Dialogue

This article takes on the difficult task of trying to ascertain the practicality of discourse as a means toward establishing a more democratic public administration. Of concern are the methods currently used to evaluate the authenticity of such endeavors, particularly Fox and Miller's warrants for discourse, which have something of a reliability problem. This particular work suggests the use of more systematic ways to examine discursive behavior, either in lieu of or in conjunction with the warrants. These are called empirical referents, and are inclusion, self-regulation, and policy outputs. Use of these empirical referents is intended to help provide us with a clearer focus for our discourse about the process of policy implementation and the attainment of tenable results.

IDENTIFYING FACETS OF DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION
The Empirical Referents of Discourse

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Within the field of public administration, there is an emerging paradigm that advocates greater responsiveness and multichanneled communication in an effort to create a more effective administration, both for the public it serves and for those who are employed within the government. Wamsley and Wolf (1996) refer to this as a refounding of democratic

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administration. Others, such as George Frederickson (1980, 1996), call it the new public administration or neoinstitutionalism. In a postmodern spin-off of these ideas, Fox and Miller (1995) advocate the creation of nodes of discourse within greater public energy fields. But how can we know whether these ideas are useful in practice? Many public officials claim to use facets of democratic administration, but upon closer examination, old patterns of orthodoxy and/or economic administration in the form of reinventing government reveal themselves.

In attempting to use discourse theory as a practical model of decision making, an important question arises: How does one know that authentic discourse is being practiced? The answer lies in the observation of discursive behavior, which I believe can be done systematically by the appearance of certain behaviors that can be used either in conjunction with or in lieu of Fox and Miller's warrants for discourse.

The appearance of new and unique public policy dilemmas often call for substantially innovative ways of implementing policy solutions. Fox and Miller (1995) have offered a new ideal that challenges orthodox views of implementation. They argue that such difficulties can be addressed through a discourse that is based on sincerity, intentions, engagement, and substantive contribution. Use of these warrants for discourse is designed to pave the way toward authentic discourse, which is the ultimate goal of Fox and Miller.

Authentic discourse facilitates the resolution of public policy demands through bottom-up style negotiation and consensus building, as opposed to economic rationalism or pluralistic competition. However, at present, public institutions exhibit only nascent tendencies (Fox & Miller, 1995) toward authentic discourse. To remedy this condition, administrators must alter those recursive practices and orthodox bad habits that currently obstruct discursive tendencies.

This article argues that the practice of participatory democratic ideals—such as discourse—can be empirically verified. The observation and identification of three empirical referents—inclusion, self-regulation, and the appearance of certain policy outputs—serve as more objective and systematic indicators of the new paradigm than current methods, which have more to do with functional critique among elites than with participatory administration. A discourse is a high-level, inclusive, self-regulated discussion about what to do next with regard to complex public policy dilemmas. It is best recognized by its warrants or licenses to participate

(Fox & Miller, 1995). However, when used as evaluative criteria, the warrants are subject to an eye-of-the-beholder problem. What this means is that they suffer from too much subjectivity, resulting in different opinions or observations being made of the same situation. This is known in the positivist realm as a reliability problem.

DISCOURSE THEORY

Many scholars have taken to bashing public agencies, arguing that bureaucracy has grown too large and is unresponsive, dehumanizing, and inefficient (see Hummel, 1994; Knott & Miller, 1987). The perception of bureaucracy as institutions restricted by too many rules, unidirectional communication, and rigid, hierarchical organizational structures gives that word a pejorative connotation in contemporary usage. Although, as Goodsell (1994) argues, this is by no means a unanimous determination. In his polemic on behalf of public administration, he demonstrates widespread, popular content with public agencies and services through the discussion of numerous surveys on the topic. Nevertheless, there appears to be a growing movement in the public administration literature and the general polity in favor of alternatives for addressing policy demands.

