



DIVERSITY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

THEORY, ISSUES, AND PERSPECTIVES

SECOND EDITION

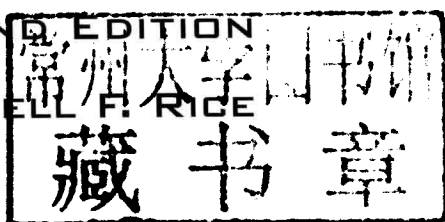
MITCHELL F. RICE

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M.E. Sharpe

Armonk, New York

London, England

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80 Business Park Drive, Armonk, New York 10504.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Diversity and public administration : theory, issues, and perspectives /
edited by Mitchell F. Rice.—2nd ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7656-2263-1 (hardcover : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-0-7656-2633-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Civil service—Personnel management. 2. Diversity in the workplace. I. Rice, Mitchell F.

JF1658.D58 2010

352.608—dc22

2009048089

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of
American National Standard for Information Sciences
Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials,
ANSI Z 39.48-1984.



EB (c)	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
EB (p)	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the contributions of the authors. I extend a warm thanks to each of them. Also, a very special thanks to my graduate assistants, Ted Brown and Samantha Chiu, who now have valuable experience in knowing what goes on behind the scenes in putting together an edited volume. Good luck in your future endeavors.

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DIVERSITY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Multiple Dimensions of Diversity and Culture

Harvey L. White and Mitchell F. Rice

Current considerations for the provision of public services must include how to respond effectively to the principal challenges of the twenty-first century. Many of these challenges will emanate from changing demographics that are impacting the demand for and the delivery and provision of public goods and services. For instance, the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) notes that Hispanics are officially the largest minority group in the United States; African-Americans are the second. There are also increasing numbers of individuals of other nationalities who represent a mosaic of colors, languages, cultural values, and ethnic traditions. This situation will pose tremendous challenges that require the creation of a diverse and more efficient public service workforce. Some of the challenges that changing demographics will pose are discussed in the *Workforce 2000* report published by the Hudson Institute (Johnston and Packer 1987). The report indicated that there would be major changes in the workforce by the twenty-first century. For example, 84 percent of new entrants into the workforce would be women and men of color, white women, and foreign nationals. *Workforce 2020*, the sequel to *Workforce 2000*, further substantiates the changing demographics of the American workforce (Judy and D'Amico 1997). In a subsequent report, *Futurework: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century*, the U.S. Department of Labor reinforces the Hudson Institute's predictions for a changing workforce. This report states:

By 2050, the U.S. population is expected to increase by 50 percent and minority groups will make up nearly half of the population. Immigration will account for almost two-thirds of the nation's population growth. The population of older Americans is expected to more than double. One-quarter of all Americans will be of Hispanic origin. Almost one in ten

Americans will be of Asian or Pacific Islander descent. And more women and people with disabilities will be on the job. (1999, xx)

These workplace changes will affect employees' expectations about the implied contract between employees and employer, the numbers of dual career and nontraditional families, and the overall diversity of the workforce.

The demographic and workplace changes discussed above suggest that public sector organizations must be prepared to develop more inclusive work cultures that have a better understanding of the many ways people are different from one another and/or different from the organizations' traditional employees. Public service organizations must give renewed (or new) attention to such defining characteristics as race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and religion. However, attention is also required for other diversity factors such as the college one graduated from, varied communication and management styles, and problem-solving approaches (Jensen and Katz 1996). Diversity has the potential of becoming the most important consideration for public service organizations in the twenty-first century. However, this consideration is not confined merely to the workforce. Diversity also includes the production and provision of public services. In other words, it is not just a question of knowing who will be the public servants. Other important questions will need equal consideration: What populations will be served? What goods and services will be provided? How will these goods and services be produced? For example, due to the changing demographics in Texas, where the Hispanic population is growing quite rapidly, the state's demographer implicitly notes that in the not too distant future a disproportionately older Anglo population will be served by a public service workforce that is more and more minority (Murdock et al. 2002). The Texas demographer also points out that the state's economic future will be tied to the future socioeconomic status of the growing minority populations. In fact, Texas, along with California, Hawaii, and New Mexico, is now a majority-minority state—a state where minorities make up a majority of the population (see Wikipedia 2009).

