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Has Public Administration Grown Up? A Case for Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity and the Intersection of Public Administration in the 21st Century

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The Journal of Public Management & Social Policy (JPMSP) symposium addresses the issue of public administration's development as an academic field in terms of its attention to sexual orientation and gender identity in a contemporary society. Intersection was selected because of the image of two or more roads meeting and it also conjures the image of being at the crossroads of an issue. Intersection can also be interpreted as intersectionality. Intersectionality arose as a feminist theory that examines the intersection of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and national orientation on feminist theory (Hancock 2007). Bearfield (2009) calls for the development of a feminist theory in public administration that "must embrace research focused on the intersection of multiple identity categories such as race and class" (pp. 383). Duerst-Lahti (2007) calls for the development framework of a diversity leadership in political science and public administration drawing from the intersectionality perspective because it challenges the idea that race, gender, and class form independent analytic categories. This symposium shows multiple theoretical roads leading to a conceptual intersection and moving beyond.

In the spirit of the intersectionality perspective the articles in this symposium examine the intersection of sexual orientation/gender identity from various theoretical and practical perspectives. The authors use the policy process, social equity, cultural competence, public administration infrastructure, liberal ideology and naturalism, and the stress of gendered bathrooms for transgender people as avenues leading to the intersection. The successful implementation of the repeal of the "don't ask – don't tell" in the U.S. Marine Corps is described. The military, for many years, was less than receptive to having openly lesbian and gay troops serve openly. The fact that an article describes the

implementation of the repeal of “don’t ask – don’t tell, shows that progress is being made, although there is still a great distance to travel. The symposium also shows the range of perspectives from policy to implementation.

Structure of Symposium

In “The Policy Landscape of Sexual Orientation” Wyatt-Nichol and Naylor use a policy process framework combining the stages model of policy and the policy stream metaphor to explore the intersection public administration and sexual orientation. Their approach combines the systematic approach of agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and evaluation (stages model of policy process) combined with the windows of opportunity (the streams metaphor) to examine the placing of marriage equality and nondiscrimination in the workplace on the national public agenda. Three interest groups are seen as preparing the stage for the national debate on domestic partner benefits. State and local governments were the first to move towards nondiscrimination in employment and extension of domestic partner benefits to same-sex spouses. They see the stages model’s dynamic system event as being the changes in attitude in towards homosexuality. They conclude that public administrators play a normative role in creating equality citing the Code of Ethics of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) to oppose discrimination and harassment.

Johnson in *The importance of Social Movements and the Intersection of Social Equity: Marriage Equality and RACING Towards Justice* uses social equity to create three foci: the relevance of social movements, the issue of race and the intersexual of same sex marriage as an impediment to progress, and addressing recommendations for addressing the issues. Where Wyatt-Nichol and Naylor view social movements through the lens of collective action frames and advocacy coalition frameworks, Johnson views them through the lens of social equity. Johnson demonstrates how social movements have furthered the social equity agenda. The author sees the LGBT community as not historically advocating for the rights of transgendered individuals. However, there is a continuing integration of transgender into their agenda. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is seen as having negative consequences on the marriage equity movement. Race becomes a contentious argument as Blacks and Hispanics are seen as obstructing the marriage equality movement despite evidence to the contrary. The author concludes that the “blame game” is not conducive to continued progress and must be stopped. Coalitions with other social movements especially international social movements would be helpful. And, it would be helpful, if social equity scholars would research same-sex marriage as a human rights issue.

Norman-Major and Becker in “Walking the Talk: Do Public Systems Have the Infrastructure Necessary to Implement and Enforce LGBT and Gender Identity Rights?” demonstrates that public policy needs public administration infrastructure to be implemented. The article discusses the changing state of LGBT rights in the United States. The federal government is seen as having limited protections. Two important rulings by the Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission included sexual orientation and gender identity in the definition of discrimination. While over twenty states prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, only thirteen have protections based on gender identity. While many states and localities have anti-discrimination laws, there also needs to be enforcement infrastructure. Good research is based on the availability of good data. There is relatively little data compounded by universally accepted definitions of lesbian, gay, and transgender. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management will be including questions on LGBT employees in federal government employee surveys.

