Governance Through the Political System: Making and Implementing Policy

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Some decades ago Harold Lasswell (1950) defined politics as “Who Gets What”. This simple but powerful definition emphasizes the fundamental point that virtually all political action is directed toward using the power of the public sector to allocate goods and services among the members of a society. Some politics is symbolic (Edelman, 1985; Sears, 1993) and emotive, but to some extent even those components of political action may help to legitimate the political system and the decisions it must make about allocations of costs and benefits among citizens. Citizens may be willing to accept allocations with which they do not agree in part because of their emotional attachment to their government and the legitimacy associated with that attachment.

Perhaps the broadest possible manner in which to consider this process of allocating goods and services through the public sector is to employ the concept of governance. As we will develop more fully below the meaning of governance is contested rather vigorously in the academic community, but the fundamental notion of governance is that there is a need for some form of collective decision-making to steer the society. This functionalist conception of governance emphasizes that although the market may be an efficient mechanism for making individual choices, there is a need to make some decisions for the society as a whole. Further, those decisions may need to take into account a range of human values, not just economic values, and also attempt to accommodate influences from a range of actors.

The idea of governance therefore is to provide some means of collective steering for the economy and society. This steering activity is usually associated with government, and with the formal institutions of the public sector, but I will be arguing that the concept should be seen as agnostic about the manner in which the steering occurs (see Pierre and Peters, 2001). Increasingly although those formal institutions of the public sector continue to have a role in governing social actors—both market and societal—also have an influence (Sorenson and Torfing, 2007). This involvement of social actors is certainly true for democratic societies but may also be true for some less democratic systems that have sought to co-opt those social actors as part of their legitimation strategies.

The activity that we generally conceptualize as public policy-making is a major component of governance. The major means that governments have of exercising that steering function is to make policies and then to put those policies into action. The policy choices made through the State, and also involving societal actors, are directed at a range of targets, involve the use of a

1The root of the word governance, like government, is from a Greek word for steering. That is also the same root as the word cybernetics.
number of instruments, and reflect a variety of political, economic and social values. Further, the process through which governments make policy (and again this typically is done with the involvement of societal actors) is complex, often taking years to complete, and involves a large number of actors many of whom may be able to exercise a virtual veto over the actions (Tsebelis, 2002; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1976).

The emphasis on who gets what from political action is sometimes considered to be technical and apolitical, focusing on economic values of efficiency, or on the legalistic application of the law through public administration. Public policy is, however, anything but apolitical, and reflects the convergence of a wide array of political forces, all attempting to influence the policy choices in ways that will benefit them and their constituents. These political forces play themselves out through complex processes that move from the recognition of policy problems through to making decisions about what good policy would be through to evaluating the consequences of public action (Jones, 1984; Hill, 2005).

Although one component of the policy-making process, governance depends heavily upon the implementation of policies through a variety of political and social institutions, notably the public bureaucracy. Although a great deal of the attention of contemporary political science is directed at organizations and actors involved in making inputs into the political system—voting, political parties, policy networks, legislatures, etc.—the public bureaucracy remains the largest component of the public sector, and arguably the most significant for policy choices. Not only does the expertise of the public bureaucracy inform policy-making but the bureaucracy (see Meyer and Vorsanger, 2004) is much more commonly in touch with citizens than are other parts of the public sector.

This paper will follow the implicit outline already presented, by beginning with the most general concept of governance, moving on to the policy-making process as a major component of public action in governing, and conclude by discussing public administration and its importance in implementing, as well as making public policy. All these aspects of governing are necessarily linked in the “real world” and in theory, but each of them also needs to be considered separately to understand better how the three do interact. The three perspectives all combine to provide a picture of what the public sector actually does and how it affects the lives of citizens.

Studying these three aspects of political science involves the interrelationship of policy and administrative issues that occur in the real of public governance with the analytic and theoretical approaches that we as social scientists employ to interpret and understand those problems. While there is some tendency to focus on the objective problems in these areas, given that they have more than a little practical relevance, we must also emphasize the role of theory. This emphasis on theory is especially important given that some of the same strands of theory, e.g. institutionalism and bounded rationality, can be applied across these areas. Therefore, this paper will be a rather tour d’horizon designed to identify the principal issues and approaches in these parts of the discipline of political science.

**Governance and Political Science**
The basic idea of governance has been in political science as long as there has been such a discipline, but the concept has become more central to studying politics over the past several decades. The exact date and source of the revival of the term is perhaps not important. Through the founding of the journal Governance in 1987. What is more important is that the discipline has been supplementing its general concern with individual political behavior with greater concern with what the political processes and all that individual behavior produce by working through institutions and processes. The outcomes of governance can be conceptualized to include not only policy choices but also the general management of the political and social systems. These outcomes would therefore including the capacity to involve members of the public in the governance process, the building of trust and social capital, and what Canadians might recognize as the maintenance of “peace, order and good government”.

At its most basic level governance means the capacity to steer the economy and society toward collective goals. That definition does not privilege any particular actors or any particular institutions, but instead recognizes the functional need to provide that steering and then attempts to understand how the process is carried out. One of the most important distinguishing features between governance and other forms of social action, e.g. markets, is the notion of collective goals and their centrality in steering. Other forms of social action, e.g. the market, assume individual goals are sufficient, or that goals emerge through interaction, but a governance perspective assumes that goals emerge through collective choice of some sort.

Governance models in political science therefore are at their heart functionalist explanations for the processes of governing writ large. In this way the governance approach to political science has some affinity with the structural-functionalist approaches used in comparative politics in the 1960s and 1970s (see Almond and Powell, 1966; Finkle and Gable, 1971). In those approaches there was an assumption that some form of collective choice is necessary, but they were agnostic about which actors are to be involved in fulfilling that need for society, and the variations in the way in which decisions were made was the locus for comparison. For governance there is the same assumption concerning the need for collective choice, and the approach should be agnostic about how it is performed, as well as being agnostic about the range of activity that will be subject to collective control and that which is better left to market and society.

The major contrast concerning governance that has been made in contemporary political science is between government and governance. The traditional assumption in political science was that governance almost inherently was the appropriate province of the institutions within the formal public sector. To the extent that non-governmental actors were involved in the process, then they were to different degree suspect. The degree of suspicion concerning non-governmental actors varied with political cultures. For example, the pluralist traditions in Anglo-American countries has tended to assume that interest groups pursue “the private use of public power” (Lowi, 1967; Schattschneider, 1960). On the other hand, however, most of the countries of Northern and Continental Europe have some tradition of corporatist involvement of private

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2My colleague Colin Campbell and I can claim some credit, or blame, for the revival

3That phrase is in the Constitution Act of 1867 that established the Confederation.
sector actors in making and implementing policy (Schmitter, 1974; Molina and Rhodes, 2002) and tend not to denigrate and often laud that involvement.

