

Government 1521  
Bureaucratic Politics:  
Government, Military,  
Social and Economic Organizations

D. Carpenter

Lecture 03: Weberian Theory and  
Contingency Models

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Wilson:  
Study of Complex Administration is  
Study of Modern Government

“Administration is the most obvious part of government; it is government in action; it is the executive, the operative, the most visible side of government, and is of course as old as government itself.”

Later: Must examine the complexity of modern institutions.

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Weber: Ideal-Typical Analysis

“...one of course from the beginning has to keep his eye on the fluidity and the overlapping transitions of all these organizational principles. Their ‘pure’ types, after all, are to be considered merely as border cases which are especially valuable and indispensable for analysis. Historical realities, which almost always appear in mixed forms, have moved and still move between such pure types.” [ES, 244]

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## Modern Officialdom

- I. Principle of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is, by laws or administrative regulations.
1. The regular activities required for the purposes of the bureaucratically governed structure are distributed in a fixed way as official duties.
2. Authority to give the commands required for the discharge of these duties is distributed in a stable way and is strictly delimited by rules concerning the coercive means, physical, sacerdotal, or otherwise, which may be placed at the disposal of officials.
3. Methodical provision made for regular and continuous fulfillment of these duties and for the execution of the corresponding rights; only persons who have the generally regulated qualifications to serve are employed.

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## Modern Officialdom

- II. Principles of office hierarchy and of levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by higher ones.
- III. The management of the modern office is based upon written documents ("the files"), which are preserved in their original or draught form. There is, therefore, a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts.
- IV. Office management ... presupposes thorough and expert training.
- V. Official activity demands the full working capacity of the official.
- VI. Management of the office follows general rules.

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## Examples

- Educational?
- Military?
- Business?

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### Weber on Quasi-Reputation

Whether he is in a private office or a public bureau, the modern official always strives and usually enjoys a distinct social esteem as compared with the governed. His social position is guaranteed by the prescriptive rules of rank order and, for the political official, by special definitions of the criminal code against 'insults of officials' and 'contempt' of state and church authorities. [ES, 199]

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### Bureaucracy and Efficiency

"Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs – these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration, and especially in its monocratic form. As compared with all collegiate, honorific, and avocational forms of administration, trained bureaucracy is superior on all these points." [ES 214]

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### Weber: Bureaucracy Perfected with Law

- Work to be done on co-evolution of law (legal bodies) and administration by rules (bureaucratic bodies).
- Notice: this positive claim is opposed to some liberal claims about necessary opposition btw the two.
- Dovetails with "machine" character of bureaucracy [ES, 228]

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## Notions of Bureaucracy

- FORMALITY: Formalization. Bureaucracy proceeds according to written rules. Division of adm labor is defined according to written rules. Authority, status, legitimacy, all are defined according to written rules.
- RATIONALITY: Rationalization. Does not necessarily connote optimization or efficiency.
- Includes SPECIALIZATION. Like division of labor (Smith, Ricardo), except fixed, stable, official, and specified and delimited by written rules.
- CONCEPT OF “THE OFFICE” AND “THE OFFICIAL”:
- RECORDS-KEEPING: Records of past decisions are kept for reference to future ones (juridical value), and for purposes of contestation.

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## What are Not Bureaucracies in the Weberian Sense?

- (1) network-based organizations (social movement organizations, MoveOn.org, al Qaeda)
- (2) patrimonial or patriarchal authority (monarchies, some churches)
- (3) charismatic organizations: movements, militant organizations (al Qaeda?).
- (4) market-based structures: environmental protection through trading of pollution credits, stock exchange
- (5) contracting-based structures

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## Stinchcombe Critique

What’s essentially bureaucratic about Weberian definition?  
Rules, files? NO: continuity and centralization.

“The principal difference comes in the criterion:  
“Methodical provision is made for the regular and continuous fulfillment of these duties and for the execution of the corresponding rights.” It is not the rules governing jurisdiction and authority which we take to be characteristic of bureaucracy, but the **regularity and continuity of work and status** within an administrative system.” [1959: 184]

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## Stinchcombe: Bureaucratic Production

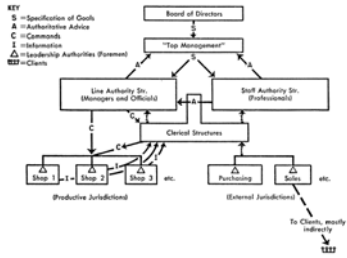


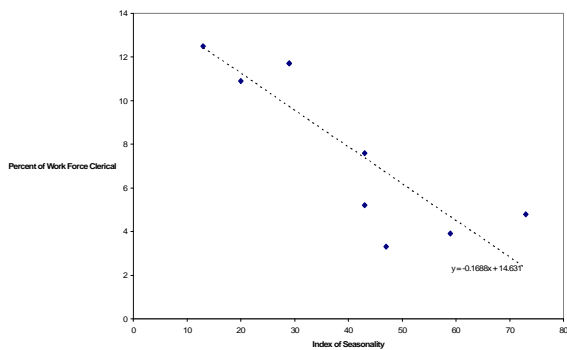
Chart 2. Administration of a mass production firm.

Table 3. The relationship between mean size of firm, seasonality of employment, and the percentage of the labor force clerks, for branches of the construction industry.\*

Type of contractor	Mean size of firms (1939)	Index of seasonality of employment (1926-1936)†	% of clerks in labor force‡
<i>More than 8 employees per contractor</i>			
Street, road, and sewer	12.3	73	4.8
Sand, gravel, excavation	9.9	43	7.6
Ventilating and heating	8.2	29	11.7
<i>4-8 employees per contractor</i>			
Brick, stone, and cement	5.5	47	3.3
General contracting	6.9	43	5.2
Sheet metal and roofing	4.9	29	11.7
Plumbing	5.1	20	10.9
Electrical	6.3	13	12.5
<i>Less than 4 employees per contractor</i>			
Painting and decorating	2.5	59	3.9

\*Taken from Vera Boethel and Sam Arnold, *Seasonal Employment in Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1944), Table 19, pp. 82-87. Plasterers are omitted from this table, because the number employed was not large enough to give a reliable figure on seasonality of clerks' work, the original purpose of the publication. There were less than 50 clerks in plastering enterprises in the state. Consequently the needed figure was not reported in the source. Plasterers' employment is very unstable, so the omission itself supports the need.  
 †See footnote 8.  
 ‡Excluding sales clerks.

Clerical Nature of Work by Seasonality (from Stinchcombe 1959)



### Regression examination of Stinchcombe's data

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reg percentoflaborforceclerical indexofseasonality meansizeoffirm, robust
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Linear regression

Number of obs = 9  
 F( 2, 6) = 24.37  
 Prob > F = 0.0013  
 R-squared = 0.7939  
 Root MSE = 1.9717

	Robust		t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
	Coef.	Std. Err.				
percentofl-1						
indexofsea-y	-.1876392	.0272658	-6.88	0.000	-.2543562	-.1209222
meansizeof-m	.3550399	.2047176	1.73	0.134	-.1458861	.8559658
_cons	12.94768	1.591291	8.14	0.000	9.053931	16.84143

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### Or Think Again

K. Hovnanian Homes: \$5.3B company in 2005.  
 Company owns and sells “styles.”  
 Toll Brothers Co.: (luxury homes, centrally designed styles): \$5.8B in 2005.

Stinchcombe’s response: “tract housing” not necessarily bureaucratic b/c the organization of work is craft oriented.

Less persuasive: Much of the work is centrally planned (home design, etc.), and centrally-developed rules **shape** much of the work.

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