

# ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC: THE CASE OF AMERICAN FEDERAL EXECUTIVES

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*Faced with the steady growth of technological operations in government, to what extent and in what way can citizen participation in administration be preserved? A century ago the distinction between citizen and official was slight, passage from one status to the other was easy. Now inexpert participation in whole blocks of administration has become impossible, the distinction between official and citizen is more definite and permanent, a bureaucracy has emerged out of the conditions of modern government. . . . The reconciliation of democratic institutions and a professionalized bureaucracy . . . is one of the major perplexities of the future.<sup>1</sup>*

THESE words written by Leonard White nearly two generations ago are, as he suspected, even more relevant today. In the years between White's assessment and the present, the activities of the federal government have continued to grow. With them, the federal bureaucracy has grown apace. While it is by no means self-evident that growth in the federal bureaucracy entails the erosion of democratic processes, it does present complex challenges to the role of popular involvement in the affairs of government and to the responsiveness of government to the claims of its citizens.

Recent years have witnessed a growing distrust of bureaucracy and bureaucrats — a profound skepticism that large-scale bureaucracies can work and a deepened cynicism toward the motivations of bureaucrats and their presumed unresponsiveness toward any but the most powerful and well-organized interests. While criticism of the federal bureaucracy traditionally has been the province of American conservatives, new politicians of the left now also wonder aloud about the self-serving tendencies of bureaucracies designed to serve the public. "Public interest" groups have sprung up on the premise that bureaucracy cannot or will not be responsive.

The notion of administrative responsiveness, however, is quite complex. In fact, Charles Gilbert discusses "responsiveness" as only one of at least a dozen values he believes underlie the broader concept of "administrative responsibility."<sup>2</sup> Dilemmas arise from the fact that while some values are complementary, others are not. The relationship between planning and consistency on the one hand and responsiveness and flexibility on the other, for example, is often beset by contradictions. Nor is it obvious that the values of accountability and responsiveness are entirely complementary. Above all, it is not often clear to whom the administrator should be responsive.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leonard D. White, *Trends in Public Administration* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), p. 340, as quoted in Pendleton Herring, *Public Administration and the Public Interest* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Charles E. Gilbert, "The Framework of Administrative Responsibility," *Journal of Politics* 21 (August 1959): 373-407.

<sup>3</sup> For an extended analysis of three major prescriptive theories of public administration which alternatively emphasize the values of formal accountability, administrative discretion, and representation, see Glendon Schubert, *The Public Interest* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960). According to Herbert Kaufman, these values tend to reappear cyclically as dominant administrative ideologies. See, Kaufman, "Administrative Decentralization and Political Power," *Public Administration Review* 29 (January/February 1969): 3-15.

No data, including ours, can resolve these dilemmas. Yet, the beliefs that administrators hold about the role of the public, their views as to clientele relationships, and, particularly, their views toward expanding the role of citizen involvement in government are highly pertinent to shaping the character of administrative relationships with the public.

Many factors not within the control of individual administrators affect the ways in which administrative agencies can respond. The sum of bureaucracy, we realize, is something more than its individual parts. Even so, we can be certain that a system with large numbers of bureaucrats who regard the demands of external interests with stiffness and contempt will ensure an inflexible and formalistic bureaucracy disdainful of the constraints of democratic control and the sources of its own legitimacy. It is equally certain, however, that administrators who seek to ensure that demands will be listened to and, at the same time, try to avoid capture by specialized clienteles face a difficult and uncertain path.

The data that we examine in this article illuminate how American federal executives see this path. They illustrate the conceptions that federal executives have of the interest group environment. Most important, the data enable us to examine the attitudes of American federal executives toward the issue of citizen involvement and to explore the factors associated with these views.

#### THE STUDY — SAMPLE AND DATA

Our data are drawn from extensive open-ended interviews with 126 high level American federal executives in eighteen federal agencies in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. These interviews, conducted in 1970, are part of a multinational study of administrative and political elites.<sup>4</sup>

All of the administrators in our sample came from agencies whose primary responsibilities are in domestic affairs.<sup>5</sup> Our sampling frame stratified administrators by position. Samples were drawn of administrators formally designated as "political executives" and of career civil servants serving under civil service jurisdiction. To be eligible for inclusion into the sample, career civil servants had to be of supergrade status (GS 16-18), be the *top* career officials within their particular administrative sub-unit, and be charged with program responsibilities. The highest eligible political executives were those who held "policy" positions at approximately the level of assistant secretary and who were formally appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate (PAS). The bulk of the political executives interviewed, however, had either Schedule C, Executive Salary designations or NEA (non-career executive assignment) status with GS rankings of 16 or higher. In all, we interviewed 61 political executives and 65 supergrade career executives.<sup>6</sup>

#### ADMINISTRATORS AND THE GROUP ENVIRONMENT

"The federal executive," as Marver Bernstein has written, "must negotiate more or less continuously with organized interests concerned with his programs."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the United States, interviews were conducted in Britain, Germany, Italy, France, Sweden, and The Netherlands. Our colleagues on the larger project are: Robert D. Putnam, Ronald F. Inglehart, Thomas J. Anton, and Samuel J. Eldersveld.

<sup>5</sup> The agencies included: Agriculture, Commerce, HEW, HUD, Interior, Justice, Labor, Transportation, Treasury, GSA, OEO, FCC, FPC, FTC, ICC, SEC, SBA, and the VA.

<sup>6</sup> Response rates were 80 percent for political executives and 96 percent for supergrade career civil servants. Further details relating to the methods employed in our study are to be found in Joel D. Aberbach, James D. Chesney, and Bert A. Rockman, "Exploring Elite Political Attitudes: Some Methodological Lessons," *Political Methodology* 2 (Winter 1975): 1-27.

<sup>7</sup> Marver Bernstein, *The Job of the Federal Executive* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1958), p. 128.

The constancy of these negotiations is clearly reflected in our data. When we asked our respondents how frequently they had face-to-face contacts in their official capacities with representatives of organized interest groups, 93 percent reported "regular" contacts. Sixty-nine percent, in fact, admitted to having such contacts on at least a weekly basis. In addition, when we asked the administrators to define their administrative constituencies, 44 percent did so exclusively in terms of particular interests while another 42 percent defined their constituencies as comprising both particular interests and the general public. Only 14 percent claimed that they served only the general public.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the fact that organized interests occupy an important place in the activities and thinking of American federal executives, the data also reveal that almost three-quarters (73 percent) of our sample accept the view that close relationships with their clientele are necessary and desirable. The preference for proximate relationships with clientele groups, then, is a fairly pervasive sentiment among American federal executives.<sup>9</sup>

It was frequently argued among those supportive of closer relationships that empathy and understanding of clientele group needs are essential to effective conduct of the administrator's job. One executive, for example, argued that close relationships were necessary because the affected clientele "understand their own problems," and that "if an absolutely uninterested person is the one who looks at somebody's problems . . . I don't think that person is well heard or that that disinterested person even understands."

