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Book Review Essay

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The Human Element: Bureaucracy, Gender, and Race

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Books Reviewed

Goodsell, C. T. (2015). *The new case for bureaucracy*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Alkadry, M. G., & Tower, L. E. (2014). *Women and public service: Barriers, challenges, and opportunities*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Gooden, S. T. (2014). *Race and social equity: A nervous area of government*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Abstract

Research on the people who deliver public services offers a useful alternative perspective in an applied field with an orientation toward organizational systems, performance, and accountability. It begins inside public organizations, treating public professionals as the subjects of research rather than objects to be controlled and manipulated. This essay reviews three new books that explore aspects of this alternative perspective, which we may call "the human element." These books focus on the characteristics of bureaucrats, women in the public sector, and race and social equity in government. They offer insights on difficult and controversial topics and serve as important resources for scholars and practitioners in public administration.

Keywords

bureaucracy, gender, minorities, practitioners, race, social equity, women

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There is more to government and bureaucracy than political systems, policy making, and controlling bureaucrats and expenditures. They are also about the intersection of public professionals and public policy, the lives of people doing the daily work of service delivery. Research from this perspective begins inside public organizations and focuses on the role of the public service practitioner. It connects with themes in administrative ethics and contrasts with the economic rationalism of public choice and New Public Management. For the purposes of this essay, we may call this perspective "the human element."

It would be reasonable to think of this essay as an argument for greater attention to studying public organizations from the inside out, as subjects, rather than thinking of them as objects to be shaped and manipulated for political purposes. This is an appealing thought, but the author is less interested in advocating for a particular sort of research than in calling the reader's attention to three fascinating new books that add significantly to the literature on public bureaucracy.

The idea of focusing on the people who work in organizations and using this point of departure as a way to study organizations and their effects on society is not new. It has a venerable lineage in the general management literature, with examples such as William Whyte (1956), *The Organization Man*; Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977), *Men and Women of the Corporation*; Robert Presthus (1978), *The Organizational Society*; and Robert Denhardt (1981), *In the Shadow of Organization*. Public administration scholars have also found this perspective interesting. Examples include Cheryl Simrell King and Lisa Zanetti (2005), *Transformational Public Service*; Mary Guy, Meredith Newman, and Sharon Mastracci (2008), *Emotional Labor*; Cheryl Simrell King (2011), *Government is Us 2.0*; Terry Cooper (2012), *The Responsible Administrator*; and Richard Box (2015), *Public Service Values*.

The books discussed below were released in 2014 and 2015. One of them, *The New Case for Bureaucracy*, is a rewritten version of a classic and the other two address issues that would benefit from greater attention in public administration. The "human element" theme captures an important commonality in these books, though they are quite different from one another. Taken together, they contrast existing conditions with a possible future of greater acceptance of public professionals and the full participation of women and minorities as essential to a healthy public sector.

Humanizing Bureaucracy

In four editions spanning the period 1983 to 2004, Charles Goodsell's *The Case for Bureaucracy* has become a classic in public administration. It has

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been a standard reference for description of the people who work in public organizations, and it has served as a defense of public bureaucracy in times of bureaucrat-bashing and transformation of the public sector by neo-liberal economic thought. Now, as *The New Case for Bureaucracy* (Goodsell, 2015), the book has been refashioned in a way that preserves the original intent while adopting an especially accessible style. The new version continues the tradition of detailing the accomplishments of bureaucracy and the dedication of public-sector workers, but the earlier "polemic" subtitle has been dropped, suggesting a more balanced discussion of conflicting views of bureaucracy. These changes, however, do not weaken the book's value as a spirited defense of public bureaucracy.

The engaging tone of the book is more readable than that of a typical academic text, but research studies are used to support and illustrate concepts, along with interesting examples and individual stories. As an example, Goodsell discusses six studies of "bureau women in action," showing how female public professionals can be effective in dealing with resistance in male-dominated bureaucracies and in taking action to fix problems (pp. 96-99).

