

**POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION:
A REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND SOME SUGGESTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The role of public administration in the political process has been of great concern since the emergence of public administration as an academic field in the late 1880s. The question of how public administration relates to the political process is of pivotal importance to scholars and practitioners alike as it bears implications for disciplinary identity (and autonomy) and institutional development of public administration. Despite a voluminous literature on the subject, the question remains unanswered. This paper identifies three major schools of thought on politics-administration relationship, and examines the state of research that has flowed in three strands as historical, conceptual, and empirical. In the end, the paper makes an overall evaluation and lays out some suggestions.

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The proper role of public administration in the political process has remained an important question since the emergence of public administration as a field of study in the late 1880s. In his famous article, Wilson (1887) outlined what later happened to be called the politics-administration dichotomy, a theoretical model that emphasizes distinct features of public administration vis-à-vis politics. In Wilson's (1887) words, public administration "lies outside the proper sphere of politics." (p. 210). The politics-administration dichotomy rests on a functional-structural view of government, dividing governmental authority between elected and administrative officials along functional lines. As such, government is conceptualized as though it has two discrete domains as politics and administration, with each one occupied separately by elected and administrative officials.

With contributions from numerous scholars, Wilson's rudimentary ideas have gradually evolved into a model of public administration that had tremendous influence on the intellectual identity of public administration until the mid 1940s. As a result of substantive critiques that followed in the post-war period, the politics-administration dichotomy lost some of its theoretical and normative appeal, and consequently, gave rise to development of alternative models. The fading legacy of the dichotomy, however, has not ended the controversy over the proper role of public administration in the political process. This long-standing controversy is important to both academics and practitioners because it relates intimately to identity of the discipline as well as future development of public administration profession (Whicker et al., 1993; Rutgers, 1997; Miller, 2000). That the stakes are high is one reason to understand why the intellectual inquiry into this big question of public administration has failed to come to a successful conclusion.

During the past decades, public administration scholars proposed numerous explanations and theoretical models in their attempts to understand the role of public administration in the political process. In this paper, we examine these scholarly efforts under three schools of thought, which are called *separation*, *political*, and *interaction* schools. The two of them, the separation and the integration schools, appear to stand as polar extremes, representing fundamental differences among scholars with respect to public administrators' political role. In the middle of the two schools lies what we call the interaction school, which carries some features of both extremes yet offers a unique understanding of how public administration does and should relate to politics. Each school has strong advocates undertaking historical, conceptual, and empirical approaches to their study and coming up with propositions to support the schools with which they feel affiliated. This paper (1) articulates the three schools of thought (2) analyzes past research that produced an arsenal of findings and insights on policy-administration relationship, and (3) lays out some suggestions to study policy-administration relationship.

THREE SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

THE SEPARATION SCHOOL

We use the term “separation” to denote this school of thought in that a group of scholars advance an agenda for separating politics from administration to the extent possible for both normative and practical reasons. The separation scholars tend to view the governmental realm as divided into two zones, that is, politics and administration. They take a functional approach to analyze the relationship between politics and administration. The function of politics is to provide guidance, or what Wilson (1887) said, “setting the task for administration.” The function of public administration, on the other hand, is to provide neutral competence to the policy process. Elected officials provide political guidance through policy leadership and legislative oversight. Policy leadership links elected officials to citizens, while legislative oversight links them to public administrators. On the other side of the policy process stands public administration whose primary responsibility is to enable public policies into concrete implementation in conformity with legislative intentions and instructions.

The separation school treats public administration as a world in its own with values, rules, and methods divorced from those of politics. As understood by the separation school proponents, primary values that guide public administration include neutrality, hierarchy, and expertise, which altogether refer to a defining feature of public administration: neutral competence. The overarching goal of public administrators is to provide neutral and competent policy advice to elected officials. In Kaufman’s (1956) words, neutral competence is “the ability to do the work of government expertly, and to do it according to explicit, objective standards rather than to personal or party or other obligations and loyalties” (p. 1060). Three constitutive components of neutral competence, neutrality, expertise, and hierarchy, help public administrators maintain distance from politics while ensuring their contributions to policymaking process.

