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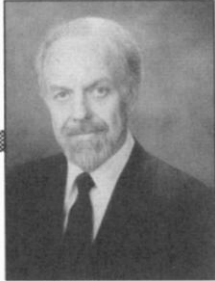
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Public Administration and Social Equity

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It was 1968. Inequality and injustice, especially based on race, was pervasive. A government built on a Constitution claiming the equal protection of the laws had failed in that promise. Public administrators, those who daily operate the government, were not without responsibility. Both in theory and practice public administration had, beginning in the 1940s, emphasized concepts of decision making, systems analysis, operations research or management science, and rationality. In running the government the administrator's job was to be efficient (getting the most service possible for available dollars) or economical (providing an agreed-upon level of services for the fewest possible dollars). It should be no surprise, therefore, that issues of inequity and injustice were not central to public servants or to public administration theorists.

To remedy what seemed a glaring inadequacy in both thought and practice, I developed a theory of social equity and put it forward as the "third pillar" for public administration, holding the same status as economy and efficiency as values or principles to which public administration should adhere. The initial reasoning went this way:

To say that a service may be well managed and that a service may be efficient and economical, still begs these questions: Well managed for whom? Efficient for whom? Economical for whom? We have generally

assumed in public administration a convenient oneness with the public. We have not focused our attention or concern to the issue of variations in social and economic conditions. It is of great convenience, both theoretically and practically, to assume that citizen A is the same as citizen B and that they both receive public services in equal measure. This assumption may be convenient, but it is obviously both illogical and empirically inaccurate.¹

Social equity began as a challenge to the adequacy of concepts of efficiency and economy as guides for public administration. In time social equity took on a broader meaning.

Social equity is a phrase that comprehends an array of value preferences, organizational design preferences, and management style preferences. Social equity emphasizes equality in government services. Social equity emphasizes responsibility for decisions and program implementation for public managers. Social equity emphasizes change in public management. Social equity emphasizes responsiveness to the needs of citizens rather than the needs of public organizations. Social

In 1968 a theory of social equity was developed and put forward as the "third pillar" for public administration, with the same status as economy and efficiency as values or principles to which public administration should adhere. Considerable progress has been made in social equity in the past 20 years. Theoretically, the works of Rawls and Rae and associates provide a language and a road map for understanding the complexity of the subject. The courts were especially supportive of principles of social equity in the later years of Chief Justice Earl Warren and during the years of Chief Justice Warren Burger. The present period, marked by the leadership of William Rehnquist, evidences a significant drawing back from the earlier commitment to equity. The decisions of state courts, based upon state constitutions and the common law, hold considerable promise for advancing social equity principles. Scholarly research demonstrates the belief of the American people in fairness, justice, and equality and their recognition of the complexity of the subject and their ambivalence toward competing claims for equality. Research on public administration finds that bureaucratic decision rules and the processes of policy implementation tend to favor principles of social equity.

equity emphasizes an approach to the study of and education for public administration that is interdisciplinary, applied, problem solving in character, and sound theoretically.²

The development of the concept of social equity was followed by a considerable literature both pro and con. Philosophically the views ranged from social equity as providing the proper normative basis for a new public administration on the one hand to social equity as an attempt by some to "steal popular sovereignty" on the other.³ Researchers, especially in the public policy fields, began to analyze variations in the distribution of public service by income, race, and neighborhood, and eventually by gender. The concept of equity was included in the first adopted Principles for the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), which later became the Code of Ethics. In 1981, the *ASPA Professional Standards and Ethics Workbook and Study Guide for Public Administrators*, in the section on professional ethics, listed as the first two Principles to be the pursuit of equality, which is to say citizen A being equal to citizen B, and equity, which is to say adjusting shares so that citizen A is made equal with citizen B.⁴

In the past 20 years the phrase social equity has taken its place as a descriptor for variables in the analytic constructs of researchers in the field, as a concept in the philosophy of public administration, and as a guide for ethical behavior for public servants. With the passage of 20 years and the attendant advantages of hindsight, some stock taking is called for, and the Golden Anniversary of the *Public Administration Review* is an appropriate occasion for this reflection.

This review of the place of social equity in public administration begins, as it should, with philosophical and theoretical developments. That is followed by a consideration of the especially important relationship between social equity and the law and what has transpired in the last generation. Following that, developments in analysis and research are reviewed.

