Max Weber and the Analysis of Modern Bureaucratic Organization: Notes Toward a Theory of Appraisal

MICHAEL A. LUTZKER

A RECENT ESSAY BY FRANK BURKE decried the lack of a theoretical perspective among archivists.[1] He challenged us to pose some fundamental questions about the nature of society and the records its institutions create. Until we do so, Burke argued, the archival profession will produce no body of theoretical principles, and, as a consequence, those who prepare to enter our profession will continue to receive training but not necessarily education. Using the analogy of the church, Burke suggested that we are turning out priests when we should be preparing theologians.[2] He raised a number of thought-provoking questions; although we are a long way from answering them, it is appropriate that we explore some of the directions he proposed for us. If we are to administer records as well as process them, we should be developing some theoretical models, and if we are to appraise the multitude of records being created in our time, we will need some general framework of analysis that can be used to guide our judgment.[3]

In attempting to develop archival theory, it is natural that we should draw from the insights of our sister disciplines: sociology, social psychology, public administration, and history. Fortunately, these disciplines offer constructs that can deepen our understanding of how institutions function. It remains for us to scrutinize the

[1]Frank G. Burke, "The Future Course of Archival Theory in the United States," *American Archivist* 44 (Winter 1981): 40-46.

[2]Burke's analogy was apt on more than one count. Given the salaries paid most archivists, a renunciation of all worldly possessions would seem to be in order.

[3]This particular framework is appropriate for archival records rather than manuscript collections. A beginning was made by Francis X. Blouin, Jr. in a thoughtful essay, "A New Perspective on the Appraisal of Business Records: A Review," *American Archivist* 42 (Summer 1979): 312-320. I am grateful to him for guiding my thinking in this direction.

This article is based on a paper given at the 1981 SAA annual meeting. The author is director of the Program in Archival Management and Historical Editing and associate professor of history at New York University. He wishes to thank Francis X. Blouin, Jr., Frank Burke, Hugh Taylor, Eva Moseley, Phyllis Klein, and Sheila Frottier for their helpful comments and suggestions.

literature and apply the insights of these disciplines in order to understand more fully the inner dynamics of the institutions or agencies that create records and the various purposes of records creation.

Let us begin with that dreaded word, "bureaucracy," whose origins are rather innocent. "Bureau" referred to the cloth used to cover the desks of French government officials in the 18th century and became linked with a suffix signifying rule by government.[4] Yet the term has come to signify the multiplication of agencies staffed by narrow-minded and high-handed officials whose work is characterized by innumerable tortuous procedures.

The bureaucrat has been mercilessly satirized in song and story. Charles Dickens complained that, if another Gunpowder Plot had been hatched in his own time and "discovered half an hour before the lighting of the match, nobody would have been justified in saving the parliament until there had been half a score of boards [of inquiry], half a bushel of minutes, several sacks of official memoranda, and a family vault full of ungrammatical correspondence. . . ."[5] And Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* advised how to get to the top by not making waves: "Stick close to your desks and never go to sea, And you all may be rulers of the Queen's Navee!"[6] Nor can anyone forget Joseph Heller's consummate formulation of bureaucratic rulemaking: *Catch-22*. The terrors of flying many combat missions and having close brushes with death could affect one's mind. But then there was Catch-22:

> which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr, who had flown many such missions, was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions.[7]

All of us have experienced the frustration of dealing with bureaucracy, and everyone has a favorite horror story. In our more reflective moments we recognize that one does not escape bureaucracy by turning from the public to the private sector. Robert Presthus has called ours the Organizational Society.[8] Our lives, values, and much of our behavior are shaped by interaction with large-scale, relatively impersonal organizations. This is true of all industrialized nations, and as the less developed countries seek to modernize, they, too, will develop more and more complex bureaucratic structures.

It is the contention of this paper that, because archivists must work with the records created by bureaucrats, because the actual operation of the administrative unit is not always reflected in the records, and because the archivist must appraise them for their evidential and informational values—for all these reasons we must examine the most appropriate analytical studies of the administrative process for the light they can shed on the significance of those records.

