalist theories of administrative systems dispose us to look at functional equivalents across political systems. Spending departments, for example, likely would be guided by similar impulses (to advance their programmatic missions) regardless of setting, whereas expenditure control departments and agencies would tend to be guided by similar imperatives across systems. Elsewhere, we have referred to this distinction as one between "demand" agencies and "supply" agencies (Aberbach and Rockman, 1984). Similarly, one might distinguish between routine decisions and high-level decisions. In this regard, an effort that compares relatively low-level and routine decision-making processes in the United States and Soviet Union tends to find more similarity than difference across these settings (MacFarland, 1969: 53-69).

Obviously, there are many potential distinctions employing a functional logic—a logic that weakens that analytic role of national system units, or, for that matter, those defined by capitalism or

socialism, or by center or periphery. Consequently, in a multination investigation of bureaucratic and political elites, we found the logics of role and ideology (themselves somewhat linked) to be more important than nation for examining differences in perspective. Yet, one national setting (the United States) was very important in failing to fit the overall pattern (Aberbach et al., 1981). The characteristics of the American case were so startlingly different from those of other nations (all in Western Europe) that we had to search for plausible system-level explanations. Still, even in the American case (and also in West Germany and in Sweden), significant differences in attitude and perspective were also demarcated by the administrative unit in which a bureaucrat worked, whereas greater homogeneity across agencies characterized the cases of Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, and France. Picked at random, in other words, any single bureaucrat in, let us say, Britain was likely to be closer to the relevant population mean than his or her randomly selected counterpart in the United States. This, of course, also fits with the British tradition of cultivating generalists able to move from organization to organization without being captured by, or helping to promote, an organization's subculture.

To assume that holistic definitions of the administrative system are useful requires us to move beyond the inevitable functional drives of administrative units likely to pervade any system and into the realm of public culture and of institutions. The culture helps us to see how these drives are expressed, whereas institutions allow us to see the pathways they follow. Not surprisingly, the more complex these institutional pathways are, the more convoluted the relations between administrators and political elites are likely to be. The system in the United States again stands out in this regard both because its institutional pathways are so convoluted and its parts so dominant. Thus the system whose parts are thought to dominate the whole (the United States) is perhaps most stunningly characterized as a system and thus differentiated from others by that single fact.

ORGANIZATION THEORY AND THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The second methodological complication is that of relating universal characteristics of organizational decision making to

variations in the setting of administration. Specifically, the issues here are first, what, if any, connection can be drawn between universal properties of organizational decision making and assumptions of collective organizational coherence and second, what, if any, connection can be drawn between such decisional processes and variability in political contexts? These issues are both very broad and also linked. In discussing them, we will make heavy use of a particular but highly influential body of organizational decision making theory wedded to tenets of cognitive psychology and to limits of individual and, hence, organizational attentiveness.

As March and Olsen argue (1984), assumptions about the purposive behavior of states or their agencies rest upon the basic conception that institutions are able to attain a sufficient level of coherence to be thought purposeful. In an effort to cast doubt about these assumptions, Allison (1969) argued that insofar as they related to U.S. decision making during the October 1962 episode involving reaction to the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba, such assumptions might be more misleading than edifying.

Leaning heavily on the work of Herbert Simon, James March, and Richard Cyert (Simon, 1976; March and Simon, 1958; Cyert and March, 1963), Allison emphasizes limits to collective rationality and stresses instead both the limited cognitive boundaries of organizational actors and the divergent goals and intentions of these actors that, in turn, often were based on the missions and doctrines of the organizations they represented. Thus formulated, information and attention are organized through organizational routines and procedures that "economize" problem-solving efforts. Such routines and procedures both limit and define the picture that organizational actors will see; accordingly, they also tend to define the nature of the problem they see. The second assumption partially derives from the first. Partly because different organizational actors have different vantage points, organizations are conflictual. Organizations are the sum of their routines plus the preferences of dominant political coalitions within them. Coalitions are often fluid, however, and thus settlements about preferences are rarely conclusive. Organizational conflicts are the norm, and they are typically quasi resolved rather than decisively concluded.

The flow of information to various actors is also critical to these decisional processes. From this perspective, decision makers react to

environmental stimuli in ways that are inhibited by constraints stemming from temporal limits, available precedents for behavior, and the flow of others' agendas (March and Olsen, 1972). Decisions are thus continuous rather than discrete. Indeed, from this perspective, although there are decisional premises, there is no "the decision" since decisions simply become premises of further decisions (Simon, 1958: 62). There are, however, choice opportunities.

Although not directly stated, the emphasis given by Allison in the case of the Cuban missile episode is that the characteristics of the organizational decision processes noted earlier dominate any notion of strategic rationality that assumes a coherent overall common purpose. Similarly unstated but seemingly implied is the notion that decisional processes in the Soviet Union (the other major protagonist in the episode) were likely to be more similar to those in the United States than different.

The basic point here, however, is not to dwell on the case but rather to assess whether the key theoretical building blocks underlying analysis of the case are ones that inevitably lead us to the conclusion that if decisional processes are universally similar, the value of contrasting organizational systems cannot be very great. In other words, are political environmental differences at all relevant to decision-making processes?

This is no simple issue to resolve, but let us review the two key elements underlying the theory and consider each in turn: first, the assumption of bounded rationality, that is, limited attentiveness and cognitive horizons; and, second, the assumption of organizational conflict and fluidity, that is, coalitions and choice opportunities.