Further, other factors that will help determine the answers to these questions include: (1) the increasingly ethnic, racial, and gerontological diversity of society; (2) an increasingly gender-diverse workforce; (3) the growing interdependence of the global community, which calls for greater knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of human diversity; and (4) the increasing technological diversity behind the production and

provision of goods and services. As these factors suggest, public service organizations will be confronted with a multiplicity of needs and interests that will require a workforce that has a broad knowledge base and a variety of skills and talents. Addressing these needs and interests will require the application of innovative technologies and management-diversity practices if public goods and services are to be delivered efficiently. What follows is an examination of diversity factors that will influence the future of public service.

Racial Diversity: Toward a Representative Bureaucracy

Many terms have been used to express the need for a diverse workforce in the public sector. *Multiculturalism*, *affirmative action*, and *equal opportunity* are the most recent. Implicit in each of these concepts is the premise that enhanced efficiency can be derived through a more diverse workforce. This premise is also an intricate part of the concept of representative democracy (see Kranz 1976; Long 1952; Mosher 1968; Van Riper 1958; Warner et al. 1963). Norton Long (1952) described the linkage between diversity and a representative democracy more than fifty years ago. According to Long, it is of critical importance that bureaucracy be both representative and democratic in composition and ethos. To be truly representative, he insists that public service must be inclusive of diverse “races, nationalities, and religions” (816–817). This inclusiveness is to be achieved through a recruitment process designed to create a workforce of individuals representative of the *pluralism* that exists in society. The concept of a representative bureaucracy was also used by Frederick Mosher to emphasize the need for a diverse public service. Mosher argues that “representativeness concerns the origin of individuals and the degree to which, collectively, they mirror the whole society. . . . A public service, and more importantly the leadership personnel of that service, which is broadly representative of all categories of the population in these respects, may be thought of as satisfying Lincoln’s prescription of government by the people” (1968, 15).

Similar to Long, Mosher views diversity as a requisite for both democracy and representative bureaucracy. Mosher correctly points out that it is crucial for good policy and management decision-making as well. “Persons drawn from diverse groups . . . will bring to bear upon decisions and activities different perspectives, knowledge, values, and abilities. And the products of their interaction will very likely differ

from the products were they all of a single genre" (16). Building on the foundation laid by Long, Mosher, and others, Harry Kranz spells out the specific benefits that he believes can be achieved through a representative bureaucracy. Kranz argues that a representative bureaucracy would lead to more democratic decision-making, resulting in better decisions, because it would expand the number and diversity of views brought to bear on policy-making. Kranz also notes that representative bureaucracy improves bureaucratic operations and outputs by ensuring that the decisions and services are responsive to the needs of agency clientele and potential consumers, particularly members of minority groups; by using the country's human resources efficiently; by increasing, both symbolically and actually, the legitimacy of public service institutions; and by elevating social equity and justice to prime political values at least as important as the prevailing paradigm of "economy and efficiency" and its fellow traveler "stability" (1976, 110–116).

Race is one component of the diversity that Long, Mosher, and Kranz advocate. As these scholars have come to realize, Europeans, Africans, Native Americans, Asians, and other racial groups possess unique cultural norms and values that affect their decisions. Numerous studies have confirmed racially differentiated perspectives on a variety of issues and events. Differences have been found to persist in areas such as political alienation, childbearing, school choice, and the environment (Henig 1990; Herring et al. 1991; Kahn and Mason 1987; Lipset and Schneider 1983; Mohai 1990; St. John and Rowe 1990). Despite these findings, most racial groups continue to be underrepresented in public service organizations at all levels of government.

As Kim and Lewis (1994) found in their research that Asian Americans are significantly underrepresented in state and local governments. Several studies have found that African-Americans are underrepresented at all levels of government and that their representation is severely restricted at middle and upper management levels (Cornwell and Kellough 1994; Kellough 1990; Murray et al. 1994). Meier (1975) found in his study of the federal civil service that minority representation decreases as rank (or grade) increases. Guajardo (1996) found that minority underrepresentation in federal agencies remained constant between 1982 and 1990: agencies with representative workforces in 1982 continued to have integrated staffs in 1990, while underrepresented agencies continued to have workforces that were predominantly white. Hence, even after nearly fifty years of effort that began with the 1964 Civil Rights Act,

achieving racial diversity remains one of the greatest challenges facing contemporary public service.

Diversity as Differences in Ethnic Norms and Behaviors

Ethnic differences within racial groups are an aspect of diversity that has been almost completely overlooked in an attempt to create a more representative bureaucracy. All Europeans, all Africans, all Asians, and all Hispanics are frequently considered homogeneous groups. As is becoming increasingly clear, however, the various European communities have distinguishing cultural and religious differences that are a source of continual conflict among them. European interethnic conflicts are found in Irish religious differences, the conflict between the Basques and Castile, and the war crisis in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia. Europeans speak different languages and may be Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim. They have various customs and social mores. As exhibited in subnational politics and employment practices in state and local government, these differences may be minimized but not abandoned when Europeans move abroad.