Bureaucratic neutrality encompasses both political and policy neutrality. More specifically, neutrality means that “public employees and activities be non-partisan, apolitical, and void of any particular policy agenda,” “administering the affairs of the [polity] with integrity and efficiency and loyalty to the [elected leadership], without participating in or allowing their work to be affected by contending programs or partisans,” and “maintaining a neutral stand on policy issues that divide the community” (e.g., Loveridge 1971; White 1927 in Lockard 1962, 226; Wolf 1999, 146-147). Expertise is given significant weight in separation school. In its best application, administrative expertise ensures competent and non-partisan contribution to the policy process. The separation school proponents rest their conclusions on the premise that public administrators are in possession of special knowledge and skills, and elected officials are eager to incorporate administrative knowledge and skills into policy process (e.g., Loveridge, 1971). In other words, the separation school assumes a consensus model of government where a wise and public regarding elected body with expert advice reaches decisions in the public interest (e.g., Loveridge, 1971).

The proponents of the separation school express support for a clear structural division of authority between elected and administrative officials to eliminate or minimize undue political influences on public administration as well as potential conflicts. Svvara (1987), for example, emphasizes the strength of a structural division (best exemplified in council-manager form of

government), “in council-manager cities, friction is reduced when responsibilities are divided in a way that limits interference by one set of officials in the activities of others (213). In such a system of divided authority, Montjoy and Watson (1995) state, “neither individual members nor the whole council bypass the manager in giving directions to the staff” (p. 236). Hierarchical nature of the administrative organization helps minimize undue political influences over public administrators, while policymaking prerogative of elected officials proves to be highly effective in resolving conflicts on disputable policy issues (e.g., Abney and Lauth 1982; Koehler 1973; Svava 1990; Miller 2000). Political influences on public administrators are considered to be leading to corruption, that is, making of administrative decisions on the basis of partisan political considerations. The leading assumption that inspires the proponents of this school is that “politics and administration work best as independent variables, capable of being improved in isolation without endangering or interfering with the other side” (Martin, 1988, p. 632). The school draws attention to the potential negative consequences of free interaction between politics and administration (e.g., Klay, 1983). Svava (1990), for example, notes that “there are cases of cities controlled by an appointed manager who cannot be challenged because of longevity or community support.” In Svava’s words, “the manager has become the master to whom the board defers out of respect and dependency” (37). The separation school also advances a pragmatic argument that rational bureaucratic structure makes public administrators less effective in fulfilling the political function, managing conflict in matters of public importance (Sparrow 1984, 3). Both normative arguments (eliminating political corruption and administrative tyranny) and pragmatic arguments (fulfilling the political function effectively) lead the separation school proponents to embrace a functional and structural division between politics and administration.

The separation school defines clear roles for elected and administrative officials. Public administrators are linked to elected officials in subordinate position. That is, administrators look up to elected officials for policy direction, while making expert contributions to policy process by engaging in how to do questions. In the ideal world of the political-administrative world, as conceived by the separation school, elected and administrative officials perform their roles as normatively assigned, and the resultant outcome is a political-administrative system where public administrators are competent yet accountable and responsive to their elected officials. So, competent, accountable, and responsive public administration constitutes the ultimate goal of the separation school.

THE POLITICAL SCHOOL

The political school represents a group of public administration scholars that emphasize and support a broad policy role for public administration. This school positions itself against the separation school and is characterized by outright rejection of the politics-administration distinction. The political school proponents consider public administration as an inseparable part of the political process (e.g., Long, 1954; Bosworth, 1958; Pfiffner, 1985; Miller, 1993). The political school takes administrative discretion as a point of departure to rationalize the policy role of public administrators. Of many reasons, vague and ambiguous legislations, lack of technical knowledge and resources available to elected officials, and difficulties in monitoring and controlling bureaucratic behavior are a few used to signify the critical role of public administrators in the policy process. Consequently, for political school proponents, there are strong grounds to view public administrators as policy makers (e.g., Lipsky, 1980).

The argument for political public administration is advanced on both normative and pragmatic grounds. From a normative standpoint, the political school advocates that public administrators should not confine their domain to mere implementation of policies, but expand their role to include policy advocacy and formulation. Directing attention to detrimental consequences of unquestioned obedience to political masters, the political school supports that public administrators critically examine moral implications of policies prior to figuring out the most efficient and expedient means of accomplishing them. Assured by the fact that public administration has a constitutive character as well as instrumental, the political school searches for policy agendas that public administrators should pursue to accomplish desirable goals (Cook, 1996). Emerged in the late 1960s, New Public Administration (NPA), for example, advanced a social equity agenda. One of the leading proponents of this movement, Frederickson (1971) rejected subordination of public administration to political leadership, when he said Congressmen and the executive represent the privileged few, while public administrators and courts should be spokesman for the underrepresented. Similarly, other representatives of the political school assign a broad policy role for public administration. For Rohr (1986), public administrators should work to maintain the balance between three branches of government, implication of which is that public administrators have autonomy to choose which masters to serve. They make this choice to safeguard fundamental values of the regime such as liberty and equality (e.g., Rohr, 1986).