Borrego in “Will Cultural Competence Lead Us Out of the Intersection of Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity or Leave Us Stalled” uses cultural competence to examine the intersection. Cultural Competence on LGBT issues follows the same pattern as cultural competence in other diversities such as race/ethnicities and gender with two important exceptions. The research starts in the delivery of social, health, and mental health services by government agencies to the LGBT community. At some point researchers makes recommendations on cultural competence requirements for organizations. At this point, the research is brought into the public administration cultural competence research. The two important differences are the coming out process in sexual orientation and transgender. These do not have parallels in cultural competence on race/ethnicity, gender, and social class. The effect of demographic changes on the changing landscape of LGBT issues is examined. The millenials are coming of age and they tend to be more liberal on LGBT issues than seniors. The involvement of LGBT advocacy groups on the political process is examined along with the politics – administration split and its relevance to LGBT issues.

Moran in “Leading the Way in Policy Implementation: An Examination of How the United States Marine Corps has Managed the Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Repeal” gives insight into an organization that is rarely researched, the U.S. Military. For many years the military resisted efforts to allow lesbian and gay service members to openly serve. Yet, the U.S. Marine Corps is successfully implementing the repeal of the “don’t ask – don’t tell”. In addition, Moran shows how the organizational and leadership structure is used to ensure successful implementation. This article is classic in demonstrating how to successfully implement any initiative. The first part is setting the tone. The Commandant of the Marine draws on a more that 235 -year tradition of Marine fidelity to let all marines know what is expected of each one of them. The Commandant states the he and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps will personally lead the effort. The Marine Corps organizational structure is used to successfully implement the repeal. Leaders are invested with the discretion to make decisions to resolve any problems that individuals may experience with the repeal. Resistance was expected. Training became the key to success. Solid management theory and using the warrior culture of the Marine Corps is used ensure the transition to repealing the “don’t ask – don’t tell” policy.

Herman in “Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender People’s Health and Public Lives” raises an important policy and administration issue. How do we handle the needs of transgender people when the past has treated and in many cases is still treating gender as binary: male and female. The authors use a minority stress framework to examine the experiences of transgender people when using gendered public restrooms. Transgender and gender nonconforming people experience certainly experience discrimination. Transgender use of gendered restrooms immediately raises the inadequacy of seeing gender as binary. In concert with the framework of intersectionality transgendered people experienced problems differently based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, and income.

The symposium ends with Brown’s and Goode-Cross’s article: “Same-Sex Marriage and the Challenge of Liberalism’s: A Case of Ideological Drift. The authors use liberal ideology and naturalism to examine the same-sex marriage issue. They use Hartz’s consensus thesis to question the exclusionary policies such as the denial of the right of same-sex marriage. They examine the works of John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, and John Finnes and ideological drift to critique the lack of progress in legalizing same-sex marriage. They see Joseph Raz and perfectionist liberalism as lying between the extremes of

excluding moral issues and defining morality narrowly. Ideological drift is seen as moral issues becoming separated from their religious and doctrinal roots and thus, leading to new principles.

Inclusion and Implications

In conclusion, this symposium shows the progress that is being made on LGBT issues. Scholars are increasingly turning their attention to the needs of the LGBT community. Research is increasing and progress brings the opportunity the study the successes. The challenges that the LGBT community still faces are also areas that benefit from the research of scholar. One of the reasons for the symposium is to highlight the works of scholars working on LGBT issues. The symposium is also a call for other scholars to turn their attention to the needs of the LGBT community and to increase the research, so it can be shared in classes. The efforts of the scholars can better inform and educate future public administrators. Future public administrators will understand the policy implications and how to implement meaningful reform.

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