Survey Article

Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs
Vol. 4, No. 1

Demons, Spirits, and Elephants: Reflections on the Failure of Public Administration Theory[1]

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For the past half-century, those defining the field of Public Administration in their role as its leading "theorists" have been preoccupied with defending the enterprise against the evils of value-neutral logical positivism. This polemical review of that period focuses on the Simon-Waldo debate that ultimately leads the field to adopt a "professional" identity rather than seek disciplinary status among the social sciences. A survey of recent works by the field's intellectual leaders and "gatekeepers" demonstrates that the anti-positivist obsession continues, oblivious to significant developments in the social sciences. The paper ends with a call for Public Administrationists to engage in the political and paradigmatic upheavals required to shift the field toward a disciplinary stance.

Keywords: Disciplinary Communities, Public Administration Theory, Simon-Waldo Debate

Author's Note: This paper was originally written and presented in 1999 as both a critical reflection on Public Administration's ongoing "identity crisis" and a rather (often too harsh) assessment of several recently published works that seemed exemplary of the problem being highlighted. Although some aspects of the argument made in the paper did find an outlet (see Dubnick, 2000), its length and contentious tone meant it was unlikely to find a mainstream outlet for publication. Nevertheless, it did circulate among colleagues and generated some collegial and published reaction (see Bogason et al., 2000). Eventually relegated to a location at the author's website, it continued to circulate via intermittent downloads, with notable increases in "hits" at the beginning of each academic term. It seems that over the years it became required reading in a number of doctoral seminars at various institutions, and as some graduates of those programs have taken up positions at other institutions, the paper's life and influence (for good or bad) has been sustained.

With the advent of online journals such as the Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs (JPNA)*, it became logistically possible to consider publishing a lengthy piece such as "Demons…," and I was pleasantly surprised when the editors approached me about revisiting the paper for*

Dubnick, M. J. (2018). Demons, spirits, and elephants: Reflections on the failure of public administration theory. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, *4*(1), 59-115. https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.4.1.59-115

possible publication. As flattering as the suggestion seemed, the prospect of undertaking what might be regarded as the longest "revise and resubmit" in history was daunting, not merely due to the length and complexity of the paper and its thesis, but also because my views of the field and works (and "gatekeepers") I critiqued have modified and mellowed somewhat. What we did agree on was to have JPNA *publish the original paper (with a few very minor tweaks) along with some external commentary. The result is that what you are about to read has not been "updated" as to facts, and especially as to opinion; moreover, you will not find a reference in the bibliography more recent than 1999. That said, I hope some of the arguments offered can still prove valuable to those who, like me, are committed to the future of our field.*

The Ongoing Identity Crisis

Those of us engaged in the study of Public Administration[2] have grown accustomed to the idea that we have an identity problem. Metaphorically, an optimistic view of this "identity crisis" would stress the idea that such conditions arise during periods of adolescence — thus holding out the promise of a productive future once such youthful anxieties are overcome. But our identity problem has proven more resistant and enduring. Following the metaphor of developmental psychology, our youthful identity crisis has matured into a full-blown mid-life crisis (see King, 1999) — without the relief from some of the emotions and anxieties that normally might accompany the intervening years.

"Identity crisis" has been one of several labels used to characterize the field's problems. I could just as conveniently have called it an "intellectual crisis" (Ostrom, 1974), a "paradigmatic quandary" (Henry, 1987), or a "shifting" among "competing visions" (Stillman, 1991). There is a danger inherent in such diagnostic commentary, especially when applied haphazardly — as former President Carter found out after declaring that the American nation was suffering from a "malaise." So at the outset of this essay, I want to be clear that my focus is on those academics who (1) define their primary scholarly interests as the activities, tasks, and functions of those engaged directly or indirectly in the administration of government programs and policies, and (2) perceive themselves as part of a distinct sub-*community* within academe known as Public Administration.[3]

The idea of "community" is significant in this context. It is a word often tossed out without discussing the implications of its use. Obviously, the use of the term is metaphorical; any community of students and scholars lacks the boundaries and the degree of social interaction among its members found in "real world" communities. Nevertheless, such communities do exist and have consequences for their members and neighbors. In that respect, they are similar — although clearly nowhere equivalent — to what Benedict Anderson terms "imagined communities" in his now classic discussion of nationalism. A nation, according to Anderson, is "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." It is "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 1991, p. 6-7). In the case of nations, an imagined community is something its members would support by putting their lives on the line. In the case of a "self-aware" group of scholars, it is a community around which they are willing to build their professional lives.[4]

One implication of this approach is that I base the following remarks on the assumption that a self-aware community of scholars and students already exists. Thus, the community of Public

Administration precedes, suffers from, and attempts to deal with the identity crisis. There are times in its past (and perhaps in its future) when such crises and quandaries help to define the field. However, I presume that its existence as a community does not depend upon or await resolutions of the debates that characterize the field.

A second implication is that Public Administrationists are not unique in having to face such difficulties. There are lessons to be learned from the experience of other imagined communities in the hard sciences (Polyani, 1964) as well as the professions (see Sullivan, 1995). All have gone through (and many are still going through) similar crises, and have emerged from the experience significantly altered, if not transformed.[5]

It must be stressed as well that this paper is about the identity crisis among those who *explicitly regard themselves as members* of the Public Administration community. There are scholars who conduct studies of public administration and bureaucracy (thereby meeting our first criterion) who do not regard themselves as members of the Public Administration academic community. Instead, they might identify themselves as political scientists, sociologists, social psychologists, administrative scientists, or as members of any of the other imagined communities found in the broader academic community. While others may characterize these individuals as "public administration scholars" based on the subject matter of their work, they take their professional cues and standards from their respective academic fields rather than from Public Administrationists. In this paper, I am concerned with those who associate themselves clearly with the field of Public Administration.

This paper is more specifically about a prominent group among the field's self-identifiers who have acted as the intellectual agenda-setters and "gatekeepers"[6] and whose recent work represents efforts to deal with the identity issue through action (in the form of published research), reflection and theory. I use the term "theorists" for this group, although some would deny the appropriateness of the label to what they do. My use of the term is not limited to individuals who explicitly engage in the articulation of philosophical frameworks and empirical models related to public administrative behavior. Rather, I cast a wider conceptual net to capture those who have addressed issues related to the nature of the field and its activities. My focus in on the failure of these *theorists* – in their role as the field's agenda-setters and gatekeepers – to provide the Public Administration community with a *consensus* upon which to construct a *disciplinary* identity as a social science.

The two major premises of this paper – that Public Administration requires a consensus, and that such a consensus should focus on the field's status as a social science discipline – are necessarily risky assumptions, and therefore beg for clarification at the outset. They are "risky" in two respects. First, they imply a pre-judgment of both the present condition of the field as well as a normative position regarding its future direction. My prejudice in this regard is clearly *against* the current ambivalence among Public Administrationists regarding their identity, and *for* the acceptance of disciplinary status in the social sciences. Second, these assumptions also imply a historicist approach to questions about the nature of the field. That is, I accept the idea that academic fields are subject to developmental patterns generated by historical and institutional forces. Given the critical purpose of this paper, however, the risks associated with both assumptions seem justifiable.

The Need for Consensus

The building of and striving for consensus is central to understanding the history of contemporary academic disciplines. This is especially true for Public Administration, for the

lack of a formidable consensus within the field generates the anxieties that we call its identity crisis.

The emergence of academic fields (see Ross, 1979) often starts with little more than a sense of common concerns among a group of scholars who initially identify with other disciplines. Building on this self-awareness, the group reaches a point where they seek to articulate an explicit identity differentiating themselves from other scholars. Roger Smith notes that scientific fields often achieve this with the establishment of an "origin myth": "Origin myths create a sense of identity, and this is as true for a scientific as for any other community. A group which struggles to establish itself, whether an oppressed nationality or a science with little institutional standing, may particularly emphasize a moment of birth and a founding father" (Smith, 1997, p. 492). For psychology, the myth was constructed around German philosopher Wilhelm Wundt's creation of a laboratory for experimental studies of the mind. American political scientists cite historian Francis Lieber's efforts to foster public instruction in government during the 1850s. And most Public Administrationists in the United States note the 1887 publication of political scientist Woodrow Wilson's "The Study of Administration" as the watershed event upon which common identity is built.[7]

The developing field also adopts a "canon" – that is, a body of "exemplary texts" providing intellectual standards for the community of scholars to focus on as they build their relationships and literature (see Schaffer, 1996). For psychology, the canon ranges from the writings of behaviorist John B. Watson to the works of Sigmund Freud. In political science, the works of writers such as John W. Burgess, Woodrow Wilson, W. W. Willoughby, and Frank J. Goodnow formed the early canon. For Public Administration, by the early 1930s the emerging Canon included not only the writings of Goodnow and textbooks by Leonard D. White and W. F. Willoughby, but commission reports and government documents as well. Wallace S. Sayre acknowledged the canonical nature of that material, noting that they "not only provided the first effective teaching instruments for the new field of study; they also codified the premises, the concepts, and the data for the new public administration" (Sayre, 1958, p. 175).

Building on these intellectual and social foundations, the consensus eventually takes organizational form. Disciplinary associations, such as the American Psychological Association and the American Political Science Association, are more than manifestations of disciplinary consensus. In the United States, most were formed between 1890 and 1905 (Ross, 1979). They become part of a now institutionalized consensus that sustains the field despite internal differences that characterized it at the time of the organization's founding, or those that might emerge in the future. Although no substitute for intellectual agreements or shared canon in the long-term, associations can serve as common ground even in the midst of paradigmatic revolutions.

The founding of the American Society for Public Administration was somewhat uncharacteristic in two respects. First, it was formed some 40 years after the creation of most major social science associations. Second, the energy and initiative for creating ASPA came primarily from practitioners and researchers not affiliated with academic institutions. Although the formal record indicates that academics played a significant role in the organization's founding,[8] a detailed narrative by one of its founders indicates a more complex history involving leaders from public and private government research bureaus as well as administrative officials from all levels of government.[9] For those practitioners and professional researchers, the new Society represented a forum where those wishing to share in the development of a "science" of public administration could meet regardless of their applied specialties in budgeting or personnel management or public works engineering. Among the academics were a number who believed it

was time (in Dwight Waldo's phrase) to "loosen public administration from the restraints of political science…" (quoted in Henry, 1987, pp. 44). But the prominent role of non-academics indicates that the founding of ASPA was not focused on creating or legitimizing a distinct social science discipline. A higher priority was given to forging "closer links between the academy and the public authorities who were the primary consumers of the academy's research and training activities" (Egger, 1975, p. 74).[10]

Another organizational manifestation of a field's striving for consensus – or at least an indicator of its success or failure in this regard – is the creation of autonomous academic units devoted to the subject. With rare exceptions, psychology, political science, economics and other social science fields became common components of academic structures in most higher education institutions by the 1930s. Here as well, Public Administration's early development provides mixed signals about the strength of the emerging consensus. A handful of autonomous academic units devoted to the field existed in the early 1930s, although there were about three dozen or more degree programs and training curricula offered by political science and engineering faculties, and even by some research institutes and bureaus. By the 1970s there were over a hundred programs identifying themselves with the field of Public Administration, with about 50 reporting some distinct identity within their institutions, and 20 of those existing as truly autonomous academic units (Stone & Stone, 1975). Today [1999] there are at least 245 academic units belonging to the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, and perhaps several dozen more that would consider themselves associated with the field of Public Administration (see NASPAA, 1999). Despite this growth, however, the mixed organizational formats and ambivalent status of these academic units within their institutions reflects lingering questions both within and outside the field about the strength of its identity – and thus mirrors field's relatively weak consensus.

The test of any field's consensus, however, comes in the form of inevitable challenges and controversies generated from within. Within academe, no disciplinary consensus – weak or strong – goes unchallenged for long. Not only are there inevitable disagreements over competing theories or alternative methods;[11] there are also those who invariably seek even greater consensus than already exists by advocating "grand theories," or "theories of everything" (e.g., see Barrow, 1991). Such challenges emerge in every field, whether we are discussing high-level theoretical physics or Public Administration.[12] What differentiates the fields is their respective capacity to build on or use the existing consensus to meet the challenges. In those fields where the fundamental consensus is strong (i.e., modern physics and other basic sciences), the controversies are handled through "normal science" routines. In less consensual contexts, controversies take the form of challenges to some dominant view within the field, with the result that the discipline begins to resemble a conglomeration of distinct but powerful sub disciplines (e.g., psychology) or a very active political arena where differences are tolerated and debated, and compromises struck among the field's elite (e.g., political science) (Lowi, 1972).

For Public Administration, an early intellectual consensus built around what we now often call the "classical" approach (i.e., scientific management and the "principles of administration") dominated until the end of World War Two. By then the emerging Canon included the writings of Luther Gulick and the advocates of the "principles" orthodoxy as well as the growing body of work associated with government reform and reorganization. The postwar attack on that consensus would seriously undermine the foundations of that Canon – converting most of it into an "anti-Canon" that stood for decades as textbook examples of outmoded and oversimplified perspectives. The major thrusts of the postwar criticisms came from two directions, one (represented in the work of Herbert Simon) challenging the integrity of the field's claim to science and another (led by Dwight Waldo) exposing its weak normative underpinnings. These

two challenges proved equally effective in undermining the orthodox consensus; more importantly, they came at a time when the field was unable to contend with the consequences by forging a new consensus. Instead, what took center stage was a debate between those seeking to create a social science focused on administration (Simon's agenda) and those committed to a normative agenda for the field (Waldo's goal). I will discuss that debate in greater detail below, for in a sense it shaped the minimal consensus that did emerge in the form of agreement that the field needed to find some focus to fill the void left by the devastation of orthodoxy.[13]

By the early 1960s, the debate had become unjoined as the major advocates for a social science of Public Administration abandoned the field to seek identity elsewhere, some in other parts of political science (e.g. comparative political studies[14]), others in the emerging fields of administrative and organizational studies.[15] No hoped-for "reformulation" or "new orthodoxy" emerged, and those remaining in the field began to accept (albeit reluctantly) a non-disciplinary identity (see discussion of the "professional stance" below). By providing a conceptual focus in the form of "paradigms," Thomas S. Kuhn's (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* revitalized discussions about the need for consensus within the field, and the search for some form of intellectual consensus has been an ongoing project central to numerous discussions and critiques of the field ever since (e.g., Golembiewski, 1977; Henry, 1987; see also Martin, 1989).

Given the current state of Public Administration, is a new or more comprehensive consensus necessary to sustain the field? Probably not, and for some critics the preoccupation with developing such a consensus has proven too costly (Golembiewski, 1977). Nevertheless, *the striving for consensus of some sort will continue* because there are some practical as well as psychic advantages gained as a result of reaching consensus in a field. Studies of graduate faculties in the sciences and social sciences indicate that scholars in fields characterized by relatively high intellectual consensus stand at the top of the academic social system and create clearer patterns for career advancement and the attainment of status within a field. These high-consensus fields also receive more favorable treatment from funding sources, and are more likely to provide opportunities for research of even the most abstract problems.

Among those fields with which Public Administration has been historically and intellectually linked, their status as social "sciences" has had mixed blessings. Relative to the "hard" or "natural" sciences, they often find themselves subject to the academic equivalent of snobbery and abuse applied to those of lower social status.[16] On the other hand, the "mainstream" social sciences seem prone to treating their "professional" siblings (e.g., social work and education, as well as Public Administration) with equal disdain or indifference. For Public Administration, the decision of the 1967 program committee for the American Political Science Association annual meeting not to include a section related to the field has long symbolized its psychic alienation from other social sciences.[17] Within institutions, similar challenges take the form of controversies surrounding the allocation of resources or personnel decisions.

The unrelenting urge toward greater consensus within Public Administration has been increasingly evident since the 1980s. The field's major journals are publishing more articles focused on the quality of Public Administration theory and research (see White & Adams, 1994a), and every major Public Administration conference seems to have a number of panels or events addressing "identity crisis" issues. The issue addressed in this paper is the failure of the leading theorists in the field to satisfy what seems to be a collective desire.

The Professional Stance

The other major "risky" premise of this essay is the assumed desirability of establishing Public Administration's identity as a social science discipline. Such an assumption, of course, implies that the field currently defines itself otherwise, and/or that there are alternatives to the social science stance. In that regard, I take seriously the conventional wisdom that the field has adopted (and adapted to) an identity closer to that of a profession than to a social science discipline. Furthermore, I also consider identification with the humanities as a serious option.

