Higher Civil Servant in the U.S.A.; A Professional Responding to His Environment and Subordinates

Suk-Choon Cho, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

1. Introduction

In 1953 there were 2,527,960 personnel in the U.S. federal civil service. Out of this total number of employees, those who belong to the classified civil service are 2,164,163 which amounts to 85.6% of the total. Geographically these men are spread over fifty states and about 125 foreign countries, colonies, and dependencies. There are anl estimated 80,000 different occupations, virtually every occupation available in the American society being represented. About 40% of the total federal personnel are covered by the Classification Act of 1949. The rest—such as TVA, the foreign service, postal employees and blue-collar workers in the defense establishments—belng to their own position classification systems. One finds no administrative or managerial class, clearly and legally distinct from other classes in the service. There are agencies which are more or less independent and autonomous in their operations such as independent regulatory commissions, foreign and military services. On the other hand, tax and postage rates, customs classifications and veterans' benefits are those areas in which discretion is limited.

The object of our discussion thus is a mammoth organization which shows great diversity in the locality, kinds of occupations, degree of independence of agencies, and in the laws covering the classification systems of the personnel.

The purpose of this writer is to arrive at some generalizations out of such a diversity—a task which I admit will be very tough work indeed. As to the time span to be covered, I will limit the observations to the current bureaucracy of the U.S. federal government.

My focus of emphasis will be on such variables as 'social backgrounds,' 'administrator's

environment,' ' upervisory style' and his 'decision behavior.' Among these I will use 'decision behavior' more or less as a dependent variable.

Though I may not explicitly point this out in the course of the presentation, I will have in mind comparisons with the Korean government bureaucracy, in order to make the conclusions more meaningful.

II. Representative Bureaucracy and Decision Making Behavior

Norton Long writes as follows with regard to the U.S. federal bureaucracy:

> the bureaucracy now has a very real claim to be considered much more representative of the American people in its composition than the congress. This is not merely the case with respect to the class structure of the country but, equally significantly, with respect to the learned groups, skills, economic interests, races, nationalities, and religions. The rich diversity that makes up the United States is better represented in its civil service than anywhere else. [1]

As to the class representation as shown in the occupations of the fathers of higher civil servants, the middle class—consisting of such categories as 'shopkeepers,' 'businessmen,' 'business employees,' 'professionals,' and ckilled workers'—occupy 81% of the higher civil servants in the U.S. federal civil service. [2]

If by 'representative bureaucracy' one literally means a civil service which consists of a reasonable cross-section of the body politic in terms of occupation, class, geography, and the like, and we consider U.S. bureaucracy representative, such dominance of the middle class in the higher civil servants must be the reflection of the middle class dominance in the American society.

According to V. Subramaniam the percentage of the middle classes in their father's occupation in the higher civil services of Denmark, Great Britain, France,Turkey, and India show 87.2, 96.2, 90.5, 96.3, and 87.6 respectively. [3] He presupposes four important reguirements to enter the government service, i.e., age, intellignce, a certain level of education and eagerness to compete. Out of these four requirements the middle class has a higher probability of meeting

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(1) "Bureaucracy and Constitutionalism," *APSR*,Vol. 46 (1952), p. 914.
(2) V. Su ramanism, "Representative Bureaucracy: A Reassessment," *APSR*, Vol. LXI, No. 4 (Dec., 1967), p. 1016. This figure goes somewhat lower when considered total federal civil service. Cf. M. Kent Jennings and Franklin P. Kilpatrick, "Federal and Nonfederal Employees: A Comparative Social-Occupational Analysis, "*PAR*, Vol. XXVII, No. 5 (Dec. 1967), p. 395.
(3) *Ibid*

the last three.[4]

Thus our observation is that even in the countries whose society is not dominated by a middle class, the majority of the higher civil servants will have middle-class origins and thus be unrepresentative of the class structures of these societies. The U.S. federal bureaucracy is representative in the literal sense because the society is largely dominated by the middle class.

