


9. Section 406 of the National Housing Act (12 U.S.C. 1729f(a)). FADA is often referred to as a "406 corporation."


11. Arguably, the Federal Assets Disposition Association, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Federal Savings and Loan Association, was established in contravention of provisions of the Government Corporation Control Act (31 U.S.C. 9102) which provide, in part: "An agency may establish or acquire a corporation to act as an agency only by or under a law of the United States specifically authorizing the action."


13. No element of the privatization program has generated more debate and heat than the efforts to privatize prisons and corrections. The legal profession, as demonstrated by the 1986 Resolution of the American Bar Association (United States Law Week (February 18, 1986), p. 2416), is largely opposed to privatizing prisons and corrections on constitutional and statutory grounds.

The premise underlying most legal criticisms of privatization of corrections is that a fundamental difference exists between "state action" and "private action" and this difference is to be found in law, not economic functions. "The Fifths and Fourteenth Amendments, which prohibit the government from denying federal constitutional rights and which guarantee due process of law, apply to the acts of the state and federal governments, and not to the acts of private parties or entities." In Robins, "Privatization of Corrections: Defining the Issues," Federal Bar News and Journal 33 (May/June 1986): 196. See Shelley v. Kraemer 334 U.S. 1, 13 (1948); Civil Rights Cases, 109 U.S. 3, 11 (1883).


---

Toward a Feminist Perspective in Public Administration Theory

Camilla Stivers

At present there is virtually no published theoretical work from a feminist perspective in the field of public administration. I hope to make clear in this essay what I mean by a "feminist perspective," to offer from this base some questions that have occurred to me, and to begin to sketch out some initial ideas about what a feminist approach to public administration theory might be like.

To begin requires reviewing some background on the nature of feminist thinking, in order to make clear what I mean by a feminist perspective. I then suggest four current areas in public administration theory where feminist thought might be productively used: the question of administrative knowledge, the model of the ideal public servant, the nature of administrative discretion, and the dimensions of the administrative state. Each of these issues might—and I hope one day will—serve as the focus of in-depth feminist treatment. My purpose in touching on four in a single essay is to indicate that there are many possible applications of feminist theory to public administration (no doubt many more than the ones I offer here), and to try to stimulate dialogue on this general topic.

Feminist Theory

Most of all, feminist theorists agree that, whatever else it is, feminist theory is critical of existing reality. Feminists view women's historical exclusion from certain human pursuits (such as politics) and confinement to others (such as homemaking) as, if not always deliberate, on the part of the individual men, certainly not "natural." Feminists argue that such arrangements make women more likely than men to encounter neglected perspectives and to ask submerged questions about the terms and characteristics of our common existence. Feminists are in general agreement that to be a feminist means to bring up these left out or ignored ideas. Understandably, these tend to be experienced by those who take existing reality for granted in the way they usually are intended: as criticism of business, as usual.

Under the general rubric of criticism fall a host of different perspectives, ranging from liberal-incremental to quite radical ideas about the proper focus and scope of the critique and the extent of the remedies thought necessary. Over the course of a dialogue that has been going on in the feminist community for some 20 years, two very general sorts of perspective have emerged. One, typically but not exclusively associated with liberal feminists, addresses the historical dictionary in sex roles by seeking to wipe it out to various degrees. This perspective treat perceived differences in men's and women's behavior as largely a side effect of societal sex roles and argues that, by opening up existing arrangements to women, such differences, or at least our feelings that they are important, will largely disappear. Existing values such as those on which liberal politics is based are largely accepted. Individual rights, procedural justice, and so on form the basis of the critique (boasting the system on its own petard, so to speak) rather than being the object of it. The Equal Rights Amendment, affirmative action, and comparable worth policies are products of critique from the liberal feminist perspective.

The second perspective, which has emerged somewhat in reaction to the first, takes the position that perceived differences between men and women, whether natural or not, matter. Existing societal systems and norms are seen not as "human" but as the products of male experiences and values. In this view, women's...
experiences and the values emerging from them are not only different, they are worthy in their own right, and need to be injected in one way or another into existing arrangements, which are seen as unnecessarily one-sided. Presumptive "feminine" values such as nurturance, connectedness, and intuition are to be celebrated, even idealized, rather than left behind in the quest for equality. The work of theorists like Wendy Brown (1988), Joan Landes (1988), Jean Grimshaw (1986), and Lynne Segal (1987) is rich with material suggestive of possible directions.

