

The Selective Providers: Organization and Distribution Effects of Public Service Provision

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to describe some of the problems and possibilities of the field of research covering the relationship between public bureaucracy and its clients and, on the basis of this description, to discuss some questions which arise and their importance to theory formation. The questions discussed are chiefly related to the conditions which affects clients' ability to handle their relationship with public bureaucracies in accordance with assumed or explicitly formulated political goals. These effects are discussed in relation to ideals of social equality and the satisfaction of clients' needs.¹

2. Problems and possibilities

Empirical focus

Because the term "bureaucracy-client relationship" comprises several different aspects, it can be useful to systematize both the empirical and the theoretical knowledge of the relationship. Empirical research can be classified into four different categories.

The *first* category of empirical research comes from general sociological research on social equality. Research in this category has mainly concentrated on the living-conditions of the underprivileged, partly in the form of descriptive studies of particular groups,² partly as studies of the general social causes of stratification and poverty.³ There are two major findings concerning the use and distribution of public service that can be discerned; (1) distribution of services is socially biased, and (2) there exists an underconsumption of a number of public services. Both function to the disadvantages of the poor.

The *second* category of findings comes from areas of general sociology, sociology of law, medical sociology and political science and deals with the relationship between social policy intentions and actual administrative practice.⁴ The findings indicate that the lack of agreement between intention and the concrete ability to solve clients' problems can be explained by two factors: (1) ambiguous and inconsistent laws and regulations, and (2) shortcomings in the administrative systems responsible for policy implementation.⁵

Interdisciplinary action research represents a *third* category of research. Here the primary research aim has been to map the total welfare situation of underprivileged groups and their use of public rights. Besides supporting research results discovered in category one above, research projects within this category also had the ambition to improve living conditions for the groups under study, by launching political actions on their behalf.⁶

The *fourth* category of research dealing with bureaucracy-client relationship covers research done by students of public administration. Based on classic bureaucratic theory and recent administrative theory, the general impression of findings in this area is that distribution of resources through the administration of public agencies tends to favor those that already have, and to disfavor the have-nots.

Although there exists an abundance of theories of effects of organizational structure on distribution patterns, little is actually known empirically about which particular organization factors are and important how structures interplay with processes within the organization and within the environment. The thematic and theoretical focus of this article is based on the recent research which has been motivated by such questions.⁷

Theoretical focus

A theoretical framework providing the concepts necessary to compare and interpret the different aspects of the bureaucracy-client relationship in different organizations is lacking. In its place exist a number of debates, one of which can be described as a traditional debate among students of public administration concerning the relationship between organizational structure, treatment of clients and distribution effects. This debate has centered on the consequences of the use of rules and professional discretion (Eckhoff and Jacobsen, 1960, Sjoeborg, Brymer and Farris, 1966, White, 1969). The bureaucratic and professional ideals discussion has usually been based on two presuppositions: a) organizational factors determine the distribution pattern and b) the organizational factors affecting the distribution pattern, are chiefly related to the use of rules or discretion in the organization. Presuppositions of this kind may provide an explanation of the dominant empirical focus of administrative research in this field. Here we will point at the need to question such presuppositions and rather ask under which conditions they may be valid.

Another theoretical limitation in the field of administrative research, is that research has been related to the general theoretical debate on the functions of the state as they manifest themselves in public policy and administration. Somewhat crudely and rhetorically one of the main questions of the debate may be formulated thus: Is the state primarily a tool for control and exploitation in the service of the ruling interests in society or is it an expression of a social community to the benefit of all and especially the poor? Although it is rather tacitly assumed than explicitly proclaimed, the last view has been the dominant one in Western, especially American, political science (Lindblom, 1982). In accordance with this view, researchers have tended to accept official political goals and measures as they are officially presented, at face value.

This has had two important theoretical consequences for the study of distribution policy. The first is that political scientists chiefly have concentrated on the study of the distribution of official goods, whereas the study of the distribution of burdens has been left to other disciplines.⁸ The theoretical perspective has usually excluded the possibility of investigating the relationship between the distribution of public goods and burdens - e.g. that they may be interwoven in the same public

measure or that what is a good to some may be a burden to others.⁹ Whether a given agency distributes goods or burdens will here be regarded as an empirical question, the answer to which must primarily depend on the judgement by those affected by the measure.¹⁰

The second consequence is that researchers have paid relatively little attention to the substantive content of public measures. The interest has mainly been focused on how the measures are administered and distributed. In other words, procedural factors have received far more attention than substantive factors.¹¹ In the sequel, both substantive and procedural factors – and the interplay between them – will be regarded as potentially important topics of study, based on the assumption that they both may affect the distribution of goods and burdens.

