Article

**DIALOGUE AND ADMINISTRATIVE THEORY & PRAXIS: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THEORY**

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**ABSTRACT**

Administrative Theory & Praxis began in 1979 as Dialogue, the newsletter of the newly created Public Administration Theory Network. It has developed over twenty-five years as a forum for “alternative” theory in public administration. This paper describes some of the work published in Dialogue/ATP from 1979 to 2004 to illustrate issues of interest to authors in the journal during this time. Examples of articles are given in five substantive categories of theory: the nature of knowledge; the relationship of Dialogue/ATP theory to mainstream public administration; normative public administration theory; social and political theory; and marginalization and oppression. The discussion highlights writing about important topics in public administration theory from perspectives often not considered in “mainstream” journals.

**INTRODUCTION**

The current form of Administrative Theory & Praxis (ATP) was not apparent at its beginning. It began twenty-five years ago as Dialogue, the newsletter of the Public Administration Theory Network (PAT-Net). As does ATP today, the early Dialogue served readers and authors who find something lacking in mainstream public administration theory. This paper is intended as a companion piece to Michael Harmon’s history of PAT-Net, published in the June 2003 issue of ATP. The initial conception was to present an intellectual history of Dialogue/ATP, but the project changed as I realized the size of the task of characterizing this large and complex body of work.

I realized also that many readers of this paper would not have easy access, should they wish it, to much of the original material. Though
today ATP is carried by two global full-text online services (EBSCO and ProQuest) and more than sixty academic libraries, the material prior to 2000 is found only in a small number of institutional libraries and private collections, and there are few collections reaching back to 1979. (The current editor maintains a complete archive.)

So, the project became less than initially conceived, as I found I could only meaningfully highlight a few ideas of interest from the history of Dialogue/ATP, and more than initially conceived, as we began the task of making the history of the journal available to PAT-Net members. We have now put Dialogue/ATP, 1979-1999, on CDs that are offered for sale and kept as a permanent record of the journal. This may not be meaningful to some, but I was impressed by the value of this body of material as an intellectual history of not just PAT-Net and Dialogue/ATP, but of public administration. It shows the development of ideas during a time in which practitioners and scholars dealt with changes in the economic and political surroundings of PA, changes toward an economistic and increasingly hostile environment for the people and programs of the public sector.

This paper and the CD project included creating a listing of papers from the history of Dialogue/ATP, 1979 to 2004. It displays authors’ names and the titles of papers, but it is not a table of contents and it does not include everything published in the journal. The papers listed are those of some length that address a substantive topic and include references to other bodies of work—brief commentaries or dialogue are excluded. The intent is to show the substantive content of the journal over time. The listing begins with issue number 5 of the first volume; issues 1-4 contained items of news or commentary that did not meet threshold criteria for listing as articles or reviews. (In the interest of space, the listing is not included here; it is available electronically from the author, at rcbox@cox.net.)

This paper includes sections that describe characteristics of Dialogue/ATP articles in five substantive categories: the nature of knowledge; the relationship of Dialogue/ATP theory to mainstream public administration; normative public administration theory; social and political theory; and marginalization and oppression. Work in each category is discussed using examples, with some attention to changes in emphasis over time. Examples chosen are not necessarily representative of the full body of work, merely illustrative of the sort of writing within a category.

There is only space here to offer illustrative bits of material contained in Dialogue and ATP, so much of the important and useful writing in the journal cannot be included. The purpose of the paper is to
identify broad themes in the work published in Dialogue/ATP and to capture a sense of history, continuity of purpose, and usefulness for the present and future of a unique scholarly enterprise.

EXAMINING THE JOURNAL

Dialogue began as a vehicle for a small group of academicians in public administration to communicate informally on matters of common interest. They self-identified in the late 1970s as the “Public Administration Theory Network,” people who found mainstream PA strong on practice but weak in theoretical development and conceptual connection to the broader society. In its first years Dialogue was a loose-leaf, corner-stapled newsletter on yellow paper, with a circulation of several dozen. Some of the content consisted of news about people and schools and there were substantive exchanges between people such as Bayard Catron, Robert Golembiewski, Guy Adams, Sir Geoffrey Vickers, Frederick Thayer, Vincent Ostrom, Ralph Hummel, and others.

Dialogue allowed discussion of ideas not often found in PA journals, from perspectives such as political theory, Marxism, historical analysis, psychology, feminism, and so on. Over a period of 25 years and changes in editorship and format, it developed into Administrative Theory & Praxis (ATP), taking on features of traditional academic publications. Today, in appearance and editorial practices, ATP is a peer-reviewed quarterly journal, but it retains its “outside the mainstream” approach. Dialogue/ATP, and PAT-Net, have been examined in the journal in earlier papers. In 1986 in Dialogue, Roger Wettenhall discussed the Theory Network and its journal from an Australian perspective and Michael Harmon’s history of PAT-Net and ATP was published in ATP in June 2003.

Process

It was necessary to divide this material into substantive areas, or categories, because it cannot be adequately described as a whole. Creating categories within a large body of material and assigning papers to them is idiosyncratic and somewhat arbitrary, but the intent was to emphasize areas of thought that distinguish this journal from others in public administration. A dozen or so categories for the substance of papers were created early in the process of reviewing the twenty-five years of work in Dialogue/ATP, but they were trimmed to five in the interest of clarity. A listing of papers by category is not given here because categoriza-
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Information was a personal tool used to identify papers useful for illustrating concepts in the five substantive areas.

Sixty-three percent (286) of the 449 total papers appearing in the period 1979-2004 were allocated to one of the five categories. Some topical areas that are not part of this study are ethics, the physical environment, teaching, and organizational management. Some papers which address these topics were included in one of the five categories, when the primary focus of a paper fit a category.

Changes Over Time

Changes in substantive emphasis in Dialogue/ATP content over time can be captured in part by distinguishing between the periods of service of the editors. Because editorial periods divide the history of Dialogue/ATP into segments of relatively equal length, they are used here as a way to describe the nature of work during particular periods of time.