Philosophical and Theoretical Developments

Public administration, it has been said, is the marriage of the arts and sciences of government to the arts and sciences of management.⁵ Efficiency and economy are primarily theories of management while social equity is primarily a theory of government. In the early years of modern American public administration the marriage, particularly in the conceptions of Woodrow Wilson, was balanced.⁶ Theories of business efficiency were routinely mixed with theories of democratic government, the argument being that a government can and should be efficient and fair. However, by the 1950s the marriage was dominated by management theories and issues, having begged questions of equity and fairness. Even though it was and

is generally agreed that public administration is part of the political process, there was little interest in developing specifics regarding the ends to which politics and public administration could be put.

In the early years it was also the conventional wisdom that public administration was neutral and only marginally involved in policy making. Under those conditions it is possible to ignore social equity. Now the theology holds that public administration is a part or form of politics, that it often exercises leadership in the policy process, and that neutrality is next to impossible. If that is the case, then it is not logically possible to dismiss social equity as a suggested guide for administrative action, equal to economy and efficiency.

Initial attempts to return to the marriage questions of equity and fairness were simplistic and superficial.

Willbern, in his splendid review of the early literature on social equity and the so-called new public administration, observed that critics were "not very precise in defining the goals or values toward which administration and knowledge must be arrived."⁷ He concluded that:

Those who wanted to challenge the "system" and the "establishment" on grounds of social equity have met with a good many rebuffs and even evidence of backlash. But it would probably be a great mistake to dismiss these essays as an expression of a passing mood, an articulation of the particular times in which they were written. On intellectual, analytical grounds, there is something of value and consequence here, a real addition to our faulty and inadequate understanding of human behavior in administrative situations.⁸

So the task was clear, social equity needed flesh on its bones if it was to be taken seriously as a third pillar for public administration. The process was begun with a symposium on "Social Equity and Public Administration," which appeared in the *Public Administration Review* in 1974. In an especially important way, that symposium is illustrative of theory building in public administration.

First, the subject is parsed, in this case, into considerations of social equity: (1) as the basis for a just, democratic society; (2) as influencing the behavior of organization man; (3) as the legal basis for distributing public services; (4) as the practical basis for distributing public services; (5) as operationalized in compound federalism; and, (6) as a challenge for research and analysis.⁹

Second, the subject having been taken apart, good theory building suggests putting it back together. Looking back, it is now clear that considerable progress has been made in thinking about, understanding, and applying various parts of the subject. But it has yet to be put back together.

**Equality then changes
from one thing
to many
things—equalities.**

Third is the arduous task of definition. In this case, it was appropriate to turn to the theories of distributive justice for definition. The phrase social equity and the word equality were essentially without definition in the field. As Rae and his associates have said: "Equality is the simplest and most abstract of notions, yet the practices of the world are irremediably concrete and complex. How, imaginably, could the former govern the latter?"¹⁰ Yet, social equity was advanced in the 1960s and 1970s as an essential third pillar of public administration.

When ideas such as social equity or the public interest or liberty are suggested as guides for public action, the most compelling definitions are often the most abstract. And so it was in this case. The initial attempts to define social equity as it applies to public administration were fastened to John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*.¹¹ The Rawlsian construct is an ideal type addresses the distribution of rights, duties, and advantages in a just society. Justice, to Rawls, is fairness. To achieve fairness the first principle is that each person is guaranteed equal basic liberties consistent with an extensive system of liberty for all. The second principle calls for social and economic inequalities to be managed so that they are of greatest benefit to the least advantaged (the difference principle); it seeks to make offices and positions open to all under conditions of *fair* equality of opportunity.

For much of the last two decades perspectives on Rawlsian justice have occupied the intellectual high ground of concern for social equity. While philosophical and scholarly interest in Rawlsian theory has been strong, and certainly the objectives of fairness through justice are compatible with the social equity perspective on public administration, the theory has thus far been of limited use in the busy world of government.

This analysis turns, then, to a more descriptive theory for both greater definition and more likely applicability to the theories and practices of public administration. Following Douglas Rae and associates, a rudimentary language and a road map are set forth for the notion of equality, with attendant definitions and examples.¹² I label this the Compound Theory of Social Equity. This Compound Theory serves as the basis for later considerations of legal and research perspectives on social equity in public administration.