Social background and decision behavior

The studies of social background assumes a necessary correlation between the background and decision behavior of an administrator. Van Riper's definition of the representative bureaucracy in terms of the requirement that the bureaucracy should be in general tune with the ethos and attitudes of the society of which it is part,[5] also presupposes such a correlation.

However, whether such a correlation actually exists cannot be determined by social background factors alone. So far as this writer is aware, there does not exist empirical research as to what social background factors affect to what degree the dimensions of attitudes and behavior in the field of public administration.[6]

With regard to the behavior of the bureaucrats, those who argue for representative bureaucracy usually emphasize the responsiveness of the civil servants to the various demands raised by various sectors of the society. Van Riper writes as follows with regard to the responsiveness of the U S. federal bureaucracy:

> When we go further and compare the day-by-day administrative behavior of the American civil establishment with that of many other bureaucracies the world over, the contrast in term of comparative responsiveness is often impressive.[7]

Taking it for granted that the U.S. federal bureaucray is very responsive in its behavior, still one can not establish a necessary cause and effect relationship by saying that, since an administrator had his father in middle class occupation, he will be responsive to the various demands raised in the society. What seems more important is whether the ethos of the society

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 1017.
(5) Paul P. Van Riper, *History of the United States Civil Service.* Row, Peterson and Co., White Plains, N.Y., 1958, p. 552.
(6) A to arms control and European integration the predictability of social background factors was tested for the German and Ferench Political leaders. cf. Lewis J. Edinger and Donald D Searing, "Social Background in Elite Analysis: A Methodological Inquiry," *APSR*, Vol. LXI, No. 2 (June 1967), pp. 428—445.
(7) Paul P. Van Riper, *op. cit.* p. 551.

and the structural arrangement surrounding an administrator is of the kind which emphasize or necessitate he responsive behavior on the part of the administrator or whether it is the middle class composition of the bureaucracy.

For the verification of this assertion one can easily think of a bureaucracy which is composed of the civil servants of middle class origin and yet not as responsive as the U.S. federal bureaucracy.

One can also think of the bureaucrat as an 'organization man' conforming to the various hierachial demands of the formal organization, discarding the values and attitudes he has acquired through the socialization process of the pre-entry period.

The U.S. bureaucracy is responsive because of the ethos of the society and the fact the society is largely composed of the middle class who support that ethos, and the typical structural arrangements for an administrator. One has to agree with Suramaniam's position stated in the following way:

> The actual picture is often brighter than the foregoing ones at least in the United States,
> mainly because the majority of bureaucrats cherish some common values which are part of the
> nation's socio-political consensus and they also expose themselves to all influences regardless of
> their class origins. In other words, this responsiveness is more a reflection of the consensual
> and equalitarian ethos of the community as a whole than a direct result of its represent-
> ativeness only. [8]

We will further probe into the causes of this responsive behavior.

III. Structural Environment for an Administrator and Decision Making

When one thinks of the external controls exercised over a bureaucrat of the U.S. government, the most conspicuous phenomenon is the multiplicity and complexity of the channels of control. An administrator is likely to be pulled by plural and diverse forces surrounding him.

Let us consider his relationship with the department head and the President of the nation. Here, one most conspicuous phenomenon compared with some other countries is its decentralized operation within the hierarchy of the executive department. In other words, the President and department heads cannot fully control the career higher civil servants. This relative autonomy of bureaus is due to the congressional efforts to split off the presidential control over the

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(8) V. Suramanism, *op. cit.*, p. 1014.

bureaucracy and to increase its own influence in its place. The mechanisms the congress has been exercising to this end are as follows:

1) o establish independent agencies of various kinds;

2) o bind legally the internal structure of agencies;

3) o give direct statutory authority to officials at the bureau chief level by-passing both the President and heads of departments, thus making bureau chiefs sometimes appear before a congressional committee in an apparently higher role than his department head;

4) o spell out detailed administrative and personnel procedures by law;

5) o appropriate funds in minute detail so as virtually to remove executive discretion or flexibility;

6) o impose a formal or informal legislative veto by committees on administrative decisions;

7) o give direct administrative instructions to middle as well as upper echelon officials;

8) o plant sympathetic personnel in key positions.