The bounded rationality notion is premised on the need to make shortcuts in calculating decisions. If we had the wits to optimize, in Herbert Simon's phrase, we would, but since (it is argued) we do not, we accept satisfactory rather than optimal resolutions. Complex organizations by limiting jurisdictions and specializing functions simplify the calculating rules for organizational actors so that they respond to salient organizational routines and priorities (as expressed in "where you stand depends upon where you sit") in order to reduce the costs of choice. Yet, if the acceptance of "satisfactory" as a criterion is universal (assuming this theoretical premise to be correct), the comparative question becomes what constitutes satisfactory and why? Although this question indeed can be posed at each of three

levels of variability—across individuals, across organizations, and across administrative systems—we consider for now the last one, cross systems. In this regard, it is interesting to note various forms of "coping" behavior across systems where the standards and norms of satisfactory responses differ considerably. Riggs (1964: 183), for example, writes that administrative formalism is likely to be a coping device of administrators when there is little agreement about the goals of the state and little guidance for their behavior. Similar patterns of ritualistic formalism are found by Scott (1968) in Malaysia. On the other hand, where there is substantial agreement at least as to how government should relate to the citizenry, administrators even when restricted by statutory inhibitions may find a satisfactory solution to consist minimally of showing informal attention and the appearance of a sympathetic ear (Goodsell, 1981: 777). In brief, even if there is a universal tendency toward the acceptable rather than the optimal, it is likely that there are important differences in decision premises and that these lead to different behaviors across administrative systems. In other words, what constitutes an acceptable solution is susceptible to variation, which is likely to derive to a considerable extent from the political culture of a society and its norms of public behavior.

The mix of ingredients constituting the decisional premises is subject, consequently, to variation among individuals, administrative agencies, and societies. Across individuals, personal values are a part of these decisional premises in spite of the classic doctrine minimizing the influence of personal values in administrative behavior. At the level of organizations and of societies, we can talk about norms and cultures as part of the mix of ingredients influencing decisions. That fact makes comparison worthwhile because it suggests to us that however similarly decision-making processes may be characterized, the range of likely decisions and the options available in the decisional repertoire are exogenous to the actual decision-making processes. Thus a nearly tenfold difference between British and Italian bureaucrats in their stated acceptance of the interplay of political actors and of political considerations in administrative activity clearly demarcates a strong effect on the repertoires of behavior likely to be engaged in by British and Italian civil servants even though *how* they actually go about making decisions may not fundamentally differ (Aberbach et al., 1981: 220).

The second premise that organizations are largely arenas for conflict (an assumption that runs deeply counter to classic Weberian notions) implies naturally enough that "bureaucratic politics" is a pervasive phenomenon. We agree that it is. Yet, cross-national analysis is especially useful for discerning not whether conflict exists or not, since it nearly everywhere does, but for discerning the forms it takes and the channels available for its expression. In this regard, it is likely that the more channels and outlets available to influence decisions, the greater the opportunities to appeal, and the greater the opportunities to appeal, the more visible and overt bureaucratic politics and organizational conflict will be. Evidence comparing the American system (with its numerous channels for influencing decisions deriving especially from the independence of the legislative body and its own complex organization) to other less convoluted systems indicates how extensive such appeals can be in the American system (Aberbach et al., 1981: 228-237). The general point here is that if organizational conflict is a norm, the forms that conflict can take and the outlets available for its expression affect how it will take place and the manner in which it will be conducted. There is, in this regard, powerful evidence that the structure of political and governmental institutions affects how conflict will be played out, and to which audiences efforts to exercise influence will be made. That, of course, is a compelling reason to try to compare administrative systems (Aberbach and Rockman, 1984, 1985).

UNIT OF ANALYSIS—STRUCTURES, ACTORS, AND ACTIONS

The three analytic building blocks of comparative administration are structures (organizations), actors (executives and various species of bureaucratic officialdom), and actions (behaviors). Of these, the first two—structures and actors—are the more tangible and somewhat easier to get a handle on, though not without complication when nuanced comparisons are called for.

Simple inferences drawn from the comparative analysis of structures are usually the safest. Richard Rose's effort (1976b), for example, to infer the priorities of governments by tracing historically when particular sets of ministries came into being exemplifies this approach. Rose finds priorities essentially chronologically organized

around state-defining activities (external relations, defense, finance, justice), then development activities (agriculture, transportation, industry, and so on), and finally individual rights (social service ministries).

More nuanced comparisons, however, also get more complicated. What Treasury does in Britain, for example, is shared across two agencies in the United States, Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget, and two ministries in West Germany, Economics and Finance. Moreover, as governmental workloads tax available organizational machinery, they require more coordination and monitoring, and some important structures become essentially ad hoc, interdepartmental, or instruments of the central decision makers. Although these structures are often very important, they also may be inconstant. In any event, one of the truly perplexing decisions facing any student of comparative administration is whether to compare and contrast structural units or seek to obtain functional equivalencies across administrative systems.

Comparing executive actors across systems, even when done in a relatively straightforward way, requires delicate judgment. This, in part, is because personnel systems often differ dramatically. Our engagement in a multination study of senior civil servants led us into debates about equivalencies of administrators across systems. The anomalous American case saturates politically appointed executives throughout the bureaucracy to a far greater degree than the other (all Western European) countries involved in our study. Thus strictly to compare senior civil servants would have led to clear functional noncomparabilities in that the Americans would be in less powerful positions. On the other hand, rough functional comparability could mean that we were comparing a different breed of official altogether (Aberbach et al., 1981: 25-29). Fortunately, although the politically appointed officials in the United States did show significant differences from the senior civil servants (in their political preferences, for example), they were remarkably similar to each other on the matters in which key cross-national differences turned up (for example, in their role conceptions).

Ultimately, the connection between organizational structures and personnel must be examined. Organizational roles are a basic point of comparison across administrative systems. We need to know, therefore, how roles are organized and whether comparable roles

exist across systems. The role of program analyst, for instance, is one that abounds throughout the U.S. federal bureaucracy but is a less visible role (even if similar functions are necessarily performed) in Britain, West Germany, or Japan. Essentially, the comparative analysis of bureaucratic actors must analyze both cross-role differences within systems *and* cross-system differences within similar roles.

