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In the current epoch, due to the worldwide movement of privatization, public administration as a field of study has come under considerable intellectual challenge. The genre of intellectual crisis created by this historical phenomenon is different from and more disparaging than the previous modes of crisis, such as the paradigm crisis and identity crisis, in the field. The newly emerging intellectual crisis in public administration takes three main forms: the credibility crisis, the normative crisis, and the confidence crisis. In this article, the nature and causes of this current crisis are explicated and alternative intellectual strategies to overcome such crisis are explored.

THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE CURRENT EPOCH OF PRIVATIZATION

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The academic discourse on different forms of intellectual crisis has been a common practice in social science. The patterns of such intellectual impasse have been variously portrayed as philosophical crisis, epistemological crisis, paradigmatic crisis, theoretical crisis, and identity crisis (see Bernstein, 1978, 1983; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Gellner, 1985; Hines, 1982; Noble, 1982). More particularly, in public administration, a considerable amount of literature has been produced regarding its various modes of intellectual crisis (discussed below). The formation, explication, and resolution of this crisis, however, have taken place mostly within the academic realm. In recent years, the intensity of these earlier debates has subsided, either because of their obsolescence in the current national and international contexts, or because these previous modes of crisis have already been resolved to a great extent.

However, during the last two decades, more severe forms of intellectual crisis have emerged in public administration due to the worldwide propagation and endorsement of privatization. Related to the global privatization movement, the recent glorification of the private market and the
demonization of public bureaucracy have created a considerable challenge to the intellectual credibility, norms, and integrity of public administration as a field of study. Unfortunately, however, the academic concerns for and critical discourse on this newly emerging intellectual crisis have been quite insignificant. In this regard, the main purpose of this study is to review the past debates on intellectual crisis, analyze the nature and forms of the current crisis, and illustrate how to overcome this new crisis through the critique of privatization thinking and some conceptual reconstruction in the field itself.

THE CRISIS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: OLD AND NEW

In the academic sphere of public administration, a considerable amount of debate took place in the past on its various forms of intellectual crisis. Some scholars have discovered that public administration suffers from an identity crisis because of its unresolved problem of the politics-administration dichotomy, its borrowing of theories and approaches from many disciplines, and its indiscriminate incorporation of "generic" organization and management literature without considering the issue of the public-private distinction (Denhardt, 1984; Harmon & Mayer, 1986).

Others have extended this analysis of crisis further to characterize it as a paradigm crisis because it has the symptoms of a Kuhnian pattern of crisis, such as the proliferation of theoretical diversity, intellectual discontent, and debatable epistemological concerns (Ostrom, 1974). Similarly, public administration, including its various subfields, has been accused of having a less coherent and unifying analytical framework, of being theoretically culture bounded, and of overemphasizing practical public service at the expense of academic inquiry (see Caiden, 1984; McCurdy, 1986; Srivastava, 1990; Ventris; 1987; Werlin, 1988). In terms of methodological crisis, public administration and its subfields have been attacked for their dearth of a rigorously empirical and scientific research methodology (Perry & Kraemer, 1986; Srivastava, 1990; Stallings & Ferris, 1988; Wart & Cayer, 1990).

In regard to the legitimacy or validity crisis, different authors have examined the field from diverse perspectives. For instance, Golembiewski (1990) has delineated four historical phases in American public administration in response to the challenges to its legitimacy; Denhardt (1984, p. 150) points out a "crisis of legitimacy" in the field, which refers to its failure to address the needs of its actors (theorists, practitioners, and citizens); and Ventris (1991) has concluded that public administration will remain
intellectually inferior to other disciplines and fields if its scholars are not engaged in validating knowledge to create its academic legitimacy.

Many of the above intellectual controversies that have perplexed public administration since the beginning of its academic consolidation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century have either been mitigated, or they still continue in different forms. For instance, the controversy over the politics-administration dichotomy has reached a stage of discourse at which it is questioned whether this dichotomy is desirable and whether Woodrow Wilson was really serious about the dichotomy. About the interdisciplinary nature of public administration, some scholars (e.g., Kearney & Sinha, 1988), instead of expressing uneasiness, have found strength in it. Regarding the methodological shortcomings, instead of too much concern for the lack of empirical method, many scholars (e.g., Catron & Harmon, 1981; Daneke, 1990; Denhardt, 1984; Long, 1990; White, 1986), in fact, have problems with the domination of positivist empirical method itself and emphasize the need for interpretive and critical modes of research in the field.

However, because of the academic nature of these paradigmatic, theoretical, and methodological crises in public administration, they could be resolved through dialogue and argumentation within the academic sphere itself. These forms of intellectual crisis did not emanate directly from the practical crises in day-to-day public service. In fact, these debates took place in the 1960s and 1970s, a period when the important role of public service was widely recognized, when public bureaucracy was expanding in all directions, and when public administration as a field of study was flourishing everywhere. Thus the crisis in public administration was a crisis of paradigmatic consensus, of disciplinary identity, of methodological parochialism, while its existential foundation in society—the domain of public service—remained considerably strong.

But the nature, intensity, and severity of intellectual crisis have changed today due to the worldwide movement of privatization. This event has not only shaped the nature, scope, and role of the practical domain of public service in many countries (Arblaster, 1991; Fitzgerald, 1988), it has also affected the academic credibility, norms, and confidence in public administration. As Bhattacharya (1990) mentions, the advocacy of privatization for the expansive private market and limited public sector "bodes ill for public administration in general and development administration in particular" (p. 15).