Simple Individual Equalities

Individual equality consists of one class of equals, and one relationship of equality holds among them. The best examples would be one person-one vote and the price mechanism of the market, which offers a Big Mac or a Whopper at a specific price to whomever wishes to buy. The Golden Rule or Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative are formulas for individual equalities.

Segmented Equality

Any complex society with a division of labor tends to practice segmented equality. Farmers have a different system of taxation than do business owners, and both differ from wage earners. In segmented equality, one assumes that equality exists within the category (e.g., farmers) and that inequality exists between the segments. All forms of hierarchy use the concept of segmented equality. All five-star generals are equal to each other as are all privates first-class. Equal pay for equal work is segmented equality. Segmented equality is, in fact, systematic or structured inequality. Segmented equality is critically important for public policy and administration because virtually every public service is delivered on a segmented basis and always by segmented hierarchies.

Block Equalities

Both simple individual and segmented equalities are in fact individual equalities. Block equalities, on the other hand, call for equality *between* groups or subclasses. The railroad accommodations for Blacks and whites could be separate, so long as they were equal in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1889)^[13] *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)^[14] later concluded that separation by race meant inequality; therefore, the U.S. Supreme Court required school services to be based upon simple individual equality rather than block equality, using race to define blocks. The claims for comparable worth systems of pay for women are, interestingly, block egalitarianism mixed with equal pay for equal work, which is segmented equality.

The Domain of Equality

How does one decide what is to be distributed equally? The domain of equality marks off the goods, services, or benefits being distributed. If schools and fire protection are to be provided, why not golf courses or recreational facilities? Domains of equality can be narrowly or broadly defined, and they can have to do with *allocations* based on a public agency's resources or they can be based on *claims*-claimants' demands for equality. Domains of equality constantly shift, aggregate, and disaggregate. Certain domains are largely controlled by the market such as jobs, wages, and investments, while others are controlled primarily by government. It is often the case that the governmental domain seeks equality to correct inequalities resulting from the market or from previous governmental policies. Unemployment compensation, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, college tuition grants, and food stamps are all kinds of governmental compensatory inequality to offset other inequalities outside of the governmental domain of allocation but within a broader domain of claims.

Domains can also be intergenerational, as in the determination of whether present taxpayers or their children pay for the federal debt built up by current deficits.

Equalities of Opportunity

Equalities of opportunity are divided into *prospect* and *means* opportunity. Two people have equal opportunity for a job if each has the same probability for attaining the job under conditions of prospect equality of opportunity. Two people have equal opportunity for a job if each has the same talents or qualifications for the job under conditions of means-equal opportunity. Examples of pure prospect equality of opportunity are few, but the draft lottery for the Vietnam War is very close. In means equality of opportunity, *equal rules*, such as Intelligent Quotient (I.Q.) tests, Standard Achievement Test (SAT) scores, equal starting and finishing points for footraces, and so forth define opportunity. "The purpose and effect of these equal means is not equal prospect of success, but legitimately unequal prospects of success."¹⁵ Aristotle's notion that equals are to be treated equally would constitute means-based equality of opportunity.

In any given society not all talent can be equally developed. Following John Schaar: "Every society has a set of values, and these are arranged in a more or less tidy hierarchy. . . . The equality of opportunity formula must be revised to read: equality of opportunity for all to develop those talents which are highly valued by a given people at a given time."¹⁶ How else, for example, can one explain the status of rock musicians in popular culture?

The Value of Equality

The value of equality begins with the concept of *lot equality* in which shares are identical (similar housing, one vote, etc.) or equal. The advantage of lot equality is that only the individual can judge what pleases or displeases him or her. Lots can also be easily measured and distributed, and they imply nothing about equal well-being. The problem, of course, is that lot equality is insensitive to significant variations in need. To remedy this, Rae and associates suggest a "person equality" in which there is nonarbitrary rule-based distribution of shares based on nonneutral judgments about individuals' needs. A threatened person may require more protection (and police officials may so decide) merely to make that person equal to the nonthreatened person. The same can be said for the crippled as against the healthy child, the mentally retarded as against the bright. Person-regarding equality is often practiced in public administration to "make the rules humane."

