Back in the 1950’s, America had developed the image of unity – a vision nurtured in the struggles of the Great Depression of the 1930’s and the fight against Nazism in the 1940’s, a norm of consensus and unity of action captured in William Whyte’s apt phrase from the 1950’s: the organization man. Dwight Waldo and his contemporaries had it about right when they took stock of the governmental structures of the post New Deal period and uttered the obvious: modern government is an administrative state. Over half a century later, can the same be said of the state? By the 1960’s the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement had exposed some serious schisms and the unified consensus began to decohere into pluralistic contestation. Now, as the first decade of the new millennium begins to appear in the rear view mirror, the polity has become so

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1 These schisms had long been hidden under the invective *Reds*. In my view, this suppression of civil liberties began when President Woodrow Wilson outlawed protests against the Great War – the war that Wilson vowed was necessary to make the world safe for democracy. Wilson, the so-called father of public administration in the United States, has rarely been held to account in the public administration literature for his racism or his extremely intolerant and repressive tactics (but see Shafritz for an attempt to place the issue on the table in a public administration textbook). The Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 were unhappy moments for democratic discourse. Wilson continued the suppression after the war via the Palmer Raids. Government suppression of dissent resurfaced in the 1950’s under the general label of *McCarthyism*. 
fragmented that terms such as *common good* or *public interest*, when they do appear in the public administration literature, are quite rightly taken to be contestable propositions.

The administrative state, having surpassed other forms of statehood, finds its ascendance to be a Pyrrhic victory. Statehood itself has become decentered and contingent if the theme of this conference has any validity. Politics, therefore, must also be recognized as contingent. Values aspiring to universal application face the limitations inherent in cultural diversity and evolutionary change, and inherent in other situational imperatives particular to circumstances. The task of this essay will be to imagine a way for a decohering public administration to interpret its democratic role on behalf of the public interest.

I. Introduction

Postmodernism carries with it a certain burden when it comes to democratic theorizing. By mocking the metaphysics associated with any worldview that hitches itself to some foundational presupposition, postmodernism’s own democratic commitments are undermined by an absence of foundations that might ground belief. This foundational aversion frustrates efforts to build postmodern democratic theory – why should “democracy” be regarded as the *a priori* presupposition?

This sort of criticism fails to appreciate that postmodernism’s reluctance to accept a priori presuppositions before the conversation begins
has the effect of making postmodernism (which is to say, antifoundationalism or antiessentialism) the only discursively democratic theory. In discursive democracy, everything is contestable. Categories of suppression such as heresy or blasphemy are highly suspect. Practices such as the arrest of professors or the jailing of journalists, dissenters or war protesters are likewise viewed with considerable skepticism. Nor are discourse participants required to acquiesce to the universality of supposedly democratic canons such as representative democracy or choice-making individual subjects.

The literature on governance (as opposed to government), is a signal that the solidity of the foundation of government, public policy, and public administration is beginning to soften. Representative democracy assumes that the sovereign people express their will through the democratic accountability feedback loop whereby elected representatives elaborate the public will through rules that are enforced through the chain of command. Postmodernism regards the loop model of governance as implausible (Miller and Fox 2007; see also Catlaw, 2005).

Modernity has been buttressed by a triumphant instrumental rationality, the value predisposition of modern organizations whose task it is to dominate and control pertinent aspects of nature and life. Modern systems assume for themselves a potentially all-encompassing universalistic view. In government, the orthodox metanarrative was the story of the electoral-democracy loop plus hierarchical bureaucracy,
amounting to a grand account of democracy actualized. Eventually, though, concepts such as the public interest, the common good, collective will-formation, performance measurement, citizen participation and constitutional foundationalism were all rendered problematic once modern assumptions about epistemology and representation were abandoned. The decentering tendency described by terms such as governance, policy networks, pragmatism and bureaucratic discretion poses a potential threat to the democratic ideals of constitutional systems. While any version of the common good or the public interest may gather local adherents and culturally affiliated subscribers, with respect to one another these realities are incommensurable. Once the social-political culture fragments into pluralistic interest groups, multiple ethnic groups, sexual identification groups, and other neo-tribal social formations, there is left precious little ground for establishing democratic foundations such as “the public interest.” Neoliberal economic thought in general and public choice political economy in particular deny the existence of any such thing as the public interest. Other more hopeful accounts of the public interest in public administration typically deny the veracity of the anti-essentialist, decentering, fragmented-polity thesis, or posit the public interest as a useful value aspiration rather than a description of any current practices.