There is an obvious symbiotic relationship in most instances between administrators and clientele groups. Administrators who lend a receptive ear to the demands of organized clientele can expect support for their own programs through other avenues of political access. A system of fragmented authority enables many interest groups to perform important political functions for administrators' interests. This mutual "stroking" — a relationship referred to by one respondent as "incestuous" — prompts a high degree of responsiveness to organized interests on the one hand and strengthens independent centers of bureaucratic power on the other.<sup>10</sup> More blatant than most, one civil servant justified his belief in the virtues of close clientele relationships through an explicit equilibrium model:

I tend to think you've got to work with them [clientele groups] and you ought to have a close relationship . . . because there are pressure groups on the other side too, so that you're going to get a balance out of this and no one group is going to be able to upset the apple cart completely. But I think you've got to listen to them because in my judgment if you haven't got a constituency, you're never going to get anything through Congress. I think democracy is a case of vested interest groups.

Our interviews abound with evidence suggesting that most American federal executives reject the view that a tight curtain should be drawn between them and their affected clientele. The pattern of incentives for most administrators operates against the establishment of rigid barriers sealing them off from organized clientele. But if interest groups can benefit administrators by providing political sup-

<sup>8</sup> For similar findings at the state level, see, Robert S. Friedman, Bernard W. Klein, and John H. Romani, "Administrative Agencies and the Publics They Serve," *Public Administration Review* 26 (September 1966): 192-204.

<sup>9</sup> Political executives and career civil servants preferred close relationships in nearly equal proportions, and somewhat surprisingly, only faint differences emerge across agencies.

<sup>10</sup> As Woll and Jones have put it: "Ultimately the bureaucracy curbs the President because it has independent sources of political power. . . . Like Congress and the President, administrative agencies and regulatory commissions have constituencies that are relied on for political support." Peter Woll and Rochelle Jones, "The Bureaucracy: A Brake on Presidential Power," in Peter Woll, ed., *American Government: Readings and Cases*, 5th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), p. 543.

port, they also can prove to be important sources of constraint upon administrative behavior. Matthew Holden contends, in this regard, that

each time the expanding agency acquires a new constituency, that constituency co-opts part of the agency's money, people, time, skill and working doctrine. If the agency then seeks to shift those resources, it may find itself constrained by the demands of the co-opting constituency which has, so to speak, now acquired a first mortgage on those resources.<sup>11</sup>

The system of private "mortgage holders" — to use Holden's term — has been criticized on several grounds. On the one hand, some, notably Theodore Lowi, have claimed that such a system is irresponsible on its face and constitutes "parceling out to private parties the power to make public policy."<sup>12</sup> The line between "cliente publics" and "the public," according to Lowi, becomes blurred when it should be made more distinct. In this view, administration by law and by principle rather than administration by bargaining, negotiation, and mediation should be preeminent. Principle should replace particularism; neutral competence should replace the value of representativeness, a function that Lowi believes should be fulfilled exclusively through electoral arrangements. Under Lowi's guidelines, the administrator should be governed by rules rather than empathy. As Victor Thompson has asserted, "Lowi's book . . . is a most passionate plea for non-compassionate government."<sup>13</sup> Were Lowi's proposals capable of being effected, they would reduce the political power of the bureaucracy and along with that, its ability to speak for groups, including those that might otherwise be unrepresented.<sup>14</sup>

From another angle, however, the system of private mortgage-holders has been criticized on the grounds that only the well-organized and the politically competent are able to take advantage of the paths of access to administrative agencies. From this viewpoint, technical criteria and complicated regulations, the essence of bureaucratic life, create obstacles to the involvement of ordinary citizens. What is required, in this view, is more bureaucratic compassion, not less; what is needed, accordingly, is more and broader involvement.<sup>15</sup>

In the environment of the 1960s and early 1970s, many advanced representative political systems experienced pressures for decentralization, the direct involvement of citizens in government programs, and other means through which ordinary citizens could make claims upon political authority. How can government become more responsive to the claims of its citizens, particularly the unorganized, and yet retain the capacity to govern? While this question continues to be at the center of discussions about increasing the responsiveness of governmental institutions

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Holden, "Imperialism' in Bureaucracy," in Francis E. Rourke, ed., *Bureaucratic Power in National Politics*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), p. 201.

<sup>12</sup> Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 358.

<sup>13</sup> Victor Thompson, *Without Sympathy or Enthusiasm: The Problem of Administrative Compassion* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1975), p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> Norton Long, for example, propounds the view that ". . . the bureaucrats fill in the deficiencies of the process of representation in the legislature." See, Long, "Bureaucracy and Constitutionalism," in Norton Long, *The Polity* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1962), p. 70.

<sup>15</sup> For such arguments, see, for instance, Gideon Sjoberg, Richard A. Brymer, and Buford Farris, "Bureaucracy and the Lower Class," in Rourke, *Bureaucratic Power in National Politics*, pp. 395-408; also published in *Sociology and Social Research* 50 (April 1966): 325-37; Richard L. Simpson, "Beyond Rational Bureaucracy: Changing Values and Social Integration in Post-Industrial Society," *Social Forces* 51 (September 1972): 1-6; Orion White, Jr., and Gideon Sjoberg, "The Emerging 'New Politics' in America," in M. Donald Hancock and Gideon Sjoberg, eds., *Politics in the Post-Welfare State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 11-35; James Elden, "Radical Politics and the Future of Public Administration in the Post-Industrial Era," in Dwight Waldo, ed., *Public Administration in a Time of Turbulence* (Scranton, Pa.: Chandler, 1971), pp. 19-42; and Marvin Meade, "'Participative' Administration — Emerging Reality or Wishful Thinking?" in Waldo, pp. 169-87.

elsewhere,<sup>16</sup> it had been posed with special vigor in the United States. Experimentation in citizen involvement was particularly stimulated by programs attached to the Office of Economic Opportunity, but the issue of broader citizen involvement was raised in other areas as well. The results of such experimentation are not strikingly clear.<sup>17</sup> Increased involvement does add further complications to the burden of decision-making. In some ways, it adds also to the dilemma of accountability. Moreover, there is no guarantee that broader involvement actually can create the conditions for greater administrative responsiveness. It may well lead only to a noisy array of insatiable demands and deepened hostilities when these are not met.<sup>18</sup>

If the problems of citizen involvement remain unresolved in practice, the attitudes that administrators hold toward citizen involvement can serve to exacerbate these problems by widening the gulf between citizens and government or they can help to increase the opportunities for successfully broadening meaningful and institutionalized avenues of citizen access. It should be stressed, of course, that in our remarkably complex social and political system, administrators in the field rather than their superiors in Washington may be the key actors in actual efforts to broaden the arena of access while maintaining the responsibilities of administration. But the cues that field administrators receive will be given by their administrative superiors in Washington, people such as those we have interviewed.

#### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

In order to gauge their views on citizen involvement in the activities of government, we presented the federal executives with a general statement and asked them a simple question:

There has been a good deal of discussion in some countries about increasing popular control over the activities of government and increasing citizen participation in governmental affairs. Do you think more of this is necessary here in the United States?

Their answers, while often quite complex, were coded along an ordinal continuum running from the view that more citizen involvement is definitely needed to one that more citizen involvement is definitely unnecessary.

More than half of the federal executives were in favor of more citizen involvement (Table 1), although the modal response was one of support tempered by reservations. Thirty percent of the respondents were coded in the bottom two categories of opposition to more citizen involvement.