Public Administration's situation differs from similar identity crises that seem to constantly reemerge over time in fields such as political science, anthropology, history, and economics. For those other fields, past and present discussions about the nature of their disciplinary identity have occurred (and recurred – see Wylie, 1996) within the context of the "two cultures" debate eloquently articulated by C.P. Snow in his 1959 lectures on the growing intellectual gap between the sciences and the humanities (Snow, 1959). More often than not, it is a debate between advocates of social science methodologies and those favoring approaches that would associate them more closely with the humanities.[18]

For Public Administration, however, a serious third option emerged early in the field's history. At its simplest, the debate centers on the issue of whether the practice of public administration itself was an art, a science, or a craft. Taking their cues from either the "art" or "science" positions alone, the debates over the field's identity might have followed the same pattern as the related disciplines. But the idea of public-administration-as-craft opened a third path toward a "professional" stance.

Perhaps the classic statements of Public Administration's contemporary identity problem are found in two 1968 essays by Dwight Waldo in which he reflects on the state of the field (Waldo, 1968a, 1968b). Waldo directly (and with characteristic honesty) confronts the issue of how the community of "self-aware" Public Administration scholars should define their mutual endeavor. At the outset of his discussion, Waldo rejects two traditional alternative solutions: sub-disciplinary status within political science[19] (or, for that matter, within any other discipline), and status as a distinct discipline among the social sciences (which he regarded as both too ambitious and not ambitious enough).[20] Instead, Waldo advocates the now famous solution that "we try to act as a profession without actually being one, and perhaps without the hope or intention of becoming one in any strict sense" (Waldo, 1968b, p. 10). Acknowledging that this position would be subject to "ridicule," Waldo nevertheless defended the professionalism option:

> The professional perspective or stance is the only one broad and flexible enough to enable us to contain our diverse interests and objectives, yet firm and understandable enough to provide some unity and sense of direction and purpose. It has meaning and contains useful cues and imperatives both in the academic world in which public administration is studied and taught and in the governmental world in which public administration is practiced. In the larger environment in which both these related enterprises are carried on, it gives us more purchase than any other oriented idea (Waldo, 1968b, p. 10).

As an analogy, Waldo (1968b) uses the field of medicine where "science and art, theory and practice, study and application" are included under the umbrella of a profession. "It is not based on a single discipline, but utilizes many. It is not united by a single theory, and is justified and

given direction by a broad social purpose" (p. 10). (In other contexts, Waldo would use the metaphor of "enterprise" to characterize the field's broad scope and diverse perspectives [Waldo, 1980]. But it was the professional stance that he regarded as more strategically viable.)

The need to incorporate all aspects of the field in resolving the identity crisis is an important and defining characteristic of Waldo's support of the professional approach, especially for its impact on the academic field of Public Administration. One of the major objectives of Waldo and others has been to maintain the inclusive nature of the more general community we call public administration. This effort has deep roots in the brief intellectual history of governmental studies in the United States. When formed in 1903, the American Political Science Association adopted three missions which seemed so complementary at the time that they were regarded as ideally and necessarily indistinguishable: enhancing the civic education of the public, training public servants, and conducting research on government and politics.[21] The centrality of Public Administration in political science through the 1930s and 1940s is evident in almost all aspects of the discipline – including the commitment to maintain a close working relationship between scholars and practitioners.

In hindsight, however, the signs of change can be found throughout the 1930s, and perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the formation of the American Society for Public Administration as a distinct entity. While it would be an oversimplification, one can characterize the history as a growing split between those in political science who sought to legitimize the discipline's claim to status as a social science, and those committed to maintaining the link between research and practice in governmental affairs. To the increasingly influential hardline social scientists desiring greater detachment and objectivity for their discipline, their contact and efforts on behalf of practitioners intellectually tainted Public Administrationists; in contrast, practitioners often regarded them as too scholarly and academic. As a result, the contemporary student of Public Administration assumed "an ambiguous and often uncomfortable dual second-class citizenship status: He is the academic's practical man and the public administrator's academic" (Waldo, 1968a, p. 444-445).

It was within the context of that commitment that Waldo's argument for professional standing made sense. Public Administration involved not merely the study of government operations and management; it inherently included a "broad social purpose" no different from that characterizing the study of medicine. Any effort to resolve the identity crisis must encompass that strong commitment to purpose.

> Public administration in contemporary government is not less, but more, complex than caring for and curing the ill (which, in a formal sense, it often embraces). We need a perspective, an orientation, appropriate to the task. In terms of my assigned topic, the scope of our theory should extend as far as the professional challenge and should respond to the needs and opportunities it presents. If the analogy to medicine has any validity, this means that we must be concerned not with a theory but with theories, indeed, with theories of many types, many dimensions and facets. The professional stand does not by a simple point-in-the-slot procedure provide "answers," nor does it even provide a complete and clear agenda of theoretical problems. It does provide a framework large enough to embrace our theoretical problems; it helps to clarify the problems posed and to define the nature of proper answers; it gives direction on the time

> that which and the level at which to seek solutions. Above all, it gives unity while permitting diversity. (Waldo, 1968b, p. 10-11)

Although published in 1968, and despite criticisms of his stand, Waldo's remarks should be read as authoritative rather than suggestive. He was articulating a position that had in fact come to wide acceptance during the postwar years in lieu of any strong consensus that might have led to a more disciplinary stance. As I argue below, Waldo wrote from the position of victor in his debate with Simon over the direction of the field. But from the perspective of 1968, the victory seemed a somewhat hollow one. At a time when he served as unofficial spokesman for the field from his formal positions as editor of *Public Administration Review* and the Albert Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at the Maxwell School, Waldo presented the "professionalism" stance without enthusiasm and with the rationale that it provided as good a strategy for dealing with the identity crisis as any other alternative.

However, such a solution proved only partially satisfying. His belief that by acting like a profession, the field might actually become one, has borne some fruit within academe in the form of a growing number of professional schools and formalized accreditation. Public Administration is rarely perceived as a distinct social science in academe. In line with Waldo's perspective discussed above, it is more frequently regarded as a field for professional education. In this regard, Public Administration educators have been successful (more often than not) in their efforts to extricate themselves both institutionally and intellectually from traditional political science departments[22] while maintaining some distance from the clutches of other "social science" professions (e.g., social welfare, management).[23]

Yet the attraction of disciplinary status remains powerful among members of the Public Administration community of scholars. It is a status that academic fields strive for as self-aware collectivities, and it has eluded our field for decades.

Disciplinary status in academe requires more than a collective declaration by members of the field.[24] There are some characteristics common to fields that achieve disciplinary status, most related to the development of consensus discussed above. Each field takes on a separate identity from other fields, and each is able to point to the establishment of distinct units in academic institutions. Members of the field become increasingly professionalized – that is, they achieve their membership by acquiring a body of knowledge that eventually takes the form of credentials. These characteristics apply whether we are discussing the humanities, the natural sciences, or the social sciences. In the case of the natural and social sciences, an additional commitment to "scientific logic" (Waldo terms this "scientism"[25]) is also regarded as fundamental, although the exact meaning of that concept varies by time and field (see Ross, 1979).

As important, however, is the capacity of the field's members to interact with scholars from related disciplines on a relatively equal footing. Although seeking recognition as a separate and distinct group, the creation of a discipline requires interaction with other fields.[26] Interestingly, Waldo himself provides us with a case study of what is required for disciplinary status in his historical overview of political science published in 1975 (Waldo, 1975). Political science and other mainstream social sciences did not emerge in a vacuum, but rather as part of a growing movement in the post-Civil War era to apply the logic of scientific rationality to modern problems. The field itself was shaped into a discipline through a dialectical process involving contrasting efforts to enhance specialized knowledge while engaging in relationships and exchanges with related fields that highlighted overlaps and similarities. Political science achieved its status as a social science through its interactions with other social sciences, and by

accepting the emerging standards of scholarship that it helped create through its relationships with the greater community of social science scholars.

As I indicate below, despite Waldo's disparaging comments about the desirability of disciplinary status for Public Administration, the possibility of moving from the professional stance toward a disciplinary identity has been constant theme in the field's identity crisis. The urge for disciplinary status is (perhaps paradoxically) inherent in the scholarly and instructional roles played by Public Administrationists under the professional stance. While committed to advancing the professionalism of practitioners through education and research, those who teach public administrators and publish in the field are also part of the academic culture where mainstream disciplinary norms dominate, and where professional schools are often isolated from the more traditional faculties. Try as they might to maintain a distinction between themselves and their colleagues in the humanities and social sciences, they are pulled toward disciplinary status and its psychic (if not practical) benefits.

In a 1987 paper addressing the "disappointment and ridicule" suffered by Public Administrationists, Kenneth J. Meier and Joseph Stewart, Jr., summarize the benefits of disciplinary identity:

> Disciplines are admittedly artificial divisions of knowledge, but they are useful for precisely the same reason that any divisions of labor or classification schemes are useful. They help us organize. They give the field of study coherence and often define a research agenda. As students of public administration have found political science too limiting, they have borrowed theories, methods, and analytic approaches from organizational sociology and psychology, management, law, history, and economics. But lacking any consensus on what constitutes the core of the field and what its appropriate research agenda is, public administration fails to integrate or take as its own what it discovers in other disciplines. Public administration borrows, but it does not adopt, foster, or develop. It does not incorporate because there is no clearly defined torso to attach appendages. Public administration remains a multidisciplinary, rather than an interdisciplinary, field. (Meier & Stewart, 1987, p. 6)

Rather than focusing on whether it ought to be disciplinary, the issue for Public Administrationists should be selecting status within either the social science or humanities disciplines. Historically, the roots of Public Administration in political science tend to draw them closer to the social sciences. There are, however, growing pressures to direct the field toward the humanities by stressing the benefits of knowledge drawn from interpretive and literary methods (see Kass & Catron, 1990). In this essay, I follow a preference for the social sciences.

What does it mean to suggest that Public Administration – or for that matter, the study of any human endeavor – can be a "social science"? What constitutes a "social science" today? For those engaged in what I have been referring to as "mainstream" social science, the standard is that is at once superficially minimal and in reality quite complex. For many it is engaging in "scientific research" about social life, and thus being "scientific" (whatever that means) is regarded as the defining characteristic of the social science. King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) recently noted four features of relevant research: (1) it is "designed to make descriptive or

explanatory *inferences* on the basis of empirical information…"; (2) it uses "explicit, codified, and *public* methods to generate and analyze data whose reliability can therefore be assessed"; (3) it accepts the role of "uncertainty" in the conduct of research; and (4) it "adheres to a set of rules of inference on which its validity depends" (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, p.7-9).

It is not the purpose of this paper to pass judgment on these or any other criteria for defining what is or is not social science research. It is enough to note that mainstream social scientists perceive themselves as members of a broad "truth community" (a variant on the "imagined communities" concept) through which certain knowledge development approaches are legitimized and others challenged. Achieving status as a field within such a community requires more than having individual members engage in legitimized activities. It requires a field-wide consensus that the norms and standards of the broader truth community should become the principal force in shaping knowledge development and theory building among its members.[27] The building of such consensus should be the job of those agenda setters and gatekeepers that I am labeling theorists.

The Argument in Brief

In the section that follows, I set the stage for my argument by focusing on a key event in the intellectual history of Public Administration – the publication of Simon's *Administrative Behavior* in 1947. The importance of that work goes beyond the content of the arguments made by Simon. As important was the challenge it posed for students in the field to make the sacrifices (e.g., objectivity, detachment) required of scholars in a field assuming its status as a social science – at least, as defined in the heyday of logical positivist influence. I offer an overview of how that challenge played itself out in intellectual disputes between Simon and Waldo. In the end, both sides would win. A social science would emerge from Simon's work (i.e., the *administrative sciences*) and he would go on to pre-eminence as a Nobel laureate whose approach to theory transformed entire disciplines outside his own (see Davis, 1996; Fry, 1986). At the same time, Waldo would win over the minds – and hearts – of Public Administrationists and help define the status of the field for most of the post-World War II period.

I follow this with a critical assessment of the current state of Public Administration theory, focusing on several recent and highly acclaimed works. The intent here is not to critique individual theories, but to indicate the challenge now facing the Public Administration community if it would seek (as I think it should) to reclaim its promising status as a social science discipline. I argue that today's theorists are still engaged in the effort to protect the field from the logical positivist agenda – despite the fact that logical positivism has long since lost its influence in the social science disciplines.

Finally, I consider some developments in the "post-modern" social sciences that bode well for Public Administration's efforts to assume disciplinary status. I will argue from a position of optimism based on changes in mainstream methodological perspectives that have moved away from the logical positivist foundations of the past and in the direction of approaches that the more reasonable critics within Public Administration will find acceptable. I also stress, however, that the move toward disciplinary status will not be easy, and may ultimately fail unless the field's intellectual leaders support a pro-disciplinary consensus.

Challenge and Reaction

Simon's Challenge

Public Administration's status among the social sciences was not always as unclear as it is today. In 1926[28] the Social Science Research Council established an Advisory Committee on Public Administration with the intention of "upgrading academic research in the field and bringing it into closer and more operational contact with innovations in administrative methods and procedures" (Egger, 1975, p. 66). By 1936, the Committee's funding activity accounted for one-fifth of the SSRC's expenditures, including support for special studies, commissions, research institutes, and creation of academic units devoted to the field.[29] These and related developments led Dean Mosher of Syracuse University's Maxwell School to declare in 1939 that the field "is itself a discipline and a method that is learnable and teachable" (Egger, 1975, p. 65).

The Second World War intervened, however, and all disciplinary development came to a halt as many Public Administrationists left academe for assignments in the war effort. What they learned during the war significantly altered their views, creating a postwar cadre of "realists" ready to question their prewar assumptions. James W. Fesler (1975) notes at least four major "shifts" in the field's postwar agenda:

> (1) the shift from administrative specialties (e.g., personnel, purchasing, and workflow planning) to the line operations concerned with achieving public purposes; (2) a shift from the chief executive and major auxiliary-and-control agencies to administrative problems of the departmental and bureau levels; (3) a shift from general, abstract principles to appreciation of the varying contexts of individual departments and programs; and (4) a shift from the rather arid concerned for efficiency and economy to a concerned for how American public administration is (or should be) affected by the political values and processes of its democratic setting. (Fesler, 1975, p. 104-105)

In this context, both the emerging prewar orthodoxy and disciplinary pretensions came under scrutiny by a group of young scholars emboldened by their wartime experience. The first explicit challenge came with Simon's (1946) famous "Proverbs of Administration" article pointing to fundamental flaws in the principles approach. Several months later, *Public Administration Review* published an article by Robert A. Dahl highlighting the major obstacles facing any effort to establish a science of administration based on general principles (Dahl, 1947). Waldo's work would follow a year later. The foundations of the field's prewar consensus were being effectively undercut. Could Public Administration's disciplinary status be salvaged from the resulting ruins?

In a very direct sense, that question was central to the debate between Simon and Waldo that dominated the field for the next decade. In hindsight, it was the publication of Simon's *Administrative Behavior* that triggered the debate, although there is no evidence of an immediate reaction (see Simon's comments in later editions). Published in 1947, that work was not merely the product of wartime experience. It began as Simon's dissertation before the war, and to some extent reflects intellectual developments in the field tracing back to at least the mid-1930s[30] as some scholars began to raise issues about the quality of research in the field. Like Public Administrationists educated at the University of Chicago and influenced by Charles Merriam and other leading advocates of an empirical political science, Simon sought to rescue

the field from what he and others perceived to be the pseudo-scientific approaches of Taylorism, the human relations movement, and the "principles of administration" (Martin, 1952).[31] The basis of the critique was not "anti-scientific"; quite the opposite, Simon sought to save Public Administration from "bad science." Thus, while challenging the integrity of the "science of administration" that dominated in the prewar years, Simon was simultaneously proposing a more credible social science approach for the field.[32]

An important feature of Simon's social science perspective was its roots in the logical positivist approach popular among many young scholars at the time, especially at Chicago. In addition to his exposure to the rich and diverse perspective on empirical research provided by the political science and sociology faculty at the university, Simon attended courses on logic taught by Rudolf Carnap, arguably by then the most visible member of the famed Vienna Circle. In his autobiography, Simon implies that his dissertation – which eventually developed into *Administrative Behavior* – had its roots in the philosophy of social science he culls from Carnap's teachings (Simon, 1991). Carnap offered a clear vision of what constitutes a "science": the presentation of knowledge in empirically verifiable statements untainted by the bias of values or ethical statements (see Smith, 1997; Wilson, 1998). It is a position Simon (1957) adopts in his brief but vigorous discussion of what constitutes a "science" in the final chapter of *Administrative Behavior*: "science is interested in sentences only with regard to their verification" (p. 248-249).[33]

It would be a mistake, however, to regard Simon's attachment to logical positivism as unthinking, or untempered. He was, if anything, a critical adherent to the approach.[34] In addition, there were the offsetting influences of Merriam's Chicago School.[35] While stressing the need to apply scientific methods to the study of politics and government, the behaviorists at Chicago were also progressives and New Dealers committed to political change. As Simon would note in 1993, the Chicago behaviorists "generally believed that understanding must precede advocacy, and that to a limited extent [they] were able to separate their roles as scientists from their roles as citizens, a separation that is still eminently desirable if clear thought is to prevail in the discipline" (Simon, 1993, p. 49).