Some public administration scholars, representing the political school, rest their arguments on pragmatic grounds. In their view, political power in the U.S. governmental structure is widely diffused, and this fact makes it essential for public administrators to engage in politics, and build and maintain coalitions (e.g., Long, 1954). Abney and Lauth (1985), among others, even argue in favor of interest group-public administration interaction on the belief that interest groups complement the electoral process, which has certain deficiencies.

The political approach to public administration rejects the subordinate, instrumental role of public administration in relating to elected officials. Moreover, for the proponents of the political school, public administrators are not just policy makers, but *should* also be actively involved in policy making. What determines the legitimacy of public administration is not a function of official authority granted to them by legislative enactments, but whether the policy goals they pursue are socially and politically desirable. Although there are some differences in the goals promoted as desirable, establishing and maintaining a democratic society constitutes a common ground that would unite many scholars in this school. To accomplish a democratic society, the political school scholars first identify barriers and then propose workable strategies to overcome these barriers (e.g., Forester, 1989)

Having acknowledged and even promoted a political role of public administrators, political school proponents turn to the art of political decision-making. The action question, for them, is how to best prepare public administrators for political tasks so that they can get things done. Numerous skills are offered as important, and practicing public administrators are recommended to equip themselves with these skills (e.g., **Golembiewski, 1994**; Moore, 1995). In the ideal world of the political public administration, as envisioned by the political school, public administrators work with other members of the political community to search for effective solutions to the policy problems, in pursuit of their ultimate goal of a democratic society.

THE INTERACTION SCHOOL

The interaction school is represented by a group of public administration scholars that emphasize a high degree of collaboration between elected and administrative officials while maintaining each one's traditional roles and unique perspectives. In a sense, the interaction school seeks a middle ground between the separation and political schools. In the words of this school's earliest representatives:

As we all should know by now, politics and administration are inextricably intermixed. Both are central to effective action. One problem is to bring them together in a symbiotic association yet keep each in its proper place. The other is to understand that the "proper place" of each will vary through time. There is no permanent solution, no fixed paradigm, to this or any other ends-means continuum. (Van Riper, 1983, p. 489)

The interaction school acknowledges the differences between politics and administration in a number of ways such as logical and psychological differences between politics and administration, or dissimilarities in the perspectives, values, and formal positions of elected and administrative officials (Waldo, 1980; Nalbandian, 1994, Svava, 2001). Yet, what makes the interaction school somewhat different from the separation school is its emphasis on ongoing cooperation between elected and administrative officials in the process of policy making. Furthermore, the interaction school seeks an expansion of the value set of public administration. Excerpting from two city managers, Nalbandian (1994) states:

They [two city administrators] reflect the notion that elected officials and administrative staff are partners in the governance process even though the governing body is the senior partner; that managers must ground their authority in community values as well as their legal relationship to the council; and that efficiency alone no longer will suffice as a guide to effective administrative work. (p. 535)

The interaction school allows a broader policy role for public administrators for mostly pragmatic reasons. Our attention, by this school, is drawn to the increasing complexity and dynamism in the political, social, and economic environment of policymaking, a fact that makes intense interaction between elected and administrative officials an essential requirement for success (Nalbandian, 1999). Excerpting from an elected official, Nalbandian (1999) says, "hierarchy is of little use in handling those problems that require independence, creativity and innovation, connectedness, communication, and cooperation" (p. 194). The interaction school is less reliant on formal hierarchical structures of government that traditionally defined the relationship between elected and administrative officials in superior-subordinate terms.

The interaction school makes itself distinguished from the political school, however: (1) it clearly views the elected body of government as senior partner in the relationship, thus requiring public administrators to fully remain accountable and responsive to elected officials, and (2) accepting the role of administrative competence for sound policy making (e.g., Svava, 1999; Svava, 2001). The interaction school develops a number of prescriptions as to what is acceptable behavior for elected and administrative officials. As Svava (2001) puts it, partisan

type of politics is prohibited to public administrators, while elected officials are not allowed to interfere with the daily routines of management. However, when it comes to policy and administration issues, the interaction school supports overlapping roles, reciprocal influence, and mutual deference between elected and administrative officials (e.g., Svava, 2001, pp. 179-80).