The privatization movement has affected almost every society. It became "one of the most important facts of the 1980s, spreading outward
from Britain to affect more than 100 countries throughout the world” (Pirie, 1988, p. 3). It should be mentioned, however, that it is not only this all-pervasive expansion of privatization policy but also its normative and ideological force that have serious implications for public administration. In fact, it is this ideological dimension that matters more for the current intellectual crisis in the field. The ideological nature of privatization and its all-encompassing influence can be found in its market-centered values, its unilateral endorsement by the neoconservative business elites and political leaders, such as Thatcher and Reagan, and its penetration into government policies in almost every country of the world (see Dunsire, 1991; Esman, 1990; Moussios & Legge, 1990). Furthermore, in this age of privatization, the Cold War has ended and the major socialist states in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have collapsed (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Although it is difficult to establish any causal relationship between such historic events and privatization, it remains a fact that all these postsocialist states have embraced privatization as a core component of their promarket reforms. One may detect the ideological nature of privatization from this simultaneous rejection of socialism and endorsement of privatization by these states in spite of their worsening socioeconomic conditions in recent years.

The point here is that privatization as an “objective” policy issue is not problematic; it is rather its reification into a global ideology, which, by portraying private enterprise as the panacea for all socioeconomic problems allegedly created by the public sector, has activated public opinion against the public service and influenced state policies in many countries. More specifically, privatization ideology has disparaged the legitimacy, ethics, and morale of the public service and thereby created serious intellectual crisis in public administration as a field of study.

Unlike the above forms of intellectual crisis of the past that were conceived, debated, and resolved within the academic sphere, the root of the current crisis is in the practical sphere of public service, public opinion, and public attitude that have been affected by the rhetoric of privatization. The current crisis in public administration takes three main forms: first, the credibility crisis created by the diminishing demand for and unfavorable public attitude toward the field; second, the normative crisis, characterized by the gradual displacement of the basic public norms of public administration by the market norms of private management; and third, the confidence crisis, referring to the loss of professional confidence and commitment among public administration scholars. The following section is dedicated to examine these three forms of crisis.
INTELLECTUAL CRISSES IN THE CURRENT EPOCH

THE CREDIBILITY CRISIS

The privatization movement, by propagating the maladies of the public sector and the excellence of private enterprise, has led to the decline of public confidence in public service and created significant challenge to its existence and legitimacy in almost every country (see Dwivedi, 1983). This attack on the public service has generated both political pressure and economic interest to reduce its scope and role and reorient its norms and objectives. It is this weakening legitimacy and diminishing scope of the public service that has considerable implications for the credibility of public administration as an academic field because, after all, it is the public service that is its main client and which constitutes its practical foundation.\(^\text{11}\)

The demand for public administration education depends on the number of its graduates required, in most cases, for the public sector. However, due to privatization, the number of public employees has declined or stagnated and the possibility of further expansion in the public sector has eroded because of the budget and program cuts, civil service reforms, and the reduction-in-force policy (Farazmand, 1989). In the United Kingdom, for example, by 1988, the Thatcher government reduced the number of civil servants from 732,000 to 580,000, and the target was to reduce it to only 200,000 during the 1990s (see Dunsire, 1991). In the United States, in the name of efficiency, the Clinton administration has planned to reduce the government workforce by 252,000 positions (Gore, 1993). For this privatization-related reduction in public sector employment, the need for public administration graduates has decreased, and thus the demand for education in public administration has diminished. For this diminishing educational demand, the very credibility of public administration as a socially necessary field of study is under challenge.

Second, the educational demand for and the credibility of the field are in crisis also because of continuous attacks on the public service not only by the business community, corporate elite, and the media but also by political leaders themselves. In the United States, a pejorative image of the public service that began to evolve during the Nixon and Carter administrations reached its extreme stage during the privatization era of Reagan. Due to the image of public service as power seeking, self-interested, and meritless, the majority of young students consider public service as “unchallenging, undesirable, and uninteresting” (see Ingraham & Rosenbloom, 1990, p. 215). Thus, by the late 1980s, “only 5 percent of
Americans surveyed said they would choose government service as their preferred career. Only 13 percent of top federal employees said they would recommend a career in public service" (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 1). In 1985, only 4% of the 1,500 Harvard graduates wanted to enter federal service, and, in 1989, 75% of presidential management interns surveyed declined to make a career in public service (Bellavita, 1991). Such antipathy toward public service created by the ruling political elite not only diminishes the demand for education in public administration but it also reduces the public trust in its relevance to society.12

In summary, on one hand, the privatization movement has led to the reduction in the scope of public service, the decrease in the rate of public sector recruitment, and thus the decline in the demand for education in public administration. On the other hand, it has created a negative image of the public service, discouraged students to study public administration, and, similarly, reduced the demand for the field. All these issues constitute an atmosphere in which the acceptability of public administration as a useful and credible field of study becomes weakened. In other words, the privatization rhetoric has created a form of credibility crisis in public administration.

In regard to these challenges to the academic credibility of the field posed by privatization rhetoric, Argyriades (1990) observes that such challenges have created a climate of public opinion in which "the business schools can barely cope with demand, while public administration, as a field of graduate study, is generally considered as only a second best" (p. 576). According to the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, graduate enrollments in public administration programs declined sharply during the period 1979-1983 (see Conant, 1992). On the other hand, the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), which is one of the oldest and most well-known professional organizations, has also been affected: In the antipublic service climate of the 1980s, the society had to tighten up its budget, struggle with the deficit, and face extreme financial difficulties and membership problems (see Pugh, 1990).