African-Americans can be similarly differentiated. They come from different ethnic and language groups in Africa and have different religious beliefs. African-Americans can also be divided into those who are descendants of slaves and those who are more recent arrivals from Africa and the Caribbean islands. Each group has norms and values that affect its demand for, participation in, and perception of public service. Asians, like other groups, are a single race in U.S. statistics. However, as Kim and Lewis note, "they vary widely in culture, language, and recency of immigration" (1994, 286). A 1990 report by the General Accounting Office identifies seventeen nationalities that make up the Asian population in the United States. In 1990, nearly two-thirds of the Asian-American community was foreign-born. In 2000 China had the largest foreign population with nearly 1.4 million, followed by India, Vietnam, and Korea ("The Foreign-Born Population . . ." 2000). As a reflection of the growing populations of minority groups, the 2000 census form included fourteen racial categories and four ethnic classifications for Hispanics/Latinos for self-identification (Rosenblum and Travis 2003). Nobles notes that the importance of census results is that they produce entitlements including political power, economic power, social power, and public goods (2003, 52).

As mentioned above, the Census Bureau sees ethnic differences among Hispanics/Latinos. Gómez (1994) points out that Hispanics are a highly heterogeneous group with major variations in terms of race, socioeconomic status, native region, and immigration status. For instance, Hispanics can be any combination of European, African, Asian, and Native American ancestry, yet be officially classified as white. In terms of religion, most are Catholic, many are Protestant, and some are Jewish. Hispanic ethnic groups also vary by nationality. They may be from one of several Caribbean islands, Mexico, Central America, Spain, or South America. Some Mexican-American families have lived in the southwest United States since before the arrival of the *Mayflower*. Ethnic diversity is real and should be appreciated by the public manager. Like race, it can expand the organization's capacity to understand and address the needs of the individuals it serves.

Gender and Public Service: The Glass Ceiling Dilemma

In the aggregate, increases in employment opportunities for women in public service seem impressive. For instance, female employees hold nearly half of all federal white-collar jobs (Naff 1994), they hold nearly 20 percent of top administrative posts in state governments (Bullard and Wright 1993), and they are nearly half of the new hires in state and local governments (Guy 1993). However, gender biases and discriminatory policies still limit the upward mobility of women. As Johnston and Packer report in *Workforce 2000*, "Despite the huge increases in the number of women in the workforce, many of the policies and institutions that cover pay, fringe benefits, time away from work, pensions, welfare, and other issues have not yet been adjusted to the new realities" (1987, 105). The public sector is no exception. Barriers have been found between women and an equitable consideration for advancement in public service at all levels of government (Bullard and Wright 1993; Guy 1993; Naff 1994). These barriers constitute what is described as a "glass ceiling" (also referred to as a "sticky floor") that relegates most women to lower management and clerical positions. As Naff points out, even though women make up nearly half of the federal civil service, they are only 18 percent of top-grade-level groups (GS/GM 13–15) and only 11 percent of the Senior Executive Service. In contrast, they hold nearly 75 percent of positions in the lowest six grades of the federal civil service.

While the glass ceiling is denying women the opportunity to hold top-

level administrative positions, other gender-based workplace practices are limiting their influence in public service. Two of the most notable practices are pay distinctions across grades (comparable worth) and disparities within grades. The pay distinction issue emerged in 1983, when U.S. District Judge Jack E. Tanner ruled that the state of Washington had illegally discriminated against thousands of women by paying them 20 percent less than men doing jobs of "comparable worth." Disparities that exist within grades result in women earning roughly 35 percent less than men (Fuller and Schoenberger 1991). The pay disparity created by these practices results in relationships of permanent inequality and impedes women's ability to influence the design and implementation of public policy (Guy 1993).

Although giving the appearance of being representative in terms of gender, most public service agencies are anything but representative in their decision-making processes: Guy says "Women occupy the lower rungs on the agency ladders and men occupy the upper rungs" (1993, 291). Obstacles to the advancement of women into management positions in public service persist, even though research suggests that women often make better managers than men (Frieman 1990; Grant 1988; Jago and Vroom 1982; White and Mischeaux 1995). Scholars have found that the nontraditional leadership styles women exhibit are well suited for rapidly changing work situations prevalent in modern economies. As they observe, the presence of these leadership styles can increase an organization's chances of surviving in an uncertain environment (Gregory 1990; Korabik 1990). Women are also believed to have management styles that are more conducive to the needs of professional workers.