In the ideal world of political-administrative world, as envisioned by the interaction school, public administrators maintain a productive partnership with elected officials, partnering with, informing and helping them in the policy process, yet remain accountable and responsive to their elected officials. Cognizant of the risk that intense interaction between elected and administrative officials may fuel negative dynamics that might eventually lead to political corruption or administrative tyranny, the interaction school finds the assurance in the interaction process itself, that is, in the interplay of different roles creating a *restraining effect of reciprocating values* (Svava, 2001, p. 179). As such, in the end, one should expect both administrative competence and political responsiveness to reach their fullest potential.

Table 1 presents dimensions along which the three schools differ from each other.

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STATE OF THE RESEARCH

In this part, we review state of the research on politics-administration relationship. We broadly categorize research efforts under three strands, which are historical, conceptual, and empirical approaches. The following three sections examine these approaches to the study of politics-administration relationship.

HISTORICAL APPROACH

History has been so generous to public administration scholars in offering help to uncover the meaning of important concepts. Since every concept is born out of a political and social context, it, then, does make sense to closely examine the historical origins of concepts and attempt to discover incomplete understandings, misinterpretations, or even deliberate distortions. Public administration scholars study prominent figures or important political/social events as potential sources of insight on the role of public administration in the political process.

Some public administration scholars took the founders of the field, and put their works, and even deeds, under magnifier. Price (1941), for example, examined Robert Child and his efforts to promote the council-manager plan which is the structural equivalent of politics-administration distinction. Martin (1988) argued that Wilson's definition of the dichotomy was a result of mistranslation, which Wilson himself noticed and corrected later, while Svava (1998) and Lynn (2001) focused on the founders' writings and argued that they meant something totally different from what many public administration scholars presently take for granted regarding the meaning of the politics-administration dichotomy. Roberts (1994) explained the development of the dichotomy with particular emphasis on Rockefeller Philanthropies and the use of the dichotomy as a "rhetorical strategy" intended to help institutional development of public administration in its formative years. Hoffman (2002) looked at the curriculum of public administration between 1884 and 1896 at Johns Hopkins University, and argued that the

founders' approach did not concentrate on government structure and management skills, but on politics, economics, history, law, and ethics. Schachter (1989) discredited the dichotomous distinction between politics and administration by examining Frederick Taylor in particular and discovered some misunderstandings and distortions through a careful reading of scientific management movement.

Some scholars shift focus from prominent figures to social and political events/progress, thereby shedding light on the true meanings of important concepts taken for granted by public administration community. Representatives include Stillman (1991) (examining the nature of administrative development in the U.S. that makes the dichotomy untenable), and Karl (1976) (examining the history of professionalism), Schiesl (1977) (examining the political agendas behind the dichotomy), and McSwite (1997) (analyzing the founding period with particular focus to the political struggles that led to promotion and maintenance of the dichotomy).

Despite the vast amount of knowledge and insight that the historical approach provides, there are certain limitations noteworthy. First, many scholars who utilize history place an exclusive emphasis on prominent individuals and their original intentions, yet tending to neglect the power of thoughts in their own right, regardless of what was intended by the founders. For example, even if the progenitors might not have meant a strict separation of policy from administration, as might be revealed by a careful reading of their writings, it is still quite possible to support a strict policy-administration dichotomy for a variety of reasons. Second, it is clear that history entertains no fixed meaning; indeed, it's meaning is open to different interpretations. That is why some believe that the dichotomy was never meant by the progenitors (e.g., Svava, 1998, Lynn, 2001) and yet, some others continue to argue that the founders indeed grudgingly accorded a significant policy role to public administrators (Sayre, 1958; **Lowery, 1993**). Sayre (1958), for example, argued that the founders assumed the politics-administration dichotomy both as a self-evident truth and as a desirable goal; administration was perceived as a self-contained world of its own, with its own separate values, rules, and methods. Despite its significant limitations, historical approach is widely used, at least, to grant emerging models some degree of legitimacy. Svava (1998), for example, in his efforts to advance a complementarity model, frequently refers to the founding period of public administration for inspiration and legitimacy:

The manager was viewed as a participant in the deliberations about policy decisions who would offer a distinct perspective [sic.], although he would not supplant the council's policy-making prerogatives... This view provided for a clearer differentiation of roles, but the intermixture of responsibilities was complex (p. 54).