**THE NORMATIVE CRISIS**

The above credibility crisis in public administration, which poses a challenge to its academic, financial, and institutional existence, has also brought about another form of intellectual crisis—normative crisis—in the field. In addition to its traditional normative problems created by its
positivist epistemology and narrow specialization (Cox, 1990; Stewart, 1991), a more serious form of normative crisis has recently emerged in the climate of privatization. Today, the major normative crisis, according to Hart and Wasden (1990), is caused by the imitation of the language and criteria of business administration in public administration to such an "unfortunate extent" that "the training of MPAs [masters of public administration] has become nearly identical to the training of MBAs [masters of business administration]" (p. 770). More specifically, such crisis has been created by the gradual displacement of the norms of public administration by those of the private market and business management.

What are the desired norms of public administration? From the literature survey on administrative ethics, Hejka-Ekins (1988) identifies four types of ethical standards, including social equity, public interests, citizenship, and regime or constitutional values. According to ASPA, the basic professional and ethical standards in the public service should include legality, responsibility, accountability, commitment, responsiveness, equality, and public disclosure (see Mertins & Hennigan, 1982). These ethical standards that guide the activities of the public service in democratic societies13 are supposed to provide academic norms for public administration as a field of study.

However, all these have changed significantly in the context of privatization. With a fundamental shift in public service ethics, academic discourse in public administration has also undergone fundamental changes. In regard to the practical domain of public service, market norms have been introduced in the British civil service under the rubric of the "New Public Management," which encourages "businessman's outlook," "business methods," "the value-for-money spirit," the criteria of economy and efficiency, the techniques of cost-benefit analysis, and so on (see Dunseire, 1991, p. 200). Similarly, in the Report of the National Performance Review, the U.S. vice president, Al Gore (1993), has made recommendations to create the so-called "entrepreneurial government" by emphasizing preference to the "customers," asking public agencies to compete for their "customers' business," converting government monopolies into "businesslike enterprises," and shifting many functions from public bureaucracies to the private market (p. 44). It is mentioned that government must be forced to "put the customer first by injecting the dynamics of the marketplace" and to "transplant some aspects of the business world into the public arena" (p. 43).

The point here is that the incorporation of these probusiness or market-oriented values in the public service has led to the corresponding norma-
tive changes in the academic sphere of public administration, which is
evident in some of the recent works in the field. For instance, Barzelay
and Armanjani (1992) endorse the replacement of the orthodox "bureaucratic paradigm" by the so-called "customer-driven" (postbureaucratic) paradigm, which suggests government deregulation, uses such terms as customers and incentives, and thus represents a market framework. Surprisingly, the main components of this promarket framework of Barzelay
and Armanjani seem to be replicated throughout the report of Vice
President Gore (1993) in terms of arguments, principles, and concepts.

However, the most common evidence of such a normative shift in
public administration toward market or business norms is the prolifera-
tion of policy sciences, policy studies, policy analysis, and urban analysis in
the field (Elhussein, 1989). Although more textbooks on policy analysis
and policy sciences have been produced and used in public administra-
tion, some traditional but essential subfields, such as comparative and
development administration, are in decline (Wart & Cayer, 1990). Many
well-known American and British universities (such as Harvard, Prince-
ston, Syracuse, Berkeley, Michigan, Stanford, Chicago, Manchester, and
Birmingham) have adopted policy analysis in their undergraduate and
graduate programs, particularly in the schools of public affairs (Elhussein,
masters programs, Cleary (1990) discovered that in the 1980s, public
administration programs had significantly more policy analysis compo-
nents. Even in Third World countries, especially in African universities,
public administration courses are increasingly being oriented toward
policy analysis (Elhussein, 1989).

This increasing dominance of policy studies and policy analysis in
public administration has serious normative implications for the field. It
is not only that these policy studies and analyses evolved within an
atmosphere of utilitarian market culture (Quaryoty, 1983), they are also
theoretically based on the framework of public choice theory, which holds
the assumptions of neoclassical economics to the effect that the choices
of rational individuals are guided by utility norms, and that efficiency
should be the main criterion for evaluating social, political, and economic
policies (see Jennings, 1991; Katzenelson, 1986; White, 1989). The theory
prescribes the application of such individualistic assumptions and effi-
ciency measures not only to the private sector but also to public sector
activities (Harmon & Mayer, 1986; Kettl, 1990; White, 1989). It also holds
the questionable assumption that all public officials are guided by their
utilitarian, selfish economic interests (Frederickson, 1991). Interestingly,
the normative assumptions of privatization are also rooted in this public choice perspective because "the theoretical base for privatization is found in the public choice literature" (Jennings, p. 116).

This is to say that policy studies, policy analysis, and similar subfields, through their theoretical framework of public choice theory (which is also framework for privatization), tend to infuse market norms, such as individual self-interest, utility, productivity, and efficiency into public administration and gradually replace its public norms, such as accountability, representativeness, equality, and responsiveness. One may reach the conclusion that this normative shift has been introduced to prevent the decline in student enrollment in the field, to make its programs more marketable (Ventriss, 1987) and to maintain its intellectual credibility in an atmosphere dominated by privatization doctrine and market principles. In other words, the privatization movement, by creating a challenge to the credibility of public administration, has generated pressure on the field to adopt market norms and has reshaped "the way we think about and define public service and public administration" (Jennings, 1991, p. 113). However, in this process of alleviating the credibility crisis by surrendering its basic norms, public administration has been subjected to the aforementioned normative crisis, which has serious practical implications.15

In short, in the current heyday of privatization, the basic guiding norms of public administration, such as public accountability, representativeness, equality, and welfare have gradually been replaced by the norms of the private market, such as utility, efficiency, productivity, and profitability, particularly in its subfields of policy studies and policy analysis. Thus some scholars, such as Hart and Wasden (1990) and Ventriss (1987), suggest that the basic values of public administration must be maintained and that it should not become another form of business administration. Similarly, for Frederickson and Hart (1985), the rise of market norms of business management in public administration has created a challenge to the unique "public" character of the public service.

