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BEYOND PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF DEMOCRATIC FEMINIST MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The transformative potential of public administration is forestalled by the portrayal of management as sphere-specific or apolitical and the resultant portrayal of marginality as natural. The lived experiences of people at the organizational level and beyond deny the objectivity of separating public and private management and thus, through the exposure of the politics of management, open a space for discussion of the transformative potential of public administration. This paper suggests a more holistic “management”¹ approach, built on the ideas of feminist and democratic theories and the praxis of Mary Parker Follett, Jane Addams, and more contemporary feminist theories of management. We conclude that a democratic feminist theory of management is potentially transformative in its recognition of the conditions under which all forms of marginalization are sustained and the discovery of the potential to change them.

Ultimately, we can speak no more than our language allows us to speak, and can see and know no more than our social context allows us to experience . . . to alter the terms of public discourse one must change the experiences people have, and to restructure experiences one must change the language available for making sense of those experiences. (Ferguson, 1984, p. 154)

INTRODUCTION

In their textbook on managing human behavior, Denhardt, Denhardt, and Aristigueta (2002, pp. 114-115) provide students with a case study exercise about Diane, a child protective services worker employed for the past three years at the Department of Economic Security. She is talking with her friend about stress. Though she loves her job, Diane cannot sleep, is anxious, and has high blood pressure. She cannot

figure out what is wrong. It could be the new supervisor, the increased workload due to budget cuts, taking care of her four-year-old child, or some of the dangerous situations she walks into on a daily basis. Diane ends her conversation with her friend by asking *what might be wrong with her?* The exercise then asks students what recommendations they might give to Diane to cope with the stress. The assumption is that Diane has little choice but to deal with the stress because “that’s just the way it is.” Public administration management theory offers little in the way of a solution and, where it is neutralized and naturalized, may actually serve to inhibit imagination of an alternative to stress management. The following paper suggests that Diane, public administration and management might do something more than cope.

Diane’s situation and the suggestion that she cope represents more than the personal stress of one individual. The suggestion that Diane cope is a distinctly political one in that it signifies the subordination of the *personal to the professional*. When the system that governs her life identifies the source of her stress as an inability to cope, Diane’s life experience is marginalized in favor of maintaining the myth that the current structure of organizational life is fair and unchangeable. Diane’s struggle, her sleeplessness, anxiousness, and high blood pressure are the result of her lack of ability to deal with stress only in the sense that her stress level is presented as unchangeable and therefore beyond her control. Marginality is stressful because it places an unfair burden on the marginalized, not because the marginalized are less able to deal with stress. Diane’s situation is not the result of her inability to cope, it is the result of her marginalization, and it is ubiquitous. As Agger (2004) highlights:

The fast family is . . . unfair to women, saddling them with stressful jobs and a higher incidence of stress-related illnesses such as heart disease and strokes, while still requiring them to prepare meals, clean the house, and help the kids with homework. (p. 85)

This condition is not limited to women, but extends to all marginalized groups burdened by the competing demands of maintaining an income above the poverty line, which frequently requires more than one job (Ehrenreich, 2002), while balancing the demands of family, which are increasingly idealized by the media’s creation of unrealistic expectations of perfection (Douglas & Michaels, 2004).

With few notable exceptions (e.g., Hutchinson, 2001, 2002; Hutchinson & Mann, 2004; Stivers, 1993, 2000a), mainstream public administration has relied largely on formalisms such as policy and the neutrality of

management and their associated claim to “representativeness” as means to deny images of marginality such as Diane’s. This formalism offers nothing to Diane, who is left to “cope.” At the organizational level the status of marginalized groups, including women, is dealt with through diversions such as Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) policies and management as an apolitical organizational tool. These policies and practices have little or nothing to do with the marginalization of women outside of the organization and outside of legal boundaries; they have everything to do with screening women’s issues behind the narrow lens of employment opportunity—the opportunity to contribute to precisely the system within which one is oppressed and forced to cope. What we would like to see is a world where the EEOC, and any other law or organization that disguises marginality, is not necessary. This is not going to be achieved through the EEOC and apolitical management, which do little or nothing to alleviate the stress borne by those who continue to be marginalized outside of the organization; it must be achieved through the exposure and repoliticization of the conditions that produced the EEOC in the first place. Legal protections against marginalization disguise the significance of the struggle that demanded these protections in the first place. The EEOC is borne of the *significance* of marginalization but has rendered marginalization insignificant through the creation of the assumption that the struggle is over.