The purpose of this essay, then, is to find ways of affirming some recognizable iteration of the public interest while recognizing the impossibility of its universal applicability in a pluralistic socio-political
culture. Such pluralist culture would make any sweeping claim to “the public interest” a suspect category, and so a contingent and situational way of thinking about the public interest must be found. This is the guiding hope of the present essay.

**A. Waldo Lays Out the Problematic**

In lamenting the vast sea of public administration's differing opinions and conflicting dogmas, Waldo (1977) tried to get a handle on the unstable and threatening aspects of the field's predicament. He acknowledged the intractability of large scale bureaucracy as “a fact of life” that will continue as such into the foreseeable future (p. 9). Importantly, he noted, policy-making occurs in these bureaucracies. This is important because there is no reconciling this second fact of Waldo’s with the U.S. Constitution or in terms of values, beliefs, or American history. The reconciliation of bureaucracy and democracy is one tough nut to crack – a life project for Waldo.

From his long intellectual struggle with this problematic, Waldo singled out two major philosophical problems in his 1977 Royer lecture. The first one is “virtually insoluble” he conceded (Waldo 1977, 10): the *unit of analysis* problem. “What is the appropriate *population* or *universe* for calculating the optimum mix of democracy and administration?” (p. 10, italics in original). Whether the unit of analysis should be the organizational complex, the single organization, the population affected, the region, or the
nation had not yet been satisfactorily answered, yet the irresolution of the unit of analysis problem made things difficult. Which was the part, and which was the whole, and could there be democracy in one but not the other? Without an answer to the unit of analysis problem, it would continue to be difficult to discuss concepts such as the public interest or the general welfare.

The second major problem Waldo mentioned was assigning status and weight to nondemocratic values. If liberty and equality are democratic values, to what extent should they defer to nondemocratic values such as efficiency, productivity, national security and personal safety? Hesitant to equate bureaucracy with efficiency, Waldo captures the problem for public administration with the following tongue-in-cheek tautology: “Bureaucracy is the most efficient organizational mode for the achievement of those objectives for the achievement of which bureaucracy is the most efficient organizational mode.” (p. 11).

There were some other problems Waldo encountered in his attempts to reconcile bureaucracy and democracy, among them the culture problem. “When one moves beyond his own country and culture, the issues of democracy and bureaucracy raise a host of additional scientific and moral problems. Can democracy and/or bureaucracy be introduced into another culture without changing that culture? I think not. Then by what warrant do we seek to export either or both?” (Waldo, 1977: 12; italics in original).
Waldo did not use the term globalization in his lecture, but he insightfully and carefully noted that “Considering only the historical period of the human experience, the nation-state system of organizing the political dimension is very recent and brief. I think it only reasonable to presume that there are additional systems yet to come . . . . Important phenomena affect the working of the state system, and also bring its continued existence into question.” (Waldo 1977, 14). Additionally, Waldo noted that the modern era’s distinction between public and private is becoming less clear and warned that the disaggregation of public powers into public-choice style democratic self-determination might lead to “selfish little oligarchies” instead (p. 15).

It seems to me, then, that Waldo’s thinking was something of a precursor to antiessentialism. His comments on the potential demise of the nation-state, his unwillingness to impose any particular unit of analysis, and his deep appreciation of the cultural context of social innovations such as bureaucracy and democracy indicate to me a sensibility to the same kinds of questions that inspire this essay if not this conference. Hence, I would like to offer a postmodern take on problematics that Waldo left unresolved, namely the unit of analysis problem and the culture problem, and a pragmatic take on the public interest problem. First I will present my radically different conception of the unit of analysis.
II. Ideograph as Unit of Analysis

As a unit of analysis, and in contrast to the individual (or some aggregation of them such as group, organization, or nation), ideographs are potent yet changeable framing constructs, abstractions that are nonetheless capable of altering peoples’ sense of what is and what is not reality; what is and what is not appropriate action. The ideograph is the agency of conceptualizations. That is a strange sentence, the point of which is to relocate human agency by pointing out that “individual agency” is a social construction.