Chapter 1 of the book opens with discussion of Weberian theory and public perceptions of bureaucracy, then summarizes negative and positive views of bureaucracy in the academic literature, drawing from economics, sociology, and political science. The negative views are grouped into three categories, which are then answered with three categories of positive views. The first negative category is that bureaucracy "does not work"; the discussion begins with mid-twentieth century free-market advocates (Ludwig Von Mises, Milton Friedman, Ayn Rand) and moves on to the reinvention movement of the 1990s. The second category is bureaucracy as an "oppressive force," in which we find authors such as Thorstein Veblen, Robert Merton, and Michael Lipsky.

Also in this second category we find Ralph Hummel (2008), whose book *The Bureaucratic Experience* has for years been used in public administration courses as a foil for Goodsell's. Read together, the two books offer students polar opposite perspectives on what it is like to work in public organizations. Goodsell and Hummel (who passed away in 2012) were friends, and Goodsell clearly enjoyed their dialogue on the characteristics of bureaucracy. Nevertheless, Goodsell paints a stark picture of Hummel's view of bureaucracy and its effects on the people who work there. As described by Goodsell (2015), for Hummel the impact of bureaucracy is as follows:

> People who spend eight or more hours a day immersed in its controlling, soulless grasp lose their identity, freedom, and individuality. Their relationships

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> with others are no longer authentic and spontaneous but structured by the organization in terms of work assignment. Their cultural values are not inherited from a unique personal background but imposed by the organization, with prime emphasis on the virtues of efficiency, capitalism, and imperialism. (p. 24)

Later in the book, Goodsell revisits Hummel's view of bureaucracy, telling the reader about the thoughts of a government professional who contrasts it with her personal experience of working in the public sector, which is positive and constructive (pp. 104-105). The author of this essay remembers encountering these two books in graduate school. After several years working in local government, my view of bureaucracy was more closely aligned with Hummel than with Goodsell, whose book seemed to give too little weight to the oppressive influence of powerful, self-interested people on the daily work life of public professionals. Many years later, though, it is easier to appreciate that one person's idiosyncratic experience does not accurately reflect the field as a whole. Both sides of the Goodsell–Hummel dialogue are needed in the effort to build a well-rounded picture of the internal characteristics of bureaucracy.

The third negative category presented in Chapter 1 is a concern that bureaucracy is "anti-democratic," because it is indispensable in society, controls information with expertise, and affects every aspect of our lives. Goodsell refers to the writings of Max Weber, Henry Jacoby, and law professor Richard Epstein, to present the argument that the regulatory state has grown beyond its Constitutional mandate, creating a society largely controlled by public bureaucracy. (A number of other authors could be added to this discussion, for example, Herbert Marcuse and Theodore Lowi.)

The counter-arguments presented in favor of bureaucracy are that it "can be made to work," it "can free and enrich," and that "democracy counts on it." In sum, Goodsell's point is that bureaucracy provides a framework for people to build a sense of community and take collective action. It serves as a rhetorical punching bag in political debate, but the contradictions between various critiques suggest that they are largely misplaced: The Occupy movement blames Wall Street for government malfunction while the Tea Party blames "big-spending Democrats" (Goodsell, 2015, p. 32), utility company executives think that environmental regulation has gone too far while environmentalists think that government is not doing enough, and so on. In these and other instances, bureaucracy serves as a convenient target for blame, when in fact government agencies largely reflect pluralist politics and legislation created by elected leaders. Goodsell acknowledges the influence of bureaucracy in shaping regulations and public awareness of issues and

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programs, but he rejects the image of a malign, all-powerful force beyond the control of the people.

The efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations are the focus of the second chapter of the book. Data are presented on citizen satisfaction with government services and productivity in the Social Security Administration. Goodsell offers an interesting research note, describing a study he conducted after becoming curious about whether, as described in another study, "bureaucrats treat their clients with arrogance, dominate and control them, and are preoccupied with obeying the rules" (p. 41). In four cities, he stationed himself in the parking lots of social security, public welfare, and unemployment compensation offices, conducting exit interviews with people who had been interacting with workers in those offices. He found that "most of the respondents said they got what they wanted inside the office and dealt with a worker whom they perceived as courteous, a good listener, and trying to help" (pp. 41-42). Positive assessments were not universal, but the results ran counter to generalizations about bureaucrats. (Predictably, good experiences were more common in Social Security offices than the other two categories, and more positive in welfare offices than in those dealing with unemployment.) The remainder of this chapter compares government with business, describes the size and growth of government at all levels (including a comparison of public employees per 1,000 population in 31 countries), and discusses change and innovation in public agencies. Little of this will be surprising to public affairs academicians, but as an introduction for students, it is a concise and thorough overview of the characteristics of contemporary bureaucracy.