Diane’s situation has meaning, but her struggle is eclipsed by the text of public administration and management. This is to say, the legal text that governs marginalization, what is typically referred to as a personnel issue, replaces the story of Diane’s struggle against marginalization. Diane sees no alternative but to cope, to internalize the problem as her own, because her situation is written as natural and therefore the alternative is hidden. We seek, therefore, to re-write her story in order to rediscover the alternative; though ours should not be the last re-writing. As the rise and fall of the cache of feminism and the tendency for the word feminism to lose its political meaning (Agger, 1989) demonstrates, it will need to be *continually* re-written.

Responding to Camilla Stivers’ (1993, 2005) call for a feminist theory of public administration and Hutchinson’s (2001, 2002, 2005) call for a multigendered theory of public administration, we begin here by providing a framework for understanding organizational management in the context of democratic public life through the lens of the feminism of Agger’s (1989) theory of fast capitalism. We will then explain the importance of feminism as a democratic social theory of transformative

public administration. With this theoretical lens established, we will turn to the role of the distinction between public and private in the maintenance of marginality. Finally, we will explore the prelude to a feminist theory of management found in the praxis of Mary Parker Follett, Jane Addams, and contemporary feminist theories and practices in management. Our aim is to introduce a discursive democratic feminist theory of management.

THE DESIGNIFICATION OF THE FEMINIST STRUGGLE: TEXTS IN FAST CAPITALISM

We will frame our discussion of management within Ben Agger's postmodern feminist critical theory of public life (1991), which builds on his (1989) theory of fast capitalism. This will serve to open a space for imagining the transformative potential of public administration and management, as well as to help us to understand where management fits within the spectrum of feminist critical social theory. We take this approach because the legal text is not the only text by which Diane's situation is maintained, though it may be the most frequently referred to (usually as equity or opportunity, which no longer signify the struggles they oppose). We draw on Agger's (1989) theory of fast capitalism because it attempts to uncover the significance of Diane's situation in the face of the degradation of the social texts that govern her life.

Fast capitalism is a critical theory of ideology that recognizes the new modal power relationship as being between text and reader.² The essence of fast capitalism is "text disciplining imagination by appearing not to be writing" (Agger, 1989, p. 86). Texts defy reading through the assumption of authorial authority (p. 24). We focus primarily on the way in which fast capitalism compels passive readings of organizational life, such as Diane's reading of the social texts that govern her life as the only alternative. As Agger explains, "a positivist culture swallows textuality but then expels it into the exterior world. As a text itself, these dispersed versions exercise a power over 'readers' who live them as unalterable versions of the unalterable" (p. 24). The point is that Diane is excluded from discussion of her own world; the EEOC and the label "stress," for example, have ended the discussion by disguising their textuality, dispersing it, and thereby exercising power over Diane's imagination, not to mention her material life.

The degradation of signification, or the way in which texts write our world for us while appearing not to do so—by appearing not to be texts—is the means by which critique is "forestalled in order to protect the world from its reformulation by people who would write and live it

differently” (Agger, 1989, p. 59). According to Agger (2004), “Fast capitalism robs thought of significance; thus we let our words think for us” (p. 131). The word feminism, in particular, has lost its ability to prompt us to think about the continuing struggle of women. In fast capitalism, we do not think of the conditions that resulted in the EEOC or stress, we “read” only the EEOC and then, even if we pause to read, we do not recognize it as being authored and therefore do not think that it could be re-written or that the social world could be written so that laws preventing our marginalization would not be necessary (marginalization was not the result of the absence of the EEOC, so the EEOC as a solution is perhaps a non sequitur) and levels of stress resulting in high blood pressure and sleeplessness would not be ubiquitous.