THE CONFIDENCE CRISIS

In the above two sections, it has been discussed so far that the contemporary ethos of privatization has led to the credibility crisis in public administration in terms of its declining recognition and demand and its financial and institutional uncertainty. In response to this credibility crisis, public administration has incorporated utilitarian market norms of productivity and efficiency, which, instead of increasing its credibility, have
contributed to its normative problems. In this section, it is argued that the credibility crisis and normative crisis have created a third form of intellectual crisis—the confidence crisis—among public administration scholars in terms of their weakening intellectual confidence or morale.

In general, the whole promarket atmosphere in both macro social and micro academic realms, created by the privatization movement, is discouraging for public administration scholars. According to Bozeman (1988), many of them now suffer from what he calls "market fatigue" (p. 672). The current ideological and normative force of privatization has not only diminished the legitimacy of the public service and the motivation of public employees (Farazmand, 1989), but it has also weakened the credibility of public administration and the confidence of its scholars. Increasingly, public administration scholars have become worried (Ventris, 1989), perhaps because of the growing uncertainty about their professional future caused by the declining credibility of the field.

On the other hand, in an academic atmosphere of increasing normative crisis in public administration (discussed above), students, teachers, and researchers naturally suffer from a lack of identity and integrity. Without an established set of academic norms, it is difficult to maintain proper direction and commitment in the profession. However, a sense of intellectual identity is hardly sustainable when the underlying normative assumptions of the field are under challenge. This weakening sense of identity caused by the current normative dilemma often leads to a lower level of confidence in the field itself.

One of the main indicators of this declining confidence among public administration scholars is their recent tendency to replace the public norms of public administration by the market norms espoused by the advocates of privatization. Perhaps it is due to this declining confidence in the unique nature and role of public administration that some scholars have come to believe that its distinction from business management is disappearing (Murray, 1975; Musolf & Seidman, 1980). Moreover, it has been considered that what is appropriate for the private sector should also be applicable to the public sector (Cummings, 1983). Thus, in the 1980s, the language of efficiency and economy of business administration has come to dominate the discourse in public administration (see Ventris, 1989).

From the above discussion, one may get an impression that among the three modes of intellectual crisis in public administration, there is unilateral causal relationship—the credibility crisis leading to the normative crisis and the normative crisis contributing to the confidence crisis. Yet the nature of mutual determination among these three forms of crisis is
characterized by dialectical confluence rather than pure unidirectional causality. In other words, these three modes of crisis can be mutually reinforcing in a reverse direction. For instance, because of their confidence crisis, many public administration schools and scholars, in the context of dominant privatization forces, have consciously replaced such public norms as accountability, representativeness, and equality by market norms of productivity, efficiency, and profitability as the criteria of validating knowledge and have thereby intensified the normative crisis in the field. Likewise, normative crisis has a considerable reinforcing influence on the credibility crisis, raising the question of the credibility of public administration as an independent field of study (Hart & Wasden, 1990). As some scholars have pointed out, public administration in recent years has lost its public identity and weakened its credibility as an academic field by compromising its public values, embracing market norms, and emulating business administration (see Ventress, 1987, 1989).

RESOLVING THE CRISIS: A CRITIQUE AND RECONSTRUCTION

Because the current forms of intellectual crisis in public administration have resulted, to a great extent, from the emergence of the privatization movement, the transcendence of such crisis requires a critical examination of some basic claims and assumptions held by the movement itself. Second, it is also essential to reexamine some recent theoretical revisions in the field, particularly its adoption of the promarket assumptions of public choice perspective in its policy studies and policy analysis programs, which has contributed to various normative controversies. Finally, there are serious problems with the core concept of public administration, that is, the concept of public, which also requires critical analysis and reconstruction. Thus this section is dedicated to introducing a practical critique of the privatization movement and its rhetorics, a theoretical critique of the controversial public choice perspective, and a conceptual critique and reconstruction of the public.

A CRITIQUE OF THE PRIVATIZATION MOVEMENT

Of the main claims that have been established by the proponents of the privatization movement, one is that private enterprises are usually more efficient than public organizations. Such belief justifies the privatization of public service, leads to the reduction in educational demand for public administration, and discredits its basic norms. In reality, however, it has
been found that for some activities, private enterprises are more efficient, whereas for others, the performance level of the public sector is either equivalent or better (see Boneo, 1986; Donahue, 1989). In regard to entrepreneurship, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) conclude that "any institution, public or private, can be entrepreneurial, just as any institution, public or private, can be bureaucratic" (p. 22).

More important, the performance of public service is hardly comparable with that of the private sector because there is no private counterpart for many government functions, such as national security and internal law and order. Furthermore, although private firms operate mainly in efficient and profitable sectors, the public sector is often left with socially unavoidable but nonprofit activities, such as food distribution, health care, and housing for the poor. In addition, it is quite unfair to solely apply the criterion of efficiency to the public sector because of its less specified objectives, its qualitative outputs, its emphasis on distribution and equality, its accountability to the different pressure groups, and so on (see Wiltshire, 1975; Hatry, 1982). Thus, considering the differences between the public and private sectors in terms of their motives, incentives, revenue sources, and public relations, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) suggest that all these differences "add up to one conclusion: government cannot be run like a business" (p. 21).