It is clear that any universal scope for equality is both impossible and undesirable. Rather than a simple piece of rhetoric or a slogan, the Compound Theory of Social Equity is a complex of definitions and concepts. Equality then changes from one thing to many things—equalities. If public administration is to be inclined toward social equity, at least this level of explication of the subject is required. In the policy process, any justification of policy choices claiming to enhance social equity needs to be analyzed in terms of such questions as: (1) Is this equality individual, segmented, or block? (2) Is this equality direct,

or is it means-equal opportunity or prospect-equal opportunity?³ What forms of social equity can be advanced so as to improve the lot of the least advantaged, yet sustain democratic government and a viable market economy? The Compound Theory of Social Equity would serve as the language of the framework for attempts in both theory building and practice, and it would serve to answer these questions.

Social Equity and the Law

Marshall Dimock made this dicta famous: "public administration is the law in action." It should be no surprise, then, that the most significant developments in social equity have their genesis in the law. "Local, state and national legislators—and their counterparts in the executive branches—too often have ignored, abdicated or traded away their responsibilities. . . . By default, then, if for no other reason, the courts would often have the final say."¹⁷ The courts are the last resort for those claiming unequal treatment in either the protection of the law or the provision of service. Elected officials—both legislators and executives—are naturally inclined to the views and interests of the majority. Appointed officials—the public administrators—have until recent years been primarily concerned with efficiency and economy, although effectiveness was also an early concern, as noted by Dwight Waldo in *The Administrative State*.¹⁸

Employment

The most important legal influences resulting in more equitable government are in the field of employment, both public and nonpublic. The legal (not to mention administrative) questions are: who ought to be entitled to a job, what are the criteria, and how ought they to be applied?

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended and the Equal Employment Act of 1972 were designed to guarantee equal access to public and private employment. This was done by a combination of block equalities (whereby persons in different racial categories could be compared and, if found subject to different treatment, a finding of violation of law would be made) and a means-equal opportunities logic (whereby fair measurements of talent, skill, and ability would determine who gets jobs). The landmark case was *Griggs v. Duke Power*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court held that job qualifications that were not relevant to a specific job and that on their face favored whites over Blacks were a violation of the law.¹⁹ The Court clearly rejected the idea of prospect equality, but because it upheld the idea of equality by blocks or, to use the words of the law, "protected groups," a strong social equity signal was sent. Race-consciousness as an affirmative action was to be based upon equality between Blacks and whites both in the work cohort and between the work cohort and the labor market—a kind of double application of equality.

John Nalbandian, in a recent review of case law on affirmative action in employment, observed that cases sub-

sequent to *Griggs* have systematically limited "affirmative action tightly within the scope of the problem it was supposed to solve." The case law has sought to limit negative effects, such as unwanted inequality befalling nonminorities as a result of these programs.²⁰ *The University of California Regents v. Bakke* was the most celebrated example of judicial support for block equality to bring Blacks up to an enrollment level equal to whites, while at the same time protecting a nonminority claimant who would likely have qualified for admissions in the absence of a protected class.²¹

The affirmative action laws, and the Court's interpretations of them, have had a significant effect on equalizing employment opportunities, first between minorities and nonminorities and more recently by gender.²² Nalbandian predicts, however, that the values of social equity may decline in a shift toward a new balance in employment practices, giving greater emphasis to efficiency.²³

Contracting

In the 1977 Public Works Employment Act the national government established a minority-business-enterprise 10-percent setaside, requiring that 10 percent of all public works contracts be reserved for firms owned by minorities. The 10-percent setaside was tested and affirmed in *Fullilove v. Klutznik* (1980). U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, for the majority, said:

It is indisputable that Congress' articulated purpose for enacting the set-aside provision was to remedy the present effects of past racial discrimination....

Today, by upholding this race-conscious remedy, the Court accords Congress the authority to undertake the task of moving our society toward a state of meaningful equality of opportunity, not an abstract version of equality in which the effects of past discrimination would be forever frozen into our social fabric.²⁴

For the minority, Potter Stewart argued:

On its face, the minority business enterprise provision at issue in this case denies the equal protection of the law....The fourteenth Amendment was adopted to ensure...that the law would honor no preference based on lineage.²⁵

Clearly, in this case, Marshall and Stewart use different domains and diverge on the issue of what is to be equal. To Marshall, block equality is essential, while to Stewart individual equality is required. Finally, as to employment (in this case contracting) opportunities, Marshall prefers it to be prospect equality while Stewart wants it to be means equality.