Although the comparison of structures and actors is often complex, it is the third component, action or behavior, that is especially elusive in comparative analysis. This is so partly because action involves decisions, and it may be that, as discussed earlier, the process of organizational decision making, whatever the content of the decisions, looks fairly similar everywhere. Undoubtedly, it is also so because organizational activity involves the making of policy, and the making of policy is especially difficult to characterize. Freeman (1985) notes, for example, that French policymaking has been described as both reactive, short term, and piecemeal and also active, rational, and impositional. It is suggested that the latter style (active, rational, impositional) characterizes the normative bent of French elites at the policymaking summit, whereas the former style (reactive, short term, piecemeal) characterizes the actual (unsuccessful from the standpoint of the guiding norms) process of policymaking. For a good many reasons, of course, including those put forth by organizational decision theory, the reactive, short-term, piecemeal style is likely to occur in practice, and the main variation may be not in the "action" but in the norms of the leading actors. This last point is also of special interest to comparisons of the actors across systems because comparing the actors suggests that there may be more variation in policy norms than in actual policy processes.

To sum up, the comparative analysis of administrative systems is inherently a difficult undertaking. This is so not only because so many possible confounding sources of variation must be controlled, but because there also are fundamental and by no means resolved linkage problems between the dynamics of decision-making processes and the more stable elements of actors and structures, between these processes and the norms and values that might guide them, and between efforts to characterize whole systems and variability across the organizational sectors that constitute these systems. Sectoral variability within systems, however, could reflect sectoral (functional) comparabilities across national systems.

In the following section of this article, we turn from these methodological ambiguities in comparative administrative analysis to a set of conceptual ambiguities that deal with (1) the relationship between bureaucracy and politics; (2) centralization and coordination; and (3) identifying systems of bargaining and mediation.

THREE CONCEPTUAL MUDDLES IN THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

BUREAUCRACIES, BUREAUCRATS, AND POLITICS

In classic conception, politics and bureaucracy are antinomies. The former involves commitment to partisan causes, to passion, and to serving parochial interest; the latter involves impartiality, impersonalism, and universalistic efficiency. The traits of politics, in this classic conception, are the province purely of politicians and of the political universe, whereas those associated with bureaucracy fall within the province of the caste of professional administrators, and belong to the separate world of management.

Obviously, these conceptions prove to be far too simple, and the strict bifurcation of politics and administration came to be scrutinized with considerable skepticism. Despite this, it is not always clear what one means by politics when it is observed that politics exists in the world of public administration. How, in characterizing administrative systems, behaviors, and actors, is the concept of "politics" used? What is meant by it?

The answer is several things depending upon context. In the context of administration, the concept has many faces, not all relevant to the same level of analysis. We now proceed to discuss these varied notions of "politics" in the context of public administration.

Politics as influence-directed behavior. In its most simple manifestation, politics is the process of seeking to gain influence over decisions. As we noted earlier, the processes of influence-seeking and coalition construction within organizations implies the prevalence of internal conflict and is at odds with the Weberian conceptions of the unity of command and of rational or purposive organization. The fact that

notions of politics as influence seeking and those of Weber are logically conflicting ones does not mean, however, that they are mutually exclusive; they may, for instance, occur at different levels within an organization or any other collective entity. If, however, in the basic sense of influence seeking, organizational politics is a constant, the norms it takes should vary depending on the instrumentalities and channels available for exercising influence—depending, in other words, on the organization of institutional authority and the operative norms of institutions. Thus multiple channels for making appeals will produce a more active and visible form of organizational politics. Alternatively, the more concentrated the channels of appeal, the more constrained and subtle will be the style through which influence seeking is promoted. The issue, therefore, is not whether organizational politics occurs or not but, rather, the size of the stage on which it is played and, relatedly, the number of actors involved in the play.

Politics as salience. The assumption here is that of the many activities with which central decision makers could be involved, they can deal only with a very few. Presumably, the very few that activate their attention are of central importance by virtue of the fact that central decision makers allocate attention to them. We might call these priority matters. Whether priorities are part of central decision-makers' agendas or mostly reacted to is relatively unimportant to this notion. Since many things can be reacted to and only a few are, it is the few that are that we assume have political salience. Unwillingness to delegate is a signal of importance to the decision maker.

At any time, of course, a decisional mix has many of the characteristics that Cohen et al. (1972) describe as a "garbage can." Yet, some patterns of activity compel the attention of top leadership more than others. Cronin's study of the American cabinet (1980: 274-290), for example, distinguishes between an outer cabinet whose members rarely meet one-on-one directly with the president, and an inner cabinet whose members are more or less constantly accessible to the president. The inner cabinet that Cronin portrays corresponds closely—indeed almost exactly—to the state-defining departments characterized by Rose. In Britain as well, Rose (1980a) finds a pattern similar to that which Cronin discovers in the United States.

Salient matters are inherently unstable ones, relatively unaffected

by statutory specification and administrative routine. They behave like "active" rather than "stable" or "inert" elements in the physical world. If they are important to political decision makers in that they require responses from them, they must, perforce, be politically important. Many activities of the peripheral (or outer ministries) are routinized through both statutory and administrative law and are often surrounded by a dense thicket of clientele interests. They are the "stable" (in some cases "inert") elements and though they can be subjected to change, that tends to require unusual and concentrated effort from the top leadership. Priorities at the top, however, are likely to be determined not by what is stable, but by what is inherently unstable or problematic. How leaders handle these salient matters (or, more important, are perceived as handling them) often determines their political fortunes.

Politics as peripheral policy. An alternative conception of politics in the context of administration relates to party constituencies and clientele interests. In this view, the aforementioned matters that must engage the attention of top leadership are ones of high policy, not of politics. The routines of politics, the programs that please party and interest clients, are those delegated to the "outer" departments—the ones laden with laws and "lobbyists." A study of politically appointed officials in the United States, for example (Mann and Doig, 1965), noted that party politicians were more likely to be appointed to these "clientele-centered" departments than to the state-defining ones. The tendency also of central policy review exercises to devolve into particularistic defenses of prevailing programs, a notable tendency in the second Wilson government in Britain, results from a need to accommodate key party constituencies.

