In this article, the authors describe the changes that have taken place in the Norwegian civil service over the past 30 years, focusing on demographic changes in education and gender and on changes in civil servants’ tasks, attitudes, and contact patterns. The changes are analyzed using tenure, structural, and demographic perspectives. The unique empirical database is provided by surveys conducted every 10 years of civil servants in the ministries since 1976. The main empirical findings are that there has been a combination of robustness and change. The findings show little support for the generational version of a tenure perspective, meaning that civil servants are not living in the past. The structural perspective, illustrated by the importance of formal position, best explains the variations in civil servants’ contact patterns and attitudes, followed by the career version of a tenure perspective. Demography, as represented by different educational backgrounds and gender, also has an effect.

Over the past two or three decades, the central civil service in many countries has experienced much change and turbulence. Three different phases of development are discernible: the “old Weberian public administration,” the New Public Management (NPM) era, and, more recently, what has come to be labeled the post-NPM phase (Christensen, Lie, and Lægreid 2007). Some see these as phases of dominance, whereby each new reform wave pushes aside the main features of the former generation and installs its own administrative principles. Another view, and the one we address here, is that each phase involves a rebalancing of existing and new features, so that previous features continue to exist, but sometimes in new forms (Light 1998; Pierson 2004; Streeck and Thelen 2005). The result is an increase in the complexity of administrative structures and culture. Therefore, when studying the history of the civil service, it seems appropriate to take an “archaeological” approach (Lægreid et al. 2003).

The tenure of civil servants seems to be a potentially important variable to focus on when analyzing the changes in the Norwegian central civil service over the past 30 years, spanning the three development phases mentioned. People who have spent many years in the civil service are the carriers of the history of civil service institutions—functioning as their living memory—and hence will pass on the history and cultural norms and values of the institution to coming generations (March and Olsen 1989; Selznick 1957). They are important for the “regeneration” aspect and for the ideal that turnover will be gradual enough to allow older civil servants to socialize and train younger ones (Pfeffer 1983). But civil servants with long tenures are important for other reasons, too, because they are naturally overrepresented among administrative leaders. They bring to leadership positions experience and attitudes formed over a long period of time and informed by a mixture of tradition and change.

A crucial question that is addressed in this article is whether civil servants with long tenure in central public administration are living in the past, meaning that their role enactment is more influenced by the historical path and the phase in which they entered the civil service than by what they have acquired from experience during their careers. Are their tasks more related to the “old public administration”—in other words, tasks related to laws, rules, single cases, and so on—than those of civil servants with a shorter tenure, whose tasks are more “modern” and NPM-oriented and include things such as planning and policy development, organizational development, regulation, performance measurement, or else more coordinative tasks associated with the post-NPM phase. Are their attitudes to their roles or role enactment more old-fashioned? And do they have a broader and different contact pattern than civil servants with shorter tenure? Is the significance of tenure stronger in these respects than...
other independent variables such as formal position, gender, or education? These questions will be addressed by using three theoretical approaches—a tenure perspective, a structural perspective and a demographic perspective.

The data used to analyze the main research questions are primarily from a large survey of civil servants in the Norwegian ministries in 2006, but comparable surveys from 1976, 1986, and 1996 are also used to show developmental features of the Norwegian central civil service.²

We will first give a brief outline of the Norwegian context. Then we will introduce the three theoretical perspectives and derive some expectations on behavior of the officials. Third, we will describe the changes in demographic composition and tenure over time, followed by a description of the changes in tasks, attitudes, and contact patterns. Fourth, we will analyze the variation in tasks, attitudes, and contact patterns by examining the importance of tenure and of structural and demographic features. Finally, we will draw some general conclusions.

The Norwegian Context: Historical Development and Reform Waves

From the establishment of the Constitution in 1814, the centralized state model in Norway was based very much on Rechtsstaat values, a feature further developed when Norway got its independence from Sweden in 1905, which marked the start of the modern Norwegian central civil service. It displayed Weberian features, and the majority of civil servants and politicians were jurists (Christensen 2003). Over time, this state model acquired cultural features related to nation building and designed to integrate different groups culturally and to develop collective norms and values. After World War II, another integrative process started whose aim was to bring about systematic organizational participation in government (Olsen 1983). Interest groups were increasingly integrated into public decision-making processes through various organizational forms.

The historical development, the “old public administration” or civil service, built on centralization, educational homogeneity of civil servants, cultural integration, and corporatist features, was really established during the Labour Party’s term in office from 1946 until 1965, when for most of that time it formed majority and single-party governments, labeled the “one-party state.” This form of public administration remained very strong in the 1970s but was modified somewhat by decentralizing elements.