Regardless of the disparate ideological origins of prevailing antigovernment ideas, they seem to have one thing in common: They advocate the reduction of the constraints and dehumanizing mechanisms of formal hierarchical organizations and the orthodox thought on which these structures are based. This antigovernmentalism originates with negative views of the state or an increasing cynicism regarding the nature of present-day society. Some wish to reduce the role of the state through the public choice manna of privatization by increasing the role of nonprofit organizations (points of light) or by opting out of the sociopolitical system altogether (see "L.A. Gated Communities" in Etzioni, 1995, pp. 243-250).

However, there are those who have suggested that a more positive way to address public policy demands is through the creation of less formal communicative structures that encourage the exchange of ideas and the resolution of substantive differences through negotiation. This kind of unorthodoxy is actually more humanistic and is designed to reach a greater degree of consensus than economically rationalist solutions, which are often only available to the highest bidder or are designed to pro-

mote selfish ends. One purpose of this work is to examine the feasibility of discursive formations in addressing complex implementation problems. For this reason, such structures deserve further explication.

Administrative discourse is built on the idea of politics through negotiation, which has its basis in a body of political science and public administration literature. It is preferable to pluralistic models of competition between elites or hierarchy because of its emphasis on equal communication. A number of social scientists have offered descriptions of new and different organizational structures as alternatives to orthodoxy, which has guided policy implementation for most of this century. Some have done so intentionally and others have done so unintentionally, their ideas having been co-opted into the theoretical bases of later works. But the one thing they all have in common is a desire to attempt the redress of political grievances through negotiation. This feature, along with the transitory nature of discursive formations, is what separates discourse theory from the practice of mechanistic orthodoxy and the contemporary preoccupation with scientific and economic rationalism, which also seeks to provide alternatives to orthodoxy.

POLITICS THROUGH NEGOTIATION

If Fox and Miller (1995) are correct and discourse is a viable alternative to orthodoxy and institutional behavioralism, then there must be a transition phase from which the currently discredited institutions evolve into newer, more appropriate discursive formations. Before institutions and practices can evolve, however, administrative theory must first evolve to provide practitioners with an heuristic guide. The following discussion is an attempt to demonstrate that this type of thinking has progressed to the point at which there is now a body of literature within the discipline that could loosely be described as possessing facets of discursive thought.

Hannah Arendt (1963) describes how the polis can be applied to modern politics. "The Greek polis, the city-state, defined itself explicitly as a way of life that was based exclusively upon persuasion" (p. 2). Within this context, men were able to more fully realize their freedom and take action within the public realm to solve collective dilemmas. Phillip Hansen (1993) interprets what he sees as Arendt's metaphor of the polis as a critique of the modern state, which is "large, bureaucratic and impersonal" (p. 52) and restrictive of a genuine politics. "It also provides additional grounds for what I have argued is Arendt's attempt to encourage a rethink-

ing of both political institutions and practices, and our ways of thinking about how we think" (P. Hansen, 1993, p. 53).

Cochran (1982) rails against the contemporary, liberal paradigm of autonomous individualism that dominates the public debate in favor of a more communitarian solution. He advocates the development of a better societal character and community and contends that politics can be a facilitator toward the advancement of these goals. His notion of character includes at least two inseparable elements: moral qualities and social roles. Inherent in Cochran's notion of character is the commitment to take responsible and positive action within society. His definition of community reflects the reciprocity between communion and hospitality. Communion refers to the shared experiences between individuals, whereas hospitality refers to a type of mutual generosity. Politics, according to Cochran, is a means through which a greater sense of character and community can be brought to bear upon society in an attempt to draw people closer. When this happens, society will be less fragmented, less alienated—and presumably—more willing to confront policy quandaries.

Deborah Stone (1988) argues against the assumptions of rational choice in favor of both a polis and a political community, similar to the ideas of both Arendt (1963) and Cochran (1982). For D. Stone, the polis cannot exist without a community, which is defined as an entity that assumes both a collective will and a collective effort. In her polis, there exists a public interest, influence, cooperation, and loyalty in the pursuit of solving common problems. Perfect information does not exist in the polis, despite the assumptions of the economic rationality argument.