Herman Miles Somers says, "There have been numerous cases of permanent bureau chiefs whose influence in congress so far exceeded that of their more temporary department heads that they were in a position to make the latter dependent upon themselves." [9]

It has been the recurrent theme, therefore, to increase the presidential control over the bureaucracy from the days of the President's Committee on Administrative Management. Much of this effort to strengthen the leadership of the top management was directed toward the provision of the tools of administrative management to the President and department heads.

Examples at the presidential level are (1) executive budget, (2) expanded executive office of the president [10] and (3) reorganization acts conferring on the President authorization (subject to congressional veto) to shift and regroup agencies. At the department level the effort was shown in such measures as (1) provision of expert staff aides, (2) addition of under-secretaries and assistant secretaries, and (3) employment of special assistants.

In spite of these measures, one is still inclined to conclude that the U.S. bureaucracy is

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(9 "The President, the Congress, and the Federal Government Service," in the American Assembly, ed., *The Federal Government Service*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965, p. 84.

(10 The Executive Office of the President has 1450 employees exclusive of the CIA and those who care for the executive mansion and grounds. The units consisting of the Executive Office are the White House Office with President's aides, administrative assistants, and secretaries, Bureau of Budget, the Council of Economic Advisors, The Office of Science and Techology, The Office of Emergency Planning, and the National Security Council.

more directly controlled by the congress than other bureaucracies and the presidential control through the hierarchy of the bureaucracy is not very effective, especially due to his restricted authority over personnel management of the civil servants who are under the classified service.

As to the relations with the pressure groups the following observation is made by Norton Long[11];

Yet however grossly one-sided an agency of government may become, few indeed will be found so completely under the dominance of a single interest as the subject matter committees of congress-

It seems that administrative agencies are as important as congressional committees for the particular clientele groups. The latter will approach either of the targets they find most convenient and advantageous to them. Thus aministrators are likely to be pressed by such a group or more than two groups.

Thus we can conceive of an administrator, for example, a bureau chief, who has to respond to various sources of pressure of approximately equal strength, such as departmental heads, the president, the congressional committees, the pressure groups, and public opinion.

The responsiveness of the American administrators is due to such multiple sources of influences exprcised upon him among which none is dominant, in addittion to the socio-political consensus of the society.

How do they respond to these influences? When an administrator does not try to assert the principles which he himself cherishes, i.e., particular values of his own, he will merely try to please every source of the pressure. He is the one caught in the middle and yet has to solve the problem in the form of a policy. He acts as go-between and his policy formulation is incremental. I will call such a leadership a mediator.

This structure of multiple influences presents him with multiple cues for the evoking of alternatives. Consequently, there will be a greater number of alternatives available than under a simple influence structure. He will be the facilitator of a non-zerosum game among the interested parties, but does not consider himself as a partner in the game. In other words, the mediator does not take side with any of the parties and does not assert the supremacy of his own alternative over those of the others. The major guidelines for the formulation of policy are the general ethos and socio-political consensus at the highest level with which all

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(11) *Op. cit.,* 14.

of the parties agree. He is to arrive at a solution upon this consensus.

I think we can find this type of higher civil servant in the U.S. federal civil service. However, it is doubtful whether this can be called the model case of leadership in that country.

IV. Professionalism and Decision Making

Out of the 14% of the federal personnel who are not categorized as belonging to the classified service, there are only less than 1000 officials the President may ordinarily appoint to supervisory posts upon his taking of the post. In 1954 and 1962—in each case a year after the new administration was installed—it appeared that the number of patronage appointments the national party headquarters could count as having been made to positions of any consequence was in the range between two and three thousand, scarcely over one-tenth of one percent of the total civilian employment.[12]

The limit to the presidential power in the field of personnel decisions of the federal civil service is well reflected in Herbert Kaufman's following statement[13]:

On balance, the efforts to return personnel management from its position of splendid isolation to a role as an instrument of administration in the hands of the government's executives must be regarded as having made little headway even after a quarter-century.