The theme of this essay is the "human element," and Goodsell's Chapter 3 addresses it directly as the focus shifts from the characteristics of bureaucracies as institutional units to the characteristics of individual public professionals. These include not only basics such as age, education, and income, but also attitudinal factors such as political orientation and public service motivation. The discussion also includes race and gender in public organizations, showing for each how changes have occurred over time and analyzing what needs to be done to achieve representational parity. Goodsell assumes that women and minorities may have perspectives on public service delivery that differ from those of traditionally dominant White male administrators, but he does not advocate "active representation" in which they favor members of their particular group when carrying out prescribed duties. Instead, he prefers equal treatment for all, so that "each one's perspective on what *is* fair and equitable is embedded in their workforces" (p. 92).

It is in Chapter 4 that the book is notably "new" and different from the earlier editions of *The Case for Bureaucracy*, as Goodsell engages with cutting-edge post-new public management features of "New Public Governance."

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The chapter title "Inside Bureaucratic Governance" is provocative, apparently reclaiming a portion of the concept of governance from its current use as a metaphor for intersectoral dispersion of governmental authority. Among other topics, the narrative of the chapter discusses the regulatory function of bureaucracy, the role of public agencies in contracting out public services, and including citizens in decision-making processes. Complexities of these functional areas are described, for example, the rulemaking process, contracting out complex services such as prison management, and when and how to involve citizens in policy making and implementation. Again, Goodsell uses review of the research literature, along with his own research and examples, to support the characterization of bureaucracy.

Although features of public administration that are now often included under the New Public Governance label are prominently featured in this chapter and elsewhere in the book, Goodsell makes a point of the enduring public nature of governmental services. Expressing the unique responsibility of those who answer to all the people, he writes that "the government agency is the only public policy actor available that *simultaneously* combines the following elements: legal authority, integrated effort, stable workforce, dedicated resources, coherent culture, and clear accountability to our democratic system." Acknowledging that collaboration and networking are often beneficial, Goodsell cautions that nevertheless, "if clear accountability to the electorate is necessary, the bureaucracies involved in these arrangements should be the *lead* collaborators" (p. 152).

The New Case for Bureaucracy concludes with a chapter on "earning and retaining the public trust." Scandals in several federal agencies are reviewed (e.g., the Internal Revenue Service), and Goodsell observes that mismanagement and individual misbehavior characterize these events, rather than "intentional violation of law, bribery, conflict of interest, refusal to obey orders, or cover-up of wrongdoing" (p. 180). No general prescriptions are offered to minimize similar problems in the future; instead, an argument is made that agencies should work to prevent trust-damaging problems caused by poor management practices.

Much of this final chapter is occupied with the discussion of the impacts of Congressional inaction on federal agencies. Efforts to make the U.S. Postal Service financially viable and to cope with the effects of government shutdown are used to show how important government is to the daily life of the nation, as well as how the White House and political appointees can maneuver to influence the course of Congressional policy making. These are important aspects of the political environment of public bureaucracies. However, because they are about actions taken by elected officials and political appointees, their relevance to the roles of career professionals—the focus of the

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book—is at best indirect. Goodsell offers a brief assessment of the effects of shutdown on federal employees, but this does not lead to a general discussion on the future of the federal service, given the political environment.

State and local governments are missing from this concluding chapter. The federal government is often the focus of media attention, but much has been happening in state and local governments that is important to this story, especially as the largest portion of career public professionals work at these levels. Like their federal counterparts, state and local government employees are experiencing the effects of political pressure, financial uncertainty, and changes in the demographics of the population and the public workforce. Perhaps in the second edition of *The New Case for Bureaucracy*, the challenges and opportunities of working in cities, counties, and states can be added to the discussion.

This critique of the final chapter should not obscure the book's importance for the field or its quality as a classroom text. Goodsell delivers a thorough review of research literature on a major topic in a warm and engaging style. This new version of a classic should be foundational reading for practitioners and scholars in public administration.