For Simon, adopting a logical positivist method did not require a complete and total indifference to the social dimensions of political or administrative life. Responding to Theodore Lowi's critical assessment of Chicago School behaviorism (Lowi, 1992), Simon notes that "the individual decision maker is never taken as an uncaused-cause, independent of society" – a point, he stresses, that is repeatedly emphasized in *Administrative Behavior*. Nor did it require that the scientist engage in over-generalization or be permitted to claim more for his or her theory that is warranted. Nevertheless, the approach generates significant insights through the theories they generate.

> Theorists of decision-making don't understand the whole polity…; but they have taught us an enormous amount about the minds (and emotions) of the human characters who play roles in the political drama… They have told us much about how these actors think, what they know, and what they value. Without that knowledge, accounts of events at the global, holistic level become pointless (if hair-raising) dramas without plot or motive.
>
> No one argues that all political studies should take decision-making as their organizing thread. But for all that, it has been an extremely effective organizer, shaping much of the most useful work in the discipline. And for larger systems (e.g., in studying

> public administration), the underlying structure of decision-making processes illuminates the coherence of the whole, the contributions of the parts to that whole, the organization's functions and its malfunctions. (Simon, 1993, p. 50)

Simon was also influenced by at least two efforts to apply social scientific methods to the study of public administration published prior to World War Two. In an opening footnote, Simon makes reference to the authors of those works: Chester I. Barnard and Edwin O. Stene.

Barnard's influence on Simon is quite explicit (Simon, 1957),[36] and concepts drawn from Barnard's (1968) *The Functions of the Executive* are frequently cited in *Administrative Behavior*.[37] In his famous Harvard lectures, Barnard stressed the need for a "science of organization or of coöperative systems" that would complement and enhance the "power" of the "executive arts" (Barnard, 1968, p. 290-291). While acknowledging that his particular "hypothetical scheme" was primarily based on "many years of practical work with organizations of various kinds," Barnard hoped it would stimulate work among social scientists (Barnard, 1968, p. 292-293). Simon eagerly took on the challenge.[38]

Less prominently mentioned – although perhaps no less important – was Stene's 1940 article in *American Political Science Review*. In that work, Stene expressly addressed the need for theory in the study of public administration. He noted the growing body of empirical studies related to public sector administration, but questioned whether the field would advance without the development of a "rational theory" to guide those efforts.

> Political scientists who give advice regarding fields and methods of possible research seemed to emphasize the need for empirical study. There is a danger, however, that the empirical studies will be a lacking in direction or meaning until they are capable of being interpreted in full light of propositions brought forth by the rational or theoretical approach. Pithecanthropus was not discovered until after Darwin had expounded his theory of evolution, and the discovery probably would have had little significance prior to that time. Principles of economics which were originally derived from relatively superficial observations has served as guides to extensive empirical studies in recent years, but thus far the major conclusions derived from the rational analyses have been changed very little.
>
> Without disparaging the importance of empirical research, therefore, one may be justified in taking the view that the early development of a rational theory is indispensable to the advancement of scientific method in the study of administration. (Stene, 1940, p. 1126)

Given its ultimate influence in a wide range of disciplines, there is little need to review the substance of Simon's *Administrative Behavior*, other than to stress the role intended for his theory as a foundation for Public Administration in the form of the "administrative sciences." He draws an important distinction between a "theoretical" and "practical" social science, noting that the theory-building goal of the scientist demands that he or she focus on the elaboration and confirmation of factual statements. However, in the case of the administrative sciences, the resulting theory is intended for practical application in addition to its value as a body of

knowledge. At the very end of his famous work, Simon expresses his hopes in the form of an analogy with economics:

> These two alternative forms of administrative science [theoretical and practical] are exactly analogous to the two forms which economics science takes. First, economic theory and institutional economics are generalized descriptions of the behavior of men in the market. Second, business theory states those conditions of business behavior which will result in the maximization of profit. (Simon, 1957, p. 253)

This was ground-breaking material, and yet when first published, *Administrative Behavior* "created no sensation..., but it was widely and quite favorably reviewed in journals of public administration and business management." At the time, Simon notes, "I was disappointed that none of the reviewer's recognized it as the revolutionary document I firmly believed it to be..." (Simon, 1957, p. 88).[39]

The Response

While generating no immediate reaction, Simon's work would eventually prove to be as revolutionary as he perceived and hoped – enough so as to earn him the Nobel Prize for transforming the way economists and others perceived rational behavior. But in his own field of Public Administration, Simon's efforts generated mostly critical reactions that stirred debate, and eventually moved the field in the direction of the professional stance and research standards more closely aligned with the humanities than the social sciences.

Dwight Waldo's *The Administrative State* was being released at the same time that Simon was still reading the reviews of *Administrative Behavior*. If Simon represented the "hard" side of the social sciences, Waldo represented the "softer" approaches – a point he makes in retrospective comments published with the 1984 edition of his classic work.[40] While in agreement with Simon on the shortcomings of scientific management and the "principles" approaches, Waldo was more skeptical of efforts to rely solely on logical positivist methods in development of a theory for Public Administration. His perspective on the sciences developed under different assumptions about the possibility of separating out "facts" for scientific study.

Waldo's views on the philosophy of science were shaped during his graduate student years at Yale University.

> That F. S. C. Northrop was at Yale during my graduate study I regard as a stroke of good luck. His interpretations of science, which I largely followed, I judge to have held up well in the following decades in which scientific philosophy and methodology became something of an academic growth industry. The limitations on physical science methods with regard to human affairs that, following Northrop, I then judged valid I still judge valid... (Waldo, 1984, p. xlin)

Northrop's views on scientific method and the role of theory were neither anti-scientific nor anti-theory (Chaudhuri, 1967).[41] Rather, they were critical of (a) the popular conception of an atheoretical science dealing with "facts" alone,[42] and (b) the view among some social scientists

that it was possible to apply the empirical methods of physical science to human affairs without taking into account the cultural and social context of the observed phenomena.[43]

On the first point, Waldo notes that the popular misconception of the scientific method being a purely "factual" endeavor had carried over to the study of public administration, and that the "scientific inadequacy of the factual approach in public administration is now patent" (Waldo, 1984, p. 171). Revisiting this issue years later, Waldo noted the dilemma posed for those who assumed the scientific focus on facts.

> The split between fact and value, 'is' and 'ought,' creates problems for the social scientist. It makes for a split personality. On the one hand the social scientist, as a general rule, carries along the baggage of moral beliefs he has received from the past, the beliefs constituting the liberal democratic outlook. On the other hand, the original philosophical foundations for these beliefs have disappeared, and no philosophy has gained general acceptance as a suitable alternative. So the social scientist lives in two worlds lacking an organic connection. There is the world of the facts, with which he is concerned as a scientist. And there is the world of his ideology or values. Since his value system cannot be justified in terms of facts, and his professional dedication is thought of as one to Fact, he is without justification for carrying his value system into his science. (Waldo, 1955, p. 62)

Waldo notes that this dilemma is merely a "pseudo problem" for those adhering to a logical positivist view. Questions related to values cannot and should not be considered by the social scientist, for they involve statements that cannot be empirically verified. Values entered into the equation when the theoretical knowledge accumulated by empirical studies are to be applied, and in that context of science is indifferent if not irrelevant (Waldo, 1955). Given Simon's views expressed in *Administrative Behavior*, this is a fair summation.

Waldo challenges these assertions on several grounds. He notes that the distinction between fact and value is more logical than real. In addition, there is the danger that what is intended as merely an "instrument of analysis" will become "inevitably a program of action – with unfortunate results." Finally, and more specific to the concerns of Public Administration, the fact/value distinction promotes the separation of means from ends – "which is what administration is about."

It is on the last point that Waldo would eventually build his critique of Simon's efforts to establish a theory of administrative behavior, but his comments in *The Administrative State* were focused on Stene's efforts to formulate a theory of administrative statics.[44] Waldo was most critical of Stene's effort to develop a generic theory, free from the normative context and other situational specifics that characterize the work of public organizations. "Administrative study, no less than economics study, is at its heart normative. Determinism does not apply to free will; 'conservation laws' do not apply to purposive human beings" (Waldo, 1984, p. 176).

With values so prominent in the work of government, Waldo believed that Public Administration must give priority to carefully and critically examining normative theories rather than generating the kind of empirical theories advocated by logical positivist approaches. Following Northrop's (1949, 1955) views, Waldo focused on the need to study the "presuppositions" and norms that were at the heart of the American administrative culture – the

central task and accomplishment of *The Administrative State*. And like Northrop, Waldo (1952) believed a theory of "good" (i.e., "democratic") administration would eventually emerge from these efforts.

The Debate[45]

It is perhaps too easy to characterize the intellectual milieu of the period as simply a debate between two individuals trained in opposing philosophies of science (Carnap's logical positivism vs. Northrop's philosophy of cultural), two schools of thought (empiricism vs. normative theory), or using more recent terminology, two conflicting social science paradigms. The situation was far more complex.[46] Logical positivism had already faced significant challenges that had undermined its legitimacy both prescriptively (e.g., Werkmeister, 1937a, 1937b) and descriptively (see Polanyi, 1964). In addition, the growing influence of alternative methodologies for the social sciences was significant enough to warrant critical assessment by Nagel, Hempel, and other prominent advocates of naturalistic methods (see Schutz 1954).

Nevertheless, the intellectual confrontation between Waldo and Simon did much to shape and determined the current status of Public Administration as a field still in the throes of an identity crisis. Interestingly, the debate itself was rarely manifest in exchanges between the two central protagonists. One notable exception was Simon's reaction to a comment made by Waldo in his 1952 article in *American Political Science Review* on the "Development of Theory of Democratic Administration." Reasserting a position initially expressed in *The Administrative State*, Waldo argued that one

> major obstacle in the way of further development of democratic theory is the idea that efficiency is a value-neutral concept or, still worse, that it is antithetical to democracy. To hold that we should take efficiency as the central concept of our "science" but that we nevertheless must tolerate a certain amount of democracy because we "believe" in it, is to poison the taproot of American society. To maintain that efficiency is value-neutral and to propose at the same time that it be used as the central concept in a "science" of administration is to commit one's self to nihilism, so long as the prescription is actually followed. (Waldo, 1952, p. 97)

In an accompanying footnote, Waldo explicitly attacks the assertion that decisions can be analyzed without reference to values. He ends that note with the comment that "Herbert Simon has patently made outstanding contributions to administrative study. These contributions have been made, however, when he has worked free of the methodology he has asserted" (Waldo, 1952, p. 97).

Simon's response came in the next issue of the *American Political Science Review*. He acknowledges Waldo's compliments, but felt "impelled" to comment "because the faults of Waldo's analysis are characteristic of the writings of those who call themselves 'political theorists' and who are ever ready to raise the battle cry against positivism and empiricism. A scientist is not (and, in my system of personal values, should not be) flattered by being told that his conclusions are good, but do not follow from his premises. If Mr. Waldo's [comment] is correct, then I should be condemned, not flattered" (Simon, Drucker, & Waldo, 1952, p. 494). He follows this with a critical commentary on the quality of Waldo's arguments:

> The study of logic and empirical science has impressed on me the extreme care that must be exercised, in the search for truth, to avoid logical booby traps. For this reason the kind of prose I encounter in writings on political theory, decorated with assertion, invective, and metaphor, sometimes strikes me as esthetically pleasing, but seldom as convincing. Since I am unable to discover definitions in Mr. Waldo's paper for his key terms, since he does not set forth his basic premises in any systematic fashion, and since his propositions appear to skip from philosophy to psychology to history and back, I have not succeeded in reconstructing the syllogisms which I presumed he reached his conclusions. (Simon, Drucker, & Waldo, 1952, p. 494)

Generalizing from that criticism, Simon states that he does not "see how we can progress in political philosophy if we continue to think and write in the loose, literary, metaphorical style that he and most other theorists adopt. The standard of unrigor [sic] that is tolerated in political theory would not receive a passing grade in the elementary course in logic, Aristotelian or symbolic.

> If political philosophers wish to preserve democracy from what they regard as the termitic borings of positivism, I suggest that as the first step they acquire a sufficient technical skill in modern logical analysis to attack the positivists on their own ground. Most of the positivists and empiricists of my acquaintance will then be likely to receive them more as allies in the search for truth then as enemies. (Simon, Drucker, & Waldo, 1952, p. 496)

The debate continued throughout the 1950s, although with less directness and in a somewhat softer tone.[47] Waldo (1955) continued to take issue with the logical positivist perspective on values, while Simon (1957) continued to characterize his critics as “political theorists” (rather than giving them the status of Public Administrationists) whose criticisms were faulty and lacking rigor. A process of mellowing also began during this period, with both Simon and Waldo expressing reluctance to stand by every word and paragraph written about positions contrary to their own. In 1984, Waldo states he

> must confess… that at the time [1940s] I was not well informed about this significant development [i.e., logical positivism]; and while my treatment of positivism as a temper and characteristic of modern philosophy will pass muster (I believe), my discussion would have been improved by more awareness of the philosophic movement that would prove to be so significant for developments not only in philosophy but for the social sciences, and for public administration specifically, chiefly through its formal introduction in… *Administrative Behavior*. (Waldo, 1984, p. xxxix)

As for Simon, the irony of receiving ASPA’s 1995 Dwight Waldo Award for his outstanding contributions to the study of Public Administration led him to remark that

> There was no real conflict between Dwight's vision and mine, except that each of us felt a strong urge to direct attention to the

> particular problem area in administrative theory that we felt to be most urgent, and our priorities were different. Nevertheless, with the enthusiasm of the young (which I hope neither of us has lost), we managed to exchange some rather purple prose… which, however, never interfered with our personal friendship. (Simon, 1995, p. 404)

"As matters worked out over the years," Simon continued, "public administration absorbed both revolutions…" (p. 404).

That last observation, however well intended, does not do justice to the current situation. It is evident that Simon's work has had considerable influence in mainstream Public Administration research, but more often it has served as a counterpoint to those who have shaped the intellectual tone of the field. A social science discipline did emerge from Simon's work, but it was established as a distinct alternative to Public Administration. The administrative sciences – and its central publication, *Administrative Science Quarterly* – would initially draw its "subscribers" from the ranks of Public Administrationists as well as those in related fields (e.g., sociology and management). By the 1960s, however, administrative sciences had developed into the scholarly extension of business administration and organizational studies.

Within the Public Administration community itself, social science scholarship was often subsumed under the pressures of a field intellectually committed to avoiding the perceived drawbacks and traps inherent to what had emerged as mainstream social science. In that regard, Waldo's characterization of Public Administration as a "profession" served two purposes. On the one hand, it legitimized the distinct position of the field by stressing its working relationships with practitioners and "real world" problems. On the other hand, it allowed the field's intellectual "gatekeepers" to maintain their defensive posture against the unwarranted intrusion of the (logical positivist and technocratic) barbarians at the gates.

For those who sought to do more than merely train and advise public administrators – including Waldo – the success of his perspective (manifest in the contrived identification as a profession) was intellectually unsatisfactory as well as frustrating. This is apparent in almost every contribution published in the Waldo-sponsored *Toward a New Public Administration* (the first Minnowbrook conference) (Marini, 1971). The desire for disciplinary status as an empirical social science is pervasive, but so is the desire to maintain the normative standards central to Waldo's approach. Consider, for example, the following comments drawn from two major contributions to that work:

> The major problem of Public Administration as an intellectual enterprise is this: Contemporary Public Administration exists in a state of antique or maladapted analytic models and normative aridity. There is almost no basis for reaching or accepting either substantive problems or analytical models save political-administrative crises or academic fashion. Teaching and research tend to be based on past problems or instant response to present "establishment" problem definitions. Both bases have limited utility in developing administrative vision, political leadership, or intellectual vitality of lasting quality. The result has been a deadening of intellectual vigor and a kind of wandering relevance to students, practitioners, and the future.