Most respondents went beyond simple endorsements or condemnations of the idea of greater citizen participation. Often, they discussed both the complexities involved in implementing greater citizen input and control and the issues for democratic government raised by efforts to make greater citizen involvement a reality. The discussion below explicates the answers within each coding category on the ordinal scale in a manner which conveys a sense of the concerns or issues which dominated the respondents' conversations.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of these trends in Sweden, particularly, see, Nils Elvander, "Democracy and Large Organizations," in Hancock and Sjoberg, *Politics in the Post-Welfare State*, pp. 302-24, and M. Donald Hancock, "Elite Images and System Change in Sweden," in Leon N. Lindberg, ed., *Politics and the Future of Industrial Society* (New York: David McKay, 1976), pp. 167-90.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Daniel A. Mazmanian and Jeanne Nienaber, "Bureaucracy and the Public: A Case of Citizen Participation in the Corps of Engineers," paper presented at the 1974 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 25-27.

<sup>18</sup> For a study with chastening findings in this regard, see, Raymond E. Owen, "On Rubbing Raw the Sores of Discontent: Competing Theories and Data on the Effects of Participation in a Black Protest Group," *Sociological Focus* 8 (April 1975): 143-59.

TABLE 1. FEDERAL EXECUTIVES' ATTITUDES TOWARD CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN THE ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENT

	%	(N)
1. Definitely Favors Greater Citizen Involvement .....	27	(33)
2. Favors Greater Citizen Involvement, Reservations .....	29	(35)
3. Mixed Views .....	14	(17)
4. Opposes Greater Citizen Involvement, Qualified .....	17	(20)
5. Definitely Opposes Greater Citizen Involvement .....	13	(15)
	100%	(120)*

\* Two respondents were coded as "other" because their answers were unclear. The answers of four respondents were not ascertained.

1. *Definitely Favors Greater Citizen Involvement*

Among those who definitely felt there was a need for greater citizen involvement, four general themes are dominant. The first theme, usually stated in a very straightforward manner uncluttered by any doubts, is that increased citizen involvement will act as a check on citizen apathy. For example, an executive in HUD proclaimed that: "Apathy is the beginning of the downfall of a government such as ours and we have an increase in apathy. I would say for the health of the nation more citizen involvement is required and necessary."

A second view, related to the first, is that increased citizen participation is a highly desirable way of representing the public interest. An administrator in a regulatory agency said:

I think that [the] community interest is one of the interest groups that should be represented. . . . I think otherwise what you're getting is . . . something that we wish to avoid, namely the one sided or biased groups' opinions which will tend not to give you the best results in terms of an objective and fair decision in a particular policy area.

The third theme emphasizes the notion that increased citizen participation is an element of business as usual in the ongoing relationship between the agencies and the clientele they serve. As an executive in one of the HEW research programs put it:

Our program operates considerably by citizen control since we . . . operate on the basis of peer review of applications for funds. Since peer groups are representatives of citizens that we serve in the scientific community, I feel we have a very direct relationship to the citizens of our country. You don't necessarily have to accept their advice, but you certainly should think hard about going against their advice.

A final theme under this heading of those who see a definite need for more citizen involvement is one of citizen expertise. One HEW respondent claimed that citizens, as consumers of government services, ". . . have a special kind of expertise. They may not be professionals, but they have the expertise that comes from being the recipients of the services."

2. *Favors Greater Citizen Involvement, But Expresses Some Reservations*

The second major group of respondents, the modal group in the distribution, is similar to the first in favoring greater citizen involvement, but the executives who were coded in this category express some reservations about the role of citizens in the administrative process. While the arguments put forth vary quite a bit in structure and nuance, two major themes are present.

The first theme, which is voiced less frequently, emphasizes the dangers of minority control. One administrator in Interior, for example, combined reservations about minority control with fears of possible government impotence:

Yes, I do want to see more citizen interest and involvement but by the same token I do not want to see government rendered impotent. After all, when you have decentralization it is not necessarily the case that the "community's" interests are being met. The elites that are most interested take control and define their interest as the community interest. . . . I am all for community participation when it is institutionalized through channels that prevent small minorities from systematically excluding other points of view.

The second theme, which is more dominant, emphasizes problems of accountability. As one executive in HUD put it:

Well, first of all, there isn't any question in my mind that we need to find ways to increase the citizen's input in terms of decisions that are made, in terms of the administration of programs. There are a lot of unanswered questions. The first thing is how you do it and then after you do it, how you can be certain that after the decision is made, the people who influence you to make it are accountable. The key question in citizen participation is how you bring about accountability.

### 3. *Mixed Views on Citizen Involvement*

Executives who cited both advantages and disadvantages of greater citizen involvement in government affairs and gave about equal emphasis to both sides of the issue were coded in the middle category of the continuum. The major reservation most people in this group stressed was essentially technical in nature. They said, often grudgingly, that citizen participation had its good points, but it did tend to clog up the works and create greater inefficiency than necessary in the workings of the large government departments employing them.

One executive in HEW, for example, stressed technical expertise:

I always worry about this because I think that I tend towards saying the people who know the answers ought to be able to make the decisions and this is kind of counter to our whole concept of government, you know, of the people, by the people . . . so in general participation is good, but citizen *direction* of what ought to be done now in technical areas sometimes might be damaging to citizens themselves. . . .

The second major theme found in these "pro-con" type answers mixes fears about technical inefficiencies with questions about accountability. If citizens participate heavily and programs don't work well, who is to take the blame for failure? In the words of an executive in HUD: "Yes if it can be done any more efficiently than it's now being done. The only trouble is you find out that the same citizens who want to have control will then criticize you when things don't get done."

### 4. *Opposes Greater Citizen Involvement, Qualified*

The fourth coding category is populated by executives who are basically opposed to greater citizen involvement in government activities, but whose opposition is somewhat qualified. These respondents can be subdivided into two major groups. The dominant group emphasized the view that we have enough citizen participation now and that more would likely prove harmful. These respondents generally defined legitimate citizen involvement quite narrowly to mean involvement by recognized clientele groups. For example, an executive in Labor said:

Necessary? We already have a good deal of citizen participation. I mentioned before about the consultation with interest groups. . . . We get confused sometimes about talk about the individual citizens. Individuals have little influence anywhere but if they form groups they have a great deal of influence. I think the Department of Labor historically has been very

sensitive to the suggestions and appeals and arguments and criticism from the major interest groups. . . .

A second group emphasized the accountability theme. Some citizen participation is desirable, but it must be confined to communicating information, not participation in the actual decision, because the policy makers are the ones who have to pay the price if programs do not work well. For example, an administrator in Interior said:

. . . If you're talking about citizen participation in the day-to-day work by people who don't have either the responsibility or the authority, then I can't buy it. One of the biggest constraints on the people who *are* in policy-making jobs is that they may have the *authority* to do things but they also have the *responsibility* of living with the decision they made and rising or falling with it. I rather deplore the tendency of some people to say they should be part of the decision making process when they can be very capricious about it if they wish to be so, because nothing rises or falls with what *they* say or do. . . . Now *communications* is a different thing. I think this is good — but *not* in the decision, because it's just too easy to have a capricious decision under those sets of circumstances.