Conclusion

The short review above suggests that the empirical and theoretical limitations are interrelated. For example, the lack of data about processes and their relationship to social and organizational structures can be explained in terms of the usual presuppositions in current explanations of the distribution effects of public measures.

The remainder of this article is devoted to a discussion on how these limitations may be rescued or overcome theoretically. The following two questions are of importance: Why do we have certain distribution effects, and how do they come about? Our discussion below is designed to illuminate these questions. The discussion will centre around three organizational aspects: (a) the organization of the interaction process between public agencies and clients (part 3); (b) the organization structure of public agencies and its impact on decision behaviour (part 4); (c) the regulation of the relationship between demand for and provision of public services (part 5).

3. Interaction process and selection mechanisms

One of the usual approaches to the study of the relationship between clients and public agencies, is to look at it as a selection process. The process is often described as a kind of hurdle-race, where potential clients have to overcome a number of barriers

in order to acquire goods or avoid burdens. What explanations such approaches offer to the outcome of the process, depend on what properties one attributes to the different barriers. Regardless of how the outcomes are explained, the functioning of the barriers or selection mechanisms seems to be similar in the sense that they tend to favor the relatively well-paid, the well-educated, the well-connected, the well-organized and the healthy, and disfavor potential clients who lack such characteristics.

Explanations

We may distinguish between at least two different approaches to the explanation of such mechanisms. The first takes as its point of departure, three analytically different situations or aspects of the process where selection may take place in administrative distribution systems (Schaffer and Huang, 1975, Bleiklie, Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 1979):

- a) admission or definition of eligibility, i.e. to get in touch with a public agency, become registered and defined as eligible for a good or burden;
- b) ordering of eligible clients with respect to the succession in which to deal with them and the sharing of scarce resources between them;
- c) exchanges between officials and clients.

How a given agency selects its clients depends according to the theory, on the degree to which these aspects of the process are governed by simple, commonly known and accepted rules. The main assumption of the theory is the following: The simpler the distribution system, the higher the probability of equal treatment of the clients in the sense that all potential clients have equal chances of gaining access to goods or avoid burdens. And conversely, the more complex the distribution system, the greater the chances of arbitrary, unequal treatment and discrimination against certain client groups.

The other approach takes as its point of departure that public agencies tend to face potential clients with certain conditions they will have to fulfill in order to gain access to goods or avoid burdens. These conditions tend to affect the content of public measures in a manner which reduces their ability to satisfy the clients' needs. These conditions are defined as three different kinds of barriers (Jacobsen, Jensen and Aarseth, 1982):

- a) the registration barrier, i.e. the requirement that potential clients themselves have to take the initiative and demand a good (or, in many cases, actively avoid burdens);
- b) the competence barrier, the condition that potential clients themselves have to demonstrate their eligibility to a good (or non-eligibility to a burden);
- c) the efficiency barrier, i.e. the condition that potential clients have to fulfill an agency's norms and expectations regarding the proper (i.e. efficient or effective) use of its resources.

How a given agency selects its clients depends on the actual content of the requirements, with what force and consequence they are held, and what precautions may have been made to counter-act their effects.

We will understand the selection mechanisms in terms of the latter approach. There are several reasons for this choice. Firstly, the former approach relates the selection of clients to the degree of bureaucratization of the distribution system. It is, therefore, based on the presumptions which we want to question. Secondly, the former approach may easily become tautological. Any distribution result which satisfy the clients' needs regardless of their socio-economic and personal resources, may be explained as a consequence of simple distribution systems. The research task is accordingly, to explore the character of the simplicity.¹² The latter approach is on the other hand, not based on presumptions about the impact of organization structure. Its independent variables are the actual behavior of public officials and agencies. The selection mechanisms discussed below, are among the most well-documented.

Selection mechanisms

Incongruity between the information given or available to potential clients and their ability to collect, understand and use information has been demonstrated by several authors. It seems to be an important cause of the underconsumption of a number of public goods, such as legal aid (Eskeland and Finne, 1973, Johnsen, 1978), social security, social aid and medical services (Hanoa, 1977, Katz et al., 1975, Sundby and Berg, 1971) and economic support to small industrial companies (Sørlie, 1978), among those who need them the most. It also seems to contribute to the overconsumption of public burdens, such as

legal penalties (Aubert, 1976, Christie, 1975) and medical maltreatment (Jensen, 1979).¹³

Even if they know their rights and where the relevant agency is located, negative attitudes or expectations may cause potential clients to abstain from attempts to gain access to public goods. Abstention may partly be caused by personal ideals or socially accepted values which praise independence and self-sufficiency and define public support as degrading or humiliating (Eskeland and Finne, 1973, Kolberg and Viken, 1978, Wadel, 1973). Partly it may be caused by negative experiences, such as cumbersome, unpleasant or humiliating procedures and treatment, rejection or inadequate help (Guttormsen and Høigård, 1977, Hoven, 1981b, Mayer and Timms, 1970, Thorsvik, 1980). Finally, potential clients may consider an alleged good an (actual or potential) burden, as when ex-convicts on parole avoid public rehabilitation assistance because they suspect its real function to be control rather than help (Thorsvik, 1980).