The initiator of Dialogue (and organizer of the PA Theory Network), Guy Adams, served as editor from 1979 to the summer of 1984, when Gerald Caiden became editor. He served for one year; Barry Hammond became editor in fall of 1985. For the purposes of this paper, the years 1979-1985 are referred to as the “first Dialogue” period. During this period, the journal had the physical form of a newsletter, copied on loose-leaf pages and corner stapled. The Hammond editorship extended from the end of 1985 to 1992 (though there was a lapse in publication after volume 12, number 2 in Winter 1990, until volume 15, number 1 in 1993). Here, the years 1985-1992 are referred to as the “second Dialogue” period. During this period, the journal had a plastic binding and covers of heavier stock. During the first Dialogue period much of the content consisted of short pieces of commentary or responses to other writers, with a few article-length contributions. During the second Dialogue period, most of the content was in the form of article-length papers.

When publication of the journal resumed in 1993, the new editors, Jong Jun and Richard VrMeer, renamed it Administrative Theory & Praxis. Though it included short pieces of member news and commentary, most of the content was in article form. The physical format remained 8½ by 11 inches and the journal (from 1993 through 1995) had a glossy cover consisting of a single heavy sheet, folded, with staples through the spine holding the pages together. In 1996, the cover took on the appearance of a standard journal (remaining in the 8½ by 11 inch size) with a squared spine, and the inside pages were printed in double-column format. In 1997, Richard VrMeer dropped out of the co-edito-
rial role, leaving Jong Jun as the editor from 1997-1999. The years 1993-1999 are referred to here as the “first ATP” period.

The first ATP period was followed by the editorship of Richard Box, from 2000 to the present. Beginning with the March, 2000 issue (volume 22, number 1), ATP was published in 6 by 9 inch size, with a new logo design and single-column print format. The years 2000-2004 are referred to here as the “second ATP” period. Two issues of ATP will have been published in 2005 when this paper appears in the journal. However, for convenience, the discussion in the paper extends to the end of 2004, volume 26.

With each editorial transition the physical appearance of the journal changed considerably, but it is difficult to know to what extent editors influenced the content. Editors have an effect on thematic emphasis, but the nature of the journal and the interests of authors also shape the content. Peer review practices, which in earlier volumes were informal or absent, later became much like those of other scholarly journals. Jun originated the journal’s symposium, or issue-topic, format with the first issue in 1996 and Box has continued it. Beginning in 2003, ATP has been carried full-text online by EBSCO Publishing, with issues available from 2000 to present. Beginning in 2005, it will also be carried full-text online in ProQuest-ABI/Inform (without back issues).

The Symposium Format

Most issues of ATP include a topical symposium, a format begun by Editor Jong Jun in 1996 which continues today. Symposia appear along with independently submitted papers and other items, such as dialogue and book reviews. Some readers dislike the symposium format on grounds that a journal, to achieve stature as a scholarly publication, should publish mostly independently submitted papers. However, ATP receives too few independently submitted papers to sustain quarterly publication. With symposia, ATP often publishes relatively large (many pages) issues, with a total of from six to eight or nine papers plus other items. It appears that authors enjoy the symposium format, since many wish to participate and there is little difficulty arranging interesting issue topics. It seems also that readers like the symposium format, which provides a range of ideas on a single topic in one issue.

Beginning in December 2000, most symposia have been announced in ATP one year in advance in a call for proposals. Those not announced may consist of a panel from a conference or a group of authors already organized when the topical suggestion was made to the editor. Each symposium has a coordinator, someone who specializes in the
topic area and has volunteered to receive proposals, read the papers and reviews and offer helpful comments to authors, decide which draft papers should be included in the symposium, and write an introduction. For each symposium, two reviewers (often editorial board members) read the draft papers, offering review comments used by the coordinator and authors to shape final papers. Some symposium papers are “invited,” meaning they are reviewed only by the coordinator of the symposium; this can occur by request of the author, or because the author is a leading writer in the topical area and the coordinator asks her or him to present her/his perspective.

A list of all ATP symposia (both published and planned through 2006) appears in the appendix below. Topics may be identified by prospective coordinators who suggest them to the editor, some topics are identified by the editor, who finds a coordinator, and on occasion the editor serves as coordinator.

THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

Of the five categories of work in Dialogue/ATP discussed here, the “nature of knowledge” seems to this reader to especially distinguish the journal from others in public administration. Public administration borrows ideas from other fields of study that are more clearly defined and Dialogue/ATP authors have been innovative in using concepts from philosophy, political theory, sociology, history, and so on. Beyond borrowing from other fields, Dialogue/ATP authors have often discussed and debated epistemological and ontological concepts.

Sixty-seven papers were placed in this category in the current study, 11 from the first Dialogue period, one from the second Dialogue period, 30 from the first ATP period, and 25 from the second ATP period. The focus of epistemological discussion in the first Dialogue period is an exchange on “methodological individualism” amongst Vincent Ostrom, Guy Adams, Bayard Catron, Michael Harmon, Fred Thayer, and Robert Golembiewski. This exchange has been described in Wettenhall’s (1986) analysis of PAT-Net, but it will be useful to highlight it here. Broadly, it grew out of the controversy stirred by Ostrom’s book The Intellectual Crisis in Public Administration (1973), grounded in public choice theory, and the rather heated exchange on public choice theory between Ostrom and Golembiewski in 1977 in American Political Science Review. The underlying concern of the PAT-Net members arguing against methodological individualism seems to be the emphasis in public choice theory on the individual as opposed to the group, with its
implied critique of government as a collective intrusion on the individual (Adams, 1979, pp. 9-13; Catron & Harmon, 1979, pp. 8-11).