My intent in thinking about public administration from a feminist perspective is to work from this potentially evolutionary perspective. Within it, I believe, a conversation could develop that might suggest or support new ways of thinking about important issues, concepts and questions in public administration: ways that use rather than ignore the neglected perspectives reflected in particular experiences of particular groups of women. Ultimately, a conversation that takes this sort of direction can transform the field in a positive way. But such a project will not be easily accomplished even if there could be universal agreement about its desirability—and I do not feel myself about the possibility that such a consensus may emerge. The requirements include trying to open up the discourse of public administration to these perspectives; being willing to be radically critical in doing so; but also building from, rather than casting aside, ideas that are already central and valued in the field. I believe that to reject, cast aside, or treat as irrelevant the central issues in the field would amount not to constructing a "feminist perspective on public administration" but to advocating a revolution rather than a transformation. Nevertheless, I am prepared to admit that if public administration deals seriously with feminist theory, the result is likely to strike many as a revolution, albeit, I trust, a bloodless one.

With these initial thoughts about a feminist perspective sketched out, we can move on to the more central part of the discussion: What might a feminist perspective in public administration theory be like? Obviously the development of such a framework is a much more ambitious exercise than one paper, or one person, can encompass. But simply to get a discussion going, I want to suggest some apparently promising avenues along which to approach this work: to sound familiar public administration themes, but, in line with the feminist project, to raise neglected issues and suggest possible new approaches. Many public admin-

\[ p. 41 \] The standpoint that would make this possible is still emerging; but clearly it requires a process of evolution rather than whole-sloth discovery. The work of theorists like Wendy Brown (1988), Joan Landes (1988), Jean Grims
down essay argued that administration was legislative, taking its orders from the representatives' legislature and executing them according to dictates of ratio

tation, comprehensiveness, and efficiency. It may be true, as Paul Van Riper (1984) sug

gests, that nobody paid much attention to Wilson's essay for the first 50 years or so after its appearance. Clearly, however, the issue Wilson raised has been and is still at the center of the field. The idea that administration can and should be neutral, and with it the notion that a politics-administration dichotomy legitimates the activities of public bureaucracies, today seems simplistic and unrealistic to many. Despite numerous attempts to sound its death knell, however, the culture of neutral expertise is alive and well, as Rosenbloom (1987)—to just take one example—argues.

This is a many-sided dilemma; but one particularly vexing aspect appears to be that we can neither live with the idea of neutral technique nor do without it. Administrators long for right answers in the face of uncontroversial facts at the same time as they recognize the undesirably value-laden nature of their enterprise. No one is naive enough to cling to the idea of a simple fact-value dichotomy any longer, yet we all do obfuscate to apparent objectivity.

What can a feminist perspective bring to this problem? No easy answers, surely. But feminism does appear to me to offer some different possibilities, in different ways of looking at the situation. For one thing, feminist theorists have argued that the importance of the idea of neutrality can be traced to liberal individualist insistence that the state maintain moral neutrality with respect to the preferences of aut

tonomous persons. They suggest that the notion of a state—or a state of nature—made up of isolated individuals is an idea foreign to the experiences of most women, whose child bearing and child rearing responsibilities make them acutely aware of the extent to which hu

man beings must depend upon each other to survive. If, instead, we had predicated the nature of modern state upon the essential inter

connectedness of human beings, we might be able to conceptualize public values somewhat differently. For example, we might base the public interest dimensions of administrative decision-making as much on the discovery of mutual needs as on the adjudication of competing claims among disconnected utility maximizers. Indeed, mothering (see Chodorow, 1978) and "maternal thinking" (Ruddick, 1989)—despite the neologism "parenting," the activities in question are still largely women's province—are principal counterfactuals to the notion that human behavior can be adequately summarized as self-interested. We have yet, however, to develop a political understanding of interconnectedness, or community, which does not depend for its coherence on an explicitly apolitical view of traditionally feminine activ

tivities as it reflected in the works of Aristotle and Rousseau, and thus on an implicitly masculine understanding of politics (as I expand upon below).

