

Team Literature Review

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The Context of Public Administration

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Introduction

Public administration broadly refers to the execution of government policies and the management of public programs, emphasizing the structures, processes, and actions that enable the efficient delivery of services to address the needs of society. The question "Who is the public?" is central to public administration, as it defines who receives government services and protections. Historically, marginalized groups, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, have been excluded from this definition. This literature review explores the need for a more inclusive understanding of the public, using LGBTQIA+ history, legal reforms, and philosophical perspectives to argue that all individuals, regardless of identity, should be recognized and supported within public administration.

The Public

Public Administrators serve society collectively, aiming to address the needs of all citizens. The term "public" often refers to the community at large, encompassing groups that emerge in response to social issues relevant to their members (Mwengenmeir, 2014). The public is not a homogenous group but a collection of identities and communities, such as the LGBTQIA+ community, that bring unique experiences to the broader concept of "the public." Traditionally, "the public" has been defined by the interests of the majority, often at the exclusion of marginalized groups such as LGBTQIA+ individuals. This exclusion has historically impacted LGBTQIA+ rights, access to services, and protections, highlighting the need for a more inclusive understanding of "the public." The term "public" can also refer to the interests that people in a polity share, and how those interests are expressed. Those whose stories and experiences are recognized gain the most attention from administrators (Norman-Major, 2011). "The public"

must encompass all individuals impacted by government policies and services, drawing from LGBTQIA+ history, legal reforms, and philosophical insights to underscore the importance of inclusion.

Philosophical Foundations of Inclusivity

The exclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals challenges philosophical notions of democracy and justice, which posit that a true public must include all affected by governance. Philosopher John Dewey argued that the public is composed of individuals affected by social issues who, in turn, have a right to representation in governance (Dewey, 1927). Dewey's view supports the idea that LGBTQIA+ individuals, as part of society impacted by laws and policies, are essential members of the public. His work challenges the exclusionary practices seen in the Lavender Scare and AIDS crisis, emphasizing that "the public" must be inclusive to uphold democratic values.

Legal and Social Turning Points in LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

As Public Administrators were historically discriminating against the vulnerable members of society, the LGBTQIA+ community was merging and organizing; cultivating leaders and igniting activism. Stonewall Inn, located in Greenwich Village, NY City, was secretly a safe Queer space for unhoused and underaged individuals, people of color, and drag performers. The underground bar was routinely raided by officials until June 28, 1969 when an uprising of the gay community ensued in a riot against police led by Marsha P. Johnson, a Black transgender woman, who threw the first brick. Followed by six days of protests in NY, the movement began to spread across the U.S. in a demand for gay liberation and civil rights. This event was marked as The Stonewall Riots and was the foundation for the gay-rights movement (Blakemore, 2023).

Gay-Rights activists throughout the 1970's made a shift in our country with regards to civil rights for the LGBTQIA+ community. An increase in policy support for the community starts to emerge as representatives begin to come out while in office, for example, in 1981, Mary Morgan became the first lesbian judge in the United States as she was appointed to the San Francisco Municipal Court (Pride & Progress). The representation within public administration continues to grow over the next few decades as more LGBTQIA+ members of society advocate and progress in policy making positions. Public administration's commitment to inclusivity not only recognizes LGBTQIA+ individuals as rightful members of the public but also seeks to redress past injustices by actively promoting their welfare and participation in public life.

Forgotten Voices in LGBTQIA+ Movements

Who has been forgotten in LGBTQIA+ activism? Throughout LGBTQIA+ history, various groups have been overlooked within mainstream movements, which have often focused primarily on the needs of cisgender, white, middle- to upper-class gay men. This focus has left out critical voices, including transgender and gender nonconforming people, LGBTQIA+ individuals of color, lesbians, bisexuals, working-class and economically marginalized individuals, those with disabilities, elder LGBTQIA+ people, and rural communities. Each of these groups faces unique challenges that intersect with their sexual orientation or gender identity. Transgender people, drag queens, and people of color were pivotal in early LGBTQIA+ activism, especially in milestones like the Stonewall uprising. Despite their key roles, many of these groups have not shared equally in the movement's progress, often facing ongoing marginalization within LGBTQIA+ spaces and in society at large (James, 2019).