During the 1980s, Norway experienced a period of transition. When NPM was introduced, Norway did not jump on the bandwagon, but remained a reluctant reformer for the next 10 to 15 years (Olsen 1996). In 1986, the center-right government introduced a modernization program, and the next year, the incoming Labour Party government proposed a renewal program for the civil service. Both programs were inspired by NPM, but reflected primarily NPM rhetoric and did not result in much action. Starting in the 1990s, the corporative system became weaker and Norway gradually introduced some NPM features. Management by objectives and results was introduced in all government organizations, followed by the gradual structural devolution of state-owned enterprises and agencies. The most marked NPM-oriented period was during the conservative-center government’s term in office from 2001 to 2005. The Red-Green Coalition government that came to power in 2005 was elected on an anti-NPM ticket, but it has been slow to reverse or modify NPM measures.

If we relate our surveys to the NPM and post-NPM reforms, we can assume that at the time the 1986 survey was conducted, the old public administration was still in place. The survey of 1996 seems to show the first NPM features (Christensen and Lagreid 1998b), while the 2006 survey shows the tension between NPM and post-NPM reform measures.

Tenure, Structural, and Demographic Perspectives

Tenure can be seen either as a formal-legal concept (fixed employment) or as a notion covering the length and continuity of service, and it is in the latter meaning we use it. Broadly speaking, tenure concerns certain aspects of employment in formal organizations (Pfeffer 1983; Tsui and Gutek 1999). Tenure reflects the dynamic between civil servants’ background, external contexts, and particularly the structural and cultural constraints to which they are subjected inside the civil service; the longer the tenure, the more complex this dynamic is.

When used as a variable to analyze the development and working of the central civil service, tenure may be defined in two rather different ways or versions. First, tenure may be seen in a generational version. When people enter the civil service, they do so in a certain historical context. This embraces a number of background factors, one of which is education. Civil servants who were educated during the student revolution of the late 1960s, for example, will have a different background and attitudes than those who were educated during the educational reforms of the 1990s. Another factor is the political, societal, economic, and technological constraints prevailing at the time they entered the civil service, but also the current political-administrative structure and culture, including whether the civil service is going through a period of turbulence. At any given moment, central government institutions are a shifting residue of history, and it is important to take lags into account (March and Olsen 1989; Stinchcombe 1965). The theory of path dependency would expect civil servants’ attitudes and behavior further on in their careers to be influenced by the historical context of their formative years—that is, their cultural “roots” will influence the “routes” and “paths” taken later (Krasner 1988; Pierson 2004; Selznick 1957).

In accordance with this view, one would expect there to be distinct generations of civil servants in different development phases, and hence tenure would explain variations in attitudes, role enactment,
identities, contacts, and so on. The generational version stresses that civil servants in many respects will be “stuck in their generation” and “live in the past,” meaning that the experience of their formative years will be far more important for their later attitudes and identities than what they experience later in their career. This perspective focuses on the importance of timing and temporal sequences, placing bureaucrats in different contexts that will affect their later attitudes and behavior (Orren and Skowronek 1994; Pierson 2004).

A generational argument could be seen as a prescription of inertia—that is, whatever the civil servants experience of changes and reforms in the civil service, they will not adapt and will stick to their institutional roots and even actively counteract any change or reform. Our argument here, however, is that civil servants do, of course, adapt to changes and reforms around them, especially if they are comprehensive, but they do so slowly and reluctantly, sticking mostly to the institutional norms and values from the phase in which they entered the civil service. So, of the many influences and constraints influencing the role enactment of civil servants, the generational will be the relative strongest.

According to the generational version, therefore, we would expect that bureaucrats with long tenure would score higher on working with single cases and that they would be more rule driven, identify more with their ministry, attend more to political signals, have more contacts with the political-administrative leadership and interest groups, and score low on attending to NPM and post-NPM features, all presumed typical reflections of “old public administration” (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). Similarly, civil servants with short tenure would have more general tasks related to planning, policy development, and coordination; be less rule-driven; identify more with their own unit; see professional signals as more significant; have a more narrow contact pattern (reflection of fragmentation and less leader access); and attend more to NPM and post-NPM measures, because these kinds of features were the ones that became dominant or “modern” during their formative years.