This contrast between government and governance (see, for example, Tiihonen, 2004; Rhodes, 1997) has emerged as a central analytic question for scholars concerned with governance. Many scholars advocating the governance perspective have argued that the formal institutions of the public sector have become increasingly incapable of providing that scarce commodity called governance. The formal organizations of the public sector are characterized as bureaucratic, clumsy, and incapable of coping with the rapidly changing societies with which they are confronted. There is ample evidence of policy failure (for a variety of evidence see Bovens, ‘t Hart and Peters, 2001) and the under-performance of the public sector in many countries that has been used to justify the position that governments are not able to provide governance.

As well as being weak in efficiency terms, critics of conventional forms of government have argued that they are also weak in democratic terms. The institutions of representative democracy appear not to be able to capture the enthusiasm of many citizens, and levels of voting in most industrial democracies have been decreasing (Wattenberg and Dalton, 2002; Pharr and Putnam, 2000). Likewise, membership in political parties and many other political organizations appears to be dropping rather inexorably. To the extent that there has been successful political mobilization much of its has been around “flash parties” that are developed around and individual or around a particular political issue. The advocates of the “New Governance” therefore believe that providing other loci and methods of political participation will make public action more democratic as well as more capable of solving collective problems.

Even if citizens were engaged in the mass politics of representative democracy, the capacity of those institutions to translate their preferences into effective policy choices is clear. Richard Rose (1974) pointed out some years ago that even in majoritarian Westminster systems voting was an extremely blunt instrument to use to control policy choices. In addition, the divided government literature (Elgie, 2000; Müller and Strom, 2003) helps to understand the extent to which coalition governments further complicate democratic control over policy. And these governance constraints become even more apparent as governments move away from direct ministerial mechanisms for service delivery that are driven more by market and social actors than by political controls (see Considine, 2002).

The lack of agreement about what governance actually means has been addressed in part by adding various adjectives to the basic concept. One of the most important of these more circumscribed terms has been “network governance” (Sorenson and Torfing, 2007), and indeed a good deal of the movement toward governance as an approach to political life has been focused on the capacity of networks to provide governance. The basic conviction of network governance is that self-organizing networks of social actors are better suited to coping with the complexity of contemporary governing demands than are hierarchical mechanisms. The “New

4 There are some notable counter-examples, such as turnout in the French presidential election of 2007, and the high level of involvement of American voters in the 2008 primary season.

5 One of the best examples was Pim Fontyen’s list in the Netherlands, and many anti-tax parties have been formed in the same manner.
Governance” of networks (see Rhodes, 1996; Salamon, 2002) is assumed to be better able to cope with that complexity and to respond to changing social conditions.

Another way of limiting the meaning of governance has been to focus on “good governance”, generally meaning the reduction of corruption and the creation of greater accountability, especially in less developed political systems. This version of governance has been dominant in much of the international donor community that is seeking not only to describe governance but also improve public sector performance (see Woods, 1999). Some scholars, however, have begun to focus on the quality of governance in a more general light, attempting to understand what features of political systems may be associated with the capacity to improve the quality of life of citizens.

The linkages between institutional and behavioral characteristics of political systems and the quality of public decisions is often tenuous, but establishing that linkage can help in the development in both understanding governance within comparative politics and enhancing the actual performance of the public sector. There is as yet very little discussion of the design of governance systems, but the accumulation of evidence may provide for that version of “constitutional engineering” just as knowledge about formal public sector institutions has generated some design principles.

Governance has been discussed primarily at the national level but the concept can be used to discuss steering capacity at all levels. For example, “global governance” has been used to describe steering at the international level (Held and McGrew, 2002). At this level the State often ceases to be the major actor in governance, much as national governments cease to be the principal actors in some models of governance. Instead, regimes (March and Olsen, 2005) composed of non-governmental actors are often central to providing some control over policy areas that governments may not be able to, or want to. Although states have attempted to exert some control over areas such as climate control the non-governmental actors may prove to be more effective.

Urban areas, and other sub-national levels, also require governance and these regions experience all the problems of mobilizing consent and exercising control over policy choices that the national level may encounter (Pierre, 2008). Indeed, networks and other forms of social actors may be more significant at the local level than at the national level, and much of the study of local politics has revolved around these interactions between formal and informal actors (Stone, 2005; Stoker, 2000). Perhaps more than at other levels of government urban areas have developed complex patterns of service delivery that correspond to the governance ideas of involving a range of private sector actors in the process of steering.

One of the more important aspects of the development of governance as a means of understanding comparative politics has been the development of “multi-level governance” (Marks, Hooge and Blank, 1996; Bache and Flinders, 2004). While students of federalism

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"The notion of quality is, of course, normative and potentially subjective. At the same time, however, some reasonable measures can be used to approximate quality and these
(Heuglein and Fenna, 2006) and of intergovernmental relations more generally might consider that this term has to some extent reinvented a very old wheel, the prominence of the concept of multi-level governance has emphasized the complexity of the processes through which public programs are made and implemented. The basic point of multi-level governance is that most attempts to govern in the early 21st century involve interactions among multiple levels of government, as well as interactions between the public and private sectors.

The multi-level governance approach also points to the extent to which the contemporary State has been disaggregated and the linkage between the structure of states and the governance being provided. As the public sector has moved a large number of its activities to agencies and quangos (Pollitt and Talbot, 2004), or has developed mechanisms such as public-private partnerships to deliver services more efficiently, the capacity for control from the center is reduced. Hooghe and Marks (2003) point to the variable consequences of the different mechanisms for disaggregating the central state, but the general consequence has been to reduce the steering capacity of the center of government.

The need to understand reactions to disaggregation and the empowering non-State actors in governance has been leading to the thinking about the capacity to restore some direction from the center. The concept of “meta-governance” (O’Toole, 2007; Peters, 2008) has been coined to reflect the need for central steering the context of a more decentralized and devolved world of political action. Meta-governance is the governance of governance, or the attempt to provide create some coherence out of very decentered policy processes. Meta-governance does not imply a return to the command and control style of governing associated with the hierarchical State, but rather reflects an attempt to steer through frames and guidelines rather than through hierarchy and formal rules.

