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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The study of public organizations has withered over time in mainstream organization studies research, as scholars in the field have migrated to business schools. This is so even though government organizations are an important part of the universe of organizations – the largest organizations in the world are agencies of the U.S. government. At the same time, the study of public administration, once in the mainstream of organization studies, has moved into a ghetto, separate and unequal. Centered in business schools, mainstream organization research became isomorphic to it environment – coming to focus on performance issues, i.e. what firms care about. Since separation, the dominant current in public administration has become isomorphic with its environment. In this case, however, this meant the field moved backward from the central reformist concern of its founders with improving government performance, and developed instead a focus on managing constraints (i.e. avoiding bad things, such as corruption or misuse of power, from occurring) in a public organization environment. Insufficient concern about performance among public administrationists is particularly unfortunate because over the past l5 years, there has occurred a significant growth of interest among practitioners in improving government performance. The origins and consequences of these developments are discussed, and a research agenda for organization studies research that takes the public sector seriously is proposed.

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Government organizations are an important part of the universe of organizations.[1] The

Department of Defense is the largest organization in the U.S. government: its budget ($410

billion in 2006) is noticeably larger than sales of ExxonMobil ($339.9 billion) and of Wal-Mart

($315.7 billion), the two largest corporations by sales in the world (U.S. Office of Management

and Budget, 2007:314; Fortune, 2006a). In terms of employees, the Defense Department has

about 3.3 million (2.6 million uniformed and 700,000 civilian), compared to 84,000 for

ExxonMobil and 1.8 million for Wal-Mart (Department of Defense, 2002; Fortune, 2006b; Wal-

Mart, 2006). If the smallest cabinet department (by budget), the Commerce Department, were a

Fortune 500 company, it would rank 367th. Beyond its size, government has main responsibility

for important problems such as protecting the environment, educating children, and finding

terrorists -- and for protection of values, and individuals, the market undervalues or neglects

(Mintzberg, 1996). Finally, government creates the very foundation, through providing

individual security and the ground rules for operation of the market, for civilized life. ("Taxes

are the price I pay for civilization," Oliver Wendall Holmes once observed.)

Government also has serious performance problems. To be sure, government performs

better than its reputation. A survey of a sample of 1000 professors teaching American

government and modern American history identified rebuilding Europe after World War II,

expanding the right to vote, strengthening the highway system, containing communism, and

promoting equal access to public accommodations as "government's greatest achievements" in

the twentieth century (Light, 2002) – no paltry collection. Nonetheless, there is enough truth to

stereotypes of incompetent delivery and indifferent service for any but the most dyed-in-the-

wool apologist to agree that, ranging from public education to emergency management to foreign

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policy decisionmaking, government underperforms. In rich democracies, no question about

government is more important than underperformance.

The argument of this review will be straightforward. Improving government

performance is a topic worthy of significant research attention, yet dramatically insufficient

scholarly firepower is directed at it. The separation of public management research from

mainstream organization studies that has appeared over the past decades is the main reason such

firepower has been absent. What has happened? Most obviously, mainstream researchers largely

disengaged from studying government, depriving research on government performance of its

largest natural source of sustenance. But in addition, the smaller group of scholars who do study

government organizations have largely self-isolated themselves from mainstream organization

studies as well. This has made them less interested and able to contribute to producing good

research about government performance. Mainstream research is, mainly because of its location

in business schools, centrally concerned with corporate performance. With separation, pressure

on those studying government to study performance has dwindled. Thus, public administration

scholars in recent decades have, often proudly, paid little attention to researching performance.

Also, with separation, public administration has been cut off from methodological advances in

social psychology, sociology, and political science, particularly increased use of econometrics,

lab experimentation, and computational analysis. Thus, methods have generally been primitive,

with excessive reliance on case studies, selection on the dependent variable, and discursive

"conceptual" frameworks with weak empirical grounding or theoretical rigor, what Rainey

(personal communication) calls "essayism."[2] This has meant research on agencies has often

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[2] It should be noted that the casualness about causality in regression-based analysis that marks much mainstream organization research has been, rightly, criticized by many outside the field.

lacked sophistication permitting conclusions strong enough to use for improving performance.[3]

It also promotes a general view that anything having to do with government organizations – including research about them – is second-rate.

Given these three problems, bringing the two traditions together again is a priority. I share with those I will criticize the view that government should be seen, in theory and often in practice, as a positive force. Government is too important not to propel improving its performance to a front rank of research attention. Insufficient concern about performance among public administrationists is particularly unfortunate because over the past l5 years there has been an astounding, and heartening, growth of interest among practitioners, particularly in the Anglo-American world, in improving government performance, and a lively interest in techniques for how to do so. The field is therefore betraying practitioners who could use help for their efforts.

CONSTRAINTS AND GOALS

Government underperformance is overdetermined. One explanation, which economists favor, is that agencies are protected monopolies and thus lead an easy life, without performance pressures (Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, l976; Savas, l982); monopoly, writes Savas (p. l34-35) produces a situation where citizens are "subject to endless exploitation and victimization," where "so-called public servants have a captive market and little incentive to heed their putative customers." The very universality of popular obloquy regarding government performance across time and place suggests the monopoly criticism is not entirely groundless, since the most obvious common feature of agencies is monopoly status. However, it is inaccurate to state that agencies generally lead an easy life without outside pressures. Pressures come from the political system

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[3] To be sure, mainstream organization studies has suffered ongoing bouts of anxiety (e.g. Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft,, 200l) that its research is insufficiently useful to practitioners. Furthermore, one should not, of course, exaggerate the successes of mainstream research in generating results conclusive enough to be used for performance improvement, though the nihilist view we have learned nothing would also be wrong.

and the media, not the marketplace, but that doesn't make them innocuous: if one asked people

whether they would rather be attacked on the front page of The Washington Post or subjected to

punishment firms typically mete out for poor performance, it is not obvious most would choose

the former. Another explanation is that few of the best people choosing government careers do so

because of an interest in managing organization performance, but rather to influence formulation

of policies such as for AIDS or terrorism. A third explanation is that, compared with the profit

metric for firms, often agencies have a hard time developing good metrics available to use to

achieve performance improvement (to take an extreme example, what should the State

Department's metrics be?) or there is controversy about goals (should the Forest Service cut

down trees for economic use or preserve them for wilderness lovers?)

In this review I focus on a different account, not necessarily because it has the largest

effect size (we don't know), but because it relates to the nature of research in public

administration and its relationship to mainstream organization studies. This explanation is that

government underperforms because, compared with firms, it pays less attention to performance

in the first place. All organizations have both goals and also constraints that put boundaries

around what they may legitimately do to achieve their goals. Traditionally in government, the tail

wags the dog – constraints loom larger than goals, inhibiting good performance.

Central to understanding government organizations, and the challenge for public

administration research and practice, is the distinction between goals an organization has and

constraints under which it operates (Wilson, l989:chap. 7; Simons, l995[4]). Goals are results an

organization seeks – for firms, profit, market share, or customer satisfaction, for the

Environmental Protection Agency improved air quality or for the National Cancer Institute better

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[4] Wilson uses the phrase "tasks" to describe what I call goals, and Simons uses the phrase "boundary systems" to describe what I call constraints.

understanding of cancer. Constraints are <u>limits</u> on the acceptable behavior of organizations or their members, even to meet goals.[5] For firms, constraints include respecting accounting rules, not dumping toxic wastes, or not kidnapping competitors. For agencies, constraints include that officials not take bribes or lie to the public; or that citizens be treated fairly, due process respected, and that there be accountability to the public for agency actions.

Since they often embody important ethical values such as respect for persons, honesty, and integrity, constraints should not be unimportant for any organization. Simons (1995: 84) argues that "(e)very business needs [boundary systems], and, like racing cars, the fastest and most performance-oriented companies need the best brakes." This is particularly so in government, where behaviors often communicate signals about societal values: equal treatment of citizens signals the social importance of equality, dishonesty lowers the moral tone in society (Kelman, l993). Furthermore, an important line of research (e.g. Thibault and Walker, l975; Tyler, 1990; Brockner and Weisenfeld, l996) argues procedural fairness encourages people to accept decisions going against their personal interests. And in service production, the process for producing the service is often seen as "part of the product" (Lovelock, l992) – and to this extent a fair process may be seen as a goal, not a constraint.[6]

At the same time, organizations (or individuals) about which it can only be said they have respected constraints would typically not be judged successful. Imagine a journalist who during a long career never revealed a source or fabricated evidence – but who had never uncovered a good story. Or imagine a company that had never cooked its books, but also never succeeded in making a sale. Nor are organizations (or individuals) that need to focus significant energy on assuring constraints are respected normally successful, because that energy is unavailable for

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[5] In linear programming or economics one often speaks of maximizing goals subject to constraints.
[6] Even here, this cannot be considered a <u>mission</u> goal.

goal-attainment. Instead, a healthy organization (or individual) is one where constraints are taken

for granted. If an individual needs to spend hours each day worrying about how s/he will avoid

murdering others, the person is unlikely to be successful at achieving substantive goals. We

seldom think that "don't kidnap your competitors" is a constraint for firms, because we take the

constraint for granted. (But consider Russia in the early l990's – a place where this couldn't be

taken for granted, with society for that reason in bad shape.)[7]

In the world of practice, firms almost always focus in the first instance on achieving their

goals: a business that doesn't won't stay in business. Indeed, Parsons argued (l960:63) that a

firm is an organization whose "defining characteristic is the attainment of a specific However, a

central fact about the practice of government, across most times and places, is that, in the

environment in which government operates, closer to the opposite is true -- failure to pay

attention to <u>constraints</u> often inflicts more pain (Wilson, l989:115). This is so for several reasons.