The advocates of privatization often blame public service for corruption and portray private enterprises as fair. But many of the private enterprises in the United States that produce goods and services by public money, particularly the defense contractors, are well known for corruption, inefficiency, and scandals (Donahue, 1989). In fact, many public agencies (such as the food and drug and environmental protection agencies) are created to control and regulate various unfair practices and corruption committed by private enterprises. In addition, the pioneers of the privatization movement need to understand that without some basic preconditions ensured by the public sector, such as external security, law and order, financial stability, and conducive foreign relations, it is almost impossible for private enterprises to function effectively. There are many goods and services, such as roads and highways, electricity and water supply, research and development, and education and training facilities, that are produced or maintained by the public sector but significantly benefit private firms.

From the above critical review, it may be concluded that, subject to rigorous reexamination, it is possible to question the validity of many arguments made by the proponents of privatization that are uncritically
endorsed by the dominant sections of the population in many countries. Because the claims of privatization ideology have posed challenges to the credibility and norms of public administration and its academic confidence, it is the task of scholars in the field to introduce a thorough critique of these privatization claims, reveal their shortcomings, and thus restore the field’s credibility, norms, and confidence.

A CRITIQUE OF THE CURRENT THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

To overcome the current challenges to public administration created by the privatization movement, it is also necessary to make a critical evaluation of a certain theoretical perspective in public administration that endorses the promarket arguments of privatization experts and plays a mediating role in infusing market norms into the field. More specifically, it is the public choice perspective that holds the promarket assumptions and that has increasingly come to dominate academic discourse in the field in different guises, such as policy analysis, policy studies, urban studies, and other programs. Thus it is necessary to examine the basic arguments of this perspective and evaluate its compatibility with public administration.

Based on the assumptions of market theories, the public choice perspective has been used by Downs (1966), Ostrom (1974), and Buchanan and Tullock (1962) to interpret politics and public administration. Although Buchanan and Tullock apply the logic of market economics to interpret democratic political systems in terms of whether they facilitate the realization of individual self-interest, Downs uses such market analysis to explain public bureaus and officials in terms of their private preferences and gains. Guided by such individualistic, promarket thinking, Ostrom not only attacks the orthodox principles of public administration offered by classic scholars, such as Woodrow Wilson, Max Weber, and Luther Gulick, he also recommends administrative changes to serve the interests of individual citizens “as users or consumers of public goods and services” (p. 131).

In short, the basic arguments of public choice theory are the following: Individuals, as rational and self-interested beings, tend to maximize their utility through rational choice; the differences among individual choices and preferences can be resolved through collective choices and actions that aggregate the constitutive individual choices; to realize these collective choices, it is necessary to design institutions in such a manner that they reflect individual preferences; such institutional choice between the state and the market should depend on the nature of goods they produce
and distribute (ranging from purely public to purely private goods); the state institutions are usually more appropriate for public goods, whereas the market enterprises are suitable for private goods; and despite their differences, both state institutions and private enterprises should adopt the market criteria of cost-benefit and efficiency (see Harmon & Mayer, 1986; Jennings, 1991; White, 1989). This theoretical framework of public choice is used for evaluating "the appropriateness of government action under different circumstances, the efficiency with which goods and services are provided, and whether optimal levels of different goods are provided" (Jennings, p. 118).

The main problem with this theoretical perspective is that its overemphasis on utility and efficiency may lead to the subordination of other basic values of public service, such as accountability, equity, representation, and citizens' rights, which are essential for the realization of a "good society" (Baldwin & Farley, 1990; Donahue, 1989; Morgan & England, 1988; Wildavsky, 1988). Moreover, its utilitarian concern for individual preference, pleasure, and happiness excludes the social and communitarian values embodied in the ideas of civic duty (Harmon & Mayer, 1986), and it disregards the less privileged in society who do not have resources and capacity to pay for goods and services (Frederickson, 1991). Thus the public choice perspective, being utilitarian, individualistic, and economic in nature, is a less appropriate theoretical framework for public administration. In fact, its market-oriented assumptions and values constitute a challenge to basic public norms and thus should be examined critically in the context of current intellectual crisis in the field.

A CONCEPTUAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PUBLIC

The above critique of privatization is not enough to revive academic credibility, norms, and confidence in public administration. There are serious weaknesses in the field, particularly in regard to its connotation of the public, which constitutes the field's basic foundation and distinguishes it from private or business management. A proper understanding of the concept of public is most crucial for formulating theory, analyzing policies, prescribing professional roles, and overcoming intellectual vulnerability and alienation in public administration (Coursey & Bozeman, 1990; Ventriss, 1987, 1989 1991). The prevailing intellectual crisis in the field might have been deteriorated further due to the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the public.

Currently, there are two dominant modes of conceptualizing the public in public administration: the mainstream view and the public choice
perspective. In the mainstream literature, the term *public* is understood mostly in opposition to the term *private*—it is evident in the field’s common practice of describing the nature of public administration in contrast with that of private or business administration. For instance, in contrast with private management, public administration is often characterized by both its positive attributes, such as representativeness, accountability, equity, openness, participation, fairness, and equity; and negative features, such as centralization, rigidity, delay, coercive power, and secrecy (Allison, 1982; Baldwin & Farley, 1990; Coursey & Bozeman, 1990; Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976).