Instead, politics is waged as a battle of symbolism and metaphor. Numbers, statistics, words, and phrases are such political manifestations and are sufficiently ambiguous to intentionally cause confusion among many political participants and observers. Drawing from Berger and Luckmann (1966), D. Stone (1988) postulates that reality is socially constructed and that political language and images help to define what is tangible in the polis. Those who define the use of these symbols and metaphors control the political agenda and the tone of the debate. Political reasoning then, according to D. Stone, "is always conducted as part of a struggle to control which images of the world govern policy" (p. 309).

Many discussions regarding the meaning of discourse center around the works of the German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas. The Habermasian notion of discourse is a form of communication that includes validity

and an ethic based on values which can be logically criticized and reconstructed depending on the actions, intentions, and experiences of the participants. Discourse is desirable in order to reach a consensus regarding the general interest (Calhoun, 1992; Habermas, 1989; Seidman, 1989). This type of communication is conducted within the context of the public sphere, which according to Craig Calhoun (1992) is where "practical reason was institutionalized through norms of reasoned discourse in which arguments, not status or traditions, were to be decisive" (p. 2). So, making one's case is more important for discourse than one's institutional position. Foucault (1980) describes the limits or structure of discourse in a similar fashion. Constraints can be either external or internal, or they can be both. External limits are likely to involve power or jurisdiction, whereas internal limits include the right to speak with authority and constraints are associated with language or vernacular (Foucault, 1980; Zito, 1984).

Much of the preceding discussion has focused on the organization of political discussion, which may imply by omission that administration is not included in the discourse literature. This, however, is not the case. Henry Mintzberg (1994) discusses what appears to be discursive administration in his theory of *ad hocracies*. These flexible structures involve very flat hierarchies or matrix organizations and are transitory, depending on the nature of the project or problem to be taken care of. Often, the participants bring high levels of expertise to the table and coordinate their efforts through mutual cooperation (Mintzberg, 1994). In general, proponents of postmodern and democratic forms assume that there is no separation of politics and administration; that they necessarily involve the same processes.

All the preceding ideas seek to address a certain angst regarding the administration of society's problems. A key assumption of these authors is that current practices and structures are not sufficient for addressing contemporary policy demands. As a result, they have provided different solutions for this dilemma. Fox and Miller (1995) draw heavily on many of these works in their attempt to provide a more functional notion of authentic discourse and to describe emergent forms that exhibit certain nascent discursive tendencies.

AUTHENTIC DISCOURSE

Fox and Miller's (1995) discourse theory considers that the assumptions on which Weberian structures and probabilistic bureaucratization

are based are not sufficient for solving today's public problems. Increasingly, hierarchies and one-way communication are seen as impediments to the effective delivery of public goods and services. This has prompted them to construct a new and improved course of action for public officials in an attempt to answer the question "What do we do next?" when confronted with unexpected or difficult policy dilemmas.

Fox and Miller (1995) advocate the creation of a public forum, which has as its main design communication for the purpose of addressing public policy demands through negotiation. For them, this is an attempt to resolve the dilemma between strong neotribalist tendencies and the thinning of the macroculture. The means by which this is to be achieved is through the establishment of patterns of discourse, that is to say, persistent, multidirectional communication that is of a sufficient level to include as many people as possible without degenerating into anarchy. Discourse should take the middle ground between the monologic (single-direction) communication practiced by the news media and the "anarchic babel" (Fox & Miller, 1995, p. 13) represented by neotribal societal factionalism. But to achieve discourse, we must first join together and seize the agenda from the practitioners of nondiscursive communication.

WARRANTS FOR DISCOURSE

There are several criteria or warrants with which Fox and Miller (1995) assess the authenticity of discourse. These include sincerity, situation-regarding intentionality, willing attention, and substantive contribution. Sincerity is necessary to build bridges of trust between those who would participate in the discourse. Situation-regarding intentionality "assures that the discourse will be *about* something, about contextually situated activities" (Fox & Miller, 1995, p. 123). One's agenda, or intentions, are designed in relation to the particular context in which the discourse is to take place. Willing attention refers to the active participation in the discourse. Not only must one maintain an interest in the dialogue, but one must also join in from time to time and listen critically and attentively to the arguments of others. Substantive contribution includes providing expertise and ideas or maintaining the level (authenticity) of discourse by policing the conversation of one's peers (Fox & Miller, 1995).