##### 5. *Definitely Opposes Greater Citizen Involvement*

A final group of administrators is clearly opposed to any additional efforts to increase the citizen's direct role in the policy process. These administrators gave a variety of reasons for their views, but three themes were dominant. The first emphasizes the confusion and even chaos which can accompany increased citizen involvement. One respondent, an executive in Agriculture, even went so far as to paint a picture of citizen participation leading to rule by demagoguery:

No — I don't really think the citizens as an amorphous group know enough or really have enough intelligence to make themselves felt or to take a more active leadership role. I think they can be swayed by any popular leader. Take Nader — I think anything he came up with he could sway a mass of people, whether he's really looked into the facts or not and I think we might have rule by demagoguery rather than careful analysis.

A second theme centers on expertise and efficiency in implementation. Administrators are so inhibited by the involvement of nonexpert citizens, this argument claims, that they cannot achieve an objective in a reasonable length of time. An executive in HUD, for example, reacted very strongly to the question:

Absolutely not! We've had a certain amount of experience with citizen participation and our experience had been it inhibits the achievement of any objective. The citizens are not organized in a manner that lends itself to speedy decisions. Generally speaking they do not have the expertise to understand the complexities of the problem. They generally fight amongst themselves for position of being the spokesman for the citizens group. They are generally very unrealistic as to what government can do or should do. And, in general it just makes most of our programs completely unworkable when we get citizen participation.

Finally, a small number of people were so pleased with the current system that they were very dubious about tinkering with it. An executive in Agriculture summarized this view well with his effusive praise of the system and the mechanisms which, he believes, exist for ensuring decisions that are responsible and accountable.

I think we have a wonderful system. . . . It seems to me our system does about as well as the frailty of a human being permits a government to do.

Now to give some more of this to the people directed in some New England concept of democracy, I'm dubious about this. When I see this done, I have grave doubts. I see the decisions going in the direction of the loudest shouts. And a system of representative government, it seems to me, taps the wisdom of the people, but filters it through a system of choice and selectivity and responsibility that is much better than a system of direct democracy. . . .

To sum up, a majority of American federal executives tend to be sympathetic to increasing the role of citizens in the activities of government, but most also have reservations and a sizable minority expresses clear opposition. The major fears are: (1) that demagogic and unrepresentative spokesmen may dominate the process; (2) that the citizens who are active will not be sufficiently responsible in their suggestions or behaviors because they will not be held to account for failures; (3) that the policy and administrative processes will become even more inefficient and cumbersome through the addition of new actors and procedures; and (4) that most citizens lack sufficient expertise to make a useful contribution.

#### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND ITS CORRELATES

We have seen that the issue of citizen involvement evokes many different responses from American federal executives. Now we turn to an examination of relationships between our measure of administrators' attitudes toward citizen involvement and several other variables. This analysis deals with four sets of variables — which, for the reasons discussed in each section below, ought to be associated with views about increased citizen involvement: age and agency, role disposition, views about the political process, and social ideology.

##### *Age and Agency*

Of the many background and role context variables which might conceivably predispose administrators to look with favor on increased citizen involvement, two stand out as clearly important factors.<sup>19</sup> Each represents a different type of experience. Age is an indicator of the ideas and practices prevalent when the respondent was socialized into his role (what can be labeled generational effects) or of the slow process of setting into a customary pattern of behavior (labeled the life-cycle effect). The type of agency an administrator works for tells us much about the experiences he is likely to have had and the clientele he serves and would like to assist.

Whether as a result of generational change or of life-cycle effects, we expected that younger administrators would be more sympathetic to broadening citizen involvement in governmental programs. From the standpoint of generational effects, data at the mass level across several countries indicate that younger people generally are more receptive to the values of involvement and participation and less concerned with the value of "social order" than their elders.<sup>20</sup> Because discussions

<sup>19</sup> Two other background and role context variables that we thought might be particularly important were the administrator's party affiliation and whether he was a political appointee or career civil servant. These two variables are strongly related to one another (political appointees are overwhelmingly Republican and career bureaucrats are not), but neither is related to attitude toward citizen involvement. Our initial expectation was that Democrats, and thus career civil servants, would be more sympathetic to the idea of greater citizen involvement because this issue was attached to some of "The Great Society" programs of the Johnson Administration. However, the absence of a party relationship suggests that the aspect of Republican doctrine which emphasizes decentralization and a diminution of bureaucratic power may affect views on increased citizen participation.

<sup>20</sup> See, Ronald F. Inglehart, "The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies," *American Political Science Review* 65 (December 1971): 991-1017.

about increasing the role of citizens in the processes of governing received special impetus in the decade of the sixties, we expected younger administrators to be closer to the events precipitating these discussions and more sympathetic to the issues underlying them. Even more appealing in this context, though, is the notion of administrative life-cycle. Older administrators, we thought, would be less receptive to greater involvement because such pressures disturb customary ways of doing things.<sup>21</sup> The "life-cycle" hypothesis, in other words, implies a hardening of the bureaucratic arteries with advancing age; a tendency to be more cautious and wary of boat-rocking.

Recent interpretations of the function of citizen involvement led us to believe that the agency variable would be especially important. A major purpose of the citizen involvement which emerged in the 1960s was to mobilize less advantaged sectors of the population, especially those dependent upon the provision of social services by the government. This led us to the expectation that administrators whose agencies' programs are heavily directed at these groups would tend to be most sympathetic to broader involvement. In this view, expanding involvement would strengthen the potential power of administrators in the social service agencies (OEO, HEW, HUD) by providing them with a more easily mobilizable clientele base.

TABLE 2. ATTITUDE TOWARD CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT BY AGE AND AGENCY

(a) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Age						
Age*	Favors More	Favors More, Qualified	Mixed Views	Opposes More, Qualified	Opposes More	
30-46 .....	14%	41	25	11	9	100% (44)
47-56 .....	41%	21	9	18	11	100% (44)
57 and over .....	28%	25	6	22	19	100% (32)
						(120)
						Gamma = -.01
(b) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Agency						
Agency						
Social Service Agencies						
(HEW, HUD, OEO) .....	31%	37	23	6	3	100% (35)
Other .....	26%	26	11	21	17	101%† (85)
						(120)
						Gamma = .30

\* Because the "life-cycle" hypothesis suggests that administrators become more suspicious of experimentation the longer they serve, we examined the data to see whether or not there was any relationship between administrators' attitudes toward citizen involvement and the amount of time they served in the federal bureaucracy. The gamma coefficient between length of government service and attitudes toward citizen involvement is literally zero. Since the political appointees generally have little previous experience in the federal executive, this analysis included only the career civil servants.

† Percentages do not cumulate to 100% because of rounding.