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

According to Svava (1985), "the heart of the problem in understanding the relationship between politics and administration has been our inability to conceptualize it" (p. 4). Conceptualizations offer unique ways of understanding the phenomena, and provide foundations upon which further research can be conducted. Conceptualization efforts have flowed in three strands: public administrator as the unit of analysis, the politics-administration distinctions, and the whole political system as the unit of analysis.

Scholars create typologies that reflect a variety of roles for public administrators, each role defining a different level of administrative involvement in the policy process. In one of the

earliest efforts, Loveridge (1968) developed and used nine roles for city managers including policy innovator, policy advocate, budget consultant, policy administrator, policy neutral, political advocate, political leader, political recruiter, and political campaigner. Loveridge found that almost all city managers believe they should participate in the initiation, formulation, and presentation of policy proposals. Lewis (1982) examined the role behavior of city managers, and proposed seven roles extending from what he calls “traditional textbook administrator” to “near-boos type.” Moore (1995) proposed two roles, as technician and strategist, and endorsed the latter as an ideal type public administrator who is capable of creating public value. Terry (2002) created a typology of public administrators, which included climbers, conservers, advocates, zealots, and statesmen. Most recently, Svara (2006) developed a typology in which public administrators fall into one of four categories: isolated, manipulated, autonomous, or politicized administrators. Svara’s typology uses two factors: level of control of public administrators by elected officials and degree of distance and differentiation between elected and administrative officials. Selden et al.’s (1999) principal and agent conceptualization, and Cooper’s (1991) citizen-administrator are also among the various conceptualizations of public administrators. The authors of these conceptualizations expressly favor one type over the other, and follow with prescriptions over how public administrators should relate to the political process.

Some scholars, on the other hand, look into the differences and/or similarities between politics, policy, management, and administration, and develop their conceptualizations accordingly. This sort of conceptualization began with Woodrow Wilson (1887) and continued with Goodnow (1900), in that both founders rested their models on what they viewed as fundamental distinctions between politics and administration. Some contemporary public administration scholars carry on this tradition. Nalbandian (1994), among others, notes a number of important distinctions between politics and administration, while Overeem and Rutgers (2003) identify sixteen characteristics along which they attempt to crystallize the distinction between politics and administration. Based on the number and degree of perceived differences and similarities, scholars develop models that reflect their judgment as to the proper role of public administration in the policy process. The politics-administration dichotomy stands as one of the oldest among this type of models. The politics-administration dichotomy is a particular conceptualization of politics-administration relationship resting on the assumption that each function works best as an independent variable, and capable of being improved in isolation without endangering or interfering with the other side (Martin, 1988, p. 632). Politics is for providing guidance, whereas public administration is for providing neutral competence (for a most recent conceptualization of the dichotomy, see Demir and Nyhan, forthcoming). The demise of the dichotomy was followed by the emergence of development of alternative models. One of these models, gaining popularity in recent years, is Svara’s (1990) dichotomy-duality model. This particular model conceptualizes politics and management as dichotomous. The model, however, supports overlapping roles and reciprocal influence between elected and administrative officials with respect to policy and administration. As such, public administrators are encouraged to assume a broader and more active role in policymaking process. Elected officials continue to retain their prerogative as to formal policymaking and mission formulation, two major tasks considered in the domain of politics.

Some scholars develop more comprehensive models without special focus on the distinctions between politics and administration. For many of these scholars, the distinction is either nonexistent, or does not merit special theoretical treatment. Some of the models are descriptive of the policy process, while others sound more normative. These models include New

Public Administration (e.g., Marini, 1971; Frederickson, 1980; 1997), Postmodern Public Administration (e.g., Fox and Miller, 1995; Spicer, 2001; Farmer, 1995), New Public Management (e.g., Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Behn, 2001), and most recently, New Public Service (e.g., Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). These models draw more attention to public administrators' relationships with the other players in the policy process.

Conceptual approach to the study of politics-policy-administration relationship is important in the sense that it gives the entire research enterprise a focus as to what concepts are important and need to be studied, and furthermore, facilitates data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Although conceptual approach improves our understanding on the role of public administration in the policy process, there are significant problems. First, many conceptual models are limited in clarity. For example, the dichotomy-duality model endorses overlapping roles and reciprocal influence between elected and administrative officials on policy and administration; however, the model is not clear as to what makes a problem policy or administration in nature. The lines drawn seem arbitrary, reflecting a particular author's personal observations and beliefs. Second, many of these models are limited in the strength of empirical support, a problem that will be addressed in greater detail in the following section.