Having established contact and being registered, does not automatically mean that the case is settled. When registration does not imply a definition of an automatic right to a good, several criteria which are unrelated to needs, may be applied for the selection of actual clients. The waiting time and chances of access to public housing may depend on the ability to pay for the good (Bleiklie, 1982b). It may also be important to be able to present ones case in terms understandable to and accepted by the officials (Hollingshead and Redlich, 1958). Success may require more than the ability to present a problem. It may also require knowledge of public administration and which considerations are important to the different agencies (Schaffer and O'Keeffe, 1978). Johnsen's (1982) study of disabled persons' access to different services, indicated that it in part depended on whether they knew when to argue in terms of their rights, their needs or their ability to profit from help. Lack of such knowledge may be compensated by support from third parties or guidance by the official. Recommendations from social workers may be important for access to public housing (Bleiklie, 1982b), and access to social security may depend on doctors' recommendations (Lindén, 1971, 1972). But there are reasons to believe that the chances of such support are unevenly distributed. For the disabled in Johnsen's study, education increased their chances (Johnsen, 1982). For burdens such as imprison-

ment, the selection mechanisms work the other way around. The process from crime via indictment and verdict to imprisonment, seems to "favor" systematically single men in bad health, with low education, without permanent jobs and housing (Christie, 1975).

Thorough and well-documented demonstration of eligibility in terms of needs and rights, may not always be sufficient. Potential clients may also have to satisfy the officials' norms and conceptions as to how they ought to perform their work efficiently and/or effectively. Bureaucratic values tend to favor efficiency. Those clients are preferred who fit the standard procedures of the organization, at the expense of "deviant" clients (Fox et al., 1976). Efficiency may also affect the distribution of burdens. Whereas low status crimes are individual, visible and relatively easily handled, high status crimes are more frequently committed within and by complex organizations with economic and legal resources to complicate and even halt police work and the legal process (Christie, 1975). Professional values are usually more inclined to stress effectiveness. Psychologists and professional social workers tend to prefer clients who are able to profit from their professional techniques (Bleiklie, 1982b, Guttormsen and Høigård, 1977, Halvorsen, 1978). Status mechanisms - e.g. professional hierarchy and division of work - within professions and between professions in institutions, seem to contribute to a flight from clients in general (Berg, 1982) and low status clients in particular (Wærness, 1982). The importance of values like efficiency and effectiveness may vary, as may the relative value ascribed to each of them.¹⁴ But the consequences of their application as selection mechanisms, tend to be similar in the sense that they both underline the importance of other client characteristics than needs.¹⁵

4. Organization and decision behavior

The findings referred to above, may give the impression that the distribution effects of public measures are basically of the same kind, regardless of how they are organized. Several of the findings indicate for instance, that the effects of bureaucratic and professional ideals are similar when put into practice. In both cases the clients are facing a more or less hierarchical,

specialized and fragmented administrative apparatus. And in both cases there are findings indicating that the relationship to public agencies is unmanageable for the clients. The effects of the selection mechanisms described above, may explain why.

These findings represent a challenge to the way in which public institutions prefer to present themselves and to the presumptions of some of our usual conceptions of how they actually work. Traditional models usually assume that the organization has the means to govern the behavior of the officials, by recruitment or by internal mechanisms for socialization, disciplining and control (Læg Reid and Olsen, 1978). In bureaucratic organizations this is supposed to be achieved by recruitment on the basis of specialized education, written rules providing a clearcut division of rights, obligations, tasks and authority and a career structure (Weber, 1964).

Even if the distribution effects we have observed may indicate standardization of some sort, it does not seem to be explained by these organizational models. From this we may make two tentative, not necessarily mutually exclusive, assumptions: (a) The organizations in question, lack the characteristics prescribed by the models; (b) The models are better suited for the explanation of variations in officials' ideologies, role conceptions and how they argue in favor of their own decisions (Eckhoff and Jacobsen, 1960), than for the explanation of variations in decision behavior.