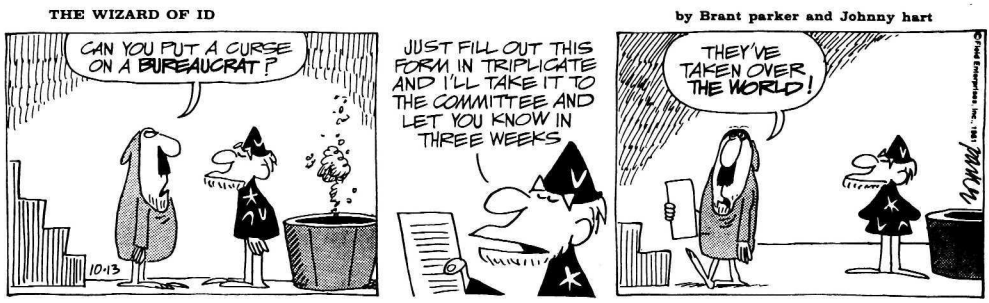
[4]Reinhard Bendix, "Bureaucracy," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* David L. Sills, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1968), vol. 2, p. 206.

[5]Marc Holzer, Kenneth Morris, and William Ludwin, eds., *Literature in Bureaucracy; Readings in Administrative Fiction* (Wayne, N.J.: Avery Publishing Group, 1979), p. 168.

[6]*Ibid.,* p. 39.

[7]Joseph Heller, *Catch 22* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1962), p. 46.

[8]Robert Presthus, *The Organizational Society,* rev. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978). This work provides a useful introduction to the subject; see particularly its first three chapters.



By permission of Johnny Hart and Field Enterprises, Inc.

Max Weber's classic formulation of the bureaucratic concept can serve as the point of departure for archivists seeking to understand the structure or hierarchy within which the process of records creation takes place. The work of administration entails defining and redefining institutional goals, resolving conflict over the exercise of authority, and dealing with the consequences of policy fluctuations. This necessarily calls for the application of rules and precedents in decision making. Despite their different perspectives, most scholars who study administrative processes—whether sociologists, analysts of public administration, political scientists, or historians–acknowledge Weber's work on bureaucracy.[9]

The administrative function has of course been a pervasive element of all societies, ancient, medieval, and modern, but Weber was among the first to recognize the distinctive character of bureaucracy in the modern era. He pioneered in conceptualizing a framework for analyzing administrative systems, and he was prophetic in voicing concern over the psychological consequences to the individual caught in the web of modern large-scale organizations. More than fifty years after his death, Weber's formulations are still valuable in helping us better to understand *all* modern politico-economic systems: capitalist, socialist, and communist. Robert Presthus has called him "perhaps the greatest social scientist of this [the 20th] century."[10]

Weber belonged to a generation (perhaps the last) of universal scholars.[11] Born into a family of moderate wealth and learning in 1864, he had the benefit of the quintessential German university education at a time when that system was the envy of the Western world. He studied successively at the universities of Heidelberg, Berlin, and Göttingen, concentrating on the law. Before completing his studies, however, he had gained professional stature in a broad range of disciplines including economics, history, and philosophy. Appointed Professor of Economics at the University of Freiburg in 1894, he was invited to join the faculty at Heidelberg in 1896.

[9]Bendix, "Bureaucracy," pp. 206-208. Every sociology text begins its discussion of bureaucracy with Weber. For examples from other disciplines see Dan Clawson, *Bureaucracy and the Labor Process: The Transformation of U.S. Industry, 1860-1920* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), pp. 16-18; A.M. Williams and W.D.K. Kernaghan, eds., *Public Administration in Canada: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Methuen); and Seymour M. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1950), pp. 226, 275.

[10]Presthus, *The Organizational Society,* p. 263.

[11]For biographical information I have relied mainly on the lengthy introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills to *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, reprinted 1979), pp. 3-31.

In 1904 Weber came to the United States to deliver a lecture at the St. Louis Exposition and took the occasion to make an extended American tour. Deeply impressed by the energy of the people, he was nevertheless appalled by the vivid contrast of wealth and poverty. He likened Chicago, with its sprawling industry and wretched housing for its teeming population, to a man "whose skin has been peeled off and whose entrails one sees at work."[12] Weber traveled through the Oklahoma territory and visited New Orleans, Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, and several cities along the east coast. Everywhere he talked with academics, public officials, social reformers, and business and labor leaders.[13]