A glance at the relationships in Table 2 indicates that only the agency variable, in fact, has an important effect on attitude toward citizen involvement. While this relationship is not quite as strong as we expected, the administrators in the social service agencies are far less inclined than others to reject outright the need for greater involvement. These administrators have been more closely involved with

<sup>21</sup> In this regard, age may reflect an adherence to administrative routines and organizational commitments developed years ago. An illuminating description of the Veteran's Administration and its difficulties in adjusting to new demands notes that in 1972 almost 38 percent of the senior career administrators in the VA's Washington headquarters were at least 55 years old. See, "Veterans: A Waiting Game," *The Washington Post* 28, (May 1974): A1-2.

the controversies and problems resulting from citizen involvement experiments than administrators in other agencies. This may help to account for the large proportion who attach reservations to their support. But it needs to be stressed that only a negligible proportion of these administrators (9 percent) are basically negative to the idea of increased involvement. Familiarity with the problems of citizen involvement may well breed suspicion among the social service administrators, but it does not seem to breed contempt. Indeed, when the dichotomous agency variable used in Table 2-b is disaggregated into a five-category typology of agencies (Table 3), we can see that while unqualified support is not unusually strong among administrators in the social service agencies, opposition to more involvement is found to a considerably lesser degree within these agencies than in any other cluster of agencies.

TABLE 3. ATTITUDE TOWARD CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT BY AGENCY (DISAGGREGATED)

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Favors More</i>	<i>Favors More, Qualified</i>	<i>Mixed Views</i>	<i>Opposes More, Qualified</i>	<i>Opposes More</i>		
Social Service (HEW, HUD, OEO) .....	31%	37	23	6	3	100%	(35)
Regulatory (FCC, FTC, FPC, SEC, ICC) .....	36%	18	—	9	36	99%*	(11)
Traditional Clientele (Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, Labor, SBA, VA)..	23%	31	8	23	15	100%	(48)
State Maintenance (Treasury, Justice) .....	55%	18	—	27	—	99%*	(11)
Miscellaneous (Transportation, GSA) .....	7%	20	23	20	20	100%	(15)
							(120)
	$X^2$ with 16 d.f. = 33.07, $p < .01$						

\* Percentages do not cumulate to 100% because of rounding.

#### *Role Disposition: Discretion and Conflict*

Expanding the role of public involvement in government programs can have tumultuous effects, at least in the short run. Any administrator who must implement or guide such programs can expect a sizable degree of uncertainty and upheaval. Administrators who conceive of their roles in a formalistic fashion should be less willing to desire greater citizen involvement and to feel more threatened by it than administrators who take a more flexible view of their roles. One aspect of a formalized perception of the administrative role has to do with the extent to which an administrator prefers to operate under highly exacting legal guidelines. A further component of a formalized role perception involves the denial that one has any discretion. Discretionary latitude, of course, does vary across administrative positions and with respect to the type of program being administered, but citing the "rules" and the "law" is also a convenient escape from dealing with conflict and uncertainty. Those who prefer discretion, we think, are more likely to be risk-takers and more activist in the ways in which they approach their jobs. Because strictly formalistic criteria of administration are eroded by increasing citizen participation, we hypothesized that administrators who have little taste for discretion would be less likely to support more involvement than those who prefer discretion.

As an operational measure of their attitudes toward discretion, we asked the administrators whether they preferred to have some ambiguity in the legislative statutes governing their operations or whether they preferred greater clarity in

legal guidelines.<sup>22</sup> Thirty-one percent of the federal executives preferred at least some ambiguity in their operating law while 38 percent came down on the side of greater clarity. Another 27 percent opted for some conditional mixture of the two. Most frequently, this latter group of respondents said either that in some circumstances they would choose clarity and in others they preferred ambiguity, or that they preferred clarity in legislative intent but ambiguity in operational guidelines. Four percent stated that they already operated under very precise guidelines. We collapsed these cases into the anti-discretion group mainly because their denial of discretion was unaccompanied by a preference for an alternative situation and also because the denial that one has discretion is a common aspect of a formalistic approach to administration.

Because increased citizen involvement often necessitates the short run promotion of conflict, we believed that administrators' orientations toward conflict would predict well to their views on citizen involvement. To investigate this, we examined two variables that deal with administrators' views toward conflict. The first of these variables, "conflict-functionality," taps whether the respondent ever mentioned during the course of the interview that conflict had beneficial or functional consequences for society. Our coders were instructed to examine several questions dealing with social and political conflict to see whether the respondent explicitly spoke of social benefits deriving from conflict, whether he implied social benefits from conflict or attached reservations, whether he weighed negative effects equally with any positive effects when he spoke of benefits, or whether he simply failed to discuss any positive consequences of conflict.

The other conflict variable used here derived directly from the administrators' responses to a question asking whether there was more conflict in American politics and government than was necessary or beneficial for the country. The two conflict variables, as expected, correlate highly with one another ( $\text{Gamma} = -.59$ ); those who believe that conflict is functional tend to deny that there is too much conflict.

In Table 4 we can see that our expectations are met only partially. The attitudes that administrators hold toward discretion are strongly related to their views on citizen involvement (4a). The same cannot be said, however, when one looks at the conflict variables. The conflict-functionality variable has only a modest correlation with administrators' attitudes toward citizen involvement (4b), and there is no relationship between perceptions of present political conflict and attitude toward citizen involvement (4c).

It is, of course, possible that many administrators simply see no relationship between increased participation and the generation of conflict. It is also possible that some of the administrators who believe that too much conflict presently exists also feel that increased citizen involvement provides a means by which to reduce existing levels of conflict. Providing a channel for citizen grievances and new forums for participation, in this view, could reduce disaffection and the conflict generated by it.

The relationship between attitudes toward discretion and citizen involvement, however, is in the expected direction and quite pronounced. Support for discretion implies an activist, perhaps entrepreneurial, orientation toward one's administrative role. Michael Harmon's typology of administrative role orientations based upon two dimensions, policy responsiveness and policy advocacy, is very suggestive in interpreting this relationship.<sup>23</sup> A style of administration that is high on both the responsiveness and advocacy dimensions is referred to by Harmon as "proactive." The proactive administrator, according to Harmon, represents the antithesis of

<sup>22</sup> We specifically avoided asking this question of respondents in the Justice Department.

<sup>23</sup> See, Michael M. Harmon, "Administrative Policy Formulation and the Public Interest," in Joseph A. Uveges, Jr., ed., *The Dimensions of Public Administration*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Holbrook Press, 1975), pp. 492-506.

TABLE 4. ATTITUDE TOWARD CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT BY ATTITUDES TOWARD DISCRETION, CONFLICT FUNCTIONALITY, AND CONFLICT IN AMERICAN POLITICS

(a) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Attitude Toward Discretion						
<i>Attitude Toward Discretion</i>	<i>Favors More</i>	<i>Favors More, Qualified</i>	<i>Mixed Views</i>	<i>Opposes More, Qualified</i>	<i>Opposes More</i>	
Favorable .....	44%	33	7	11	4	99%* (27)
Mixed Views .....	20%	36	28	16	—	100% (25)
Opposes (or sees None) .....	15%	28	15	15	28	101%* (40) (92)
Gamma = .44						
(b) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Belief in Functional Aspects of Conflict						
<i>Belief in Functional Aspects of Conflict</i>						
Yes, explicitly stated .....	37%	26	19	12	7	101%* (43)
Yes, but implied or reserved .....	13%	47	20	13	7	100% (15)
Pro/Con, equally balanced with negative views .....	25%	35	10	10	20	100% (20)
No mention of functional aspects of conflict .....	24%	24	10	26	17	101%* (42) (120)
Gamma = .20						
(c) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Too Much Conflict Now						
<i>Too Much Conflict Now?</i>						
Yes .....	22%	34	12	12	20	100% (41)
No .....	26%	28	16	21	9	100% (68) (109)
Gamma = -.07						