We will discuss these questions with reference to some findings in studies of local administrative structure and practice and of professional behavior.

Variations in local administrative structure and practice

The administrative units which take care of the day-to-day contact between the public administration and its clients, are usually (state or municipal) agencies on the local level. If we look at the administrative structure of Norwegian local administration, we will find that it differs in several important respects from the traditional models of bureaucratic and professional organizations. Even if the development during the last decades has been one of increasing bureaucratization and professionalization, it may still be characterized as follows:

- a) A varied administrative structure both in terms of absolute and relative size and hierarchical and functional differentiation (Brandsdal, 1982).¹⁶

- b) A majority of small municipalities - more than 2/3 with less than 10.000 inhabitants and correspondingly small and undifferentiated administrative structures (Hoven, 1979).
- c) A varied, but relatively great proportion of unprofessional officials (Hoven, 1979).
- d) A relatively politicized civil servant role (at least on the top level) (Olsen, 1968, Lund, 1974, Guttelvik, 1974).
- e) A varying degree of delegation of authority from elected bodies to the administration: the smaller the municipality, the less delegation (Hoven, 1979).
- f) An extensive system of collegiate boards related to the various administrative branches (Brandsdal and Tangenes, 1979).

These characteristics led us to expect considerable variations in how local administrations and their different administrative branches provide services for their clients. Several studies lend support to this assumption. They show considerable regional and local variations in levels of spending and consumption, administrative practices and attitudes towards the clients. Not all of the variations are, however, explainable by characteristics of the local political-administrative system. Variations in the levels of spending on social security are mainly explained by variations in local economic resources (Hansen and Kjellberg, 1976) and the levels of consumption by characteristics of the job market (Kolberg, 1974). The levels of spending on social benefits seem, on the other hand, closer related to characteristics of the local political-administrative system (Hansen and Kjellberg, 1976). Officials' attitudes towards the clients and the easiness of access to public services, also seem to be related to characteristics of the administrative apparatus. A comparison of the distribution of economic support and legal entitlements in a small rural and an urban municipality, showed that the proportion of potential clients who got in touch with public agencies, was higher in the rural municipality. After contact had been established, however, clients received a high degree of equal treatment in both municipalities (Hoven, 1981a). A study of the county boards which play an important part in decisions on applications for disability pensions, showed variations in the relative importance ascribed to different decision criteria such as: procedural efficiency, legal correctness, the applicants' needs and moral considerations (Løchen and Marthinsen, 1962).

Although data are scattered and scarce, the studies referred to indicate that there are local and regional variations in the supply of some services, their accessibility and the decision criteria being applied by local administrators.

Variations in professional behavior

Even if the classical models of professional behavior assume a high degree of standardization, brought about by professional autonomy and self-imposed collegiate control based on internalized norms and the professionals' organizations, empirical studies indicate otherwise. This may be illustrated by some examples from the health sector, which more than other public sectors, may be expected to be characterized by professional standardization and predictable behavior.

In a study of the role conceptions of physicians, Løchen (1971) found that general practitioners adapted to their roles in different ways, dependent on how they defined their relationships with patients and colleagues. Variations of a similar kind were found by Guttormsen and Høigård (1977) among social workers.¹⁷ Such variations have also been found in medical practice. Doctors' prescriptions and patients' consumption of psychotropics provide one example. In Norway one have found differences between counties, between psychiatric wards in different hospitals, between different wards in the same hospital and between different doctors in the same city (Jacobsen, Jensen and Aarseth, 1982). These variations do not seem to be explainable in terms of characteristics of the patients and their illnesses.

According to studies of the causes of such variations, they seem to be related to factors like doctors' attitudes, the marketing of pharmaceutical products (Jensen, 1979), the professional and social network among physicians (Coleman, Katz and Mentzel, 1957), the choices made by physicians with decision making authority in hospitals (Bomann-Larsen, 1981) and the organization of the information system in connection with public drug control (Bruun et al., 1982, Jensen, 1979).

The findings above, indicate (a) that the standardizing effects of professional competence and knowledge are considerably weaker than traditionally assumed, and (b) that professional autonomy and collegiate control, by the same token, are insufficient to bring about standardization.

If we look at the organization of the health service, it is characterized by specialization and fragmentation. It allows the medical profession great freedom individually and collectively. At the same time the health service has in most areas been unable to establish effective feedback mechanisms concerning the effects of its activities. The lack of coordination and feedback may be damaging to patients receiving treatment from different physicians, for one thing, but it also serves as an effective protection against criticism and control from outside. These organizational characteristics probably constitute important conditions for the observed variations (Jacobsen, Jensen and Aarseth, 1982).