Weber was particularly interested in the role of bureaucracy in a democracy, and he was quick to recognize the importance of political party machines in managing the electoral process. While aware of their manipulation of the voters and their corrupt practices, he could also understand why the civil service reformers and forces of good government had so much difficulty in dislodging them. It was clear that the egalitarian spirit preferred a set of elected politicians who used the spoils system, yet who could be ousted when too corrupt, to the alternative of a caste of expert civil servants, drawn from the elite, who would despise the voters but would be irremovable. Weber foresaw that, despite this democratic penchant, the increasing complexity of American society would ultimately require better trained, more professional administrators in government than the political patronage system provided.[14]

A brief sketch cannot possibly do justice to the scope of Weber's interests.[15] Despite frequent periods of physical and mental ill health, by the time of his death in 1920 he had produced remarkable works of scholarship in a number of disciplines. He clearly discerned the powerful forces propelling all of Western society toward the centralized bureaucratic state, and he sought to understand this process by means of an imaginative multicultural analysis. Unlike Karl Marx—by whom he was influenced and whose ideas he challenged—Weber did not produce a holistic world view or political program. No one has erected statues of him, and few, if any, political manifestos invoke his name. But he has also been influential: rather than committed ideologues and activists, his followers are scholars who have used his insights to illuminate many dark corners of human experience, without making excessive claims for his ideas. Archivists should look to him as well.

Weber explained the importance of modern administrative systems by drawing a series of contrasts with those of older societies. In the ancient civilizations there were highly developed bureaucracies but, notes Weber, the keepers of the records were a subservient class:

> The Egyptian officials were slaves of the Pharaoh, if not legally, at least in fact. The Roman latifundia

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17. Weber came away from these discussions with a deep sense of foreboding about the future of racial relations and the ability of the United States to absorb the massive numbers of immigrants coming to its shores.

[14] There are translations of some of Weber's letters detailing his trip in H.W. Brann, "Max Weber and the United States," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* (June 1944): 18-30.

[15] The literature on Weber is extensive. For an excellent discussion of the man and his work, see H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1958).

> owners liked to commission slaves with the direct management of money matters, because of the possibility of subjecting them to torture. In China, similar results have been sought by the prodigal use of the bamboo as a disciplinary instrument. The chances, however, for such direct means of coercion to function with *steadiness* are extremely unfavorable.[16]

By contrast, the medieval and pre-modern eras were characterized by the leasing or direct sale of administrative office to benefit the royal treasury. The prime aim of the office holder was to turn a profit, so the resultant system of taxation and administration was less than equitable. Another pattern was the honorific appointment of administrators: office was bestowed by a ruler upon court favorites or to reward a subject for military or other services.[17]

These pre-modern administrative systems were characterized by inefficiency, nepotism and other kinds of favoritism, corruption, and coercion; they produced, as a consequence, a decision-making process that was wholly unsystematic, unpredictable, and highly idiosyncratic. It is against this background that one must measure modern systems of administration.

The changes came gradually; one sees a pattern only in retrospect. They paralleled the rise of the European nation-state. In a complex process lasting some 400 years, authority was gradually transferred from numerous local feudal bodies to a central administration. Decision making was removed from local nobles and their agents, who had been influenced by regional customs and loyalties narrowly conceived. Administration came increasingly to be entrusted to distant, more impersonal offices applying a central system of uniform decrees or laws. In time a new type of individual emerged onto the historical stage: the administrator, the civil servant whose task it was to carry out the will of the central authority.[18] The economic theorist Joseph Schumpeter has stated that the development of modern bureaucracy is "a fact no less important than the rise of the business class."[19]

Weber explained the adoption of this system throughout Europe by citing its technical superiority over other forms of organization. The fully developed bureaucratic mechanism compares with alternate administrative structures

> . . .exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production.
>
> Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs—these are raised to the optimum in the strictly bureaucratic administration, and especially in its monocratic form. As compared with all collegiate, honorific and avocational forms of administration, trained bureaucracy is superior on all these points.[20]

[16]Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber,* p. 208; emphasis in the original.

[17]*Ibid.,* pp. 206-224. It is impossible to do justice to Weber's wide-ranging discussion and complex formulation in so brief a compass.

[18]In a commentary on an earlier version of this essay, Hugh Taylor has called attention to some important differences between England and the European continent in the evolution of the administrative process. This point is well taken. Weber accounts for some of these differences in his discussion of the power of the "great and centrally organized lawyers' guilds" in England as compared to the Continent. See Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber,* pp. 217-218, 228.