On the question of objectivity, feminists have criticized for their masculinism both linear rational thinking and the attempt to achieve un

biased knowledge by means of detached obser

vation. To be sure, human systems organized according to and seemingly dependent upon this mode of thought have been historically male. Sandra Harding (1987) and Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) have each written compellingly in this vein. Keller's treatment of the Baconian metaphor linking the inductive acquisition of knowledge about nature with the act of taking a woman by force exemplifies this stream of thinking in a vivid way. (According to Bacon, the scientific method has "the power to conquer and reduce [Nature], to make her to her founda

\[ 4.6 \] Toward a Feminist Perspective in Public Administration Theory

\[ 4.7 \]
neglect the diversity of women's— and men's—experiences. What I do think feminism usefully emphasizes is the partiality of the dominant. In other words, it seems counterproductive to assume that there is something inherently masculine about linear thinking or the quest for objectivity, as it appears both that women are as capable of such thinking as men and that men are similarly able to think intuitively and holistically. In a similar way, talk of an essential "women's experience" or "women's values" cancels out the great variety in perspectives, life chances, behaviors, and so on of people of different races, classes, and cultures. But it does seem misguided to take values as universal simply because they are pervasive, and to assume that the men who set up and still predominate in social systems, and their demonstrated values whatever they may be in particular settings, represent the human norm. Although there may not be universal male or female experiences, clearly there are in every society socially constructed genders, which carry with them properties to look at the world in quite different ways. We can use this awareness to expose the incompleteness of our understandings: to undercut, for example, the taken-for-grantedness of values like efficiency, comprehensiveness, and objectivity. From this perspective, a substitute for or way of moving beyond neatness of technique and standards might be to take steps to ensure that the full diversity of perspectives reflected in the field of concern become ingredients in the administrative process. I suggest, further, that it is similarly one-sided to assume that out of diversity must come conflict rather than collaboration, or that, when conflict does occur, it must be solved by reference to "objective" standards or techniques.

The Model of the Ideal Public Servant

Because of the decade-long epidemic of bureaucrat-bashing characterizing the public conversation, public administration has been preoccupied with restoring the public servant to a position of societal respect. In the community of theorists, this effort has taken the form of trying to reconceptualize the nature of public service. According to Mitchell and Scott (1987), the American people are disenchanted not so much with their institutions as with the people who run them; in particular, they note, the trustworthiness of people in public life has been called into question. Out of this sense of awareness have come examinations of the ideal personal characteristics or "image" of the public administrator. For example, the 1988 meeting of the American Society for Public Administration featured a symposium on the image of the public administrator and a panel dealing with the life stories of several "exemplary" public servants. The sense of need for this dialogue can be traced to the argument made by the framers of the Constitution, that men [sic] of virtue would be attracted to public life by the possibility of winning public honor and fame, a motivation not only considered noble at the time but perhaps even heroic. Fame is a public virtue, one that must be earned through the effort to be a force in history, one bestowed by an audience of the wise and the good (Adair, 1974). In his examination of the lives of Alexander, Wellington, and Ulysses Grant, John Keegan (1987) argues that heroic leadership is a public performance, which validates the hero's authority through the display of virtue. Hero worship, or recourse to exemplars as guidance, becomes structural, a way of stabilizing the political order. Given this, it is understandable that public administration should be seeking an exemplary— even heroic— image. While the typical public servant may have to continue to labor in anonymity, at least the public service as a whole might take on heroic qualities and in so doing validate authority.

The question of what this image ought to be, however, remains an open one. Feminists have not been slow to take up the question of the nature of heroism, nor to point to its essential masculinist, at least in traditional terms. Certainly most of us would agree that our administrative heroes need not all be men, but we have not yet begun to think about the extent to which the inclusion of women in the pantheon of administrative heroes changes the canons based on which we decide what an exemplary public servant is. Feminist examinations of heroism (e.g., Edwards, 1984; Pearson, 1986) stress the masculinity of the traditional public

 Article 46 • Toward a Feminist Perspective in Public Administration—

the deepest spiritual significance (see, for example— though I take issue with some of its interpretations— Campbell's [1968] great The Hero with a Thousand Faces). Thus the feminist challenge to the idea of heroism is in essence, though stress may be attached to the social transformation that could result. Among the possible implications for public administration of reshaping our understanding of heroism may be the need to rethink the desirability of public honor and fame. The framers of the Constitution believed that only a minority of men [sic]— the "better sort"— were qualified to lead the nation. Are the "best" public administrators selected to public service, as the founders thought, by the opportunity to accept an audience of the wise and the good? Should they be? It appears that many of the modern images of the public administrator, such as the entrepreneur, the advocate, the decision-maker, derive their legitimacy and their appeal from their potential for individual visibility— for glory. Yet it may be that glory is possible for only a few and less widely attractive than might be thought. The need to re-win the public's trust may call for more broadly interactive images.