5. Definition of clientele and service provision¹⁸

The findings concerning variations in administrative and professional attitudes and behavior, do not go against the findings regarding the impact of selection mechanisms related to the clients' socio-economic resources. What they do indicate is that the impact may vary, depending on the size and structure of local administrations, professional or administrative culture and attitudes and the social distance between potential clients and local administrators. The use and impact of selection mechanisms may also depend on other characteristics of the organization of public services. Although there are few systematic comparisons, present knowledge gives reasons to assume that the character of the selection process is affected by the principles with which the relationship between demand and service provision is regulated.

The regulation of demand may primarily be regarded as a question of how the clientele is defined. Here we will distinguish in parsonian terms, between services where client status is defined on the basis of *ascription* or *achievement* (Parsons, 1951). Ascribed client status is a distinguishing feature of the universal services which form the basis of modern "welfare states" - e.g. minimum old age pensions, child insurance and primary education (Titmuss, 1968). In these cases, client status is ascribed on the basis of age. The imposition of burdens like military service in modern conscript armies, is also usually based on ascription. "Client status" is determined by sex and age.

Achieved client status may be based on need (e.g. traditional poor relief, today's social benefits, allowances for the disabled and unemployed and health service), ability or competence (e.g. higher education) or deviant behavior (e.g. prisons and psychiatric institutions).

The provision of a service may in principle depend only on demand or in addition, on a given and fixed supply. We may accordingly, distinguish between *demand-regulated* and *supply-regulated* service provision. In the former case, the provision is in principle "unlimited" and access non-competitive - i.e. variations in the number of eligible clients will not influence a potential client's chances of access. This is generally the case for social benefits and insurance allowances. In the latter case, potential clients will or may have to compete for access to the service, as is the case for higher education.

The two dichotomous variables may be used for a classification of different combinations of principles with which the demand - service provision relationship may be regulated. To the extent these principles are applied, public services may be classified in the different cells of the fourfold table (table 1). Each value-combination may be expected to have different consequences for how clients are selected, by what mechanisms, for the distribution of the service and for how official service providers (i.e. politicians and administrators) are likely to ration the services, especially in periods of contractive public policies. We will illustrate this by discussing some of the possible consequences of each value-combination, cell by cell.¹⁴

		Client status	
		ascribed	achieved
Service provision	demand-regulated		
	supply-regulated		

Table 1. Principles for regulation of the demand - service provision relationship.

Ascribed demand-regulated services.

As indicated above, the universal services of modern welfare states, make typical examples. Among the most usual services of this kind, are minimum old age pensions, child allowances and compulsory education.

Potential clients to these services are usually faced with relatively few and easy requirements in order to gain actual client status. Access is often more or less "automatized" - i.e. there are usually minimal competence and efficiency requirements attached to the selection process, and the initiative requirement is reduced to a minimum.

Demand regulation does not mean that available resources are literary unlimited. When the resources dwindle relatively or absolutely,¹ or there is a shift in the direction of contractive policy, there are two ways of saving, if one does not want to change the principles. One is to lower the standards - e.g. reduce allowances or increase the number of pupils per teacher. The other is to reduce the clientele by changing the eligibility criteria - e.g. to require that the elderly have to be older and the children younger to be entitled to allowances. In both cases the rationing will be highly visible and open to political contest and conflict. The reason is that the service provision usually is determined solely by commonly known rules, the clientele is easily identifiable and the demand is relatively predictable. These services are, by the same token, standardized and, less than other services, subject to variations in administrative and professional attitudes and behavior.

Achieved demand-regulated services

Several kinds of individual economic support belong to this category - e.g. social benefits, disability pensions, rehabilitation support, unemployment insurance and additional old age pensions.

The services are discriminatory, and the eligibility criteria are usually based on some kind of evaluation of a present need and its causes, or of past merits.²⁰ Access usually requires initiative from potential clients and more or less competence to pass the evaluation - i.e. to prove ones needs and relate it to an acceptable cause or deserved right. It may, additionally, be an advantage to be counted among the "normal" cases which do not represent too much extra work and reduction of the expected procedural efficiency of the service. On the other

hand, the clients are rarely expected to employ this kind of support effectively. Access is here, as for the services of the former kind, usually granted on the basis of present situation and past events and not on the basis of expectations of future achievements. The distribution effects of this kind of requirements, have been discussed above (cf. part 3).