One common tendency in this mode of conceptualization is to identify the public with the state or government, irrespective of its nature, role, and ideology. It leads to fundamental conceptual problems in the field because there are instances when public administration serves the needs of the state but the state does not serve the needs of the public (Ventriss, 1987). In fact, in many Third World countries, the political and economic power is monopolized and the excessive state power is used to transfer public resources to the “ruling elite” (Briones, 1985, p. 371). Thus Mathews (1985) argues that “the root words for public are not the same as the root words for the polity, the state, the government” (p. 123).

The second mode of understanding the public is from the public choice perspective (described above), which also has considerable limitation because its underlying market-based assumption of utility-maximizing and atomistic individuals (Wise, 1990) is hardly compatible with the idea of the public that implies the existence of consciously interactive and cooperative individuals with some common bond. Moreover, the public choice perspective depersonalizes and objectifies the public because, for this view, it is not the real people that construct the public but rather the nature of objects (e.g., the indivisibility of goods and services) consumed by them that defines publicness.

These conceptual problems in the field make it more vulnerable to the forms of intellectual crisis discussed above. On one hand, if the public in public administration is identified with government, whenever the role of government in society and economy comes under challenge (as currently posed by the privatization movement), the practical relevance and the academic credibility of the field also become questionable. On the other hand, if the public in public administration is based on the market-centered assumptions (as held by the public choice perspective), whenever there is any victory of promarket thinking (as earned recently by the privatization movement), the field would easily come under pressure to intensify the
replacement of public norms by market norms, although it leads to more normative ambiguity.

From the above critical review, it can be concluded that the intellectual crisis in public administration, resulting mainly from the sweeping endorsement of privatization and its wholesale prescription for almost all socioeconomic activities, has been accelerated further by this conceptual dilemma. However, some optimism has been generated recently by the fact that the debate on the issue has started among some scholars in the field. For instance, after reviewing the existing views of the public in public administration, Frederickson (1991) presents his "general theory of public" for public administration. It includes the following four components: the constitutional principles (e.g., representative government and balance of power); the idea of the virtuous citizen (based on American constitutional principles and regime values); the institutional arrangements for hearing of public grievances; and the principles of benevolence and love for the constitution and government. Another important contribution has been made by Ventris (1987, 1989). He not only rejects the existing identity of public administration with government institutions and its use of apolitical language found in economic choice framework, but also emphasizes the need for reconstructing the field into a public social science—based on public interdependency, public learning, and a new public language—which the public can understand and discuss and which addresses the needs of different publics (Ventris, 1987, 1989).

These recent works are undoubtedly significant improvements on the past parochial and simplistic views of the public. Yet there are certain problems with these formulations, too. For instance, a closer scrutiny would make it clear that Frederickson's (1991) theory is quite biased toward and formulated within the framework of American democracy and thus may not be compatible with other societies. Moreover, Stivers (1991) has a problem with Frederickson's idea of such democracy itself. The analysis of Ventris is quite comprehensive and useful for understanding how public administration has to reconstruct itself to be compatible with some central public concerns, but he remains less coherent in articulating what the public really is.

After the above critical appraisal of the prevailing dominant views of the public, including some recent studies, it is quite logical to introduce a framework for rethinking the concept. However, because the issue by itself requires an independent study, only a brief outline of the concept is feasible in this article. First, as mentioned above, the public cannot be equated with the state because of its monopolization by the dominant
political, bureaucratic, and business elites in many countries. It is essential to liberate the state from such elitist control, democratize its composition, introduce people-oriented policies, and thus enhance its publicness. Second, the public is not identifiable with the private market either, because in the atmosphere of individualistic and utilitarian market competition, there is little scope for forming the public as a collective entity. In fact, it might be necessary to make the market and its constituent private enterprises more responsive and accountable to the public through the means of public institutions. Last, it is also difficult to equate the public with the total society and its people, because no society is free from diversity or heterogeneity in terms of race, class, ethnicity, and gender. To acquire the quality of public or to enhance the degree of publicness, a society must undergo basic transformation, particularly in regard to its economic and political structures, to rectify the existing intergroup and interclass relations that are based on unequal power and domination.

In addition to these state-centered, market-centered, and society-centered interpretations of the public, which mainly emphasize its structural composition, there are also the dimensions of mutual interaction and critical consciousness within the public that must be addressed for its proper understanding. In this regard, the idea of the “public sphere,” introduced by Hannah Arendt and extended further by Jurgen Habermas, is quite relevant. For Arendt (1958, 1963), the constitutive components of public reality—such as action, speech, equality, freedom, and power—are intersubjective and communicative in nature, and their realization requires “public space” within which individuals can express themselves and encounter one another. Similarly, for Habermas, it is the autonomous public sphere within which the interactive and discursive private individuals can play a critical role in discussing issues of common concern, forming public opinion, and holding the state accountable to society (see Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 1990). However, Habermas realizes that such public sphere in advanced capitalist societies is no more used for setting critical discourse but has become an arena for advertising and legitimizing the state and corporate interests through the media (see Calhoun, p. 26). Yet without such critical public space or public sphere, the aggregate of fragmented, self-seeking individuals cannot form the public.

However, one should not ignore the shortcomings of this idea of public sphere offered by Arendt and Habermas. They have been accused of idealizing the image of the Greek polis, of introducing a dichotomy between the political and the social, of underestimating the social and material preconditions of political participation, and of excluding the
structural composition (based on class, gender, and ethnicity) of the public sphere (see Fraser, 1990; Bernstein, 1983). Thus it is necessary to address all three dimensions—structural, interactional, and critical—for a comprehensive understanding of the public.