In a 1989 affirmation of the 10-percent set-aside provisions of the 1977 Federal Public Works Employment Act, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a 30-percent setaside for minority construction firms on contracts with the city

of Richmond, Virginia. This was immediately regarded as a significant setback for the affirmative action programs of 33 states and over 200 municipalities. The *Richmond* decision reasoned that the 14th Amendment was violated by the set-aside because it denied whites equal protection of the law.²⁶ No doubt the set-aside provision has enhanced social equity. It is clear, however, that the law has used inequality to achieve equality.

Government Service

In 1968 Andrew Hawkins, a Black handyman living in a neighborhood called the Promised Land, an all-Black section of Shaw, Mississippi, gathered significant data to show that municipal services such as paved streets, sewers, and gutters were unequally distributed. Because these services were available in the white section of Shaw, Hawkins charged that he and his class were deprived of the 14th Amendment guarantee of equal protection of the law. The U.S. District Court disagreed, saying that such a distribution had to do with issues of "municipal administration" that were "resolved at the ballot box."²⁷ On appeal, the decision of the District Court was overturned by the U.S. Court of Appeals, in part based on this amicus curiae brief from the Harvard-MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Joint Center for Urban Studies:

...invidious discrimination in the qualitative and quantitative rendition of basic governmental services violates an unyielding principle...that a trial court may not permit a defendant local government to rebut substantial statistical evidence of discrimination on the basis of race by entering a general disclaimer of illicit motive or by a loose and undocumented plea of administrative convenience. No such defense can be accepted as an adequate rebuttal of a prima facie case established by uncontroverted statistical evidence of an overwhelming disparity in the level and kind of public services rendered to citizens who differ neither in terms of desire nor need, but only in the color of their skin.²⁸

While the appellate court ruled in Hawkins' favor, it construed the issue of equal protection so narrowly as to all but preclude significant court intervention in service allocation decisions where *intent* to discriminate cannot be conclusively demonstrated.

Desegregation of public schools following *Brown v. Board of Education* has resulted in varied and creative ways to define and achieve equality. Busing is a means of achieving at least the appearance of block equality. Busing has, however, been primarily from the inner city out. Magnet schools are an attempt to equalize the racial mix via busing in the other direction. Building schools at the margins of primarily white and primarily Black (or Hispanic) neighborhoods preserves the concept of the neighborhood school while achieving integration. The major problem has been jurisdictional or to use the language of equality, domain. The familiar inner city, primarily non-

white school district surrounded by suburban, primarily white school districts significantly limits the possible equalizing effects of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This is especially the case when wealth and tax base follow white movement to the suburbs. State courts have in many places interpreted the equality clauses of state constitutions to bring about greater equality. Beginning with *Serrano v. Priest* in California, state equalization formulas for school funding have in many states required the augmentation of funding in poor districts.²⁹ Ordinarily this is done on a dollar-per-student basis. This procedure broadens the domain of the issue to the state, and it is also a simple formula for individual equality. It does, of course, bring about this equality by race-based inequality.

From the point of view of competing concepts of equality, the Kansas City Missouri School District desegregation cases may be the most interesting. After *Brown v. Board of Education* determined that separate but equal schooling was in fact unequal and unconstitutional, two questions remained. Was it sufficient for school districts and state departments of education to stop segregating? Or, was it necessary to repair the damage done by a century of racially separate school systems? In *United States v. Jefferson City Board of Education* the Court of Appeals declared that school officials: "have an affirmative duty under the Fourteenth Amendment to bring about an integrated unitary school system in which there are no Negro schools and no white schools—just schools....In fulfilling this duty it is not enough for school authorities to offer Negro children the opportunity to attend formerly all-white schools. The necessity of overcoming the effects of the dual school system in this circuit requires integration of faculties, facilities and activities as well as students."³⁰

Later in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* the U.S. Supreme Court stated that "the objective today remains to eliminate from the public schools all vestiges of state imposed segregation."³¹

Two conditions pertain in Kansas City, Missouri. First is a dual housing market resulting from an interaction between private and governmental parties in the real estate industry, resulting in racially segregated residential areas. This has resulted in racially segregated schools roughly mirroring the segregated neighborhoods. Originally segregated all-Black schools are now schools of mostly Black students and teachers. The 11 suburban school districts surrounding Kansas City have almost all white students and teachers.