Both standard reduction and a more narrow definition of the potential clientele are possible ways to save money for this kind of services as well. A more likely initial step, however, is to increase the gap between potential and actual clients. The achievement evaluation offers this opportunity. By altering the relatively byzantine and publicly inaccessible aspects of public service provision which are called "administrative practice" or "professional judgement", saving without controversy may be possible. A more rigorous selection of this kind, may have either of two consequences: a relative increase in the number of rejections or slower procedures which result in longer waiting lines and fewer admissions. This may explain why means testing has been proposed to be reintroduced for some universal social security services in several western countries during the current period of contractive public, especially social, policy.

The discretionary evaluation of rights and needs makes the selection of clients to these services a likely subject to variations in administrative and professional behavior. Some of the studies referred to above (part 4) which showed local variations, were of social insurance services of this kind (Kolberg, 1974, Løchen and Marthinsen, 1962). This indicates not only that such variations are more likely for some services than for others. It indicates also that the variations may be explained in terms of characteristics of the demand as well as in terms of varying attitudes and behavior among officials.

Ascribed supply-regulated services

There are few individual services which clearly fall into this category. There are supply regulated services, however, which have defined their potential clientele by ascription - e.g. when only members of a particular sex and particular age groups may apply for a particular kind of education with a fixed annual intake of students. But the final selection of actual clients is usually based on achievement and is therefore based on the same principles as the services discussed below.

Achieved supply-regulated services

A common characteristic of these services is that access to them is competitive. We may distinguish between those to which access is openly and positively competitive, and those to which it is more or less clandestinely so. In the first category, non-compulsory education offers a typical example, when a fixed number of students is admitted each year on the basis of competitive tests. To the second category belong most of the treatment and institutional resources of the public health service. When it is publicly financed, free and in principle universally accessible, it may seem to belong to the second category of services at first glance. But because the institutional capacity and the number of therapists are more or less given, the available resources at any given point of time, are fixed within limited margins of variation. There are limits to how many beds one may cram into a hospital and the extent to which therapists may reduce the duration of treatment or increase patient turnover. And as we have observed, those limits are frequently reached.²¹

Access to services of this kind, may require both initiative and competence. They are additionally characterized by a tendency to face potential clients with stronger efficiency requirements than other services. The competitive tests for admittance to higher education, are supposed to prove the applicants' competence and to indicate whether they are able to profit from and use the education effectively. The effectiveness requirement may also constitute an important selection mechanism for the services to which access is more clandestinely competitive, and which may purport to select their clients solely on the basis of needs. Economic support to small industrial companies distributed from fixed annual bloc grants, make one example. Even if it is intended to support needy companies, the selection is based on an evaluation of the prospects of progress (Sørli, 1978). Access to professional medical treatment is often based on similar requirements. The patient have to prove a need by being properly ill, but also the prospect of being able to profit from the treatment by getting properly well.²²

The modes of saving described above, are also possible for this kind of services. Two forms of saving are, however, more typical than others (though not necessarily the most frequently applied). The first is to make the effectiveness requirement more rigorous. This is easily done for openly competitive services

when the demand increasingly exceeds the supply. It is not quite as easily done for the more clandestinely competitive, needs-related services. But calls for better planned use of resources in the health service are frequently heard, and so are complaints about all the incurable patients who fill the hospitals at the expense of curable patients in need of treatment (Hofoss, 1982). Another way to increase effectiveness, is to segregate the demand by a clearer distinction between therapeutic services for the curable and care of the incurable patients.

Because the health service and higher education constitute the bulk of this kind of services, they are especially subject to variations in professional behavior as indicated by the examples above (part 4).

6. Conclusion

The theoretical perspective of the discussion in this article is based on organization theory. The perspective implies that we regard the distribution of public goods and burdens as a product of complex organized processes. It also indicates that simplified models which explains the distribution in terms of only one set of factors are of limited analytical value. We have discussed three sets of factors which affect such processes and which we regard as important elements to the formation of a general theory of client-bureaucracy relationships. There are other important elements as well, two of which we will mention here.

Firstly there is the historical development of client-bureaucracy relationships in the light of the development of the modern national state and the general state-citizen relationship.

Secondly, in this article we have mainly discussed and compared individual public services and their selection of individual clients. Public service provision have accordingly, been explained in terms of characteristics of individual agencies and their clients. The agencies are, however, not only left with the options of accepting or rejecting potential clients. They may also refer them to other agencies. In many cases, as indicated by a study of compulsory psychiatric treatment in Sweden (Hetzler, 1978), clients may be given access to goods or subjected to

burdens on the initiative of public institutions. An important task for future research, therefore, is to study the barriers clients are faced with and variations in service provision in terms of characteristics of public administration as a whole, e.g. specialization, fragmentation, division of work, cooperation and possible routines for mutual referral of clients.