Administrative Discretion

Theorists who reject the notice of public administration as a neutral technique view it instead as a form of governance. They see governance in the exercise of discretion, where administrators, in order to breathe life into vague legislative mandates, make substantive judgments about the nature of the public interest in particular situations, decisions that have impacts for good or ill on people's lives. The "Blacksburg Manifesto" (Wamsley et al., 1987), to take one example, is an attempt to substantiate the legitimacy of administrative governance. As the Blackstone in his Commentaries pointed out, the exercise of public authority is an inescapable fact of post-industrial life. Administrative governance is the use of bureaucratic authority for the purpose of system steering; the Manifesto takes the position that the fragmented nature of our system of government makes this a positive opportunity. Norton Long (1981) has also argued along these lines, to the
effect that it is a good thing that administrators see themselves to be governing, because no one else is.

The key question is the basis on which discretion shall be exercised. The Blackbourn theorists argue that legitimate administrative discretion is informed and guided by an agency-specific set of normative elements, including the Constitution, laws, regulations, history, agency culture, and a commitment to the "widest possible interpretation of the public interest."

The Blackbourn and similar perspectives do much to counter public administration's overly technocratic tendencies, but their vulnerability to charges of elitism still seems significant. Clearly the Manifesto is meant as a thoughtful reply to the charge that, because administrators are not elected and cannot take detailed orders from the legislature, their decisions are not legitimate. The issue remains a live one, however. In addition, justifications of administrative governance have a hollow ring unless they confront the essentially undemocratic nature of bureaucratic hierarchy.

Questions of power, authority, and hierarchy are central to a growing body of feminist literature, although no one writing in this vein has yet taken up the issue of administrative governance. (Kathy Ferguson's The Feminist Case against Bureaucracy [1984], to my mind, despite its virtues neglects fundamental differences between public and private organizations.) But clearly certain feminist ideas appear relevant to an understanding of administration in American society, a problematic insight to many whose political comfort depends upon viewing the United States as an exception to the inevitable development—at least in industrializing countries—of institutional capacity for system steering. Since Blackbeard, we have had to acknowledge the substantive, organized exercise of (presumably) legitimate coercion by an "integrated network of institutions, procedures, and human talents." (Skowronek, 1982, p. 15). The persistence of work in the field stressing the fractionalized nature of the American system of governance and the need for administration as a balance wheel or fulcrum, attest to our continuing ambivalence about the American administrative state (as Skowronek points out, an institution built around administrative capacity rather than one presuming its absence): we want it to be an entity capable of significant power, but as administrators we are reluctant to see that power as oppressive, even potentially. Therefore we stress its necessity. Critics to the right and left of mainstream public administration, of course, remind us of this potential continually, though the nature of the oppression is viewed differently from the two vantage points.

It seems to me that our mixed feelings about the existence of a positive state have to do with our ambivalence about the nature of freedom and what sort of state is required in order to ensure that freedom. The chief problem of liberal thinking helps to shed light on both.

The first has to do with the dichotomy between the public and private realms on which our liberal heritage depends. The liberal state, as we know, developed in opposition to monarchy, a patriarchal system if ever there was one. Feminist political theorists join with others in pointing out that the liberal case against monarchy depended on justifying a societal space beyond the reach of "l'état c'est moi," but they see the development of that space as resting on the exclusion of women from it. From their perspective, we are still operating within an intellectual inheritance in which freedom for some (i.e., men) is profoundly dependent on limiting the freedom of others (women).