Ostrom’s response has (at least) two parts. First, quoting Sir Geoffrey Vickers, Ostrom argues that “The individual level of being. . . is the lens through which we see all of the others” (Vickers, in Ostrom, 1980, p. 14). Second, he advocates thinking of the matter of individual and community not in either-or terms, but as a matter of individuals cooperating in both individual and group interest (Ostrom, 1979, pp. 2-4; Ostrom, 1980, pp. 14-18). No resolution is reached in this exchange, but whether one is more concerned about the penetration of economic thought into the public sector or with the effects of government on individuals, these papers capture a particularly interesting moment in the development of thought in PA.

Postmodernism made its appearance in ATP in 1993, at the beginning of the first ATP period, in a paper by Charles Fox and Hugh Miller which includes many of the elements found later in their book, Postmodern Public Administration: Toward Discourse (1995). The paper can be regarded as the opening into intense discussion in ATP about foundationalism in PA theory, a discussion that was at its peak from volume 18, number 1 in 1996 to volume 20, number 4 in 1998. The symposium in volume 18, number 1 is titled “Modern/Postmodern Public Administration: A Discourse About What is Real.” Participating authors are Fox and Miller, Adrian Carr, David John Farmer, CharlesGoodsell, Ralph Hummel, Gary Marshall, and O. C. McSwite. The symposium is arranged in three “rounds,” with each participant writing an initial paper and then two successive responses to the work of other participants. This set of papers illustrates well the views and concerns of those inclined toward postmodern thinking and those concerned about its effects.

In his initial paper, David Farmer writes, “The reality is that we are all heavily imbued, even the most Francophile, with the modernist theoretical lens that has dominated the West during the past five hundred years. We need a corrective” (1996, p. 133). Farmer’s approach is cautious and multi-faceted, as he suggests PA thinkers employ a variety of perspectives in their work rather than restricting themselves to particular types of modern or postmodern theory. Ralph Hummel recognizes the value of postmodernism in providing a framework that “permits observation that better fits the condition of things today than the previous modern frameworks.” However, he finds that in deconstructing modernist assumptions, postmodernism “serves as a critical theory without teeth,” which “leaves the field open to anyone who, through force of
personality or by using technique to regress us to earlier visions of human development, irresponsibly and irrationally cashes in on our continuing age of anxiety.” Thus, “aswim in oceans of indeterminate interpretations, we are advised to passively lie on our backs and float, empty vessels on a denatured sea” (1996, p. 46).

Despite such concerns, a postmodern anti-foundationalism has become close to universal in ATP writing. Early in this development, in their response to a 1996 ATP paper by Dean Geuras and Charles Garofalo, Fox and Miller make clear the dilemma for those who would claim a concept or principle as absolute and unchanging. In their paper, Geuras and Garofalo recognize the value of philosophical approaches that question foundational assumptions, but think them inadequate; they instead “find Kant especially compelling because his first principle is the self-evident law of non-contradiction to which all rational beings must adhere” (p. 11). Fox and Miller respond that postmodern conditions render this move “nostalgic. That is, the toothpaste cannot go back into the tube” (1997, p. 88).

Today, ATP authors who make use of bodies of theory that intrinsically contain foundational assumptions tend to distance their work from such assumptions, though not the framework of the given body of theory. Prospective ATP authors find it difficult to move successfully through the review process if they use unexamined foundational assumptions. Though some may think this situation narrow or exclusionary, from an editorial perspective it seems that close examination (deconstruction might be a good word here) of foundational premises has become a primary distinguishing characteristic of ATP. As I observe the review process, it appears that questioning of foundational premises often results in stronger and clearer papers. Authors who might, when writing for a different audience, find it comfortable to rely on an epistemological or ontological assertion instead find it necessary to describe and justify its use.

Also in this peak time of discussion of the nature of knowledge, symposia appear on “Interpretive and Critical Theories in Public Administration” (volume 19, number 2, 1997) and on “Learning from Natural Sciences” (volume 19, number 3, 1997). In the second ATP period, the nature of knowledge has been the focus of two issues of ATP in particular, volume 22, number 2 in 2000, which includes a dialogue on “knowledge and research,” and volume 24, number 2 in 2003, which includes a symposium on rationality. Volume 22, issue number 2 in 2000 also contains a paper by Jos Raadschelders (2000a), who examines distinctions between knowledge in the natural and social sciences and knowledge in
branches of the social sciences. Raadschelders concludes that it makes more sense to pursue integrated uses of types of knowledge than it does to argue about which are epistemologically or ontologically “correct.”

Raadschelders’ paper fits well with the Forum section dialogue in this issue (volume 22, issue 2, 2000), on knowledge and research. The dialogue consists of e-mail messages and was prompted by Melvin Dubnick’s plenary panel presentation at the 2000 PAT-Net conference in Fort Lauderdale and a paper Dubnick presented at the 1999 American Political Science Association conference. In the dialogue, Dubnick argues that much research in public administration does not meet social science standards, leading to a lack of legitimacy for academic PA and the need for PA academicians to associate more closely with, and emulate, colleagues in disciplines such as political science, sociology, economics, and anthropology. This requires identifying more with the scholarly community than with the community of professional practice. In making this suggestion, Dubnick (2000, pp. 393-397, 399-402, 407-408, 420-423) refers to a debate a half century ago between Dwight Waldo and Herbert Simon, in which Waldo associated the field more closely with practice and Simon with academia.

In addition to Dubnick, participants in the dialogue are Peter Bogason, John Kirlin, Kenneth Meier, Janet Foley Orosz, Jos Raadschelders, and Curtis Ventriss. The ATP Forum section editor at the time, Cheryl Simrell King, notes that “Although this conversation was civil and apparently consensual, the reader should know that some of the participants thought that the underlying issues were ‘undiscussable. . .’” (2000, p. 391). This sensitivity about the rigor of research in public administration seems to be the result of a feeling on one side that, as King put it, “our research is not rigorous enough,” and on the other that positivist-minded people want to impose a “methodological/epistemological monotheism” on PA (p. 391). Though declaring himself a positivist and wishing for a turn to positivist research in public administration, Dubnick claims that “recent developments in the social science disciplines” indicate that “postmodernism has gained some respect and produced a greater openness to diverse perspectives and methods” (p. 396). In this environment, writes Dubnick, “the meta-logical stranglehold of positivist methodism is clearly broken. In its place has emerged a more open search for justifiable knowledge and ‘cultures of inquiry’ where the standards for credible scholarship are constantly being discussed and challenged” (p. 421).