One can say then that most of the two and a half million federal employees enjoy a rather permanent guarantee of their jobs unless their positions are designated as of a temporary nature. However, this does not necessarily mean most of them remain in the service for a very long period of time. Seperations since world war II recorded more than 400,000 every year, from one-sixth to one-fourth of the total work force. However, most of these seperations were due to temporary positions, voluntary withdrawal, reduction in force and other similar causes. Discharge for cause was only 10,000 a year.[14]

Upon this background of stability of job status in the burearcracy and relatively larger employment opportunities in the society compared to some other countries is built the following characteristics of professionalization of the civil service and decision behavior accruing

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(12 Harvey C. Mansfield, "Political Parties, Patronage, and the Federal Government Service," in *The Federal Government Service, op. cit.*, p. 115.

(13 "The Growth of the Federal Personnel System," in the American Assembly, ed., *The Federal Government Service, Ibid.*, p. 67.

(14 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

from this professionalism.

A substantial and increasing portion of the federal service is engaged in pursuits of a specialized or technical character which have enjoy recognized professional status. Meterologist, chemist, medical doctor, statistician, economist, accountant, personnel officer, fiscal officer are examples of the professionalized fields. Foresters, public health and social welfare workers are also the ones who show storng career loyalties. Though not yet having attained professional status, the government workers who are in skilled trades belong to unions. These groups are not patronage appointees and hare their jobs by some test of fitness. Professional groups establish standards of conduct to which the individual, wherever employed, is committed. Professional associations find recruits for the vacated positions and sometimes prove themselves far more effective than the civil service commission in defending employees who have met punishment for stubborn devotion to professional standards. Those in skilled trades are profected by unions. With the increasing professionalization, self-respect and prestige of a protession will increase and a profession's horizontal loyalty cutting across agency lines will be heightened, too. It seems such a trend of professionalization is already well underway, compared to some other countries, especially the developing countries.

Decision Behavior

Faced with the multiple environmental influences of approximately equal strength referred to above, professionals will respond in two different ways according to the degree of his assertion of professional rationality and technical proficiency. These are moderators and synthesizers. The common characteristic for both of these types is that the decision-maker has his own alternative based on his speciality, which is different from the alternatives raised by environmental influence sources. The characteristic of his own alternative is that his breadth of view is broader both as to the substance of the issue and the time span covered.

The moderato is different from the mediator in that he has his own concept of broad boundaries based on his own speciality, within which the other alternatives are kept under control. As in the case of the mediator, he does not take part with any of the other alternatives and tries to let each group observe the general socio-political consensus. He is different from the mediator, however, in that he has the additional concept of reasonable limits based on the profession, and effort is made to let the other alternatives observe both kinds of these

criteria.

The synthesizer deals with the multiple influences somewhat differently from the moderator. He is the one who asserts his professional capacity to the largest extent under the environmental constraints we have conceived. He is the one who trys to derive a new alternative of his own, which will take care of all of the alternatives raised by environmental sources, and base his alternative on both the general socio-political consensus and the professional integrity and yet does not neglect the demands of the groups to any important degree. He is the one who has to show creativity and innovativeness in the process of forming such a new whole which has to meet the requirements which are sometimes in conflict.

Now let us construct a matrix in order to clarify the above concept. Our first variable will be the degree of professional loyalty an administrator possesses. The second variable will be the degree of skewness of environmental forces. When these forces are highly skewed, it means an administrator is under the control of a single source of influence, most probably his hierarchical superior. On the other hand, when the skewness is the lowest, he is under the multiple influences which have equal strength. Our dependent variable will be the types of decision makers.