Meta-governance also represents an attempt on the part of many political leaders to reassert the primacy of politics. If networks and other forms of devolved political action are increasingly dominating political life then the connection between voting and policy choices are becoming more attenuated. Political leaders therefore have felt the need to control policy without necessarily undermining some of the efficiency and legitimation gains achieved by using the devolved and marketized methods of governing. In some cases these attempts at control have involved overt politicization of the public service, but in others have involved softer forms of steering and control.

Even if one accepts that a great deal of the action of governing has been shifted away from formal institutions in the public sector and toward devolved and delegated action, it is important to remember that this activity is always being done in the “shadow of hierarchy” (Scharpf, 1997). That is, if the market or social actors being given grants of power fail to perform adequately in making and implementing policy then the State can always revoke its delegation and resume control over the policy. The reassertion of hierarchical control would go beyond the softer controls associated with meta-governance to recapture direct control of policy, and the more direct imposition of the priorities of elected politicians.

At the same time that governing is carried on in the shadow of hierarchy, to some extent more
formal patterns of governing is carried on in the “shadow of governance”. We know that the policy-making processes of the public sector do fail (Wolfe, 1987; Bovens, ‘t Hart and Peters, 2001) all too often and therefore creating policy arrangements that rely more heavily on non-State actors provides political leaders an opportunity to correct for, or perhaps avoid, those failures. In part, the capacity to move activities that may fail within the State out of the center is an important means of blame avoidance for politicians (Weaver, 1986; Ross, 2000). Using market and non-State actors can, of course, be a less “political” strategy and more a reflection of the capacity of those institutions to act in ways that the public sector can not, whether that is being less bureaucratic in the pejorative sense of the term or being able to respond more nimbly to changing conditions, or being able to leverage human and financial resources that are out of the reach of government.

In summary, the governance turn in political science has brought the discipline back to some of its roots in thinking about the capacity of the public sector to provide coherent direction to society. Clearly in the case of failed states this type of governance is not possible, and even for some more successful political systems it can be sporadic and inconsistent. Further, governance is not just about the success or failure of the formal public sector but also involves the capacity of those institutions to interact successfully with social actors, and also increasingly the capacity to interact with the global environment.

Public Policy

Public policy studies is the second major body of to be considered when thinking about the outputs of the public sector. Most political scientists do not think of themselves as “policy scientists” of the type advocated by Lasswell (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950) but in essence we are. The individualistic turn in political science, reflected in both the behavioral and rational choices approaches to the discipline, have diverted attention from the output side of the political system toward aspects of of political life where institutions and processes are less dominant features. For many political scientists operating in those approaches public policy is something better left to the economists or to professions such as planning.

Although the two aspects of political science–policy and individual behavior--are in fact more complementary than competitive they tend to ignore each other and to press the primacy of one or the other. This is most unfortunate given that it is individuals, working singly or collectively, who must make policy decisions and we need to know more about how they make those decisions. Likewise, public policies frame a good deal of the political action by individuals, so that voting may be voting for or against specific policy choices, or rational political actors must be exercising some preferences have as one

The Policy Process

I must acknowledge the contribution of John Hulten at the University of Lund for bringing this to my attention.
The study of public policy in political science has several important but somewhat disparate dimensions. The largest single body of research has been on the policy process (Jones, 1984; Hill, 2005). This approach to policy is inherently political, arguing that the policy choices made by government are primarily a function of the political process through which they are made. The majority of the process models attempt to explain policy choices by understanding the actors who are involved at each of these stages, as well as understanding linkages among the stages. These models are, however, far more useful as heuristics for describing the process than they are as means of explaining outcomes.

The conventional process model of policy-making begins with agenda-setting or problem definition and then proceeds through a series of steps such as program design, legitimation, resource attachment and evaluation, but typically did not have any strong assumptions about the political mechanisms that were used to manage that movement. Although some elements within the general model, e.g. agenda-setting (Kingdon, 1995) relied on the role of policy entrepreneurs to provide agency within the process, the general models tended to be largely devoid of that animation.

Further, the process model as usually used in political science did not reflect the degree of conflict that might exist in these crucial political processes—the process rather appeared to move along rather smoothly to its conclusion. One important addition to process models that did contain that conflict was Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith’s (1993) “Advocacy-coalition framework”. This model was concerned with explicitly with policy change, and argued that policy change came about through the clash of ideas, as manifested in an existing policy coalition and a potential replacement. These conflicts could be worked out through bargaining processes, often generating a new synthesis about policy, that would in turn be institutionalized and set the stage for the next round of policy change.

In addition to the general model of the policy process, there has been a substantial degree of theorizing about various components of the policy process. In particular, political scientists have been concerned with agenda-setting, budgeting, implementation, and at one point in evaluation. Interestingly, the study of the legislative process by which policy is made tends to be somewhat divorced from the study of the content of the policy itself. This separation from policy concerns has been particularly true of the study of the US Congress that has concentrated on rather arcane issues of rules that facilitate formation of certain types of

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*I*ntervention

The first of these components of the policy-making process to emerge as a distinctive field for...
research was implementation. Although the term is hardly new it was brought to center-stage in policy studies by Pressman and Wildavsky (1974). They focused attention on the difficulties of taking legislation and making it work in “the real world”, and especially the difficulties in making it work in the manner intended by the framers of the legislation (see also Lane, 1981). The developed this analysis by identifying the number of clearance points that had to be passed successfully if the program were to go into effect. While their analysis of the difficulties of implementation was perhaps excessively pessimistic (Bowen, 1982; Alexander, 1989), it did help frame a fundamental policy problem in a strong analytic model.

The Pressman and Wildavsky framework for understanding implementation is a top-down perspective on the process, while the process may also be analyzed from a bottom-up perspective. The bottom-up perspective assumes that programs might be better designed from the perspective of the prospective of implementation. This “backward mapping” (Elmore, 1982) perspective assumes that programs might ultimately be more effective if their final implementation were central to their formation. Although criticized as putting implementation ahead of policy goals, this approach does emphasize the key role of implementation in making programs actually work.

A third wave of implementation research emphasized quantitative studies of the success and failure of implementation efforts, relying heavily on measures that were in many ways difficult to sustain in the face of the complexity of the implementation process. If anything the complexity of implementation has become even greater. For example, implementation increasingly involves multiple actors at multiple levels of government (O’Toole, 2004), or perhaps also actors in the private sector.