\* Percentages do not cumulate to 100% because of rounding.

the neutral executor. He is both an advocate for his own beliefs and an active facilitator of external interests. More fully, Harmon asserts that

in contrast to rationalist administration, responsiveness in the proactive style is highly active. While recognizing legitimate legislative and legal constraints on his agency and himself, the proactive administrator is highly involved both in removing arbitrary barriers to interest articulation and in facilitating access of client groups (actual and potential) to the decision process. Responsible free choice is characterized by his advocacy of policies which are always subject to negotiation with the environment.<sup>24</sup>

While we lack data on the actual behavior of these administrators, the relationship between the discretion variable and support for citizen involvement implies a proactive or mobilizing style for it demonstrates that administrators who hold passive and formalistic views of their roles are less receptive to expanded citizen involvement than those evincing a preference for discretion. There is a question, however, as to whether this role orientation is independent of substantive ideological views — a matter we will explore later in this article.

#### *Views About the Political Process: Clientele Distance, Representational Equity, and Power Satisfaction*

Since expansions of citizen involvement require changes in normal procedures, we thought that administrators who perceived imbalances and inequities in the process of representation would be more likely to support increased involvement

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 504–5.

than those who saw all interests represented equitably. We also believed that administrators who were less satisfied with influence relationships in the political system would be more supportive of citizen involvement than those who were highly satisfied. Finally, we wanted to know whether administrators who preferred close relationships with their clienteles were more inclined to provide access for broader publics by supporting increased citizen involvement or were inclined to think of their clientele relationships in a narrow manner, undisturbed by the involvement of broader publics.

We noted earlier that nearly three-quarters of our respondents desired close relationships with their clienteles. If close relationships are viewed narrowly, however, as merely providing access for the articulate and well-organized, there is no reason to believe that a preference for close clientele relationships should coincide with support for wider citizen involvement. After all, widened involvement actually can destabilize functional relationships with existing clienteles. In other words, if citizen involvement means something substantially different from the traditional working arrangements forged between administrators and interest groups, there is no reason to expect that a preference for closer relationships of the latter sort would necessarily lead to support for wider involvement. Indeed, one might surmise that administrators who see close clientele relationships as undesirable would be more likely to prefer greater citizen involvement as a means of neutralizing established and entrenched clienteles and altering what Schattschneider calls the prevailing mobilization of bias.<sup>25</sup> From an alternative perspective, however, administrators who are receptive to access for the organized may be more inclined toward responsiveness in the first place and more inclined to view the articulation of all types of interests through the bureaucracy, including broadly conceived citizens' interests, as legitimate and desirable. Administrators who prefer distance from their clientele groups, given this interpretation, probably view broader involvement as even more disturbing and disruptive than that which already exists. In this view, administrators who prefer distant clientele relations should be less receptive to increasing citizen involvement than those who prefer proximate clientele relations.

We employed two measures to deal with the administrators' perceptions about imbalances in the representational process. One of these focuses on representational inequities at the level of the political system, the other at the level of the administrator's agency or programs. The first variable represents the administrators' responses to a question asking whether they thought that any groups in American society failed to have their interests adequately considered. Their responses are coded along a three-point scale. On one side of the scale are those who felt that some groups failed to have their interests adequately considered. At the other end of the scale are those respondents who claimed that all groups were represented adequately or if they were not, it was the fault of the group rather than the result of any defect in the system. In the middle category of the scale were respondents who insisted that all groups were considered adequately, but who then attached qualifications to this view by asserting, for example, that they might not be aware of all groups or that while all groups were considered, this did not mean that all benefited equally in terms of outcomes.

The second variable dealing with administrators' perceptions of representational equity focuses on whether administrators believe that some groups fail to have their interests adequately considered within their own agency or program. Though it was coded quite similarly to the variable dealing with equity of representation at the system level, there was a stronger tendency for respondents to be less equivocal in their responses here. Thus, the variable was dichotomized for this

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<sup>25</sup> E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), pp. 20-46.

analysis. While the two equity of representation variables are highly correlated ( $\text{Gamma} = .60$ ), their distributions differ markedly and there is further evidence in our data to indicate that they are measuring different perceptions.

Naturally, we expected that both equity variables would manifest strong relationships with a desire to expand citizen involvement. Since citizen involvement has been discussed as a means of broadening access and remedying inequities in the representational process, we thought it clearly should be related to perceptions of both system and agency-program representativeness, i.e., those who perceive inequities should approve increased citizen involvement.

Finally, we hypothesized that administrators satisfied with prevailing power relationships would be less receptive to expanded citizen involvement than those who were not so satisfied since more citizen involvement obviously means change. After describing for us their picture of the degree of influence exerted by various institutions and also interest groups over public policy, we asked our respondents whether they thought that any changes were necessary from the pattern they had described or whether they felt satisfied with the prevailing pattern. From their responses, we constructed an index of power satisfaction which indicated quite clearly that American federal executives are not much disenchanted with the system they maintain. Nevertheless, we did anticipate that those who were less satisfied would be more favorable to citizen participation and that a critical difference might be found between those who were very satisfied and those who, at least, did express some qualifications.

We see from Table 5 that modest to moderately strong relationships prevail for three of the variables discussed here, but the fourth, power satisfaction, has no relationship with citizen involvement. Those who are most satisfied are as likely to support more involvement (46 percent) as those who are least satisfied (43 percent). Obviously, administrators who are dissatisfied with existing arrangements are dissatisfied for a variety of reasons. When administrators who expressed less than complete satisfaction with existing arrangements were asked what aspects of the system they might change, only fourteen spontaneously asserted that the public should play an increased role in the policy process.

Although the correlations between each of the two equity variables and attitudes toward citizen involvement are in the proper direction, they are more modest than we expected. We originally hypothesized that the most important reason for preferring greater citizen involvement was to redress imbalances in the representational process. But these data and, also, the wide variety of themes illustrated in the quotations which we presented show that this is only one reason. It is especially intriguing that nearly half of the administrators who unqualifiedly believed that all groups in American society were considered adequately (45 percent) or that all groups in their agency's programs were adequately considered (48 percent) supported more citizen involvement. The fact that such a sizable minority of respondents failed to perceive inequities and still supported more citizen involvement attests to the resilience of participatory values in the American political culture.

