
EDITORS' NOTE

HYBRIDIZING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The theory-praxis question in public administration is fairly ritualized, and indeed, taken as a matter of obstinate pride within the discipline. Public administration is held to be theory *in practice*, or perhaps, a practice of theory. The second phrasing is suggestive because it hints at what is often unspoken in public administration: that it is, in the words of the French theorist Louis Althusser, an ideological apparatus. Thus, even antecedent to the debate concerning facts and values or the possibility or desirability of neutral competence, the formulation of the practice of public administration is always already ideologically oriented and saturated. The framing of the discipline sustains its historical mode and method.

One of the critical manifestations, and arguably, necessities, of this framing or bounding of public administration is the maintenance of solidary, rather than divisive, identifications, both of itself and its participants. For despite the volumes written about competing values, interest groups and the messiness of politics, public administration is a woefully homogenizing field. In other words, public administration has tended not to view its agents as divided, discontinuous subjects caught in conflicting interests and identities; rather it has tended to view them as pure forms (Politics, Administration, Law, Citizen), differentiated, if at all, only in terms of public and private. This is a gross oversimplification with tragic consequences.

We all exercise and deploy multiple identities, none of which are fixed. The question should not be, how do I weigh professional (i.e. "public") and private values, but how do I negotiate among my various identities to make a decision. Which identity should I put first? This question upsets fixed identities and loci of power, and dislodges the hegemony of public administration's traditional discourse. It creates a kind of ambivalence within power that enables a form of subversion. Public administration, the bastard child of the social sciences, marks a space for a possible disruption of the performance of these rules of recognition.

In the words of noted postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (and the linkage of administration and colonialism here is not inappropriate), it is this "hybridity" that is both the effect of power and that which sustains critical ambivalence. There is no "natural" identity, no "natural" form of power,

program or governance, only hybrids of hybrids. It is through this ambivalence, this recognition of hybridity, that the possibility for recognizing difference might finally emerge.

The articles in this issue each begin to explore, in varied and markedly different ways, the pervasive hybridity of public administration's agents. Brian Veronda empirically explores the veracity of theories of regulatory change and illustrates both the essential role theory plays in orienting us in the world, and also that, finally, there can be no discursive closure of theory, no one and final truth. Similarly, Ilan Haber, in his examination of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), shows how regulatory theory, again, fails to account for the continued relevance of the disclosure-enforcement framework. Haber provides a compelling account of the framework's deep symbolic importance in the public's psyche during the last half-century. He further demonstrates, however, that the SEC may be on the verge of shifting its regulatory orientation as the pressures of globalization impose themselves on elements that were *always* present within the SEC. Haber implies that it is not simply that external forces have made this shift inevitable, but that the disclosure-enforcement framework was never as seamless as we may have thought. The SEC was hybrid from the start, and Haber writes, "the Trojan House already sits within the city gates."

Kindra Ramble unites public administration and criminology in an innovative consideration of the escalating violence against rangers of the United Forest Service. In speaking for these public servants whose stories would otherwise remain untold, Ramble makes it clear that these anti-government times have real, human casualties. Don Jaccard takes public administration to task for being "stuck at the vortex of the Friedrich v. Finer debate" and for insisting on the static identities of the public administrator as either policy enforcer or policy expert. Jaccard proposes a third option: public administrator as community norm-setter via a delicate and individualized negotiation of context and mandate.

Our interviews with Raymond Scheppach, Executive Director of the National Governors' Association, and Donald J. Borut, Executive Director of the National League of Cities, lend "real world" support to this emerging notion of

heterogeneity. Scheppach and Borut describe a dynamic world in which most of our familiar signposts, configurations and even territorial divisions are increasingly irrelevant. Traditional identities of states, local governments and business are being rethought, and new partnerships and alliances are being forged in an attempt to address the layered complexity of problems that plague us. Whether these shifts are truly those that ultimately will be accommodating of hybridity and difference, or simply temporary and restricted shelters from the pressures of globalization, remains to be seen.

All told, this issue points to a discipline in need of active reevaluation. Yet it is a discipline that for at least one reason enjoys a positional advantage: public administration in the end is the *confluence* of citizen and government. It must begin to think this way.

We would be remiss if we did not mention our new appearance, and that this academic year *Policy Perspectives* will be published twice for the first time in its history. We thank our editorial staff and faculty advisor as well as those who were integral in guiding our rethinking. The present and future of this journal has itself been an object of intense negotiation for those who are close to it. That conversation, we believe, has made both this publication and our home institution a better place.

