

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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PUBLIC  
MANAGEMENT

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progress" aimed at promoting trust in government: a collaborative public management would be "more willing to share ideas, knowledge and power with others, not merely instruct citizens and patronize them" (Vigoda 2003: 885).<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, direct and deliberative democratic institutions can build community out of individuality, shared values out of diversity, consensus out of partisanship. In the process of debating public issues, individuals can forge a sense of community as they talk through their differences. In addition, a sense of community and norms of reciprocity will constrain disorderly and fractious impulses (Bellah et al. 1985; Dryzek 1990; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). The abundant literature on social capital supports and extends this idea (Putnam 2000, 2002).

Participative processes have their own pathologies, however. They are subject to some of the same problems as representative ones, in that inequalities of wealth— independent of, or combined with, inequalities of social status—can distort the version of the public interest that results from their workings. Lynn (2002: 448) lists a variety of other "vexing issues" arising from direct participation:

Among them are the destructive consequences of rent seeking, ambition, ignorance, avarice, ideology, narcissism, and prejudice... Economists will adduce collective action problems, opportunism, conflicts of interest, and information asymmetries...

In addition, participative institutions—both those that involve direct participation by citizens and those that link organizations in networks—present difficult issues of accountability. To the extent that networks are egalitarian and cooperative, not coercive, they are what political theorists call "anarchies," of which the defining characteristics are, first, that there is no specialization of political roles (that is, no one is the leader all the time) and, second, there is no enforcement of collective decisions (participants are free to join or withdraw from the arena as they wish (Taylor 1982)). In such cases, accountability is diffused—the collective as a whole is the responsible party—and, in a sense, accountability by all means accountability by none. Alternatively, the only means of ensuring accountability is constant, consistent participation: absent enforcement of collective decisions, players must stay at the table to protect their own interests (L. deLeon 1994).

### 5.3 DEMOCRATIZING PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Both the contemporary literature of public management and its related disciplines of public administration and public policy contain extensive research on a variety of means by which the practice of public management can be democratized. This section provides a brief overview of a few of them.

#### 5.3.1 Representative Bureaucracy

Where the political system does not function effectively to represent the will of the people (a charge against both overhead democracy and pluralist democracy), another means of achieving representativeness may be provided by the bureaucracy itself. A representative bureaucracy is one in which the workforce reflects the composition of the citizenry with respect to such qualities as class, gender, race, and ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> A representative bureaucracy "symbolizes as well as promotes equal opportunity and equality" (Dolan and Rosenbloom 2003: 6); it is often preferred by clients (Thielemann and Stewart 1996). More importantly, it should result in policy that serves the public interest.

As Meier and Nigro (1976) have argued, however, the effectiveness of representative bureaucracy involves a four-variable causal chain: social origin dictates socialization experiences, which shape attitudes, which motivate behaviors. Challenging this theory, they cite evidence that people from different social backgrounds can have similar socializing experiences (Barber 1970), that organizations are powerful socializers (Baldwin 1968; Janowitz 1960; Kaufman 1960), and that attitudes may be slightly or not related to actions (Wicker 1969).

Research on the linkages among variables in the theory of representative bureaucracy finds mixed results, but contingency theories show promise. For example, Thompson (1976) suggests key conditions under which passive representation turns active: when minority officials deal with issues that clearly will affect persons of their race, when minorities work in close proximity to each other, and when minority officials occupy jobs that have discretion. Recently, Meier and Bohte (2001) reinforce this last proposition in a study of minority teachers. As predicted, when bureaucrats have policy discretion over an area directly linked to their values, they are likely to take concrete action on behalf of those values.

Interestingly, though, Selden, Brudney, and Kellough (1998) found that attitudes can be more important than status—even persons not from minority backgrounds may act on behalf of minority interests if they believe it is important to do so. Furthermore, in a discussion of comparative civil service systems, Van der Meer (1996) distinguishes demographic, opinion, and interest representativeness, suggesting that the opinions of under-represented groups may not necessarily reflect their more general or long-term interests. On the other hand, advocates of representative bureaucracy argue passionately that a "trustee" relationship is insufficient. Feminist theorists attack as deceptive the "long held view that men could represent women without the latter being physically present... by acting as a trustee for them" (Kelly 1998: 204). They point out that increasing representation of women in political and social life is related to the implementation of policy that promotes and preserves their interests (Guy 1992; Hale and Kelly 1989; Kelly and Guy 1991; Stivers 1993). As is so often true in social science, causality cannot be definitively established for this association. It seems plausible, however, that the

presence of politically disadvantaged groups in the administrative apparatus (and, of course, in legislative bodies as well) does function to keep "their" issues on the agenda and, subtly, gives public managers' sense of responsibility a human face, the face of colleagues.