Nevertheless, the general impression seems to be that Dubnick is arguing for a narrowing of PA research to gain greater status in the social
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sciences. In keeping with his paper published in this same issue, in the
dialogue Raadschelders advocates a multidisciplinary approach, sug-
gesting that “‘Scholarship’ with respect to PA is a better term than ‘sci-
ence,’ and there is a lot of good scholarship in PA and in studies aux-
iliary to the understanding of government” (2000b, p. 405). Curtis
Ventriss emphasizes the difference between describing phenomena us-
ing positivist methods and exploring “normative and philosophical con-
cerns.” He asks, “Can the field confront the mechanization of theory
that is occurring in some other fields (I would put rational-choice the-
ory here) and still be taken seriously by other social sciences? How
does the field, in other words, address Max Weber’s probing (and still
relevant) question: ‘What shall we do and how shall we live?’” (p. 413).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF DIALOGUE/ATP THEORY TO
MAINSTREAM PA

Papers in this category focus on the relationships of public adminis-
tration theory to the practitioner community and/or to the “main-
stream” community of PA scholars. Twenty-one papers were assigned
to this category, one from the first Dialogue period, four from the sec-
ond Dialogue period, nine from the first ATP period, and seven from
the second ATP period. Papers discussed in this section address the re-
lationship of Dialogue/ATP theory to the mainstream of public adminis-
tration theory, what the relationship has been, is now, and could and
should be. A number of authors have written about this, either as the
central focus of a paper or two, or peripherally as they have discussed
adequacy of research methods, legitimacy of PA as a social science, and
so on. Of those authors who have directly addressed Dialogue/ATP the-
ory and the mainstream, the thoughts of O. C. McSwite and Camilla
Stivers seem particularly useful for this discussion.

Though it is common to think of the relationship of Dialogue/ATP
authors and the rest of public administration scholarship—the “main-
stream”—in terms of us-versus-them, people who publish in the journal
also read and publish in a variety of journals, teach courses with tech-
nical content to practitioners, do applied research and grant work, serve
on ASPA committees, present papers at NASPAA and ASPA confer-
ences, and so on. They have found Dialogue/ATP to be a place to pub-
lish and to read perspectives that are often not welcome in other outlets
in PA, but this does not completely define their intellectual or profes-
sional identities.

Despite this cautionary thought about a simplistic dichotomy be-
tween Dialogue/ATP and the mainstream, people who enjoy ATP tend
to be at least partly at odds with PA theory as a whole, finding it in some way(s) unsatisfying substantively, methodologically, or stylistically.

O. C. McSwite writes about this in 1999 in terms of “the proper relation of the theory community to the mainstream public administration community.” Setting aside for the moment the question of how to ground a claim that a particular position is “proper,” an interesting argument is made. McSwite (1999, p. 4) assume that mainstream public administration reflects an undesirable modernist consciousness in society and it is the role of a group such as the Theory Network to “speak to the broader institutionalized community from a position marginal to it.” Theorists of the PAT-Net sort wait for a “crack” to open in this consciousness due to internal contradictions; meanwhile, they “have an alternative discourse ready for consideration when the propitious moment occurs.”

This is a strong version of the idea of separation between Theory Network ideas and those of the rest of the field. In her essay in the March 2000 ATP (first offered as a plenary presentation at the 1998 Theory Network conference), Camilla Stivers suggests a position that has one conceptual foot planted in the mainstream and one in the Theory Network community. She describes why some theorists want occasional refuge from the mainstream: “We feel our difference from its repeated impulses toward scientism, and, weary of defending the enterprise of normative theory, we seek solidarity with others who have the same feeling” (Stivers, 2000a, p. 20). Stivers draws on Hannah Arendt to envision three possible responses to this situation: assimilation into the mainstream, complete withdrawal from it, or the position of the “conscious pariah,” who is not fully at home in the mainstream, but instead “chooses homelessness in order to speak from the fringes” (p. 20). In public administration, such a person feels a sense of responsibility for the larger field of study and practice, but also needs connection to a smaller community of people who are “in solidarity with one another based on shared consciousness” (p. 21). This shared consciousness is found in a company of friends, “a company predicated on difference, on plurality that opens up space for talk—not comforting agreement, but argument” (p. 20).

In a later paper in ATP, Stivers again turns to Arendt for conceptual inspiration, this time to understand the “fundamental darkness of the age: the disappearance of the public realm.” In a time of official “double talk” and “camouflage,” “people retreat into separate, private worlds, asking no more of politics than that it guarantee their rights and
their freedom to pursue private interests” (2004, p. 20). Stivers argues that in such conditions it is appropriate for theorists to engage in (using Foucault’s words) “fearless speech,” and that “We need to think of theorizing, more than we do, as public speech. We need to be mindful of its world-creating dimensions, its potential to enliven a network of diverse people whose concerns we share and to make a place in which conversation and argument about the meaning of events can flourish” (p. 24).

McSwite and Stivers hope the work of PAT-Net theorists may stimulate thought in the “mainstream,” perhaps shifting the course of public affairs in constructive directions. This is an ambitious vision of what theorists can do and what effects they have on the world outside their small community. Within that community, Stivers’ description of a group of people who support each other in “dark times” echoes a comment Michael Harmon makes at the end of his history of the Theory Network. He writes that, “I cannot imagine that very much of my own work (for better or worse) would even faintly resemble its current form were it not for my long association with PAT-Net” (2003, p. 171).

There are occasional complaints that PAT-Net theorists write “in an abstract, non-scientific way” that aggravates the disconnect between scholarship and practice (Box, 2004, p. 18), and between PAT-Net and the larger PA theory community. However, there is no particular reason to assume that the work of Theory Network members must always be immediately useful to everyone else in public administration. Providing a space for people to reflect on ideas and events in the broader field may be quite enough for a small group of people and their journal. This is not insignificant, since the ideas discussed in this space can ripple outward, affecting others who write and teach and through them practitioners and the course of public affairs in countless organizations.