Skewness of Environmental Forces

		low	high
Professional loyalty	low	mediator	subordinate partner
	high	moderator, synthesizer	equal partner

By 'partner' I mean an administator who is taking side with an influence source which is more or less monopolized by the hierarchy of the bureaucracy at the apex of which is the nation's top political leader. The 'subordinate partner,'whose professional loyalty is low, is likely to make his decision based solely on the premises given by the hierarchical authority even when these are in conflict with the needs of the professional requirement. This is the bureaucrat of German bureaucracy under Nazism, pleading its orders for "die höhe tiere"as an excuse for criminal acts. On the other hand, the 'equal partner,' whose professional loyalty is strong, is likely to make his decision based both on professional demands and the premises given by the hierarchical authority. He is the one who integrates, sometimes creatively, both

of these criteria in the policy he formulates. This is the case of the economic planners who formulated the irst five-year economic development plan in Korea. [15]

The thesis of this paper is then that in the U.S. bureaucracy, most of the administrative leaders are moderators or synthesizers, given the assumptions that they are under pressure from a greater number of environmental influences of approximately equal strength and the degree of professionalization has advanced to a greater extent than in most of the other countries.

Of course there are differences among the agencies in the U.S. federal bureaucracy as to the degrees of autonomy and discretion, professoinalization, and the pressures from environment. And the image of federal employment is that it is rated as less desirable among the higher level groups than among the lower, and near the top, among scientists, professionals, and executives, it is rated lowest of all. [16]

It may be true then senior personnel in the federal service except those in the military and foreign service whose occupations are not easily transferrable to other sectors of the society, are not necessarily the persons of the highest professional ability.

However, when one has to compare the whole higher civil servants as a group with those of other countries, the above characterization of the U.S. federal bureaucracy at the higher civil service level as composed mostly of moderators and synthesizers is not inadequate in spite of these modifying features.

V. Styles of Supervision

In this section we will focus our observation on the role styles of supervisors vis-a-vis their subordinates. In other words, we are concerned here with the question of how our models of administrative leaders, i.e., moderators and synthesizers, supervise their hierarchical subordinates.

This is the area with which the scholars who can be grouped under the various categories, such as, human relations, group dynamics, decentralization, and individual adjustment to orga-

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(15) Suk Choon Cho, "A Comparative Analysis of Two Administrative Reforms Under the Military Regime in Korea: the First Five Year Economic Development Plan and the Planning and the Programming System," in Hahn-Been Lee and Bel Samonte, ed., *Administrative Reforms in Asia*, EROPA, Manila, 1970.
(16) Frederick G. Mosher, "Features and Problems of the Federal Civil Service," in The American Assembly, *The Federal Goverment Service, Ibid.*, p. 208.

nizations, have been mainly concerned. Though the organizations studied by them varied widely as to the goals, many of the studies dealt with business organizations. For the public administration it is usually assumsed that the findings in the business situations are applicable to the government bureaucracy. This is the most plausible assumption in the U.S. setting. Frederick C. Mosher says: [17]

> In many important respects, government employment and public employees in the United States are surprisingly like their non-public counterparts. Here, the employees of the government and of all but the smaller private concerns work within frameworks of organization, systems of loyalty, duties, and discipline, and processes of human relationships that are fundmentally parallel.

In the categories of role styles, we will consider only two, i.e., authoritarian and democratic (permissive). The two may be distinguished by such factors as: [18]

(a) degree of determination of policy by leader or formal head;

(b) degree of dictation by leader of work steps and coworkers;

(c) leader's aloofness from groups.

As to the effects of these different styles of leadership, we will concern ourselves with only two broad dimensions, viz., employee morale and productivity. There have been numerous research projects, including experimental studies, which tried to establish correlations and cause-and-effec relations between these supervision styles and their effects.

As to the morale side, the findings of the experiment by Lewin, Lippit and White [19] and numerous subsequent similar researches show rather consistent results. Participation in decision-making by the members of a group will increase their satistfaction, and authoritarian rule by superior will result in greater aggression and tension among the group members. However, this does not mean that American employees do not want control from hierarchical superiors, and the participation in other countries will not increase member satisfaction.

