

Bridging Levels of Public Administration: How Macro Shapes Meso and Micro

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Roundtable

Is Public Management Neglecting the State?

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Public management is a domain of research that is now roughly three decades old. Researchers in this area have made important advances in understanding about the performance of public organizations. But questions have been raised about the scope and methods of public management research (PMR). Does it neglect important questions about the development of major institutions of the modern state? Has it focused unduly on problems of the advanced democracies? Has it made itself irrelevant to public debates about the role and design of government, and the capacity of public institutions to deal with emerging challenges? This set of eight short essays were prepared for a roundtable held at the research conference of the PMR Association at the University of Aarhus in June 2016. Contributors were asked to consider the question: Is PMR neglecting the state?

Milward, H. Brinton, Laura Jensen, Alasdair Roberts, Mauricio I. Dussauge-Laguna, Veronica Junjan, René Torenvlied, Arjen Boin, H.K. Colebatch, Donald Kettl and Robert F. Durant (2016). Is Public Management Neglecting the State? *Governance* 29(3): 1-26.

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Leaders develop an overall view about how state authority ought to be exercised, which I call their strategy for governing. This strategy includes an understanding about national priorities—that is, the ordering of goals and the methods of pursuing goals. The institutional apparatus that constitutes a state is the means by which strategy is put into place. It is the expression of strategy. Experts in public administration provide advice on how to build or renovate institutions so that they align with overall strategy.

Roberts, Alasdair (2020). Strategies for Governing: Reinventing Public Administration for a Dangerous Century. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press.

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Behavioral Public Administration: Combining Insights from Public Administration and Psychology

Abstract: Behavioral public administration is the analysis of public administration from the micro-level perspective of individual behavior and attitudes by drawing on insights from psychology on the behavior of individuals and groups. The authors discuss how scholars in public administration currently draw on theories and methods from psychology and related fields and point to research in public administration that could benefit from further integration. An analysis of public administration topics through a psychological lens can be useful to confirm, add nuance to, or extend classical public administration theories. As such, behavioral public administration complements traditional public administration. Furthermore, it could be a two-way street for psychologists who want to test the external validity of their theories in a political-administrative setting. Finally, four principles are proposed to narrow the gap between public administration and psychology.

Grimmelikhuisen, Stephan, Sebastian Jilke, Asmus Leth Olsen and Lars Tummers (2017). Behavioral Public Administration: Combining Insights from Public Administration and Psychology. Public Administration Review 77(1): 45-56.

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in our understanding of the underlying psychology and behavior of individuals and groups. This definition has three main components: (1) individuals and groups of citizens, employees, and managers within the public sector are the unit of analysis; (2) it emphasizes the behavior and attitudes of these people; and, most importantly, (3) it does so by integrating insights from psychology and the behavioral sciences into the study of public administration. By micro level, we mean that the unit of analysis focuses on psychological

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Categorizing the governed

- Property (*Dred Scott*)
- Subjects
- Indians
- Alien immigrants
- Lawful permanent residents
- Alien visitors
- Illegal aliens / undocumented immigrants
- Citizens
 - “thin” or “thick” citizenship: Enfranchisement, protection against discrimination, access to services

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Conceptual confusion

- When discussing attitudes / satisfaction / perceptions / expectations of government, status in relation to government matters
- Many papers about “citizens” do not appear to be talking about citizens
- Surveys, experiments do not ask about or select on citizenship status
- Citizenship, residency, membership of household, and status as client or consumer of service are often conflated and treated as interchangeable concepts

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Table 1 Levels of analysis in public administration

<i>Macro-level</i>	Study of the governance strategies that are devised by leaders to advance critical national interests and the ways in which these strategies influence the overall architecture of the state.
<i>Meso-level</i>	Study of the design, consolidation, administration, and reform of specific institutions—that is, laws, organizations, programs and practices—within the state.
<i>Micro-level</i>	Study of the attitudes and behavior of officials within the state apparatus and of people who are subject to their authority. ¹

¹ I have modified the definition commonly used by proponents of behavioral public administration, which refers to the attitudes and behavior of “citizens, employees and managers.” There are many more ways of categorizing people inside and outside the state apparatus.

From *Strategies For Governing* (Cornell University Press, December 2019)

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A great schism approaching? Towards a micro and macro public administration

Donald Moynihan*

Abstract: As an emerging field, behavioral public administration (BPA) has spurred important new research, documenting human biases and heuristics in public sector contexts. In doing so, it has embraced Herbert Simon's call to draw from psychology to understand administrative behavior. To fulfill its potential, BPA should also pursue another goal of Simon: a normative aspiration toward design science, using its powerful analytical techniques to solve, and not just document, real administrative problems. Another challenge for BPA is understanding where it fits in the constellation of public administration research. One critique of BPA is that a focus on micro-level behavior leads to a neglect of big questions that were once central to public administration. But this tension may also signal the possibility of a productive division of labor, with a micro and macro public administration that addresses distinct questions, but which are connected by common research concepts.

Moynihan, Donald (2018). A Great Schism Approaching? Towards a Micro and Macro Public Administration. Journal of Behavioral Public Administration 1(1): 1-8.

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Nested levels

- At the macro-level, national leaders craft “strategies for governing” that define national priorities in response to their perception of circumstances.
- These broad strategic choices determine how specific institutions within the public sector will be built, reformed and administered: this is the domain of the meso-level.
- Overall strategy also shapes understandings about the relationship between public officials and the people they govern: this is the domain of the micro-level.

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Four phases of US history

- Progressive era
 - Nation-state / positive state / imperial state
 - Progressive institutional reform
 - Enfranchisement for some / disenfranchisement for others / subjugation of colonials / denaturalization of radicals
- Post-war era
 - Administrative state / welfare state / national security state
 - Military-industrial complex / imperial presidency / intergovernmentalism / federal regulation
 - Rights revolution / Due process revolution / entitlements

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Four phases . . .

- Neoliberal era
 - Market state / hollow state / neoliberal state / network state
 - Reinvented government / the public management revolution / new federalism / deregulation / military downsizing
 - Customers / Due process counter-revolution / War on crime / Felon disenfranchisement
- An era of nationalist populism?
 - “Take back our country” / MAGA
 - Voting rights / rights of illegal aliens / anti-discrimination policies

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MACRO

Britain outlines post-Brexit vision 'beyond Europe'

LONDON — The U.K. government is mulling an overhaul after Brexit — and that starts with the department charged with taking Britain out of the European Union.

““The process of recreating ourselves is even more challenging than withdrawal” — *Senior U.K. government minister*

MESO

MICRO

- What happens to EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens in the EU?
- What about EU nationals who want to work in the UK?
- Will immigration be cut?
- Will I still be able to use my passport?
- Will I need a visa to travel to the EU?

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Complements, not rivals

- Public administration should encourage research at multiple levels
- Scholars ought to have basic competence at all levels
- An understanding of one level can enhance understanding at other levels
- The interconnection between levels (and thus the influence of “grand politics”) cannot be avoided

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