Notes

1. Concepts like 'need' and 'equality' are of course not easily defined. We shall not add to the list of substantial definitions. Our procedure is the following: We will accept the usual official notion that a given agency and the goods or burdens it distributes, is supposed to fulfill some kind of social need. The fulfillment of the need is usually defined in terms of the agency's obligations or actions in relation to a more or clearly defined clientele. 'Equality' and 'need' may then be defined on the basis of the official definitions - i.e. on the basis of whether the actual distribution is in accordance with the definitions or some of them, or whether it may be better explained in terms of the clients' ability to handle their relationships with public agencies. One important criterion is whether the actual distribution weakens, strenghtens or is neutral to socio- economic status differences within a potential client group.
2. Among the groups which have been subject to this kind of studies in Norway are: vagrants (Ramsøy, 1971), Lapps (Eidhem, 1971, Otnes, 1970), old people (Midré, 1973b), prostitutes (Martinussen, 1967), dependants on social insurance and social benefits (Kolberg, 1974, 1976) and different categories of institutionalized clientele (Bratfos, 1974, Christie, 1960, Løchen, 1970).
3. Townsend (1979) probably represents the most outstanding recent contribution to this kind of research. The most comprehensive investigations in Norway have been carried out by the government sponsored "Level of Living Project" during the period from 1972 to 1977 (NOU 1976:28).
4. Norwegian examples are the studies by Aubert, Sveri and Eckhoff of the Domestic Servant Law (1952), by Christie of the Sobriety Boards (1964), by Løchen and Marthinsen of the Rehabilitation Support and Disability Insurance Acts (1962), by Lindén of the disability insurance (1971, 1972), by Benneche of the Child Protection Boards (1967) and by Øyen of the Social Benefits Act (1974). Internationally there is a growing literature on implementation which is highly relevant in this context, e.g. Lipsky and Weatherley (1977), Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), Elmore (1980).
5. Some authors have quite appropriately pointed out that when such problems are explained as a result of "lack of adaptation" caused by

"imperfect" laws or administrative arrangements, the explanations are often based on rationalistic presumptions. Conflicts and ambiguities are regarded as "obstacles" to the implementation of political goals. The problem may however, just as well be the implication that ambiguities and conflicts are deficiencies or deviances, rather than integral parts of political life (March and Olsen, 1976, Schaffer, 1980). Recent contributions in sociology of law (Hetzler, 1978) and political science (Elmore, 1980) are accordingly based on different presumptions and research strategies. A traditional approach normally presupposes the normative power of a given law or policy, and the research task would then be to study the factors which may reduce, impede or transform its effects when it is put into practice. The studies referred to above, on the other hand, take the daily work situation of the actors (public officials) who are supposed to practice the law or policy, as their point of departure. Their task is then to study the factors which affect their performance in the daily work situation, among which one may, to varying degrees, find the law or policy in question.

6. Some of the most well known Norwegian action research projects have been carried out in the Oslo-area. Among them are a broadly based study of living-conditions in a municipality (Nord-Odal) outside the city (Midré, 1973a), a study of needs for legal aid (Eskeland and Finne, 1973) and a study of social-medical needs (Hanoa, 1977). The two latter were carried out in central working class areas.
7. Apart from the important contributions from a few pioneers (Jacobsen, 1964, 1965, 1970), the research activity has increased, especially from the seventies onwards, cf. Bleiklie, Jacobsen and Thorsvik (1979), Grunow and Hegner (1980), Jacobsen, Jensen and Aarseth (1982), Katz and Danet eds. (1973).

Most of the examples and data referred to below, are of Norwegian origin. Descriptions of public services and arrangements are based on the Norwegian experience, unless indicated.

8. In studies of the client-bureaucracy relationship, the two perspectives have usually been kept apart. To some extent we might even contend that the field has been characterized by an academic division of work, where general sociology and political science have concentrated on the distribution of official goods, whereas the question of the distribution of burdens has been left to more specialized disciplines like criminology and sociology of law. There are of course, exceptions from this general characteristic, cf. Katz, Gutek, Kahn and Barton (1975), Kjellberg, Brofoss, Ellefsen and Saglie (1980). Studies of public control policies represent also important exceptions in general political science (Bruun et al., 1982, Wilson, 1980). The marxian tradition represents another obvious exception, by stressing the function of the state in maintaining the dominance of one social class over another (Lenin, 1968, Marx and Engels, 1965).
9. There are several examples of different ways in which goods and burdens may be interwoven. Criminal and psychiatric ward

usually try to *combine* therapeutic and control functions (Christie, 1960, 1964, Hetzler, 1978). Complex and onerous application procedures are often used to *modify* or reduce demands for public goods like social insurance or other kinds of economic support (Guttormsen and Høigård, 1977, Sørli, 1978, Øyen, 1978). Protection of some groups or interests may entail a *complementary* control of others, e.g. protection of tenants/buyers on the housing market against owners/sellers (Bleiklie, 1979) or psychiatric patients against manufacturers of psychotropics (Bruun et al., 1982).