Who then has a right or warrant to participate in the discourse? In an effort to be as democratic as possible, Fox and Miller (1995) advocate the involvement of anyone whose intentions are genuine, as long as they are willing to participate with others as equals in the pursuit of the public

interest. "Communication requires equal participants. Unequal communication is oxymoronic; talk between unequals is either command or acquiescence" (Fox & Miller, 1995, p. 116). Sincerity is important in these situations to build trust between participants who, at least initially, may know very little about one another. The participants must also be willingly engaged in the process, providing substantive contributions in accordance with the overall agenda, which is negotiated among the members of the group.

Discourse theory assumes that language that is used to dominate, exclude, reduce, lie, or misrepresent should be identified for what it is—nondiscursive—and henceforth be exposed and eliminated. Participants should police the discourse as a way to maintain a certain level of substantive discussion. This is intended to help prevent self-interested tendencies from taking over the debate and forcing their agenda on others.

> We want to valorize for public policy discourses the exclusion of claims that are insincere, claims that are only self-serving, claims from those unwilling to attend to the discourse, and claims from "free riders." (Fox & Miller, 1995, p. 120)

Warrants for discourse, then, will be awarded to sincere individuals engaged in the policy process who wish to participate in public discussions to define, formulate, and implement substantive decisions for complex public policy dilemmas.

But the question still remains: How can the warrants be systematically useful? Sincerity is easily faked. Whether one has hidden agendas is in the eye of the beholder. Determining who is engaged in the process is open for interpretation by both participants and observers. What is considered a substantive contribution by one party may be dismissed as unworkable by another, and so forth. Another problem is that the warrants may not be considered to be universal norms by all groups or individuals. For example, many Christians view the questioning of agendas as uncharitable behavior and hence might choose not to use this particular warrant or might resent those who do. These value differences would tend to perpetuate rather than alleviate postmodern miscommunication.

Also, what happens when discourse is not effectively policed? What if there is no will to impose sanctions for misbehavior, such as shunning or ostracism? When there are no means to shout down the forces of monologic diatribe, democratic compromise breaks down. It should be apparent by now that there is a need for a more systematic method for measuring and evaluating the authenticity of discourse.

POSTMODERN METHODOLOGY

Before those of positivist tendencies vicariously celebrate the conquering of new intellectual territory through my advocacy of the empirical observation of discourse, I should point out that I make this argument from the point of view of a postmodern administrative theorist. I am not a behaviorist per se, as my body of qualitative work will attest. Logical positivism holds that research be conducted through empirical inquiry, with the operationalization and measurement of variables used to provide answers to previously dispensed research questions. This is inherently modernistic. Postmodern research is different in the sense that questions are not set up for quantitative rigor but for the addressing of argument. Postmodern theorists are judged not by the strength of their methodology, but by the definition of terms and strength of their arguments. One reason for the writing of this article is to help strengthen the new democratic administrative paradigmatic argument.

Wamsley and Wolf (1996) and their Blacksburg disciples describe administration as an inherently modernist construct. However, the environment in which society finds itself is inherently postmodern. From this point of view, the whole notion of postmodern administration sounds a bit oxymoronic. Wamsley and Wolf deal with this problem by taking a middle position that straddles the modern construct of administration and the contemporary hyperpluralist, hyperreal environment. They call this position *high modern*. This is done in an effort to bring administration up to date, to reconstitute it and make it useful for addressing contemporary public problems once again.

My position is similar. To enhance the legitimacy of postmodern administration, it is useful to give it a modernistic flair (but without backtracking too much toward the modern origins of administration). In short, I take a step back toward the high-modern position by using the positivist framework as an heuristic for making my argument. The argument is that if discourse can be objectively observed, it is of greater value for addressing postmodern policy dilemmas.