It is possible, of course, for top leadership to turn peripheral concerns into primary ones—to make the disruption of prevailing subgovernmental coalitions a primary target of change. Such has happened to some effect in both the United States and Britain. In a very rough analogue, it might be argued that such efforts were undertaken in the Soviet Union during the Andropov leadership and, perhaps, now that of Gorbachev.

Politics as attitude. Moving now to the administrative actors, we can detect yet another form in which the concept of "politics" is applied in administration. This is politics as attitude, a notion that

implies that there are differences between bureaucrats in the same system and also possibly differences between systems.

The notion of politics as attitude derives from the classic distinction of administration and politics. Presumably, apolitical bureaucrats correspond to that end of the distinction in which bureaucrats are merely the neutral executors of law. Of course, the sharp distinction of classical theory bears little correspondence to the complex realities in which politics and administration share a niche. The extent to which bureaucracies respond to complex forms of accountability and also the extent to which their legitimacy is granted, may each depend on the extent to which bureaucrats themselves accept the routines of politics as a natural part of their environment—an environment jointly inhabited by politics and administration, and by politicians, political interests, and bureaucrats. These concerns led Putnam to evaluate the tolerances of administrators for political pluralism, initially across national settings (1973) and then among bureaucrats with technocratic and nontechnocratic backgrounds (1977). Putnam (1973), and later Aberbach et al. (1981: 220), found strong cross-national differences in individual bureaucrats' tolerances for the processes of pluralistic politics. In reference, therefore, to the broad distinction between political bureaucrats and classical bureaucrats, this attitudinal conception of political implies that "politically minded" bureaucrats will be more active in the administrative process and thus will enhance accountability, though in more complex forms than the original distinction between administration and politics could formulate.

It turns out that bureaucrats with attitudes more generally tolerant of politics not only are more likely to be strategically located nearer the centers of power in their organizations but are also more likely to be linked to organizational centers of power (an indicator of activism) when their strategic location in the organization is held constant. The organizational "movers and shakers" can be identified rather well by their attitudes regarding politics (Aberbach et al., 1981: 224-227).

It appears to be the case, in short, that at the individual level, holding attitudes favorable to politics has real consequences for behavior. What all of this means at the collective level, however, is less conclusive mainly because system-level concepts of bureaucratic accountability are more open-ended and subject to debate. Complex concepts of accountability, however, that take into consideration

multiple interests are likely to be compatible with widespread attitudinal acceptance of the legitimacy of politics.

Partisanship is another set of political attitudes of interest in an administrative system. Generally speaking, within the public bureaucracies of Western multiparty systems, partisan-based attitudes are relatively weak (Aberbach et al., 1981: 155-164). It is often the case, however, that partisan attitudes are deeply held, yet concealed in the form of antipartisanship. As Putnam notes in this regard, "This myth . . . served as an ideological defense for a conservative bureaucracy against an intrusive political environment" (1973: 284). Empirically, this myth has tended to be associated with bureaucrats sympathetic to conservative parties when confronted with governments promoting considerable social change and political regeneration. The advent of the Social-Liberal coalition in West Germany in the 1969 elections soon brought about charges of Parteibuch administration even though there has been ample evidence that political considerations have long influenced state administration and the selection of administrative elites under conservative governments (Derlien, 1984).

In fact, there are really two separate notions of partisanship. One is the party relatedness of political attitudes; the second is the matter of party saturation of the bureaucracy, which may exist under the auspices of ostensible antipartisanship. This second meaning is dealt with under the next category of politics. As to the first, the basic empirical finding here is that party is not nearly so strong a honing signal for bureaucrats even when they admit a party affiliation or tendency as it is for politicians. The exception to this ironically occurs in the United States, where partisanship overall tends to be less strong. This exception in the United States contributes to the criticism by the executive political leadership that the bureaucracy is an independent and undisciplined source of policymaking.[1]

Although politicalness in the sense of tolerance for the inherent messiness of pluralist politics may logically edge over into heightened partisanship in attitudes, there is no direct evidence that it does. The British case here is instructive in that British civil servants have a very high tolerance for pluralistic politics but a very low (relative to British politicians) tendency toward partisan salience in attitude.[2]

Politics as politicization. Perhaps the most obvious way that bureaucracy is said to be political is when it is politicized.

Politicization of the bureaucracy is normally thought to occur when the bureaucracy loses its independence to propose alternative choices and, especially, its ability to exercise discretionary choice in the context of rendering impartial and universalistic judgments of effectiveness within the context of prevailing laws. Bureaucracy also is thought to have become politicized when administrative officials are required to meet litmus tests of loyalty to the governing authorities. Often this means showing correct political party standing (the other form of partisanship was discussed). More often it means a proper level of enthusiasm for the political ideas endorsed by the top political leadership.

Another way in which politicization is employed, though not relevant to our application, has been put forth by Ronge (1974). Politicization, in this usage, means the inevitable performance by bureaucrats of roles that once were thought to be exclusively the province of politicians—the nurturing of interest constituencies, for example, or the mediation of various interest groups in formulating and, especially, implementing policy. This concept of politicization is not really politicization as such but instead evidence of the growing grey area between an idealized or classic politics of electoral struggle and mass mobilization on the one hand and an idealized administration of management and technical decision making on the other. The politics of governing is politics beneath the headlines, and it is more or less inevitable that since it is the bureaucracy that provides concrete expression to policy that it also is the bureaucracy that becomes a site for managing the politics of policy implementation.