An ideograph is a symbol used in a linguistic system, perhaps intended to denote an object pictured, but more importantly to conote some thing or idea that the object pictured additionally suggests (Miller 2004). The term ideograph was employed by McGee (1980) to avoid some of the associations that attended terms such as myth or ideology, but also to explicitly link connotative concepts to symbolic systems.

An ideograph is an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief, which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable. (McGee, 1980, p. 467)
Hence, in public discourse, ideographic usage invokes patterns of political consciousness. There is a sense in which ideographic patterns normalize reality. An ideograph has deterministic properties in McGee’s view, but the term seems less deterministic and implies less constancy than Foucault’s (1970) *episteme*. An episteme for Foucault is an era in the structure of thought such that, at any given moment in a given culture there is one regime of truth, one cultural code, that defines the conditions of knowledge by governing language, perception, and values. By the time he wrote *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1982) replaced the term episteme with *discursive formation*. Discursive formation does not carry with it the strong residues of Marxian superstructure that are apparent in the episteme. Discursive formation, like episteme, signifies a set of symbols that can authorize knowledge, but with more malleability. Along the same lines, the term ideograph assumes less about society’s power arrangements and involves more discursive possibilities. An ideographic structure entails pictures, images, symbols, linguistic impressions, and meaning systems that are widely shared in the culture yet open to marginal adjustment.

In a political mode, the ideograph operates as a field of contestation—similar to what Stone (1997) called “goals” (policy objects such as equity, efficiency, security and liberty). She described these as ideas and portrayals, as the stuff of strategically crafted arguments. These goals require a context to make them applicable. Efficient production of clean gasoline and efficient production of clean air imply radically different
actions even though maximizing efficiency may be the purpose on everyone’s mind. While everyone may assume there is a common definition of efficiency, that commonality only potentially exists in the abstract. At the level of problematic situation, efficiency is a matter for interpretation and for politics.

This way of thinking puts the individual person as unit of analysis into a different field of play. While modernity accepted the individual as the biological, economic, humanistic and political unit of analysis, postmodern thought sees the individual as another ideograph. Individual-the-ideograph connotes the autonomous liberal-humanist subject of the Enlightenment. Thinking about an “individual” who encounters “others” in civil society is a deeply sedimented habit that has for the most part persisted unscathed through the postmodern assault on other foundational assumptions. This sovereign self-determining subject has been challenged but not displaced. Symbolic practices of Western culture have produced the agential, autonomous individual, and it is a durable ideograph. The importance of this ideograph is culturally contingent; in some cultures the individual matters little. Its displacement by a diffuse and decentered self that is constituted by the discursive and symbolic practices of culture has advantages.

Returning to Waldo, would this ideographic conception of the individual solve his rather major unit of analysis problem? In some ways no, but in other ways yes. There remains a certain ambiguity about how big the unit of analysis should be. For Waldo there was a question about
whether it should be group, organization, or nation-state. With an ideographic unit of analysis, the boundaries of the unit are not even susceptible to reduction to one size or another. Ideographs are connotative and holistic. Their linguistic value is not their precision in describing an objective reality, but their symbolic integration of meaning into recognizable images or symbolizations. A democratic ideograph would be one that is open to re-interpretation, one whose symbolizations are not fixed permanently. Metaphors may mutate. Democracy in the style of ideography means that new associations are allowed, new attempts at meaning-making are permitted, blasphemies and heresies treated as competing views rather than punishable offenses against Authority.

If ideography is the unit of analysis, culture is the background playing field in which ideographic expressions are imagined, symbolized, communicated, modified, and reaffirmed. Culture is the playing field of a democratic discourse that concerns itself with the politics of meanings and actions.

III. Culture

Waldo’s awareness of insights gleaned from his study of comparative administration deprived him – by virtue of his own disciplined reading of that literature – of any easy-to-claim warrant to impose bureaucracy or democracy on other cultures. Today the transfer of culture that gave him pause seem unavoidable. The insinuation of one culture’s norms and mores
onto another's has become considerably less manageable in the age of the Internet. Boundaries between cultures are easily permeated by ideographic exchange or replication of cultural icons via media such as DVD's, Internet, television, I-pods, radio, and mobile telephones. The velocity of global communicative movement – some of it monologic like television, some dialogic like Internet blogging – renders cultural boundaries infinitely permeable.