Applied Feminism

With *Women and Public Service*, Mohamad Alkadry and Leslie Tower (2014) enter a stream of literature about the relationship between women and organizations that may be traced back at least to the publication of Kathy Ferguson's (1984) *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*. Ferguson wrote about bureaucracy in a generic rather than sectoral sense, so her thoughts about women in bureaucracy apply to people working in the private and nonprofit sectors as well as in government.

According to Ferguson (1984), two schools of thought may be distinguished within feminism. "Liberal" feminists are concerned with "gaining access to established institutions" (p. 4) through equal legal status, equal pay for equal work, and access to prestigious careers. "Radical" feminists are less interested in gradual reform of existing institutions than in transforming them (p. 4) to be less bureaucratic and more participatory (pp. 5-6). Ferguson identifies with the radicals, regarding bureaucratic capitalism as "a primary source of the oppression of women and men" (p. ix). From this perspective, meaningful change results from "people's confrontations with the existing social arrangements" (p. 29) and it is not enough to think that "organizations will somehow be altered simply by virtue of recruiting women into them . . ." (p. ix).

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Camilla Stivers' books *Gender Images in Public Administration* (1993/2002) and *Bureau Men, Settlement Women* (2000) are landmarks in bringing awareness of gender into public administration discourse. Stivers does not advocate wholesale social change, but she would go beyond the important goal of gender parity within public organizations as they are. She draws upon an emphasis in feminism on "horizontal rather than vertical relations," thus "seeing oneself as reaching across rather than down, as seeing others as respected equals rather than threats to one's own autonomy or sheep in need of herding" (Stivers, 2002, p. 139). If this view is put into action in public organizations, the result is that administrators think of themselves "as 'partner with' rather than 'guardian over' or 'citizen for,'" sharing information, spanning boundaries, and empowering others (p. 138). A primary barrier to achieving this goal is "cultural masculinity masquerading as universality, blocking nonconforming people and their ideas" (p. 137).

Alkadry and Tower (2014) think of their work as building on these earlier books. Instead of discussing past progress and "the efforts of activists and politicians in driving these changes" (p. xix), they want to look forward to creating "a better workplace for men and women" (p. xvi). They view this approach as "mechanical" (p. xix) in contrast to a "manifesto of principles"; the strength of the book is, indeed, that it serves "as an examination of the status of women in public service organizations, their history, and the issues and policies affecting them" (p. xvi). The book is not without theoretical assumptions and normative perspectives, however, so the reader expecting some provocative ideas will not be disappointed. Early on, for example, Alkadry and Tower critique a common ideology:

> This book's authors believe that the most compelling challenge facing public, private, and nonprofit organizations is to reverse what is known as the conventional ideology of working men and family women (Johnson and Duerst-Lahti, 1992). In sociological circles, this is largely associated with the concept of patriarchy. . . . This ideology and its assumptions fundamentally act to disadvantage women, who are often expected to function as caregivers at the expense of career success. (p. 17)

The Introduction and Chapter 1 present the conceptual framework of the book, followed by five topical chapters and a concluding chapter that summarizes key points of importance to the authors. The five topical chapters address these general areas affecting women in public organizations: legislation, policy and the courts, social costs of careers, segregation and representation of women, equal pay, and mentoring and bullying. The discussion in each chapter covers a comprehensive range of issues that appear in research

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literature and practice, such as civil rights, comparable worth, family medical leave, and child care in Chapter 2; affirmative action and decisions of the Supreme Court in Chapter 3; trends in marriage, children, and alternative work arrangements in Chapter 4; concentration of women in agencies oriented toward "caring" in Chapter 5; "emotional labor" and family responsibilities in Chapter 6; and sexual harassment and physical violence in Chapter 7.

Four issues may be highlighted that are central to the authors' perspectives on women and public service. These are as follows: the characteristics of women and men, the nature of the workplace environment, the status of women in society, and prescriptions for change. First, Alkadry and Tower argue that "men and women are equal." They set aside differences in physical and psychological characteristics, asserting that "we are not biological determinists and do not start with the assumption that men are built physically, mentally, or emotionally to take on certain male jobs or roles" (p. xvi). Logically, it follows that "gender differences are generally caused by society, including parents and teachers (inadvertently or not) who reinforce gender stereotypes in the way they treat children . . . " (p. xvi).