Returning to the original notion of politicization as an effort to concentrate political control and to politically saturate the bureaucracy so that it will respond in Pavlovian form to its masters, one obvious form of politicization involves the use of patronage. Whether patronage is used as a currency to pay off political supporters or to instill a high degree of doctrinaire loyalty, it is one of the most obvious forms of politicization. The control of personnel is essential to most other efforts to achieve administrative compliance. Since the creation of a civil service system is designed to prohibit overt forms of patronage, patronage appointment often takes more subtle forms.

Among Western states, patronage is probably least subtle and most pervasive in the United States where the bureaucracy itself is a relatively new idea and where the pattern of appointing political

supporters to top administrative jobs has been a longstanding one. In the American system, the notion of the civil service is still a limited one. Civil service positions formally are designated as ones (fictitiously, of course) not involving policymaking. Thus, even elite civil service positions in the U.S. federal government usually begin four levels removed from the heads of departments, a condition that does not obtain in other Western states. Beyond this, there are other mechanisms that a presidential administration with a will to keep the professional bureaucracy on a tight leash can deploy. In recent times, that will has grown markedly.

In Western Europe, the formal distinction between the civil service and a layer of political overseers in departments does not exist. At least on the continent, however, changes in governments tend to bring changes in the very top civil service stratum, and the more politically sensitive the position, the more prudent the selection. In Britain, the tendency of the Thatcher government has been to keep a special eye out for those wedded to Mrs. Thatcher's precepts about the role and size of the state, and especially her devotion to the role of entrepreneurship. Although such appointments are made from within the civil service, they are designed to select politically sympathetic personnel, and so represent clear efforts to achieve political control.

Over time, there is a tendency for governments—if they are in power long enough—to try to remold the bureaucracy to its image. Until the grasp of Christian Democracy over Italian governments began to weaken in the 1960s, the Italian bureaucracy mirrored faithfully the party that molded it. The enemies of the DCI were regularly denied effective access to represent their claims within the bureaucracy, whereas the party's allies were granted special privilege (LaPalombara, 1964).

Similarly, the greater the change a new government wishes to make during its term of office, the more pressure it is likely to exert on the bureaucracy to comply with its directions (Lipset, 1971: 307-331). Often, if given the mandate to rule, a party or party coalition that has been out of power over a lengthy period of time (or perhaps never in power), naturally enough will seek to produce great change. Under the circumstances, it is likely to face a bureaucracy that, if not recalcitrant, is at the very least not habituated to a new government's directions and assumptions. In other words, where the bureaucracy

has been molded around the preferences and assumptions of a prior political order or regime, the new government will want to reconfigure the bureaucracy toward its preferences and assumptions. Not very surprisingly, the newly dispossessed will claim that the bureaucracy is being politicized. So claimed the French Right and Center after the election of the Socialist government; so claimed the CDU/CSU and its administrative officials in the aftermath of the Social-Liberal coalition of 1969; so claim the partisans of expansionary social and development programs in the United States in the midst of the Reagan efforts to shrink the scope and activities of the state—activities supported, indeed often promoted, by a bureaucracy whose beginnings largely dated to the New Deal burst of state expansionist activity in the 1930s, and whose assumptions continue to be marked by those preferences.

Politicization, it turns out, often lies in the eye of the beholder.

Nevertheless, it is possible to point to circumstances where politicization did not take place in spite of conditions that might have promoted its occurrence. The long rule of the Social Democrats in Sweden, for example, potentially accorded them significant opportunities to alter a largely conservative bureaucracy more to their liking. A political culture predicated upon consensus and problem solving, however, led to a relationship between governments and civil servants built upon trust and a shared commitment to solving public problems more than on policy agreement per se.

Politics as civil service curbing. A variant of the politicization path is to disregard the civil service as much as possible by providing clear-cut political direction. The simpler these directions (and the simpler the goals to be pursued), the more likely that the discretionary space of civil servants can be reduced. Although it is virtually impossible in the context of modern government to cut civil servants out of implementing activities, their role as consultants and advisers can be sharply curtailed by any government or administration bent on pursuing simple, if often radical, objectives. Under such conditions, even discretion in implementing activities can be severely restricted.

Clear and simple directives when impressed from above and persistently monitored are the stuff of classic scientific management. In this scenario, civil servants are reduced to "managers" in the most

technically limited meaning of the term (Ridley, 1983). Such a state of affairs apparently conforms with the jointly held vision of Mr. Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher as to how governing should proceed—simply crafted rules guided by a "political" commisariat, conceived, of course, in somewhat different terms in each country. This strategy seems especially appropriate for a political leadership wishing to diminish the role of government rather than one wishing to employ government as a programmatic tool for social engineering. However, it is plausible to imagine that a strategy of civil service curbing can be undertaken by a political leadership that wishes to maintain a more expansive set of services, the primary suppliers of which would come from competitive private or paragovernmental sources. Here, the role of the state is to maintain supervision over an allegedly more efficient market-oriented delivery system. Such a government would still be one of simple rules, and it is a model that in the United States has found increasing favor among so-called neoliberals within the Democratic party.

Politics as assimilation. Another way in which politics is defined within the context of administration is through the administrative pathway into politics. The convergence of bureaucracy and political recruitment is very substantial in several advanced capitalist states, notably Japan, France, and West Germany among the larger states. In France, Dogan (1979) points out a well-worn route to cabinet ministerial positions is through the grands corps. Similar processes are found in Japan and West Germany where membership in the civil service elite can be a springboard into the political elite. In some ways, these systems may be described as bureaucratized polities although they could just as readily be described as political bureaucracies—arenas where individuals of considerable competence and even more considerable connections may be selected for potential political leadership posts as, for example, was Helmut Schmidt in West Germany.

Usually in such systems the parliamentary body contains a substantial number of civil servants granted leave. Many ministers and other political officials have been (or are) senior civil servants. The percentage of civil servants in the West German Bundestag, for instance, is usually over 30%, and the percentage is even higher with the Bundesrat. In France, Birnbaum (1982: 51-55) shows that in the

1970s about 38% of cabinet ministers and secretaries of state had been senior civil servants.