**NORMATIVE PA THEORY**

Offering normative assessment of present public administration theory and practice and prescriptive visions for the future is a specialty of Dialogue/ATP authors. One-hundred and ten papers were assigned to this category, 11 in the first Dialogue period, 14 in the second Dialogue period, 40 in the first ATP period, and 45 in the second ATP period. One might expect that in times characterized as postmodern and/or dominated by the market metaphor, PA scholars would think normative imaginings pointless or would forget what it means to experience them, but that is not what we find. In addition to the papers discussed below, in this category there are papers on topics such as political theory and
power, leadership, management theory beginning in the Progressive Era, and the public interest.

Richard Stillman’s paper contrasting “classical” and “romantic” public administration theory is an appropriate opening into normative theory in Dialogue/ATP. Writing in 1983, Stillman notes that PA scholars had wondered over the prior decade whether the flowering of theory from “new public administration” in the 1960s and 1970s was a passing fad (p. 16); he describes new PA as romantic, in contrast to the classical PA approach to government and administration. Stillman finds that the classical approach was characteristic of pre-World War II thought, with “its values of efficiency, order, unity of command, hierarchy and neutral professional expertise.” Romantic PA theory, instead, advocates “decentralization in lieu of hierarchy, popular participation rather than neutral expertise, fragmented structure instead of unity of command,” and “subjectivity and feeling, not economy and efficiency as the criteria for effective action...” (p. 2).

For Stillman, romantic PA theory is Rousseauian and “thrives on excess: on individualism, conviction about the goodness of mankind, the possibilities for individual growth, ahistoricism, moral reform, distrust of experts and expertise.” It exhibits a preference for “subjectivity, feeling, spontaneity, humanism and humanity” (1983, pp. 17-18). Some Dialogue/ATP readers may disagree with Stillman’s characterization and it might be different if written today. However, it may provide a useful beginning point for thinking about normative PA theory in Dialogue/ATP, which includes both “classical” (or maybe “neo-classical”) and “romantic” ideas.

Concern for a “legitimate” place for public administration in society appears in Dialogue, notably in the “Blacksburg manifesto” (1984) which, in this form, was authored by Gary Wamsley, Charles Goodsell, John Rohr, Orion White, and James Wolf. The related topics of stewardship, democracy in PA, and administrative discretion were of particular interest through the second Dialogue period. During this time, in 1988, papers were published in four issues of Dialogue (volume 10, numbers 2, 3, and 4; and volume 11, number 1) that were later included in the PAT-Net sponsored book, Images and Identities in Public Administration (1990), edited by Henry Kass and Bayard Catron. The book offers a summary view of thought on normative PA theory at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century. Co-editor Kass notes in the “Prologue” that the motivating theme of the project is “the need to develop legitimating concepts for American public administration that
can send their roots deep into the soil of American political culture” (p. 10).

Discourse theory appears in the first and second ATP periods. A paper by McSwite (1998) presents an interesting contrast between discourse theory and what they call “the new normativism.” McSwite characterizes discourse theory as involving “a central commitment to discourse, defined as correct or authentic dialogue” (p. 377). According to McSwite (p. 379), “the New Normativism is romantic and heroic,” but new normativists recognize the absence of absolute, foundational values on which to ground governance, so they turn to acceptance of socially accepted institutions to “preserve, in this postmodern era, a sense of hope, progress, coherence, possibility.” Thus, new normativism “has it both ways: it is relatively open and indeterminate; yet it provides a solid foundation for the exercise of authority.” Discourse theorists, instead of accepting the authority of the institution, recognize that “it is what authority entails that is the problem...” Thus, “the point of discourse is to create an open social space into which something from the outside, something beyond the participants’ conscious apprehension, can enter” (p. 379).

A paper written by Alexander Kouzmin, Robert Leivesley, and Nada Korac-Kakabadse in 1997 is the first in this category to address the effects of “public choice theory” on public sector administrative and organizational theory. Other topics addressed in recent papers include the physical environment as a basis for normative theory, psychoanalytic theory applied to public administration, and value pluralism, the idea “that our values are often incompatible and incommensurable with one another” (Spicer, 2001, p. 507). Michael Spicer finds that value pluralism is “more coherent with our moral experience than monist views that assume an underlying harmony among human ends” (Spicer, 2001, p. 507).

Generalization can be dangerous, but it appears there is a shift in this category over time, from a desire to create greater legitimacy for public administration in response to neoliberal criticism, to greater conceptual diversity in the search for normative guidance in a time that offers less certainty about core values in the field. It is cliché to label this shift as “postmodern,” but that well-worn word may be as good a descriptor as any. From a negative perspective this may reflect continuing erosion of conceptual content that might be used to shape the field of public administration into a “discipline,” giving it some of the academic legitimacy discussed above in the section on the nature of knowledge. From a positive perspective (not positivist—positive) it may reflect the matur-
ing of PA theory as it branches out in multiple directions to explain current circumstances and offer guidance for the future.

Many papers could be put into more than one substantive category. This is certainly true of the distinction between papers in the categories of normative theory and social and political theory. Also, some papers include themes that appear across categories and across time in PA theory. A paper by Guy Adams, Priscilla Bowerman, Kenneth Dolbeare, and Camilla Stivers (1988) in volume 10, number 4 is a good example (this paper appears also as chapter nine in Images and Identities in Public Administration). Titled “Joining Purpose to Practice: A Democratic Identity for the Public Service,” the premise of the paper is that the perceived separation of private sector market liberalism from the public sector and democracy has led to “partial” instead of “full” democracy, and that public administrators can and should act in ways that encourage a shift toward full democracy. This means deemphasizing expertise and legitimacy, instead focusing on including citizens in the process of governance, so they “are seen as co-governors and co-decision makers, not simply as consumers or providers of services” (p. 80). The theme of finding a way to govern democratically in a society based on market liberalism appears in Adams, Bowerman, Dolbeare, and Stivers and in later writing on the effects of “new public management” as well as citizen self-governance.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THEORY

Papers in this category address concepts such as citizenship, democracy, capitalism, institutions, community governance, civil society, social change, governmental structures, history of public administration, historical periods such as the Progressive Era, power, critical theory, and classical liberalism. There are linkages in much of this work to the practice of public administration, but the focus is not so much on normative, prescriptive theory for the field as it is on describing the societal environment of the public sector and exploring its implications for PA. Seventy-two papers were assigned to this category, five in the first Dialogue period, two in the second Dialogue period, 32 in the first ATP period, and 33 in the second ATP period.