In *Jenkins v. Missouri* in 1984 the trial court under Judge Clark found the Kansas City Missouri School District and the State of Missouri liable for the unconstitutional segregation of the public schools.³² The problem, of course, was the remedy. It is one thing to identify inequality; it is another to achieve equality. The School District

tried and failed to secure passage of tax levies and bond issues to comply with Judge Clark's order.

Following the *Liddell* and *Griffin* cases, Judge Clark ordered both tax increases and bond issuances to cover the remedies sought in 1986.^[33] The court also held that 75 percent of the cost of the plan was allocated to the State of Missouri for funding. The appellate court sustained all of Judge Clark's remedies with the exception of a 1.5-percent surcharge on incomes earned in Kansas City by nonresidents and instructed the state and the district to proceed with the remedies.³⁴

If the majority of the citizens had turned down bond issues and had refused higher taxation to enable the school district to meet its desegregation objectives, how could the judge justify imposing those taxes as a matter of law? He said,

Urban and state bureaucracies, following patterned decision rules or service delivery rules, have distributed public services in such a way as to ameliorate the effects of poverty and race.

A majority has no right to deny others the constitutional guarantees to which they are entitled. This court, having found that vestiges of unconstitutional discrimination still exist in the KCMSD is not so callous as to accept the proposition that it is helpless to enforce a remedy to correct the past violations.... The court must weigh the constitutional rights of the taxpayers against the constitutional rights of the plaintiff students in this case. The court is of the opinion that the balance is clearly in favor of the students who are helpless without the aid of this court.³⁵

From an equality point of view, there are several examples of competing views of fairness. *First*, with the individual definition of equality, each vote is equal to each other vote, and the majority wins in a representative democracy. The court here clearly said that a majority cannot vote away the constitutional rights of a minority to equal schooling. *Second* is the dimension of time or intergenerational equality. The century of inequality in schools for Black children was to be remedied by a period of inequality toward nonminorities to correct for the past. *Third* is the question of domain. To what extent should the issue be confined to one school district? Because schools are constitutionally established in the State of Missouri, Judge Clark concluded that the funding solutions for desegregation were ultimately the responsibility of the state. Indeed, Arthur A. Bensen II, an attorney for the plaintiff, argued persuasively that it was fully within the authority of Judge Clark not only to impose either state or areawide financing to solve school desegregation but also to reorganize the school districts to eliminate the vestiges of prior discrimination.³⁶ The judge chose not to go that far.

Many more examples of equality can be traced to the courts, including equalizing funding for male and female student athletes in schools and colleges.

An especially interesting and relevant interpretation of the relationship between social equity and law as they have to do with public administration is provided by Charles M. Harr and Daniel W. Fessler. They suggest that the basis for equality in the law is less likely to be found in the United States Constitution and federal statutes and more likely to be found in state constitutions and statutes. "Recognizing the growing practical difficulties in relying on the equal protection clause, we assert the existence—the convincing and determinative presence—of a common law doctrine, *the duty to serve*, as an avenue of appeal that predates the federal Constitution."³⁷ More than 700 years before the Constitution, judge-made law in the England of Henry III held "that, at a fundamental level of social organization, all persons similarly situated in terms of need have an enforceable claim of equal, adequate and nondiscriminatory access to essential services; in addition this doctrine makes such legal access largely a governmental responsibility."³⁸ All monopolies—states, districts, utilities—are in the common law "clothed with a public interest" and obligated to the "doctrine of equal service."³⁹ If Harr and Fessler are right and if the state-based school funding equalization cases are illustrative, social equity will emerge at the grass roots rather than be imposed by the federal courts.

Social Equity and Analysis

Consequent with the development of theories of distributive justice and the law of equality has been the emergence of policy analysis. Over the past 25 years many of America's major universities have established schools of public policy that specialize in the interdisciplinary study of policy issues. In addition, many existing schools and departments of public administration have started to emphasize the policy analysis perspective. Virtually every policy field—health care, transportation, law enforcement, fire protection, housing, education, natural resources and the environment, national defense, is now the subject of regular review and analysis. Generalized scholarly journals as well as journals specializing in some policy fields are now available, and virtually every issue has articles dealing with some form of equity.⁴⁰