The general point about these systems is that the bureaucracy is perhaps the single most pivotal institution leading to political eliteness. In Japan and France the bureaucracy also provides a springboard to the business elite as well (Koh, 1979; Suleiman, 1978).

Politics as overlapping worlds. Although the notion of a bureaucratic-politics assimilation is usually perceived as leading to bureaucratic domination of the polity, the notion of overlapping worlds that emerges from the U.S. experience is one that emphasizes a political style in the bureaucracy (Aberbach and Rockman, 1977; Aberbach et al., 1981: 94-100). The overlapping character of American politics derives from a combination of macro-systemic features, institutionally and culturally. The independence of the legislative body, as previously remarked, provides ample opportunities for influencing decisions at a variety of points. It attunes U.S. bureaucrats to operate as much, indeed more, within the context of legislative as executive routines. It attunes them equally to operate as often, if not more, from the perspectives of key legislators' interests, especially because of the power of congressional work groups, committees, and especially subcommittees. So, the institutional and unique features of the American system provide inducements for bureaucrats to think and behave along lines not far removed from the hurly-burly of U.S. legislative politics, notwithstanding that important differences do exist between the two sets of elites.

Management as a scientific activity (or at least as a theorized art) was applied to the management of private enterprise and developed before there was much bureaucratization to the American state. Consequently, the distinction between administration (as management) and politics was drawn most sharply in the United States, helping to account for the relative scarcity of civil servants at the top of U.S. administrative hierarchies. Since in the American view civil servants were supposed to be essentially neutral technicians rather than involved in making policy, it is understandable from this doctrine that civil servants are not the partners of the governing authorities but entirely, in theory, their obedient underlings. Removed as they are from the very top layers of authority in the U.S. executive system, exercising influence upward is more complicated

than exercising it outward to the legislature—an option that exists in no other setting to the magnitude that it does in the United States. Hence, the worlds of legislative politicians and of senior civil servants in the U.S. system are said to be overlapping not only by the pattern of behavior that emerges but also because of the shared perspectives that tend to develop. Although these perspectives tend to be politician dominant, they also do travel in the opposite direction. For example, U.S. legislative politicians tend to a greater degree than their peers in Western Europe to focus on technical aspects of policymaking, a vintage bureaucratic characteristic (Aberbach et al., 1981: 98, 250-251).

The methodological ambiguity of relating broad system generalizations to the diversity of micro-phenomena is naturally relevant here. Not all U.S. bureaucrats, for example, exhibit the political mentality as discussed. Officials with programs to promote or protect are apt to be different from those who are not in a position to nurture outside political support (foreign service officers) or from those whose organizational mission resists that idea (treasury officers, for example, or officials whose responsibilities are to bring about budgetary discipline or efficient allocations of resources).

These necessary cautions aside, however, a general contrast between politics as bureaucratic assimilation, that is, the bureaucratic pathway to politics, and politics as overlapping world, that is, the shared perspective, is that the former (bureaucratic assimilation) portrays a potential (or realization) of the institutional dominance of the civil service elite since the civil service is a gateway to both political and economic power (Birnbaum, 1982; Suleiman, 1978). The main fear is that strategic power is dominated by a small group that, if not always cohesive in policy, is almost always cohesive about how policy should be made. The latter (overlapping worlds), on the other hand, is not burdened by fears of elite concentration and cohesion, but precisely the reverse—of the inability to achieve strategic direction in the face of a countless array of tacit political alliances between subsets of bureaucratic and political actors. If the fear pertaining to the "assimilation" model is the suppression of politics by the dominance of a bureaucratically originated strategic elite, the concern relevant to the "overlapping" model is with the problems of achieving policy discipline amidst a diffusion of micropolitical relations.

In sum, the concept of politics when applied or related to bureaucracy takes on numerous meanings and often has different implications. Inconsistent usage of the concept abounds. We have here, however, not tried to point to a singular way in which the concept should be applied, but rather to point to numerous (and no doubt not fully inclusive) ways in which it has been applied.

CENTRALIZATION, PLANNING, AND COORDINATION

The Weberian formulation of bureaucratic organization leaves no doubt that above all it is a command organization. When combined with the features of limited jurisdictions, differentiated roles, specialization, and memory, unity of command makes bureaucratic organization, in the Weberian view, the most technically proficient organizational type. Thus the concepts of hierarchical command and coordination allow for coherent planning. On this presumption (or delusion), modern governmental organization is rationalized.

Empirical studies, however, often reveal not how well governments plan, but more often how plans turn to dust (Schultze, 1969; Rivlin, 1971; Hayward and Narkiewicz, 1978); not how well they coordinate, but how episodically and reluctantly they do. Nor is it often demonstrated how formal centralization allows for imposition or command, but more often how that is avoided (Rose, 1976a; Rose and Suleiman, 1980). In a theoretical way, these issues are discussed at some length by Lindblom in his well-regarded book, *Politics and Markets* (1977).

In spite of the limited capacity to achieve coordination, especially when one moves from a given organizational unit to the full expanse of governmental organizations, efforts to achieve greater coordination appear to have grown rather than diminished. Colin Campbell's careful study (1983) of central agencies in three Anglo polities—Canada, the United States, and Britain—indicates the extent to which these coordinating and monitoring mechanisms have sprouted and, above all, how they have functioned. Derlien and Müller (1985) also note the dramatic growth in the office of the Federal Chancellery in West Germany as a consequence of the need to provide central steering and control organs over the social policy reforms and the new foreign policy initiatives begun after the Social-Liberal govern-

ment was formed in 1969. Whatever the level of actual success, the evidence is that central governments are undertaking a larger policy-monitoring and coordinating role. The obvious reason for all this is that government is involved in more programs and activities. It has sprouted more tentacles over time with no greater controlling capacity. Consequently, whether a government is interested in better results for its expenditures or whether it simply wants to spend less, control and coordination from the center are viewed as increasingly essential by the actors at the center.

