

## **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

With considerable pride and great hopefulness about the future of public management research, I have assumed the editorship of this Journal. I would like to thank Fred Thompson and others for the confidence they have placed in me, and for Fred's guidance managing the editorial transition. The first issue for whose content I will be responsible will be the last issue for 2005, issue 8(3).

I wanted to share with the Journal's readership a few of the values (biases?) I bring to my editorship:

(1) The genuinely international nature of this Journal is one of its great strengths, which should continue to be nurtured. Scholars in many countries need to learn from each other, and having available both empirical material and theoretical approaches from many countries will enrich our collective understanding of public-sector management.

(2) We need dramatically to increase the cross-fertilization between public management research and the mainstream of organization theory/behavior research in the social sciences. Unfortunately, at the present time there is little mainstream organization theory/behavior research (coming out of social psychology, political science, or sociology) being done on public-sector organizations. Most organizational behavior research either is a-institutional or involves business firms, rather than public organizations. Political science research involving organizations generally involves how elected officials shape organizational behavior, with public organizations the passive receptacles. This is particularly unfortunate since so much of the classic work on organizations – by Weber, Gulick, Selznick, or Crozier – involved public organizations.

At the same time, too much public management research has segregated itself into an intellectual ghetto, outside the mainstream of social science. One of my main goals for this Journal is to increase both the social-science sophistication of research undertaken by public management scholars and the amount of research on public organizations by mainstream organization theory/behavior scholars.

(3) I would like the Journal to retain and strengthen its orientation towards prescriptive research that identifies ways to improve public-sector performance. Such research should be rigorous, not hortatory, but it should be willing ask hard questions about how we can improve public performance and not content itself with only explanation. There have been complaints that too few public management reform proposals are backed by evidence about whether they work. That criticism is correct, but the answer is to engage in such research, not to abandon the ambition to develop prescriptions about what works.

Scholars value critical thinking. Too often, I fear that we confuse critical thinking with criticism, especially when studying public policy and its implementation, focusing public management research on the search for problems and failures, rather than searching for effective approaches. I would hope this Journal will advance understanding of what works, perhaps even more than it dwells on what doesn't.

(4) This Journal has to some extent been associated with ideas that go under the rubric New Public Management (NPM). So many people mean so many different things by this phrase that one hesitates to associate oneself with it, for fear of having one's own views misunderstood. Recognizing that risk, I would say that to the extent NPM suggests a concern for results and performance in the public sector, as opposed to a more traditional view that it is sufficient if public activities are conducted honestly, openly, and in accordance with the rule of law, I personally bring to this Journal a sympathetic outlook towards this current. However, the Journal will have no "party line."

I am very excited to be able to announce that a number of internationally renowned scholars have agreed to join the Journal's editorial board, out of a shared belief that the quality and quantity of research on public organizations must increase and that this Journal is a good venue to encourage this development. As you will see below, this list includes some of the most distinguished living scholars in the areas of organization theory and organizational behavior. They are:

John Brehm, University of Chicago  
Michel Crozier, Paris Institute of Political Science  
Paul DiMaggio, Princeton University  
Martha Feldman, University of California - Irvine  
Henrich Greve, Norwegian School of Management  
Mitsuyoshi Ishida, Waseda University  
Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard University  
Roderick Kramer, Stanford University  
James March, Stanford University  
Johan Olsen, University of Oslo  
Kathleen Sutcliffe, University of Michigan  
Karl Weick, University of Michigan

I would especially like to direct an appeal to mainstream organization theory scholars who are seeing this Journal to submit articles to us for consideration. I would like to direct a similar appeal to those in the public management community who see their work as significantly informed by the mainstream of social science research. The Journal will not impose a methodological line any more than it will impose a line about the right approach to public management. However, I will seek to publish articles that meet high standards of social science excellence, with probably a greater proportion of empirical articles using quantitative data analysis than have been published in the Journal in the past.

It also pleases me greatly to announce that, starting with the first issue of 2006, Professor Martha Feldman, who holds the Johnson Chair for Civic Governance and Public Management at the University of California (Irvine), will assume the responsibility for the Journal's book reviews for North American books. This is a real honor for the Journal; she brings enormous intellectual distinction to the study of public management. She is well known as the author of *Order Without Design: Information Production and Policy Making*. Her articles have appeared in the top journals in our field, including *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, and *Journal of Management Studies*. She is on the editorial boards of *Organization Science*, *Organization Studies*, and *Organizational Research Methods*. Her article coauthored with Anne Khademian, "Managing for Inclusion: Balancing Control and Participation," appeared in this Journal in 2000.

Finally, I would like to announce that the first issue for which I bear editorial responsibility will include a symposium on "The 9/11 Commission Report and Organization Theory." A number of leading organization theory and public management scholars from several countries will be participating in this symposium, most of them scholars who have never published in the Journal before. I think this symposium will be an important intellectual event, which you as readers will find interesting and valuable.

**Steven Kelman**

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