First, in government goals are often controversial (should affirmative action be required or free

trade pursued?), but "everybody can agree" it's wrong to lie or show favoritism. This makes

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[7] A helpful way to think about the difference between goals and constraints, although it does not apply perfectly, is in terms of the common distinction in moral philosophy between "negative" and "positive" duties (Russell, l980; Tooley, l980),.where the former are duties to refrain from some action (don't kill) and the latter to undertake some action (save people who are dying). Constraints can generally be respected if an organization does nothing – if an agency lets no contracts, it will not violate the constraint that contracting officials shouldn't award contracts to relatives; if it has no program to combat terrorism, it will not risk violating the due process rights of terrorist suspects. Meeting goals almost always requires action. Simons (l995:84, emphasis in original) is explicit about this when he states, "If I want my employees to be creative and entrepreneurial, am I better off telling them what to do or telling them what not to do? The answer is the latter. Telling people what to do by establishing standard operating procedures and rule books discourages the initiative and creativity unleashed by empowered, entrepreneurial employees. Telling them what <u>not</u> to do allows innovation, but within clearly defined limits. …(B)oundary systems are stated in negative terms or as minimum standards."

One should also distinguish between constraints and multiple goals. If the U.S. government seeks good relations with both India and Pakistan (where improving relations with one may hurt relations with the other), the State Department faces <u>multiple goals</u>. These are not the same as constraints. Those arguing for a "stakeholder" rather than a "shareholder" view of the firm are typically arguing for the importance of goals other than shareholder wealth maximization, although sometimes they are also arguing that greater attention should be paid to constraints (e.g. accounting ethics). Thus, Freeman and McVen (quoted in Sundaram and Inkpen, 2004) argued that "(t)he stakeholder framework does not rely on a single overriding management objective for all decisions," and Clarkson (quoted in <u>ibid.</u>) that "the economic and social purpose of the corporation is to create and distribute wealth and value to all its primary stakeholder groups." In both cases, the corporation is pursuing goals – creating value that then must be distributed – not merely respecting constraints.

constraint violation an easier story for media or opposition politicians to tell. Second, goal

achievement is not fully under agency control and occurs over time, while constraint violation is

immediate. Third, pursuing goals is about "maximizing good government," respecting

constraints about "minimizing misgovernment" (Gregory, 2003:564, quoting Uhr); many have

such limited aspirations for government that reducing misgovernment is all they ask, a standard

for success firms would find incomprehensible.[8] Fourth, agency accountability is a central value

in a democracy. This focus is a constraint since it says nothing about results, only process.[9]

All organizations should seek to maximize attainment of goals, while respecting

constraints. For firms, goal focus increases the probability they perform well – and also the risk

they ignore constraints --the Enron problem (Schweitzer, Ordonez, and Douma, 2004). For

government, the problem is less that constraints are violated (although the way the media cover

government may produce the misimpression of common misbehavior) than that they perform

poorly -- the Katrina problem.

The importance of constraints is tied to dominance of bureaucratic organizational forms

in government, since rules and hierarchy are important control tools.[10] As Kaufman (l977:4)

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[8] More broadly, greater attention is paid in government to mistakes than to achievements. Even in the l920's, White (1926:243-44) observed that public officials perceive that "(w)henever we make a mistake, some one jumps on us for it, but whenever we do something well nobody pays any attention to us. We never get any recognition except when we get 'bawled out'." A half-century later, Derek Rayner, the CEO of Marks & Spencer brought into the British government under Thatcher, noted that in government (quoted in Hennessy, l989:595), "Failure is always noted and success is forgotten."

[9] This is a longstanding fact about government. In an earlier era (and still in many countries, especially in the developing world), constraints were often violated – e.g. by corruption or political favoritisim – making respect for constraints a more natural part of the political agenda. In l926 White noted (p.18-19) that government needed to apply a standard of consistent treatment of cases in a way unnecessary in business. The longstanding focus on constraints explains the lack of attention, until recent decades, to development of non-financial performance measures in government -- agencies' most-important counterpart to the profit measure for firms -- including issues of measurement and standardization (a counterpart to GAAP for non-financial government performance metrics).

[10] The bureaucratic form that has become so associated with government that, for example, Wilson's (l989) classic book on government agencies is titled, simply, Bureaucracy, and political scientists working on government agencies generally refer to them by the generic name "the bureaucracy."

famously noted, "One person's 'red tape' may be another's treasured procedural safeguard."

Hierarchy, combined with rules developed at the top, where those lower down are merely

executing directives, fits into the desire to subordinate unelected officials to political control

(Warwick, l975: 69-70). If one cares about minimizing misgovernment rather than maximizing

good government, one will be disinclined to grant officials discretion. As Theodore Roosevelt

stated a century ago (quoted in White, l926:144), "You cannot give an official power to do right

without at the same time giving him power to do wrong."

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION STUDIES: FROM COLLEAGUES TO STRANGERS

The founders of public administration[11] in the first decades of the twentieth century saw

the field as closely tied to the general study of management. Woodrow Wilson, then a young

political science professor, wrote in "The Study of Administration" (l887:209), the first scholarly

work calling attention to public administration, that "(t)he field of administration is a field of

business." The field's first textbook, White's Introduction to the Study of Public Administration

(1926:5), saw "conduct of government business" as similar to "conduct of the affairs of any other

social organization, commercial, philanthropic, religious, or educational, in all of which good

management is recognized as an element essential to success." Another early text (Willoughby,

1927) referred to the legislature as an agency's "board of directors" and its director as its

"general manager." The most influential collection of essays on public administration during the

l930's, Papers on the Science of Administration (Gulick and Urwick, 1937), is an important

collection for the history of organization studies in general. Gulick, the most-influential public

administration scholar of the era (and one of three members of the panel proposing a plan for

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[11] Over the last thirty years a distinction has developed between some who call the field "public management," with others continuing to use the older phrase "public administration." The significance of this terminological pluralism will be discussed below.

executive branch reorganization to Franklin D. Roosevelt in l937), wrote in his essay "Science, Values and Public Administration" (Gulick, l937b: 49) that "there are principles…which should govern arrangements for human association of any kind…irrespective of the purpose of the enterprise…or any constitutional, political or social theory underlying its creation." The essay by Fayol, who worked mostly on business management, argued (1937: 101), "We are no longer confronted with several administrative sciences but with one alone, which can be applied equally well to public and to private affairs." Simon,[12] Smithburg, and Thompson's textbook <u>Public Administration</u> states (l950:8) that "large-scale public and private organizations have many more similarities than they have differences." In turn, studies of public organizations were important for organization studies generally, tied in with Tayloristic industrial engineering and contributing to the study of organization design. "(I)n the l930s, public administration dominated the fields of both political science and management" (Henry, l990:4). The first president of the American Political Science Association, Frank Goodnow, was a public administrationist. Prominence of public administration also reflected lack of research at business schools at the time.

Modern organization studies grew out of industrial psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century (Baritz, l960), which initially addressed issues mostly in an individual context (personality tests for job applicants, for example), but with the Hawthorne studies turned attention to small groups, and grew within sociology after World War II. Although they did not consider themselves public administrationists, early postwar organization studies scholars, particularly sociologists, situated important research in government, both because agencies were seen as worth studying and because access was often easier than for firms. Selznick began his scholarly career writing about the New Deal Tennessee Valley Authority (l953). Two other

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[12] This is Herbert Simon. His historical connection with public administration will be discussed below.

classics, Blau's The Dynamics of Bureaucracy (l955) and Crozier's The Bureaucratic

Phenomenon (l954), were empirically located in government.[13]

Administrative Science Quarterly was founded in l956 as an outlet for scholars from

sociology, political science, and social psychology engaged in organization studies. Figure One

displays changes in percentages of ASQ field-based empirical articles situated in government,

nonprofits, and firms. In almost every year of its first decade, the percentage situated in

government exceeded that in firms. Until the early l980's ASQ published significant research

situated in government. In recent years such research has vanished.[14]

This transformation reflects the overwhelming migration of organization research into

business schools, which in turn reflects larger social trends. Since the l980's the salary gap, for

professional/managerial work, between government and industry has dramatically increased

(Donahue, 2005). For much of this time, business was also culturally "hot." In 2003 about

l25,000 students were studying for MBA's in the U.S., compared to one-fifth that number

studying for master's degrees in public administration or public policy (U.S. National Center for

Education Statistics, 2006).[15] The enormous growth of wealth in the business community

provided business schools funding sources unavailable to others. At the same time, ideological

attacks on the desirability of government playing an active role in society, and on the idea of

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[13]   Lewin's early research about attitude change in groups (1958), while not involving small groups inside government, was about how agencies might persuade people to eat odd cuts of meat during wartime rationing.