> Younger students, men in public affairs at various levels, and many among us complain that we are not relevant, that the intellectual stuff of Public Administration has restricted meaning and limited significance to their experience, that it misses the drama of social change… that it misses the point! Most of our efforts *do* come perilously close to missing the point; they fall between the stools of searching normative interpretations and detailed practical solutions to specific problems faced by administrators. Most are neither normative league nor practically relevant. (La Porte, 1971, p. 21)
>
> * * *
>
> The new Public Administration must cope with… weaknesses in empirical theory and innovate in selected directions. This chapter, by pointing up limitations in the quality of systematic empirical theory, represents an exhortation for greater scientific authority in the pursuit of our tasks. Obvious steps called for in the future are to better delineate and seek agreement on the nature of the things we study, to improve the empirical quality and theoretical adequacy of our work, and to raise the level of systematization of our explanations of Public Administration phenomena. But the new Public Administration requires more than these things. *We must add to our emphasis on better science – scientific authority – a critical second criterion: moral authority.* (Kronenberg, 1971, p. 217)

In 1977, Robert Golembiewski called for his colleagues to turn their attention away from the search for a "comprehensive paradigm" and toward more essential work. For Golembiewski, the intellectual time and energy devoted to "maintenance" functions would be better spent on what he termed "task" functions. What was unique about his argument was its explicit purpose to have the field "move beyond the present anguish about identity or intellectual crises in public administration, and to do so in constructive ways that will highlight specific skills and technologies for both research and application. Only in this way… is progress in public administration likely to occur" (Golembiewski, 1977, p. 67). Although sometimes cited, Golembiewski's prescriptions have gone unheeded among the field's leading theorists.

In the late 1980s, the authors of the Blacksburg Manifesto – self-described "Minnowbrook I with institutional grounding" (Wamsley, 1990, p. 20) – maintained the Waldo-inspired aversion to endorsing a social science disciplinary identity for the field. They blamed Simon and the positivist/behavioralists movements in political science and organization theory for diverting Public Administration theory "into an intellectual cul-de-sac" (Wamsley, 1990, p. 42) and creating "tacit boundaries" (Wamsley, 1990, p. 246) that had taken decades to overcome.

> There has been no major advance in public administration theory per se beyond the writings of Appleby, Waldo, Redford, Long, Price, Selznick, Sayre, and others. Although some of these theorists (most consistently, Long) have continued to expand on themes that should be central to public administration theory, those themes have not stirred nearly the interest in serious theory-building efforts that we feel they warrant. They seem never to have gained the kind of recognition and adherents they enjoyed

> in the late 1930s or 1940s. There are, no doubt, several reasons for this, but foremost among them has been the suffocating hold of behavioralism and positivism upon the social sciences in general. That hold has begun to loosen in the past two decades, but very slowly. (Wamsley, 1990, p. 19)[48]

The urge for disciplinary status continues today, and is perhaps even stronger among those who regard themselves as social science researchers. A series of articles published in *Public Administration Review* and other journals beginning in 1984 have reflected both the desire for greater "rigor" (in mainstream social science terms) and the equally powerful urge to resist such standards.[49]

The indicators are numerous: from the decline of academic membership and conference participation in the American Society for Public Administration, to the reemergence of a strong organized section on public administration in the American Political Science Association; from the growing participation of academics in the annual conferences of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, to increases in the number and status of scholarly journals devoted to Public Administration research (e.g., *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory*, *Administration and Society*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*).

The growth in the number of Ph.D. programs in the field has also re-generated concerns about its status as a social science. A clear distinction must be drawn between the professional education of practitioners and the academic education of scholars if a doctorate in Public Administration is not to be merely a "black belt in MPA."[50] This position was supported in earlier years by such preeminent scholars as Wallace Sayre and Leonard D. White,[51] and more recently led one colleague to suggest that the best Public Administration doctoral programs are located at least 25 miles from the nearest MPA program.[52]

But fulfilling that urge for disciplinary status has not been easy. It has proven exceedingly difficult to overcome a half-century of bias against social scientific methods and theories, as is evident in the views reflected in several recently published works on the theory and nature of Public Administration.

Theory as Gatekeeping

The Failure

Despite its importance in the field's current self-awareness, the "bias against social scientific methods and theories" alluded to above has hardly been unique to Public Administrationists. Controversies surrounding the application of "scientific" methods to the study of human affairs can be traced back at least to the work of Auguste Comte (see Smith, 1997), and the first major articulation (and defense) of a philosophy of scientific social studies is found in J. S. Mill's (1965) *On the Logic of the Moral Sciences*, published in 1843. The debate certainly intensified with the elaboration of the logical positivist perspective during the 1920s and 1930s,[53] a factor that shaped much of the content of the Simon/Waldo debate.

The debate itself was more than merely a conflict between those favoring and opposing the scientific study of society. As I argue in the concluding section, the debate has succeeded in generating changes within mainstream social science that have fundamentally redefined the disciplinary standards for research and publication. The degree of change has not satisfied many

of the most adamant critics, nor has the logical positivist ideal been totally abandoned in psychology, sociology, political science, and the other social sciences. But the basic idea of what constitutes legitimate social science research has moved in directions quite in line with the critical perspectives that have dominated Public Administration for the past half-century. Much of this change can be attributed to the prominent "theorists" who have played the role of intellectual gatekeepers in their respective fields (i.e., see Gergen, 1994a).

I argue that those who play similar gatekeeping roles in Public Administration – those who I call the field's "theorists" – continue to assume a more isolated and defensive posture. The work of leading theorists in our field – our intellectual agenda-setters – has remained fixed on the need to protect our scholarship and our students from the shortcomings and evils of logical positivist social science. In the process, they have perpetuated a fixed and distorted image of social science research and have been indifferent to the significant changes in disciplinary approaches. In that sense, Public Administration theory – or, more specifically, the theorists – has failed us.

Two caveats are in order. First, while contending that Public Administration has not achieved the status of a social science, I am not arguing that there is a lack of social science scholarship focused on public administration and government bureaucracy. In fact, quite the opposite is true. There are a significant number of relevant studies generated each year by scholars who identify with – and often publish in – other fields, from political science to administrative science to organizational studies to social psychology. The important point is that few of these scholars identify with the imagined community of Public Administration scholars. As important, those conducting such research rarely cite or make reference to the mainstream literature in Public Administration – thus providing another indicator of the relatively low regard for research in our field among the social science disciplines.

Second, by focusing on some of the field's leading theorists, I am not arguing that there exists some conspiratorial intellectual elite consciously controlling what is or is not presented or published in the field. Rather, I am arguing that there is a pervasive and powerful anti-social science theme found in the diverse literature of our field – powerful enough to set the standards and expectations for researchers in the field. My own "gatekeeping" experience in Public Administration convinced me that the perceived prejudice against positivist social science research resulted in fewer submissions of those sorts of manuscripts.[54] For those who might challenge the dominant view, it is easier to present and publish one's work outside the field than it is to fight the "powers that be." No less a figure than Herbert A. Simon himself offers a model of someone with deep roots in the field who met considerable success outside the community of Public Administration scholars.

In attempting to grasp the various dimensions of this failure, I offer a framework highlighting four analytically distinct groups of Public Administration theorists (see figure 1): Reformers, Alternativists, Normativists, and Transformationists.[55] Each of these groups is engaged in what John R. Hall (1999) calls a "formative discourse" about the field's identity crises – that is, each considers the issues within a particular definition of the problem.

What these four groups have in common is a bias against turning Public Administration into a logical positivist social science. To understand their different perspectives on this issue, it is useful to distinguish between two general criticisms levied against naturalistic models of scientific research such as logical positivism. On the one hand, there are criticisms focused on the technical limitations of natural science methodologies. Here the challenge is to the capacity of such methods to live up to the declared criteria of objectivity. On the other hand, there are critics who draw attention to the social, ideological, and political dangers inherent in adopting

Figure 1. Gatekeeping Theories in Public Administration

		Problems with "Social Scientific" Methods	
		Technical	Social, Political, Ideological Implications
Perceived Possibility for an Acceptable Social Science	High	Reformists (Methodology)	Normativists (Ethics)
	Low	Alternativists (Epistemology)	Transformationists (Ontology)

the "value-neutral" perspective of a logical positivist science. A further distinction can also be drawn within each of these two groups, differentiating between those who believe that a social science is still possible despite the noted problems and those who are more pessimistic about such possibilities.

The resulting framework offers a useful means for examining and assessing the recent work of Public Administrationists. Those who fall in the upper left quadrant include a range of writers who consider the problems of achieving disciplinary status as technical and resolvable. Their focus is on methodology. They remain advocates for an identity rooted in the mainstream social sciences, and they focus their efforts on modifying and "reforming" methods and approaches to make mainstream social science more acceptable to Public Administrationists – and vice versa.

In contrast, those in the lower right quadrant adopt a far less optimistic view, concluding that nothing less than a radical and continuous transformation of our worldview will suffice. The challenge is ontological, and demands nothing less than a rethinking of our thoughts about the role of government and the behavior of those engaged in the practice of public administration Although a number of labels can be used for this group, I will use the term "transformationists" to reflect their primary agenda for the field.

In the lower left quadrant are those who believe that mainstream social science provides a narrow and incomplete perspective for our understanding of the world of public administration. For them, the objective is to legitimize "alternative" approaches to studying and understanding our subject, creating a diversity of acceptable tools – even if this means going beyond the boundaries of approaches acceptable to mainstream social scientists. For them the problems facing Public Administration are epistemological.

Finally, there are those who believe that the pervasive and powerful ideological forces that dominate the mainstream social science perspective can be overcome through the integration of appropriate norms and values in research and analysis. Members of this group will be termed "normativists," reflecting the high priority they give to ethical issues in the work of Public Administrationists.

Reforming Methodists

For the theorists I have termed "reformers," Public Administration cannot as yet regard itself as a part of the social science "truth community" because the field has yet to demonstrate a commitment to relevant disciplinary standards as the criteria for conducting and assessing the research of its members. From the reformist perspective, therefore, the challenge facing Public Administration is to deal with the methodological problems that pose obstacles to joining the broader community.

From this perspective, it is more than merely a matter of exercising the "will" to be disciplinary. Rather, there is an emphasis on adopting those standards *without explicitly challenging* the basic anti-positivist premise that defines the field. In lieu of a more radical critique of the research in the field, the reformers choose to focus on adjustments in methods to "fit" the distinctive qualities of the field's core subject matter. In addition, the reformist position also stresses the need for greater methodological competency for researchers, as if to argue that there would be a greater appreciation of social scientific approaches if only more Public Administrationists were competent to conduct such research.

On the first point – and despite the mythology of a common commitment to some idealized scientific methodology – the reformers have lots of allies within the scientific community to support their contentions. The shortcomings of "naïve" inductive approaches and covering-law explanations have long been acknowledged in the natural sciences, as has the "theory-dependence" of empirical observations (see Chalmers, 1994). Physicists studying quantum mechanics since Werner Heisenberg posited his "uncertainty principle" in 1927 have acknowledged the inherent limitations of scientific observation (Cassidy, 1992; see also Matson, 1964). Although a few hardline empiricists remain (Wilson, 1998; see also Horgan, 1997), most scientists conduct their research with an understanding that their methods and instruments are necessarily imperfect and that a good deal of what they do involves "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 1962).

Nor would many "mainstream" social scientists argue that their methods live up to the arbitrary and unrealistic standards associated with extreme forms of logical positivism. For most, the logical positivist perspective is a stereotyped distortion of what social scientists actually assume and how they act. Social science research is, instead, perceived as an effort to deal with the limitations and uncertainties inherent in studying human social behavior. It is in that intellectual context that reformist theorists in Public Administration of remain committed to the view that their field is capable of dealing with the limits of social science research and should operate as a social science discipline through a variety of "reforms."

Which leads to the second, related issue of researcher competency. If social science involves doing research applying methods that deal with methodological limitations and uncertainties, then any field aspiring to disciplinary status must provide its scholars with the relevant training and promote the appropriate standards for conducting and publishing that research. Public Administration, in short, must reform its education of Ph.D. students and adjust standards used in the major scholarly outlets such as *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *American Review of Public Administration*, and *Administration & Society*.

There is nothing new about this perspective, but beyond the writings of Simon and his colleagues fifty years ago, there has not been a major theoretical work or radical stance explicitly supporting this position in the field in any comprehensive way – a point I will return to below. Instead, there have been a number of efforts to prescribe what Public Administrationists must do to achieve their status as social scientists. Specific prescriptions are, not surprisingly, related to the particular shortcomings highlighted by each "reformer." For some, the issue is a lack of methodological "rigor" in Public Administration research (Cleary, 1992; Cleary & McCurdy, 1984; Perry & Kraemer, 1986). For others, there is a need for more relevant measures of what the public sector does (Meier & Keiser, 1996). Still others believe that Public Administrationists would undertake more "scientific" research if they understood how research is really conducted (in contrast to the idealized model of how scientific research ought to be conducted) (Bailey, 1992). And there are those who see the answer in emerging new paradigms more conducive to

the complex realities of the public sector (Kiel, 1994; Overman, 1996). Each of these suggested reforms would indeed move Public Administration closer to the vague but highly desired objective of disciplinary status as a social science – assuming, that is, we accept the reformer's implied or explicit standard for social science research. It is on that point that the reformist perspective tends to disappoint.

Consider, for example, the approach assumed by Hal G. Rainey and others (e.g., Menzel & Carson, 1999) focused on the need to systematically organize what we know about public administration into a coherent propositional inventory that can be used to set a research agenda for the field. The assumption is that Public Administration has access to a significant knowledge base, but it lacks an organizing theory or focus that would create order out of the intellectual fragments. While similar in purpose to the search for a comprehensive paradigm, this approach does not call for radical shifts or revolutionary changes in research agendas. Instead, it seeks to establish something like a "research program" based on existing work.

The approach can be traced back to Edwin O. Stene's 1941 call for a more systematic approach to the field through the development of a theory of administrative statics (as discussed above). A decade later, Donald W. Smithburg would make an argument similar to Stene's, noting that "the vital scientific task of attempting to make a coherent, logically consistent system out of the hodge-podge of sensory fact" is a critical task for the field (Smithburg, 1951, p. 68). From time to time, the field has benefited from individual and collective efforts to develop a coherent body of empirically testable propositions drawn from the vast knowledge base of Public Administration and related fields. March and Simon's (1958) *Organizations*, James D. Thompson's (1967) *Organizations in Action*, Rainey, Backoff, and Levine's (1976) "Comparing Public and Private Organizations" are three notable examples from the past.

Rainey and his coauthor Paula Steinbauer (1999) continue this tradition in their article, "Galloping Elephants: Developing Elements of a Theory of Effective Government Organizations" (see also Rainey, 1993a). With the explicit intention of developing "propositions as a step toward development of a theory of effective government agencies," Rainey searched through various literatures focused on organizational best practices, leadership, organization culture, and so on. Underlying this effort is the belief that a useful program of social science research can be developed from existing knowledge about public organizations. It is a "field of dreams" approach – if you build it (in this case, a comprehensive summary of existing knowledge), "they" will come.

The effort to construct this intellectual field of dreams requires more than merely knowledge of the literature. It demands the development of a framework broad enough in scope to capture the complex dimensions of the subject as well as the many varieties of relevant research. It also requires the capacity to discriminate among conclusions and hypotheses of such varying quality that only a few individuals are capable of doing the job effectively. It is a task we assume we can trust to one of the more respected intellectual gatekeepers of the field – a status no informed scholar would deny to Professor Rainey.

However, there are at least two critical problems with Rainey's approach. First, generating propositions is interesting and useful to the extent that it provides a summary of what others have concluded from their research. But the resulting propositional inventory does not provide what is necessary to establish a "research program" consistent with contemporary social science standards. Research programs, as described by Lakotos (1970), are defined by both negative and positive heuristics. They require hypotheses structured around empirically relevant and testable "mechanisms," and therefore demand propositions that make explicit assertions of links among

variables. Rainey does note that the "concepts and relations in the propositions advanced here need more development in a variety of ways," but he does not elaborate (p. 28). He discusses the possibility of paring down the list of variables for the sake of parsimony, but fails to note what that would accomplish in terms of theory-building efforts. Finally, he speculates that "based on the literature reviewed and cited in this article" there are certain variables (e.g., leadership, professionalism) likely to emerge as "most important" as a result of further analysis (p. 28). But Rainey fails to elaborate why these variables are salient for future research.