This work is designed to be a transitory piece that links the theory and practice of discourse with policy implementation. The main research question this article seeks to address is: Can discourse be systematically observed? This question is important for several reasons. If it is not systematically observable, then the utility of discourse in the realm of administration is severely diminished. Discursive practice becomes more difficult because it cannot be constructed or evaluated. If this is the case,

then perhaps the critics who argue that discourse is nothing more than a lot of talking (Wright, 1996) are correct.

A second reason why this question is important is related to reliability. To be empirically valid, methods of observation and evaluation must be replicable (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994). Differences in perception may cause differences in observation of the warrants for discourse in practice. This is what I call the *eye-of-the-beholder problem.* In more technical parlance, this is also known as observer bias. To avoid such confusion, a more systematic means of identifying and using discourse would be useful.

A discussion of three empirical referents helps to pursue an answer to the main research question. The referents are: inclusion, self-regulation, and policy outputs. The first, inclusion, involves who is invited to participate in the discussion. Presumably, the more actors involved in the discussion, the less likely it is to be controlled by institutional or elite interests and hence the more likely it is to be authentic. The second referent involves how the discussion is regulated. If the norms, rules, and procedures that structure the discussion are predetermined by policy elites, then the outcomes are likely to be the result of a top-down, unidirectional and undemocratic nature—and hence—to be antidiscursive. If the discussion is self-regulated by its participants, then it is closer to the ideal.

The third referent, policy outputs, involves whether the discussion results in action being taken in pursuit of problem solving. A lack of substantive policy outputs indicates that something is wrong with the discourse. Policy outputs that result from an inclusive, self-regulated discussion, on the other hand, are likely to illustrate the benefits of discursive administration. These three empirical referents are designed to provide an answer to the research question of how to systematically measure discourse. Following a review of relevant literature and a critique of Fox and Miller's (1995) warrants for discourse, there will be a more in-depth discussion as to the applicability of the empirical referents.

THE EMPIRICAL REFERENTS OF DISCOURSE

This section defines the systematic measurement of authentic discourse. To reiterate, there are three empirical referents that can be used to illustrate the practice of discourse: inclusion, self-regulation, and policy outputs. Whereas inclusion and self-regulation as well as their corresponding warrants are unique to discourse, policy outputs, and hence sub-

TABLE 1
Facets of Democratic Administration

Empirical Referent	*Characteristics*	*Antithesis*	*Characteristics*
Inclusion	Coalition building Acceptance of outsiders Community outreach Open spatial arrangements	Exclusion	Elite control In-house only Closed-door policy Platform/head table
Self-regulation	Empowerment Election of leaders Multidirectional communication	Hierarchy	Directives Appointment of leaders Unidirectional communication
Policy outputs	Organization development Adequate funding Completed strategic plans Implementation tasks	Few outputs	No organization development Inadequate funding No strategic plans Litigation

stantive contributions, are not. Outputs and contributions by themselves do not indicate discourse and may in fact be illustrative of some other dynamic. However, outputs are an indication that action is being taken and when coupled with inclusion and self-regulation, serve to substantiate the claim of Fox and Miller (1995) that discourse is indeed a useful theory of implementation. For this reason, I argue that it is unlikely that one would ever observe inclusion and self-regulation without subsequent policy outputs. The practice of discourse, therefore, can be empirically verified through the observation of inclusion and self-regulation, whereas its degree of authenticity and overall value can be weighed through implementation progress.

INCLUSION

Three criteria can be used to determine the nature of inclusion. They are coalition building, the acceptance of outsiders, and community outreach activities. Local governments often form coalitions with discursive characteristics to gain support and legitimacy for stated economic development initiatives. Community development literature indicates that these coalitions are representative of the community at large—incorporating various political factions, racial groups, businesses, and grass-roots interests—and that local government provides the leadership necessary to

coagulate these various interests into a workable unit (K. N. Hansen, 1996; Pagano & Bowman, 1995; Sonenshein, 1993; C. N. Stone & Sanders, 1987).