[14]   This observation applies specifically to research in the fields of organizational behavior and organization theory. Not surprisingly – partly because of greater access to information through memoirs and other records – non-experimental research on judgment and decisionmaking, including cognitive biases, and on negotiation, frequently uses examples involving government leaders, particularly presidents (e.g. Bazerman, 2005; Kramer, l998, 2000, 2005; Lax and Sebenius, l987), as does, again not surprisingly, leadership studies.

A casual examination of the most-recent volumes of Academy of Management Journal and Journal of Applied Psychology shows similar results for the present, though no historical comparison was made.

[15]   The second number includes students studying social work, so the real contrast is larger. The number of MBA students has more than doubled since l980, while the number of MPA/social work students is up by about half.

public service, spread, in academia (especially economics; e.g. Friedman and Friedman, l980; Tullock, l976, l979) as well as politics.[16] Business schools thus became a gold mine for organization scholars, offering abundant well-paying jobs and a benign funding environment.[17] Not surprisingly (though, I would suggest, not honorably), mainstream organization studies thus by and large forgot government. To be sure, the bulk of organizational behavior empirical research – most obviously lab experiments – is "ainstitutional" in setting. However, in situating field research or considering topics for theorizing, organization studies directed attention to the world of business that was their new home, and large swathes of the field (such as strategy research) was squarely located in the business world.

While mainstream scholars were abandoning government, public administrationists were administering a self-inflicted wound by isolating themselves from the mainstream. As early as l956 Mosher noted there were few connections between public administration and social psychologists studying small groups, and no use of lab studies, while conversely organization studies scholars such as Blau and Selznick did not cite public administration literature though

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[16] One conservative columnist wrote in l986 that "we should be eternally grateful that government is stupid and bungling, adding, "I want a government that is stupid, lethargic, and low-performing" (Behn, 2005, which cites other similar quotes). Barry Goldwater expressed a similar sentiment in The Conscience of a Conservative.

[17] Although this will not be a major theme here, since this review centers on organization studies, it may be noted that parallel to the separation of public administration from organization studies there also occurred a separation from political science, the other discipline to which the field traditionally connected. The reasons were somewhat different. During the l950's political science began using more sophisticated, quantitative methods; in the l980's the field became interested in formal modeling. This favored research on individual voting behavior or congressional roll-call votes over studies of organizations, because large sample sizes made them more amenable to quantitative analysis. The new political science also had little sympathy for public administration's practical approach; in their view, "public administration concerns the lower things of government, details for lesser minds"– frequently ridiculed as obsession with "manhole covers" (Waldo, 1990:74; see also Martin, l952:660; Fesler, l990; Kettl, 2002:16). So political science began in effect to shun public administration. By l962 the American Political Science Association (APSA) report "Political Science as a Discipline" mentioned public administration "only in passing," and a l983 APSA compendium did not even include it as a subfield (Kettl, 2002:84; Henry, l990:10). Currently, most of the meager body of political science research on organizations is written in a principal-agent tradition and discusses relations between legislatures and agencies (for summaries, see Bendor, 1990; Bendor, Glazer, & Hammond, 200l). There is a small body of work closer to mainstream organization studies (e.g. Miller, l992; Hammond, l993). Carpenter's (200l) work on efforts of senior public managers a century ago to build operating capacity and political support has an extraordinarily modern ring, though it involves managers working long ago.

they researched government. The emergence of organization studies in social psychology and sociology created a need, and an opportunity, for public administration scholars to reach out (the traditional disciplinary home for public administration was political science). The field failed to reach out; instead it retreated inward. An examination of the most-cited public administration research (McCurdy, l985:4-5) showed that in l972 60% of citations "came from fields of study that held no particular distinction between business administration, public administration, or any other type of administration," but by l985 this had declined to 30%.

The Public Administration Ghetto

Separation of public administration from mainstream organization studies has resulted in creation of a modestly sized public-sector research ghetto. In 2006 the Academy of Management had almost l7,000 members (Academy of Management, 2006). By contrast, in 2005 the Section on Public Administration Research of the American Society for Public Administration had 355 (American Society for Public Administration, 2006), and the Public Administration Section of the APSA numbered 5l5 (American Political Science Association, 2006).[18]

The ghetto is separate. In the most recently published survey of the field, The Oxford Handbook of Public Management (2006), a section called "disciplinary perspectives" includes law, ethics, and economics, but not organization behavior/theory, or social psychology, sociology, or political science.[19] One sees the result in the author index. DiMaggio is cited 3 times, Kramer twice, Pfeffer twice, Weick twice, and high-profile names such as Argote, Bazerman, Dutton, Hackman, Neale, Staw, and Tushman not once – even though a number, such

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[18]   The Public and Nonprofit division of the Academy of Management had 497 academic members as of 2006 xx.

[19]   The Handbook of Public Administration (Peters & Pierre, 2003) does have a section called "Organization Theory and Public Administration," though the topics discussed are idiosyncratic enough to suggest lack of broad familiarity with the field.

as Weick, Staw, and Bazerman, have situated some research in government. By contrast, the index is chockablock with names unfamiliar in mainstream organization studies or political science -- Pollitt is cited 80 times, Bouckaert 32, Frederickson l7.

The ghetto is unequal, having only now begun to undertake a transition to modern social science methodologies that became common elsewhere after the field became ghettoized.[20] Public administration has roots in prescription and close ties to practitioners. Public Administration Review (PAR), traditionally the field's most-important journal, begun in l940 as the organ of the American Society for Public Administration, an association with mostly practitioner members, and thus the journal has always needed to appeal to practitioners, inhibiting methods advance.[21] An examination of dissertations for 1981 concluded only 42% "tested a theory or a causal statement" and 21% had research designs even "potentially valid" (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984); fewer than a fourth of articles in PAR between l975 and l984 discussed relationships among variables (Perry and Kraemer, l986). More recently, few efforts have been made empirically to evaluate the wave of public management reform, something, an empirically oriented researcher has lamented, "the academic community has not taken seriously" (Boyne, 2003: 2). Lynn (l996:7), a senior scholar critical of the field's standards, wrote a decade ago that public administration had failed to "develop habits of reasoning, intellectual exchange, and criticism appropriate to a scholarly field."

Public Administration Separatism

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[20] Younger scholars (e.g. Heinrich, 2000; Heinrich and Fournier, 2004; Bertelli, 2006; Hill, 2006) are trying to move the field toward mainstream social science. As this review proceeds, the reader may note the dominance of books over articles in citations. This is because the academic culture of emphasizing papers over books – reflecting a methodological shift to bounded empirical work – is just starting in public management.

[21] Mosher (1956:272) noted that for this reason the journal was "not itself an adequate or appropriate outlet for more than a very few research reports."

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Public organizations are, of course, both "public" and "organizations." In its ghetto, public administration has taken a separatist turn. Like ethnic separatisms, public administration separatism defines itself by emphasizing how it differs from the larger world. This means fixating on the unique "public" part of public organizations and neglecting, even proudly, the "organization" part connecting the field to a larger world. Thus, the central separatist theme is opposition to what is designated (e.g. Pollitt, 1990; Wamsley et al, l990; Peters and Pierre, 2003) as "generic management" – the view that organizations share enough common features about which generalizations may be made to make it useful to study agencies and firms together.[22]

A number of public administration scholars (e.g. Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, l976; Perry and Rainey, l988; Allison, l986; Bozeman, l987) have written about differences and similarities between public and private organizations. Obviously, the two are alike in some ways, different in others. Which aspect one emphasizes is not ontological but normative. This is partly because one may attach different value to ways organizations are alike or different. If one cares about performance, this directs attention to similarities, since performance drivers (e.g. determinants of successful teams or response to coordination mechanisms) are often similar. And emphasizing similarity or difference is partly normative because one may criticize (and advocate reform of) some ways agencies are empirically different, if these differences impede good performance in government.

Centered in business schools, mainstream research became isomorphic to it environment – coming to focus on performance issues, i.e. what firms care about. Walsh, Weber, and Margolis (2003) found individual or organization performance was far more likely to be the dependent variable in empirical papers in the Academy of Management Journal than institutional

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[22] The very phrase "generic" is negative, suggesting bland inferiority (to call, say, a wine "generic" is a put-down).

or societal welfare.[23] One thinks of research on determinants of team performance or successful

negotiation outcomes, or of all strategy literature, which deals in various ways with determinants

of firm economic success of firms. In addition, research on topics such as cognitive biases,

organizational citizenship behavior, and escalation of commitment all involve phenomena

linking to organization performance. As human resources management research has become

more "strategic," it has become more associated with the impact of HR policies on organization

performance (Huselid, l995; Delery and Shaw, 200l).[24]

Since separation, the dominant current in public administration has become isomorphic

with its environment. In this case, however, this meant the field moved backward from the

central reformist concern of its founders with improving government performance, and

developed instead a focus on constraints. Had public administration been part of the mainstream,

such isomorphism would have been tempered by exposure to a larger universe of organizations.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: A HISTORY AND SYNTHESIS

This section presents a synthesizing account of the field's development, discussing (1) the

founding decades, (2) the separation from mainstream organization studies, (3) practitioner-led

reforms of the last decades and reactions to them, and (4) the rise of a "public management" current.

The unifying theme will be the changing relation to performance improvement in government.

The Founding Decades

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[23] For research about firms, the danger – and the worry this paper expressed – is constraints get under-researched (consider the somewhat orphan status of business ethics research). I return to this at the end of this paper.