The authors believe that "women should be properly represented in public service organizations because that is the right thing to do," but they go beyond moral justification to advocate for "active representation," the idea that women's "presence in these organizations is critical for the success of policy implementation" (p. 3). Because the authors believe that the presence of women makes a difference in organizational success, to be consistent they would have to think that the characteristics of women and men are not the same today, though they could be the same in a society without gender stereotyping. The idea that no fundamental differences exist between the genders is a contestable concept, one that could be important to how we think about gender and organizations. Alkadry and Tower assert that "there is no legitimate reason to explain why women cannot be competent firefighters, construction workers, engineers, Army combat soldiers, elite Navy SEALs, Army generals, and commanders in chief" (p. xvii).

Certainly it is true that some women can be successful as, for example, members of elite military units, but that is not the same thing as asserting that equal percentages of all women and all men are capable of performing in that role. It is also not the same as assuming that equal numbers of women and men would wish to do so, even in a society without gender stereotyping. We might wonder whether, in a society entirely free of gender stereotyping, equal percentages of women and men would be found in the occupations mentioned by Alkadry and Tower, whether equal percentages of prison inmates convicted of violent crimes would be female and male, and whether wars such as those in Vietnam and Iraq would continue to occur. People who are

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less than pleased with the current condition of the world and think of women as a source of hope for the future may wish for the existence of some fundamental differences.

Second, Alkadry and Tower's characterization of the working environment in organizations is that "assertiveness as a leadership trait has largely given way to participative management ideas. Employee empowerment is far more important in today's organizations than control of employees." As a result, "most organizations have adopted principles of participative management that essentially favor caring and listening over assertive characteristics" (p. xviii). This makes for a better workplace environment for women and it fits the authors' general perspective, which is to acknowledge that much progress has been made, but that more needs to be done.

A somewhat less sanguine view suggests that workplace environments in the aggregate might not be as participative and caring as we would wish. It may be true that knowledge of participative management techniques is widespread and some organizations make full use of them. At the same time, from what one knows about organizations and judging from experiences shared by mid-career students, life in organizations can be challenging and stressful today, as it was in the past. Situations involving poor management practices, arbitrary decision making, unethical behavior, and abuse of power are not uncommon. Camilla Stivers (2002) wrote that

> women are still paid less than men, generally do most of the lower-level work, are still not represented proportionately in the top levels of the bureaucracy, have trouble fitting into accepted managerial roles, experience sexual harassment in organizations, and work a double shift of home and job responsibilities . . . (p. 6)

Drawing a contrast between work settings she has experienced in which all the employees were women and those where both genders were present, Janet Hutchinson (2001) described her impressions of life in the mixed-gender organizations in this way:

> Conflicting feelings of pleasure, anger and sadness engulf the administrative space with accompanying longings for harmony over discord, magnanimity over pettiness, honesty over deceit, and recognition over disregard and neglect. This longing is a form of melancholy and is gendered-feminine. (p. 600)

Third, *Women and Public Service* is, by design, framed within the context of a developed Western democracy. In this setting, the discussion is about further advances to build upon progress made by women toward workplace equity. By adding the dimensions of time and global comparison, we might

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conclude that progress made by women is recent, somewhat fragile, and limited to certain countries. The movement toward workplace equality for women is indeed a recent phenomenon. Until the introduction of birth control pills in the 1960s, women could not easily control if and when they would have children, making it difficult to have a career. It was generally understood that many women who wanted to work outside the home would choose K-12 teaching, nursing, or clerical occupations and they often were prevented from having their own credit or making major purchases without approval of a male relative (the Equal Credit Opportunity Act was passed in 1974). For many readers of Alkadry and Tower's book, this may seem like ancient and irrelevant history. However, people in the generation of this essay's author were young adults at the time, so to some of us the changes in effect today seem remarkable rather than mundane.

Events at the national and global levels alert us to the possibility that women's rights and place in society are not entirely secure. Nationally, we see, hear, and read about media personalities and political leaders who want to determine what women can do with their bodies, mock or devalue women, downplay physical abuse and rape, and want to slow, prevent, or reverse social change. The desire to control women is not as open or mainstream in the United States as it is in some other countries, but it can be locally influential and affect state and national events as well. The conditions of women's lives in other parts of the world can make it seem that we live in a zone of relative safety rather than a global society with shared progressive ideas about social justice. In this environment, an attitude of attentive vigilance is not unwarranted.

Fourth, of the many prescriptions for change offered by Alkadry and Tower, it can be argued that comparable worth is especially important. This concept is about eliminating pay inequities between occupations dominated by women and those dominated by men. These inequities would diminish somewhat if girls and women were more interested in traditionally male occupations. However, this is not only a matter of personal preference. It also reflects the socialization of gender stereotyping and the efforts of some people in male-dominated professions to make it difficult for women to become part of the group and to succeed.

In the concluding chapter, the authors emphasize the "challenge of getting women interested in male-dominated occupations" (p. 173). Of course, to the extent early socialization and education can draw women into professions that are currently male dominated, every effort should be made to do so. (And, presumably, the converse. If a large percentage of women move into male-dominated occupations, a percentage of men will need to switch into traditionally female occupations if the work is to be done.) At the same time, this begs the question of why gender-based pay discrimination between

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occupations is allowed to exist. Put another way, it seems unfair to expect women to pursue occupations that hold little interest for them, simply because of pay inequities.

Today, however imperfect implementation of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 may be, there is a general understanding that equal jobs should be paid equally, regardless of gender. There is no such understanding that people with similar levels of training and experience who work in different fields should receive equivalent compensation. We are familiar with examples of electricians or engineers earning more than teachers, social workers, nurses, and so on. What is remarkable is that this particular variety of discrimination continues to be tolerated and faces no serious challenge. In part, this results from devaluation of work that requires "emotional labor," the application of sensitivity and caring to workplace interactions. This skill is associated with occupations dominated by women, and it is not generally recognized in job analysis, so it can be left out of calculations of compensation (Guy et al., 2008). One would think that it is well past time to eliminate a form of discrimination that is clearly based on gender.

Alkadry and Tower (2014) identify the goal of comparable worth as compensating "on the value of the job rather than the market rate" (p. 36). They define comparable worth policies as "those that evaluate jobs on the basis of characteristics (e.g., education or degree of skill)" (p. 35) and they challenge organizations "to conduct their own comparable worth research . . . to pay men and women equally for comparable work" (p. 173). It would be a fine thing if people in organizations were to take up this challenge, implementing comparable worth society-wide in a collaborative grassroots effort. The end result would be greater freedom for women and men to choose careers as they wish, without gender-based discrimination or inequity. Unfortunately, this seems unlikely or at best a prospect for a distant future. Quite possibly, this is a change requiring governmental assistance or intervention, however improbable that appears in today's political environment. Times change, though—it is difficult to imagine passage of the Equal Pay Act if it were introduced today, yet President Kennedy signed it five decades ago.

As discussion of these complex and fascinating matters suggests, Alkadry and Tower have brought together in one volume a full range of gender-related issues relevant to public administrators. Practitioners in public and nonprofit organizations need to be aware of these issues, and this book is an important resource for the field.

The Intersection of Race and Social Equity

Much has been written about race in America. Although race relations are generally believed to be better now than they were decades ago, claims of a

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"post-racial" society appear premature. Commentators debate whether having had a Black president has eased racial divisions, but one effect may be that it has functioned to draw the existing problems into the open (examples include the "birther" movement which questions whether President Barack Obama was born in the United States, and the people who characterize him as a Muslim from Kenya). High-profile incidents in which Black citizens are killed by White police officers have sparked protests, some of which have been met by militarized law enforcement personnel using armored vehicles, assault rifles, and riot gear. As Ronnie Dunn (2010) described it in an article about police civilian review boards, the tense and mistrustful relationship between Black citizens and the justice system has a long history grounded in segregation and discrimination. Whatever the overall trend in race relations, clearly it remains a difficult topic in public affairs.

In *Race and Social Equity*, Susan Gooden (2014) directly addresses the awkwardness of discussion of race in public administration, writing that "social equity, specifically racial equity, is a nervous area of government" (p. 3). Race has been given relatively little attention in public administration despite its importance in national politics and its broad impact on public affairs. Matthew Witt (2006) makes the point that race intersects with policies and programs across the public sector. He writes that "today, no policy venue confronted by public administrators is untouched by the consequences of racist institution building in the United States, or, increasingly, abroad." These policy venues range from

> housing to transportation, to land use planning and zoning and the full gamut of infrastructural development policy; from environmental hazardous waste disposal onward to early childhood nutrition and health services; from education policy and law enforcement to health care and services for the aging, tax codes and debt financing; from equal employment opportunity, glass ceiling dilemmas and social security, on and on and on . . . (p. 60)

This broad impact is not matched by attention to race in public administration scholarship. Jennifer Alexander and Camilla Stivers (2010) contend that "scholarship in public administration reflects assumptions of professional neutrality and innocence, and a lack of awareness about the unique relationship between patterns of administrative practice and racial minorities." They acknowledge the research literature on "public policies that affect or are affected by race (such as welfare, housing, employment, and education policies)," but find very little that connects "normative administrative theory" with race and "ethical practice" (p. 579).

Instead, the way many people encounter issues of race and social justice today is through the concept of diversity. David Embrick and Mitchell Rice

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(2010) write that diversity "has become one of the most commonly used words in the United States" (p. 24). It has come to mean many things, such as accepting "the racial and ethnic differences of others," "class tolerance," differences in "gender, sexual orientation, age, culture, religion," and more (p. 24). Although greater equality and opportunity are good for organizations, Embrick and Rice (2010) are concerned that "gender and racial inequalities continue to be overlooked in many organizations as a result of the broadening of the term *diversity*" (p. 25). This is because, "as diversity comes to represent more of the differences between people in society, less attention is paid to historical and persistent racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination in organizations" (p. 25).

According to Embrick and Rice (2010), the "diversity ideology" suggests that "everyone—including women and all racial and ethnic groups, in particular—is treated fairly and equally." If that is so, "anyone who will work hard enough" can succeed on "a level playing field when it comes to opportunities in such avenues as education, politics, public administration, and corporate America" (p. 37). In reality, though, "the diversity ideology has effectively allowed many major organizations to shield the racial and gender inequality that continues to persist in their work environments" (p. 39). As a result,

> although there has been an increase in the rise of organizational philosophy espousing diversity, there are also overwhelming data that suggest that minorities and women are still unable to obtain opportunities or to achieve success at the same rates as their white male counterparts. (p. 25)

In this generalized context of diversity, *Race and Social Equity* brings the issue of race back into sharp focus. In keeping with the theme of nervousness, Gooden (2014) finds a fear of talking about race among people who work in public agencies. This includes

> fear of saying the wrong thing about race, fear of being misunderstood, fear of what will be said next, fear of speaking up, fear of not participating in the discussion, fear of interacting with colleagues after the discussion, fear of being labeled a racist, fear of being labeled a race-baiter, fear of being isolated at work. (p. 47)

This is quite a set of potential fears, and it is understandable that people might be nervous about approaching the topic of race and inequity.

Gooden explores the theme of the book in chapters linking it with social equity, racial inequities in the United States, individual public administrators,

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and public-sector organizations. These chapters are followed by three in-depth case studies illustrating the conceptual framework. The case studies are about the City of Seattle's race and social justice initiative, the work of a committee that assessed racial disparities in a State of Wisconsin welfare program and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) programs on environmental justice. The Seattle and Wisconsin case studies are based on interviews with participants and the EPA study uses publicly available agency website materials.

Gooden believes that nervousness about race "has stifled many individuals and organizations, leading to an inability to seriously advance the reduction of racial inequities in government" (p. 3). This is not only a matter of concern inside public organizations, as "organizational nervousness needs to be effectively managed in order for governmental agencies to proactively address social inequities" (p. 18). Thus, organizational nervousness about race is linked to how public services are delivered and the effects an organization has on issues of social justice. In Chapter 2, Gooden documents racial inequities in public policy areas such as housing, education, and environmental hazards. She writes that race-based policy outcomes "are embedded in a historical structure where racial minorities chronically experience pervasive negative differences." This means that "we cannot have a discussion about inequities in the provision of public services without talking about race" (p. 39).

Assessment of racial equity issues within public organizations is the topic of Chapter 8, which follows the three case study chapters. Here, Gooden asserts that "assessing the performance management and accountability dimensions of racial equity is central in the delivery of public services." Among other benefits, assessment encourages "examination of advantaged and disadvantaged clients, structural causes of inequities, and ways of reducing racial disparities in publicly provided services" (p. 146). The chapter offers tools and techniques for evaluating racial equity programs and rating agency performance on implementation. Because these ideas are relatively new, Gooden writes that "public administrators will need additional training in developing and conducting racial equity impact assessments" (p. 159).

Chapters 9 and 10 of *Race and Social Equity* examine diversity in Master's of Public Administration programs and "comparative nervousness." The comparative discussion uses Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the United Nations to explore conditions in racial inequity globally and ways it has been addressed by national governments and the international community. In the concluding chapter, ten "principles," each with supporting narrative, are offered for "conquering nervousness in government." As a sample, the first principle is that "public administrators have a responsibility to operate in the

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nervous area of government" (p. 196), the fifth principle asserts that "at the individual level, public servants must recognize and eliminate behaviors that impede racial equity progress" (p. 198), and the tenth principle closes the chapter with the hopeful thought that "significant racial equity progress in government can be achieved" (p. 201).

The book describes the historical development of discrimination in several policy areas (education, housing, and so on) along with related legislation and court decisions. This is especially useful for readers who are familiar with issues of race and diversity from media coverage or from workplace training, but lack deeper background knowledge of the conditions associated with race-related tensions in society. Public administration students are a primary audience for *Race and Social Equity*. It is this author's experience that nervousness in talking about race appears in the face-to-face or online classroom as well as in the workplace. Current public attitudes about policies that address socioeconomic inequality and injustice have been influenced by media coverage that emphasizes personal responsibility, assumes that people can move relatively freely between socioeconomic classes, and assigns fault to those who do not succeed economically. There is a political movement of some significance that favors rolling back many of the progressive measures from the eras of the New Deal and Great Society. In this setting, it is not surprising to find that some students regard the basics of a social safety net as "socialism" and believe that everyone should "pull themselves up" as they have done themselves. Not uncommonly, such attitudes are also expressed by mid-career professionals who work in jobs with substantial benefits, including secure pensions.

This reflects conditions of race and class in contemporary America. It has been decades since the national government was heavily engaged in urban affairs, and urban populations remain geographically separated by race even though residential mobility has increased. (The interactive "racial dot map" shown on the website of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at University of Virginia is an excellent tool for demonstrating racial concentrations. It shows one dot, color-coded by race and ethnicity, for every person counted in the 2010 U.S. Census. Zooming in on specific urban areas is very instructive.) Despite the best efforts of nonprofit organizations and some state and local governments, problems such as poor schools, lack of jobs, and crime associated with concentrations of racial minorities are unresolved. The recent trend toward characterizing socioeconomic inequality as a matter of class rather than race is useful in broadening the public policy discussion, but it can also obscure the important issue of race and the role it continues to play in social inequities.

Moving student discussion past blame and ideology to address policy options can help relieve nervousness over this issue. Among other techniques,

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class discussion can imagine policy options that would boost current efforts to improve urban schools, make jobs and better transportation available, and channel energy into community projects and activities instead of unlawful behaviors. Confronting assumptions and ideology with facts and alternatives can help move the conversation beyond nervousness and predetermined opinions. Whether or not people in every public affairs class and every public organization need to deal with the issue of race, *Race and Social Equity* will convince many readers that all public administration scholars and practitioners should be more conscious of how it may affect their daily work.

Conclusion: The Context of the Human Element

The "human element" perspective on public bureaucracy can include many topics, such as the politics–administration relationship, citizen involvement in governance, public service motivation, accountability, public service values, and more. The books discussed in this essay address three important areas of study and practice: the characteristics of bureaucracy, and gender and race in public service. They avoid the standard theme of controlling bureaucrats and the assumption that issues of representation and discrimination will resolve themselves; for this reason alone, they are interesting reading for scholars and students in the field.

The usefulness and importance of a book depend in no small part on what is happening in society when it is released—put another way, context matters. The context today includes rapid changes in the global economy, the nature of work, and population demographics, along with a level of volatility, political challenge, and change in the public sector that is, if not unprecedented, certainly unsettling to many. It is particularly important in this context to follow Susan Gooden's lead, pushing through our nervousness to openly assess the current situation and engage in dialogue about what is to be done. These three books do so with empathy for the people who work in public organizations and for the people they serve. They are well worth our time and attention.

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