A second version of the tenure perspective is a cumulative career one. In contrast to the first version, which also looks at external societal factors, this perspective focuses solely on the importance of internal socialization and discipline (Lægreid and Olsen 1978, 1984). Socialization encompasses attitude formation and the process by which civil servants internalize the prevailing values in the ministries, while discipline is more preoccupied with behavioral control through promotion mechanisms. Many Norwegian civil servants reach the top of the administrative hierarchy in the ministries after going through several socialization and disciplinary filters designed to produce a responsible bureaucracy (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). Civil servants generally start their careers as executive officers dealing with single cases and performing simple tasks. Later, they move on to more general work and are gradually promoted to leadership positions, where they come into contact with a wider variety of actors. Unlike the generational version, this version stresses that civil servants accumulate experience and adapt to changes and reforms in the course of their careers, and that their experience will reflect the stage they are currently at.

According to this version, civil servants move through a system based on a career structure; their experience—for example, of reforms—will be more cumulative and blended and will not yield such distinct categories of identity as those associated with particular generations of reforms and historical periods. What would be the general effects of tenure according to such a version? We would expect long tenure to be connected with having general tasks, being less rule driven, identifying more with the civil service as a whole, attending more to political signals, establishing a broad range of long-term contacts, and scoring high on attending to NPM and post-NPM measures.

A structural perspective is an alternative to the tenure perspective. Simon’s (1957) main argument, according to the theory of bounded rationality, is that where a civil servant is located structurally will have an important influence on his or her behavior, because formal structure channels attention and capacity. Leaders, therefore, will have a different structural outlook, will have different attitudes and contacts, and will behave differently to actors lower down in the hierarchy, and their attitudes toward reforms will be different (March and Olsen 1983).

In line with the effects of vertical structural differentiation, those in positions higher up the hierarchy will presumably have more general tasks, be less rule driven, identify more with their own ministry and the civil service as a whole, pay more attention to political signals, have broader contacts, and score high on attending to NPM and post-NPM measures. In addition, the classical bureaucrat will act in a manner appropriate to his or her position rather than in accordance with personal preferences, and can be trusted to do so even in the face of considerable temptation to act differently (Lægreid and Olsen 1978; March and Olsen 1989). Civil servants in top positions have normally made a career within the civil service.

In most respects, the career version of the tenure perspective and the structural perspective will yield many of the similar predictions, based on the premise that most civil servants with long tenure will probably also be in leadership positions. But civil servants with long tenure may also have more professionally related jobs, remaining in advisory positions, for example, rather than becoming leaders—in other words, promotion is a selective process. This may weaken the effects of position. This makes it more interesting to see whether structural position, which in many studies has been a dominant variable that “makes room for” separate effects of tenure related to career factors (Christensen and Lægreid 1998b; Egeberg 2003; Lægreid and Olsen 1978).

A third perspective is a demographic perspective (Lægreid and Olsen 1978; Pfeffer 1983). Instead of stressing tenure effects or structural effects, this perspective focuses more on how individually oriented demographic variables, either separately or in combination, have more significance than tenure or position for attitudes, identity, and contacts. This perspective holds that a selected variable, type of higher education, is more important for differentiating tasks, signals, roles, identities, and contacts than tenure, as is gender (Christensen and Lægreid 1998b).

One basis for such an individual perspective is that the personal background of civil servants will influence their modes of thought and behavior in the civil service. Through early socialization based on gender and education, a civil servant arrives in a government institution with certain “baggage” that affects his or her subsequent
attitudes and behavior. The theory of representative bureaucracy presupposes that social background, whether based on prescribed features (gender) or acquired features (educational background), will be important for attitudes and action (Lægreid and Olsen 1978; Meier 1973). According to this perspective, who you are and where you come from will be more significant than where you are located in the formal civil service structure or what cohort or generation of civil servants you belong to.

We expect that type of education will matter quite a lot. Jurists will score higher on single cases, be more rule driven, and attend less to NPM-measures (Christensen and Lægreid 1998b). Social scientists are expected to have more general tasks, have a more holistic identification profile, attend more to political signals, have broader contacts, and score high on both attending to NPM and post-NPM features. Economists will presumably have more general tasks, identify more with their own unit, attend more to professional considerations, have most contact with the political leadership, and score high on attending to NPM-measures. We further expect women to have more general tasks than men, be less influenced by rules, have a more holistic identity profile, attend more to political signals, have more narrow contacts than men, and score higher on attending to NPM measures, while men will attend more to post-NPM measures because they are more strongly represented in the administrative leadership (Christensen and Lægreid 1998b, 2007a, 2007b).