EMPIRICAL APPROACH

Public administration scholars have produced a substantial amount of research output on the role of public administration in the political process. Research methodologies varied significantly including interviews, anecdotal evidence, case studies, personal experiences, surveys, descriptive data analysis, hypotheses testing, and theoretical model construction and evaluation. In the following lines, we summarize empirical research that shed light on the role of public administration in the political process.

In terms of topical interest, there has been much diversity in research endeavors. Some studies focused on political and policy role of public administrators while some others focused on elected officials' interference with administration (e.g., Loveridge, 1971; Abney and Lauth, 1982; Selden, Brewer, and Brudney, 1999; Nalbandian, 1994; Watson, 1997; Koven, 1989; Hasset and Watson, 2002). For example, Watson (1997) studied political profiles of local bureaucrats in Alabama, and identified likely characteristics of bureaucrats that are politically engaged. Abney and Lauth (1982), based on a survey of municipal managers, examined elected officials' involvement in administration, and found that elected officials frequently interfere with administration. These studies analyzed political-administrative relations, corroborating widespread claims that the traditional boundaries of politics and administration have significantly shifted over the past decades (Nalbandian, 1999).

A number of studies focused on the nature and quality of communication between elected and administrative officials, specifically addressing the issues of conflict and cooperation among these officials (e.g., Koehler, 1973; Carrel, 1962). The unit of analysis, in this type of research, was either individual managers or elected officials. A few researchers, however, conducted empirical analysis at agency level. For example, Hecl (1975) and Wolf (1999) studied Office of Management and Budget for understanding the role of public administration in the policymaking process. Some public administration scholars analyzed decisions as the unit of analysis. Fleischmann (1989), for example, examined rezoning decisions in Atlanta, GA during one year to see whether or not the relations between professional planners and elected officials comport

with traditional understanding of how administration and politics related to each other in local governments. He found evidence supporting the idea that expertise helps minimize partisan politics. Koven (1992) studied base-closing decisions to see whether the politics-administration dichotomy holds currency in this special case where the legislation was designed in a manner to isolate administration from politics. His analysis, however, showed the difficulties of that isolation despite much legislative effort. Also, quite a few other scholars looked into the politics-administration relationship from a third-party point of view. Stover (1995), for example, analyzed Burger-Rehnquist Court decisions, and concluded that the Court upheld traditional public administration principles. His analysis implied that good public administration, from the Court's point of view, is a function of commitment to traditional administrative principles such as division of labor, definition, authority, unity, and responsibility.

Some studies attempted to understand how public administrators and elected officials perceive each other (e.g., Lee, 2001; 2006). Lee (2001), for example, used his long experience as an elected official, and concluded that public administrators are perceived in a subordinate position vis-à-vis elected officials, and are expected to follow legislative directions without serious argument. Nalbandian (1999) used interviews with managers and elected officials, supporting mutual support and partnerships between elected and administrative officials.

Some scholars utilized descriptive data analysis to determine the degree of politics versus professionalism of public administration. Newell and Ammons (1987), for example, looked into the time allotment patterns of municipal managers, and found that city managers spent an average of 17 percent of their total time for political roles that involved community leadership. More recently, French (2005) evaluated time allocations of mayor and managers in small cities and towns. His research found that managers in small cities and towns spend more time on policy and management activities, and less time on political activities than mayors. Some other studies reported an increasing use of management tools by managers, thereby implying a growth in professionalism of public administration (e.g., Poister and McGowan, 1984; Poister and Streib, 1992).

Since political and policy activities of public administrators have always been of much interest to scholars, some studies focused on the political competences of public administrators, evaluating the degree of performance of administrators in policy and politics. For example, Ammons and Newell (1989) found a low competence of administrators in community leadership based on their observations in local government (see also Sparrow, 1984). In a survey research to identify critical skills needed by municipal managers, Kerrigan and Hinton (1980) found that "situation analysis" and "assessment of community needs" ranked high on importance scale. The authors showed that more technical knowledge and skill areas ranked lower on the importance scale, a finding that further substantiated the shifting boundaries between politics, policy, and administration. Some studies specified and tested hypotheses to understand whether public administrators are effective in politics. For example, Daniel and Rose (1991) measured the correlation between professionalism and political acuity. Although the correlation between the two turned out to be somewhat low, the authors presented the findings as empirical support to the emerging ideal of blending professionalism and politics.