[19]Quoted in Henry Jacoby, *The Bureaucratization of the World,* translated from the German by Eveline L. Kanes (Berkeley, Calif.: University of Californa Press, 1973), p. 27. This is an impressive work on the rise and development of modern bureaucracy.

[20]Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber,* p. 214.

Weber's concept of modern (as distinct from traditional) bureaucracy is one example of what he called an "ideal type," a method he used to construct a logically precise definition. The word "ideal" did not imply a value judgment. What he sought was a clearly specified set of characteristics that could be tested against historical and current realities.[21] He theorized that modern bureaucracy embodies three groups of characteristics; this formulation, though modeled largely on the German civil service, was intended to apply in general to both private institutions and government departments.[22]

The first group of elements relates to the structure and function of an organization. There exists a hierarchy of offices with fixed areas of jurisdiction specified by laws or administrative regulations; division of labor is acknowledged. Each official's degree of authority and amount of responsibility are clearly set forth, thus promoting specialization and the cultivation of expertise. Decisions are made on the basis of the written regulations. The files documenting these decisions, writes Weber, "are preserved in their original or draught form" and record actions and decisions taken. These records provide a mechanism for monitoring an individual's performance and set precedents for future actions.

A second group of characteristics deals with means of rewarding effort. An official receives a fixed salary, graded by rank. His position should be his sole occupation and is accepted with the understanding that it not be exploited for emoluments or rents (a practice of earlier periods). An official exercises authority by holding office, but he does not own his office and thus cannot designate his successor.

Third, Weber specifies the protections accorded the office-holder. The administrative office constitutes a career, with promotions granted by seniority or achievement. A clearly defined course of training with prescribed examinations is a prerequisite for appointment. The qualification for office is, therefore, ability (presumably ratified by a credential) rather than political or personal connections. In the modern era the administrator is no longer the personal agent of a ruler. As a civil servant, he serves the state and cannot be removed at will by changes in political leadership. He retains his position as long as he satisfactorily discharges his duties.

This Weberian model has already, in a sense, been incorporated into the professional archivist's consciousness. Does not the archivist, during the initial appraisal of records, seek to understand institutional hierarchy and the role of given administrators or agencies in decision making? If we agree that an understanding of the administrative process is essential to assessing the nature of administrative records, how can we selectively apply the extensive Weberian and post-Weberian literature to advance the work of archival appraisal? I will suggest some lines of approach and inquiry while recognizing that these ideas will require testing over time.

[21]Another of Weber's great contributions to an understanding of authority systems, and one which bears an important relationship to bureaucracy, was his conceptualization of "charisma." This is not the place to elaborate on such a complex phenomenon, but it is useful to note the linkage Weber made between bureaucracy and charisma. By means of historical accounts Weber demonstrated that virtually all charismatic leaders, whether warriors, religious prophets, monarchs, or revolutionary figures, are impelled to consider how their authority can be passed on to a successor. This involves the creation of some more permanent form of administrative hierarchy, some institutionalization of authority, or, as Weber called it, the "Routinization of Charisma." See S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 48-65.

[22]Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber,* pp. 196-204.

We have seen that Weber's emphasis was on the rational aspects of bureaucracy: structure, rules, and precedents. Subsequent studies have followed Weber's model, but some have criticized this emphasis on the rational and have concentrated instead on the nonrational factors and informal networks within the formal bureaucratic structure.

Analysis of these elements of human behavior received considerable impetus with the experiments at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Hawthorne studies are among the best known in sociological literature.[23] They began, modestly enough, as research on the effects of lighting on worker productivity in the assembling of electrical apparatus. Two groups of workers assembling the same components were separated from the main body of workers in the plant. The test group worked under increased lighting; the other served as a control group. Careful records were kept of the output of each group. To the surprise of the researchers, the productivity of *both* groups rose significantly as compared to that of the rest of the plant. Puzzled, those in charge began to substitute other variables. First the test group was given long periods of rest, then much shorter ones—all this in consultation with the workers involved. The research team was astonished to learn that productivity continued to rise in a steady curve even when the rest periods were substantially shortened.