The hierarchy in the Norwegian ministries has changed over time in a number of ways. The proportion of leadership positions has decreased, while the proportion of advisory positions has increased, reflecting changes in the way the work is organized, with an increase in the number of projects, collegial structures, and teamwork. Among the leaders in the hierarchy, relatively fewer are top leaders than before and relatively more are mid-level leaders, as shown in table 1. There is a significant positive correlation between long tenure and holding a leading position, as we would expect from a career perspective.5 Historically, the educational background of civil servants in the Norwegian ministries has predominantly been law school. The first challenge to this dominance came in the 1950s, with an influx of national economists to meet the increasing need for planning competence in the emerging social-democratic welfare state. Since then, the proportion of national economists in the ministries has not increased much (by slightly less than 10 percent). Social scientists started to enter the ministries in the 1970s, and since then, their share has increased from 4 percent in 1976 to 22 percent in 2006, as shown in table 1, making them the largest educational group in the ministries. In the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, the kind of expertise required by NPM led to the employment of another group of economists, business economists, by the ministries. Since then, however, their share (around 7 percent to 8 percent) has not increased, even though more NPM measures have been introduced. As for the jurists, their share has diminished over the last 30 years from 38 percent in 1976 to 22 percent in 1996, but since then, it has been stable, probably reflecting an increased demand for legal expertise related to adaptation to the European Union and the European Economic Area treaty. The rather large overall change in the educational composition of the ministries makes them more heterogeneous, with less dominance of groups with a particular educational background.

Table 1 also shows clearly that the share of women in the Norwegian ministries has

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (average)</td>
<td>(784)</td>
<td>(1,183)</td>
<td>(1,426)</td>
<td>(1,677)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Tenure, Formal Position, Education, and Gender Composition in Norwegian Ministries, 1976–2006 (percent)

Traditionally, the trend in Norway has been for civil servants to have lifelong careers in the ministries, often in the same ministry. Over time, it seems to have become more common to change one’s job more frequently, primarily inside the ministerial or agency structure, but in some cases moving to the private sector. . . .


Traditionally, the trend in Norway has been for civil servants to have lifelong careers in the ministries, often in the same ministry. Over time, it seems to have become more common to change one’s job more frequently, primarily inside the ministerial or agency structure, but in some cases moving to the private sector.
increased sharply in the 30-year period studied, from 15 percent to 48 percent, indicating a feminization of the civil service (Lægreid 1995). What is interesting is that the increase has been much lower over the last decade, which seems rather surprising given that the share of women in higher education has increased even further during this period.

**Describing the Dependent Variables: Tasks, Attitudes, and Contact**

Long-term changes in the main function or tasks of a civil servant reflect changes in the functions of ministries in the political-administrative system. The main trend in this respect is for ministries to become more like secretariats for the political executive leadership, attending more to planning and coordinative functions and later to controlling agencies, while single cases are deemphasized (Christensen and Lægreid 1998a).

Table 2 shows clearly that the main functions of civil servants have changed quite a lot in the 30-year period studied. The most dramatic change has been the sharp fall in the number of civil servants working on single cases, and this is not compensated for by any sharp increase in law-related activities. So the demand for judicial-related competence has generally decreased, which is also reflected in the substantial decrease in the share of jurists in the civil service. Accordingly, there has also been a corresponding marked increase in the share of civil servants involved in planning and policy development and coordination, related primarily to the increase in recruitment of social scientists. This development reflects both NPM and post-NPM features, but the minor increase regarding law-related tasks also increased integration into the European Union through the European Economic Area agreement. While NPM produced more framework steering and more planning and policy development, it also resulted in more structural fragmentation, which increased the need for coordination—a typical post-NPM feature.

Regarding rules and discretion, the question is whether civil servants have unambiguous rules and established practice as a basis for their daily work, or whether discretionary behavior is more typical. One of the main elements of NPM was to change the administrative culture from a rule-based bureaucratic mode toward a more performance- and results-oriented mode with greater discretion for managers and civil servants. With the increase in central control and coordination associated with the post-NPM reforms, one expectation might be the reintroduction of stricter rules and less managerial freedom, in contrast to the management orientation of NPM.

There is, however, great stability in this respect. First, there is no significant increase in managerial discretion and leeway or reduction in rule-based administration from the 1970s and 1980s to the 1990s, in spite of the NPM movement and its focus on cultural change of this kind. More autonomy seems to be followed by more rules and regulation—that is, deregulation and reregulation seem to go in tandem (Christensen and Lægreid 2006). And leaders are not less rule oriented than nonleaders. Second, there is no significant change from 1996 to 2006 in the balance between rule orientation and managerial autonomy—in other words there is no indication of a major shift in a post-NPM direction, mainly because the NPM movement had such a weak impact on rule orientation in the first place in the mid-1990s. The general picture during the last three decades is that the civil servants can be divided into three relatively stable groups of fairly equal size: one-third rule oriented, one-third having managerial autonomy, and one-third in the middle. From a long-term perspective, there is a weak trend toward increased rule orientation, in contrast to what would be expected from the NPM movement.