The terms "centralization," and its opposite, "decentralization," are ones that come naturally to scholars of policymaking and of administrative organization. Centralization implies, in the Weberian framework, a capacity to achieve planning and coordination, which in modern usage implies policy success because it also implies coherence. Yet, the concept of centralization is often ambiguous in use. An important reason for this is that the concept is at least two-dimensional.

One dimension is territorial and has to do with the relations between various governmental and organizational jurisdictions; the other is institutional and has to do with the relative concentration or diffusion of authority within a given jurisdiction. Leman's (1980) study of welfare reform policies in Canada and the United States nicely illustrates this difference. The Canadian federal system is formally more decentralized than the U.S. system in that the legal autonomy of the provinces in Canada is greater than that of the states in America. The decisional structures in Canada, however, at each level are less convoluted than they are in the United States. Stated somewhat differently, Canadian structures were both more decentralized and less diffuse, whereas American structures were more centralized but also more diffuse. Consequently, despite greater decentralization, Canadian federal and provincial elites were better able to bargain and to be sheltered from public pressures (which in both countries were dubious of reform) than in the United States, where far more actors were involved at both the state and federal levels.

In examining the British and French experiences with central-local relations, however, Ashford (1982) draws somewhat different conclusions. In this case, both systems are territorially highly centralized, but British decisional structures, in this conception, are

more austere. Ashford's rich argumentation defies neat summarization, but essentially British dogmatism, in his view, stems from the hallowed role given to the concept of party government and parliamentary supremacy, which provides little bargaining and adjustment room. French pragmatism, on the other hand, resulted from the discretionary adjustments made by the bureaucracy in Paris, the prefects, and the dual local-national roles played by a number of French politicians who simultaneously hold local and national office. In Ashford's view, the richness of the French decisional complex produced more accepted and effective policy implementation than in Britain because it resulted from numerous adjustments and bargains.

Insofar as modern pluralistic states are concerned, there is considerable debate about the importance or necessity of centralization in either of its dimensions for effective policymaking. To a considerable degree, whether explicitly or implicitly, the extent to which effective policymaking is defined as a coherently energized and comprehensive product has much to do with one's penchant for increasing centralization, especially the concentration of power resources. To the extent that such a definition is held, the modern pluralistic state is apt to be viewed as the captive of myriad particular interests and thus paralyzed from dealing with broad and non-incremental problems (Cutler, 1980; Scharpf et al., 1977). Conversely, the conceptual apparatus of "bounded rationality" coincides intellectually with the notions of mutual adjustment and bargaining (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963). From this perspective, "big" decisions are likely to cause great error. Not surprisingly, this perspective coincides with an emphasis on policymaking as an iterative process that is disturbed from time to time by new stimuli, actors, events, and opportunities. The concept of a strong state (implied centralization along both the territorial and concentration dimensions) may not correspond to notions of effective policymaking (Ostrom, 1973; Benjamin, 1980). In a casual but provocative comment, Ashford observed that "perhaps weak states make strong policies."[3] The implication herein is that concentrated and centralized authority leads to imposition of authority, which leads to inability to adjust and bargain, which leads to delegitimation, which then leads to large error. Alternatively, one can infer that diffusion of resources engenders bargaining and adjustment, which leads to legitimacy

based on acceptance. In starkest form, the values of coherence versus consent are sharply brought into play.

No doubt, all of this simplifies too much. However, it is rare at least among Western observers for any to think their countries have much capacity to generate coherent direction. The play of interests seems bewildering as the totality of bureaucratic organizations pursues multiple and conflicting objectives, propped up by multiple and conflicting political support groups. Authority to harness these various objectives together is not readily found. This is why the growth of central machinery and, above all, the growth in its importance in Western governments has been so impressive. If the purpose of trying to achieve centralization, however, is to gain coherence in policy, structures may be less important ultimately than shared norms about reaching agreements and about policy goals. As Olsen argues in the case of Norway (1983: 116), "Consultation and anticipated reactions are more important forms of coordination than command."

In sum, the language of centralization, planning, and coordination assumes hierarchically arranged goals around a monolithic preference structure. Centralization is presumed to be the most effective means for goal achievement, though the concept of centralization, as we have argued, is not unidimensional. The extent to which centralization is perceived to be a mechanism for engendering coordination is itself a litmus test of the extent to which effectiveness is defined in terms of a monolithic hierarchy of goals (the plan) or in terms of a complex set of adjustments and accommodations of diverse preference orderings. The extent to which the norms of elite actors are organized around the latter process may well be more important for coordinative processes than the construction of organizational structures to force monolithic hierarchy.

BARGAINING, MEDIATION, AND SUBGOVERNMENTS

Complex processes of coordination involve bargaining relationships, whether the bargains are arrived at around a cabinet table or between a supplier and a buyer on a black market. It belabors the point to suggest that processes of governing that are not the result of clear hierarchical command are the result of bargaining. That is to

say, nearly all of governing is bargaining—an interpretation that coincides readily with the conception of organizations as arenas of conflict.

However, to say this is as yet to say little. For the crucial question seems to be not does bargaining exist, but where are bargains made? Where, in other words, are the key sites for reaching agreements, and who are the key actors?

Much of the literature on policymaking suggests that the answers to these questions depend on the types of policies under consideration rather than on sweeping macro-level judgments (Lowi, 1972). No single policy system or characteristic set of bargaining relationships is likely to exist. Rather, a given policy sector is likely to be characterized by a fairly distinct pattern of relationships. Indeed, one effort to characterize policy sectors in the United States uses the pattern of participants as a way of differentiating sectors (Ripley and Franklin, 1984). Obviously, we are back to the problem of the whole and its parts.