### 5.3.2 Proactive Administration

Overhead democracy suggests something akin to economists' notion of "trickle-down" effects, in which benefits bestowed on the rich and powerful eventually make their way down to less favored participants. But perhaps a trickle is not enough; critics who contend that public administration is elitist would prefer a "cascade" theory—citizen input should pour in from all directions—from inside and outside, from above and below. In this conceptualization, representative bureaucracy brings input from inside administration, overhead democracy brings it from above, and so-called iron triangles (Ripley and Franklin 1984) and issue networks (Hecl 1978) portray influence coming from the external environment of interest groups.

Another important source of democratizing influence, however, can come from "below," from the clients whom public agencies serve. One of the earliest explicit statements of this idea of proactive administration was put forward in a volume of essays (Marini 1971) arising from the Minnowbrook conference in New York, which kicked off a movement in the United States called the New Public Administration. Reacting against the increasingly professionalized (Mosher 1968; Mosher and Stillman 1977) civil service, with a workforce that over-represented the educated middle class compared to the impoverished and disproportionately minority underclass, these theorists (particularly Michael Harmon 1971) argued that authoritative decisions in a democracy should not be made only by legislators in the policy selection phase; rather they should be made, proactively, by administrators as well. Some twenty years later, the "Blacksburg Manifesto," which formed the basis for *Re-founding Public Administration* (Wamsley et al. 1990), pursued the same notion, suggesting that "the popular will does not reside solely in elected officials but in a constitutional order that envisions a remarkable variety of legitimate titles to participation in governance," and that "Public Administration, created by statutes based on this constitutional order, holds one of these titles" (47).

### 5.3.3 "Street-level" Bureaucracy

As in the field of public administration, during the 1970s and 1980s a debate within policy implementation studies pitted those who preferred a top-down approach (Matland 1995; Sabatier 1986) —on the ground that elected officials are more likely

to be representative of the population from which they are drawn than are bureaucrats—against those who took a bottom-up orientation. Scholars like Michael Lipsky (1980) focused on the activities and beliefs of "street-level bureaucrats"—front-line workers who interact directly with the clients of public agencies. Street-level bureaucrats, though not formally accountable to their clients and protected by civil service rules, unions and limited liability, may nevertheless have a better understanding of and dedication to client interests than do legislators. They are often, in fact, engaged with clients in the co-production of public services (education, law enforcement), so both parties have an interest in success (P. deLeon and L. deLeon 2002). And clients are not without resources to impose their demands on public servants:

Street-level bureaucrats... are also dependent upon clients. Clients have a stock of resources and thus can impose a variety of low-level costs. This is because street-level bureaucrats must obtain client compliance with their decisions, particularly when they are evaluated in terms of their clients' behavior or performance (Lipsky 1980: 57).

In some few cases, street-level bureaucrats may go so far as to exceed the limits of their administrative discretion. Maynard-Moody and Leland (2000) note that the research on the ways in which street-level workers deviate from formal policy suggests that they do so in order to make their work lives easier. Their own study of a variety of front-line bureaucrats, however, found that a sample of social-welfare professionals were sometimes more committed to client needs than to their agency or to government in general. Clearly, this stance runs counter the classic view of managerial responsibility or the prescription that administrators can "exercise autonomy from organizational or hierarchical imperatives only under certain circumstances and for certain "civic" reasons" (Pollitt 2003), such as whistle-blowing or resistance to actions that are wasteful of public resources.