No culture is now sufficiently isolated from others as to remain innocent of exposure to foreign influences and ideographs. The ethical choice that Waldo imagined to be of considerable significance during the heyday of comparative administration – the imposition of an instrumentally rational bureaucratic values system on non-Western culture – now pales in comparison to cross-national and cross-cultural influences that circulate under the label *globalization*. There is tremendous anxiety about preserving culture, and this anxiety is expressed differently in differing cultures. The incompatibility of American military establishments on Saudi soil was of immense concern to much of the Islamic world. That Arab women may sometimes be seen wearing traditional burkas and American-style running shoes at the same time is not so much a contradiction as a sign of the times.

Deep divisions over matters such as abortion, gun control, homosexuality, feminism, environmentalism and the role of religion in government have been described as culture wars (Hunter, 1991). One need
not invoke the over-used metaphor of war to recognize that the playing field of politics has moved toward cultural contestations over meanings and values. The omnipresence of such contestations supports public choice pessimism about the possibility of a public interest.

IV. The Public Interest

Recapturing an overarching public interest in light of pluralistic tendencies may be an impossible task and its pursuit would not be compatible with postmodern antiessentialism. But there may be contingent moments and particular controversies or circumstances where participants in a discussion find their way to a resolution that may be described as *in the public interest*. This section will imagine such possibilities.

Just as values and goals such as efficiency, security, liberty and equity require context for them to make sense, so do aspirations such the public interest or the common good. There have been public interest arguments put forth to initiate and sustain any number of public programs in the United States, from national defense to social security, to Medicare and Medicaid. Let me briefly mention a few others, for the purpose of demonstrating that a contingent, pragmatic approach to the public interest may redeem the concept as a viable ambition for public administration.

A. Wildlife Refuge

The American national wildlife refuges are home to many of the nation’s endangered or threatened species. The refuges protect many fragile
and environmentally important ecosystems that provide habitat for migratory birds, marine mammals and fish. Whether the protection of such ecosystems is in the public interest or not is politically debatable – think of the snail darter. But no one argues that wiping out the North American passenger pigeon was a good thing.

While wildlife refuges seem to have the moral suasion to weigh in as a candidate for consideration, other controversies will arise during budget appropriations and in the implementation stage. The creation of wildlife refuges, like environmental protections of any kind including protections against global heating, can and should be debated with reference to a public interest, but advocacy is needed to advance the pro-refuge argument (or the pro-environmental argument). If public administration is to advocate and enact the public interest, it cannot construe itself as conversationally “neutral.”

B. Corruption

While it is possible that the payoff from fighting corruption would not justify the effort in some contexts, it seems that anti-corruption efforts, like the establishment of wildlife refuges, holds strong potential for redeeming a contingent claim on the viability of the public interest. Corruption, the appropriation of economic advantage through bribery and fraud, is lamented worldwide as an obstacle to economic and social development. The misuse of public office for private gain, via acts ranging
from nepotism to embezzlement and extortion, can be found in public offices of all kinds. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID 2007) has this to say about corruption:

Corruption poses a serious development challenge. In the political realm, it can seriously undermine democracy and good governance. Corruption in elections and in legislative bodies reduces accountability and representation in policymaking; corruption in the judiciary suspends the rule of law; and corruption in public administration results in the unequal provision of services. More generally, corruption weakens government institutions by disregarding official procedures, siphoning off the resources needed for development, and selecting or promoting officials without regard to performance. At the same time, corruption undermines the legitimacy of government and such democratic values as trust and tolerance.

Corruption also undermines economic development. In the private sector, corruption increases the cost of business through the price of bribes themselves, the management cost of negotiating with officials, and the risk of breached agreements or detection. Although some claim corruption reduces costs by cutting red tape, an emerging consensus holds that the availability of bribes induces officials to contrive new rules and delays. Corruption can also shield companies with connections from fair competition, thus allowing inefficient firms
Corruption also generates economic distortions in the public sector by pulling public investment away from education and into projects where bribes and kickbacks are more plentiful. Corruption also lowers compliance with construction, environmental, or other regulations; reduces the quality of government services; and increases budgetary pressures on government.

As a political-economic problem, the inequities and inefficiencies attributable to corruption is a societal cost that calls for reform (Rose-Ackerman 1999). Working on the side of corruption are a receding moral discourse reaffirming honesty and fairness. The retreat of local newspapers in the coverage of city hall or national government results in an absence of vigilance. It is possible that public administrators would be the only ones in a position to know what is going on, and therefore the only persons who could serve the public interest by letting the facts be known.