Finally, some researchers attempted to test theoretical models using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Browne (1985) tested Svara's dichotomy-duality model (re: complementarity model) and found some supportive evidence for the model; however, the research had an important limitation in that it examined only policy initiatives. Dunn and Legge (2002) used three models that they culled from the literature, and surveyed local government

managers to understand whether public administrators' relationships with elected officials conform to the three models that public administration scholars had used to characterize that relationship. Dunn and Legge (2002) found empirical evidence supportive of what they named the partnership model, indicating strength of blending politics and administration in policy development and administration. And very recently, Demir and Nyhan (forthcoming) specified a theoretical model of politics-administration dichotomy, and tested the theoretical model with extensive nationwide survey data collected from city managers. Their research failed to provide support for major hypotheses of the politics-administration dichotomy, a model that favors very limited policy role for public administrators for normative and pragmatic reasons.

In summary, public administration scholars significantly benefited from empirical approach to the study of politics-administration relationship. It is clear that empirical research produced important findings and insights that subsequently were used to provide support to positions by the proponents of the three schools. However, the focus of much empirical research remained rather narrow; rarely did public administration scholars specify and test comprehensive models. Since most of the research was not theory-guided, the findings largely turned out to be mixed and inconclusive, open to being interpreted in ways that may support one school or the other. For example, it is quite possible to interpret a low yet positive correlation between professionalism and political acuity (Daniel and Rose, 1991) as support to political school or to the separation school, depending on the researcher's perspective and personal beliefs.

EVALUATION AND SOME SUGGESTIONS

Separation, political, and interaction schools each contributed immensely to our understanding of how public administrators related to political process in contemporary government. Historical, empirical, and conceptual approaches adopted by public administration scholars have turned out to be rather prolific. A voluminous literature notwithstanding, it is clear that the controversy remains largely unsettled. Challenged and critiqued by numerous scholars, the separation school is still capable of responding to its critics. For example, the political school proponents support a morally-conscious public administration, however, this precept rests on the assumption that moral implications of policies are clear, an assumption hard to hold. The interaction school has a number of limitations. First, the interaction school underestimates the power imbalances between elected officials and public administrators. In the process of interaction, the powerful side may override the powerful side. In other words, the interaction might result in loss of either administrative competence or political supremacy. The role of reciprocating values as a safety check remains untested. Second, by accepting the dichotomy between politics and management, yet tolerating overlapping roles and reciprocal influence, the interaction school neglects the risk of role ambiguity and its probable consequences: the greater the role ambiguity the more one can engage in political activity with little chance of it being visible.

Defining the role of public administration in the political process is a challenging academic task given the fact that any definition is likely to carry strong implications for the intellectual identity and institutional development of public administration. Decades of research produced a huge literature with important findings and insights. Yet, it is hard to conclude that the controversy is over. Each school has limitations, and past research produced inconclusive and mixed evidence that allowed much discretion to judge the proper role of public administration in

the political process. Table 2 reports a summary of the research that supports the three schools of thought.

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It is clear that each school is supported by scholars undertaking historical, conceptual, and empirical approaches. It is also clear that available research does not support one school clearly over the others. So, what should be done? What sort of methodological approach we should utilize to make the best possible use of the available literature, and furthermore, to move the future scholarly inquiry in more productive direction. We make the following suggestions:

1. In our judgment, each school addresses certain problems better than do the other schools. So, if we shift our focus from generic propositions to specific problems, unique contributions of each school to our understanding will become clearer. The separation school might assist in distancing politics from administration (such a need may emerge under particular circumstances), the interaction school is helpful in getting elected and administrative officials to cooperate (in cases where uncertainty and complexity may force such a cooperation), and the political school might assist in making the best use of politics to accomplish political and social goals (when moral implications of policies are clear).
2. As mentioned in the preceding lines, each school has certain limitations and weaknesses. This is why public administration community needs to keep the three schools in the intellectual inventory. Where one school fails the other school may come to our rescue. If there are problems with politicized public administration (that the political school explains and prescribes), the separation school can provide a number of workable strategies that would help distance public administration from politics and get the political-administrative relations back to the point envisioned by the interaction school.
3. Scholars should continue to produce empirically testable hypotheses that reflect the basic convictions of the three schools, and should evaluate these hypotheses with empirical data whenever possible and appropriate. Consistent failure to accept the hypotheses of one school is an indication of its weakness in a particular problem area. This empirical-based research may help us to single out some of the weak claims that one particular school makes, and therefore, we can focus our attention and efforts on what the school truly contributes and may contribute to our understanding. Once this is achieved, can we keep the public administration community from debating what indeed does not merit that debate.
4. Conceptual-theoretical models that explain politics-administration relationship should communicate with one another on a more conscious way. Scholars might try one model's specific claims in the other model's area, and see how the other model responds to those claims. If the dichotomy model, for example, prefers low political engagement by public administrators because of the fear that public administrators will become politically identified, what the other models say about this claim or address this potential problem? The dichotomy-duality model, for example, would respond with "restraining influence of reciprocating values" as a check against the tendencies toward political corruption or administrative tyranny. Was this hypothesis tested? Can it be tested? In sum, we suggest