We also describe how much weight civil servants attach to various considerations in their daily work—that is, the balance between different elements and decision-making premises in their role enactment. Political loyalty, expressed through attention to political signals, but also through knowledge-based and professional considerations, are very important. The relative importance of these main considerations is high and has remained stable over the last two decades.

Civil servants’ identification with their own department is high and has remained stable. Identification with their own ministry is also strong and has increased over the past 10 years. This pattern illustrates the importance of the Norwegian position-based civil service system, in which recruitment is decentralized to each individual ministry and not carried out by a senior executive service or central recruitment body (Lægreid and Wise 2007). Identification with central government as a whole is lower, but has increased substantially over the past decade, indicating the emergence of post-NPM features.

Internal contact with administrative leaders in civil servants’ own ministry is high and stable. Contact with political executives in one’s own ministry is much lower and, in fact, decreased somewhat in the 1990s and later, compared with the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting capacity problems among the political executives. Contact with interest organizations has decreased significantly since the 1970s, which was the peak of the Norwegian corporate system (Christiansen and

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**Table 2 Main Tasks of Civil Servants, 1976–2006 (percent)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law-related</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single cases</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/policy development</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other functions</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(budget, information</td>
<td>(722)</td>
<td>(1,105)</td>
<td>(1,312)</td>
<td>(1,832)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communications and technology, personnel, control, information)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N = 100% (722) (1,105) (1,312) (1,832)*
Table 3 Summary of Regression Equations by Tenure, Position, and Demographic Features Affecting Tasks, Rule Orientation, and Identities, 2006 (standardized beta coefficients, linear regression)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Single Cases</th>
<th>Coordination</th>
<th>Rule Orientation</th>
<th>Own Department</th>
<th>Own Ministry</th>
<th>Central Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.06*</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.06*</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>.08***</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>.07**</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demography:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Gender</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.05*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Jurists</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Social scientists</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>-.06*</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Economists</td>
<td>.07*</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F statistics</td>
<td>5.697</td>
<td>37.857</td>
<td>5.800</td>
<td>5.525</td>
<td>7.649</td>
<td>10.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. of F</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,451</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>1,468</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>1,454</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rommetvedt (1999). In line with the weakening of the corporative system in Norway, we also see less frequent contact between civil servants in the ministries and interest organizations in business, trade, and industry, and also with civil servants’ unions.

Our indicator for NPM-oriented reforms is performance reporting and evaluation. Management by objectives and results is a core NPM instrument in Norway, and performance reporting is a main component of this performance management system (Lægreid, Rønness, and Rubekksen 2006). In 1996, almost half of the civil servants said that performance reporting and evaluation were important or very important or relevant in their own field of work. Ten years later, the percentage had dropped to 38 percent, indicating that NPM has dropped.

While the performance management system is mainly preoccupied with vertical control and coordination within one’s own policy area or sector, post-NPM reforms are more concerned with horizontal coordination problems across sector specialization in central government. In 2006, fewer than half of the civil servants in the ministries reported that horizontal coordination was good. Horizontal coordination was seen as much more problematic than vertical coordination within one’s own policy area, indicating that concern about reestablishing “whole of government,” which is a feature of post-NPM reforms, was rather strong (Christensen and Lægreid 2007a).

Multivariate Analysis: The Relative Explanatory Power of Tenure, Position, and Demography

We now turn to the question of the relative explanatory power of the different independent variables. A central question is whether there is an effect of tenure when we control for formal position in the structural perspective, or demographic features, such as gender and education.  

First, the most important factor for understanding variations in civil servants’ attitudes and behavior is position in the hierarchy. Position has a significant effect on all of our dependent variables except one and is especially strong when it comes to contact with political and administrative executives and having coordinating tasks, but also when it comes to identification with one’s own department, ministry, and the civil service in general, as well as the importance of performance reporting.

Second, there are some significant effects of tenure related to having coordination tasks, identity with one’s own ministry or central government in general, reform orientation toward post-NPM challenges, and the importance of signals from political executives. This seems to indicate a career effect: The more experienced people are, the more general tasks they have, the less concerned they are with horizontal coordination problems, the broader their identity becomes, and the more political sensitivity they have because of learning effects.