The correlation between administrators' preferred relationships with clientele groups and their attitudes toward increased citizen involvement is especially interesting. Our data reveal that administrators who prefer close relationships with their clientele groups are substantially more supportive of increased citizen involvement than administrators who are skeptical of the value of close clientele relationships. Attitudes supportive of interest group facilitation, in other words, are not incompatible with attitudes facilitating access from broader publics. On the other hand, wariness of clientele groups is associated with distrust of involvement generally. In short, administrators who feel uncomfortable with the role of organized groups are less accepting of any public claims upon them, except perhaps those articulated through elected officials. Approval of the role of organized interest

TABLE 5. ATTITUDE TOWARD CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT BY ATTITUDES TOWARD CLIENTELE DISTANCE, BELIEFS ABOUT EQUITY OF REPRESENTATION, AND SATISFACTION WITH POWER RELATIONSHIPS

(a) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Preferred Clientele Relationships						
<i>Preferred Clientele Relationships</i>	<i>Favors More</i>	<i>Favors More, Qualified</i>	<i>Mixed Views</i>	<i>Opposes More, Qualified</i>	<i>Opposes More</i>	
Close .....	31%	33	12	12	12	100% (75)
Distant .....	17%	21	17	24	21	100% (29)
						(104)
		Gamma = .34				
(b) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Equity of Representation (System)						
<i>Are Some Groups Inadequately Considered (System)</i>						
Yes .....	30%	33	15	13	9	100% (69)
No, but qualified .....	11%	33	17	11	28	100% (18)
No .....	28%	17	11	28	17	101%* (18)
						(105)
		Gamma = .26				
(c) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Equity of Representation (Agency/Programs)						
<i>Are Some Groups Inadequately Considered (Agency/Programs)</i>						
Yes .....	30%	38	14	10	8	100% (50)
No† .....	22%	26	12	22	18	100% (50)
						(100)
		Gamma = .29				
(d) Attitude Toward Citizen Involvement by Satisfaction with Power Relationships						
<i>Existing Power Relationships</i>						
Satisfied .....	29%	17	15	29	10	100% (41)
Qualified Satisfaction .....	29%	37	14	11	9	100% (35)
Pro-Con .....	8%	75	—	8	8	99%* (12)
Qualified Dissatisfaction .....	20%	20	—	40	20	100% ( 5)
Dissatisfied .....	36%	7	21	—	36	100% (14)
						(107)
		Gamma = .00				

\* Percentages do not cumulate to 100% because of rounding.

† The "No" category includes 4 respondents who said that all groups were considered, but attached qualifications.

groups in administrative activity does not preclude acceptance of an increased role for others.

*Social Ideology: The Left-Right Social Services Continuum*

While the issue of expanding citizen involvement in government has many faces, the most heavily publicized aspects of it seem to have been associated with the social programs that were part of the Johnson Administration's "war on poverty." Although this aspect of the issue has generated the most controversy and also created the greatest problems for administrators, it seemed to us that administrators who believed the government should be more involved in providing social services and who were sympathetic to expanding social programs would also be more supportive of greater citizen involvement. As Presthus states: "What contemporary advocates of 'participation' desire is the broader sharing of access to include groups that possess fewer political resources."<sup>26</sup> Administrators who sup-

<sup>26</sup> Robert Presthus, *Public Administration*, 6th ed. (New York: Ronald Press, 1975), p. 107.

port programs designed to produce benefits for "dispossessed" groups should also be more likely to adopt views favorable to citizen participation than administrators who are either indifferent or hostile to such programs. A wide variety of social services and programs exist, of course, and only a few of these evoke the symbols of citizen involvement. Nevertheless, to the degree that citizen involvement represents a means by which to increase the political power of many of the recipients of social programs, we believed that the views held by administrators toward government activism in the social sector would help to shape their views toward citizen involvement.

To ascertain the ideological postures of administrators toward the provision of social services by government, we constructed a summary measure of each respondent's position on a left-right continuum. Placement on this continuum was based upon a respondent's support for, or opposition to, programs that allocated public funds for social services. The code ranges along a five-point continuum from support for a considerable expansion of government efforts in providing social services at one end, to endorsement of the existing balance of governmental activities in the center, to support for a much greater emphasis upon private enterprise and individual initiative in welfare matters at the other end. Coding was based upon views expressed throughout the entire interview, but special attention was paid to a set of questions dealing with the role of government in economic affairs, the kind of future society the respondent desired and the practical changes believed necessary to bring it about, and the respondent's distinction between political liberalism and conservatism.

The correlation between the Left-Right Social Services Continuum and support for citizen involvement is fairly high (Table 6). Administrators to the right of center have considerably less enthusiasm for citizen involvement than those who were coded to the left of center. Respondents who were coded farthest to the right on the social services continuum are overwhelmingly skeptical about the need for more citizen involvement. In fact, administrators who were coded farthest to the left support more citizen involvement (73 percent) in just about the same proportion as those farthest on the right oppose it (75 percent).

TABLE 6. ATTITUDE TOWARD CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT BY THE LEFT-RIGHT SOCIAL SERVICES CONTINUUM

<i>Left-Right Social Services Continuum</i>	<i>Favors More</i>	<i>Favors More, Qualified</i>	<i>Mixed Views</i>	<i>Opposes More, Qualified</i>	<i>Opposes More</i>	
Left .....	38%	35	21	3	3	100% (29)
Left-Center .....	40%	25	15	10	10	100% (20)
Center .....	22%	41	9	16	13	101%* (32)
Right-Center .....	13%	31	25	25	6	100% (16)
Right .....	8%	8	8	33	42	100% (12)
						(109)
						Gamma = .38

\* Percentages do not cumulate to 100% because of rounding.

The issue of citizen involvement, then, is tied to a left-right cleavage. Indeed, of the three previous predictors whose correlations with the attitude toward citizen involvement measure were of a magnitude of .30 or above, two of them — attitude toward discretion and agency — are strongly correlated with the left-right cleavage. (The Gamma coefficients are .65 and .60, respectively.) Changes in the relationship between each of these variables and attitudes toward citizen involvement when controlled for the left-right continuum (Table 7), indicate the extent to which the left-right cleavage seems to be dominant. The original discretion-citizen involvement relationship vanishes for administrators in the center and on the right of the

continuum. A modest, though reduced, relationship exists for those on the left. Thus, any independent contribution attributed to the discretion variable exists only for administrators who are left of center.

TABLE 7. ATTITUDE TOWARD CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT BY ATTITUDE TOWARD DISCRETION AND AGENCY CONTROLLED FOR THE LEFT-RIGHT SOCIAL SERVICES CONTINUUM

<i>Left-Right Social Services Continuum*</i>	ATTITUDE TOWARD DISCRETION <i>Gamma Coefficients</i>	AGENCY <i>Gamma Coefficients</i>
Left .....	.26 (35)	.07 (49)
Center .....	.09 (28)	.60 (32)
Right .....	.05 (22)	-.19 (28)

\* In order to retain a sufficient number of cases, the 5-point Left-Right Continuum was collapsed to a 3-point scale. The left category includes the original left and left-center codes and the right category includes the original right and right-center codes.

The relationship between the administrator’s agency and attitude toward citizen involvement is also altered profoundly when the left-right control is introduced. In this case, the relationship vanishes for administrators who are left of center, increases substantially for those in the center, and reverses direction for those who are right of center. For those on the left, ideology overshadows agency differences. While there are exceedingly few administrators in the social service agencies who are coded right of center, these individuals seem to be particularly skeptical about citizen involvement since none of them support greater involvement. Agency influences, however, are quite strong among administrators in the center of the left-right continuum. For administrators whose ideological commitments are not especially sharp, role context appears to be very influential in guiding views toward citizen involvement.

Despite the obvious importance of the left-right cleavage, it is essential to recall (Table 6) that 63 percent of those coded in the center of the left-right scale and even 44 percent of those just to the right of center supported at least some further level of citizen involvement. Such evidence points again to a participatory norm in American political culture that is clearly affected by ideological differences, but not completely bound by them.