We find two papers during the first Dialogue period written by Ron Sakolsky, on public administration within the capitalist system. Writing from a Marxist perspective, Sakolsky (1980) portrays public administrators as managers of periodic crises in the public sector resulting from contradictions and tensions in the political-economic system. Themes found in Sakolsky’s work appear in different forms in other Dialogue/
ATP papers, including the Adams, Bowerman, Dolbeare, and Stivers paper discussed above and the Zanetti and Box papers noted below.

Also in the first Dialogue period, Camilla Stivers (1985) writes about her search for a model of citizenship that moves beyond the current framework—a logical extension of the intentions of the framers of the Constitution—in which citizens vote but “policy outcomes are the result of exclusionary negotiations that go on among powerful groups, in iron triangles, and so on. . .” (p. 7). Stivers suggests an intersubjective, process-oriented model of praxis that de-emphasizes finding “best” solutions to problems and operates both within and outside the bureaucracy. This paper prefigures later work by Stivers and others, in Dialogue/ATP and elsewhere, on relationships between citizens and public service practitioners.

There are two symposia in the first ATP period of particular thematic interest in this category, one on institutions (volume 18, number 2, 1996), and one on community capacity and social trust (volume 21, number 1, 1999). Papers in the symposium on institutions include approaches emphasizing the American Constitution as a guide to public administration practice, the role of institutions in fostering social trust, the relationship of statesmanship to institutional values, and democratic governance in local public institutions. The second symposium includes papers discussing the development and characteristics of theory and papers reporting case examples of community capacity and social trust. Both symposia offer a view of the thinking of ATP authors and readers in these areas in the 1990s.

In coining a phrase, “The Everyday Maker,” Henrik Bang and Eva Sørensen (1999) suggest a new way to think about citizenship and citizen action in local communities. Bang and Sørensen want to move away from an exclusive focus on government, instead using the concept of governance to direct “attention away from the state-civil society opposition and towards those many new types of political coordination and interaction that may best be regarded as complexly organized governance networks” (p. 329). Studying citizen action on community issues in a neighborhood of Copenhagen, they find that people avoid ideology and long-term involvement in community affairs, instead working on “solving of their immediate and concrete policy problems ‘on the lowest possible level’” (p. 336). Bang and Sørensen do not claim the “everyday maker” as the wave of the future in citizen involvement, but argue convincingly that it is a phenomenon worth studying. In contrasting their view of citizenship with Robert Putnam’s “bowling alone” model, they
join a number of authors in documenting the change underway in citizen interaction with government.

Moving into the second ATP period, citizen action is also the theme of Teva Scheer’s (2002) paper on women’s clubs as a progressive force in the Western U. S. in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Northeastern and Midwestern cities, challenges of the time included “abuse of immigrants, substandard housing, poor sanitation, and inadequate employment and education opportunities.” In Western towns, however, the problem was lack of basic services, such as “sewer systems, roads, schools, parks, law enforcement systems, or health facilities” (p. 522). By examining the records of women’s clubs in several Western states, Scheer documents the activities of women who surveyed local conditions and organized citizens to raise money, initiated programs, and pushed local and state governments to become involved in problem solving. Many club women were appointed or elected to local boards and commissions, and some held state and national office.

There may or may not be clear trends over editorial periods in the topics covered by papers on social and political theory. However, there is a trend since the attacks on the U. S. in 2001. The material discussed below was not chosen specifically to reflect responses to political and cultural events since that time, but it does so nonetheless. There is meaningful long-term dialogue taking place in ATP at present on matters of democracy, liberty, citizenship, and the responses of public administration scholars and practitioners.

The Forum section in ATP allows space for informal dialogue, with shorter papers and without peer review. Two sets of Forum exchanges are highlighted here. They are significant because they challenge social-political theories contained in much of the writing in public administration and in ATP. One of these, in volume 25, number 1 in 2003 is organized around Charles Fox’s paper, “The Prosecutorial State.” Upset by the trend toward governmental intrusion into private affairs, Fox writes that the “paradigm case” of administrator-citizen interaction is not the one portrayed by advocates of administrative discretion, but instead it is “being confronted by cops and other agents of behavioral coercion” (p. 63). Fox’s assertion drew responses from Michael Spicer, Louis Howe, and Adrian Carr. Spicer thanks Fox for “reminding us of the fundamentally coercive character of quite a lot of the administrative action that is undertaken by government” (2003a, p. 73), though Carr thinks Fox too pessimistic and cautions that administrators are not passive tools, but participants in the dialectic of public policy. Ultimately, Howe notes, “perhaps public administration can’t help but be a collaborator’s
game," though he characterizes “PAT-Net theorists” as “much less sycophantic than the discipline as a whole” (p. 78).