Let us introduce the interesting speculations of a German industrial psychologist concerning an attempt to utilize group decision-making in his country in such matters as deciding upon

(17) Ibid., p. 163. (underline is mine)

(18) Robert T. Golembiewski, "Small Groups and Large Organizations," in James G. March, ed., Handbook of Organizations, Rand McNally & Co., Chicago, 1965, p. 89.

(19) K. Kewin, R. Lippitt, and R.K. White, "Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created Social Climates", Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. X (1939), pp. 271—299 and K. Lewin and R. Lippit: "An Experimental Approach to the Study of Autocracy and Democracy, a Preliminary Note," Sociometry, Vol. I, 1938, pp. 292—300.

vacation times:

> In the German factory, the first suggestion would be that the foreman decide. If the
> foreman (declined) the men would individually state the best period for them: "May"
> "Early August," and so on. If the foreman said, "We can't shut down the plant all
> the time; you have to decide on one time, they would say, "All right. You decide on
> the one time. We have told you our preferences." Further insistence by the foreman on
> group decision would be met by increased opposition among the men. The difference
> is that Americans are able to see temselves as forming a group, aside from their working
> relationships. The Germans are a group only as they are led by their foreman. The
> informal group is a potentiality in America in a way it probably is not in Germany.[20]

I think American subordinates expect greater delegation and participation and the leader has
more confidence in the group's ability to arrive at a decision. The resulting behavior of the
leader then is to let the subordinates participate in decisions to a greater degree to the satisfa-
ction of his followers.

On the other hand, on the dimension of productivity, the findings are rather mixed. Not only
democratic control but also authoritarian control increase the productivity or performance of
the group. However, as to the relative merit between these two styles, the findings are
inconsistent, i.e., sometimes the authoritarian leader can secure greater performance than the
democratic leader.

In spite of this, the authorities such as Rensis Likert and the Organization Behavior Program
of the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan assert that democratic control is
superior in the productivity dimension too.

> Likert says:

> This gives us every reason to believe that had the clerical experiment been continued for
> another year or two (this study was terminated after a year), productivity and quality of
> work would have continued to increase in the participative program, while in the hierarchi-
> cally controlled program producvity and quality of work have declined[21]

Marcus and Cafagna, Both of the University of Michigan, say:[22]

> Yet productivity increased among both groups. In fact, the amount of increase was
> greater in the hierarchical groups than in the participative groups. While it is difficult to

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(20) Rober T. Golembiewski, *op. cit.*, p.120.

judge what the long-run effects will be, it is suggested that effectiveness will decrease in the hierarchical groups because of the hostility and resentment developed toward high producers and management

How long is the "long-run" one does not know. And there is no study of an experimental nature extending over more than a year. Thus the above statements seem to be mere assertions.

We can imagine an American administrative leader faced with two alternatives, i.e., democratic supevision and authoritarian supervision, and weighing the relative advantages and disavantages in order to adopt one as his pattern of supervision. Both can increase productivity while democratic supervision increases subordinates' satisfaction and authoritarian supervision decreases it. It is the writer's conclusion that the American administrative leader will let the subordinates participate in the decision process as much as possible to the extent he does not lose control over the process and will give the subordinates high expectation of performance.

VI. Conclusion

In this paper we have characterized the American administrative leader in the federal bureaucracy as moderaters and synthesizers in the handling of his environmental influences. In the supervisory behavior toward his subordinates he was characterized as delegators who at the same time give delegatees high expectation of performance.

It seems that the general ethos of the society, such as equality, consensus, compromise, individualism and pluralism, all contribute to these responses of the administrative leader to both his environment and hierarchical subordinates. Pluralistic structure of political influences is also a contributing factor to these particular manners of administrative leaders' response vis-a-vis external sources of influence.

(21) Rensis Likert, "Measuring Organizational Performance," *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Mar.—Apr., 1958), p. 48, Parentheses are mine.
(22) Philip M. Marcus and Dora Cafagna, "Control in Modern Organizations," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XXV (1965), No. 2, p. 126.