10. This implies that a complete empirical validation requires the judgements of both the clients and officials concerned.
11. This pair of concepts is based on the distinction in science of law between formal and substantive justice. Whereas substantive justice defines the legal rights and obligations of the population in a society, formal justice defines how they are to be enforced (e.g. similar treatment of similar cases) (Rawls, 1971). Here, the concepts are defined in a similar way. 'Substantive factors' refers to properties of the good or burden which is distributed. 'Procedural factors' refers to properties of the process by which the distribution takes place.
12. The problem is related to the definition of 'simplicity' and 'complexity', and whether the concepts pertain to formal rules or actual practice. In the former case, the theory runs the risk of being unrealistic and irrelevant. In the latter case, it may be difficult to establish criteria sufficiently precise and general to prevent the unrealistic and irrelevant. In the latter case, it may be difficult to establish criteria sufficiently precise and general to prevent the definition from changing content in different situations in a manner which suits the theoretical presumption about a causal relationship between organization structure and distribution result.
13. Several authors have argued that the information problem cannot be satisfactorily explained only as a consequence of the low level of information among low status clients. It has been argued that the complexity of bureaucratic structures makes it impossible to give simple and adequate information about them and the services provided by them. It has also been contended that the information techniques which are usually applied, only make the information available to those who need it the least. Finally, it has been argued that most information is concentrated on easily accessible services available to large sections of the population, whereas much less information is given about the relatively complicated services intended especially for the needy (Eskeland and Finne, 1973).
14. The relative significance ascribed to norms of efficiency and effectiveness, may depend on how different categories of officials legitimize their decisions. Whereas traditional bureaucratic decision-making is based on correct application of rules and indifference to the further consequences of the decision, the means-end character of professionals' (e.g. physicians, economists) decision-making, primarily obliges them in terms of what ends they

pursue, and reduces the selection of means to a solely pragmatic question (Eckhoff and Jacobsen, 1960).

15. This does not imply that the norms of efficiency and effectiveness necessarily have to serve identical purposes. They may even work in a mutually opposite direction. My own experiences from a psychiatric institution make one example. On the one hand, professional norms of effectiveness implied that access should be restricted to the relatively few patients who were defined as motivated for treatment and having a good prognosis. On the other hand, norms of efficiency defended by superior authorities, exerted a pressure to accept as many patients as the institution could hold (Bleiklie, 1982b). Hofoss (1982) indicates that similar conflicts are a general problem within public health services.
16. The variations may be illustrated by figures from the two smallest and the two largest Norwegian municipalities:

	Modalen	Utsira	Bergen	Oslo
Population	270	310	210.000	457.000
Mun. employees	17	13	8.500	38.000
Elected reprs.	13	13	85	85

(Brandsdal, 1982:157).

17. Variations of a similar kind was also found by this author among unprofessional officials at a municipal housing office (Bleiklie, 1982b).
18. In order to simplify the argument, this part deals mainly with the distribution of goods.
19. The consequences discussed below, are not necessarily logical implications of the categorization. They are partly so and partly based on empirical observations - i.e. some of the phenomena observed in connection with the different value-combinations, may be caused by underlying factors.
20. Whereas access to social benefits is solely based on needs, the other services presuppose loss of an earlier wage income. Access is then based on an evaluation of the causes of the loss. For disability pensions and rehabilitation support, the evaluation involves medical examinations. Access to unemployment insurance depends on whether the unemployment is unmerited or not and on a certain minimum duration of the earlier period of employment. Apart from social benefits, the amount of money one receives from these services and in additional old age pensions, is decided on the basis of earlier income.
21. This is at least true in a synchronic perspective. In a diachronic perspective however, the changes in efficiency of medical institutions and therapeutic techniques may increase considerably over longer periods of time. The innovations in psychiatric drug therapy in the fifties make one example (Bruun et al., 1982).
22. These requirements are of course not held with the same intensity throughout the health services. In some cases need may be the only requirement, in others, future prospects of recovery are considered

important. The relative importance of the different requirements are probably dependent on a number of factor such as: speciality, degree of specialization, relative size of demand etc.

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