**Budgeting**

Aaron Wildavsky (1967) was also central to the emergence of public budgeting as an area of concerted research in political science. In contrast to economists who looked at the public budget as a search for a Pigovian optimal allocation, Wildavsky saw budgeting in a much more political manner, emphasizing the importance of structure and process in producing the outcomes. In particular the repetitive nature of budgeting, and the multiple organizations involved in the process (at least in the United States), tended to produce incremental outcomes. There was also some individual element involved in this model of incrementalism, given that many of actors involved played the “game” year after year and their memories and their interpersonal trust also influenced the outcomes.

After his initial insights into the American budgetary process, Wildavsky and his colleagues made a number of other important contributions a political understanding of budgeting. First, he formalized and tested the incremental model of budgeting (Davis, Dempster and Wildavsky, 1966), and demonstrating that there was a great deal of predictability in the decisions made for

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9For an interesting, if highly personal, account of implementation research see Barrett, 2004.
10Some pride of place should also go to V. O. Key (1940) and to Alan Peacock and Jack
the US federal budget. Further, Wildavsky and colleagues developed alternative models that could describe budgetary choices in other types of political systems. Finally, Heclo and Wildavsky (1974) provided a detailed analysis of budgetary decision-making in the British Treasury, again emphasizing the importance of trust in these deliberations.

Although the seminal work by Wildavsky sparked a number of interesting elaborations of budgeting, and critiques of the incremental model. Unfortunately, however, that interest in budgeting has not been maintained, even with its centrality in governing. To the extent that it has been maintained the interest in budgeting has been found largely among rational choice scholars who see the budget as a logic locus for actors to seek to maximize their own benefits, and to pursue interesting strategies in order to do so (Kraan, 1994).

The incremental ideas that have been central to understanding budgeting in the United States, and to a lesser extent elsewhere are related to more general analytic approaches emphasizing the likelihood, and the desirability, of incremental decision-making (Lindblom, 1965). In this view the public sector will produce better governance through successive limited comparisons rather than through attempting to make a single, correct and comprehensive decision. While such a pattern of governing can be condemned as excessively conservative, the logic also corresponded well to the American political style from which it had evolved.

At a more theoretical level, beginning with Herbert Simon’s (1947) work, the logic of bounded rationality has been a powerful contender to the attempted domination of more rationalistic approaches to policy, and to politics more generally. In this view any attempt at comprehensive rationality in public decision-making is doomed to failure, so that the more appropriate course of action is to make a series of smaller decisions, examining the outcomes of those decisions in turn and adjusting. Further, the objective of the policy-making exercise is better understood as satisficing rather than maximizing utilities, so that all decision-makers must find is a decision that is good enough rather than one that is optimal.

**Agenda-Setting**

Agenda-setting is the final element of policy process that has achieved a great deal of prominence in the discipline. Cobb and Elder (1983) were responsible for bringing the idea of agenda-setting to a central place in the study of policy. The basic argument is, of course, that nothing can be done about a problem in society unless it is identified and transferred to the active agenda of a political institution. Thus, one of the most important aspects of political mobilization is generating awareness of the issue, and some commitment on the part of politicians to attempt to deal with the issue.

Cobb and Elder’s approach to agenda-setting was largely purposive, but later approaches to this stage of policy-making emphasized the almost random elements of the process. In particular John Kingdon’s (1995) work emphasized the need for a “policy window” to open before an issue can be put on the agenda. This idea if not dissimilar to the garbage can model of decision-making (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972) in the bounded rationality literature mentioned above,
which argues that decisions are largely the product of the fortunate confluence of opportunities and ideas and actors. This is, of course, in marked contrast to the usual rational assumptions about how social and political decisions are made.

The agenda-setting literature has been expanded significantly by Baumgartner and Jones’s (199x) discussion of patterns of movement of issues on and off active agendas. Using some of the same terminology as the historical institutionalism such as “punctuations” to emphasize the rather abrupt changes in the visibility and the salience of policy problems. Their plotting of the dynamics of agenda in American politics has generated a large new area of inquiry in the United States and in other countries that has made significant progress in mapping the sources of policy change, and the political foundations of policy choices.

**Policy Causes Politics**

A second strand of theorizing about policy in political science has to some extent reversed the logic of the process model, and argued that policy produces politics (Lowi, 1972). This model involves the assumption that four fundamental types of policy tend to be associated with certain types of political action. For example, redistributive policies are assumed to be associated with the immediate applicability of coercion focused on the environment of conduct rather than the conduct itself. Salisbury and Heinz (1974) used a similar set of policy variables, although related them more to the types of demands being placed on the policy-making system and the degree of fragmentation of that policy-making system.

The model developed by Lowi has motivated a great deal of empirical research (see Smith, 2002) as well a number of theoretical critiques. Perhaps the most fundamental contribution has been, however, to make political scientists think about policies in more analytic categories. There is always the tendency to think about policies in terms of the names one finds on government buildings—agriculture, defense, housing, etc. That manner of thinking is useful, but only useful up to a point and may mask some of the internal variations in individual policy areas.

A slightly different version of the “policy causes politics” approach is the argument made by Gary Freeman (1985) and others that the differences across political systems are not as great as the differences across policy areas. The technical and political foundations of a policy area such as health may be more similar across countries than are those foundations for disparate policy areas within a single system. As policy ideas spread across national boundaries these common aspects of policy may become more similar. Pressures from globalization and from Europeanization (Knill, and Lenschow, 1998) have tended to homogenize policy across national boundaries, further reinforcing Freeman’s argument.

**Policy Styles**

To be able to understand public policy it is important to consider the policy choices made by any one country (or sub-national unit) it is important to compare those choices with the choices made by other countries. That comparison could be done on a policy by policy basis, as described for the Welfare State below, or we could typify the policy-making style of the political system in
question. In this case, rather than policy being assumed to cause policy, policy is being used to characterize the political systems, and is used as the lens through which to make the comparison of those systems.

Jeremy Richardson (198x) made the first major analysis of policy styles in Western Europe, arguing that the policy styles in these countries could be characterized by two variables. One was an active-reactive dimension, assessing the extent to which a county attempted to anticipate policy problems.

Almost all the research on policy styles has been done on the industrialized democracies. This pattern has the advantage of holding some important variables, notably wealth and democracy, relatively constant. There have been some attempts to assess the policy styles of less affluent countries, generally attempting to build something on the order of a model of policy-making for one region or another.

Policy Instruments

Implementation studies have been concerned with the ability to transform stated policies into effective action. The ability to make that difficult translation from law to action involves a number of components, but some of the more important elements is the choice of a policy instrument, or tool (Hood, 1976; Peters and Van Nispen, 1998; Salamon, 2002a). The basic idea of policy instruments is that the public sector can achieve its goals using a variety of different types of programs—subsidies, regulation, vouchers, etc.—and each of these instruments will have different substantive and political characteristics that will influence the likely success of the program being implemented.