As discussed below, the frustrations associated with past theory-building efforts have shifted the standards for social science research toward models that specify causal mechanisms and away from models based on causal relationships. The willingness to settle for explanations based on strong correlation has passed. Although the quality of data and statistical analysis may have improved considerably over the past several decades (see Blalock, 1971), the fundamental fact remains that "Correlation is no proof of causation" (Simon, 1954; also Elster, 1989). This is one of the major reasons axiomatic theories have been widely adopted in the social sciences.[56]

Furthermore, even if we were willing to honor a claim for disciplinary status on the basis of correlation-based studies, there is another fundamental problem to contend with. The literature Rainey relies on for constructing his proposition inventory reflects findings drawn from research using a range of methods, e.g. from carefully designed and executed empirical studies to interpretive observations. Here Rainey's approach is subject to a Catch-22 problem. In his effort to create a foundation for research that meets the standards of mainstream social science, Rainey must rely on hypotheses drawn from conclusions generated by studies that might not meet even the most generous standards for empirical research. What emerges from this approach is a list of hypothesized relationships of such varying quality that they are in need of further analysis for purposes of verification.

Such is, in fact, the true value of Rainey's efforts. In gathering and organizing these propositions in a coherent framework, Rainey enhances the potential for future research activity. Each proposition can be regarded as an empirical and theoretical challenge. Empirically, the challenge is to verify the hypothesized relationship regardless of the quality of research used by its initial source. On the level of theory, the challenge is to uncover the mechanisms behind those hypothesized relationships. Unfortunately, these challenges are unlikely to be joined within the field. Propositional inventories such as Rainey's are more often perceived as *summaries of* rather than *agendas for* research. Thus, despite the obvious value of Rainey's efforts in summarizing and focusing attention on work relevant to Public Administration research, the project falters on the lack of a clear expression of – and adherence to – relevant standards for disciplinary-relevant social science research.

In a sense, the reformers are plagued by a fundamental belief that they need not explicitly challenge the field's gatekeepers. Wishing to avoid the demonization visited on Simon,[57] they see no value in confronting the powers that be with a forceful argument on behalf of positivist research.[58] Suffering from naiveté rather than arrogance, many feel they can rely on the strength of their work alone to convince others that social science research in Public Administration is both feasible and valuable. Thus, they complement their "field of dreams" strategy with a "just do it" attitude.[59] "One wonders," Rainey (1993a) remarks in commentary on public management research, "whether public administration scholars might do better in advancing both the identity of the field and its research and theory if fewer of us ruminated on these topics and more of us simply identified important theoretical and research questions and worked on providing useful answer to them" (p. 9).

Enthralled with Alternatives

The group I term "alternativists" are, like the reformers, concerned about the technical problems plaguing those who attempt to apply scientific methods to the study of human behavior. Where they differ, however, is their assessment of the potential for adjusting mainstream scientific methodology to studies of public administration. In this regard, they often share with the "normativists" and "transformationists" a critical suspicion of what Guy B. Adams calls "technical rationality" – a pervasive characteristic of modernity that must be countered if we are to improve our knowledge of public administration (Adams, 1992). Technical rationality is not perceived as an ideological problem among alternativists, but rather as a major epistemological constraint on our ability to *understand* the phenomena we are investigating.

The alternativist view of social science is thus somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, there is considerable respect expressed for what social science methodology seeks to achieve and the standards used in the effort.[60] On the other hand, alternativists are not optimistic that more rigor, comprehensive paradigms, more relevant measures, etc. will make a significant difference in the advancement of Public Administration knowledge. Put simply, for them *the issues are not methodological but rather epistemological.*[61] What the alternativists have in common is the belief that social science approaches must be complemented, supplemented, or even replaced by *alternative* (i.e., non-positivistic social science) methodologies if we are truly understand human social behavior.[62]

Among Public Administrationists, a major statement on both the epistemological issues and possible solutions was articulated by Jay D. White and Guy B. Adams (1994b) in their introductory essay to *Research in Public Administration: Reflections on Theory and Practice*. After arguing the fundamental flaws of positivism (in the form of a pervasive "technical rationality"), White and Adams also note the drawbacks for ("threats to") knowledge development inherent in the postmodern critique (see discussion of transformationists below). What they prescribe instead is that the field learned to live with epistemological "diversity."

> We are persuaded by the weight of historical and epistemological evidence that no single approach – even if accorded the highly positive label *science* – is adequate for the conduct of research in public administration. If research is to be guided by reason, a diversity of approaches, honoring both practical and theoretical reason, seems necessary. Thus we want to suggest that knowledge and theory development in public administration should proceed in many ways, including hypothesis testing, case studies, analyses of administrative or policy processes, historical interpretations of the field or parts of it, deductible arguments, philosophical critiques, and personal reflections on administrative experiences. (White & Adams, 1994b, p. 19-20)

Alternativist efforts have focused on three general alternatives to the mainstream social science epistemology: historicism, interpretivism, and critical theory. While all three approaches are credited with useful insights, none claims to fit within standards for valid knowledge and theory development demanded by the positivist social science community. Historicism has been subject to the most elaborate consideration on this point. Karl R. Popper's (1964) systematic critique of the logic underlying various forms of historicism has proven decisive in the eyes of many social scientists, and even its strongest advocates admit to its shortcomings within the

sphere of social science research (see Tinder, 1961). Interpretive methodologies have gained considerable respect for the insights they provide, but even its leading practitioner (anthropologist Clifford Geertz) admits that it poses a challenge to the standards of mainstream social research (Geertz, 1974).[63] Critical theory approaches are explicitly designed to highlight the structures of power and tensions that lie beneath the surface of social life (see Bohman, 1991; Hayes, 1994), but their reliance on critical frameworks (e.g., neo-Marxist and Freudian analytics) as well as the implied commitment to action directly (and intentionally) challenges the basic premises of positivist social science (see Comstock, 1994).

Thus, despite the implied openness to and tolerance of[64] various methods and epistemological perspectives, alternativist theorists are unable – an often explicitly unwilling – to generate the kind of research agenda or quality of research conducive to disciplinary status among the social sciences. As a consequence, the impact of alternativist prescriptions has been to push Public Administration increasingly toward a relativistic position on questions of epistemology (see Miller, 1972), and toward identification with the humanities through the application of epistemologies more closely associated with those disciplines. Alternativists thereby challenge us to confront the field's identity issues directly by highlighting the value the humanities-based research as a means providing practitioners with useful knowledge and insights about being public administrators.

Historicist research in Public Administration has been increasing in recent years. As Larry Luton notes, much of this work was driven by an effort to improve the field's self-image and to offer exemplary models from the past that can be emulated (Luton, 1999). But there are Public Administration scholars using historical analysis as a means for enhancing both the field's knowledge base and theory development. The work of Stivers (1995) and Schachter (1995) have raise questions and offered new insights into the progressive roots of the field, while John Rohr (1986) and David H. Rosenbloom (1998) use historical analysis for greater understanding of the constitutional and legal foundations of contemporary administrative issues.[65]

Regarding interpretive approaches (see Farmer, 1995), there is a long history associated primarily with "case study" teaching methods. More recently Jay D. White (1992), Ralph Hummel (1991), and others[66] have pointed out the value of narratives and storytelling in enhancing the understanding of public administration for managers, and Hummel makes the case that managerial storytelling needs the criteria for validity in the social sciences. Pursuing that argument, he and David Carnevale have developed an approach they call "knowledge analytics."

Critical theory has played less of a role in the field until very recently. Among the leading theorists in the field, Ralph P. Hummel (1994), and Robert B. Denhardt (1981) established the value of such an approach in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The most recent application of this approach is found in Adams and Balfour's (1998) *Unmasking Administrative Evil* (UAE). Because of the attention this work has received in the field, I will focus on it as an example of the problems the alternativist position poses for Public Administration as a social science.

The authors of UAE are quite clear about the epistemological foundations and methodological strategies driving their work. For too long, they argue, Public Administration has been avoiding its past, or has operated under the influence of a biased perspective (i.e., "technical rationality") that has distorted the field's historical consciousness.[67] An "objective" social science would be blind to the historical truth, and so would any historical analysis that has fallen under the spell of modernity. *Critical historical studies* are needed to offset the intellectual damage done by our obsession with the "technical rationality" inherent in modernist epistemology. "If critical,

historically based studies were in the forefront of public administration research, we could more readily consider questions crucial to the present and future configuration of public administration, and to administrative evil" (Adams & Balfour, 1998, p. 51).

Like all critical theory analysts, Adams and Balfour begin by articulating a framework that can be applied to describing the genesis and maintenance of the social situation being studied (see Comstock 1994/1982). For this they rely on "object-relations psychology," a major form of post-Freudian psychoanalysis, and specifically the writings of Melanie Klein (1882-1960), who stressed how an individual's emotional life is rooted in basic orientations toward objects formed during earliest childhood (see Smith, 1997; Segal, 1988).

Object-relations psychology focuses on the tensions we first encounter as infants as we develop both positive and negative feelings toward others, and Klein took note of a particular mechanism – projective identification – people use to deal with those tensions as they grow older. By "splitting off" our good from our bad feelings and projecting the bad onto external "objects," we are able to obtain some relief but at a cost of how we relate to those others. Internalized resolutions (as an alternative to projective identification) are also problematic (i.e., leading to depression and other psychological maladies), although they would stop the individual from hateful and aggressive behavior toward the "other." For critical theorists who adopt this controversial model, projective identification joins with the forces of modern organizational life to produce the social evil we see in today's world. Adams and Balfour elaborate such a theory of evil – in their case, administrative evil – rooted in the structure and dynamics provided through Kleinian analytics (Adams & Balfour, 1998). Modern organizations and institutions, they argue, are "holding environments for evil."

> People who need direction – a target, really – for their unintegrated rage and aggression, who must split off the "bad" and projecting it outward, hear all too well the siren call of groups of organizations that will contain this psychic energy for them. The price tag is almost always obedience and loyalty, and sometimes moral inversion; occasionally, the price tag is very dear indeed – those truly evil eruptions that become the great moral debacles of human history. (Adams & Balfour, 1998, p. 27)

A major obstacle to the acceptance of critical theory and other alternativist epistemologies by mainstream social science is obvious in the Adams and Balfour adoption of this analytic framework: there is no evidence or rationale provided to support the acceptance of this particular framework for analysis. The framework seems merely to be presumed appropriate. The willingness to make such a major presumption seems reinforced by an interesting assertion made by the authors after briefly introducing the Kleinian theory. "However true to life one wishes to consider object-relations psychology to the inner workings of the infant mind (and there is controversy over this issue), for our purposes, *what is important is the way these insights help us understand the construction of social and organizational evil in adults*" (Adams & Balfour, 1998, p. 10). What Adams and Balfour are saying, in essence, is that we ought to accept their judgment that this is appropriate and relevant perspective from which to view modern public administrative life. "Trust us," they seem to argue, and let's see where this critical theory leads. There is no presentation of evidence, only a demonstration through application that this framework seems to make sense of the world and therefore is as valid as any other framework, period.

For mainstream social science, such an approach seems nothing less than arbitrary and unwarranted. It is a criticism that can be applied to historical and interpretivist analyses as well (e.g., see Jones, 1998; Popper, 1964). The only similar approach taken within the mainstream – Milton Friedman's controversial assertion that economic theories should be judged on how well they make predictions rather than on the validity of their assumptions (Friedman, 1953) – cannot stand as a relevant analogy since its acceptance ultimately rests on how well it meets an empirically verifiable standard. Critical theories do not seek such assessments. They only assert that the field should follow their arbitrary lead and see where it takes them.

Still another issue about these approaches well illustrated by *UAE* is the lax attitude toward conceptual clarity, especially in regard to central concepts. In *UAE*, the importance of "evil" as an idea cannot be overstated. And yet there is an almost intentional effort to keep the meaning of the term ambiguous. What exactly do they mean by "evil"? The authors spend surprisingly too little time on this question, relying vaguely on approach that regards it as behavior that is "destructive to others." This definition, they contend, "suggests a continuum, with horrible, mass eruptions of evil, such as the Holocaust and other, lesser instances of mass murder, at one extreme, and 'small' white lies, which is somewhat hurtful, at the other." Their focus for the analysis is on the bloodier extreme (Adams & Balfour, 1998, p. 2-3). A good deal more energy is put into discussing where administrative evil comes from (e.g., technical rationality), how it escapes detection, and the role of organizations and institutions as "holding environments for evil".

By an interesting coincidence, the question of "evil" and its role in the historical analysis of the Holocaust was the subject of two intensive examinations published just after UAE, and the complications of using the term are evidenced throughout both (see Copjec, 1996; Rosenbaum, 1998). What we discover is that conceptually, evil is so ambiguous that the concept of evil *may actually detract* from our ability to understand and assess human behavior. Perhaps more important, there are dangers in using such a concept carelessly. For example, the use of term to broadly characterize a group or a set of behaviors by a group (e.g., "administrative evil") may itself generate reactions that can lead to scapegoating and destructive behavior. Such careless labeling for the sake of enhancing their critical analysis is all the more surprising since the authors demonstrate an awareness of the power of stereotyping (e.g., the comparison between the rhetoric of welfare reform in the U.S. and the Nazi characterization of Jews [see Adams & Balfour, 1998]).

Having set the conceptual stage, Adams and Balfour apply the logic of their critical perspective to examples of administrative evil that thread their way from the Holocaust to the Vietnam War, the *Challenger* accident, and beyond (Adams & Balfour, 1998). Here as well, the rather loose standards of research acceptable to many alternativists – and anathema to mainstream social science – become evident and significant. Despite the stress placed by Adams and Balfour on the need for greater attention to historical evidence to enhance our understanding of public administration, the history in UAE is *used* rather than *analyzed*. That is, history is used as source of case study material for applying a pre-supposed critical perspective rather than as the source of evidence from which patterns and insights about the field might be derived or the critical theory framework might be tested and evaluated.[68] While historical studies of the Holocaust, the *Challenger* accident, and other cases are relied upon (e.g., Robert McNamara's role in transforming the Defense Department), the material is mined selectively for the purpose of demonstrating and promoting a particular view of the authors.

Such analytic strategies are necessary and acceptable when applying a critical theory approach, for the assumption of critical theorists is that the world of appearances is misleading and the

task of the scholar is to "reveal the lie."[69] Therefore, this particular complaint might be dismissed as merely a statement of the obvious. After all, as the title of the book states, the authors intended all along to "unmask" administrative evil. Nevertheless, throughout the book the authors imply that the theory of administrative evil is not merely a critical interpretation of history, but is rather a historical fact that emerges from the careful study of administrative behavior. And what is the purpose of uncovering this historical fact? Is it for the purposes of knowledge development and/or theory building?

The answer is found in a characteristic of critical theory analysis that differentiates it from other alternativist approaches: its acceptance of a liberationist function for research. Critical theory analysts are committed to more than insight and understanding; they seek to raise the consciousness of those they determine (through analysis) to be dominated and repressed with the idea that such analyses will prove therapeutic if not liberating. Denhardt (1981) articulates this as the "activist stance":

> In both the Marxist and Freudian traditions, we see the suffering of the individual and the society has the key to reconstructive (revolutionary?) action. It is through our remembrance of the pleasures which reality denies that we see our true condition, and it is through the recognition of the alienation which marks our existence that we are motivated to move in opposition to the powers which holds us. For this reason, our suffering must not be "rationalized" away, for it remains at the heart of our "spiritual" quest; it is to transcend our suffering that we act. (Denhardt, 1981, p. 115-116)

For Adams and Balfour, the implications of their analysis should include a "new basis for ethics" in public administration, one that would lead administrators to actively resist administrative evil in its many and pervasive forms.

> Administrative evil lurks where governments seek to solve social problems using the technical-rational expertise of professionals, in the absence of a vital and active political community. A new basis for ethics is needed that does not demand individual conformity to the procedures of technical-rational solutions to social problems, but that instead he engages administrators as citizens in an ongoing effort to promote and sustained an inclusive democratic polity. (Adams & Balfour, 1998, p. 160)

If the purpose of accepting alternative epistemologies is to enhance our capacity to understand the phenomena we study, analyses conducted using those alternatives should be subject to assessment for their contribution to "knowledge development" (a position, it must be re-emphasized, that is closely associated with the writings of Professor Adams). Like other analyses using the critical theory approach, *UAE* offers us provocative insights and generates much needed reflection and discussion among both scholars and practitioners. But does it contribute to knowledge development in the sense of enhancing our understanding of public administration? Critics of the critical theory epistemology argue that the approach obscures and diverts the search for knowledge and understanding – that rather than "revealing the lie," critical theory imposes its own distortions.