[24] There is also some organization theory literature (the locus classicus is Meyer xx) problematising the concept of "performance" in organizations.

At the beginning, there was performance – or, to use the idiom of that era, promotion of "economy and efficiency."[25] White's early text (l926:2) states "(t)he objective of public administration is the most efficient utilization of the resources at the disposal of officials and employees." Gulick wrote (1937:191-92) that "(i)n the science of administration, whether public or private, the basic 'good' is efficiency." The founders of public administration were reformers, promoting good management as a means to improve government performance. White argued that growth of the state's role in society had increased interest in "the business side of government." He continued, "More and more clearly it is being understood that the promise of American life will never be realized until American administration has been lifted out of the ruts in which it has been left by a century of neglect" (White, l926:9,13; see also Wilson, l887:20l).

The founders specifically established the field in distinction to public law, which emphasized constraints. White (1926:2, 4-5) stated "the study of administration should start from the base of management rather than the foundation of law, and is therefore more absorbed in the affairs of the American Management Association than in the decisions of the courts." While the major objective of public law was "protection of private rights," public administration's main objective was "efficient conduct of public business." Three chapters in White discuss legislative and judicial control of agencies, the other 28 organization design and personnel management.

Herbert Simon and Dwight Waldo: The Road Not Taken[26]

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[25] The phrases don't have the same connotation: "economy and efficiency" suggested strong emphasis on saving money, i.e. treating performance as a constant, while reducing the cost of producing it (e.g. White, l926:103; Gulick, l937:192), while "performance" suggests emphasis on quality as a variable. However, one early author (quoted in Waldo, l948:l96) did argue that "(w)hen we say efficiency, we think of homes saved from disease, of boys and girls in school prepared for life, of ships and mines protected against disaster." Both the phrases "efficiency" and "performance" are alternatives to emphasis on constraints.

[26] Bertelli and Lynn (2006:chap.2-3) was extremely helpful in preparing this section of the review.

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Shortly after World War II two young scholars each published widely noted books --

Herbert Simon, Administrative Behavior (1947) and Dwight Waldo, The Administrative State

(1948). At the time, Simon clearly was a public administrationist: his first published article

(l937) was on municipal performance measures, it is impossible to read Administrative Behavior

without noticing it is written from a public administration perspective, and three years later

Simon coauthored the text Public Administration (Simon, Smithburg, & Thompson's, l950).

Waldo had received his PhD (on which the book was based) in political philosophy. Each, with

the iconoclasm of youth, criticized the field's founders. But each urged the field in different

directions – and they argued with each other over the next few years (Waldo, l952; Simon, l952).

The two had different subsequent histories. One became an icon of social science – he

won the Nobel Prize in economics. The other became an icon of public administration – the

American Society of Public Administration's highest scholarly award is named for him, his book

subject of a retrospective collection, Revisiting Waldo's Administrative State (Rosenbloom and

McCurdy, 2006) sixty years later.[27] One continued an astonishingly productive career, while the

other wrote little but elucidations of his first book.[28] The Administrative State helped set public

administration on a separatist path. Administrative Behavior represented a road not taken.

Simon began his book with a blistering attack on existing public administration,

exemplified by Gulick, for promulgating "proverbs" regarding organization design that suffered

from the double flaw of poor logic (some contradicted each other) and lack of empirical testing.

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[27] Simon received the Waldo Award in l999, a surreal event for many reasons, including their earlier hostility. The public administration section of the American Political Science Association actually conducted a formal debate at its 2005 meeting about whether Administrative Behavior or The Administrative State was the most-influential public administration book of the previous fifty years (Rosenbloom and McCurdy, 2006b:1).

[28] Bertelli and Lynn (2006:179) note the closing sentence in Waldo (l952:503) stating Simon might become a major figure "if he can resist the temptation to make a career of defense of his first book," and then noting that this "is the fate that awaited Waldo."

Methodologically, Simon called on public administration, as a science of human behavior, to associate itself with social psychology and, more generally, to test propositions about organizations in a more scientific way. Substantively, Simon endorsed the founders' support for "efficiency" as the criterion to judge organizations, although adding a focus on making good organizational decisions not present in the founding literature. As Bertelli and Lynn note (2006:50), Waldo later argued – correctly I think – that, though his attack on the founders is remembered, Simon, with his interest in science and efficiency, actually had much in common with them. He also endorsed the founders' interest in common elements across organizations: his l950 text (p.8) stated that "large-scale public and private organizations have many more similarities than they have differences." Simon pointed public administration on a path that would have reached out to the emerging field of organization studies.

Waldo's critique of the founders was the opposite of Simon's. He denounced their preoccupation with efficiency. And he rejected their aspirations to science, not (as with Simon) for poor execution but rather for ignoring values, particularly the importance of democracy. He argued the founders sought expert administration, questionable from a democratic perspective, and centralized hierarchy, violating democracy at work. Waldo believed the field needed to redirect attention toward creation of "democratic administration" – greater popular participation in setting direction for agencies and greater employee participation inside them. Seen from the perspective of this review, Waldo disparaged the field's attention to how well agencies performed and urged focus instead on process, perhaps the most important of constraints government organizations face, but constraints nonetheless. And he displayed a traditional style that showed considerable flair but that Simon (1952:496) distained as "loose, literary, metaphorical" – a style the field sought to imitate.

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In the early l950's Simon left public administration to take on the job of transforming the business school at the Carnegie Institute of Technology into a research-oriented institution. March and Simon's Organizations (l958) was about organizations in general, with no particular government orientation. (March had come to Carnegie after getting a degree in political science.) This was followed by Cyert and March's A Behavioral Theory of the Firm (1963), dealing with business specifically. Simon's departure was a tragic loss. The field was small enough that departure of one young prominent figure actually could make a difference, especially at a crucial time when organization studies was growing rapidly in disciplines not traditionally connected to public administration, and thus building new links was crucial. And one may speculate that Waldo's approach was attractive for a field traditionally close to political science but now distained by that discipline for preoccupation with "manhole covers"[29]: by turning to political philosophy, public administration might regain its esteem.

The Political Turn in the Road

In the view of public administration founders, a dividing line existed between "politics," where elected officials decide, and "administration," where unelected officials should hold sway (Wilson, 1887; Goodnow (1914). In Goodnow's classic formulation, politics "has to do with policies or expressions of the state will," while administration "with the execution of these policies." The founders erected this separation to give unelected officials breathing room from interference from politicians who cared about patronage rather than performance.

Such a "line" is empirically unrealistic and normatively debatable. Career officials are strongly involved in policy formulation, as sources of substantive policy ideas, judgments about whether proposals make sense, and (often) advocates for a point of view, generally one consistent with values their agency's mission embodies. After laws are passed, political

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[29] See footnote l3 above.

decisionmaking by unelected officials continues. Administrative discretion is inevitable in determining specifcs of regulations (Kelman, l98l) – how many parts per million of sulfur dioxide should be allowed in the air? should auto safety regulations require airbags? -- as well as for frontline "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, l980; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003) deciding how to apply policies and, generally, treat the public. It is easy, however, to see why a policymaking role for unelected officials might be seen as problematic in a democracy. Finer (1941) proposed, as a normative matter, that the proper role of administrators toward elected officials was "subservience"; this is the most straightforward form of the democratic accountability of unelected officials. However, there would appear to be nothing undemocratic about a decision by Congress to give discretion to such officials – based on substantive advantages this is seen to bring -- as long as the decision is itself made democratically.

Attacking the politics/administration dichotomy became a major theme in public administration following World War II, perhaps as some scholars got government experience and noted they were involved in policymaking. Participation of unelected officials in the political process was a major element in Appleby (l949) and in a widely noted essay by Gaus (l950) called "Trends in the Theory of Public Administration," in the tenth-anniversary edition of <u>PAR</u>, which concluded with the flourish, "A theory of public administration means in our time a theory of politics also." Most importantly, a version of this theme – increasing democratic participation in administration -- was central to Waldo's alternative to the founders.[30]

As public administration took Waldo's road, these issues became central to the field. An analysis of public administration theory (Denhardt, 1990) concluded that the main change between the l950's and the l980's was a shift from "positivist" research on organizations to

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[30] Somewhat later this became a theme in political science as well, e.g. Lowi, l969; Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman, l98l; Gruber, l987.

"subjective" discussions of the relationship between administration and politics; the review of

theory articles between l980 and l985 in <u>PAR</u> classified the major topics as "the role of the

public bureaucracy in the governance process," "the ethics of public service" (identified as "one

striking shift in the priorities of public administration theorists in the l980s"), "citizenship and

civic education," "alternative epistemologies" (mainly questioning positivism[31]), contributions

"to organization theory generally," and public choice theory. Of these, only the second to last

tied the field to mainstream organization studies.