Once the existing parochial, fragmented, and ambiguous views of the public are transcended and a comprehensive public perspective is established in public administration, it might provide a sound intellectual foundation to alleviate the field’s current crises caused by the privatization movement. More specifically, by identifying with this reconstructed meaning of the public that overcomes both the state and market biases, the field may be able to maintain its credibility as an autonomous publicly useful body of knowledge, consolidate its genuine public norms, and enhance confidence and commitment among its scholars and practitioners.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this article, it has been pointed out that although there was considerable discourse on various forms of intellectual crisis in public administration in the past, a more challenging form of intellectual crisis has emerged in the field in the current context of privatization, although such crisis has received relatively scant attention. The uncritical endorsement of privatization policy and its ideological reification has affected almost every sphere of society, particularly the public service, in terms of its shrinking existence and unfavorable image. Because the root of the current intellectual crisis is in this weakening practical domain of the public service, it is significantly different from the past forms of crisis that were mostly academic in nature and articulated within the academic sphere itself.

The first form of contemporary intellectual crisis in public administration is its credibility crisis, characterized by its diminishing societal demand and deteriorating academic image, resulting mostly from the decreasing scope of the public service and the emerging challenges to its legitimacy. The second form of intellectual crisis in the field is its normative crisis, caused by the gradual replacement of such public norms as representativeness, accountability, equality, and responsiveness with the market values of individualism, utility, competition, and efficiency. Such normative deviation is evident in the increasing academic dominance of policy studies and policy analysis based on the public choice perspective. The final form of crisis is the confidence crisis in the field, indicating the declining academic confidence and commitment among public administration scholars.
To overcome this emerging intellectual crisis, it has been argued that it is necessary to introduce both critique and reconstruction, including a critical analysis of the claims made by privatization advocates that are practically unsustainable, a reexamination of the use of market-biased public choice theory in public administration because of the theoretical incompatibility, and a reconstruction of the existing views of the public that are conceptually inadequate. In opposition to the advocacy of privatization, it has been pointed out that its claim of higher efficiency of private enterprises is usually inconclusive, that its comparison of public sector performance with that of private enterprises is often illogical, and that its deliberate exclusion from the discourse of all the gains of private enterprises from the public sector is quite unfair.

In regard to theoretical inconsistency, it has been argued that the public choice perspective, because of its promarket values and beliefs, is normatively incongruous with public administration, although it has proliferated in the field significantly in recent years. Finally, from a conceptual point of view, it has been explained that the current intellectual crisis is immanent in or inseparable from the prevailing understanding of the public in public administration. Both the state-centered and market-centered views of the public are found to be problematic, and their major conceptual limitations and implications have been critically examined. Even the current studies and debates on this conceptual question, despite some positive contributions they have made, seem to be quite inadequate. Thus an alternative conceptual reconstruction of the public has been proposed. It not only encompasses the structural realm of the public related to the state, market, and society, it also emphasizes meaningful interaction and critical discourse as essential dimensions of the public.

The purpose of this study has not been to examine all the controversies, ambiguities, and difficulties found in public administration but to explain the nature of specific intellectual challenges to the field that emerged recently in the prevailing context of privatization. The objective has not been to offer any guaranteed solutions to this intellectual crisis but to outline some possible courses of action for public administration scholars, particularly regarding their tasks of critique and reconstruction, to alleviate the critical intellectual situation. Unfortunately, in the contemporary market-friendly global atmosphere, there is a relative dearth of critical approaches to the study of privatization and a tendency toward the uncritical endorsement of privatization rhetoric all over the world. The main purpose of this essay has been to introduce such a critical perspective
on privatization, especially with regard to its implications for the academic discourse in public administration.

NOTES

1. "Privatization" is commonly understood as the transfer of assets and functions from public to private hands (Hanke, 1987; Heald, 1990; Savas, 1987). There are various forms of privatization, including the sale of public assets to the private sector; the contracting out of public services to private contractors; the liberalization of government monopoly and the acceptance of competition with private enterprises; the withdrawal of government regulations over business sector; and so on (Hanke; Heald).

2. Privatization has been interpreted as a movement (Jennings, 1991) that is global in scope and influence. It has not only been advocated and practiced by the developed market economies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, it has been also introduced in many developing countries and more recently, in the former and the existing socialist states (Fitzgerald, 1988; Linowes, 1988; Pirie, 1988).

3. In this article, public administration is considered a "field of study" rather than a "discipline or subdiscipline" for various reasons. It is no more a subdiscipline of political science because it has its mainstream books and journals, independent departments and schools, and academic and professional associations (McCurdy, 1986; Waldo, 1968). On the other hand, public administration is not yet a discipline because it still lacks a coherent body of knowledge of its own, concerns too diverse and varying issues, and draws significantly on other disciplines and fields (McCurdy; Waldo). Thus most scholars are willing to consider public administration as an eclectic academic field (Ventris, 1987) rather than a discipline. In this regard, the following statement of McCurdy is quite commendable: "Public administration possesses many of the characteristics of an academic discipline. . . . public administration is becoming increasingly professionalized. Yet public administration is not exactly a profession nor precisely a discipline if one applies the historic standards defining such terms. Public administration is a distinctly modern field of study" (1986, pp. 12-13, italics added).

4. The limitations of study on the implications of privatization exist not only in regard to the intellectual domain of public administration but also regarding the practical sphere of public service, particularly its newly emerging business perspective (see Althshuler, 1992).