The corruption issue can be more complicated than obvious. It is possible that well-meaning policies may collude with corruption to create fertile conditions for its practice. The more things are regulated, so the argument goes, the more corruption is invited. For example, were marijuana not illegal there would be far fewer corrupt law enforcement officers and border patrol agents.
Furthermore, the red tape generated by anti-corruption measures can possibly exacerbate the oft-mentioned inefficiencies. It is the honest businesses that pay the price, via increased paperwork and oversight, for the corruption of the dishonest ones. The tipping point in politics may not be the utilitarian waste of taxpayers money (the United States spends $274 million per day on the war in Iraq) but the degeneration of government into self-interested political-economic oligarchies who play insider games among themselves, either as financially interested lobbyists or on-the-take politicians.

While the matter of corruption is more complicated than meets the eye, there is surely a public interest in minimizing it if possible, and that requires a vigilant public administration willing to shed light on shady practices – willing to enter the public discourse with their knowledge.

C. Public Health

In the medical field of epidemiology, health and disease of the population are of paramount importance. Preventing the outbreak of disease is a public health concern that is obvious except perhaps when there is no threatening disease in circulation among the population.

In this policy area, one need not stray far from the utility-maximizing assumptions of individual self-interest to see a public interest in disease prevention. Once it is understood that disease is a communicable phenomenon, and that few of us live in total isolation from others, public
health is easily interpretable as a public interest. Here the role of public administration in advancing the public interest is to bring scientific expertise to bear on the epidemic in question.

V. Conclusion: The Sins of Our Father

Postmodern public administration should not be viewed as a cynical approach to the field, or to the idea of the public interest. To the contrary, the view of public administration that assigns it the silencing role of neutrality is the view that should be recognized as the one interested in suppressing the public discourse. If that proposition seems like a stretch, let us revisit the legacy of the so-called father of American public administration, Woodrow Wilson. In order to separate the realm of politics from the business practices of public administration, Wilson assumed that the political realm comes to a consensus in which prudent and public-regarding elected officials define the public interest through the act of deciding. This is not invitation to discourse. To public administration this is an invitation to shut up. Advice would be accepted if were intimately linked to expertise, but other contributions to the cultural ideography were explicitly unwelcome under the suppressive requirement of neutrality.

This primitive role for public administration constructs cultural boundaries around the civil service that are nowadays untenable. The rules, methods, and norms of the old unified civil service deprived public administrators of their very citizenship: neutrality displaced advocacy;
hierarchy displaced equality; expertise drew boundaries around what is permissible speech. Public administrators were required to assume a political consensus, a consensus that was feasible only when dissent was suppressed.

Suppression of dissent was one of Wilson’s specialties once he became president. The Espionage Act of 1917, passed at the insistence of President Wilson, was used to arrest Wilson’s rival presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs the very next year. Debs was sentenced to 10 years in prison for making a speech against Wilson’s saber-rattling call for war, the recruiting efforts, and the call-up. The act declared any journal, newsletter or newspaper that challenged Wilson’s war endeavors to be in violation of the law. Hence, anti-war utterances were severely suppressed. German language publications were particular targets. Victor Berger, a newspaper editor who was elected to U.S. Congress from Wisconsin in 1910 and who subsequently opposed the war, was sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges of conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act.

Wilson also pushed for the Sedition Act of 1918 that amended the Espionage Act, extending its suppressive features. This act denied delivery of mail to war dissenters and enhanced the suppression of dissent, which was the main feature of the Espionage Act.\(^2\) The anti-German sentiment that Wilson nurtured contributed, perhaps, to the prohibition of alcohol which

\(^2\) Wilson long admired the “utility, cheapness, and success of the government’s postal service” (Wilson 1887/1941 485).
began during his presidency. The impact of this legislation on the German brewing business was total devastation.

The Palmer Raids deserve mention here, too, as they were also conducted during the dubious presidency of Wilson. After several incompetent but nonetheless menacing bombing attempts by radical anarchists, the Wilson administration (in particular Attorney General Alexander M. Palmer, namesake of the project) commenced a repressive counter-attack. The counter-attack was aimed at “hyphenated Americans who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life. Such creatures of passion, disloyalty and anarchy must be crushed out” (quoted in Kennedy 1980, 24; also cited at wikipedia.com). Using the Espionage Act, federal agents raided the offices of Emma Goldman because she argued publicly against the war and against the draft. Officers confiscated the 10,000 person subscription list to her journal *Mother Earth*. Ten thousand war dissenters were soon arrested and 6,000 were imprisoned or deported. Others learned to keep quiet.