Both the ideological and methodological perspectives in policy analysis have been dominated by economics. Although governments are not markets, market-model applications are widely used in policy analysis. The logic is simple. If, in economic theory, both individuals and firms maximize their utilities, their citizens and government bureaus do the same. This perspective has been especially compatible with popular contemporary governmental ideas such as deregulation, privatization, school vouchers, public-private partnerships, cut-back management, and the minimalist or so-called "night watchman" view of American government. While the economic model has been a powerful influence on policy analysis, it has been tempered, especially in recent years, by use of measures of both general and individual well-being that are more compatible with governmental goals. Long-standing and powerful governmental concepts, such as

justice, fairness, individual rights, and equality, are now being measured and used in analysis. Broad collective measures, the so-called social indicators such as unemployment and homelessness, are now more often used in policy analysis. Measurements of variations in the distribution of public services by age, race, gender, income, and the like are relatively routine. Social equity concepts are used not only as theory or as legal standards but as measures or variables in research. The problem, of course, in social equity analysis, as in the use of social equity in law or theory, is the compound character of equality.

At the level of the individual, data and findings are now available that map, in at least a rudimentary way, personal views and preferences regarding equality. Jennifer Hochschild has determined that people have contradictory views of equality.⁴¹ These contradictory views are not determined so much by income level or political ideology as by more subtle distinctions. People have varied opinions about equality depending on what domain of life is being considered and how equality is being defined. Using three different domains, *social* (including home, family, school, and community), *economic* (including jobs, wages, taxes, and wealth), and *political* (including voting, representation, and law), and using two conceptions of equality first, equal shares and equal procedures, and second, differentiation (a combination of segmented equality and means-based equality of opportunity) Hochschild's findings are as follows.

In the social domain people hold strongly to norms of equal shares and equal procedures. Equal treatment of children, one spouse, equal sacrifice for the family, and equal treatment in the neighborhood mark the general views of the poor, the middle class, and the rich. In schools, equal or fair procedures are important to just determination of grades. In schools, families tend to move somewhat away from strict individual equality toward a differentiation based upon investment, such as the handicapped child's needing more, an example of Rawlsian justice. And there is evidence of a differentiation of investment for the more gifted or those with greater potential. People are not, however, equally happy with the egalitarian character of social life. If they feel they have some control over their fate and are able to act on the principles of equality, they are more happy. If not, they are bitter and unhappy.

These same people endorse differentiation or means-based equality in the economic domain. People, in other words, want an equal chance to become unequal. Productivity should be rewarded, the poor feeling this would produce more equal incomes, the rich believing it would result in less equal incomes. Private property is deeply supported. Accumulated wealth is not generally opposed by poor or rich, and both strongly oppose inheritance taxes. And both partially abandon their different views when it comes to poverty, feeling that "something should be done."

In the political domain these people are egalitarian again. Political and civil rights should be distributed

equally to all. "They want tax and social welfare policies mainly to take from the rich and give to the poor and middle classes. Their vision of utopia always includes more equality...."⁴² There is deep resentment over perceived unfairness resulting from loopholes in the graduated income tax because it treats people unequally. Many people endorse tuition subsidies for the poor, housing subsidies, and even a national health insurance.

Yet, with all of this, Hochschild found ambivalence. People recognize that their views are sometimes inconsistent or that they are confused. And there is some helplessness and anger over whom to blame for inequality or how to make things better.

As the different domains of people's lives best explain how they feel about equality, they also generally conform to the compound conception of social equity set out in Section II. Both in the theoretical model and in people's outlooks, equality splits into equalities depending on domains, dimensions of time, jurisdictions, abilities, effort, and luck.

Field research on the distribution of local government service is filled with implications for social equity and public administration. Much of this research tests the "underclass hypothesis." If one accepts that hypothesis, it follows that the distribution of libraries, parks, fire protection, water, sewers, police protection, and education services follows power, wealth, and racial variations. The findings of research on municipal services generally indicate that the underclass hypothesis does not hold.⁴³ Fixed services such as parks and libraries exhibit "unpatterned inequalities" that are not correlated with power, wealth, or race. These inequalities are more a function of the age of the neighborhood and the condition of housing. Mobile services such as police and fire protection tend to be distributed relatively equally, and such variation as can be determined is not associated with race or wealth. On the burden side, evidence indicates that property tax assessments are unequal in the direction of lower proportionate assessments for minorities and the poor and higher proportionate assessments for the rich and the white.⁴⁴