Discussions during the l970's and l980's combined interest in this topic with an emerging

separatism. The so-called "new public administration" (Marini, l97l) was a movement of young,

politically left-of-center scholars influenced by the turbulence of the l960's, who argued that

agencies, and the field, needed to pay more attention to "social equity" and Waldo's "democratic

administration." The new public administration was "less 'generic' and more 'public' than its

forebear" (Frederickson, l97l:316). The so-called "Blacksburg Manifesto" scholars of the l980's

mixed separatism with strong support for an active political role for career officials. The lead

essay in a "Blacksburg" volume (Wamsley, l990:24) referred to "debilitatingly irrelevant

intellectual baggage" inherited from the field's founders – "(borrowing) heavily from private-

sector management techniques" rather than developing "its own theories, concepts, norms, or

techniques." The "own theories" sought mostly involved justifying wide participation by

officials in policymaking: "(T)he popular will does not reside solely in elected officials but in a

constitutional order that envisions a remarkable variety of legitimate titles to participate in

governance. The Public Administration, created by statutes based on this constitutional order,

holds one of these titles. Its role, therefore, is not to cower before a sovereign legislative

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[31] Which, it might be argued, never established a firm foothold in the field in the first place.

assembly or a sovereign elected executive [but rather] to share in governing wisely and well the constitutional order" (Wamsley et al, l990:47).

Both empirical and normative inquiries regarding administrators' role in policymaking, and the public's role in administration, are legitimate, and there is no reason to criticize the field's initial postwar engagement, especially given the oversimplified view the founders had articulated. But over the decades, pragmatic accommodations have been made between the principle of subordination of unelected officials to democratic control and the reality of a far-less passive role for them. Many of these work better in practice than in theory. And democratic participation is of course a problem in our societies, but except to observe the problem needs attention, the outpouring from public administration hasn't generated much theoretical or empirical progress, compared to work by those formally trained as political philosophers, which few public administrationists are. Much of all this therefore seems to represent a gigantic exercise in what Freudians call "work avoidance" – looking for things to occupy oneself other than difficult-to-solve performance problems government actually faces. And this turn created ghettoization, because these issues are unique rather than shared with organization studies.

Also, the topic moved the field closer to concern about constraints (especially when emphasizing limits on actions of unelected officials); public law (e.g. Davis, 1969, l978) is preoccupied with control of administrative discretion, considered a grave danger. Waldo (1968) urged public administration to move away from its hostility to administrative law. Cooper (1990) noted public law had "experienced a resurgence in public administration" during the l970's and l980's, another move in the wrong direction, away from performance.

Enter the "New Public Management"

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Over the past 20 years what Kettl (2005:1; see also Peters, 200l:2) calls "a remarkable

movement to reform public management has swept the globe." Hood (l990) labeled this the "new

public management"; in the United States it came to be known as "reinventing government."

The movement has come from practitioners. It has sought public-sector self-renewal – a break

from the preoccupation with constraints in favor of a drive to improve performance.

The countries where public management reform got started, in the early l980's, were New

Zealand, the U.K., and Australia (Kettl, 2005). In all cases senior politicians initiated reform. In

all three, in the background was slow growth, fiscal crisis, and a widespread view government

was trying to do more than could be afforded, and not doing it well enough (Hood, l99l). In the

U.K., management reforms came from Margaret Thatcher and were part of an anti-government

conservative ideology, though Tony Blair continued and deepened reform after Labour came to

power in l997. In New Zealand and Australia they were introduced by left-of-center

governments. In the U.S., reform grew out of a Clinton-Gore effort to reposition Democrats from

traditional defense of "big government," while endorsing a positive government role.

In both New Zealand and the U.K., the first reform measures involved efforts to reduce

government spending -- New Zealand introduced accrual accounting (so the full budgetary cost

of programs would be accounted for upfront) and the U.K. a "financial management initiative" to

reduce waste.[32] In all these countries, the effort then expanded to include use of performance

measurement to establish a new context for public management, whereby managers would be

freed from many process rules (e.g. for hiring or budgeting) in exchange for producing improved

service/cost performance -- a mixture of what became called "let managers manage" and "make

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[32] The U.S. went through a similar effort around the same time with the Reagan-era "Grace Commission," named after a corporate CEO who headed an effort led by private sector managers to identify wasteful spending produced by poor management.

managers manage" (Kattl, 2005:82-85). Public management reform also included a new attention to the importance of agencies providing good "customer service" (Kettl, 2005:51-54). Finally, in all three countries, each of which had had significant state-owned infrastructure (power, railroads, water), reform also included privatization, as well as increased "contestability" for other services to competition between in-house and outsourced production.

In the U.S., two practitioners, Osborne (a journalist) and Gaebler (a former city manager) in l992 published <u>Reinventing Government</u>, which, amazingly for a book about public management, became a bestseller and then basis for the Clinton-Gore administration's "reinventing government" initiative -- formally known, tellingly, as the National <u>Performance</u> <u>Review</u>).[33] The book argued for government that was "mission-driven" rather than rules-driven (the authors began one chapter, p. 108, with a quote from Patton, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what you want them to achieve and they will surprise you with their ingenuity") and for using results-oriented performance measures. They argued government should more "steer not row," i.e. set policy for service delivery, but have services delivered through non-government parties. "Reinventing government" mixed management reform with workforce downsizing. Reformers attached themselves to a law then recently passed by Congress to begin pushing performance measurement (Kettl, 2005:33-34). An effort was made to learn from business, as in a l997 report <u>Businesslike Government: Lessons Learned from America's Best Companies</u> (Kettl and DiIulio, l995).

Promotion of management reform by politicians was of quite visible. However, less visibly, many career officials supported or promoted the efforts. Career officials promoted management reform in Sweden as early as the l960's (Sundstrom, 2006), and in the U.S. career

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[33] The spread of reform might be analyzed through a neoinstitutionalist lens as a fad, but reinventing government got launched with nary any foreign influence, and it is hard to imagine Thatcher got her ideas from New Zealand.

officials at the end of the l980's promoted introducing total quality management into agencies

(Kaboolian, 2000). Teams of civil servants making suggestions for agency improvements

produced most of the 1993 Gore reinventing government report (see also Kelman, 2005).[34]

One central theme in reform efforts has been debureaucratization. For the founders, there

existed no tradeoff between bureaucracy's constraint-promoting role and its impact on

performance. White (l926: 12) referred approvingly to Taylor's influence on public

administration. Classic discussions of organization design recommended centralized,

hierarchical, rule-driven organizations.[35] However, recent reformers have seen bureaucracy as

an enemy of performance, for reasons similar to Mintzberg's criticism (l979) of "machine

bureaucracy" and Ouchi's (2003) analysis of public school management (undertaken without

awareness of its relationship to new public management).

The Empire Strikes Back

Some public administration scholars embraced reform and aligned themselves with the

performance movement. A new current, calling itself "public management" in conscious self-

distinction to public administration, arose with its own version of performance orientation.

However, a disturbing proportion of the field, particularly in the U.K,[36] has reacted with cranky

skepticism or downright hostility, often displaying nostalgia for good old days of a public sector

not needing to concern itself with pesky performance demands. The three editors of PAR serving

when new public management emerged were all negative. The field's two most-recent

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[34] Business managers brought in as volunteers had been responsible for the Reagan-era Grace Commission.

[35] A contemporary descendent of this view is the argument for rules/standard operating procedures in terms of their role in creating organizational capabilities (e.g. Nelson and Winter, l982:chap. 6; March, Schulz, & Zhou, 2000).

[36] The U.K. hostility is noteworthy in that these efforts have gone on long and visibly. The lack of empirical research is particularly unfortunate given the plethora of government-generated data that could be analyzed.

handbooks (Peters and Pierre, 2003; Ferlie, Lynn, & Pollitt, 2005) have been predominantly

critical. A major theme in essays in <u>Revisiting Waldo's Administrative State</u> was skepticism

about new public management, something the book's Introduction notes. The sad result has been

that, "(u)nlike in the transition to the twentieth century," when public sector reform was "led by

the Progressives and orthodox public administration," current transformation efforts have

proceeded "largely without intellectual or moral support from academia" (Kettl, 2002:21).

In reacting to reform, public administration's separatist chickens came home to roost.

Practitioners had unwittingly challenged the separatist turn. Thus, new public management

caused separatism to become more self-conscious, and to develop a theoretical defense of the

primacy of constraints over goals in government going beyond any articulated before. Perhaps

the most influential in the British torrent of attack is Pollitt's <u>Managerialism and the Public</u>

<u>Service</u> (1990), which popularized the phrase "manageralism" in public administration

discourse.[37] Pollitt initially defines this as a belief "that better management will prove an

effective solvent for a wide range of economic and social ills," which, absent the

overdramatization, might appear no "-ism" but just the unexceptional claim good management

improves performance.[38] What Pollitt doesn't like is the implication of generic management --

"the transfer…of managerialism from private-sector corporations to welfare-state services

represents the injection of an ideological 'foreign body' into a sector previously characterized by

quite different traditions of thought" (p. 1-2, 11). Rhodes (2002:107) states, "The coming of

the New Right with its love of markets heralded lean times for Public Administration. …(I)t

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[37] The expression recurs endlessly in chapters in Ferlie, Lynn, and Pollitt (2005). This word occasionally appears in critical management studies theory (e.g. Clegg and Hardy, l996), generally to mean a mainstream approach centering on managers in organizations rather than on workers or other constituencies.

[38] Adding "-ism" onto a common word typically warns something ominous is being hinted.

found its prescriptions roundly rejected for private sector management skills and marketization."

Frederickson (l997:194-96) worries about an "excessive and uncritical reliance upon the value

assumptions of business administration" in government. Radin (2006:35-41) sees generic

management as a major flaw of the "performance movement."