It was only after many months of continued experimentation that the researchers began to realize that an entirely unanticipated factor was at work. Both the test and control groups had been dealt with differently than the other workers. The original lighting experiment had been discussed with them in advance, and each subsequent change in the conditions of work had been made in consultation with the test group. Both groups had been separated from the rest of the work force and they perceived this treatment as conferring a special status, distinct from the drab day-to-day routine of the other workers in the plant. The additional attention had apparently raised their morale and the resultant esprit de corps had increased productivity. This phenomenon became known in the sociological literature as the "Hawthorne Effect."[24]

Another experiment at Hawthorne, this one with an already established group of production workers known as the Bank Wiring group, produced a quite different set of data. The researchers discovered that these workers maintained among themselves an informal understanding to restrict output and thereby reduce speedup. The group was controlled by a few members, and those who failed to conform were subject to ostracism and intimidation. The researchers also detected an elaborate system of retaliation against those supervisors who showed favoritism, as well as informal devices to cover up for fellow workers even to the point of falsifying records (though to a minor extent as far as management was concerned).

The result of these fascinating studies was an increased respect for empirical research in which the researcher tries to

[23]The classic account is by F.J. Roethlisberger and W.J. Dickson, *Management and the Worker* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947); see also the more critical account by Loren Baritz, *The Servants of Power* (Wesport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974).

[24]Frank Burke has suggested that there might be an analogous archival "Hawthorne Effect:" that is, if certain administrators know that their records are destined to come to the archives, that fact may influence the character of the records created.

avoid preconceived notions and follows the data in whatever direction they may lead. Many of these studies, grouped loosely under the heading of the "human relations" model, have been concerned with the effect of organizational structure and authority systems on people at the lower or middle levels of the bureaucracy and have aimed to increase morale and productivity.

"Human relations" studies are of value to the archivist in that they may help to illuminate the informal structures within an organization that never appear on an organizational chart and may not be clear from the records. Indeed, the records will be read differently depending upon the archivist's knowledge of the internal dynamics of the bureaucracy. A generation before Hawthorne, Weber had expressed concern about the psychological consequences of the organizational discipline required by industrialization and bureaucracy. He feared that in the great majority of cases the bureaucrat was becoming "only a single cog in an ever moving mechanism which provides to him an essentially fixed route of march."[25] Now, fifty years later, there is a substantial literature—fiction as well as sociology—testifying to the stresses and frustrations of those involved in large-scale impersonal organizations. How these attitudes affect the records, or are reflected in them, is a question archivists should address.

A quite different direction taken by sociological research emphasizes the structural elements within the bureaucracy and thus remains closer to Weber's model. It is the established structure and hierarchy that give an organization its stability, its standard operating procedures, and its predictability—as well as its resistance to change. Those who would advance through the ranks soon absorb the cues and behavioral strategies most likely to maximize their chances. More is involved than telling one's superior only what he or she wants to hear. According to Charles Perrow,

> An organization develops a set of concepts influenced by the technical vocabulary and classification schemes; this permits easy communication. Anything that does not fit into these concepts is not easily communicated. For the organization, "the particular categories and schemes of classification it employs are reified, and become, for members of the organization, attributes of the world rather than mere conventions."[26]

Thus even data from outside the boundaries of the organization—for example, scientific papers, reports by consultants, or government studies—may be summarized and assessed according to the institution's own vocabulary and conceptual framework. As a consequence the organization's own archival records may represent misperceptions of the real world, and it might be judicious to preserve the independent studies from which the summaries were derived.

Another model concerns conflict within an organization. The pervasive character of competition is evident not only among individuals but, more important, among groups: departments,

[25]Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber,* p. 228. As if that were not disturbing enough, Weber observed that, as the need for more training and specialization grows in modern administrative work, a high value is placed on the "strictly objective expert" who succeeds in "eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational elements which escape calculation." In short, the ultimate irony is that bureaucracy is regarded as most successful when it is, in Weber's word, "dehumanized" (pp. 215-216).

[26]Charles Perrow, *Complex Organizations, A Critical Essay,* 2nd ed., (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1979), p. 146. In this section Perrow discusses and quotes from James March and Herbert Simon, *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958).

agencies, bureaus within the structure. The struggle may concern power, but often involves security, autonomy, discretion, and even survival. Research during the past two decades has lent support to the conflict model. Studies suggest that an organization or institution does not necessarily pursue a single, clearly defined goal. Different groups within a bureaucracy may be in competition even to the extent of pursuing multiple goals. General objectives may be agreed upon—for example, making a satisfactory profit, educating students, or curing the sick—but they are too ambiguous and nonspecific to be readily implemented. Satisfactory profits this year may be made at the expense of profits a few years hence; educating students may involve retrenchment policies to maintain high standards; additional facilities for curing the sick may delay purchase of expensive research equipment. Some goals are less in conflict than others. During periods of expanded resources and growth, even differing goals may be pursued simultaneously or sequentially, while in times of steady state or retrenchment conflict tends to become aggravated.