Both interdistrict and intradistrict school funding variations have tended, on the other hand, to confirm the underclass hypothesis. In the past 20 years, primarily as a result of court cases, more than half of the states have undertaken school-finance reforms designed to equalize funding between schools within districts or between districts. When compared to nonschool-finance reform states, the reform states now evidence greater equity in per-student funding.⁴⁵

Why has the underclass hypothesis not been demonstrated in field research, except in the case of schools? Robert Lineberry and others argue persuasively that urban and state bureaucracies, following patterned decision rules or service delivery rules, have distributed public services in such a way as to ameliorate the effects of poverty and race. The effects of municipal reform, including city managers, merit-based bureaucracies, at-large elections, non-partisan elections, and the like, have strengthened the pub-

lic services at the local level. The public services are routinized, patterned, incremental, and predictable, following understood or accepted decision rules or service delivery rules. Police and fire rules require decentralization and wide discretion in deployment of staff and equipment. Social services tend to respond to stated demands. Each service has some basis for its service delivery rules.⁴⁶

What is most significant here is that it is bureaucracy, professional public administration, particularly in larger cities, that distributes public services either generally equally or in the direction of those especially in need. The point is that public administration understands and practices social equity. Social equity is understood or given, in the same way as efficiency or economy, in general public administration practice.

What explains school funding inequities? School bureaucracies have virtually no control over interdistrict funding levels. What explains Shaw, Mississippi, and other glaring examples of race-based service inequity? Often it is the lack of a genuinely professional public service.

Conclusions

This article first reviewed the suggestion made in 1968 that social equity should be the third pillar for the theory and practice of public administration. Theoretical, legal, and analytical developments of the last 20 years were then assessed.

While the more abstract theories of distributive justice were found to be intellectually challenging, the theories that hold the most promise for both empirical verification and practical application to social equity and public administration are those that dissect the subject and illuminate the complexity of equality as an idea and a guide. That theory, coupled with the methodological tools of policy analysts, facilitates examination of the distribution of burdens and benefits so as to make informed decisions that are fair. Legally, equality issues probably reached their zenith in the latter stages of the Warren Court. Both the Burger and Rehnquist Courts have narrowed the emphasis on affirmative action, equity in service distribution, and the like.

For social equity to be a standard for policy judgment and public action, analysis must move from equality to equalities and equity to equities. A compound theory of social equity which details alternative and sometimes competing forms of equality will serve to better inform the practice of public administration. It will always be the task of public servants to balance the needs for efficiency, economy, and social equity—but there can be no balance if public servants understand only the complexities of economy and efficiency but cannot plumb the details of fairness and equality.

A nascent theory is presented here. A fully developed compound theory of social equity and public administration is the theoretical and research objective. Such a theory needs to be parsed by policy field and informed by the effects of federalism. It must define, if not predict, the

effects of alternative policies, organizational structures, and management styles on the equity of public programs.

It is a great irony of these times that all of this has occurred during a period referred to as the "age of the new individualism" or the "age of narcissism."⁴⁷ The dominant political ethos of the last 12 years has been pro-business and anti-government, anti-tax, anti-welfare, and particularly anti-bureaucracy. This ideological consensus seems to indicate that the majority share this ethos. In addition, this has been a lengthy period of sustained economic growth. Yet, under the surface of majoritarian consensus, one sees a significant adjustment of the workforce from primary production to information and service at net lower wages, a sharp increase in two-worker families, a profound discontinuity in income and ability to acquire housing, transportation, and food, an increase in homelessness, and an increase in poverty.⁴⁸ Thus, while social equity has undergone development as a theory—and while public administrators have, following a social equity ethic, ameliorated the effects of inequality—still inequality has increased as a fact.⁴⁹

Most important in these conclusions is the research which indicates that public administration tends to practice social equity. This is no surprise to those who are in public management at the local level. Public administrators solve problems, ameliorate inequalities, exercise judgment in service allocation matters, and use discretion in the application of generalized policy. Fairness and equity have always been common-sense guides for action. Some are concerned that this seems to put bureaucracy in a political role.⁵⁰ No doubt exists that public administration is a form of politics. The issue is, what theories and beliefs guide public administrators' actions? As it has evolved in the last 20 years, social equity has served to order the understanding of public administration and to inform the judgment necessary to be both effective and fair.

* * *

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