The second Forum exchange, in volume 25, number 4 in 2003, is organized around a paper by Michael Spicer. Using Isaiah Berlin’s concepts of “negative” and “positive” liberty, Spicer argues that not enough attention has been given in PA to negative liberty and too much has been given to positive liberty. Negative liberty allows freedom for individual action by protecting people from the state and positive liberty provides opportunities through governmental action that allow people to realize hidden or blocked potential. Spicer cautions against a “monist style of governance and administration” that “requires potentially unlimited governmental power over the lives of citizens” (2003b, p. 561). Cheryl Simrell King sympathizes with Spicer’s concern for protecting individual liberty, especially in the current political situation, but also thinks that “modified and more sophisticated applications of classical liberalism, as suggested by contemporary reform movements and by Spicer in this article, are perhaps not what is needed” (p. 569). Hugh Miller agrees with the emphasis on negative liberty, though he adds the proviso that it should not weaken the resolve of people in the public sector to do the work that needs to be done. “Instead,” he writes, “I want public administration practitioners to continue to hone their competencies and improve our capacities to solve the problems that the population places on the doorstep of government. And leave people alone, too” (p. 573). Matthew Witt asks whether Spicer’s argument valorizes the “‘voluntarist’ assumption of liberalist thinking” (p. 578), and Richard Stillman cautions that it takes a certain amount of “positive” government action to secure negative liberties. In Spicer’s response to his dialogue partners, he acknowledges the need for both negative and positive liberty, but, following Berlin, writes that there may be people who prefer a society offering greater privacy and lower levels of both participation and surveillance (2003c, p. 588).

These Forum exchanges are not unique in expressing concern about the effects of current conditions on individuals. David John Farmer coordinated symposia on “anti-administration” (volume 23, number 4, 2001) and “the great refusal” (volume 25, number 2, 2003) addressing similar themes. “Great refusal” was a 1960s response by Frankfurt School social theorist Herbert Marcuse to what he perceived as an oppressive socio-political system that closed off, or “contained,” knowledge of contradictions between current reality and potential alternatives for the future. Papers by Lisa Zanetti and Richard Box in the refusal symposium are written within the conceptual framework of
critical theory. Zanetti suggests that public organizations operate from an instrumental perspective that motivates employees to quickly resolve contradictions between the situations of clients and administrative rules. She would prefer that administrators sometimes hold open these contradictions for awhile, refusing to close them, instead taking the time to understand the ambiguities in human circumstances. Box examines the status of democracy, the “warfare state,” research, and gender in late capitalist society through the work of Marcuse. He finds “an overarching contradiction affecting theory and practice”; it is “between public service/public interest and government as reflection of the interests of the market” (p. 258).

In a paper published in a later issue of ATP, Nancy Meyer-Emerick (2004) joins the discussion of critical theory in public administration. She discusses findings from “biopolitical theory” indicating that people may be genetically inclined toward hierarchy, dominance, and submission, making it easier for them to be coerced by the media, government, and the market into the social conformity described by critical theorists. Meyer-Emerick reviews some of the literature of critical theory in public administration to find ways to counter this phenomenon and build citizen capacity for self-governance.

Two more entries discussed in this section on social and political theory address the current political environment and the possibilities for meaningful response. Ralph Hummel (2004, p. 279) writes that “the science of politics studies necessities; the philosophy of politics studies freedom.” He believes “the challenge is not the hue and cry for more of a science whose power holds us all in thrall. The challenge is whether we have not lost the ability to freely imagine ways of living together” (p. 279). Examining this question from the perspective of Heidegger’s study of Greek politics, Hummel concludes that “treating truth as an ongoing struggle for discovering possibilities, and seeing the polis as the clearing for the gathering that engages us in this struggle, re-opens purpose for politics, policy-making, and administration” (p. 298).

Patricia Patterson’s (2003) view of the contemporary political situation is pessimistic. She asks: “in an atmosphere of authoritarian and arbitrary decision-making, state-sanctioned violence and intimidation, and an absolute distinction between thinking and feeling, do we find sufficient counterweights within current administrative, cultural, and economic practices?” (p. 240). Patterson draws from a poem by William Butler Yeats, The Second Coming (1923), finding in it “images of Hegelian forces in contradiction” in which “the moment of unity cannot last” (p. 237). Instead, in Yeats’ words, “the centre cannot hold” and a
“blood-dimmed tide is loosed” (Yeats, in Patterson, p. 237). Patterson answers her question about “sufficient counterweights” through Yeats’ chilling words: “The best lack all conviction, while the worst. . .Are full of passionate intensity” (Yeats, in Patterson, p. 237). This is a thought likely to cause many of us to consider, or reconsider, our responses as academicians to current conditions in society.

MARGINALIZATION AND OPPRESSION

Writing that addresses the effects of governmental action on minority populations and vulnerable people is not common in public administration journals, but it seems to fit the role of Dialogue/ATP as a place to consider perspectives that are out of the mainstream. Only 16 papers were identified with this category, but it is included because I believe it is important to the purpose of the journal and its contribution, however limited, to improving societal conditions. One of the 16 papers appears in the first Dialogue period, there are none in the second Dialogue period, three are found in the first ATP period, and there are 12 in the second ATP period. Several themes can be identified in these papers—the effects of economic globalization and the oppressive impacts of exclusion and silencing are prominent.

Businesslike efficiency has always been a central value in public administration. Concern about the social justice of administrative action or non-action on individual lives and, in the aggregate, on public policy has been secondary, in the background. This is especially true today as the market metaphor, with its language of measurement, performance and cost-effectiveness, crowds out other values in the public sector. Administrative action is not neutral and the values considered important by practitioners can make a difference in outcomes. ATP has focused on this matter in features such as the symposium on “Anti-Administration” (volume 23, number 4, 2001), the symposium on “The Role of the Theorist in Facilitating Voice” (volume 25, number 4, 2003) and the papers discussed below, among others.

Consuelo Ahumada and Christina Andrews (1998) examine the effects of neo-liberal economic policy promoted by the United States, including privatization, commercial liberalization, and cuts in public expenditure. According to Ahumada and Andrews, this economic integration is imposed on nations too weak to resist. In describing the situations in Colombia and Brazil, the authors find that this process is accompanied by U. S. intervention in the political and economic affairs of affected nations, often resulting in destabilization, unemployment, poverty, and social unrest. They conclude that “as the implementation
of neo-liberal prescriptions deepens the social crisis. . .,” concerns about unemployment and poverty “are already arising from within international financial institutions” (p. 464). Mohamad Alkadry (2002) also addresses the theme of effects of neo-liberal intervention, writing that “colonial experiences, imperial ventures, globalization, and defensive modernization are the challenges facing Middle East nations as they move from a moment of national independence and anti-colonial resistance to a moment of liberation and democratic governance” (p. 739). Alkadry notes that “colonialism, and subsequent imperialism/globalization have tampered with civil society, geographic boundaries, and national identity” (p. 755). His description of the outcome is bleak: “the result is a Middle East with dehumanized natives living in non-democratic nation states that were drawn around them and in some cases through them” (p. 756).