British critics have associated new public management with the hostility of Thatcherite

Conservatism to the public sector. "(M)anagerialism has become a steadily more prominent

component in the policies adopted by right-wing governments towards their public services.

…(It) is the 'acceptable face' of new-right thinking concerning the state" (Pollitt: l990:11). New

public management has also been linked (e.g. Ferlie, Lynn, & Pollitt: 2005) with "public choice"

theory, i.e. application of microeconomics to analysis of government (e.g. Mueller, 1997). More

broadly, the critics are ideologically skeptical of business. Pollitt complains (l990:7) about new

public management's "favourable analysis of the achievements of the corporate sector during the

last half century." Savoie (l994:146) objects to "enthusiasm…for the merits of private

enterprise." This anti-business tone is illustrated by an aside Peters (200l:45, 206) appends in a

footnote to his comment that supporters of the "customer" metaphor see it as trying to provide

"the same expectations of quality that they have when dealing with a private-sector firm":

"Those of us who deal regularly with airlines and Blue Cross-Blue Shield may consider being

treated like the customer of a private concern to be a threat."

The critics disapprove importing business terms into government, even those one might

regard in a positive light. An example is enmity against the word "customer," as in "customer

service" (e.g. Pollitt, l990:139; du Gay, 2000:108-11; Peters, 200l:45).[39] Critics have gone

beyond observations (Moore, l995:36-38) that government "delivers" obligations, such as to pay

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[39] Another example is hostility to the idea of "entrepreneurship" among nonelected officials, a topic to which I will return in a slightly different context below.

taxes or obey laws, as well as services, as well as the observation that those who may be

concerned about how a service is delivered often include other than the service's immediate

recipients (consumers as well as farmers are affected by farm subsidies). Instead, critics have

more sweeping anxieties, that the word "customer" – as a replacement for "citizen" -- presents an

image of a passive recipient rather than an active agent, or as a selfish monad receiving personal

benefits rather than a participant in a collective enterprise.

Fretting about business metaphors has occasioned resurrection of the

politics/administration dichotomy in the context of concern about introduction of the idea from

business that public managers should behave as "entrepreneurs" (Doig and Hargrove, l987).

Terry (l993; see also Terry, l990) titled a <u>PAR</u> article, "Why We Should Abandon the

Misconceived Quest to Reconcile Public Entrepreneurship with Democracy," concluding "the

concept is dangerous and thus, public administration scholars should avoid using it if at all

possible." In an unfortunate passage, Peters (200l:113) maintains, "It is not clear that in systems

of democratic accountability we really want civil servants to be extremely creative." Savoie

(l994:330) states, "Bureaucracy is designed to administer the laws and policies set by elected

politicians, and as a result, authority delegated to career officials must be handled

bureaucratically in order to accept direction."[40]

What should one make of this? It is true some intellectual underpinning of reform,

particularly in New Zealand, used principal-agent and public choice theory (though, oddly,

reforms there were instituted by the Labour Party). It is legitimate to question public choice

analysis, for reasons similar to those in mainstream organization theory criticizing principal-

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[40]   However, other critics (e.g. Rosenbloom and Ross, l994; Peters and Wright, l996) express the opposite worry, that the distinction between "steering" and "rowing" in Osborne and Gaebler (1992), and hence in new public management, recreates the divide, reducing the ability of nonelected officials to participate in policymaking.

agent models and other import of microeconomics into organization studies (Ghoshal and Insead, l996; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005). And of course, people legitimately hold different views on the overall role of business in society. But is flawed to elide a concern about, say, having health care turned into a for-profit enterprise available only to those able to pay with opposition to using management tools to improve performance just because for-profit firms use them. As for the "customer" idea, it works better in practice than in theory. In reality, the alternative to treating people as "customers" is typically not treating them like "citizens," but treating them like dirt. Since frontline staff easily understand its meaning, the word "customer" provides a powerful metaphor for driving performance improvement.

A conscious defense of primacy of constraints over goals emerged in embrace of what frequently became referred to as "traditional" public administration values.[41] Savoie (1994: 283) worried about "rejecting traditional public-administration concerns with accountability and control, and giving way to the business-management emphasis on productivity, performance, and service to clients." Peters (200l:36) the phrase "cherished traditions of personnel and financial management" to refer to bureaucratic rules; In Peters (200l: 88, 108, 121, 125, 129, 200) reference to "traditional" values such as probity, impartiality, and so forth appear in at least six places. Thus the bane of government is presented as a virtue. And "performance" itself is presented as a negative word. Radin boldly titled a recent (2006) book Challenging the Performance Movement. Lynn (2006:113) characterizes a salutary if innocuous statutory change in the legal purpose of government training that the reinventing government program promoted – changing it from providing "training related to official duties" to "training to improve individual and organizational performance" – as supporting a "darker view of reinvention."

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[41] The previous discussion of the founding decades of academic public administration suggests that, at least for the U.S., the reference should be to traditional values in public-sector practice rather than public administration theory.

Embracing constraints, the critics reject reformers' attack on bureaucracy. Du Gay's In Praise of Bureaucracy (2000) lauds bureaucracy for promoting constraints, while demeaning the significance of performance goals bureaucracy might harm. Phrases such as "probity" and "reliability" abound. Du Gay praises bureaucracy for being "ordered, cautious"; by contrast, new public management judges agencies for "failure to achieve objectives which enterprise alone has set for it" (p.87), presumably performance and cost-consciousness. "(I)f the rule of law is to be upheld and there is to be a system of accountability within government the hierarchy becomes the crucial link between ministers and the decisions taken in their name by their numerous subordinates in the field" (Peters and Wright, l996:632). Peters (200l:200) muses about "a return to the bureaucratic Garden of Eden."

Sometimes the tone is lackadaisical, displaying an opposite of the urgency about performance that reformers seek, evoking the atmosphere of a gentleman's club. Du Gay (2000:92-93) belittles "a 'can do' approach to the business of government," and "dangers that the demand for enthusiasm pose" to the traditional role of civil servants as advisors who, without displaying commitment, present ministers with options and emphasize pitfalls of proposals.[42] The literature on "public service motivation" to be discussed below argues that commitment to agency mission is an important source of motivation for good performance in government, counteracting the more meager economic incentives agencies can offer. But du Gay (p. l29) mocks the effort of one senior civil servant "to ensure that her staff were infused with a discernible sense of 'mission.'" Similarly, though others believe fresh blood often invigorates

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[42] The mainstream literatures on cognitive biases, groupthink, and escalation of commitment (e.g. Bazerman, 2005; Janis, l982; Staw, 1981) do indeed warn of dangers of premature commitment and inappropriate failure to consider disconfirmatory evidence. However, one should seek to create an ability for managers and organizations both to reduce these problems in decisionmaking while still taking advantage of the performance-enhancing impacts of belief in a goal; at a minimum, it is not clear why there should be a division of labor between career officials and politicians whereby the latter specialize in enthusiasm while the former in warding it off.

Kelman, Steven. 2007. FORTHCOMING. "Public Administration and Organization Studies," Book chapter in Arthur Brief and James P. Walsh. Editors. *Academy of Management Annals*. New York: Erlbaum.

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organizations, du Gay (p.128-29; see also Peters, 200l:121-22)) is skeptical of recruiting outsiders. He quotes a business manager brought in to run an agency who had stated, "I don't expect to become a 'civil servant," and asks, "Quite what benefits are meant to accrue from having someone occupying a senior position within the Civil Service who doesn't want to be a civil servant are not at all clear."

Although many critics of new public management come from the political Left, this emphasis suggests traditionalist conservatism as well. Terry (l990:40l) cites Burke on worry about subjecting "our valuable institutions" to the "mercy of untried speculations." Radin (2006:16-l9) frets about "unintended consequences" of using performance measures to improve performance, which, as Hirschman notes in The Rhetoric of Reaction (1991:chap. 2), is a classic conservative argument against change, the "perversity thesis" that "everything backfires."[43]

It should give contemporary bureaucracy advocates pause that the Austrian economists, such as von Mises and Hayek, who advocated a very limited government role in society, favored a bureaucratic form of government organization because it promoted impartial treatment and consistency over time, which they saw as important ways government allowed markets to work (Armbruster, 2005). For them, constraints loomed so large because government's goals were so modest. For those envisioning a more active government role, this should be disquieting.

It may be noted, in their defense, that the critics were correct to note[44] there are often issues with the special context of government that make performance improvement efforts harder than in firms. It is also easy to sympathize with the sarcastic dismissal of guru nostrums, often taken from business bestsellers, which have formed part of public management reform.

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[43] Perverse consequences of course occur, but the appropriate comparison is not between a perfect change, without such consequences, and an imperfect one where they are found, but between an imperfect change and the status quo.

[44] See p.5 of this review for some examples of these differences.

Furthermore, the bark in the critiques has often been worse than their bite. The last chapters of Pollitt (1990) soften its anti-"managerialist" message considerably, though this is not what is generally remembered. The "alternatives" to managerialism he presents all "place performance and quality (as defined by consumers) above unreflective rule-following or conformity to precedent." Though emphasizing differences, Pollitt agrees (p. l75) that "it might be argued that all the major alternatives point in roughly the same direction" as managerialism. The last chapter of Radin (2006) states the "performance movement" needs to change its ways and democratically "involve a range of actors" in establishing performance goals, but few performance measurement advocates would disagree. One of the last pages of du Gay (2000:144) states that "(t)he function of officials…cannot be exhaustively defined in terms of achieving results with maximum 'economic efficiency,' 'value for money' or 'best value.' There is (sic) a host of other obligations and responsibilities imposed on state officials"; this is not exceptional, except that earlier pages confine themselves to belittling concern with results at all. None of all this adds up to the animus that animates these attacks.