5. According to Dwight Waldo (1968), the orthodoxy in public administration that emerged from the contributions of Woodrow Wilson, Frank Goodnow, Leonard D. White, W. F. Willoughby, and Luther Gulick came under attack, initiated by Herbert A. Simon, which created an identity crisis in the field. This idea of an identity crisis or a lack of disciplinary consensus has been emphasized and widely discussed by other scholars (for details, see Hale, 1988; Kirwan, 1977; Srivastava, 1990; Ventris, 1987).

6. Since the introduction of the idea of "politics-administration dichotomy" by Woodrow Wilson in 1887, the subject has been articulated further by Frank Goodnow (1900), W. F. Willoughby (1935), Luther Gulick (1933), and others (see Denhardt, 1984; Harmon & Mayer, 1986; Waldo, 1982). Although such a dichotomy has been mostly rejected, the controversy still continues (see Kirwan, 1977).

7. For instance, Ventris (1991) feels that there is too much diversity in public administration programs and in the academic background of public administration scholars. The author
observes that public administration programs resemble “a disoriented educational octopus, with appendages moving in all directions, lacking a sense of normative coherency” (p. 8).


10. In Western nations, a “market ideology” was introduced by early thinkers, such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill (Ramo, 1981), which became institutionalized in almost every private realm of society (Barzelay & Armanjani, 1992; Morrow, 1987). But they have always characterized the state and its public service by relatively nonmarket (public) values, such as public interest, public welfare, public disclosure, public accountability, and so on. Thus, within the context of capitalism dominated by market ideology, public administration could acquire its legitimacy by following, or at least demonstrating, its unique public nature. However, that has changed due to the current privatization movement, which not only justifies the market ideology in the private social realms but also affects the public service by replacing it by market forces or at least transforming it by market logic. Thus, instead of considering it a rational policy issue, privatization has been interpreted by many recent scholars as an ideological phenomenon based on vested interests (for instance, see Feigenbaum and Henig, 1994; Lundqvist, 1988; Starr, 1991).

11. There is usually a complementary relationship between any academic discipline or field and its corresponding professional practices in society. In this century, the emergence of specialization and professionalism in various social sectors has led to comparable specialization in the academic sphere. Today, the rise and fall of a discipline or field depends on the ups and downs in its related profession (see Waldo, 1948). In the case of public administration, its existence as a credible academic field depends, to a great extent, on the situation in public service profession. If the conditions in public service are unfavorable, it is difficult to maintain the academic credibility of public administration as a field of study.

12. In the United States, for instance, the growing public distrust in the public service has led to “a serious erosion of the citizenry’s belief in public administration’s legitimacy” (Nigro & Richardson, 1990, p. 630).

13. These administrative norms are based on the ideology of political democracy; an ideology that became the source of administrative norms for the early scholars, such as Herman Finer, David Levitan, Wayne Leys, L. K. Caldwell, Donald Kingsley, and Paul Appleby (see Nigro & Richardson, 1990).

14. Some of these textbooks include the following: Policy Analysis in the Bureaucracy (Meltzer, 1976); Public Administration and Public Policy (Rhodes, 1979); Techniques and Public Administration (Spiers, 1975); Management and Policy Science in American Government (White, Radnor, & Tansik, 1975); Administration: The Word and Science (Dunshire, 1973); Public Administration: Politics, Policy, and the Political System (Morrow, 1980).

15. For instance, although the democratic norms of public administration are mostly political in nature, the promarket norms of the public choice perspective are apolitical and
they depoliticize the policy process (Brooks, 1983; Hale, 1988; House & Shull, 1989; Quaryoyt, 1983; Werlin, 1988; White & McSwain, 1990). In addition, politics and political decision processes themselves have increasingly been reduced to market norms (see White & McSwain, 1990).

16. The lack of a common academic identity and consensus that led to the discourse on intellectual crisis in the past has deteriorated further due to the advocacy of privatization by promarket experts, political leaders, and institutions (see Glade, 1986).

17. However, the proponents of privatization, being biased for market competition and efficiency, often ignore many of these issues “that are vital to the public’s social and economic well-being” (Morgan & England, 1988, pp. 981-982). In a recent report, Al Gore (1993) tried to show government inefficiency by presenting the figures of ineffective government expenditures, such as $25 billion on welfare, $27 billion on food stamps, and $13 billion on public housing. He failed to mention the government expenditures that benefit private corporations, such as billions of dollars spent for bailing out the bankrupt private banks (see Petras, 1990). He missed the point that expensive government programs for the poor were not the causes of poverty; it is rather the market forces that are often responsible for and/or indifferent toward such problems and thus require government intervention. Despite the fact that 32.5 million people live below the poverty line and 20% of all children are poor in America (“Poverty figures,” 1988, p. A22), during the privatization period 1980-1988, federal funding for subsidized housing was reduced by 86% and assistance to families with dependent children by 26% (Petras). These underprivileged people cannot be considered customers and left with “market dynamics such as competition and customer choice” as recommended by Vice President Gore (p. 6). A public service based on the principle of basic human needs, rather than market-driven customers’ choice, is still essential for the poor or the underclass.

18. However, there has already been some degree of public disillusionment with privatization. For instance, although the former socialist states have overcome the problems of centralized state control and adopted promarket privatization strategies (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), they are becoming more skeptical toward privatization rhetoric due to the worsening conditions of poverty, inequality, instability, violence, crimes, and other socio-economic disorders under promarket reforms. In fact, some of these newly emerging market economies, particularly Poland, Hungary, and Lithuania, have already reestablished a revised form of socialist government through democratic election.

19. For Frederickson (1991), there are five prevailing views of the public in public administration: the public as interest groups, the public as consumer, the public as represented, the public as client, and the public as citizen.

REFERENCES


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