For some, the dominant values in public administration can lead to oppressive conditions in organizations and in civic life. In her analysis of values in public administration, DeLysa Burnier (2003) refers to Camilla Stivers’ book, *Bureau Men, Settlement Women: Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era* (2000b) in arguing that “public administration would be a different discipline today if it had kept the settlement women’s values and practices as part of its founding narrative and adopted the home, rather than business, as one of its guiding metaphors” (Burnier, 2003, p. 536). Had this occurred, writes Burnier, “empathy, compassion, connection, commitment, and context might have become just as prominent in public administration as efficiency, expertise, neutrality, and technical reasoning” (p. 536).

Participants in the settlement house and social centers movements of the Progressive Era emphasized community discourse and cooperative action. Much attention is given in the public administration literature to participation in discourse, often defined as speech. Patricia Patterson (2000) finds that this narrow focus on speech minimizes “openness and attention to power and conflict, to silenced and silent and otherwise alternative discourses, and to the forging of attentive relationships. . .” (p. 688). Often when people do not participate in discourse, when they are silent, their perspective is ignored. This is not necessarily an appropriate response to silence, which can mean many things, such as agreement, passive listening, acquiescence, or resistance. Patterson writes: “one consistent theme across the literature reviewed here is that the consequence of dominant talk by some will be the silence of many Others” (p. 681). As people study and take part in decision-making processes, Patterson suggests they ask: “is mutual engagement charac-
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terized by mutual listening, attentiveness, competence, responsibility, and regard, as well as talk? Or is it one-way communication, self-involved, argumentative and exclusionary?” (p. 688).

Silencing, or exclusion from discourse, is one form of oppression; conditions in organizations can be another. Janet Hutchinson (2001) describes her sense of conditions in organizations as “melancholy,” a depressive feeling of loss of self to the larger entity which keeps “getting in the way” because its parts are “in constant competition with one another” (p. 596). Hutchinson suggests these conditions result from stereotyping men as having masculine characteristics (dominance, forcefulness, etc.) and women as having feminine characteristics (tact, compassion, etc.), and then valuing the masculine over the feminine. As an alternative she would value both sets of qualities, avoiding the negative effects of gender stereotyping, since “there is the conviction that biological sex as well as gender are socially constructed. Indeed, there is substantial support for the the view that gendered-masculine and gendered-feminine are not dualities. . . ,” but instead “anchors on either end of an array of gendered-other” (p. 601).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A detailed summary description or interpretation of the substance of Dialogue/ATP is not attempted here, but I would like to offer a few thoughts in closing. This material provides a view of the interests of authors in a particular niche of public administration and a window into the work of importing theories into a practice-oriented field to generate understanding beyond instrumental techniques.

Reading from past issues of Dialogue and ATP gives one a useful sense of perspective. Some concepts that seem new today have appeared in different forms in the past, such as the politics-administration relationship or the effects of globalized capitalist society. On occasion, one can be startled by parallels—here is an example. A paper was published in Public Administration Review in 2004, authored by Laurence O’Toole and Kenneth Meier, titled “Desperately Seeking Selznick: Co-optation and the Dark Side of Public Management Networks.” According to the abstract, it “argues that individual network nodes can work to bias the organization’s actions in ways that benefit the organization’s more advantaged clientele” (p. 681). A paper was published in Administrative Theory & Praxis in 1994, authored by Nada Korac-Boisvert and Alexander Kouzmin, titled “The Dark Side of Info-Age Social Networks in Public Organizations and Creeping Crises.” From the abstract: “networks in public organizations can have the effect of a poison pill
leading to unethical collective action such as the propagation of dis- or mis-information, large-scale fraud, and organizational crisis” (p. 57). The latter paper is not cited in the former.

There are changes in conceptual emphasis over time. For example, over the quarter-century of Dialogue/ATP, there appears to be movement away from constitutionalism, institutionalism and legitimacy, toward discourse, voice, and negative versus positive liberty. Though this could be an inaccurate or misleading generalization, it seems that writing in the journal has shifted from structure and operation within government to relationships between government and the broader society. A clear explanation of this would be difficult. Among other possibilities, it could be in response to long-term changes in the journal’s readership, the increasingly economistic political and societal environment of public administration practice and scholarship, changes in government and administration following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and/or editorial preference.

There have also been changes in the demographics of authors. Data are not readily available on age or seniority of Dialogue/ATP authors, but participation by graduate students and new faculty appears to have increased in the past few years. Women were named as author or co-author of papers 11 times in the first and second Dialogue periods combined, 48 times in the first ATP period, and 63 times in the second ATP period. In the ATP periods, the journal has become increasingly international in nature, with work by authors from countries including (with apologies to any not mentioned) Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, India, the Netherlands, and Singapore.

Acknowledgement should be given to the contribution of communications, book reviews and other material not included in this article-focused discussion. Special notice should be made of the columns written by David John Farmer that have appeared in every issue during the second ATP period.

It would be difficult to determine whether and in what ways Dialogue/ATP has influenced the broader public administration community and to what extent the existence of the journal has made possible work that would otherwise not have been published. I will be pleased if this overview leads to renewed appreciation of the role of Dialogue/ATP in public administration. It would be especially gratifying if some readers were prompted to look through the history of the journal, possibly to extend the work begun here.
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Box


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### APPENDIX

Symposium Topics in *ATP*, 1996-2006

(Issues from 27(2) to 28(4) are planned, not published as of this writing)

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