While it is common to think of these instruments in more or less technical terms, it is crucial to remember that they do have a strong political dimension. For example, as the politics of governing have changed to cast suspicion on direct public sector interventions then many of the conventional “command and control” instruments of the public sector such as regulation have been exchanged for softer instruments (Morth, 2003). The choice of policy instruments may also reflect the need to build coalitions to have legislation adopted. For example, much of the Federal support for university students in the United States is provided through private bank loans guaranteed by government. While it might be more efficient to have the loans managed through the universities it was important to create a political ally in the banking industry.

The study of policy instruments leads to a number of other, even more difficult, questions about public policy and the possibilities of effective public sector intervention. The most fundamental of these is that the choice of instruments raises the possibilities of policy design. Do policy analysts, whether in political science or not, have the ability to design better policies? To do so requires some understanding of the causation of policy problems, the relationship of those problems to the instruments available to address those issues, and some normative basis to evaluate the outcomes of the policy intervention (Linder and Peters, 198x; Eliadas, Hill and Howlett, 2005). The design issue also raises the question of whether the simple functional
categories we generally use for policy are sufficient to capture the complexity of the challenges faced with attempting to match instruments to the underlying dimensions of policy problems (Peters and Hoornbeek, 2005).

**Discourse and Deliberation**

The majority of thinking about public policy has been in a strongly objective model, attempting to measure policies as dependent variables and then finding the factors that explain those policy choices. Likewise, economic and utilitarian values tend to undergird much of this analysis, assuming that policies are best understood in terms of improving the economic well-being of the objects of the policy. One strand of reasoning in political science, however, argues that policy is best understood in more linguistic terms. The assumption of deliberative models (see Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Fischer, 2003) is that the discourse surrounding the policy, and conflicts between alternative discourses, define the ways in which policy choices are made. Of course, utilitarian values are one discourse, but only one among many possible set of values that can guide policy choices.

The use of discourse and deliberative models is often best applied in areas such as science policy and some aspects of environmental policy where there are often widely diverging understandings of the nature of the policy. Herbert Gottweiss (200x), for example, has examined the deliberative aspects of research on human biology, and there have been a number of studies of environmental policy that apply the deliberative approach to policy analysis. These studies have demonstrated the range of values that may be involved in complex policy issues as well as something of the ways in which those almost inherent conflicts may be resolved.

**Welfare State**

I could write a section in this paper on any number of policy areas; there is no shortage of books and articles with the title “The Politics of XX Policy”. I will not go through all of those interesting possibilities but rather will focus attention on the development of, and then the challenges to, the Welfare State. This special treatment is justified because not only have Welfare State politics and policy been central to the legitimation of the contemporary political systems in Europe, and to some extent the rest of the world\(^{11}\), but the Welfare State has played a central role in theorizing about the politics of public policy. Further, the study of the Welfare State has to some extent integrated the study of policy, comparative politics, and normative political theory\(^ {12}\).

The development of the Welfare State, and of the various forms which this policy regime has

\(^1\) It is important to remember that many countries in Latin America, e.g. Argentina and Uruguay, developed welfare State programs before many of their European counterparts. See Mesa-Lago (1978).

\(^2\) On the normative dimension see, for example, T. H. Marshall (1963), and Richard Titmuss (1963).
assumed, has been a rich vein of research and theorizing. Gosta Esping-Andersen’s *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitals* (1990) is perhaps the most famous work of this sort. Esping-Andersen identified three types of Welfare States, based on the extent to which labor was commodified and the welfare system was seen as replacement for labor or simply as more of a right of citizenship. Although the Esping Andersen work has been central to thinking about the Welfare State there have been a number of other studies that have attempted to explain patterns of development and differences in the contemporary systems. For example, Flora and Heidenheimer (1981) constructed a development model to explain welfare policy choices, taking into account explicitly the differences between Europe and North America.

Although the Welfare State project has been central to legitimating the States of Western Europe, and in improving the quality of life for most citizens of those countries, the model for building a social safety net for all members of society has been under a good deal of pressure since at least the late 1970’s. The oil crisis of the 1970’s brought the cost of these programs to greater public attention, and those costs have only continued to increase. Further, with the continuing aging of the societies with well-developed Welfare States will exacerbate the financial problems. In addition to the manifest fiscal problems of the Welfare State, this model of governing has been the source of large-scale ideological assaults driven by shifts in the consensus that had dominated policy. Those assaults came from both the political right and, less predictably, from the political left complaining about the depersonalization and bureaucracy of the Welfare State.

The pressures on the Welfare State have engendered a number of important studies that have integrated the study of the policies themselves with the study of comparative politics. For example, Paul Pierson (2001; see also Leibfried and Mau, 2008) and his collaborators have been concerned with the role of demographic and fiscal pressures on the erosion, or at least recasting, of many Welfare State programs, even in the countries that have been among the most committed to this style of governing. Rather than being a simple economic response, however, these transformations are considered in a very political light, reflecting the variety of pressures being exerted on government and the internal politics of organizations within the public sector itself.

The pressures on the Welfare State reflect the confluence of political, economic and social change and the impact of that juncture of forces on a set of very successful public programs. Somewhat ironically, the Welfare State that had been crucial for legitimating the State has now become a source of delegitimation in many political systems. In an era of neo-liberal economics and politics, these programs no longer have an uncontested place in governing, but yet remain crucial for the well-being of many segments of society.

**Public Administration**

The third body of literature to be included in this essay, public administration, has been a component of studying the public sector virtually since that inquiry began. Governments have

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13For critiques see Goodin and xx (199x) and Bambra (2004)
always had to have some means of implementing their programs (see above) and the public bureaucracy has been central to that role. As important as public administration is in implementation, however, its roles are not limited to that activity, and public administrators play a major role in shaping public policy (Page and Jenkins, 2005) and making public policy directly (Kerwin, 2006). Finally, civil servants also play a role, and an increasing role, in linking the public sector and the public, so that public administration has become a central locus for emerging forms of democratic control over governing processes.

_Bureaucracy_

To this point I have been discussing bureaucracy and public administration as virtually identical concepts, but the two should be differentiated. Public administration is the more general term, while bureaucracy refers to a particular organizational form, and especially to the Ideal type model of bureaucracy developed by Max Weber (1946). That conceptual distinction does not prevent, however, bureaucracy being used as a word of opprobrium for public administration, referring the perceived inefficiency and excessive formality of those public organizations (but see Du Gay, 2000; Goodsell, 2004).