It is, of course, unfair to challenge the entire range of alternativist research by focusing on the problems inherent in one study. However, from the perspective of mainstream social science, most of the problems characterizing *UAE* can be found in historicist and interpretivist studies as well. The field of Public Administration seems unlikely to achieve disciplinary status as a social science so long as its scholars defer to alternativist epistemologies.

Spirited Public Administration

Among the four groups in this analysis, those I term "normativists" come closest to the views of Dwight Waldo during his debates with Simon. The issues are not framed in anti-scientific terms per se, but are focused on the drawbacks and dangers of value-neutrality in the study of governmental administration. The holy grail of this group is a normative theory of public administration, one based on social scientific knowledge but embracing a view of what constitutes "good" or appropriate ends for public service. For normativist theorists, the issues are ultimately ethical.

The efforts of Public Administration's major theorists to establish an ethical foundation for the field has, in fact, defined the field's "mainstream" scholarship for decades – again, an indicator of Waldo's triumph. While these writings cover a wide range of alternative norms, a common theme has been the need to articulate those primary or core values that ought to guide not just public administration practitioners, but the community of Public Administration scholars as well. Thus, for normativists the central problem facing those who aspire to the status of positivist social scientist is the price paid in meeting the standards of value-neutrality and objectivity.

It should be reemphasized that Waldo's (1984) arguments against positivist approaches were not that they were value-neutral, but that the claim to neutrality merely obscured the high value placed on efficiency and rationality in administrative studies. He therefore took Simon and his colleagues to task for the same sins that informed his critique of the "principles" and other "orthodox" approaches to public administration. Implied in the classic politics–administration dichotomy was the assumption that "true democracy and true efficiency are synonymous, or at least reconcilable (p. 199)," and that by enhancing the business end of that identity (efficiency) one is also enhancing the political (democracy). Opposition to this assumption energized Waldo's work and led him to strive for development of a "democratic theory of public administration." The role of such a theory is laid out clearly in the conclusion of *The Administrative State* where he discusses the challenges facing America's democratic society as it becomes increasingly reliant on government by experts.

> Closely related is the problem of providing adequate preparation and a "philosophy" for our administrators. Are training in the mechanics of administration and codes of professional ethics enough? Or should our new Guardian Class be given an education commensurate with their announced responsibilities and perhaps be imbued with a political philosophy? The present gap between the content of our administrative curricula and what we announce to be the responsibilities of our Administrators in appalling. Presuming that we are in the midst of some sort of "managerial revolution," can we say that either the problem of our philosophy *about* managers or philosophy *for* managers has been adequately treated? (Waldo, 1984, p. 202)

With these words, Waldo sets the standard that Public Administration's normativst theorists have been seeking to achieve for more than half a century. Any legitimate theory for public administration must go beyond the empiricism and data-driven models of positivist social science; it must give priority to the purposes and values of the democratic society it serves.

There are various exemplars of the normativist approach to Public Administrationist theory, and the approach includes entire movements (e.g., "The New Public Administration" of the early 1970s, the "Blacksburg Manifesto Movement" dating from the early 1980s) as well as individuals. Two recent and quite notable publications provide explicit examples: H. George Frederickson's *The Spirit of Public Administration* and Louis C. Gawthrop's *Public Service and Democracy*. Both are interesting books for the quality and consistency of their respective arguments, but for present purposes we will focus on their perspectives on the purpose and role of Public Administration, particularly in regard to the role of theory and research.

Although a composite of old and new essays, Frederickson's (1997) book carries a powerful theme and purpose stated in the first major chapter: the need for a "theory of the public in public administration." Frederickson posits service to the public as the central value of public administration in general, and after assessing five different academic "perspectives" on the public (pluralist, public choice, legislative/representation, service providing, and citizenship), he calls for the adoption of a "general theory" of the public in public administration

> designed not just for the purpose of theory development but also to guide those in public service. Because it is to be used by those who must make government work, such a theory must be practical. It should also be empirically based – and, of course, it must further the interests of the public both specifically and generally. (Frederickson, 1997, p. 44)

Each of the other models "contribute in some general way" to such a theory, but none is complete and "when taken together they still suffer from significant omissions" (Frederickson, 1997, p. 44). What is required is a theory that gives priority to the values of public service.

An equally strong normativist stance is assumed by Gawthrop (1998). While his latest work is focused primarily on the practice of (rather than the study of) public administration, he has little respect for those who directly or indirectly promote rationalistic, technocratic, detached, objective criteria for describing, explaining or assessing the work of public administrators. He is especially critical of any social theory that is morally vacuous – which is to say, most contemporary social theory. Citing Reinhold Niebuhr's contention that "every moral theory insists on the goodness of benevolence, Justice, kindness, and unselfishness," Gawthrop (1998, p. 155) notes that contemporary social theories do not meet that standard.

> …[A]s we enter the twenty-first century, we seem to be mesmerized by the notion of theory to the point where theory is the only reality countenanced by our society. In whichever policy arena the public manager happens to be situated, whether it is law enforcement, healthcare, education, housing, and so on, there is no dearth of micro, macro, or meta theories to distract attention from the empirical realities that reveal the slow but steady degeneration of our ethical-moral values. Theory, not religion, has become the opiate of our society. Indeed, the ethical-moral "theories" advanced over the centuries by philosophers and

> theologians have been relegated to the dustbins in the cellar of the edifice constructed by the twentieth century's new "sciences" of social life…Despite the intellectual rigor, precision, and rational certitude presumably associated with the process of theory building, the fact remains that the deeply rooted moral dimensions of democratic society are effectively disregarded and functionally distorted by most of our elegant and sophisticated sociopolitical theories. (Gawthrop, 1998, p. 155-157)

For both Frederickson and Gawthrop, the essence of public administration and public service cannot be captured by a Public Administration that does not itself capture the field's "spirit." For Gawthrop, the focus of his volume is "on the ethical-moral values and virtues that pervade the spirit of democracy and constitute the pathways to the common good. The core argument advanced is that these values and virtues must function as guideposts and benchmarks for those who serve in the name of democracy" (Gawthrop, 1998, p. xii). For Frederickson, the "spirit" in his book's title "is a deep and enduring commitment to the calling of public service and to the effective conduct of public organizations and their work."

> The spirit of public administration combines rational and empirical forms of knowledge or ways of knowing with an understanding of the field built on experience, wisdom, and judgment. Rational assumptions and the traditions of social science research are essential to the creation of reliable and replicable theories of public administration. But theories that are derived solely from rational assumptions and social science methods may be unable to account for important forces in the field, such as compassion, courage, and benevolence. The aim of *The Spirit of Public Administration* is first to guide the reader to a knowledge of the field, and second and more important, to attempt to further an understanding of the field. (Frederickson, 1997, p. 2-3)

The focus of these two prominent normativists on "spirit" is not without precedent in the history of the social sciences. From the Renaissance until the 19th-century, spirits and "humours" were taken seriously as causal mediates through which distinct parts of nature and human nature (e.g., the intellect and body) were connected. For centuries, it served as the social science equivalent of the physicists' concept of "ether."[70] In the work of Hegel and other idealists, spirit took on the characteristics of a higher morality that becomes real through its apprehension and activation by individuals (Smith, 1997). In stressing the spiritual nature of public service values, both Frederickson and Gawthrop indicate that what they seek is more than a mere commitment to duty, obligation, objectivity, and so on. For them there must be strong moral substantive content in any theory of public administration worthy of the name. There is certainly no room for a value free or value neutral approach to the study of Public Administration.

In setting these normative standards for Public Administration as a social science, the normativist position makes it difficult – if not very uncomfortable – for any social scientist committed to mainstream standards who attempts to conduct research or undertake empirical theory development within the confines of the field. American social scientists are neither ignorant of, nor indifferent to, the role of values in research. It is a problem traced to Kant's observations about the limits of pure reason, and specifically the inevitable role of values in efforts to comprehend history. By the late 19th century, the role of values had become a major debate among European social scientists, and emerging from that milieu was the Weberian ideal

of value neutrality that has dominated as the methodological mainstream standard.[71] It is a position that acknowledges the relevance of values and cultural influences on the research endeavor, but seeks commitment to methods that minimize their impact.

In the tradition of Waldo's critique of Simon, the normativists stress standards calling for value commitments that would guide research – a position clearly at odds with the mainstream social science position on the rules of inquiry. Intentionally or not, the strong normativist position set two related litmus tests for acceptable Public Administration research: first, does your research acknowledge the priority of values in public administrative behavior, and, second, are those values in sync with the norms of the major gatekeepers in the field? With the normativist position perceived as dominant by those outside the Public Administration community, those identifying with the social science mainstream avoid presentations and publications in Public Administration venues.[72]

Some of the problem can be attributed to exaggerated misperceptions among "outsiders" regarding the standards of research for Public Administration. But the strong and pervasive position articulated by leading normativist theorists is also a likely factor. Consider, for example, Frederickson's critical treatment of various attempts by a number of scholars to conceptualize what is emerging today as "public administration as governance." "Any serious student of the field," he argues, "will recognize that the use of the word and concept governance to describe public administration is laden with problems – both of practice or application and of conceptual rigor "(Frederickson, 1997, p. 87). Intentionally or not, Frederickson's use of ad hominem argument reflects an inherent bias in the strong normativist stance to be dismissive of those who do not agree, i.e., a "serious" student is someone who agrees with Frederickson's position, while those who disagree (by seeing some value in the concept) can be dismissed as "not serious." Frederickson also seems unwilling to explicitly distinguish between those who apply the concept prescriptively from those who seek to apply it descriptively. In what amounts to criticism that "shoots the messenger," he seems unwilling to tolerate the conceptualization even when articulated for analytic purposes.

At the same time, the normativist does see the benefits empirical research that is accomplished in the service of moral theory. Frederickson's book is filled with mainstream social science research citations supportive of his positions. In addition, we find Frederickson outlining a research agenda that would enhance our understanding of the role of ethics in public administration, including descriptive and comparative studies of ethical "settings, professions, and cultures"; assessments of efforts to enforce, enhance, and teach ethical behavior; and studies of how privatization and administrative discretion impact public administration ethics (Frederickson, 1997). (Ironically, Frederickson would expect that such research would live up to the standards of mainstream social science. More important, however, it is the fact that it is research in the service of a normative agenda that legitimizes it.)

Which brings me to a major reason for arguing that the normativist has failed to enhance the disciplinary status of Public Administration within the social sciences. When all is said and done, the normativist perspective promotes rhetoric rather than research. Mainstream social scientists will argue that the normativists impose a non-scientific agenda on Public Administration research. The role of research is not merely – or primarily – to serve knowledge development or theory building, but rather to serve the rhetorical needs of a particular moral theory posited by the normativist.

This is not to argue that rhetoric is an insignificant or unworthy endeavor. I am not referring here to the thin, sophistic form of rhetoric associated with arguments intended to hide or distort

the truth. Instead, I am referring to the Aristotelian form of rhetoric developed to make persuasive arguments on behalf of a point of view. It is a form of inquiry with a long, honorable, and productive history that, some would argue, remains central to our search for knowledge despite the pretenses of scientific methodology.[73]

Nor am I contending that research about public administration conducted in the social science mainstream lacks normative content or purpose. Wood and Waterman's (1994) *Bureaucratic Dynamics*, for instance, is a work reflecting the quality of research expected under mainstream social science standards, and yet contains significant normative themes relating to questions of responsiveness and accountability. In fact, a good deal of research about public administration done by those who would not identify themselves as members of the Public Administration community is initiated in response to normative issues.[74] And most conclude their works with prescriptions reflecting values and norms not unlike those advocated in the normativist literature of Public Administration.

My contention is that the influence of the strong normativist position in Public Administration reduces the incentives for those engaged in mainstream social science research too identify with our field. A work such as *Bureaucratic Dynamics* should be more closely identify with Public Administration, and perhaps would have benefited considerably from interactions with the field. Nevertheless, the work was clearly written to the standards of the mainstream social science community with which the authors identify, i.e. political science. An important indicator supporting this judgment are the relatively few citations to Public Administration research found in the eleven-page reference section (Wood & Waterman, 1994). Of those citations recognizable as associated with the field of Public Administration, almost all would be regarded as classics from the era when political science and Public Administration were considered inseparably one. And despite its direct relevance to an issue high on the normativist agenda in our field – as indicated by the work's subtitle: "The Role of Bureaucracy in a Democracy" – all the scholarly papers that eventually comprised the core research in the book were published in mainstream political science journals rather than those associated with Public Administration.

Under the influence of normativist standards, analysts who in every other respect are committed to promoting the values of democratic administration and public service, are subject to criticism for conducting studies or developing theories that do not have a stronger normative content guiding their work. It is not a matter of whether detached and value free research is possible; it is more a question of whether the research explicitly fosters the appropriate values. Despite courteous bows in the direction of empirical researchers, neither Frederickson nor Gawthrop nor many other normativists would give due credit to research or theory building that is not politically correct or ideologically in-sync or socially sensitized.[75]

Of course, this assessment is vulnerable to charges of over statement about the standards of social science and over generalization about the power and influence of normativist writers in the field. The strong normativist position represented by Frederickson and Gawthrop has its equivalent within mainstream social science (see Wolfe, 1989), although its influence is muted within positivist arenas. And within Public Administration there are subtler normativist positions less likely to give the impression that research in the field must be subsumed under some dominant value structure. Nevertheless, the strong normativist position has both history and status on its side within the field. If Public Administration is to attain acceptance as a social science, the power and influence of the normativist gatekeepers needs to be addressed.

Transforming the Field

Finally, we consider those Public Administration theorists who believe that the positivist agenda in its varying forms is pernicious in its capacity to misdirect research and blind the field to the true nature of public administration's role in society. For this group of writers, nothing less than an ontological transformation will suffice to deal with the resulting problems. The very ideas of developing methodological, epistemological, or ethical solutions is dismissed in favor of opening up the "worldview" of Public Administrationists through development of new languages and a new consciousness.

Ironically, the transformationist goal is quite similar to that articulated by Simon in his efforts to re-orient Public Administration in the 1940s. He, too, sought a revolution in the way scholars approach administrative questions, not only through the adoption of the logical positivist epistemology, but also by re-focusing the conceptual and logical foundations of the field toward decision-making. The contemporary transformationists cast a wider net as they seek to replace the modernist ontology that has dominated the field (at the least in United States) since the Progressive Era. In so doing, they target not only Simon, but Waldo and Taylor and Gulick and the Blacksburg Movement and Gawthrop – and just about anyone else who consciously or unconsciously relies on the world-as-defined-by-modernity perspective.

An early explication of this approach was offered in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Orion F. White, Jr. and Cynthia J. McSwain (1983).[76] Building on Jungian analytic psychology, they argued for a broader ontological foundation in the study of public organizations – one that would extend the reach of scholarly analysis from the positivist focus on structures and social relations to the depths of the human psyche and the collective and individual unconscious (White & McSwain, 1982).[77] As noted below, White and McSwain (writing as O. C. McSwite [1997]) remain active contributors to the transformationist perspective; today, however, they are joined by the growing number of Public Administrationists who identify themselves as postmodernists.

In articulating the postmodernist approach in the field, Charles J. Fox and Hugh T. Miller argue that "prevailing ontologies" are central to Public Administration's inability to deal with key issues. The very categories we use to think about public administration results in bias and distortion.

> [T]oo much is assumed by prevailing ontologies – too much is assumed about the rationality of human nature, about the concreteness of organizations and institutions, about the consensus around organizational goals, and about the solidity of the key concepts and variables that shape public administration thought. We try to back away from as many of these assumptions as possible, and even goes so far as to allow that "reality" itself is neither concrete nor objective, but constructed by humans and hence malleable. In the process of backing away from these underlined assumptions, we come to understand that many of the categories that we uncritically employ in daily discourse far reifications, that is, socially constructed categories that are mistaken for things that exist "out there" in the world of "objective reality." (Fox & Miller, 1995, p. 8)

David John Farmer explains the perspective in terms of the various languages used by public administration theorists and practitioners, and like others who adopt this approach he notes that a "sea change is necessary" if Public Administration (and the other social sciences) are to improve their understanding of governing. "Without such a root-and-branch shift in the foundations of an understanding of public administration, treatment of the sort of questions we want answered will remain unsatisfactory" (Farmer, 1995, p. 4).