However policies are eventually characterized, ultimately bureaucracy is the edifice through which they are institutionalized. The beneficiaries of those policies and the groups that are closely affected take a continuing interest in them long after the dramatic elements of legislative enactments have disappeared. They are the program constituents. This connection between program constituencies, usually taking the form of interest groups, and relevant administrative units typically is referred to as a subgovernment. The phenomenon of subgovernments is widely regarded as a pervasive one in contemporary pluralist systems. They occur because of the tendency of bureaucrats having specific jurisdiction to deal more or less exclusively with organized interests directly affected and expressing continuing concern with decisions made by the administrative unit. At Whitehall, in the words of Lord Armstrong, for example, "there is now certainly somewhere . . . a little unit of people whose job it is to acquaint themselves with what is happening in each industry and, as far as they can, watch over its interests" (Jordan, 1981: 118-119). Their persistence owes to numerous factors. Among them are the inattentiveness or inconstancy of attention on the part of the top leadership; an unwillingness or inability on the part of the top leadership to disturb important political constituencies with a stake in the programs (opportunity costs); and the agreement of the

leadership with the purposes and administration of the programs.

For reasons just pointed to, governments often do not wish to disturb the prevailing subgovernments, or at least not many of them. No political system and, certainly, no political leader can stand to be sucked up in constant controversy and turmoil. This is why the status quo is always advantaged. Well enough, even if not good enough, is often acceptable because of the opportunity costs involved in changing existing subgovernmental structures and relations.

Yet, important structural differences across systems exist that potentially affect the relative solidity of the protective shell around extant subgovernments. Although opportunity costs to challenging subgovernments are always large, a large number of bargaining arenas and complex authority structures provide special advantages to the status quo. The role of a cabinet (or some functional equivalent) as a point of aggregation is structurally important even if conflict avoidance or brokering is the norm when governments are confronted with choices that offend important interest groups. For if agreements can be arrived at in cabinet or across parties represented in the cabinet, the affected interests will run out of bargaining space. Not so in the United States, however, where independent decision makers abound, not only institutionally in Congress but also in the judicial system. It is possible, but more difficult, to run out of bargaining space in the American system because of the multitude of sites within which clientele groups can seek to protect their interests.

Despite the prevalence of subgovernments in all pluralist systems, the United States is said to be subsystem dominant (Rose, 1980b). In large part, this is because the system lacks an effective cabinet or party system as central points of aggregation and possibilities for systemwide bargaining. In Western Europe, interest groups typically are fewer but more widely representative (that is, peak associations are more powerful) and if accommodations are arrived at within the governing coalition and in the cabinet, subgovernments may be incorporated into providing intersectoral support for the government for a payoff in the form of greater sectoral autonomy under normal conditions. This, of course, describes the Scandinavian model. The American system, however, provides more incentives for narrowly focused interest groups than for peak associations because the congressional work group structure is highly suited to this form of interest aggregation. Although the American system features a great

deal of cross-institutional bargaining between the bureaucracy and the legislature, these bargains are frequently implicit and do not often travel to the top. Bargaining in the U.S. system is almost never systemwide. Despite its prevalence in the U.S. system, bargaining is intensively subsystemic, and it is very rarely conducted to provide support for system wide initiatives. More than any other reason, this is why the American system is characterized as subsystem dominant.

CONCLUSION

This article explores three methodological and three conceptual ambiguities in the comparative study of public administration. It should be clear that the comparative analysis of administrative systems is a difficult undertaking. This is so for a formidable set of methodological reasons beyond even the many possible confounding sources of variation that must be controlled before we can be confident of any explanation: (1) there are fundamental linkage problems between the parts of the administrative system, usually the focus of inquiry, and the administrative system as a whole, usually the object of theoretical inference; (2) it is difficult to relate the universal characteristics of organizational decision making to variations in the setting of administration (political and administrative context); and (3) the linkage problems between the three analytical building blocks of comparative administration—structures (organizations), actors (officials), and actions (behaviors)—are formidable.

In addition to the methodological ambiguities in comparative administrative analysis, we must deal with a difficult set of conceptual ambiguities: (1) the links between bureaucracies, bureaucrats, and politics are complex, and the concept of politics when applied or related to bureaucracy takes on numerous meanings and often has different implications; (2) the language of centralization, planning, and coordination assumes hierarchically arranged goals around a monolithic preference structure, assumptions rarely if ever met; and (3) it is difficult to define levels of bargaining and mediation across political systems and to define their relation to semiautonomous domains of influence within governments (subgovernments).

Having said all this, it is tempting to abandon the comparative study of administration. But that would not solve the problems

discussed in this article. They are inherent in any study of administration whether comparative or focused on a single country or even a single agency. Comparative study pushes them to the fore, however, and propels us to a level of conceptual and methodological self-consciousness and clarity rarely found in noncomparative studies of public administration. As the examples drawn from our own comparative study of bureaucrats and politicians in Western democracies demonstrate, the U.S. administrative system is best understood in a comparative context. The same, of course, is true for the other systems. The conceptual and methodological ambiguities examined are most apparent in an explicitly comparative study; they thereby stimulate clarity and understanding. We not only understand our own systems better when we compare, we gain a better understanding of the methods, concepts, and theories we employ.

The muddle of comparative administrative study may well be a hell, but one whose suggested motto is: "Abandon hope all ye who do *not* enter here!"

NOTES

1. This criticism has been forcefully made under recent Republican administrations that view the bureaucracy, not altogether incorrectly, to be a bastion of Democratic sentiment.

2. Indeed, of the seven national samples analyzed by Aberbach et al. and their associates, the British samples were marked by the strongest party-based attitudinal differences among politicians and very weak party differences among bureaucrats.

3. This was an oral statement made to one of the authors by Professor Ashford.

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