### 5.3.4 Administrative Responsiveness and Responsibility

Less radical than theories of proactive administration, but consonant with the Blacksburg Manifesto's call for a fuller appreciation of the positive role of authority in administration, is the development of theories of administrative responsibility. Responsibility and its cousin, responsiveness, are processes by which citizens' choices, as conveyed via the electoral system, are converted into administrative practice. Responsiveness, as suggested in the preceding section, requires that public managers conform to law and policy. But the intent of law may be ambiguous or incomplete. In this situation, "managerial responsibility" (Bertelli and L. Lynn 2003) requires the manager to follow laws, rules, and policies created by the legislative branch. This obedience must also, however, be moderated by four elements: judgment as to what the public interest and professionalism require; accountability

to law and rules, recognizing that these may emanate from divergent sources; balance, an attempt to take into account contending interests expressed through many and various channels; and rationality, or judgment that is both reasonable and realistic. Bertelli and Lynn insist that responsibility is both a requirement and a right: "However much courts, legislatures and interest groups may wish it to be otherwise, fulfilling legislative mandates in conformity with both individual and collective justice requires principled deference to public managers, who bear the primary burden of administration" (265).

In an intriguing analysis of responsibility, Bovens (1998) suggests that the older conception of hierarchical responsibility – in which individuals were expected to be strictly obedient to superiors, has given way to a view that managers should also be loyal to peers, their professions, and citizens. Situations in which loyalty to the organization (or, by extension, its political controllers) are in conflict require choices between loyalty, voice and exit (Hirschman 1980). Each of the alternative conceptions of responsibility has less legitimacy than the older notion, and thus public employees must be skillful in balancing their organizational citizenship with their role as citizens of a political community. Because modern notions of proper loyalty and obedience are so fluid, the quest for responsibility, Bovens suggests, will never end.

### 5.3.5 Citizen Participation

The literature on citizen participation is extensive in both time spanned and quantity. With roots in political science, it investigates questions such as the relationship between participation and the sense of political efficacy, the socio-economic correlates of participation, and the spillover among political, social, and economic participation (Berry, Portnoy, and Thomson 1993).

There are many ways of involving the public in public management. Pollitt (2003) uses a tripartite classification that ranges from informing them, to consulting them, to allowing them full two-way and iterative participation. He also describes "market" and "forum" models; participation is more intensive (along the scale described above) and also more extensive (from participation by individuals to participation by collectivities) in the latter. Moynihan (2003) offers a very similar typology and then asks why, when participation seems to be such a good idea, is there so little of it? His answer reflects a concern that is very widespread among theorists, elected officials, public managers, and even citizens: participation is time-consuming and frustrating and may not even produce better outcomes than decision making by professionals. Other concerns are that democratic activities absorb resources that could be better spent on needed services or that democratic initiatives sometimes backfire—in an effort to secure the participation of socially excluded groups, they in effect discriminate against access by other,

established groups (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2001). An interesting approach is the contingency theory proposed by Thomas (1995), suggesting that successful outcomes are more likely when participative mechanisms (public hearings, consultation, etc.) are appropriately matched to a variety of decisional and situational conditions.

One way to reduce the costs of participation is to use technology. A number of case studies, drawn from various nations, describe the use of email, websites, networked laptops, and wireless keyboard pads, among other things, to make citizen input easier to obtain and manage, or to provide information to citizens in support of their involvement in decision making (Chen, Huang, and Nsaio 2003; Kakabadse, Kakabadse, and Kouzmin 2003; La Porte, Demchak, and de Jong 2003; Moynihan 2003). Drawing conclusions from a worldwide survey of government websites, La Porte, Demchak, and deJong note that government websites can be justified either on the ground that they increase product efficiency (service provision) or that they increase civic participation, or both. "Hence, the use of the Web is likely to rise irrespective of the philosophical choices and is likely to be included in commonly accepted definitions of democracy" (2003: 437).

Finally, several observers note that the public management literature places undue emphasis on political participation. Social and economic participation are also important avenues by which citizens can achieve public outcomes that meet their needs. Nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as informal clubs and associations, exemplify the former, while private sector activity exemplifies the latter. Lam (2003) makes this argument in the context of Hong Kong: participation may take the form of demonstrations and social movements that favor or protest government activity. Hong Kong residents have a reputation as politically apathetic, but in fact they are quite expressive, if this broader definition of participation is used.

## 5.4 DEMOCRACY WITHIN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

The preceding sections have focused on the relationship between public management and the political systems by which policy is made and implemented. Several lines of research and theory address the separate question whether public agencies themselves should be run democratically. In Dwight Waldo's famous question, is "autocracy at work" really the necessary price for "democracy after hours" (Waldo 1984: 75). Denhardt (1993) is unequivocal in asserting that public organizations in a democracy must themselves be exemplars of workplace democracy: "Democratic