For example, Joan Landes' (1988) study of the French Revolution argues that monarchy feminized men by keeping men and women equally helpless in the face of the king's power. Her account portrays an age in which a performative public sphere, while ultimately controlled by the king, offered, in the institution of the salon, opportunities for both men and women to be and act in public. The salon, known literally as "le monde" (the world) was a social institution and cultural terrain controlled by women, who hosted the gatherings. There, new individuals were taught the style, language, and art necessary in order to operate in a performative public sphere, while ultimately controlled by the king, offered, in the institution of the salon, opportunities for both men and women to be and act in public. Landes argues that men came to see women's power in the salons as analogous to the king's monopoly on the terms of political life. The challenge to patriarchy thus came to be equated in men's minds with the silencing and banishment of women.

This vision has deep roots, of course, dating back to ancient Greece. The polis, idealized by so many as the quintessential public space, depended for its existence on the simultaneous presence of a household where women were confined and where the necessities of life could be taken care of by women and slaves, thus freeing men for the life of action-beyond-purpose portrayed so glowingly by Hannah Arendt (1963). (For a devastating critique of this aspect of the Athenian city-state, see Kvenla [1985].)

The political theory that freedom depends on a division between public and private worlds that took place during industrialization; work became something done outside the home, so that women's traditional duties were no longer carried out alongside men's but in isolation. The spread of wage labor, of course, also meant that women's domestic labor was no longer viewed as "work." The banished activities of women were imbued with public purpose by viewing home and family as responsible for developing "male" citizens for their proper place in the state and women as responsible for keeping male aggressiveness in check. Thus the extent to which the state depended on women's silence was masked by assigning them a political role.

Landes argues that once banished in order to that a masculine public sphere can be constructed, women who attempt to speak public languages violate the code of natural behavior. Having become, because of their exclusion, utterly different, women's voices can only be heard as partial, while the discourse that constructs the public sphere can be viewed by those taking part in it as universal. Landes suggests that, once the terms of this development are understood, it becomes clear that women (unless they "become men") i.e., obliterate their difference) cannot take possession of a public sphere constructed on masculine lines. We must transform discourse in order to authorize women's participation.

There has been a great deal of attention in public administration, particularly recently, to its essential publicness and what this implies for the nature of administrative practice in the public sector. We have yet to turn our attention to the problem of power and status, however, to the sense of difference obscured by our taken-for-granted notion of the public. For
example, we tend to see intrusion of the state into family life as a violation of privacy, or at least as not constitutionally mandated (for example, the Supreme Court recently ruled in a child abuse case that the 14th Amendment protects us from the state but does not imply any positive obligation on the part of the state to protect us from violent family members). From women's vantage point, however, the "haven in a heartless world" is frequently cruel, almost always fundamentally limiting.

Let me push this line of thought one notch further by turning to the second of the two problems referred to above, that is, regarding our notions of freedom. Here I draw on Wendy Brown's (1983) critique of our understanding of freedom as existing in a place beyond necessity. Using material from Aristotle, Arendt, Machiavelli, and Weber, Brown lays out the development and persistence of a culturally masculine idea of politics. She points out the gender origins and dimensions of state-creating political action (that is, virtus, from vir = man), giving form to matters (from mater; or mother/woman). By taking political action, men achieve mastery over circumstances (in Machiavelli's terms, they overawe fortune)—Hanna Pitkin (1984) has shown, a woman); they rise above necessity. Forming and controlling the body politic, which becomes an instrument, they can move into the realm where freedom means not being confined by the body. In essence, they can (at least for a time) cheat death. Women meanwhile, as we saw above, remain in the realm of necessity, the world of food, dirt, blood, crying children, and soiled clothing: in sum, the world of subsistence.

As Brown points out, Arendt's form of political action takes this dichotomy to such extremes—any connection whatever with purpose, for Arendt, contaminates action—that her public sphere is completely empty of content: what, then, is all this action to be about? In this view, the true politicians lives for, rather than as a result of, politics. He [sic] becomes disembodied by rising above necessity, that is, by relegating it to the care of women. He becomes pure mind, dominating the body, giving it form and purpose but also standing beyond these. As a result, Brown suggests, politics can legitimize the pursuit of aims higher than life (such as "the national interest"). She argues that instead we need to recognize that freedom is embodied: that living things cannot overcome themselves, but must engage with the materials of existence to draw forth possibilities rather than to try to impose form on them (childbearing is Brown's partial model here).