Another manifestation of inclusion is the acceptance of outsiders. Sabatier and Pelkey (1987) suggest this as a measure for their advocacy coalition theory, although for them the outsiders are media elites, interest groups, and policy analysts. For discourse, outsiders might include expertise in the form of consultants or specialized practitioners brought in for specific implementation purposes. Acceptance of outsiders is a good indication of whether discourse is inclusive with regard to solving highly technical policy dilemmas, as expertise is often required to deal with the unanticipated difficulties associated with complex problems. Mintzberg's (1994) ad hocracy idea also requires a certain level of expertise for addressing policy implementation problems. The general, as opposed to specialized, nature of these structures make it theoretically possible for many individuals to come and go as needed (Mintzberg, 1994).

A third indicator of inclusion is the practice of community outreach activities. Such activities include, but are not limited to, town meetings, regular media coverage, informative surveys, or any other practices that enable or encourage public participation. Town meetings must be set up in such a way as to encourage multidirectional communication and should be held on a regular basis at a consistently accessible location. Town meetings can be evaluated by observing the spatial arrangements of the participants and observers and the format of the discussion. A roundtable setting is most appropriate for discourse because it encourages a feeling of conversation between equals. Other types of seating arrangements, such as having lecturers on a stage or at a podium in front of an audience, are more conducive to monologic communication, as they stifle participation and the normal give-and-take of conversation by rearranging the civic space (Domahidy & Gilsinan, 1992; Goodsell, 1988).

Regular media coverage can take the form of weekly newspaper columns or television news stories, the substance of which could be evaluated through a content analysis if one were ambitious enough. The media can also keep the community informed regarding the places and times of public hearings or meetings, rather than simply reporting the results of the discussion after the fact. Informative surveys are a useful tool with which to gauge public opinion and values. They are also a useful way to increase the polity's level of knowledge and to provide a means to seek out the ideas of those who may otherwise be unable to participate in regular discussions due to high information or opportunity costs.

An anecdotal example may serve to illustrate how inclusion works. In late 1989, the war on drugs was a highly salient issue. To help formulate policy solutions for this problem, U.S. Senator Alan Cranston (D-California) organized a series of town meetings throughout California at which the citizenry, state and local law enforcement, and elected officials were welcome to air their views. By using the Senator's franking privilege, his staff invited everyone with a mailing address within certain geographic areas to attend the meetings.

I assisted with the advance team at meetings in Orange County, California. My role was similar to that of a television talk show host or moderator, as I was responsible for giving people a chance to speak into the microphone. This had the effect of putting government officials and the attending media into the role of listeners, whereas the citizens were empowered with participation. Opinions ranging from the expansion of capital punishment, to funding for more police, to legalization were discussed. Some of these ideas were eventually legitimized into federal law.

Although the coalition in this instance may have been more transitory than the usual conception for discourse, certainly no one who was willing to participate was excluded. And although it is difficult to claim that anything truly of substance came out of the meetings, it is interesting to note that the conversation involved ordinary people as well as public servants from all levels of government, both elected and appointed. It was also issue specific and structured to stay within established parameters.

The three indicators of inclusion—coalition building, the acceptance of outsiders, and community outreach activities—are conceptually reminiscent of the new public administration. According to Frederickson (1980, 1996), the new public administration is process oriented and involves the development of "criteria by which to judge effectiveness" (Frederickson, 1996, p. 264). Peters and Savoie (1996) discuss decentralization and empowerment as essential facets of democratic management. These perspectives are also in favor of public outreach and access mechanisms of the type described above. For inclusive participation to be possible, however, there must be a greater emphasis on citizenship and public service (Frederickson, 1996; Wamsley & Wolf, 1996).

SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation is an important aspect of discourse. If the participatory group or community is not allowed to "police the discourse," in the words of Fox and Miller (1995), then communication is unequal, hierarchical,

and nondiscursive. There can be no discursive will formation or willing engagement if it is coerced. One indicator of self-regulation is the election of leadership by problem-solving committees and subcommittees. This practice—legitimizing street-level or citizen-level decision making—is often called empowerment (Peters & Savoie, 1996). Another indicator is the negotiation of operating norms, rules, and procedures, which serve to add direction to the conversation. Fox and Miller (1995) refer to these as recursive practices, which are needed to establish and maintain discursive patterns of communication.