Performance-Oriented Scholarship in Public Administration

There has been a minority performance-oriented contingent within public administration, many at the University of Georgia and Syracuse (two of the strongest U.S. public administration programs). Rainey's text Understanding and Managing Public Organizations (2003) takes a performance-oriented approach and cites some mainstream organization literature.[45] In a lecture to the American Society of Public Administration (2005:391, emphasis in original), Ingraham stated "performance matters so much for government…that we must keep the fundamental performance promise: our only choice is to use taxpayer and donor dollars in the very best way

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[45] Rainey's master's degree is in psychology and his PhD is from a public administration program cohoused with a business school.

possible." Ingraham, Joyce, and Donahue (2003) report on the Government <u>Performance</u> Project

(for state governments) and the Federal <u>Performance</u> Project – emphases added! -- both

foundation-funded efforts designed more to provide information to inform the public than to

constitute research.[46] The projects measured and rated management capacity, which the authors

define (p.15) as "government's intrinsic ability to marshal, develop, direct, and control its

financial, human, physical, and information resources." Unfortunately, measurement was limited

to management systems (though these included a capacity to "manage for results" by developing

and using performance measures) rather than substantive performance. Selden and Brewer

(2000) used a structural equation model with employee survey data to test Locke and Latham

(1990a; l990b) "high performance cycle" in explaining senior federal government manager

performance. Perry (e.g. Angle and Perry, l98l; Lee and Perry, 2002) have empirically

examined issues such as employee motivation in the public sector and the impact of information

technology investments on government productivity. In a series of papers, Meier and O'Toole

(2002, 2003; O'Toole and Meier, 2003) have examined the influence of various managerial and

organization practices on variance in school-level performance on Texas educational tests. A

group at Cardiff University (e.g. Boyne, Meier, O'Toole & Walker, 2006; Boyne, 2006) have,

alone in the U.K., studied public organization performance (local governments, using variance

across them for quantitative empirical analysis).

<u>"Public Management"</u>

Scholars interested in government performance improvement mostly come out either of

public policy schools or think tanks. During the l970's several universities, such as Harvard,

Berkeley, Duke, Michigan, Texas (Austin), and Minnesota established master's programs in

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[46] The projects were undertaken in cooperation with <u>Governing</u> and <u>Government Executive</u> magazines respectively, both publications aimed at senior government managers.

"public policy" as opposed to public administration. Most of the distinction involved greater

attention the public policy programs gave to the substance of policies (health or national security

policy, for instance), analyzed using microeconomics, prescriptive decision theory, and

econometric evaluation research. However, there also grew from these programs, starting at

Harvard, a new current in studying public organizations calling itself "public management."

"Public management" defined itself in two ways. First, it focused on the behavior of top

executives rather than on issues of more interest to middle or functional managers (Rainey,

l990:162).[47] Second, to many the word "management" rather than "administration" sounded

more muscular, implying "a decisiveness and proactiveness that appear to be lacking in

government" (p.171); public policy programs sought to train people "able to move an agency"

rather than just play "a custodial role" (Lynn, 2003:16, quoting Stokes.[48] Public management

thus offered a new, somewhat different emphasis on performance. And, although many U.S.-

centric public management scholars had never heard the phrase "new public management," some

wrote with sympathy about its ideas.[49]

The most important work in the public management tradition is Moore's Creating Public

Value (1995). The central concept in the book is "public value," creation in government of

services citizens value at more than they cost to produce. "(T)he aim of managerial work in the

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[47] An academic pecking order phenomenon was also at play here, since the public policy programs were generally at universities with higher standing than those with public administration programs; faculty at public policy schools occasionally stated with arrogance that public administration graduates would work for their graduates.

[48] Looking back to an earlier era, Savoie (l994:172), a public administration separatist, writes, "The term administration rather than management best described government operations. …The role of administrator involved the applying of formalized procedures."

[49] A new journal supporting, broadly, public management reform, revealingly called itself the International Public **Management** Journal; it published a number of papers defending new public management (e.g. Behn, l998; Gruening, 200l).

public sector is to create <u>public</u> value just as the aim of managerial work in the private sector is

to create <u>private</u> value" (p. 28, emphasis in original).

Moore (p. l7) criticizes a view that public managers be "expected to be faithful agents

of…mandates" the political system gives, which "produces a characteristic mindset…of

administrators or bureaucrats rather than of entrepreneurs, leaders, or executives." This mindset

"denies the public sector the key ingredient on which its private sector specifically relies to

remain responsive, dynamic, and value creating: namely, the adaptability and efficiency that

come from using the imaginations of people called managers to combine what they can sense of

public demands with access to resources and control over operational capacity to produce value."

<u>Creating Public Value</u> sought to promote "strategic management" in government.

Broadly, this means (p. 20) that "instead of simply devising the means for achieving mandated

purposes, (managers) become important agents in helping to discover and define what is valuable

to do. Instead of being responsible only for guaranteeing continuity, they become important

innovators in changing what public organizations do and how they do it." Moore sees

managerial discretion as "an opportunity for leadership." He specifically states that business

school work on corporate strategy is relevant to thinking about strategy for a public manager. A

public manager's strategy, Moore argues, should have three elements -- goals reflecting the

public value the agency seeks to create, an account of how support can be achieved for these

goals in the "authorizing environment," and a plan for creating operating capacity to achieve the

goals. Since all these jobs are in service of creating public value, Moore's greatest contribution

may be seen as expanding demands on the manager for what s/he needs to do to achieve good

performance – not only create operating capacity, but also participate in the political process.

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Another influential book is Barzelay's <u>Breaking Through Bureaucracy</u> (1992). The book is based on a case study of transformation of an overhead organization in Minnesota with responsibility for personnel, purchasing, information technology, and other administrative functions into separate organizations, one a fee-for-service voluntary source of purchasing or information technology services, the other responsible for regulatory controls in these areas. Barzelay characterizes public management reform as a break with the "bureaucratic paradigm" from the Progressive era in favor of a "post-bureaucratic paradigm." He presents a number of contrasts between the two – the former "defines itself both by the amount of resources it controls and by the tasks it performs," the latter "by the results it achieves for its customers."

Other scholars at public policy schools, such as Bardach, Behn, and Kelman, embraced a performance orientation that focused, more than Moore, on internal operations rather than the agency's external environment. Bardach's <u>Getting Agencies to Work Together</u> (1998) is a study of cross-agency collaborations to take joint responsibility for delivering a service (such as social services for people with multiple problems), probably the strongest both methodologically and prescriptively in a growing but generally weak literature on this topic. Bardach's first chapter is called straightforwardly "Creating Value through Collaboration," endorsing both "managing for results" and what he calls (p. 6) managerial "purposiveness" ("a combination of public spiritedness and creativity"). Behn's <u>Leadership Counts</u> (l99l) is a case study of a successful state program to train disadvantaged workers that seeks to explain, in a guru-like style, management practices which, Behn argues, help explain successful performance (including "making government more businesslike"). His <u>Rethinking Democratic Accountability</u> (2001) is an important theoretical work arguing that accountability to which government agencies are held needs to move from accountability for process and rule-following – in the language of this

review, accountability for respecting constraints – to accountability for results (performance).

Behn has also been the most prolific public management scholar writing about non-financial performance measurement (e.g. Behn, l99l:chap. 4; 2003; 2006). Kelman's Procurement and Public Management (l990) has an anti-bureaucracy thrust similar to Barzelay. His Unleashing Change (2005) is a quantitative empirical study, analyzing a survey of l600 frontline civil servants, of a change process in the procurement system that was part of "reinventing government" and sought to implement ideas in Kelman's earlier book.

To this list should also be added work from scholars at think tanks, most prominently Kettl and Light of the Brookings Institution.[50] Kettl coauthored with two senior practitioners and Ingraham a study (Kettl, Ingraham, Sanders, & Horner, 1996) on civil service reform subtitled "building a government that works." Noting (pp.3-5) that "(g)overnment's performance can only be as good as the people who do its work," the study called for debureaucratizing a system creating inflexibility and insufficiently rewarding good performance, and for building a "culture of performance" along with "a culture of public service."[51] Light's Four Pillars of High Performance (2005) presents research by RAND on organizational performance, though the book's orientation is not limited to government agencies.[52] Using an interesting methodology that asked RAND researchers to think about the organization they knew best, inquired about practices at that organization, and then used regression to develop predictors of high performance, delegating authority for routine decisions, investing in new ideas, and managing using performance measures were three of the seven strongest predictors. Altshuler and Behn

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[50] Kettl recently moved to the University of Pennsylvania and Light to New York University.

[51] They therefore saw a public service culture in the service of performance, not as a justification for separatism.

[52] RAND also published its own collection High-Performance Government (Klitgaard & Light, 2005), focusing specifically on government.

(1997) and Borins (1998), both university-based academics, have written on determinants of government innovation using as their data source applications to the Ford Foundation/Kennedy School of Government Innovations in American Government award program.

