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Statement of Research, Teaching, & Service

Introduction

At the core of my research and teaching is the question of *difference*. I am ever driven by the questions of how we can understand our personal, often unexplored, differences and singularities; how we can communicate across differences to create a world in common; how knowledge relates to difference; and, perhaps more fundamentally, how difference rather than presumptive unity or sameness could be the basis for a new political order and mode of self-governing. From this core commitment, my research aims to engage the foundations of political and social theory from the disciplinary perspective of public administration in order to contribute to the formulation of a novel theoretical conception and practice of democratic self-governing that supersedes the administrative state. In my teaching, I have designed courses, exercises, and assignments that encourage students both to examine their differences and to practice more effective ways of living with the conflict, tensions, and possibilities that difference inevitably brings. I believe strongly that public administration is the ideal vantage from which to advance our understanding of these matters because the challenging nature of the field demands that theoretical innovations be linked directly to action and concrete changes in everyday practices.

Research

Grounded in post-structuralist and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories, my research to date focuses on elaborating, critiquing, and theorizing beyond what I have called the *political ontology of the People*. I argue that the nature of popular sovereignty makes it an unsuitable foundation for democratic governance in the contemporary world because of the exclusionary, sometimes violent relationship that its structural logic establishes with difference. From this critique, I provide the broad theoretical contours for a different kind of political order and theory of “governing,” a *politics of the subject*, founded on an ontology of difference and a hope of establishing qualitatively different relationships between government and society. While my research agenda aims to theorize beyond the current coordinates of the field, it also aims to be meticulous in its engagement with and reading of the field’s history, traditions, and literatures in order to shed new light on some of the field’s long-standing questions.

Since my arrival at Arizona State University in 2004 I have completed: (1) one solo-authored book; (2) eight peer-reviewed articles, published in well-regarded journals; (3) two peer-reviewed book chapters; (4) one edited collection; (5) two book reviews; (6) three other publications in scholarly journals; and (7) one article currently under review. I have also made presentations at 15 international, national, and regional conferences or seminars.

The first major paper completed, “Constitution as Executive Order: The Political Ontology of ‘We the People,’” appeared in *Administration & Society* in September 2005. This article outlines the general theory of political ontology and demonstrates why the contemporary crisis of governmental legitimacy is a function of the ontology of the People. “Authority, Representation, and the Contradictions of Post-traditional Governing” extends the argument to formulate a different figure and vocabulary for thinking about political and administrative authority. Drawing from psychoanalytic and classical philosophical sources, I develop the figure of the “midwife” as a possible alternative practice of authority. This article appeared in the September 2006 volume of the *American Review of Public Administration*. Appearing in *The Handbook of Decision Making* (2006),

“Discourse, Decision, and the Doublet: An Essay on the Crisis of Modern Authority” represents a second important component in my efforts to formulate a novel account of authority grounded in post-structuralist theory.

In addition to contributing significant articles to general public administration journals, I have contributed three articles to a major international journal of public administration theory, *Administrative Theory & Praxis*. Using a strategy developed in my critique of the People, “The Death of the Practitioner” (2007) takes on another central idea in public administration, the Practitioner, and contends that it tacitly sustains hierarchies of power, status, and influence in democratic governing. The second piece, “Performance Anxieties: Shifting Public Administration from the Relevant to the Real” (2006) links this critique to questions of knowledge production. Engaging a long-standing debate in the field about the “relevance” of public administration research, it argues against a priori, decontextualized determinations of “relevant” knowledge since such determinations are inevitably self-serving and self-justifying, and have the effect of excluding actual people from the governance process. The article also advances a pedagogical framework for the politics of the subject. The third article, “From Representations to Compositions: Governance Beyond the Three-Sector Society” (2007) advances a critique of the “governance” literature, focusing on the tensions between its empirico-historical account of the contemporary world and its conceptual apparatus and implicit normative commitments. Along similar thematic lines, “Networks and Governance at the Limits of Representation” (accepted at the *American Review of Public Administration*) explores the image of political collectivity implicit in network theory in public administration and its problematic relationship to political representation.

My most significant work to date is *Fabricating the People: Politics & Administration in the Biopolitical State*, a solo-authored book published in August 2007 by the University of Alabama Press. This book originated in my dissertation research and significantly expands upon and develops the ideas presented there. Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 6 were essentially rewritten, and chapters 4 and 7 were revised substantially. The book begins by seeking a way to understand the legitimacy problem in contemporary governance as a consequence of something other than a failure of government performance or values. To do so, it develops a sophisticated theory of “representation” that integrates long-standing critiques of epistemological objectivism and political representation. It argues that representation names the broad set of ontological commitments through which the socio-political reality of “the People” is made up or *fabricated*. This framework is then applied to analyze three periods in American history. In these chapters, the book describes the gradual diffusion of the representational logic through society and its work to fabricate an empirically heterogeneous social field into a presumptive unity, a People-as-One. It argues that the breakdown of the plausibility of the representational logic and the political institutions and discourses through which it is manifested lay at the heart of the legitimacy crisis. Grounded in the preceding theoretical and historical analysis, the book’s concluding chapter presents several propositions that can guide theorizing beyond representation and towards a politics of the subject.