A third indication is multidirectional communication. Again, one way this can be evaluated is through the observation of spatial arrangements at meetings. If people are relegated to an audience—by seating them at other tables or in rows of chairs—they are reduced to the status of passive evaluators rather than active implementors and are hence not allowed to take part in the discussion or its direction. That is, unless they are somehow empowered by some technological means. My circulating through the crowd with a microphone in the example of the drug enforcement policy meetings serves to demonstrate how the discussion can be brought to those who might otherwise be excluded by the structure of the civic space. Other ways to create multiple channels of communication are through the innovation of multiple access points, such as providing toll-free phone and fax numbers or e-mail addresses.

An example of self-regulation would be local military base redevelopment efforts, which establish organizations to engage in policy solutions and strategic plans. These organizations, called Local Reuse Authorities (LRAs) are funded by the federal government but are comprised of local people who autonomously make the operating rules and procedures for their organizations. Most states consider them to be independent local districts, such as school or water boards, and because they often receive little in the way of state funding, they are permitted to chart their own courses. Self-regulation is also reminiscent of the new administration. These practices help to facilitate democratic participation and citizen involvement in the pursuit of contemporary problems that involve postmodern elements and modern administrative paradoxes (Wamsley & Wolf, 1996).

POLICY OUTPUTS

Finally, policy outputs can be used to measure progress in the problem-solving process. Fox and Miller (1995) argue that discourse has to be about what to do next and that substantive contributions must be

geared toward this end. I assert that how to do it necessarily follows from the discussion of what to do next. However, Fox and Miller make no distinction between policy formulation and implementation. Whereas they posit that policy solutions can be negotiated through politics and that discourse is necessarily about something, I argue that discourse is not only about something, but that to be authentic with regard to addressing complex policy problems, it must be specifically about the implementation process.

There are several steps to policy implementation that include the creation and funding of implementing agencies, the construction of rules and regulations (Cochran, Mayer, Carr, & Cayer, 1993), in addition to the daily activities of policy execution. Regardless of whether these happen sequentially, as modernists would argue, or simultaneously, as postmodernists do, they are distinct activities that comprise the implementation process, and that is the concern here. James Q. Wilson (1989) argues that every organization must have a task, a mission, and the autonomy to carry out policy objectives. These criteria can be used to describe the policy output referent, because they are illustrative of specific actions. For the purposes of this work, if there are policy outputs (in the presence of the other two referents) that address a specific, previously defined policy problem, and if they are carried out within a reasonable period of time, then they serve to illustrate whether substantive contributions have been made in the pursuit of discourse. If solutions are not negotiated within a certain amount of time, this may be indicative of hidden agendas, stonewalling, poor organization, or incompetence and may serve to indicate that there are problems somewhere in the process.

It should be kept in mind that although policy outputs are necessary for discourse to be effective, when taken by themselves, they are not sufficient indicators because they are not unique to discourse. Policy outputs that serve to operationalize implementation activity may include organizational development, funding, completed strategic plans, and their actual execution. Such activities are not exclusively discursive—as are inclusion or self-regulation—but they serve to illustrate the authenticity of discourse through the demonstration of tangible action. In other words, discourse is only authentic if something is being done; otherwise, there is no point to having the discussion. Policy outputs indicate discursive implementation because there can be no realization of how to do it without tangible results.

Conversely, the lack of discursive behavior can also be operationalized through the observation of exclusion, orthodoxy, and the lack of policy

outputs geared toward problem solving. Exclusion is exemplified through elite control, refusal to include outsiders, and an unwillingness to reach out to the community. Orthodoxy is most easily defined by the practices of appointing officials to a hierarchical system and of unidirectional communication. A paucity of policy outputs such as organizational development, adequate funding, strategic planning, and implementation activity can be noted by their absence or by the presence of the very antitheses of discourse—litigation and/or postmodern cognitive dissonance. Again, it should be kept in mind that policy outputs are a necessary condition of discourse but are not by themselves sufficient to indicate its practice.