As an intellectual movement, postmodernism is difficult to capture analytically, and many of its leading advocates would argue against efforts to do so.[78] Emerging from a variety of sources, it has taken many forms and is likely to take many more before its influence is spent. But most share a common belief that society is in the throes of a change from a modernity rooted in the Enlightenment toward a future that (thus far) lacks firm intellectual grounding. For some observers (e.g., Peter Drucker [1969][79]), the postmodern era held the promise of positive change as society and the economy moved away from bureaucratic and industrial cultures and toward a more open knowledge-based society. The first reactions to the prospect of emerging postmodern conditions reflected an optimistic view of modern management's ability to deal with the challenges it might generate – even in the public sector (Caldwell, 1975). Most contemporary postmodernists, however, expressed anxiety about these developments. The alienating and dehumanizing conditions fostered under modernity's obsessive application of rationalistic techniques (see Ellul, 1964) are regarded as pervasive influences, and many forecast that life under postmodern conditions will lack meaning or direction.

Among those who perceive the postmodern world with anxiety, there are at least two major and somewhat opposing outlooks. In presenting an overview of the postmodern influence in the social sciences, Pauline Marie Rosenau distinguishes between "skeptics" and "affirmatives." At their most extreme, skeptics regard the emerging postmodern condition has inevitable and unstoppable (at least short of revolutionary action). In contrast, the affirmatives hold out hope that through radical alteration of the way we think about our lives, we can create a more humane and livable world (Rosenau, 1992).[80]

In their respective analyses of how we think about public administration, the works of Fox and Miller and O. C. McSwite reflect a critical view of current conditions, but ultimately they assume the tone of the affirmatives in proposing transformational strategies. Fox and Miller focus on the need to rethink how we think about bureaucracy and American democracy. The problem, as they see it, lies in existing ontological constraints making it impossible for us to even think about public administration as an active force in a truly open and democratic system. After reviewing the shortcomings of various modernist perspectives in dealing with the challenge of the postmodern condition, Fox and Miller write of the need to "theorize ourselves out of the cul-de-sac of postmodernism" through development of a "constructivist discourse theory" intended

> to valorize proactive participation of public administrators intermingled with others of public-minded communities in policy networks, interagency consortia, adhocracies, and task forces. These we take to be the appropriate loci for a potential public sphere. Such extra-legislative policy forums… are, however, rendered through the lenses of orthodoxy as thefts of sovereignty – more, the ascendance of technocracy. Although we have laid some licks on orthodoxy and its alternatives, we've required a newly engineer epistemology/ontology to affirm a discourse alternative. (Fox & Miller, 1995, p. 78)

For McSwite, the goal is to reinvigorate a long suppressed constitutional ethos rooted in colonial traditions, manifested in the Articles of Confederation, fundamental to both populist and progressive ideas, and implied "in the present moment has postmodernism." Their path involves the creation of an alternative to what they label the "Man of Reason method," and it takes the form of a "collaborative pragmatism" that would rely on relationships rather than reason to determined collective action or resolve differences.

> We can make a world by developing the kind of relationships with each other that allow us to figure out what we want to do next. Our shared purpose does not have to be a grand "once and for all-time" purpose, which is to say, and ideological purpose. Indeed, purposes like this quickly lose their vitality and die because they become appropriated by consciousness and cannot continue to create things. This is what happens when people start quarreling over whether what they are doing is really progress. The purposes I mean are simply iterative, tentatively experimental choices about what we want to try doing next. If we, in short, can agree on something that we want to do next and set about doing it, then we do not need to worry. Our subsequent actions will create the world. At bottom, it is authentic human relationship that creates the world. *If we have relationship, we do not need reason*. (McSwite, 1997, p. 261)

Transformationists like Fox and Miller and McSwite combine critical theory epistemology with utopian ontologies[81] to create an agenda for Public Administration theory that has no room for the positivist world of mainstream social science. In fact, the transformationist is explicitly anti-positivist, to the point of demonizing those who would objectify the world and challenge the legitimacy of human subjectivity and the unconscious. Unlike the alternativists who seek epistemological diversity alongside positivism and normativists who desire greater value commitment within the positivist social sciences, the transformationist position dismisses and denigrates mainstream social science activity as inherently flawed and a key factor in the dehumanization and alienation of modern life.

For example, Fox and Miller critique the use of positivist social science methodologies (e.g., surveys, panels) in developing solutions to the postmodern condition (Fox & Miller, 1995). McSwite also regards such efforts as insufficient, and is particularly suspicious of efforts to merely reform how we think about public administration. Typical is McSwite's assessment of "neo-institutionalism" which is "especially pernicious, in my view, because it appears to be something new when in fact it is reactionary, a defensive holding action against the effects of the wearing away of the epistemological foundations of the ideology of reason" (McSwite, 1997, p. 271).

The knowledge-gathering and theory-building functions of social science research are not high on the agenda of the transformationists. Knowledge and theory are instead treated as tools, intended to serve the needs of their respective utopian programs. This is especially evident in the way McSwite approaches historical analysis. The use of historical knowledge for rhetorical purposes, i.e. to persuade, is a fundamental and explicit part of McSwite's methodology. Just as political and intellectual histories have been used to suppress equally legitimate alternatives (e.g., those of Antifederalists, Follett, Dewey) to the textbook versions perpetrated to enhance the Man of Reason world view, so it can be used to subvert that perspective. But in taking this approach, McSwite is subject to a variation of what Habermas terms "performative

contradiction"[82] – that is, McSwite's rhetorical use of historical analysis simultaneously implies legitimacy for that which it condemns and condemns that for which it claims legitimacy through its application. In a sense, there is irony and justice in McSwite's approach, but there are also serious questions to be raised about the integrity of their presentation.

These and related problems have plagued postmodernists for decades, and often result in a greater appreciation of the value of positivist standards in the social sciences (see Rosenau, 1992). While the transformationist perspective constantly reminds us of our desire for a humane public administration and complementary development of a humanist Public Administration community, its inherent shortcomings highlight the price we would pay – in terms of knowledge accumulation, theory development, and (yes) disciplinary status – for adopting a utopian stance.[83]

A Seat at the Social Science Table

One of the benefits of historicist thinking is the dirty little pleasure of engaging in "what if" exercises. What if the South had won the Civil War? What if Hitler had not invaded the Soviet Union? What if Truman had decided against using nuclear weapons? Or, for our purposes, what if Simon, and not Waldo, had prevailed in the postwar debate in Public Administration? What would the field have accomplished as a social science discipline rather than as a handmaiden to professionalism?

I will resist pursuing this speculative game in detail, but it seems clear that the field would have retained its autonomy relative to political science, although current ties would have been stronger. The Woods and Watermans of the world would regard themselves as members of the Public Administration community while suffering no intellectual or social discomfort in attending Political Science Association meetings. Mainstream political science would have developed a more deferential (rather than a dismissive) attitude toward Public Administrationists during the 1960s. Waldo's professional analogy to medicine would have been replaced by one comparing the field with those who study international relations, and like their international relations colleagues, public administration would have a distinct organization (most likely separate from the American Society for Public Administration, and more like today's Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management) as well as a significant section with the American Political Science Association (as it currently has).

But most important, as a social science, Public Administration's gatekeepers would have been "at the table" (figuratively, of course) in the half century of discussions about the standards for social science research and what constitutes social science knowledge. From that perspective, they would realize that the logical positivist bogeyman was just that – a figment of their collective imaginations that could have sapped their energies in a decades-long tilt with windmills while others engaged in the business of inquiry.

But the South did not win the Civil War, and in fact Public Administration has been tilting at the logical positivist windmill for decades. It is not my intent to add a history of science or social science to this already lengthy essay, but few would argue with the observation that logical positivism's day in the sun was a short one – if there was such a day at all. Among philosophers of science, logical positivism remained a powerful theme, even as it was reconstructed and adapted for use in the social sciences (see Kaplan, 1964). And there is no denying the impact of behavioralism and other positivist approaches on the research agenda and publications in the social sciences through the postwar era.

Nevertheless, no one familiar with the individual social science disciplines can ignore the continuous emergence of controversies regarding standards and methods of research. Division and debate were (and are) as commonplace as the "urge" for consensus that inheres in each discipline. Anthropology journals have been filled with discussions about alternative methods and the ethics of research for decades (e.g., Ammerman, 1992; Despres, 1968; Earle & Preucel, 1987); leading psychologists have been raising significant questions about the appropriateness, misuse, and bias of various mainstream approaches in the field (see Gergen, 1994a, 1994b; Kagan, 1998); and sociologists and political scientists are continually rethinking their "paradigms" and research methods in light of critiques generated by both traditionalists and postmodernists (see Campbell, 1996; Giddens, 1979; Rosenau, 1992). Economics has not only not escaped these debates, but has gone out of its way to honor those who "stir" the methodological or epistemological pot – as in the cases of Nobel laureates Herbert Simon and Milton Friedman (see, for example, McCloskey, 1994).

John R. Hall (1999) has provided a relevant view of the social sciences that is perhaps closer to the historical reality. He approaches the social sciences as "cultures of inquiry" constantly engaged in at least four ongoing "formative discourses" about the role of values, narratives, theories and interpretations in the social sciences. These discourses are necessary because social science inquiry is "an arena contested by alternative *practices of inquiry* – [i.e.,] relatively conventionalized methodological approaches to the production of sociohistorical knowledge" (Hall, 1999, p. 25).

> Whether the endeavor is ethnomusicology or macroeconomics, any practice of inquiry presupposes some stance about how to theorize, and, similarly, about the ways that values, narrative, and explanation or interpretation come into play. Formative discourses are not types of inquiry; they are constituent elements of it. Thus, the ability to carry out research depends on resolving various problematics within different forms of discourse (such as social theory), but the solution to a problematic within a given form of discourse is not isolated. Instead, any resolution to issues within one form of discourse becomes articulated resolutions to problematics from *other* forms of discourse (e.g., theory with narrative). Compositions that align resolutions to problematics form multiple forms of discourse amount to practices of inquiry. (Hall, 1999, p. 27)

Within the context of these discourses, logical positivism has at most served as an idealization that generated reaction rather than submission to its tenets. Through these various and ongoing discourses, social science has always been something quite different than the "model" which caused so much angst among Public Administrationists for over five decades!

With their attention focused on the potential threat of value-less positivism, the leading theorists in the Public Administration hardly had time to notice that the social science disciplines had in fact moved toward a more open and diverse position on research standards. The black-and-white distinctions between objectivism and relativism, between modern and postmodern, between realism and constructivism have blurred rather than sharpened over time in the social sciences – a fact to which Public Administration theorists seemed oblivious. Instead, the field's theorists began a subtle shift toward a more generalized conceptualization of logical positivism in the form of "technical rationality." Now the peril is not merely the conscious effort to establish a value-neutral field; rather the danger is a spreading technocratic

logic and conformity that the human psyche finds irresistible. And before you know it, it has captured our souls as well as our bodies.[84]

The question for the field is not whether it can turn itself into a social science by doing research that meets some perceived methodological standards (i.e., the reformist solution). Nor is a solution found in the "diversity of approaches" prescription of the alternativists. Brewing up some epistemological mix to study a social phenomenon poses a significant challenge that demands more than implied by a call for multiple perspectives. Nor will the subjectivism of either normativists or transformationists hold an answer to the future of the field. Focused as they are on the ethics and ontological foundations of research respectively, both seek to judge and direct knowledge development rather than promote knowledge accumulation or understanding. And intentionally or not, both approaches raise the kinds of fundamental intellectual and social challenges addressed by Popper in his critique of "holistic" or utopian thinking (Popper, 1962a, 1962b, 1964).

What is required is a willingness on the part of the field's gatekeepers to engage in the formative discourses of the social sciences and to promote that engagement among other members of the field through changes in standards of research and publication. This might require another *Administrative Behavior* to pose a challenge to those fixated on the positivist devil, but this time the iconoclastic author would be arguing on behalf of a social science more sensitive and responsive to reflexive and emotional human beings as well as the complexities and chaos of social life.

Such a social science has emerged over the past several decades in response to constant criticisms and challenges. Among the list of "targets" in these ongoing discourses has been methodological individualism (Gergen, 1994b), the search for "lawlike generalizations" (Elster, 1989, 1999), the behavioral assumptions associated with homo economicus (Douglas & Ney, 1998), etc. At the same time have come calls for greater focus on institutions, relationships, reflexivity, and causal mechanisms. Topics previously avoided, especially the role of emotions in social life (e.g., see Elster, 1999; Gergen, 1994b), are now regarded as high on the social science agenda in several fields. And certain sources, data and methods previously dismissed as unsuitable (i.e., not "scientific" enough) are gaining wider acceptance.[85]

What Public Administration will gain from engaging in the formative discourses of the social sciences is more than merely a collective identity or higher status among their peers. The true benefits will come in the form of contributing more to our knowledge and understanding of those subjects that fall under the field's purview. Despite the criticisms made in this essay, Public Administrationists have a considerable amount of individual and collective intellectual energy to offer in dealing with the many questions that remain on the vast and diverse social science research agenda. Given the central role played by intellectual leaders and major gatekeepers in perpetuating the failures of Public Administration theories, however, harnessing that energy will require an upheaval in the field that is likely to be political as well as paradigmatic. As the history of the Minnowbrook and Blacksburg movements indicate, this is no easy challenge. Certainly, it will require more than polemics such as this. It demands the emergence of an individual or group with Simon-like abilities to articulate both a challenge and an alternative that would finally allow the field of Public Administration to assume the disciplinary stance it surrendered after World War Two.

Notes

1. This paper was originally prepared for and delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA, September 2-5, 1999.
2. In this paper, I will use the now common convention, attributable to Waldo (see Waldo, 1968a, p. 443, note 1), of using capital letters to differentiate the academic side of the subject from the practice of public administration itself.
3. This argument, therefore, is narrower than – and overlapping with – Stillman's (1991). In his superbly presented analysis, Stillman covers the identity crisis among scholars as part of an overall historical pattern of themeless-ness and directionless-ness in both practice and study of public administration.
4. For classic and controversial analysis of an academic "community," see Bourdieu (1988).
5. E.g., see Smith (1997) and Gergen (1994a) on psychology and related behavioral sciences; also see Matson (1964).
6. The imagery of "gatekeepers" builds upon a broader metaphor that regards those who study Public Administration as forming a distinct community of scholars within academe. The boundaries and membership of such community are "imagined" (see Anderson, 1991, p. 5-7), a fact that makes them no less real or meaningful. Like other academic and scientific communities, Public Administration has developed norms and roles that helps sustain it even in the absence of a core paradigm, methodology, or clear sense of identity. (On this point, see Polanyi (1964); for a postmodern perspective, see Bourdieu [1988]). Among those who play gatekeeping roles are journal editors (see Simon and Fyfe [1994]) and individuals who, through criticisms and the articulation of theories, have the power to shape and define their fields (e.g., Calhoun (1995); Gouldner (1970).
7. On psychology, see Smith (1997, chapter 14). Regarding political science, see Waldo (1975) and Leonard (1995). For Public Administration, see Chandler (1987). It must be stressed that I am focusing on the founding "myths," rather than asserting that these represent verifiable historical roots. In public administration, for example, credit can also be given to the work of lesser known contributors than Woodrow Wilson, e.g. Theodore Dwight Woolsey and Dorman B. Eaton (see Van Riper, 1987).
8. The first meeting of the Society was held in conjunction with an academic conference (the December, 1939, meeting of the American Political Science Association) and its first president was an academic (Dean William Mosher of Syracuse University).
9. See Stone (1982). Also see the brief comments in Egger (1975).
10. While this did not fit the pattern of the major social science associations, it did resemble the coalition of practitioners, reformers, and academics that characterized the founding of professional associations during the 19th and early 20th centuries (see Ross 1979).
11. See the now classic case of a debate between competing theories that challenged the consensus surrounding quantum mechanics in physics in the 1920s and 1930s (Cassidy, 1992).
12. On the "disunity" of science, see Galison and Stump (1996).
13. By the late 1950s, there was some optimism left in the observation of Sayre about the state of the field: "The post-war decade of the center and heterodoxy has not yet revealed the clearer outlines of an emerging new body of comprehensive doctrine. But perhaps we can anticipate some of the major components of the reformulation now in process. The premises around which the new consensus [sic] – perhaps to become a new orthodoxy – would seem to be forming…" (Sayre, 1958, p. 178-179)
14. Consider, for example, the careers of notables such as Samuel P. Huntington or Merle Fainsod.
15. Simon and James G. March are the most prominent examples.