that the models should communicate with each other to enhance our understanding of problems.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined the literature of public administration on politics-administration relationship. In particular, we identified three major schools of thought, and three approaches to the study of politics-administration relationship. Our review of literature shows that the controversy over the proper role of public administration in the political process is far from being concluded. Despite scholars' best efforts to garner overwhelming support in favor of a particular school, the evidence used and the arguments presented have been mixed and inconclusive, far from compelling us to adopting the perspective of one particular school. Each school of thought seems to be equally powerful, and supported by a wide array of research approaches. This comprehensive review of literature is intended to provide an accessible resource to understand the state of research in public administration on politics-administration relationship. In the end, public administration, as an intellectual enterprise, seems to lack an agreed-upon foundation on which further intellectual inquiry can be built. Instead, the scholarly efforts did and continue to flow in different directions that are inspired and supported by discrepant foundations. Some pragmatic steps can be taken to improve the communication between the three schools, and to help answer some questions, at the very least.

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Table 1. The Three Schools in Summary

Dimension	Separation School	Political School	Interaction School
Politics-Administration distinction	Dichotomous	Undistinguishable	Overlaps
Nature of relationship between elected and administrative officials	Superior-Subordinate	Equals/Competitive	Partnership/Complimentarity (elected officials are senior partners)
The assumption on governance	Consensus	Conflict	Conflict (can be contained through cooperation)
Public administrators' policy role	Policy advising to elected officials, policy implementation	Policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation	Policy formulation (excluding setting broad goals/mission), policy implementation, policy evaluation
Division of labor is determined by	Structural-Functional	Dynamic /Constantly changing	Structural-Functional (reciprocal influence and overlapping roles allowed)
Assumption on political public administrators	Less effective in politics	Politically competent	Need to develop political skills (to assist and understand elected officials better)
Government model	Representative	Participative, Inclusive	Representative, Participative
Source of legitimacy for public administration	Legislation, specific grants of authority from political supervisors	Administrative decisions responding to and/or reflecting values of society (no predetermined legitimacy criterion)	Legislation, specific grants of authority from political supervisors, and community values
Primary means for resolving conflicts	Authority (formal)	Compromise, exercise of power (formal and informal)	Cooperation, mutual understanding and respect
Teleology	Able, yet accountable (to elected representatives) public administration	Democratic Public Administration	Able, accountable, and responsive to community
Fear	Political corruption and administrative tyranny	Undemocratic society (where power and wealth are unequally distributed)	Political corruption and administrative tyranny
How to deal with political corruption and administrative tyranny	Minimization of interaction between elected officials and administrative officials	These are the results of power concentration. Solution lies in the diffusion of power	Maximize interaction between elected and administrative officials. Reciprocating values will restrain tendencies toward political corruption and administrative tyranny

Table 2. The Summary of Research

Research Theme	Historical Approach			Conceptual Approach			Empirical Approach		
	Separation	Political	Interaction	Separation	Political	Interaction	Separation	Political	Interaction
Founders' intentions and deeds	✓	✓	✓						
Political/Hidden agendas		✓							
Historical development of public administration	✓	✓	✓						
Public administrator-focused conceptualization				✓	✓	✓			
Politics-Administration distinctions/similarities				✓	✓	✓			
Policy-related activities of public administrators							✓		✓
Elected official involvement in public administration								✓	✓
The politics of administrative decision making process							✓	✓	✓
Elected and administrative officials' mutual expectations							✓		✓
Third party perspective on public administration (e.g., Courts)							✓		
Professionalism							✓	✓	
Time allocations of managers							✓		✓
Political/Policy competences of public administrators							✓		✓
Analysis of public administrators' needs								✓	✓
Theoretical model building and testing							✓	✓	✓