According to this conflict model, administrators at every level have a more or less articulated file of goals (proposals that imply particular objectives) on hand when the appropriate situation arises: for example, a change in leadership or the coalition of two units in support of a common proposal providing benefits for both. This is hardly a tidy concept. Indeed, its formulators have called it a "garbage can" model, wherein problems are convenient receptacles into which people may toss solutions that happen to advance their interests. The resulting accumulation

> becomes an opportunity or resource. Depending on the number of . . . proposals around, the mixes of problems in them, and the amount of time people have, they stay with the . . . proposal or leave it for another. The problem then gets detached from those that originally proposed it, may develop a life of its own, or get transformed into quite another problem.[27]

It is clear that theorists who use the conflict model have departed substantially from Weber's framework. Weber assumed a sense of loyalty to the entire structure; in the case of a civil servant it was to the nation-state. Conflict theorists suggest that loyalties operate in a much narrower frame—that is, a department or an even smaller unit within an organization. Yet even the most conflict-ridden institution requires some degree of stability in order to function. Certain normative processes act as rudders, as, for example, preparation of a budget. The conflict theorists are persuasive in showing that the preparation of a budget is something more complex than a rational process the aim of which is to advance the goals of an institution as articulated by its current leader. A notable work characterizes budget making as "an explicit elaboration of previous commitments," among its purposes being the "stabilizing of bargaining and expectations for a year or longer."[28] A second normative element acting as a stabilizing factor in the conflict model is the recourse to precedent, standard procedures, and tradition, evidence of which is usually found in the archivist's records.[29] However, contemporary sociologists testing the conflict

[27]Perrow, *Complex Organizations,* pp. 156-158.

[28]Richard M. Cyert and James G. March, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 33.

[29]*Ibid.,* pp. 105-107.

model in the larger sense have relied very little on historical documentary records but almost entirely on contemporary survey and interview data. Therefore, archivists face substantial problems in applying conflict-oriented studies to the appraisal of noncurrent records.

In spite of these difficulties, if the archivist were to find some elements of the conflict model useful for understanding the way in which the institution functions, would it not markedly affect his or her view of the records? Should this understanding be a factor in the appraisal process? One would think so. A more difficult question is to what extent the archivist should seek to document the bargaining process that conflict theorists have described. Frank Burke urges us to record the actual decision-making process, not merely the decisions themselves.[30] While this may complicate our task of appraisal, will it not bring us a step closer to understanding the realities of policy formation as well as policy implementation? Such records may be of evidential as well as research value. Does this mean retaining far more than we can control? Not necessarily. A clear understanding of the give and take appropriate to the conflict model may lead the archivist to recognize those records that were created essentially to protect the turf of an administrative unit as well as those that represent solutions awaiting problems; both are more suitable for bargaining purposes than for archival retention.

Among the various schools of sociology, one likely to be useful to the archivist is the Institutional School.[31] By focusing on the case study—that is, the actual operation of an institution—the researcher is more likely to consult the records and, more important, to address the whole issue of records creation.

Results of a study of a California junior college by Burton Clark seem likely to apply to other two-year colleges.[32] Clark found that the original aim of the college was essentially to provide remedial and vocational training to those who could not enter the state's four-year colleges. This institutional goal came into conflict with the aspirations of many students, who, though poorly prepared, sought a more academically oriented program that would prepare them for transfer to the four-year colleges; their ultimate aim was to enter one of the professions. Clark's study shows how the junior college attempted to reconcile these differing visions by a variety of administrative techniques, including academic tracking and extensive counseling. What is noteworthy from our perspective is the combination of sources Clark used. He drew heavily on depth interviews with administrators and faculty, re-interviewing some over a two-year period. But, in order to avoid dependence on hearsay, Clark tells us, "interview information was cross-checked among respondents and especially was checked against information found in documents. . . . Records and memoranda became in this study the primary source of dependable material, as well as a check on interview results." Clark makes the point "because files have had little status in sociology as a re-

[30]Frank G. Burke, "The Future of Archival Theory," p. 43.