As the concept was developed by Weber bureaucracy was meant to be the highest level of development of rational-legal governance. Rather than oppressing the public, as now often argued, the bureaucracy should provide both greater equality and greater transparency than the traditional forms of governance that it would replace. The reliance on law, the separation of the bureaucracy from political controls, and the development of the files were assumed to allow citizens to know when decisions were being made in their case, and to have some justification for those decisions. These patterns would be markedly different from the patrimonial administrations that characterized many governments at the time that Weber wrote, and which also characterize many governments in the early 21st Century.

Although the Weberian model of bureaucracy and associated model of the state were dismissed almost completely by reformers stressing markets (see New Public Management below) and/or social networks as alternatives to the hierarchy of bureaucracy, the bureaucratic model has made something of a comeback. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) have argued for the emergence of a “Neo-Weberian State” that would reassert some of the values of bureaucracy, albeit while retaining many of the reforms that have produced greater efficiency in the public sector (see also Olsen, 2007). In particular the Neo-Weberian State is an attempt to recapture accountability for service delivery instruments that have become increasingly divorced from controls by legislatures and political executives.

_The New Public Management_

The Weberian style of bureaucracy produced a number of benefits for the public sector, and for citizens, but it has was also the focus for intense criticism. Rigidity, reliance on formal authority, impersonality and over-specialization were but a few of the numerous criticisms leveled at
formal bureaucracy. Beginning during the end of the 1970s, the New Public Management (Hood, 1991) posed a series of challenges to the bureaucratic model, and to some extent became a new paradigm for public administration.

New Public Management (NPM) has been defined in any number of ways, and has been argued to be both the salvation and damnation of the public sector. At its most fundamental NPM implies at least: 1) the use of market-type mechanisms for public policy and for public management, and 2) an emphasis on the role of managers in the public sector, often using the mantra of “let the managers manage” (see Peters, 2001). To this core set of ideas in NPM might be added some notion of the citizen as an important actor in the process, although citizens more likely to conceptualized as customers than as full-fledged citizens participating in a democratic, political process.

As New Public Management has evolved the style of governing has become one of making the managers manage rather than merely letting them manage. Performance management has been one of the principal instruments for that change in emphasis (Bouckaert and Halligan, 2007). The measurement of the outputs of individuals and programs, and using that information to make decisions about budgets, retention and other important outcomes for the organization and its managers places pressure on those managers to perform as well as possible. To be successful, however, that performance must be measured well and there must be means of enforcing the results (Radin, 2006).

**Public Personnel**

The people who work for the public sector are one of the crucial elements explaining the relative success or failure of administration. There is little disagreement on the proposition that the public should, to the extent possible, employ the “best and brightest”. The tasks performed by public employees are at least as difficult as those performed in the private sector so that high quality employees are crucial. Indeed, management in the public sector is almost certainly more difficult than in the private sector, given the absence of clear criteria for success and failure, the transparency of most of the operations, and the absence of control over many aspects of the personnel and budget systems. In addition, top management has a number of interpersonal demands when dealing with ministers that may be unmatched anywhere else.

Public personnel management raises a number of highly technical questions about the employment, training and motivation of public employees, but there are several crucial political questions as well. I will focus on those political questions, leaving the more technical questions to the experts in that field. These three questions are the role of representative bureaucracy, the politicization of the civil service, and the importance of understanding the rewards of high public office, whether elected or appointed.

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14One exception was President Ronald Reagan who argued that public employees only needed to be “good enough”, and the best talent should remain in the private sector.
Representative Bureaucracy

Representative bureaucracy is one of the classic questions in public administration. The term was coined toward the end of World War II when it became clear that there would be a socialist government in the United Kingdom at the end of the War, and the implementation of what appeared to be a rather sweeping set of policy initiatives would be the responsibility of a civil service that was in cast of mind, if not party membership, conservative (Kingsley, 1994). Could the new government expect support from this civil service, or would their social background prevent their whole-hearted support?15

The question of to what extent membership of the public service mirrors the nature of society has both empirical and normative elements. The empirical questions require identifying the extent to which the members of the civil service are representative of the population, and especially the extent to which women and members of minority groups are included in government. The answer to these questions vary markedly depending upon what level within the government is being considered. As a whole the public sector in most industrialized countries does represent the society reasonably well, and often is more than half female (Peters, 2008). On the other hand, at the higher levels of the public bureaucracy women, and especially minority group members, tend to be under-represented.

A second part of the empirical question concerning representative bureaucracy is does it really make any difference?. One version of the role of representation is a passive one in which merely having women and minority group members in the public service is assumed to present a positive image to the public and to produce better outcomes. A more active version of representation, on the other hand, involved those minority representatives assuming a more active role in governing and attempting to use their positions to redress some of the inequalities that may exist in the social and economic benefits available from (Selden, 1997)

The normative questions about representative democracy are based on the logic that the public sector should be a “model employer” and demonstrate that more equitable hiring practices can be effective. They are further based on the logic of attempting to use the public sector as a means of addressing long-standing social and economic deprivations by social groups, with public servants adopting a more active representational role in that process. These normative stances may not be as effective as their advocates might like in improving the lot of members of society but they do express some commitment toward social justice through administration.

Politicization

Another important political question about recruitment of public officials is the extent to which political criteria are, and should be, involved in the selection of public officials. The logic of bureaucracy and the civil service is that public administrators should be selected on the basis of merit and that political criteria should be irrelevant. On the other extreme, however, there is a perceived need by politicians to have advisors, and to some extent also to have managers, who will support their programs.

15In reality the implementation of the Labour Party’s agenda went off with few problems.
Although the norm of a professional and depoliticized public service is certainly accepted in the industrialized democracy, it is also under attack. The movements toward a more politicized public service are generally subtle and the argument in favor of the movement is difficult to press overtly, but politicians clearly want to have greater control over their public servants (Peters and Pierre, 2004). The movement toward greater politicization reflects in part the consequences of adopting New Public Management, with many programs being moved from direct ministerial control. Further, contemporary changes in personnel management, reflecting the logic of the New Public Management, have made it easier for ministers to make decisions about hiring that are not done strictly on merit criteria.

For many of the less developed countries politicization of the public service is quite common. The failure to institutionalize a merit-based civil service reflects the importance of public service employment in less affluent countries. For politicians in these often clientelistic administrative systems the ability to distribute public office is an important means of building a political power base (Nef, 2008). In addition, the political leaders may perceive the need for loyalty from their civil servants, as well as commitment to particular policy agendas, that is crucial for their vision of development as well as their political future.