Third, there are also significant effects of education. Jurists tend to be very involved in individual cases and less in coordination tasks, which is very much in line with the traditional profile of this group. They are more rule oriented and identify more strongly with their own department or the central government in general. The latter seems somewhat strange, but one explanation may be that this combines an overall narrow perspective, with jurists still having a solid position in leadership roles. Jurists also tend to pay great heed to signals from political executives, but also to professional considerations. They also have close contact with administrative executives in their own ministry and with interest organizations, the latter probably reflecting their focus on single cases. In addition, they pay less heed to performance reporting than people with other professional backgrounds (cf. Christensen and Lægreid 1998b).

By contrast, social scientists are more occupied with coordination and are less rule oriented, reflecting the type of education they have received. They identify strongly with central government in general, and signals from political executives are important, probably reflecting a “government-friendly” profile. They also have close contact with political and administrative executives and score high on the importance of performance reporting. Economists tend to work more on single cases; they pay great attention to political signals and
have close contact with political and administrative executives and interest organizations. This is a more mixed profile, probably reflecting the fact that some members of this group are national economists and some business economists (cf. Lægreid and Olsen 1978).

Fourth, there are also some effects of gender. Women tend to be more rule oriented, which may reflect structural position. They also pay greater attention to professional considerations than men, which may reflect that they see such considerations as the foundation for making a career in the civil service. And they have less contact with political and administrative executives as well as with interest organizations, probably reflecting the fact that they are less represented in leadership positions than men, even though this situation is changing. Added to this, they also tend to see fewer horizontal coordination problems than men.

Discussion
How do our main results measure up to the three perspectives outlined? First, not many of the results fulfill the expectations we had based on the generational version of the tenure perspective. We had expected civil servants with long tenure to score high on single cases and rule orientation, because their formative years were in the “old public administration” period, when single cases made up a greater proportion of their tasks, but we do not find such an effect. Long tenure was also expected to be coupled with the performance of fewer coordination tasks, but here we actually find quite the opposite. Concerning identity, we expected identification with one’s own ministry to be strong. Although there is a significant correlation between tenure and this type of identification, this effect is slightly weaker than the effect on identification with the whole civil service. Tenure does correlate positively with sensitivity to political signals, but there is no effect on professional considerations. The correlation with political signals was expected from a generational version, because we assumed that exposure to political signals and contact with political leaders were stronger two to three decades ago, but here our prediction from the career version was the same anyway, only based on other mechanisms. Concerning contacts, we expected a less pronounced profile for the generational version than the career one, but there are no significant results here.

Overall, the results for our expectations from a generational version are rather mixed. Either there are no significant correlations (rule orientation and contacts), or the results are the opposite of what we expected (coordination tasks or reform orientation), or else they are mixed (identification). The only result that confirms our expectations is that those with long tenure attend more to political signals, but this does not differ much from the career version, so the main conclusion is that the generational version has rather weak explanatory power.

When we move on to the career version of the tenure perspective and compare it with the structural perspective, as many expectations are the same, the picture is different. We expected that long tenure and high hierarchical position would lead to less focus on single cases and more on coordinative tasks, and this basically accords with the main results. Concerning identity, the results are more mixed, because the main expectation from the career version was that leaders and people with long tenure would score higher on identification with the civil service as a whole, while the result is that there is very little differentiation among the different measures of identity—that is, position and tenure are important for all of them.

We expected that long tenure and high position in the hierarchy would produce more attention toward political signals, and this is indeed the case, but as mentioned earlier, this does not differentiate much from the generational version. We did not expect any clear results concerning professional considerations, but we find that leaders actually attend more to such considerations. We also expected leaders to have a contact pattern showing broad and frequent contact, and that is actually the strongest correlation in the regression analysis.
The same type of expectation for civil servants with long tenure is not fulfilled, however. We expected leaders and people with long tenure to attend more to performance reporting and to see fewer coordination problems. Here we find an interesting and differentiated result, showing leaders to be more preoccupied with performance reporting, a typical vertical measure, and civil servants with long tenure more satisfied with cross-sectoral coordination, indicating that long experience and broad contact patterns matter.

Overall, the conclusion is that formal position shows relatively stronger and expected correlations with the dependent variables than tenure, illustrating the importance of the structural perspective. But there is an independent effect of tenure, showing that civil servants with long tenure tend to work more with coordinative tasks, identify more broadly with the civil service, and attend more to political signals, all results mainly in connection with the career version.

The demographic perspective also seems to be significant. The story here is primarily that the jurists as an educational group are significant for nearly all the dependent variables. They work more with single cases and less with coordination than the other educational groups, they have the strongest overall identification pattern, they attend most to both political signals and professional considerations, and they have overall the broadest and most frequent contacts. This shows that in many ways, the jurists have managed to maintain their strong and dominant historical profile as civil servants. Jurists dominated the central civil service in Norway until the 1970s. They held most of the leadership positions, their educational background meant that their dominant administrative technology was rule orientation, and they managed to combine proximity to political leaders with close attendance to professional norms and values. Basically, they were the most professional group in the civil service, and this still seems to be the case, even though the educational profile overall has changed.