[31]There is the question of how representative a single institution may be, but an institution studied can be cross-checked against similar agencies to determine how typical it is. A good example is Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977). While studying a single corporation, and serving as a consultant to other corporations, Kanter found the one she studied to have much in common with others of the same size. See her Appendix I, "Field Study Methodology and Sources of Data," pp. 291-298.

[32]Burton Clark, *The Open Door College* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

search source. Actually their role in organizational study may be a primary one."[33] This is worth citing not only to argue the case for documentary research but to emphasize that institutional studies, especially those that follow Clark's methodology, may be particularly useful for archivists.[34]

Another institutional study that makes substantial use of the documentary record is one made by Charles Perrow of a hospital; Perrow emphasizes the interrelatedness of goals and power structures.[35] He traces a shift of control over the years from the trustees to the medical staff, to the administrative staff, and then to a system of multiple leadership involving checks and balances. In addition to analyzing the conflicts within the hospital hierarchy, Perrow's study is noteworthy for showing how these conflicts are related to shifting patterns in the medical profession, changes in the community, and new directions in government funding. In other words, the environment in which the institution functions markedly affects its policies and ultimately its power structure.[36] Perrow's work demonstrates how the actual policy-making function may shift from one administrative group to another, and this suggests that the archivist must develop an appraisal method sensitive to such changes.

All working archivists recognize, of course, that the records we receive, no matter how voluminous, contain something less than the full administrative history of our institutions. What the best of the works in sociology and related administrative studies can teach us is how to look at these records in a more perceptive manner. It is useful to be aware of the ways in which nonrational factors affect decision making: to recognize that some records fulfill a purely ritual function; to understand that not all the policy decisions are made at the top of the organization, that conflicting policies can produce records reflecting quite different realities, and that outside forces in the organization's environment affect its records creation. All this makes our task a formidable one. But that is precisely why we need a body of archival theory. The general principles will emerge gradually from the working models we construct while applying the knowledge of our sister disciplines to the process of records creation within a given institution.[37] As we discern the ways in which some administrative layers mesh while others conflict, we will learn to weigh this cooperation–conflict factor in the appraisal process.

The working models we develop may be refined as we discover the informal networks not accounted for in the organizational hierarchy. In some instances a judicious use of the oral history interview will assist us. Rather than trying merely to fill the gaps in the records, we should pose a whole range of new questions that will aid in testing

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

[34] For a contrasting institutional pattern, see Clark's later study, *The Distinctive College: Antioch, Reed, and Swarthmore* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970).

[35] Charles Perrow, "Goals and Power Structures: A Historical Case Study," in Eliot Freidson, ed., *The Hospital in Modern Society* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp. 112-146. This essay is a distillation of Perrow's dissertation.

[36] For studies of the relationship between organizations and their environments, see Marshall W. Meyer et al., *Environments and Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1978).

[37] An excellent analytical survey of the sociological literature is Perrow's *Complex Organizations*. It is refreshingly free of sociological jargon. Presthus's *Organizational Society* approaches the subject from the perspective of politics. If one wishes to study bureaucracy through fiction, a good anthology is Holzer, Morris, and Ludwin, *Literature in Bureaucracy*. It contains a useful introduction.

working hypotheses.

Some will question whether one can analyze the organizational structure of which one is a member. Such an internal analysis does require a rigorous intellectual effort, but many archivists would insist that they are sufficiently remote from the power centers of their institutions to be relatively objective.

Enough has been said to suggest that the archivist who is aware of an institution's inner workings is bound to have a clearer insight into its documentary record. In all likelihood this will aid the difficult process of appraisal. But might it mean something more than that? Is it possible that the archivist's role might expand beyond that of keeper of the institutional memory? Could he or she be an appropriate person to suggest how bureaucratic conflict might be mediated, how institutional goals might be clarified, indeed in what ways a dysfunctioning structure might be improved? Is it fantasy to suggest that the archivist might eventually occupy such an enhanced role, one not now incorporated in the training manuals?

In any event, out of our individual searching for the internal dynamics of our own organizations will come the data which, when shared, can produce workable archival theory. Such theory will enrich professional archival training and add another dimension to the expertise of the archivist.