These are not the usual tactics one might associate with consensus-building, but they were exceedingly effective in generating the illusion of unity in the polity. If Loveridge (1971, cited in Demir 2007) is correct that the politics-administration dichotomy depended on a supposed political

3 Wilson’s top-down style of democracy is expressed thusly: “Whoever would effect a change in a modern constitutional government must first educate his fellow citizens to want some change. That done, he must persuade them to want the particular change he wants. He must first make public opinion willing to listen and then see to it that it listen to the right things.” (Wilson 1887/1941: 492).
consensus, one can speculate that the consensus needed to thereby effect a neutral public administration was effectively secured by Wilson.

Silencing dissent is no way to run a democratic constitution, in my view. I know of no American who as done as much damage to free and open public discourse as Woodrow Wilson did. Wilson's sins against democratic discourse derive, it seems to me, from his assumption that the pluralistic polity needed fixing: “The problem is to make public opinion efficient without suffering it to be meddlesome,” he wrote (Wilson 1887/1941, 499). Wilson wished most to insist on a particular principle: “That principle is, that administration in the United States must be at all points sensitive to public opinion” (p. 500). But public opinion for Wilson was a monistic phenomenon. In its pluralistic form, public opinion was a nightmare. According to him. “an individual sovereign will attempt a simple plan and carry it out directly: he will have but one opinion, and he will embody that one opinion in one command. But this other sovereign, the people, will have a score of differing opinions. . . There will be a succession of resolves running through a course of years, a dropping fire of commands running through a whole gamut of modifications” (p. 491). What was the solution to this over-supply of public opinion? The imperious Wilson ended the conversation before it even began with his comment that “this discrimination between administration and politics is now, happily, too obvious to need further discussion” (p. 495).
Wilson’s aim in “The Study of Administration” was to “straighten the paths of government, to make its business less unbusinesslike, to strengthen and purify its organization, and to crown its duties with dutifulness” (Wilson 1887/1941 485). He presupposes the existence of a consensual polity (and when he became president tried to force such consensus when such did not exist). Were the pluralism of the body politic given its full due, the model of neutral administration espoused by Wilson would not have achieved the prestige it was subsequently afforded.

Administration is not something that is identical in a monarchy, in a democracy, in the 19th century, in the 21st century. To assume that there is a universal science of public administration is to preempt democratic discourse by forcing on the polity a particular set of social practices. Public administration, like all social institutions, depends on the culture in which it is embedded, depends on the problematics it confronts. In other words public administration is a contingent social practice and not a universal principle.

Over a range of policy questions – government processes, public health, wildlife protection – the potential for activating a public interest is fulsome and immanent. The world has moved quite some distance from overarching consensus – a consensus whose partner in governance is neutral administration. Wilson is more the antichrist of democratic discourse than the father of public administration. Rather than continuing
to contrive a political consensus that enables a unified administration, the
field needs to accommodate the contingent.

Recapturing the public interest in conditions of decentered pluralism seems not an impossible task. While this short conference paper has certainly not sealed the deal, it has, I think, illustrated that the effort to explicate a public interest that is contingent and situational has promise for bringing the idea of public interest back into the public administration discourse, and into the practice of public administration.

The policy issues briefly mentioned in the previous section gather in a large array of issues when their connotations are allowed to play out:

- *Wildlife refuge* connotes environmental protection along various dimensions.
- *Corruption* invokes antidotes such as good government and ethical conduct by public officials.
- *Epidemiology* reminds us that we all have bodies – biological bodies that are susceptible to communicable disease. Apocalyptic death and plague have already visited the species in times past.

Why should public administration be excluded from their sociality, from the desire to participate in culture, from helping to shape the ideographs that help shape society? Such exclusion would not be good for public administration and would be even worse for society and polity. Does the concept of *public interest* imply a special role for public administration?
I think so, but it is not always the same role. In some instances the public administrator serves the public interest as a scientific expert; other times as a whistle blower; and other times as a policy advocate. It’s not just that public administration should allow citizens to participate in governance. Rather public administrators themselves should participate in governance using all their wits, not only their technical competence. The public interest depends on it.
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