If, as Skowronek suggests, statecraft is institution-building, perhaps this is too far from Brown's idea of imposing form on matter. I would argue, however, that our emphasis on the administrative state as virtus and administrative discretion as an "opportunity" for positive action in a fragmented polity, is our bid to establish and reserve to ourselves a sphere of freedom: constrained, it is true, by the Constitution, laws, and agency norms, but nonetheless action not fully resolvable to following a set of rules and therefore, at its core, "free." Beguiled by this freedom, we may be slow to ask ourselves the extent to which its exercise depends on the unfreedom of others and our distaste for challenging it, or to look for a mode of action that accepts its embodied nature (that is, its grounding in the "People not as an abstraction but as a group of real human beings") and thereby begins to join the body politic with its head and putative mind, the administrative state.

Feminist theory sees the barrier between public and private, erected ostensibly to protect the freedom of all, as supportive of the oppression of many. In a space constructed out of the exclusion of half the human race, as long as this exclusion remains unexamined no heroine of practice is possible. Nor can women be counted in without changing the terms of the dialogue, since in order to enter the public sphere as given, women must leave behind part of ourselves—as must men. The transformation suggested by feminist thought is the opportunity to become whole in the process of writing what has not yet been written. It seems to me that we public administrators need to consider the challenges represented in feminist theory, and use them as a source of creativity. Let us begin the conversation.

Notes

1. By "theory," of course, I mean something much closer to political philosophy than what is arrived at by linking empirically tested hypotheses. I view public administration as a form of governance. As such, its most interesting questions are inherently value-laden and must therefore be dealt with by means of reasoned argument rather than proof.

2. The only well-known woman among classic public administration theorists, Mary Parker Follett, made an argument along these lines that was strikingly different from the perspectives of her contemporaries (see Follett [1918] 1965, [1924] 1951). The field has yet to deal with the radical political implications of Follett's ideas.

References


Understanding Organizational Culture
J. Steven Ott

This book is about organizational culture, a phrase that means two different but related things. First, it is the culture that exists in an organization. When the phrase is used in this sense, it means something similar to the culture in a society and consists of such things as shared values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, norms, artifacts, and patterns of behavior. It is the unseen and unobservable force that is always behind organizational activities that can be seen and observed. According to Kilmann and associates (1985), organizational culture is a social energy that moves people to act. "Culture is to the organization what personality is to the individual—a hidden, yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilization."

Second, organizational culture is a way of looking at and thinking about behavior of and in organizations; a perspective for understanding what is occurring. When used in this sense, organizational culture refers to a collection of theories that attempt to explain and predict how organizations and the people in them act in different circumstances. For clarity, organizational culture is used in this book to mean the culture of an organization, and the organizational culture perspective means the use of organizational culture as a frame of reference for the way one looks at, attempts to understand, and works with organizations.

The organizational culture perspective represents a counterculture within organization theory. Its assumptions, theories, and approaches are very different from those of the dominant structural and systems perspectives.


The organizational culture perspective is challenging the views of the structural and systems perspectives about basic issues: for example, how organizations make decisions, and how and why people in organizations behave as they do.

Organizational culture is... perhaps the most controversial of the organization theory perspectives. Its theories are based on assumptions about organizations and people that depart radically from those of the mainline perspectives. One important difference is that the organizational culture perspective does not believe that quantitative, experimental-type, logical-positivist, scientific research is especially useful for studying organizations.

In the structural and systems perspectives of organization theory, organizations are assumed to be institutions whose primary purposes are to accomplish established goals. Goals are set by people in positions of formal authority. In these two schools of thought, the primary questions for organization theory involve how best to design and manage organizations so that they achieve their declared purposes effectively and efficiently. The personal preferences of organizational members are restrained by systems of formal rules, by authority, and by norms of rational behavior. In a 1982 article Karl Weick, a leading writer about symbolic management, argues that four organizational conditions must exist in order for the basic assumptions of the structuralists and systemsists to be valid:

1. A self-correcting system of interdependent people.
2. Consensus on objectives and methods.
3. Coordination is achieved through sharing information.
4. Organizational problems and solutions must be predictable.

However, Weick is forced to conclude that these conditions seldom exist in modern organizations.