Two Spirit (2S) people, often regarded as healers, shamans, and teachers, hold traditional roles of honor and respect in Indigenous cultures. However, their unique identity, which encompasses both gender and spirituality, is frequently misunderstood—even within the LGBTQIA+ community. Due to colonization's impact, Two Spirit individuals have been marginalized in both historical and contemporary narratives of LGBTQIA+ contributions. Today, Two Spirit leaders work to reclaim and revitalize their roles within Indigenous communities, emphasizing the importance of Indigenous perspectives in LGBTQIA+ advocacy and history (The Legacy Project). For a truly inclusive movement, LGBTQIA2S+ advocacy must expand to address the diverse experiences and needs of all community members, ensuring that everyone is represented and supported.

The question 'Who is the public?' calls for an examination of how public administration defines and serves its communities. By acknowledging all individuals, including LGBTQIA+ people, as part of 'the public,' public administration can uphold democratic values and ensure fair treatment. An inclusive approach fosters policies that reflect society's diverse needs, creating a public that is truly representative and equitable for all.

What is Public Administration?

In a general sense, Public Administration serves as the backbone of modern governance in which civil society works through state agencies by addressing collective needs, managing resources, and implementing policies that advance the common good. It encompasses problem-solving efforts that involve creating, selecting, and managing programs and services that produce beneficial outcomes for the public, whether through policies, contracts, provisions,

or partnerships; aiming to create a society rooted in inclusivity, sustainability, and fairness. Yet, its role extends beyond impartial governance, it requires active engagement with communities and a resolute commitment to dismantling systemic barriers, ensuring that the policies and services it delivers foster genuine social equity (Elliot, 2024).

Effective Public Administration is centered in four core values: economy, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity (Meyer, 2022). Among these, social equity is particularly crucial in addressing historical and systemic disparities. By employing historical and critical thinking, Public Administrators uncover overlooked narratives and ensure policies address the root causes of inequities. For marginalized communities like LGBTQIA+ individuals, Public Administration represents both a challenge and an opportunity. While historical discrimination emphasizes the risks of exclusionary governance, the progress achieved through advocacy and representation illustrates the transformative potential of inclusive Public Administration. Are public administrators genuinely upholding core values in their approach to marginalized communities?

Looking back, it's clear that progress in LGBTQIA+ rights has been fraught with challenges. Some would say that this is proof that public administrators have not been upholding their core values. Within the U.S., decisions are typically made based on majority voting, often without substantial consideration for minority opinions or rights. When majoritarian governments enact inequitable policies, public administrators become crucial actors in ensuring that the system does not lose sight of its fundamental commitment to fairness and dignity for all. Their actions should balance their duty to the state with their responsibility to uphold democratic ideals. Administrators must implement policies that reflect the majority's preferences, even if they conflict with the rights or needs of minority groups. If administrators enforce the majority's will, they may face criticism for neglecting minority concerns. If they prioritize minority

protections, they might be accused of undermining democratic principles. Imagine being a public administrator in a time when the majority openly supported homophobia, while a marginalized minority advocated for LGBTQIA+ rights. For many administrators during the mid-20th century, neutrality was not just difficult, it was often impossible without compromising personal ethics or professional integrity. Public administrators who valued equity and the economy faced an impossible choice: comply with policies they found morally reprehensible or risk their careers by advocating for change in a hostile environment.

During the height of the Lavender Scare in the United States, public administrators were thrust into the center of a moral and professional crisis. As federal agencies purged employees suspected of homosexuality, administrators were tasked with enforcing discriminatory policies. The pressure to align with societal norms and political directives was immense, leaving little room for dissent. Staying neutral felt like a betrayal of fairness. On one hand, administrators were expected to uphold the principles of the government they served, including enforcing anti-LGBTQIA+ policies. On the other hand, many recognized the deep injustice in targeting individuals based on their sexuality. The challenge of neutrality was even more apparent during events like police raids on LGBTQIA+ establishments, such as the Stonewall Inn. Public administrators overseeing law enforcement had to justify actions that were blatantly discriminatory. For some, neutrality meant following orders and turning a blind eye to the humanity of those targeted. For others, neutrality was a façade, hiding the internal conflict between duty and morality. This historical reality serves as a stark reminder that public administrators are not immune to the moral weight of their roles.