16. This snobbery sometimes comes to the surface in the form of confrontations over the distribution of awards or honors – as was the case in the 1980s when political scientist Samuel P. Huntington engaged in a public, but ultimately losing, battle for membership in the prestigious National Academy of Sciences (Cordes, 1988).
17. Dwight Waldo mentions this specific insult in a number of forums; see the discussions in Charlesworth (1968).
18. Does such identification of differences make a difference? It seems to in terms of research productivity standards and other evaluative norms (see Wanner, Lewis, & Gregorio, 1981).
19. In both essays, Waldo bitterly notes that this was not merely a matter of choice on the part of Public Administrationists. The field's relevance and status within political science was already significantly reduced in the eyes and actions of its colleagues. Start in 1962, Public Administration was relegated to the "other" category in formal reports and questionnaires issued by the American Political Science Association. But the most explicit indicator was the "disappearance" of Public Administration as an organized section in the 1967 program of APSA's annual meeting (see Waldo 1968a, 1968b). For responses to his concerns, see Sayre (1968) and Riggs (1968).
20. Waldo (1968b). A decade later, Waldo would use a narrower definition of "discipline" than he applied in his 1968 comments (see Waldo 1980).
21. See critical discussions of the founding period in Ball (1995) and Leonard (1995).
22. There are, of course, many institutions where the Public Administration faculty remains housed within political science departments (see http://www.naspaa.org/programs/index.html). However, anecdotal evidence indicates that the relationships between Public Administration faculty and their political science colleagues are often plagued by difficulties, particularly in questions related to tenure, promotion, and other status issues.
23. An interesting indicator of this accomplishment is found in the jobs posting section of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* where the field has a distinct status outside the listings for social science and among those designated as "professional fields."
24. The notion of a "discipline" is confusing as well as ambiguous to most of us. As Mark Rutgers points out, its use in public administration has been troubled by both philosophic and sociological meanings. My argument relies primarily on the sociological type (see Rutgers, 1995).
25. He characterizes it as a belief that "the way toward the discovery of greater (or 'true') knowledge…law in the application of modes of thought and methods of research which had demonstrated their potency so effectively in such areas that has physics and biology" (Waldo, 1975, p. 28).
26. See Newland (1994) for insightful comments on the efforts of "public management" scholars to see themselves as a discipline by stressing their separateness from public administration.
27. This perspective is drawn from the sociology and history of science literatures where stress has been placed on the role of community norms and values in shaping and directing knowledge accumulation. A classic presentation of this perspective is found in Merton (1957); for a more recent study, see Shapin (1994).
28. Different sources note different dates for the Committee's formation: Roberts (1994) reports it as 1926; Stone and Stone (1975) put it at 1928; and, Egger (1975) has its formation as 1934.
29. For an overview of the Committee's activities, see Roberts (1994).
30. E.g., Gulick and Urwick (1937). Earlier attitudes toward applying "scientific" methods to the study of public administration were reflected in the comments by William F. Willoughby in a survey of research in political science published in 1933. After noting the

"enormous amount of research" focused on the work of administrative agencies by research institutes and bureaus as well as other institutions, Willoughby was not quite ready to label these efforts as "scientific," although he was willing to call them "analogous:" "While it may be that public administration is not entitled to the designation of a science, as that term is employed in respect to the natural sciences, studies in this field have gone far enough to establish that there are at least fundamental principles, of more or less general application, analogous to those characterizing any science, which must be observed if the end of administration, efficiency in operation, is to be secured" (Willoughby, 1933, p. 21). Even such limited claims to scientific status were subject to severe criticisms (see Hyneman, 1939).

31. For a contemporary and critical view of social science research applied to industrial settings prior to the 1930s, see Gillespie (1991).
32. On the significance of the publication of *Administrative Behavior*, see Landau (1972).
33. In his autobiography, Simon writes of weekly graduate student gatherings where the philosophy of science was the primary topic of conversation. "Logical positivism was the moment, perhaps exclusive, religion in this group, and we took turns talking about our special interests or projects" (Simon, 1991, p. 74-75). Ironically, one of Simon's major contributions to the study of decision-making – i.e., the inherent limits to human rationality – undermines the very foundation of the logical positivism he builds upon (see Wilson, 1998).
34. In his autobiography, for example, Simon recalls a problem he had applying Carnap's views to his initial work on the thesis that would become *Administrative Behavior* – a problem he shared with Carnap who "tried to show me that I was mistaken. However, in his 1942 book on semantics, he retreated from his earlier position in exactly the direction I had pointed" (Simon, 1991, p. 54).
35. See the discussion of Merriam's perspective in Leiserson (1975).
36. In his autobiography, Simon notes that a picture of Barnard hangs in his study, next to those of his father, Clarence Ridley (a much-admired colleague and co-author), Charles Merriam (his mentor), Franklin Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, and Albert Einstein (Simon, 1991).
37. There are at least ten citations in the index to Barnard.
38. "[The reliance of Barnard's] administrative theory on common sense was not entirely acceptable to me. Systematic observation and experimentation were badly needed in this field to ever become scientific. Until someone build a satisfactory theoretical framework, it would not be clear what kinds of empirical studies were called for" (Simon, 1991, p. 73).
39. Waldo brings some clarity to this point when he reflects on Simon's work some twenty years later. While *Administrative Behavior* represented one of the most critical "refutations" of the dominant ideologies of the time in Public Administration (see also Dahl, 1947), in many respects it was also a "conservative" work that gave priority to bringing valid scientific methods to the so-called science of administration. Rather than being regarded as a radical perspective that threatened to alter the world of administration, Simon's work might have been perceived as a much-needed approach that would provide more realistic and useful knowledge (see Waldo, 1968a).
40. "My rearing and education disposed me to the soft side: to human us approach to social science and to a suspicion of all philosophies and methods that offered Truth. But I could hardly ignore the transformations wrought by modern science and technology; and I acknowledged that the claims made on behalf of science for further knowledge and control deserve to be heard and, if judged valid, heeded" (Waldo, 1984, p. xlix).
41. In fact, many in the scientific community though Northrop went too far in his views of what science could accomplish. At one of the early Macy Foundation conferences held

between 1946 and 1953, Northrop "proposed that the idea of 'the good' be based on science. He did not get very far. Most of these scientists present agreed with Einstein's view that 'science cannot create ends and, even less, instill them in human beings; science, at most, can supply the means by which to attain certain ends…'" Several months later, Northrop would present a paper at a meeting of scientists and philosophers titled "The Scientific Method for Determining Normative Social Theory of the Ends of Human Action" (Heims, 1993, p. 267).

42. Waldo (1984) quotes Northrop on this point.
43. On this particular point, Waldo cites Northrop's critique of economic theory (see Waldo, 1984) and uses it to criticize Stene's attempt to develop a rational theory of administrative statics.
44. Waldo makes several somewhat uncritical references to Simon's work with Ridley in *The Administrative State*, as well as a very positive citation of Simon's 1946 *Public Administration Review* article on the "Proverbs of Administration" (see Waldo, 1984).
45. For a different perspective on the Simon/Waldo debate, see Harmon (1995).
46. Having described this essay as polemical and rhetorical, I could hide my oversimplifications of history behind those characterizations. However, I would be remiss not to point out a very significant, third major contender in the post-war Public Administration debate: the political realists who launched direct assaults on the idealism implied in the politics/administration dichotomy. Perhaps best known for leading this attack on the prewar orthodoxy were Paul Appleby and Norton Long.
47. In the introduction to the second edition of *Administrative Behavior*, Simon takes note of his response to Waldo quoted above, characterizing his views in that 1952 reply as set forth "accurately if somewhat too tartly…" (Simon, 1957, p. xxxiv).
48. See also comments on Simon's role in Lowi (1992).
49. For a collection of most of those articles through 1993, see White and Adams (1994b).
50. The phrase is mine, but the sentiment is more widespread (see White, Adams, & Forrester, 1996).
51. Sayre's position on this issue is well known among those associated with Columbia University during his tenure there. White's views came in the form of a letter in which he noted that the study of administration in the university should be "intended primarily as a means of understanding the nature of government and its operations" as opposed to a focus on the application of knowledge to practical situations (see Waldo, 1968a, p. 445).
52. I attribute this comment to Professor Kenneth J. Meier. When asked to verify the comment (personal communication, July 14, 1999), Meier could not recall having made such a statement ("I don't remember saying this, but I could have"), but expressed a willingness to accept attribution in his capacity as the "Yogi Berra" of our field.
53. Roger Smith notes that the practice of social scientific research based on methods drawn from the natural sciences was already well underway – at least in behaviorist psychology – by the time logical positivism became well known (see Smith, 1997; also see Matson, 1964).
54. Anecdotally, early in the Rosenbloom editorship, when Public Administration Review did publish an article that might otherwise have found a home in one of the more mainstream social science publications, we received a strongly worded complaint from one of the more prominent members of the field. That sharp critique certainly did not change Rosenbloom's attitude toward publishing similar pieces, but the lack of similar submissions did. You cannot publish what is not submitted, and what is or is not submitted has more to do with perceptions of the field than the policies of any editorial board.
55. Compare with Stillman (1995).

56. For the classic argument supporting axiomatic theories, see von Mises (1944). For an assessment of the use of formal models to study bureaucracy, see Bendor (1990). The use of such models by members of the mainstream Public Administration community has been limited.
57. E.g., Lowi's (1992) statement that "[t]raditional public administration was almost driven out of the APSA by the work of a single, diabolical mind, that of Herbert A. Simon" (p. 4).
58. There are, of course, exceptions, e.g. the various examinations of published and dissertation research (see White & Adams, 1994a) and opinion pieces such as Meier and Stewart (1987).
59. Among those who do "just do it," many are doing it in journals outside the Public Administration community's mainstream publications. In doing so, they reinforce the isolation of the field by assuming identities as political scientists or policy analysts. The one notable exception (there may be others) is Gregory Lewis of Georgia State University. Not only does he "do it," but he does it almost entirely within the field's mainstream publications. According to his posted list of "recent publications" (found at: http://www.gsu.edu/~padgbl/vitae.html), he has published seventeen articles in the leading peer-reviewed Public Administration journals – most (if not all) using positivist methods and research standards.
60. The classical expression of this position was made by phenomenologist Alfred Schutz in a 1954 response to empiricist Ernest Nagel's critique of Weberian methodology:

> I agree with Professor Nagel that all empirical knowledge involves discovery through processes of controlled inference, and that it must be statable in propositional forms and capable of being verified by anyone who is prepared to make the effort to do so through observations – although I do not believe, as Professor Nagel does, that this observation has to be sensory in the precise meaning of this term. Moreover, I agree with him that "theory" means in all empirical sciences the explicit formulation of determinate relations between a set of variables in terms of which a fairly extensive class of empirically ascertainable regularities can be explained. Furthermore, I agree wholeheartedly with his statement that neither the fact that these regularities have in the social sciences a rather narrowly restricted universality, nor the fact that they permit prediction only to a rather limited extent, constitutes a basic difference between the social and the natural sciences, since many branches of the latter show the same features. (Schutz, 1954, p. 260)

61. Mainstream social science has not been indifferent to these epistemological challenges, and one finds a variety of strategies to deal with the resulting disciplinary discomfort. Some, following the lead of Karl Popper, have developed "local epistemologies" – essentially assuming the existence of an analytically comprehensible "reality." Others have taken a "conventionalist" approach by accepting the fact that science is a social institution through which we accumulate knowledge. Still others (typically associated with Habermas, despite his claim that he is not engaged in such a project) have embarked on attempts to develop a new epistemological foundation that would integrate social science and humanist/historicist perspectives. For a survey of the issues and various efforts to deal with them (see Hall, 1990).
62. For a general collection of works associated with this perspective in the social sciences, see Morgan (1983).
63. For critiques, see Jones (1998) and Shankman (1984).

64. There are, of course, alternativists who demonstrate less flexibility in their solutions to the epistemological issues. Robert B. Denhardt, for example, acknowledges three distinct "models" characterizing the study of public organizations: the rational model, reflecting "positive social science" and its emphasis on control; the interpretive model, with its stress on phenomenological "understanding"; and the critical model, based on critical social theory and stressing a commitment to emancipatory "praxis."

> Although mainstream theory [i.e., the rational model] presents itself as the only available theory, many who have contributed to the intellectual and political heritage of public organizations have suggested alternative approaches. Completeness in the study of public organization requires that we be attentive to the full range of approaches available to us....
>
> [However, in] my view, it is toward administrative praxis [i.e., the critical model] that practitioners as theorists must guide their theory buildings and their actions. (Denhardt, 1993, p. 232-233)

65. In many respects, historical analyses in Public Administration are closely related to the normativist perspective discussed below. Rohr, for example, is a prominent member of the Blacksburg Manifesto Movement, and Rosenbloom is a leading advocate for a view that promotes U.S. constitutional values in the development of Public Administration theory. Nevertheless, the standards of historical research are taken seriously by these scholars, and they are less subject to the criticism (which I apply to the normativists) that research is used to persuade rather than enlighten.
66. See Herzog and Claunch (1997) for a complementary analysis to Hummel's. Michael Harmon is the other notable writer in this area. His emphasis on "action theory" is deeply rooted in the phenomenological tradition (see Harmon & Mayer, 1986; also see Harmon 1990, 1998).
67. This is an argument Adams (1992) made several years earlier and is repeated in chapter 2 of *UEA*.
68. Compare with Stivers (1995) and Schacher (1995).
69. For a brief overview of the critical approach, see Denhardt (1981).
70. Nineteenth-century physicists believed that ether was a necessary medium for the propagation of electromagnetic radiation. "Ether theory" was abandoned after Einstein's special theory of relativity gained wide acceptance.
71. See an overview of this controversy and the Weberian position in Hall (1999).
72. This is a personal observation drawn from my experience as managing editor of *Public Administration Review*. Editor-in-chief David H. Rosenbloom had an "open door" policy in regard to questions of acceptable research, and we informally engaged in efforts to generate more mainstream social science submissions. With the exception of one or two submissions each year, we were unable to attract relevant work from outside the Public Administration community. This despite a growing body of mainstream social science scholarship focused on public administration and bureaucracy.
73. Donald N. McCloskey, for example, contends that all scientific research is rhetorical. "The rhetorical concern," he argues, "is how we really do convince each other, not 'what is true according to abstract methods.' Abstract Methods are necessary for the unlimited conversation of Ultimate Truth. Rhetoric is necessary for courts of law and conferences of scientists, places in which the bell rings and the decision must somehow be made. How they really do convince each other in the here and now is the main concern of scientists; they could care less what is true at the Second Coming according to abstract

Methods; they want to persuade, to bring a particular debate to a conclusion" (McCloskey, 1994, p. 106).

74. E.g., the "public management" research agenda is explicitly prescriptive as well as normative (see Bozeman, 1994; see also Newland, 1994).
75. I am obviously avoiding labeling the normativists "authoritarian," although others make an interesting case that there are authoritarian propensities present in such subjective approaches (see Geuras & Garofalo, 1996).
76. White and McSwain (1983) cite an earlier paper by Larry Kirhart and White.
77. The use of the term "transformationalist" in the present paper is not intended to reflect White and McSwain's use of the label "transformational theory" to describe their approach. Theirs is derived from Jungian analysis; my use of the term is intended to be descriptive of the common agenda characterizing a number of Public Administration theorists.
78. Which has not stopped such attempts (see Best & Kellner, 1991; Lemert, 1997).
79. Drucker retains his optimistic view of postmodernism today (see Drucker, 1999).
80. Compare with Lemert (1997).
81. See Geuras and Garofalo (1996) for a related argument.
82. Such a contradiction occurs when an analyst makes "performative use of something he expressly denies" (Habermas, 1990, p. 129).
83. I am not addressing here an even greater potential cost to the utopian stance, i.e. its connection to the development of closed and authoritarian systems (see Popper, 1962a, 1962b). Again, it is ironic that approaches emerging from postmodern critiques of "totalizing" cultures are themselves subject to the same kind of utopian thinking that they are so good at criticizing.
84. If you believe this characterization is unfair, I suggest a reading of *Unmasking Administrative Evil* (*UAE*), discussed above. I also recommend that you compare the narrative in *UEA* with the plot of a movie released at about the same time as the book: *Fallen* with Denzel Washington as a detective who is pitted against an evil force that is able to maintain itself by passing from body to body through touch.
85. Textual analysis, once dismissed as relevant only for the humanities, has regained some stature in the social sciences as analysts have turned to novels and proverbs and classical texts as sources. Again, see the work of Elster, Gergen, and others.

Disclosure Statement

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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