What should one make of the public management current? One of its remarkable features is that it has created a wedge between preoccupation with the political role of unelected officials and public administration separatism: it incorporates participation of unelected officials in the political process, but in service of better agency performance.

More generally, public management sees itself as radically departing from public administration; however, I believe one should see it as heir of the field's founders. This is an unconventional view. True, the founders advocated separating politics and administration; Moore (1995:21, 74-76) sees this as the essence of "traditional doctrines of public administration" he was criticizing. However, their actual purpose was to argue for the importance of public administration: politics and administration were to be kept separate so agencies could perform effectively, without political interference likely to be indifferent to competence. Furthermore, as we have seen,[53] it is unfair to suggest more recent public administration scholarship had accepted this dichotomy. Second, it is true the founders used different language, "economy and efficiency" rather than "performance." Barzelay (1992:118-21) contrasts "efficiency" from the bureaucratic paradigm with "quality and value" in post-bureaucracy. I would argue that, although the words suggest different emphases, both worry about goals rather than constraints. Finally, the founders did advocate the bureaucratic form and "scientific management," while contemporary performance advocates seek to "break through bureaucracy." However, the founders would have argued bureaucracy would best produce the "results" -- though that's not language they would have used -- Barzelay favors.

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[53] See pp. 18-20 of this review.

Lastly, public management literature virtually all uses case studies, with little quantitative or experimental work – making it much weaker methodologically than the best work coming out of public administration, especially from younger but even a handful of the older scholars. This is partly because of focus on top leader behavior, which drives one-off accounts (and partly because of Harvard Business School's influence on Harvard's Kennedy School). The literature is also heavy on "best practice" accounts Lynn (l996) rightly criticizes for selection on the dependent variable. So the public management turn has produced no <u>methodological</u> renewal.

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR ORGANIZATION STUDIES

A number of issues are more important in a government than a business context, because they involve organizational phenomena more central to agencies than firms. For this reason, these issues have been under-researched in mainstream organization studies, though they fit comfortably into a mainstream sensibility. An organization studies research agenda that took public management seriously – and a public administration research agenda that took goals and, hence, performance, seriously -- would thus increase attention given to:

(1) <u>bureaucratic organization forms</u>: This issue has virtually disappeared from the mainstream screen since Mintzberg (l979), except for interesting work (e.g. Feldman, 2000; Pentland and Feldman, 2003, Levinthal and Rerup, 2006) on how routines evolve.. Impacts of bureaucratic organization on performance, and alternatives to bureaucracy, remain important for government. Research questions might include, for example, whether there are interaction effects between bureaucratic structure and dispositions, or between internal rules and the nature of external (including media) oversight in explaining behavioral reactions to a bureaucratic environment; or field experiments examining performance impacts of differentially rulebound or hierarchical environments in different decision situations and for different employees; or

techniques managers might use to counteract the signal a rulebound environment sends that

one's job consists of nothing beyond following rules

(2) <u>non-financial performance measurement:</u> New public management has promoted use

of non-financial performance measures as the public sector's counterpart to profit. Some

theoretical and empirical literature on the topic out of public administration and economics (e.g.

Hatry, l999; Propper and Wilson, 2003) exists, as does significant mainstream literature on the

impact of goal-setting on performance (Latham, 2007). The topic needs considerable additional

theoretical and empirical work (particularly fieldwork in agencies) on performance measurement

as a performance-enhancing intervention in absence of financial incentives.[54]

(3) <u>"public service motivation":</u> There is evidence (e.g. Crewson l997; Jurkiewicz <u>et al</u>

l998; Houston 2000; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Brehm and Gates, l999 present an interesting

political science account) that performance which extrinsic incentives elicits in firms can be

elicited by intrinsic rewards from government service, promoting better performance. The

general topic of motivating good performance using non-cash incentives, and the specific

question of what managers can do to encourage public service motivation (Grant, 2007), needs

better empirical/theoretical work.

(4) <u>rare events: emergency management, finding terrorists</u>: Government agencies must

frequently prepare for the unusual, seek out needle in haystacks, or display high-reliability

performance. Performing well in such situations requires a mix of operational (e.g. managing

surge capacity) and cognitive (e.g. noticing the unusual in the first place) capabilities. Much

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[54] The business literature on stakeholder management and the balanced scorecard (Kaplan and Norton, l996) also discusses non-financial performance issues, but certainly for the latter and for most of the former (Walsh, 2005), the non-financial performance measures are seen as being at the service of a superordinate goal of financial performance. For public organizations, no such subordination exists; non-financial and financial (in a public-sector context, cost-control and/or efficiency) performance measures have independent status.

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existing literature on "situational awareness" has an individual-cognition, engineering flavor

(e.g. Endsley, Bolte, & Jones, 2003). Snook (2000) discusses situation awareness in an

organization context, and indeed, a government one – the accidental shootdown of Army

helicopters by F-l5 fighters over northern Iraq in l994.[55] There is also a small body of literature

on high-reliability organizations, both from public administration (e.g. LaPorte and Consolini,

l99l; Rochlin, l996) and organization studies (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001). The next stage in the

Weick/Sutcliffe research program on this needs, I believe, to be more rigorously empirical in its

examination of mindfulness and whether there are tradeoffs between routine performance and

mindfulness. Tushman and O'Reilly's (1996) "ambidexterity" construct in a government

context, both for emergency management and for detecting weak environmental change signals

(e.g. new terrorist tactics) may be relevant here as well, but needs operationalization.

   (5) <u>interorganizational production and "governance":</u> In recent years, it has become

common to speak of a shift from "government" to "governance" in delivering government

performance. Governance involves "the processes and institutions, both formal and informal,

that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group," while government is "the subset that

acts with authority and creates formal obligations" (Keohane and Nye, 2000:12).

"'Governance,'" notes Kettl (2002:119) "is a way of describing the links between government

and its broader environment." To some extent, this literature parallels that in organization

studies on cross-firm alliances (e.g. Powell, l990; Polodny and Page, l998).

   The overwhelming bulk of cross-boundary production occurs through contracting and

other indirect policy tools Salamon (198l, 2002) discusses, as well as collaboration within

government across agency boundaries (Bardach, l998; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Thomas,

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[55] A business school academic, Snook had been an Army officer and West Point instructor before writing the dissertation forming the basis for the book.

2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). But enough examples exist – from mundane, such as "adopt a highway" programs, to momentous, such as public-private collaboration against terrorism – that newer forms of "collaborative governance" shouldn't be ignored (Selsky and Parker, 2005).

Contracting is a crucial way public services are delivered (Kettl, l988; Kelman, 2002), more important in agencies than firms. Determinants of contractor performance have received some attention in organization studies, often from a transaction cost economics perspective (e.g. Mayer and.Argyres, 2004; Mayer and Nickerson, 2005; Srinivasan and Brush, 2006). There are also a few empirical articles on this topic in a government context (Provan and Milward, 1995; Milward and Provan, 2003; Brown and Potoski, 2003, 2006). Compared to its importance in government, this domain has been badly underresearched. For contracting, the main question is predictors of contractor performance; in particular, more good empirical work is needed testing the performance impact of relational/trust-based versus principal-agent models for contract management, including possible impacts of moderator variables. For cross-agency collaboration, questions involve incentives for collaboration and evolution of collaborative institutions absent (in contrast to cross-firm alliances) profit incentive, as well as impacts of collaboration on performance, about which we know virtually nothing. Important questions about "governance" fall outside areas organization theory has studied. However, in a world where organization studies took government seriously, that would be an opportunity, not a problem.

A CONCLUDING NOTE

The agendas of those researching government and business will never be identical. There are important issues for both kinds of organizations unique to each. Those interested in public management will care little about research on corporate strategy, for example. But it is possible creatively to mix questions from mainstream organization theory with the special political

context of government; examples are Hammond and Thomas' work (1989) on design decisions about departmentalization, and broader work (e.g. Moe, 1993) on the impact of political choices about agency location on decisions the agency makes.

Greater involvement in public management problems would be good for mainstream organization studies. Research access to agencies is relatively easy. Rich presence of archival and memoir data also makes agencies a fruitful research location, an opportunity some studying decisionmaking or leadership, and on occasion escalation of commitment, social loafing, or sensemaking (e.g. Staw, 1981; Snook, 2000; Eden, 2004) already use. Greater public sector involvement can be good for organization studies for another reason. Just as isolation of public administration from organization studies encouraged the former to pay too much attention to constraints, so isolation discourages the latter from paying enough attention to ethical issues for firms. Exposure to a public environment may encourage rebalancing. Furthermore, scholars studying business may be able to adapt material public administrationists have developed about managing constraints to a business context.[56]

Most importantly, the public sector needs help with its performance problems. Mainstream organization studies can provide help both from having mainstream scholars engaging these problems, but also by providing public administration exposure to the mainstream, to give it a greater dose of the performance orientation government needs, as well as to contemporary methods that can generate research useful for helping government.

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[56] Public administration literature is less relevant to questions of stakeholder management and conflict resolution than one might imagine, because this literature (e.g. on political management -- such as Moore, l995; Heymann, 1987) and on public deliberation -- such as Reich l990) assumes a context of decisionmaking in a democratic political system that does not apply to firms.

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