Although merit recruitment is the usual standard for a “proper” civil service, all public sectors have some place for political recruitment. At one extreme among the industrial democracies the United States has over 4,000 political appointments in positions that in many other countries would be career positions. In France and Belgium there is also large scale use of political appointments in ministerial cabinets that advise ministers and help to enforce their decisions (De Winter and Dumont, 2006). In a number of other cases a parallel bureaucracy may be created with political appointees to some extent shadowing the actions of the career public servants.

**Rewards**

Decisions about the level of rewards for public employees are a final issue in personnel policy. Although there is a good deal of evidence that pay is not the prime motivation for individuals joining or remaining in the public service, it must be considered. Financial rewards are increasingly important because the adoption of ideas from New Public Management about opening the public service to direct entry from outside. These rewards may be especially important for the top of public sector who may be responsible for extremely large organizations but receiving very modest rewards. who work beneath the Secretary receive even lower salaries.

If we want to understand the importance of public rewards for the public sector, however, we need to move beyond formal salary levels. The formal salaries and visible benefits of public officials are but a small portion of the rewards for high public officials in many countries. At the extreme the nominal salaries of the leaders of China are less than $100 per month, but that figure

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16At the extreme the Secretary of Defense in the United States is responsible for the largest organization in the world for the princely salary of $180,100. The civil servants
does not begin to take into account the huge range of housing, transportation and other benefits from holding office (Burns, 2004). At the other end of the dimension of visibility public officials in Australia and New Zealand receive few indirect rewards and are held to close account for the benefits they do receive.

The degree of rewards received by public officials, and especially those informal rewards received in addition to their formal salaries and benefits, are important for the legitimacy of the system as well as for recruitment. The relationships between rewards and legitimacy often represents a negative spiral in which low legitimacy makes it difficult for some governments to provide adequate resources to their employees, and therefore those governments may choose to provide a number of intransparent rewards. Those are almost inevitably exposed to public scrutiny, increasing public cynicism about government and reducing legitimacy (Hood and Peters, 1994; Hood, Peters and Lee, 2004).

**Politicians and Bureaucrats**

I have been discussing the role of public servants primarily as the providers of public services to the public. That role is certainly their dominant image for most citizens, but senior public servants also play a crucial role in the political processes of their countries. Although both scholars and practitioners had understood for years the importance of civil servants in making policy and in advising their political masters, the understanding was largely anecdotal until Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981) began to conceptualize and measure the relationships more precisely. The work of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman has been the foundation of a number of other studies of the roles of civil servants in a range of countries (Wilson and Barker, 2003; ). Although there are a number of differences across political systems and across time (Aberbach and Rockman, 1991) the research does find that the same roles do appear in most countries although they may be interpreted differently.

The Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman approach to the relationships between politicians and bureaucrats is largely attitudinal, judging the extent to which both sets of actors have attitudes that are conducive to cooperation and to effective policy-making. These relationships can, however, be considered in terms of structural relationships. For example, I (1987) have attempted to develop five ideal types of relationships between politicians and bureaucrats and then to use those models as means of comparing the styles of executive politics in a number of countries. These models ranged from the formal Weberian/Wilsonian domination of governing by elected politicians to an administrative state in which experts in the bureaucracy dominate policy. All the models were conceived of as ideals, but there were certainly empirical referents in a number of countries.

Finally, the relationship between civil servants and politicians can be conceptualized as a bargain between the two sets of actors (Shaffer, 19xx; Hood and Lodge, 2007). In this bargain politicians can be argued to give up some of their personnel powers by creating a professional and career public service, in order to gain the loyalty and commitment of a highly expert body of professionals. Likewise, the civil servants cede their capacity to complain publicly about
policies in return for a more or less guaranteed position in the structures of governing and a predictable set of rewards.

**Accountability**

I have been stressing the powerful position of public administrators in governing. As well as exercising substantial control over the public as they implement programs, these officials also have substantial influence over public policy. In both their role in implementing policy and their role in making policy bureaucrats have been able to exercise their power with little direct control from the public (but see below). The traditional model of accountability (Day and Klein, 1987) for public servants was that they were accountable to their ministers (or to some other political official), that minister was accountable to the legislature and the legislature was accountable to the people. Even in non-democratic regimes there has been some sense of the necessity of public officials being held accountable for their actions, often to the hegemonic party rather than to duly elected officials (Shen, 2005).

To make the hierarchical model of accountability function effectively governments have developed a number of instruments that enable political officials, and the public, to detect malfeasance and to force some reckoning for failures (whether of commission or omission). These instruments are too numerous to mention here, but some generalizations should be at least mentioned here. One is that many of the instruments for accountability are internal to the executive branch of government, and there require ministers (and other public servants) to exercise control over their subordinates.\(^{17}\)

A second generalization about hierarchical forms of accountability is that legislatures have played a central role. This role is easier for well-staffed legislatures with strong committees such as the United States Congress, but it is true even for the less well-resourced legislatures. In addition, as parliamentary systems come to be more dominated by cabinet and prime minister (Peters, 2007) then their legislatures appear to be finding enforcing accountability to be a means of recapturing some of the powers that may have been lost. Legislatures appear to be adding staff and creating structures to facilitate this central function, but they still have a great deal to do to be effective controllers for the executive.

In addition to the revival of legislatures as a locus of accountability, public policy and administration have become increasingly influenced by law and the courts. Public administration has always been the implementation of law, and in some administrative systems such as France and those derivative of that tradition there has been substantial *ex ante* judicial control (see Ongaro, 2008). Legal means of control over administration have, however, become more central, especially in Westminster systems in which the courts had relatively little capacity to control the other branches of government. However, with the adoption of some constitutional instruments such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada, and the United

\(^{17}\)This is not imply a separation of powers model, but is only an empirical observation about the existence of an executive, both political and administrative, that is to some extent distinct from other parts of government.
Kingdom’s membership in the European Union, the courts have gained greater capacity to enforce accountability even in those systems (Clark, 2001).

To some extent all the mechanisms for accountability above, even those with a strong institutional foundation, depend upon transparency and openness. If an administrative system can keep its practices hidden from the public and from political actors then the possibilities for exercising control over that administration are very limited. The central role of transparency is at the heart of many efforts by international organizations, e.g. the World Bank, to promote transparency and accountability in transitional and developing countries. Transparency is important for maintain accountability in general but may be especially important in the on-going war against corruption in these systems.