I am very pleased that the book appeared under the imprimatur of the University of Alabama Press as the press has published some of the most important works in public administration since the 1940s and, more recently, has emerged as perhaps the most important publisher of critical theoretical perspectives in the field. The book has potential to have a highly significant impact on the field. Alluding to Dwight Waldo’s 1948 work, *The Administrative State*, arguably one of the most influential texts in the history of public administration scholarship, one reviewer (who reviewed the manuscript for the University of Alabama Press) wrote, “I believe that this book will be as big a

milestone in the development of the field as *The Administrative State* has been, and for a similar reason: that after reading it, one simply cannot continue to see the field in conventional terms—or, at least, one can't continue to take one's perspective for granted but is called to re-examine its assumptions." Related evidence of my standing in the field includes my appointment effective January 2008 as editor-in-chief of *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, the major international journal of critical and theoretical dialogue in public administration. I have also been selected to participate in the third "Minnowbrook Conference," which gathers prominent junior scholars every twenty years to consider the current state and future of public administration.

Teaching

I have worked hard to achieve the same high level of performance and quality in the classroom that I strive for in my academic research. I receive high quantitative marks on masters and doctoral student course evaluations, and my courses are consistently well-received. I have also been recognized by students for excellence in teaching as demonstrated by my nomination for the Last Lecture Series, the Featured Faculty Series, and the Centennial Professorship. In 2007 I received the School of Public Affairs' "Distinguished Teaching Award." In addition, I have worked to enhance my in-class capacities through participation in the Arizona Wakonse Teaching Fellowship and completion of the ASU Safe Zone program, which aims to cultivate an accepting atmosphere for students of all sexual orientations.

Philosophically, I believe that course material and the individual student must intersect in a meaningful and personal manner in ultimate service to nurturing a pluralistic ethos, a position consistent with and informed by my theoretical work. To this end, I have designed assignments and courses that ask students both to reflect personally on their own intellectual and personal commitments and to engage texts and ideas from those commitments. Broadly, I ask that students find and develop their own voice but at the same time be attentive to and provide space for the voice of the other/author (or their peers). The "Paradigms and Intellectual Identity" essay for my Foundations of Public Administration exemplifies this. Here, students are asked to study several paradigms of sociological theory from the perspectives of ontology, epistemology, human nature, and method, and to locate their own views in them. They emerge with a clearer understanding of their own commitments as well as a thorough understanding of the possibilities and limitations of other philosophical and social scientific traditions.

To date, I have designed and taught six classes at the graduate level—Introduction to Public Affairs, Organization Behavior, Comparative Administration, Foundations of Public Administration (doctoral seminar), Public Administration and Community Development, and Qualitative Methods for Public Affairs Research (co-designed and co-taught). The masters-level Public Administration and Community Development course is perhaps my most involved effort to integrate my theoretical work and classroom content. This course is premised on the assertion that poor relationships and distorted communication are frequently the prime cause of development failure and that public administration itself must become more collaborative and community-based. The course has been an ongoing venue to explore the theory and practice of a "post-representational" public administration.

Finally, I have been a strong mentor to students, especially doctoral students. I have sat or currently sit on seven Program of Study committees (chairing three) and five dissertation committees (two completed). I also have worked with many masters and doctoral students in readings and conferences or independent studies, making particular use of my expertise in Lacanian, discourse,

and post-structuralist theories. As indicated on my curriculum vitae, I have involved students considerably in my academic research.

Service

I have worked to make a meaningful impact on the School of Public Affairs, its identity, and its programs, and to engage more broadly in service to the profession and my community. In addition to recruitment and doctoral committees, I served and played an important role in the School committee that designed the new Urban and Metropolitan Studies program, which is a critical dimension of the School's new downtown Phoenix location and commitment to "advancing urban governance in a global context." I also have helped to develop the School's global presence by developing our partnerships with Moscow State University and Yerevan State University (Armenia). I have been active, furthermore, in national professional service. I served on the 2007 and 2008 program committees for the annual conference of the Public Administration Theory Network. In addition, I have served on national awards committees for the American Society for Public Administration, and have reviewed numerous articles and book proposals for major journals and presses in the field.

Having set my research agenda on track and established my abilities in the classroom, I have begun to become active in community affairs. Serving initially as its academic advisor, I now sit on the board of directors for Project Literacy, a nonprofit organization that provides one-on-one English-language tutoring. I have given several presentations of my work and related topics to the community, including those at the First Annual ASU Summer Institute on Community, a well-attended session on deliberation and dialogue at Make A Difference's 2007 Community Forum, and, recently, at the City of Tempe's 2008 Neighborhood Workshop. Finally, I was appointed by the mayor of Tempe to serve a three-year term on the city's Neighborhood Advisory Commission, which advises the mayor and city council on city-wide neighborhood issues.

The Path Ahead

My research agenda going forward is well-formulated in the short, medium, and long terms. In the coming year, I expect to complete two papers (one co-authored with a doctoral student) on "participation," which will appear in a special symposium in *Public Administration Quarterly* that I am editing. Another paper is currently under review at *Administration & Society*, and two additional papers are near completion. I will also collaborate with a group of scholars on a prospectus for the second edition of the widely-used text, *Government Is Us: Public Administration in an Anti-Government Era*. If accepted, the book will be completed by August 2009. I also have embarked on a collaborative book project that explores, through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the role of government and public administration in articulating and sustaining the social bond beyond the People. We hope that the manuscript will be finished by the summer of 2010. Together, these efforts will prepare me for what I expect will be my next solo-authored book project which I have tentatively called "The Authority of Desire." It will examine the relationship of legitimacy, authority, and desire—a theme that appears throughout my work.

In the longer term, it is my hope to continue to advance the literature of public administration by (1) working through the remaining propositions for a politics of the subject and (2) developing an empirical aspect of my research program that investigates issues of interest connected with my theoretical work—legitimacy, authority, identity, and participation. I expect that development of this aspect of my research program will open further opportunities for community engagement and to bring my theoretical work to larger audiences and fields of practice.