CONCLUSIONS

To reiterate, a discourse is a high-level, inclusive, self-regulating discussion about what to do next regarding problems of complex implementation. It is but one of several theories that have been offered as critique and solution for orthodox administration and the practice of hierarchical communication. Discourse differs from theories of rationalism or pluralistic competition due to its emphasis on community, equal communication, and consensus building, as opposed to economy or Darwinian self-interest. Fox and Miller (1995) argue that it is best recognizable by its warrants. However, whether the discussion is in fact authentic (based on the warrants) is in the eye of the beholder. This prompts the question: Is there not a more systematic way to evaluate and operationalize discourse? I argue that to be useful and authentic, discourse must not only be about what to do next, but how to do it. Or in other words, that it must be about the implementation process.

There are three empirical referents that can be used to systematically verify the authenticity of discourse. Although Arendt (1963), D. Stone (1988), and Cochran (1982) provide some structure for politics through negotiation and Foucault (1980), Habermas (1989), Mintzberg (1994), and Fox and Miller (1995) provide for its functional use, discourse still remains very ad hoc and squishy. My argument is in part an attempt to provide additional structure for the sake of clarity and utility. To briefly summarize, the empirical referents of discourse are inclusion, self-regulation, and policy outputs.

Inclusion involves the creation of a broad-based coalition of political factions, racial groups, and business interests, the acceptance of outside expertise, and community outreach activities such as town meetings,

regular media coverage, or informative surveys. Self-regulation is demonstrated by the election of leaders, the negotiation of operating rules and procedures, and the practice of multidirectional communication through multiple access points. Policy outputs include specific implementation activity that is geared toward solving complex public policy problems. Although policy outputs are not unique to discourse, they help to provide evidence that discourse can be a useful method of complex policy implementation.

To make discourse more applicable for practitioners, I have taken the liberty of reification. My explication of discourse is slightly more democratic, solution oriented, and implicitly focused at the local level than is Fox and Miller's (1995) ideal, which is more guild oriented. However, it is not inconsistent, as they would argue that discourse is intended to be a theory of bottom-up administration. For them, at least at first, discourse involves many of the same actors that might comprise an iron triangle. However, in practice, openness and inclusion seem to be greater guarantees of multichanneled, equal communication (Domahidy & Gilsinan, 1992; Goodsell, 1988; Heclo, 1977).

I also argue that to be authentic, discourse must be focused on policy implementation, or it will fall victim to the forces of inaction. So, not only must it be about what to do next, as Fox and Miller (1995) assert, but it must explicitly be about how to do it. Although implementation may be implicit in addressing what to do next, it deserves additional emphasis so that policy goals are not forgotten in the ensuing discussions. By examining policy outputs, practitioners can systematically evaluate whether progress has been made and whether discourse has been a valuable policy-making exercise.

Systematic use of the empirical referents is important for the sake of reliability. Due to the eye-of-the-beholder problem associated with the use of Fox and Miller's (1995) warrants, it is difficult for different individuals to use them consistently. This is not to say that they are not useful, because I have used them in what I feel was an effective manner (K. N. Hansen, 1996). However, legitimate questions arose over reliability and internal validity. Therefore, the empirical referents—which are more precise—are offered as a complimentary method for measuring and evaluating discourse. Whether it be by policy researchers or practitioners, the ability to replicate the observation of discourse is vital to its adoption as a means of reformulating patterns of democratic administration.

The intention of this piece was to put a slightly modern spin on a postmodern prescription—discourse—in the hopes of strengthening it con-

ceptually for practical use. Much discourse is practiced at the guild level through academic symposia (Carroll, 1996; Fox, 1996; Frederickson, 1996; Miller & Fox, 1997; Peters & Savoie, 1996). Whether democratic administration becomes a new paradigm, such as reinventing government, depends on whether it is adopted by both the academic and practitioner communities. It is gaining ground among academics but lagging behind economic rationality in popular usage. If this work helps to increase its popular legitimacy, then I have contributed in some small way to the fulfillment of the dreams of many administrative theorists.

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