The social scientists have a less clear profile, but are definitely emerging as a strong group competing with the jurists. If we compare the social scientists to the jurists, there are similarities between them concerning identification, signals, and contacts. The main difference between the two groups is that the social scientists work less with rules and on single cases and much more with coordinative tasks. Rather surprisingly, the economists are similar to the jurists concerning working with single cases, while they have similarities with both the jurists and the social scientists concerning signals and contacts.

When it comes to gender, women have much less contact with political, administrative, and private actors than men, even after controlling for position. We believe that this result still reflects a gender difference, in that leadership experience imposes obligations and offers opportunities to develop a hierarchical contact pattern. The fact that women are more rule oriented may also reflect this. Interestingly enough, women attend more than men to professional considerations, without scoring lower on sensitivity to political signals. This may indicate an orientation that is not only directed toward casework but also toward following norms that are important for recruitment.

### Conclusion

The data provided by surveys covering 30 years of development in the central civil service in Norway enable us both to trace development features and to discover the dynamics concerning the working of the civil service, which is rather unique in a comparative perspective. We started out by describing the development in structure and demography over the three last decades. The main impression is one of both change and stability. While there have been significant changes in tasks, in contact with interest organizations, and along demographic dimensions such as gender and education, there has also been a stable pattern over time regarding rule orientation and role considerations. From 1976 to 2006, there was no general decline in rule orientation. Thus, the administrative culture seems to have been quite resistant to the reform ideas advanced by the NPM movement. In practice, the NPM movement does not represent a decisive move away from a rule-based approach. These findings are in line with Rhodes and Weller (2001, 230) who claim that the impact of such reforms on senior civil servants over the last 20 years has been overstated.

The main picture is increased complexity. New reform tools have been added to existing measures. What we see is reforms with a supplementary function rather than a process in which post-NPM reforms have replaced NPM reforms. New measures have been added without a substantial reduction in the old ones. We do not see a general trend toward deregulated and entrepreneurial government, as suggested by the contemporary reform movement, but rather the emergence of some reshaped and some new reform tools, often emerging in hybrid forms (Lægreid, Roness, and Rubeksen 2007). Traditional Weberian administrative features, neo-Weberian reform tools, NPM features, and post-NPM measures are combined in a complex way (Christensen and Lægreid 2007b; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004).

The main hierarchical structure of the civil service has changed during this period: The proportion of top leaders has been halved, while the share of mid-level positions has increased substantially. This is a reflection of a continuous process of structural differentiation in the civil service, which has resulted in more exclusiveness at the top and less access to top leaders who are struggling with capacity and attention problems in an increasing complex world. Another structural change is that more civil servants are working on planning and coordination tasks and fewer on single cases. This reflects a major principle of NPM—namely, that the ministry should be a secretariat for the political leadership (Christensen and Lægreid 1998a). This means that a ministry should take care of planning, coordinative, and strategic tasks, in addition to having the capacity to serve the political leadership on an ad hoc basis when needed, while single cases should be moved to the agencies. This is an old doctrine, which became established in Norway in 1955 because of capacity problems in the political leadership, but was revived with the NPM reforms (Christensen 2003).

Concerning demographic features, these three decades have brought about a radical increase in the proportion of women in the civil service from 1976 to 2006, with a less steep increase over the past
decade. In terms of education, women have come to dominate the professions from which civil servants are mainly recruited, so their share will probably increase even more in the future. They are also gradually climbing higher in the hierarchy, with the greatest increase in women in leadership positions in the last decade.

The educational structure is also changing quite a lot. While the proportion of jurists has almost been halved since 1976, their share has remained stable over the last decade, probably reflecting the process of adaptation to the European Union. The social scientists, dominated by political scientists, strongly increased their share from 1976 to 2006, thereby taking over as the largest educational group.

The proportion of economists has remained relatively stable. Compared to the development of U.S. federal executives, the Norwegian central civil service has experienced a stronger feminization and also a bigger change in civil servants’ educational training (Aberbach and Rockman 2000).