Professionals who are highly skilled and highly mobile expect the organizations they work for to help them meet their personal goals. Such workers also expect to be active participants in decision-making. Findings from a survey of both men and women suggest that women may be better managers for these workers (Rosener 1990). Men, in this survey, indicate the use of a series of transactions in their management practices; that is, rewards for services rendered or punishment for inadequate performance, in their relations with subordinates. They also rely on power that comes from their organizational position and formal authority. Generally, responses given by men suggest an inclination toward exhibiting traditional management behavior, which is characterized by extreme competitiveness, striving for achievement, and an intense drive and aggression. Such behavior is often counterproductive for both the

organization and the individual. It usually includes some hostility, time urgency, impatience, and accelerated activity (Rowney and Cahoon 1990). As Friedman and Rosenman note, this behavior characterizes someone “who is aggressively involved in a chronic, incessant struggle to achieve more and more in less time, and if required to do so, against the opposing effects of other things or other persons” (1974, 37). Such behavior often leads to stress-related health problems for the individual and unhealthy tension in the organization.

In contrast to men, women managers indicate the frequent use of transformational leadership to encourage subordinates to transform their self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. As Judy Rosener (1990) observes, women work to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved. More specifically, women are more likely than men to encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people’s self-worth, and get others excited about their work. Moreover, women managers have many useful skills that can enhance management in organizations. Korabik’s research on conflict resolution (1990) illustrates how nontraditional leadership styles exhibited by women can enhance managerial effectiveness. In her study of male and female middle- to upper-level managers, masculinity was significantly related to the use of a competitive style of conflict management, whereas femininity was significantly correlated with an accommodative style. Each style can be an asset. Yet public sector organizations have failed to make effective use of the managerial skills women possess.

Taking advantage of the gender assets women managers have to offer as public managers does represent a challenge in organizations when the top leadership positions are usually held by men. However, in order for government to ensure maximum efficiency in the delivery of public goods and services, it must utilize all the resources at its disposal. As Lynwood Battle, a Procter & Gamble executive, points out, “When it gets right down to it, . . . [organizations] that are going to survive and thrive in the next century are the ones that take full advantage of their work force” (quoted in Solomon 1989, 50). Battle further observes that failure to utilize the skills and talents of women represents a waste of valuable managerial resources. The consequences of this failure can affect both the productivity and survival of an organization. Thus, government organizations should have selfish reasons for utilizing the assets that women bring with them as managers.

The successful provision of public services in the future will be intricately linked to government's ability to develop a more inclusive work culture. This inclusive work culture must be one in which all people can contribute their full potential, unhindered by stereotypes or prejudices about their differences. It must be one in which people's differences are viewed as organizational assets, new perspectives that enhance the overall performance of the organization. Moreover, an inclusive work culture must embrace people's ideas, and their input must be sought and valued (Jensen and Katz 1996). An inclusive work culture will allow diverse people to contribute to the organizational mission in meaningful ways. When an organization has developed a work culture that values contributions from a diverse workforce, it is poised to realize new efficiencies in the provision of public services.

Gerontology as a Diversity Issue: A Graying of the Civil Service

One of the challenges to public service, described in the Hudson Institute's report, is that posed by an aging workforce. The concern is that as the average worker's age climbs toward forty, the workforce may "lose its adaptability and willingness to learn." The median age of the population, which had been declining until 1970, was projected to reach thirty-six by the year 2000 (Johnston and Packer 1987). This challenge is expected to be particularly strong in the public sector, where the average worker is older than the norm. As Johnston and Packer discerned, most of this aging will be the result of huge increases in the number of middle-age individuals. By the new millennium, the number of people between ages thirty-five and forty-seven was expected to increase by 35 percent, and those between forty-eight and fifty-three were projected to increase by a staggering 67 percent. Overall population growth was expected to increase by only 15 percent during this same time (Johnston and Packer 1987). More recent data from the U.S. Census is supportive of this increasing age of the population. In 2006 nearly 12 percent of the population was sixty-five years of age and older. Another 25 percent of the population was in the forty-five to sixty-four age group (see U.S. Census Bureau News 2007; www.marketingcharts.com). These demographics suggest that *gerontological* considerations will become extremely important in the production, delivery, and mix of public goods and services. As Wolf et al. (1987) found in a study of social service agencies, public organizations