SUMMARY

Recent years have witnessed a heightened concern about popular control of government activities, especially the activities of the large bureaucracies which administer government programs. While much has been said about the problem and many efforts have been undertaken to increase citizen participation, there is much confusion about how to go about it. One reason for this confusion is that the participation norm which is widespread in our society often conflicts with other commitments and beliefs: the commitment to administrative efficiency; the belief that expertise is required to solve complex problems and that experts merit and must be given great autonomy from public pressures if they are to perform their tasks effectively; and the belief that while, in a pluralist system, programs should be influenced by organized interests with a “responsible” interest in the policy area, consideration of an amorphous “public interest” and inclusion of representatives of an ill-defined “community” will lead to irresponsible inputs and even uncontrollable conflict. These value conflicts are also reflected in the views of American administrators on citizen involvement.

American federal executives do tend to believe that greater citizen involvement in governmental affairs is desirable, but many would agree with an HEW executive who said, “Being against it is like being against motherhood, but I’m not entirely sure what it means to be for it.” Administrators generally are sympathetic to the

goal, but most also have reservations and there is a sizable minority which expresses rather clear opposition. The reservations and opposition center on four major concerns: (1) that the citizens who become active in citizen participation programs are often unrepresentative of the publics they claim to represent; (2) that the citizens who are activated will not be responsible participants because they will not be held to account for program failures; (3) that more citizen involvement will hopelessly complicate an already complex and inefficient policy process; and (4) that citizens lack the expertise to make a useful contribution. Some administrators see the organized clientele groups now dominating the process of interest representation as the only legitimate interests worthy of representation.<sup>27</sup> A clear majority, however, would like to see greater citizen participation especially if mechanisms could be devised so that it did not clash with other values they hold.

When we examined the correlates of our citizen involvement measure we found that administrators in the social service agencies were the least opposed to increased citizen participation in the activities of government. To a very large extent this is so because administrators in the social service agencies are substantially more liberal than administrators in other agencies.<sup>28</sup> But the fact that citizen involvement programs often mean increased activities for the social services agencies and a strengthened clientele base must certainly reinforce these views on citizen participation. The comments of the social services administrators, however, indicate that their experiences with citizen involvement experiments also have made them well aware of the problems which accompany attempts to broaden citizen participation.

Administrators who preferred discretionary latitude in the the statutes governing their functions were much more positively oriented to increased citizen involvement than were those who had little taste for discretion. Support for discretion implies an activist, perhaps even an entrepreneurial orientation toward one's administrative role. Administrators who preferred discretion were much less likely to mention the problems other respondents raised when discussing citizen involvement. Perhaps their preference for a free-wheeling environment and the activist orientation this implies contributes to their lower level of apprehension about the problems which can accompany increased citizen involvement. Finally, in regard to the discretion variable, we should reemphasize its strong association with the left-right social services continuum and the fact that controlling for this measure of social ideology markedly diminishes the relationship between attitudes toward discretion and citizen involvement.

Support for increased citizen involvement was correlated with perceptions that some groups were not adequately represented in the policy process, but the correlations were not as strong as we had expected. We originally hypothesized that the most important reason for preferring greater citizen involvement would be a desire to redress imbalances brought about by inequities in the existing system of interest group representation. The data and the comments made by the administrators suggest that this factor, while important, is not dominant. There is a norm favoring citizen involvement which strongly affects even those who do not see inequities in the current system of group representation. In fact, administrators who prefer close relationships with their clientele groups are much more in favor of wider citizen involvement in government activities than are administrators who are wary of clientele group access.

<sup>27</sup> It should be recalled here that some of the respondents who are coded as most in favor of citizen participation conceive of it as synonymous with the traditional process of interest group representation.

<sup>28</sup> An extensive discussion of the liberal social ideologies of administrators in the social service agencies is to be found in Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman, "Clashing Beliefs Within the Executive Branch: The Nixon Administration Bureaucracy," *American Political Science Review*, 70 (June, 1976), especially pp. 461-463.

While we have examined variables that differentiate American federal executives' ideas about greater citizen involvement in the activities of government, we also have found rather broad support, in principle, for citizen involvement.<sup>29</sup> It is clear, however, from the reservations that many administrators have, that a fair amount of confusion exists as to how increased citizen involvement can be put into operation. The participation norm often conflicts with other values regarding administrative practice, especially efficiency, expertise, and accountability.

#### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It is true of course that being for involvement in the abstract is costless and we have detected little evidence to indicate a burning desire on the part of any but a few administrators to make citizen involvement an important priority. Acceptance of the participation norm does not mean that administrators will generate pressures for greater involvement or that they will act in ways consistent with this norm when conflicting values and constraints are brought into play. The pressures for greater citizen involvement are almost always likely to be generated from outside the administrative arena although they must be resolved within. Until these pressures are brought to bear and until mechanisms are established which reduce for administrators the saliency of conflicts between widespread participation and other norms of responsible and democratic administration, most administrators probably will sidestep the issue.

We can expect to see viable programs of citizen involvement mainly in areas of administration where there is little clash between the values and styles of the participants and the administrators. In those cases, especially, where the citizen-participants are largely seen as professional consultants, their involvement may tend to add greater legitimacy to the decisions made through the administrative process and even help to clarify acceptable options. Accordingly, technical and professional areas of decision-making are likely to be most amenable to the sustained involvement of outside citizen-experts. But this form of citizen involvement ultimately is not much removed from existing patterns of administrator-clientele relationships already found in many agencies.

On the other hand, programs designed to increase the direct involvement of low income groups as part of a package of ameliorative benefits undoubtedly will be more troubled. The lack of consensus surrounding these programs in the political system, the unclear objectives attached to them, the fierce and occasionally violent competition between elites of affected target groups, and the absence of participatory norms among the rank-and-file of such groups present great obstacles to seemingly forms of citizen involvement. Ironically, the obstacles to viable citizen involvement are most sizable in those program areas where the receptivities of administrators to more citizen involvement are also greatest. In short, citizen involvement is likely to be most effective where decision-making is essentially technical and least effective in areas of large social controversy, although the administrators in the latter areas may be most amenable, at least initially, to increased citizen participation.

It is clear that a delicate balance must often be struck between increased citizen involvement and effective performance. In a number of program areas, defining this balance will depend upon the negotiating skills and receptivities of field

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<sup>29</sup> A similar question was asked of a comparable sample of high level administrators in Britain, Germany, and Italy by Robert Putnam. Although the threshold for a pro-involvement response is a bit more stringent in the question posed to American administrators, the American and German samples are, by far, the most favorable to involvement. Fifty-six percent of each sample gave pro-involvement responses. Pro-involvement responses for the Italian and British samples are 38 percent and 29 percent respectively. We are grateful to Professor Putnam for making these data available to us.

administrators as well as those of the top level Washington administrators we have interviewed. Our data do not indicate how such a balance can be achieved. What they do indicate is that most American federal executives will not be reflexively hostile to administrative changes which embrace broader citizen participation. If this is by no means a sufficient condition to ensure the success of citizen involvement programs, it is at least a necessary one.