The traditional, hierarchical model of accountability was built on some heroic assumptions, and to some extent it is now being complemented by a range of other approaches to accountability that rely on a variety of different instruments (Hood, James, Peters and Scott, 2004). The most important addition to the repertoire of accountability instruments has been using competition to both identify problems in service provision and to find means of enforcing control over less successful programs. Randomness. This method of control is to some extent manifested in performance management (see above) and it further relies upon the “customers” of programs paying attention to the success or failure of the programs that serve them and becoming mobilized politically if the programs perform poorly.

A final point concerning accountability is that we need to recognize the growing importance of output legitimation in many countries. The traditional democratic model of legitimation is that the political process, and inputs such as voting, are central to legitimating government and its policy decisions. To an increasing extent, however, the public sector is legitimated by its ability to provide services. This change is, at least in part, a consequence of the New Public Management and its emphasis on service provision, but it is also in part a function of the declining centrality of political participation in many democratic systems. Further, many scholars (see Follesdal and Hix, 2006) argue that the (in)famous democratic deficit in the European Union has required output legitimation.

**Summary: The Centrality of Administration**

Although most citizens, and for many political scientists, would not be happy to consider public administration as a central part of contemporary politics and government, it is difficult to understand what is happening in governance without understanding the central role of the public bureaucracy. Further, as argued above, the centrality of administration may be increasing as many political institutions lose some of their capacity for governance and the actions of public administrators become more important both for making substantive decisions and for linking State and social actors.

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Supposedly the other two major methods of accountability identified were mutuality and contrived
The increasing centrality of administrative actors in governing is to some extent a paradoxical result of some reforms of the public sector that were designed to transform administration and to make service delivery more market driven, and customer driven. Although many of these reforms were directed ostensibly at the public bureaucracy as traditionally organized and managed, the net effect of the reforms has been to reduce the power of the political officials nominally in charge of government. In reality, the New Public Management was a broader theory of governance as much as a theory of public administration per se. Its explicit demand was to let the managers manage, the implicit statement was that politicians should absent themselves from the process of governing as much as possible.

Linking the Fields of Inquiry

I have to this point discussed three major fields of inquiry in political science somewhat in isolation from one another. While that strategy helps to clarify each of the three fields individually, it does not capture the reality of governing, and the close interconnections between policy choices, the administration of policies, and the overall governance capacity of these systems. As already discussed to some extent the purpose of political science can be understood as finding ways to explain why certain policy choices are made, why they are effective, and what their consequences are for citizens. These three fields all focus on what governments actually do to affect the lives of their citizens, hopefully for the better. If we adopt the basic Lasswellian principle that politics is about transforming the life chances for citizens then we should begin with the study of public policies and work back from those outputs of the political process. These policy choices can be conceptualized both as a dependent variable for the political process, as outlined above, and also an independent variable for explaining the steering capacity of the political system. That is, the nature of the policy process, as well as the demands being pressed on the system, may serve some purposes well but may not enable the governance system to steer effectively. For example, Fritz Scharpf (1988) has pointed out that the design of policy-making systems in the European Union and in Germany tend to produce sub-optimal results, and hence the steering capacity of these systems was not as great as it might otherwise be. There are mechanisms available to overcome those problems (Peters, 1997), but they too may present governance challenges. Further, in other cases the outputs of the political system may reflect the interests of dominant groups in society but by ignoring other interests may complicate steering and diminish overall legitimacy.

When beginning thinking about the broader processes of governing with making policy choices, however, it is important to remember that making and implementing policy is not a once and for all set of choices. Almost all policy making in contemporary political systems is revising and (hopefully) improving older policies, sometimes incrementally, sometimes radically, but there tends to be a framework for public action that must be addressed (Hogwood and Peters, 1983). In that remaking policy, or policy succession, feedback from the earlier attempts to make policy

19Those consequences should be comprise not only economic distributions and social gains and losses, but also the development of trust in the political system itself (See
is crucial to be able to assess the success and failure of those interventions. For comparative political analysis the capacity and willingness of political systems to respond to feedback is one crucial element for understanding the differences in policy-making.

The feedback process places public administration in a central position. There are certainly political processes for providing feedback, but the connections between the bureaucracy and the environment are crucial. Christopher Hood (1976) noted that the tools of government (see above) included both detectors and “effectors”, and that the public bureaucracy was central to both. The involvement of the bureaucracy in feedback occurs in part through their connections with clients, and especially the role of street level bureaucrats (Meyers and Vorsanger, 2004). The public bureaucracy may also be important in detecting more “objective” problems in policy, given the wide range of data collection in which it is engaged.

As patterns of governing continue to shift toward the greater use of market and civil society actors, the bureaucracy may become even more important as a locus for steering. The public bureaucracy is crucial for managing instruments such as contracts and partnerships, and in providing the linkage between networks of social actors and the public sector. Political leaders may not have the technical capacity for some of these aspects of contemporary governing, and may not be willing to engage in the continuous bargaining and adjustment needed for coping with networks. These patterns of governing may therefore be uncomfortable of many public servants who believe that they are being forced to make too many policy decisions, and for politicians who may feel they have lost control of governing.

As well as being linked through some aspects of the common problems with which they are concerned, these three major components of political science as also linked through theory. Each area has its own particular theoretical and conceptual issues, as identified above, but there are also some common theoretical strands that united them. Perhaps the most apparent of these is institutionalism, and the fundamental assumption that structure matters. These three bodies of research all recognize that agency is also a part of any explanation, but at the heart of the three, and perhaps especially public administration, is also a strong sense that structures to a great extent constrain that individual agency (Peters, 2001).

While institutionalist approaches may appear the most logical means to link these three sets of literature, they may also be addressed through other approaches, such as rational choice models. Certainly rational choice has been applied to both public administration (Niskanen, 1971; Hay, 2004; Horn, 1995) and to public policy (Ostrom, 2007; Levi, 1998), providing a good deal of insight into these aspects of governing. Rational choice has, however, been applied rather little to the more comprehensive issues associated with governance. Although that has been the case, one can see how that application might be made. The design of governance structures can be considered from the rational perspective almost as easily as can the design of administrative structures or the choice of policy.

In addition to the central role of institutions in making and implementing public policy, a number of the central concepts in political science are relevant for understanding governing. Governing involves the use of power, as the public sector must impose its decisions on society and are often
confronted by countervailing power within society. Power is often subtle, and is seen as much in what does not happen as in what does (Lukes, 2005). Governing also involves the use of authority and legitimacy, allowing governance without the overt application of power. The list of fundamental concepts could be extended, but the fundamental point is that public administration and policy are not distinct from the remainder of political science, but rather may be at the heart of the discipline and its concerns.

References:


