Bureaucratization and Active Citizenship: Approaches to Administrative Reform

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INTRODUCTION

Administrative reform efforts in the federal government of the United States have been marked by different perceptions of “the people” by public administrators. Before the civil service system was solidified in all its bureaucratic and hierarchical glory during the Progressive Era, public administrators, placed in their positions not through merit but through patronage, were the people. After the implementation of Max Weber’s ideal type bureaucracy and the merit system, public administrators separated themselves from the people by virtue of their qualifications and expertise. In this context, the people are seen largely as clients to be served by public administrators, or, even less than that, as a mere abstraction — a faceless public paired with a faceless bureaucracy. The Reinventing Government movement sought to change the perception of the people by public administrators in part by transforming the people from clients, to be served or processed, to customers to be handled. Finally, today, the people, while still treated as customers or clients in certain relationships, are being looked at as citizens that can have direct and meaningful input into the policy making and implementation processes.

Several classification schemes have been used to organize and describe these periods and types of administrative reform efforts. Larry Terry defined four approaches to public management: quantitative/analytical management, political management, liberation management, and market-driven management. He grouped the latter two together into a broad category of “neo-managerialism” (Terry 1998). Paul Light discussed the four tides of reform: scientific management, war on waste, watchful eye, and liberation management (Light 1997). B. Guy Peters examined four models of alternatives to bureaucracy: market government, participative government, flexible government, and deregulated government (Peters1996). Ronald Moe discussed the administrative management paradigm as a response to the entrepreneurial
management paradigm (Moe 1994). Michael Barzelay expounded on the bureaucratic paradigm (Barzelay 1992). Alfred Tat-Kei Ho observed the e-government paradigm (Tat-Kei Ho 2002). Each of these has held at its center the structure or function of government, the role of managers in government, or the relationship between the private and public sector. None has held as its center the role of the citizen.

One exception to the absence of the role of citizen in discussions of administrative reform comes from Janet and Robert Denhardt (Denhardt 2003). They proposed a “New Public Service, a set of ideas about the role of public administration in the governance system that places public service, democratic governance, and civic engagement at the centre” (ibid. p. 24). This New Public Service is contrasted with the Old Public Administration and the New Public Management. Within this paradigm the people are seen as citizens, and the public interest is realized through a dialogue about shared values.

This paper explores the theoretical bases of key administrative reform efforts in the context of how the people are perceived by public administrators. It also proposes a variation on Denhardt and Denhardt’s New Public Service in the form of a two dimensional framework of active citizenship and bureaucratization, within which is a classification construct containing four administrative approaches. Inside each of the approaches is found differing perceptions of the people and the public interest, administrative goals, roles of public administrators, and functions of technology. This framework and classification construct is a base for dialogue about the future of reform in the United States among experts and between experts and citizens.

To begin, the paper provides an overview of public administration theory as practiced in the United States, with a conceptual focus on the role of the people and public administrators vis-à-vis each other. Following that, the four approaches to administration are examined:
Finally, threats to the people as citizens are explored, the future of reform is considered, and some concluding thoughts regarding future research are offered.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM AND GOVERNMENT:
CITIZEN RELATIONS THROUGH TIME

Cheryl Simrell King and Camilla Stivers discussed phases of administrative reform that affected government-citizen or administrator-citizen relations (King 1998). A clear history of administrator-citizen relations in the federal government can be traced from the founding of the United States. As King and Stivers observed, from the time of George Washington through the John Quincy Adams Administration, there existed “government by gentleman” where kinship and class were determining factors of membership in the administrative institutions.

Andrew Jackson’s administration changed this establishment by opening government jobs to party loyalists and supporters. In the words of Jackson, “The duties of all public officers are, or at least admit of being made, so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance” (ibid. p. 51). Under this philosophy, government jobs suddenly became available to the every-man, not only to the well-born. The Jackson Administration also began what King and Stivers refer to as “the slow march toward bureaucratization” (ibid. p. 52). According to Matthew Crenson, Jackson sought to “purify the federal establishment of all its new-fangled complexity” that was established under Washington, Adams, and Jefferson (Crenson 1975, p. 66; Light 1997, p. 16). To do this and fulfill the aim of what Paul Light called “moral purity”, Jackson instituted codes of conduct and accounting systems in federal departments (Light 1997, p. 16). These concurrent administrative reform
efforts — rotation in office through the spoils system and the slow march toward bureaucratization — fall under two tides of reform as defined by Paul Light: watchful eye to hold administrators accountable and war on waste to make government business less unbusinesslike (Light 1997).

It was a reaction against the spoils system that motivated the reforms during the Progressive Era. As King and Stivers described the movement, “in the late 19th and early 20th centuries another sea change occurred in views of citizenship and administration, one that reversed the emphasis on direct involvement of ordinary citizens and the simplicity of government work, arguing instead the need for administrative expertise” (King 1998, p. 53). The reforms that occurred during this period largely belong to the scientific management tide described by Paul Light, but there were also initiatives undertaken that were considered to be watchful eye and war on waste (Light 1997). The reforms in this era are exemplified in the writings of Woodrow Wilson, E. Pendleton Herring, Max Weber, and Frederick Taylor.

Wilson emphasized the need for expert administration as well as administrative discretion. The public would serve the role of maintaining accountability over the administrators, who were acting with discretion towards achievement of the public good. Wilson stated,

Public attention must be easily directed, in each case of good or bad administration, to just the man deserving of praise or blame. . . . If to keep his office a man must achieve open and honest success, and if at the same time he feels himself intrusted with large freedom of discretion, the greater his power, the less likely is he to abuse it, the more is he nerved and sobered and elevated by it (Shafritz 1997, p. 22).

He went on to observe that the role of public opinion and its relationship to administration was “to be efficient without suffering to be meddlesome” (ibid. p. 23). King and Stivers summed up
this new phenomenon of public opinion more cynically: “Citizens became the source of something called public opinion, a factor in political life that ever since has been the object of keen interest, if not outright manipulation, on the part of governmental leaders, as ubiquitous opinion polls today on every conceivable topic and candidate for office attest” (King 1998, p. 53). The public was to provide legitimacy for governmental institutions and administrative decisions but not in such a way that would detract from the expertise needed to establish and maintain a functioning administration.

Public opinion in a way served as a surrogate for the public’s direct involvement in administrative affairs and governance processes. It informed the expertise of public administrators in the system established by Progressive reformers. E. Pendleton Herring noted that, “to the officer executing the law, the public is simply an abstraction”. Continuing the theme of administrative discretion begun by Wilson, Herring noted that multiple individuals may provide input into administrative affairs or policy implementation decisions, but the only reaction administrators receive from the public is that which they choose to hear as the collective public voice or which they recognize as the opinion of the public. In the context of bureaucracy, expertise, and discretion in the administrative branch of government, Herring concluded that “the public, viewed in this mass, is of relatively little importance” (Shafritz, p. 79).

What was of concern and interest to Progressive reformers was not citizen involvement but the perception among citizens that government is legitimate. This legitimacy, Wilson thought, would be achieved through the sound management and expert administration of governmental affairs (Shafritz 1997). To this end, Progressive reformers wanted administration based on scientific knowledge (King 1998, p. 53).
Frederick Taylor identified four principles of scientific management: 1) gathering of all knowledge about the workplace and the work to make rules, set conduct codes, and establish processes, 2) selecting the workers most fit for a task to do that task while paying attention to the developmental capacity and needs of each worker, 3) putting the selected workers to work using the processes established under scientific study, and 4) dividing the work equally between workers and management (Shafritz 1997, pp. 30-31).

Max Weber continued the process of defining the features of an organizational system that would result in the greatest efficiency and best work-product. He laid out the six characteristics of bureaucracy:

1. There is the principle of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is, by laws or administrative regulations.
2. The principles of office hierarchy and of levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones.
3. The management of the modern office is based upon written documents (“the files”), which are preserved in their original or draught form.
4. Office management, at least all specialized office management – and such management is distinctly modern – usually presupposes thorough and expert training.
5. When the office is fully developed, official activity demands the full working capacity of the official, irrespective of the fact that his obligatory time in the bureau may be firmly delimited.
6. The management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned (Shafritz 1997, pp. 37-38).
The “people” in this administrative setup are at best an abstraction providing public opinion, or perhaps a client or passive recipient of services. Either way, the public is as faceless as the bureaucracy.

Laurence Lynn summed up the Progressive reforms, collectively considered by some to constitute a bureaucratic paradigm of public administration. He stated, “A new logic of democratic control that challenged the premises of the spoils system had begun to take form: Bureaucratic, technocratic government subject to judicial oversight was a way to ensure transparent governance that would be obedient and accountable to the constitutionally expressed public will” (Lynn 2001, p. 9). Lynn also observed that classical public administration theorists and scholars (or those that substantiated the “bureaucratic paradigm”) recognized the “policymaking role of civil servants, the inevitability of administrative discretion, the importance of persuading the courts to formally recognize the necessity for administrative discretion, the concomitant requirement for responsible conduct by managers and civil servants, and the necessity for ensuring that citizens can somehow participate actively in matters affecting their well-being based on adequate information” (ibid. p. 10). These are all qualities of the traditional paradigm that have, said Lynn, been inadequately recognized if not ignored by contemporary public administration theorists who argue for a new paradigm.

The distrust of government, public administrators, and the bureaucracy, born in part out of events such as Watergate and the Vietnam War, led to a shift in the dialogue about citizenship and administration and, thus, about the need for administrative reform. “This distrust,” said King and Stivers, “coupled with federal mandates requiring more public participation, opened the door for citizens to become more involved in administrative processes” (King 1997, p. 54). However, by the late 1970s, attitudes had changed again, as citizen participation was perceived by
administrators as detracting from administrative expertise. This reversal was due in part to the failure of administrators to fully buy-in to the efficacy of citizen participation in the administrative process (*ibid.* p. 55).

In the 1990s distrust of government and bureaucracy had not abated. Indeed, in the words of David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, distrust and cynicism ran “deep within the American soul” (Osborne 1992, p. xv). To counter this deeply felt cynicism and to respond to global change, Osborne and Gaebler in their famous book *Reinventing Government* called for radical change in the structure of government. This proposed change, adopted largely by Vice President Gore’s National Performance Review (later renamed National Partnership for Reinventing Government), started to shift the perception of the people by public administrators from that of client, or a passive recipient of services, to customer, whose each individual need had to be met and satisfied. Osborne and Gaebler outlined their reinvention along ten themes, one of which was *customer-driven government*, where the needs of the customer were met, not the needs of the bureaucracy. “Thus,” said King and Stivers, “the citizen role is couched in terms of purchasing decisions rather than in terms of a share in the authority and dignity of public life” (King 1997, p. 57).

King and Stivers expressed one of the consequences of customer-driven government as follows: “Seeing citizens as consumers, taxpayers, and customers, and encouraging them to see themselves that way, leads people to evaluate government according to what each individual receives rather than what the community as a whole receives” (*ibid.*).

This consequence has led to a renewed interest among both academics and administrators in direct citizen engagement in administrative processes, leading to the possibility of more administrative reforms. These reforms can go in two directions. Some reforms have occurred
that have rejected the customer orientation of reinvention, thus being called here anti-reinvention reforms, but have accepted the need to break down the barrier between government and people (see case examples in King and Stivers, 1997). Other reforms have been expressed somewhat in practice and discussed significantly in theoretical post-modern literature (Box 2002; McSwite 1997; Stivers 1994 and 2000; Lynn 2001). These reforms are discussed in the next section, which will present a framework based on the chronological history of administrative reform presented above. Inside this framework is built a classification construct presenting four approaches to administrative reform based on different perceptions of the people by public administrators.

**A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND MODEL FOR DISCUSSING ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM**

Based on the broad overview of administrative reform and government to citizen relations presented in the previous section, I have created a framework consisting of two dimensions: level of bureaucratization and level of active citizenship. The former is defined as the extent to which there are in place set procedures and processes, clear division of work, and other characteristics of a bureaucracy as defined by Weber. Level of active citizenship is defined by the extent to which the people are called on to act in a meaningful way in partnership with public administrators towards achievement of a public goal. These two dimensions were chosen as they represent two highly dynamic components of the American governmental structure since pre-Constitutional times. Figure 1 demonstrates this and shows the framework with the periods of reform identified in the previous section mapped along the dimensions.
The founding national administration – “government by gentlemen” – is located in the bottom left corner of the map, meaning the level of active citizenship was low. The administrative class was a selective group of well-born individuals, and the nature of the work done by administrators did not warrant direct citizen participation. Similarly, the level of bureaucratization was low, with the nation and its government still in their infancy. The Jacksonian reforms responded to the closed nature of administrative offices and instituted the spoils system, which opened the ranks of administrative offices to the every-man. Also begun during the Jackson presidency was the “slow march toward bureaucratization” (King 1997, p. 52).

Progressive reforms were defined by high levels of bureaucratization in the form of Taylor’s scientific management and Weber’s bureaucracy. Jackson’s spoils system was replaced by the merit-based system, and citizen-administration was replaced by expert-administration. The public became an abstraction, morphed into the ubiquitous public opinion. Individual
persons were seen as passive recipients of government services, or clients. For these reasons
Progressive Era reforms are located at the top and far left of the map, where the level of
bureaucratization is high and the level of active citizenship has returned to the low levels of the
founding national administration.

In the 1990s, the United States began, with its reinvention efforts, what might one day be
called a slow march away from bureaucratization, as opposed to the slow march towards
bureaucratization begun during the Jackson Administration. These efforts were marked by
reducing bureaucratic layers and outsourcing government operations, as well as by customer-
driven government practices. Finally, what are being called anti-reinvention and post-modern
reforms are at the far right of the map, meaning that citizens as partners in administration are the
intended norm. In the anti-reinvention stage, the level of bureaucratization remains at or near
Progressive levels, whereas post-modern reforms are reflected in the near elimination of
bureaucracy. The placement of each of these reform periods in the map are rough
approximations, and they, or any variation on each, can exist anywhere on the bureaucratization
and active citizenship continua.

Figure 2 shows the two-dimensional map again, this time with the labels of four
approaches to administrative reform based on different perceptions of the people by public
administrators. Each approach was selected based on the historical record of administrator-
citizen relations as presented above. As is seen in the discussion of each approach below the
historical periods discussed are reflected in the theoretical approaches, with the exception of the
Jacksonian reforms and the founding national administration. These historical periods are not
likely to be recreated, at least in the government of the United States, and thus are not
encapsulated in a theoretical construct.
The first approach, administrative/law, is characterized by the people being perceived as clients or passive recipients of government service or benefits. Reinvention/market is characterized, as the name implies, by reinvention efforts where the people are perceived as customers or active recipients of government service or benefits. Institutional participation holds that the people are citizens who should be directly involved in administration and policy implementation under the processes established by the bureaucracy. Post-modern participation holds that the people are citizens who should be directly involved in administration and policy implementation but on an equal level with public administrators and other actors. Table 1 summarizes each approach and identifies within each how the people are seen/perceived, how the public interest is achieved, the administrative goal, the role of the administrator, and the function of information technology.

The function of technology is included here to highlight the significance of technology and the broader concept of “e-government” as a mediating factor between administrators and the bureaucracy, on one hand, and the people. Jane Moon described five states of e-government
(defined as including the use of all information and communication technologies, from fax machines to wireless palm pilots, to facilitate the daily administration of government): simple information dissemination (one-way communication), two-way communication (request and response), service and financial transactions, integration (horizontal intragovernmental and vertical intergovernmental integration), and political participation (such as online voting, online public forums and online opinion surveys) (Moon 2002).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative Approach:</th>
<th>Administrative/ Law</th>
<th>Reinvention/ Market</th>
<th>Institutional Participation</th>
<th>Post-Modern Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Seen As:</td>
<td>Client (passive recipients)</td>
<td>Customer (active recipients)</td>
<td>Citizen (partner recipients)</td>
<td>Citizen (partner providers and recipients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Interest Achieved Through:</td>
<td>Law/ bureaucratic process</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Citizen input</td>
<td>Cross-sector discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Goal:</td>
<td>Strict adherence to the law</td>
<td>Zero complaints about agency performance and service delivery from agency customers (people, organizations, corporations, other governments)</td>
<td>Optimal levels of citizen engagement in the policy-crafting and implementation processes and citizen buy-in to governmental decisions</td>
<td>Open, unregulated discourse on the goals and strategies for society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function of Technology:</td>
<td>Process forms</td>
<td>Customer interface; one-stop services and information</td>
<td>Citizen access point; enable citizen-administrator interaction</td>
<td>Enable the creation of a commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Administrator:</td>
<td>Technocrat</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplars:</td>
<td>Taylor, Weber, Wilson</td>
<td>Osborne and Gaebler</td>
<td>King and Stivers, Denhardt and Denhardt</td>
<td>McSwite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Administrative/Law Approach**

The administrative/law approach to administration is etched into law through such acts as the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946, Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, and the Hatch Act Reform Amendments of 1993 (Light 1997). The institutionalization of this approach began with reform in the Progressive Era and would be classified by Paul Light as belonging to the tide of scientific management, though some reforms that entail high levels of bureaucratization, such as the establishment of offices of Inspectors General, also include components of war on waste and watchful eye. As Ronald Moe noted, Inspectors General are “viewed by some as the last, best hope for reviving a management capacity in the executive branch” (Moe 1994, p. 115).

The administrative/law approach, also equated with the bureaucratic paradigm, consists of high levels of bureaucratization of the kind described by Max Weber and Frederick Taylor. People are perceived as “clients to be managed” (Kettl 1997, p. 452), and the public interest, defined by Herring as the “standard that guides the administrator in executing the law” (Shafritz 1997, p. 78), is achieved through the procedures established as part of the bureaucratic process. In order to preserve equality of treatment for the clients of the government, the administrative goal is strict adherence to the law.

The functions of technology under this approach are several. Referring to Moon’s stages of e-government, stages one, simple information dissemination, and three, service and financial transactions, fall under the administrative/law approach, as these are the only stages that preserve the hierarchy and rules inherent in this approach. The other stages of e-government do not fit within this approach, as they disassemble characteristics of the bureaucracy that are inherent
within it. For instance, the two-way communication and political participation stages break down the impersonality barrier between administrators and clients. Also the integration across and within government agencies and operating units begins to knock down the hierarchy and functional silos or stovepipes also inherent in this approach.

All three levels of bureaucracy defined by Mark Bovens and Stavros Zouridis — street, screen, and system — can function within the administrative/law approach (Bovens 2002). Interestingly, the most technologically-enabled level of bureaucracy, where clients merely have to input their information into a computer system from any remote location to receive or apply for services, is the level most fitting to the high level of bureaucratization of the administrative/law approach. As Jane Fountain observed, the technology can be used either to break down rules and procedures, or it can make them more stringent (Fountain 2001). In the case of the system-level bureaucracy, the role of public administrator is taken over by a computer system that serves the client of government through the strict and logical application of the law (Bovens and Zouridis, 2002).

The role of the administrator in this context is that of technocrat, expert, or “man of reason” (McSwite, 1997). Government under this approach is “of the technocrats, by the technocrats, and for the technocrats” (Kearney 1988, p. 571). It is this detachment from the true customers of government that the reinvention efforts sought to counter and which will be considered next under the reinvention/market approach.

Reinvention/Market Approach

David Osborne and Ted Gaebler identified ten themes instrumental to the goal of reinventing government in their book of the same name. They were:

- Catalytic Government: Steering Rather Than Rowing
- Community-Owned Government: Empowering Rather Than Serving
As can be seen by looking at the themes of reinvention, Osborne and Gaebler were offering an all-out attack on characteristics of the administrative/law approach, with its high levels of impersonal and faceless bureaucracy, baffling hierarchy and organizational charts, and ignorance of the needs of the customers of government. Some critics hold that the reinvention effort, led by Vice President Al Gore under the auspices of the National Performance Review, was accepted by organizations like the National Academy of Public Administration without deep and rigorous analysis (Lynn 2001; Moe 1994). The people under this approach are perceived as customers. Osborne and Gaebler open their chapter on customer-driven government with a quotation from David Couper, Chief of Policy in Madison, Wisconsin. Couper stated, “Quality is determined only by customers” (Osborne p. 166). The logic employed by Osborne and Gaebler and the whole of the reinvention movement is captured in the following passage from their book:

Democratic governments exist to serve their citizens. Businesses exist to make profits. And yet it is business that searches obsessively for new ways to please the American people. Most American governments are customer-blind, while McDonald’s and Frito-Lay are customer-driven. This may be the ultimate indictment of bureaucratic government (Osborne 1992, p. 166).
There has been much criticism of this customer-driven government concept, such as King and Stivers’ observation that when government focuses on the individual and the needs, wishes, and whims of that individual, then the needs of the whole community are lost (King 1997). However, there was also widespread acceptance found at the highest levels of government and within the walls of the most respected of institutions.

Osborne and Gaebler recommend several methods to “listen to the voice of the customer” to achieve the public interest through customer satisfaction. They recommend customer surveys, customer follow-up, community surveys, customer contact, customer contact reports, and customer councils (Osborne 1992, p. 177). The goal is not strict adherence to the law, as in the administrative/law approach, but flexibility in service delivery and customer contact so as to receive as close to zero customer complaints as possible.

The function of technology in this approach is defined in the National Performance Review report, which suggests that e-government “will allow citizens broader and more timely access to information and services through efficient, customer-responsive processes — thereby creating a fundamental revision in the relationship between the federal government and everyone served by it”. Using the tools of e-government, public managers shift from emphasizing producer concerns, such as cost-efficiency, to focusing on user satisfaction and control, flexibility in service delivery, and network management with internal and external parties (Tat-Kei Ho 2002). Viewing this through Moon’s stages of e-government, not only will government be using simple information dissemination and service and financial transactions, as in the administrative/law approach, but it will additionally be using two-way communication between administrator and customer as well as integration of procedures and information across and within agencies (Moon 2002).
Public administrators in this context act in the role of entrepreneur. Moe discussed reinvention using the label of an “entrepreneurial” or “entrepreneurial management” paradigm (Moe 1994). The administrator’s function is to take risks, act outside the bureaucratic box, and aim to achieve results and satisfy the needs of individual customers.

In one breath, reinventors referred to customers and citizens as one. “[Competition] lets each citizen choose his or her service provider. It establishes accountability to customers” (Osborne 1992, p. 169, italics in the original). If anything, the words citizen and customer might be reversed in the above passage, but it might be better to separate the terms entirely, as this classification construct does.

**Institutional Participation Approach**

One of the theoretical benefits of citizen-engagement in the governance process is captured by King and Stivers as follows:

Political philosophers like John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville argued that one of the chief benefits of direct citizen involvement in government was that ordinary people would come to see how their own lives were interwoven with the lives and fortunes of others and be able to raise their sights from what they themselves received from government to the overall good of the community (King 1998, p. 57).

They continue:

When people think of themselves as consumers or taxpayers and have no say in how things are decided, there is little prompting for them to take the high road and put the public interest ahead of their own private wants. At the same time, administrators see the ideal citizen as one who understands citizenship as being a follower, supporter, and ratifier of government action, conforming to the administratively defined mandate and climate (King 1998, p. 57).
In one stroke of the pen, King and Stivers challenged the efficacy of both the administrative/law approach and reinvention/market approach. In their place is the institutional participatory/democratic approach, in which the people are seen not as passive clients or active customers but as citizens, or partner recipients of service.

The institutional participatory/democratic approach may or may not reject the de-bureaucratization begun by the reinventors, but advocates of this approach would likely reject the role of people as customers and instead embrace them as citizens. Such a rejection is evident in Denhardt and Denhardt’s New Public Service (Denhardt 2003). Like the scholar-activist portrayed in the self-defined characters of Patricia Siplon and Amitai Etzioni, lived experience is a vital component to expert administration (Siplon 1999; Etzioni 2003). According to McSwite, Stivers is interested in enhancing administrator-citizen relations within the context of existing power structures and bureaucratic systems in order to pair real life experience and insight with the expertise of professional administrators (Box 2002). Therefore, citizen input is the means to the end of achieving the public interest, and the administrative goal is to obtain optimal levels of citizen engagement in the policy-crafting and implementation processes, as well as citizen buy-in to governmental decisions.

The function of technology in this approach is to serve as a citizen access point and to enable citizen-administrator interaction. Referring to Moon’s five stages of e-government again, political participation would be added to the list of those present in the previous two approaches, as tools such as online voting, public forums and opinion surveys would be utilized (Moon 2002). Andrew Kakabadse, Nada Kakabadse and Alexander Kouzmin similarly define four models of electronic democracy: electronic bureaucracy, information management, populist, and civil society (Kakabadse 2003). The institutional participatory/democratic approach would
consist largely of the populist model, which enables citizens to register their views on current issues and is exemplified by electronic town halls.

In this context the administrator would serve in the role of mediator, being careful to attend to the interests of citizens, other administrators, and additional actors, while instilling in citizens a sense of ownership over the government. A quote from Mary Parker Follett, originally stated in a different context, defines nicely the difference between the institutional participatory/democratic approach and the post-modern participatory/democratic approach. Through active citizen engagement, people would come to believe it “is not that I serve my neighborhood, my city, my nation, but that by this service I become my neighborhood, my city, my nation” (Box 2002, p. 4). The act of becoming the government is examined next in the final approach to administration and administrative reform along the bureaucratic and active citizenship continua.

**Post-Modern Participation Approach**

The post-modern participation approach is based on the concept of discourse theory. Defined by Richard Box, discourse theory “seeks to free citizens and administrators from reified, theoretical preconceptions and institutional constraints, allowing them to re-create themselves and their institutional arrangements in current discourse settings” (Box 2002, p. 21). That is, the people and administrators can redefine how they see themselves, each other, and their environment as they pursue common societal goals. Like the institutional participation approach, the people are perceived as citizens, not only as citizen recipients of government services but also as citizen partners in the production and allocation of government services. Also contrasted to the institutional approach, the post-modern approach eliminates all bureaucratic restraints and seeks to operate outside the box. Public interest is achieved in this approach through cross-sector
discourse, and the administrative goal is open, unregulated discourse on the goals and strategies of society.

The function of technology in this approach, using the Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Kouzmin model, is to enable civil society. The civil society model of electronic democracy refers to the transformation of political culture. Its goal is to strengthen connections between citizens and promote a robust and autonomous site for public debate (Kakabadse 2003).

In this context the role of the public administrator is to act as a facilitator of the discourse, outside the confines of institutional settings. His/her role is to assist in creating community through collaboration with citizens (Box, 2002). As can be imagined, there exist several challenges to achieving this kind of administrative reform. Indeed, some even question the desirability of any reform beyond the kind of administration existing under the administrative/law approach. This is explored next as closing thoughts are presented.

**THREATS TO PEOPLE AS CITIZENS: THE FUTURE OF REFORM**

Richard Box sees several problems to the realization of either of the participation approaches. These include “that people know that there is a problem that needs to be solved, that [administrators] know how to bring interested people together, that [citizens] have access to the information required for informed discussion of the questions before them, and that [the] process will not be interrupted by the action of elites who feel their interests to be threatened” (Box 2002, p. 9). Indeed, the interests of elites, as well as hallowed public institutions, may actually be threatened. According to Lynn, champions of “community and citizen empowerment barely acknowledge the constitutional role of legislatures, courts, and executive departments” (Lynn 2001, p. 15). These systems were put in place for a reason. As Peters noted, “In the traditional
bureaucratic system, rules and procedures protect clients from arbitrary and capricious action” (Peters 2000, p. 24). Once citizens and administrators are empowered those protections begin to fall apart, as citizens may begin to make unreasonable demands and administrators may serve an interest other than the greater public good.

The future of administrative reform is uncertain. As has been demonstrated in this paper, reforms can occur not only between sectors of society but also between “expert classes,” meaning trade-offs will need to be made between bureaucratization and active citizenship. Attention needs to be paid to this aspect of reform as well as to the aspects more frequently considered, such as the role of public managers, structure of agencies, and the relationship between public and private sectors.

Key questions from this perspective concern the fact the United States system of government was intentionally created as a representative system. What are the consequences for the democratic institutions in place when public administrators and citizens are empowered in the name of reform? How will the role of elected officials change when administrators handle customer case work, establish policy goals based on stakeholder input, and facilitate citizen town hall meetings to solve community problems? These are all questions that need to be asked as reformers of every stripe continue to shift the United States governmental system around the two-dimensional frame of bureaucratization and active citizenship. Both values are important to maintaining democratic accountability and governmental legitimacy. What is the cost, though, of sacrificing one in the interests of the other with respect to the overall quality of life for the nation’s citizens? What is the impact on the quality of results achieved through the ways and means of the government?
This paper proposes a framework and classification construct through which administrative reform trends and proposals can be discussed. Other dimensions, beyond bureaucratization and active citizenship, should also be considered in the framework, such as the level of policy control by elected officials and the level of activity by interest groups. These dimensions need to be detailed more thoroughly in a future paper and matched with the historical trends and administrative reform constructs discussed in these pages. Both the framework and the classification scheme need therefore to be tested and revised, but they each provide a good place to start in order to have an open dialogue among experts and between experts and citizens on the future of administrative reform in the United States.

**Endnotes**

1. I depart from Kettl in calling clients a body of people to be “managed”. The term managed implies some level of interaction between administrator and person. I prefer the word “served” in this context to emphasize the amorphous character of the body-public.

2. Siplon is arguably a better scholar because of her subjective activism paired with her objective scholarly pursuits. Similarly, Etzioni implied in his revealing memoir, *My Brother’s Keeper*, that lived experience can enhance scholarship.
Works Cited