From the Lavender Scare to the Trump era, the tension between implementing discriminatory policies and upholding principles of equity has defined their role. The future will

likely bring similar challenges, requiring administrators to act as both enforcers of government policy and potential agents of social change. A second Trump administration takes office in 2024, with this occurring, public administrators could face intensified challenges as federal laws or executive orders expand discriminatory policies. These might include federal bans on gender-affirming care, nationwide restrictions on LGBTQIA+ representation in schools, or broader religious exemptions that permit businesses and government entities to deny services to LGBTQIA+ individuals. The choices public administrators make will significantly influence whether future governments protect or undermine the progress made in the fight for LGBTQIA+ equality. Administrators tasked with implementing such policies would encounter profound ethical dilemmas. The potential for backlash against those who advocate for inclusivity would remain high, and in progressive states or cities, administrators may actively oppose regressive federal directives, drawing on local authority to safeguard LGBTQIA+ rights.

What do Public Administrators Do?

In modern times, Public Administration has developed into an organized system through which societies address public needs by shaping policies, managing resources, and implementing services. However, in the past Public Administrators led to the destruction of many, especially the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) community. For example, in the 1950's several members of the *Grand Old Party* (GOP) made it their mission to oppress the LGBTQIA+ community, and make that form of discrimination law. Senator Joseph McCarthy linked homosexuals to communists sparking the Lavender Scare, leading to two congressional investigations (National Security Agency). One investigation

gathered information on the so-called infiltration of “Subversives and Moral Perverts” in the Executive Branch. The second investigation gathered data on gay and lesbian governmental employees. These investigations led to 5,000-10,000 government employees dismissal, after president Eisenhower signed an executive order banning all gays and lesbians from working for the federal Government (Haynes, 2020). Two years later, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) diagnosed homosexuality as a mental illness, labeling it as a “Sociopathic Personality Disorder.” This classification affected people in the judicial system by considering LGBTQIA+ parents “unfit to parent,” teachers “unsafe to teach,” employees “not intelligent to hold jobs of high security.” This diagnosis was challenged in 1974, but it would take an additional twenty years before homosexuality was officially removed from the APA’s list of mental illnesses (GLSEN).

Years later, the values of Public Administrators shifted in a positive way. While Public Administrators historically discriminated against the LGBTQIA+ community, people of the community and allies began to organize and fight for their civil rights. The Stonewall Riots in 1969 led to the start of the Gay-Rights Movement, which led to an important policy reform in support of the LGBTQIA+ community (Blakemore, 2023). Over the years Presidents adjusted policies that have affected the LGBTQIA+ community in both positive and negative ways. Executive orders are signed in support of civil rights by Democratic administrators such as President Barack Obama’s Executive order 13672 (2014) banning discrimination of transgender federal employees, which expanded upon President Bill Clinton’s previous Executive Order 13087 (1998) banning discrimination of federal employees based on sexual orientation (Joughin, 2014). In 2015 the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* makes same sex marriage legal in all 50 states showcasing the growing support for LGBTQIA+ policy in public

administration and society in the U.S. (Human Rights Campaign). Modern day Public Administrators are expected to remain neutral while serving the public impartially to prevent conflicts of interest and bias. However, the current election has proved that the elected Public Administrators coming into office are extremely biased and bigoted. This will have a devastating impact on the LGBTQIA+ community, which may lead to policies similar to what was written in the 1950's to emerge. Hopefully, equity, efficiency, accountability and transparency will still be used as a guide in making decisions that affect the masses.

Conclusion

Beyond remedying specific injustices, public administration acts as a vital tool for advancing broader societal objectives, including sustainability and equitable access to resources. Administrators work across sectors to build partnerships that address complex challenges. Redefining "the public" in public administration is essential for creating a more inclusive society that recognizes and addresses the needs of all individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups like the LGBTQIA+ community. Grounded in principles of neutrality and equity, Public Administration must seek to balance competing interests while promoting societal well-being, policies that are more representative, and ensuring equitable treatment for everyone. This inclusive approach strengthens democratic values and fosters a society where all individuals, regardless of identity, are protected and empowered to participate in public life.

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