The main results indicate clearly that civil servants are not living in the past, because few factors from the generational version seem to be significant. The strongest explanatory perspective is the structural one, but also the career version of the tenure perspective is significant—that is, the experience that civil servants have acquired in the course of their career is significant for various indicators of decision-making behavior. Thus, organizational socialization and discipline within the central government seem to be crucial. Organizational factors are most crucial. Civil servants seem to adapt quickly to the requirements of the position they hold at any given time. When they move to a new position, they also change their responsibilities and adapt quickly to the constraints and opportunities connected with their new position. To understand their tasks, attitudes, and contact patterns, it is more important to know what their position is in the organizational structure than where they come from or how long their tenure is.

Accumulating experience, according to the structural perspective, means, on the one hand, moving up the hierarchy gradually, giving civil servants an increasing number of leadership obligations and duties, but also, as they reach the top of the hierarchy, acquiring a more holistic perspective. But long tenure also implies being exposed to a broader variety of tasks and being pressured to think in broader terms and to be politically and professionally sensitive, accumulate contacts, and so on. We show that of these two main cumulative factors, formal position is the most significant one, but tenure is evidently important as well and of independent significance. We also conclude that the demographic perspective is also significant, with the main effects connected with being a jurist, which has been the dominant professional group in the Norwegian central civil service for a long time.

We have primarily used data from 2006 to correlate tenure, structure, and demography with tasks, rule orientation, identification, signals, contact, and reform orientation. In an analysis of all the surveys from 1976 to 2006, Langhoff (2007) analyzes these correlations for contacts as dependent variable, and the main results are that structure is the most important independent explanatory variable in all surveys. This shows quite clearly that such a typical Weberian feature has a continuous presence, regardless of structural and demographic changes, and waves of new reforms in these three decades.

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Appendix
Dependent Variables Used in the Regression Analysis
Tasks: “How much of your working time would you estimate you have spent on various tasks over the last year”? We then listed 10 different tasks. For each task, the civil servants were asked to answer on a scale from 1 (totally dominating) to 5 (totally absent); in this article, we use two of the tasks (single cases and coordination).

Identity: “Below we will ask you to report how strong or weak your sense of belonging or identification is with the following organizational units.” We then listed four units, and for each of them, the respondents were asked to answer on a scale from 1 (very strong) to 5 (very weak). In this article, we use three of the units (own department, own ministry and central government in general).

Signals: “What weight do you give to each of the following considerations while executing your tasks”? We then listed 12 different considerations and asked the respondents to answer each of them on a scale from 1 (very important) to 5 (very unimportant). In this article, we use two of the considerations (signals from political executives and professional considerations).

Contact: “If you think of your average yearly contact, approximately how often do you have contact with your own minister.” (1) Once a week, (2) Once a month, (3) Less often, (4) Never.

“Approximately how often have you had work-related contact with organizations in business, trade and industry over the last year”? (1) Weekly or more often, (2) Once a month, (3) Less often, (4) Never. Not relevant is excluded.

Reform orientation: “In connection with the modernization and renewal work in the government several reform tools have been introduced. How important are the following reform tools in your own field of work”? We then listed 26 different tools and asked the respondents to rate each of them on a scale from 1 (very important) to 5 (not important at all). In this article, we use the tools: “Evaluation/performance reporting. New control and auditing routines.”

Independent Variables Used in the Regression Analyses
Tenure: (1) Less than 5 years, (2) 5–15 years, (3) More than 15 years.
Position: (1) Lower position, (2) Director general/head of division and higher

Gender: (1) Man, (2) Woman

Jurist: (1) Yes, (2) No

Social scientist: (1) Yes, (2) No

Economist: (1) Yes, (2) No

Notes
1. We use the term “role” here in a broad way, including elements such as tasks, identity, signals, contacts, and reform orientation, all covering formal and informal aspects of their models of thought and decision-making behavior as bureaucrats.

2. The respondents were all civil servants in the ministries, from executive officers to top civil servants who had been working in the ministry for one year or more. The response rate was 67 percent in 2006 (1,874 respondents) compared with 72 percent in 1996 (1,482 respondents), 1986 (1,193 respondents), and 1976 (784 respondents).

3. Demography, of course, generally covers many more potential variables than education and gender, such as geographic, social and cultural background, political preferences, age, affiliation with interest groups, and so on. The reason for just selecting two of these variables is to simplify the analysis. Education was selected because, overall, it has shown to be the most potent demography explanatory variable in many bureaucracy studies, and gender is the variable that shows the most change over time.

4. In 2006, 29 percent of the civil servants had less than five year’s tenure. 44 percent had been working in the ministries between five and 15 years, and 27 percent had been there for more than 15 years.

5. In 2006, the correlation between tenure and position was .30 (sign = .000, Pearson R).

6. This is done by using the beta coefficient, which expresses the “effect” of one independent variable on the outcome variable. It is the regression coefficient using standardized variables.

References