Agger’s (1989) theory of fast capitalism is a deepening of the Frankfurt School’s understanding of ideology that very specifically addresses not only feminism as critical social theory, but the continued marginalization of women:

Fast capitalism reproduces itself through this circuitry between the realms of values and valueless activity—work and home, public and private, men and women, science and fiction, practice and theory. The domination of reproduction, degraded into mere intellection, text, superstructure, reproduces domination by providing a reserve army of labor and unpaid houseworkers through which a capitalist lifeworld perpetuates itself. (pp. 60-61)

Through the lens of this framework we can understand Diane’s situation as not only a function of dichotomous realms, but as the degradation of her situation through a complex of both material structure and meaning within which we, like Denhardt, Denhardt, and Aristigueta’s (2002) students, can only see the possibility of *coping and interpreting* rather than *opposing*. We seek to reveal that Diane’s story, the situations that govern her life, are authored and thus we might re-write it. Agger’s (1989) project in *Fast Capitalism* is to demonstrate that Diane’s story, as with the entire social world, can be re-written.

Before turning to our discussion of management, we want briefly to position a feminist theory of management as a critically democratic theory. Feminism is not only a women’s issue, it is a democratic issue (Agger, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1998). Feminism stems from the experiences of women as a marginalized group in capitalist patriarchal society. Feminist issues are therefore a basis for understanding all issues of marginalization because women are marginalized within a system that marginalizes *all groups* that deny its “ideal image of itself” (Ryan, 1982, p. 127). A feminist theory of management therefore ought to be di-

rected at the elimination of the conditions under which all forms of marginalization are sustained. As Agger (1991) writes, feminism is critical social theory:

More than a theory of sexual politics, though it is that too, feminism is a theory of textual politics, addressing text's own self-subordination to the more valued realm of public production and politics. . . . Therefore we can link the particular oppressions suffered by people simply because they do not participate in the mainstream—labor, women, people of color, inanimate nature. Feminism in its best sense is a critique of value's subordination of valuelessness. (p. 62)

Feminist management is therefore inherently a critically transformative management. The underlying normative assumption of feminism is that there is something wrong with subordination; in this case, but not in every case, subordination according to gender. This necessarily implies that a feminist management seeks social change.

A democratic feminist management continually draws attention to how marginality is maintained through the portrayal of gender roles as natural. Asserting feminist perspectives is a denial of the patriarchal model of society, which extends to *all* subjugated groups, not just women. Patriarchy and oppression of groups is maintained precisely by the denial that subjugation is political. When the private and the personal become political it is no longer “natural” for women, or any other group exploited outside the official realms of value, to be subjugated. When we extend this to management as discourse we mean that management must be political, that it is authored and therefore can be rewritten (Agger, 1991). Management that is denoted as *public or private* is the denial of politics and the denial of politics is how gendered issues remain “inherent” to gender and thus appear unchangeable.

THE MYTH OF SPHERES

We are focused on the organizational management level in this paper because that is where Diane (and most of us) works and because social change begins in small spaces. But we are also focused at the societal level because the conditions governing private lives are a political issue. The question that we seek to address is not what is the difference between public and private management, but rather how does stratification carry into every sphere and how might we oppose it. This binary opposition between the public and private spheres is the very logic by which the distinction between public management and private management are maintained as separate spheres. The artificial distinction be-

tween public and private life, the valued and the valueless, while relying on the same logic, is not the same as the public versus private sphere as it is discussed in public administration, which relies on an artificial distinction between the state and capitalism (Nickel, 2006). Thus, the lens of text and discourse help us to understand the binary logic in both realms. Text and discourse traverse all four spheres: the public sphere, the private sphere, public management, and private management. Furthermore, text and discourse are the means by which the current myth of spheres is maintained. Disciplining texts appear not to be texts because as texts they would be subject to discourse and thus re-writing.

“Public” and “private” are, of course, not apolitical terms. Feminist theory has demonstrated in spades that the public versus the private sphere is a binary opposition that serves as “a discourse of domination that legitimizes women’s oppression and exploitation in the private sphere” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 93). Our aim is to explode the conceptual boundaries of spheres in order to demonstrate that a feminist theory of management is not only necessary in order to move toward a more democratic understanding of what we variously call public administration, public management, public service, and network governance, but that in its recognition of the absurdity of the idea that the state and capitalism do not invade every aspect of human life, what Marcuse (1964) called one-dimensionality, is transformative not only for women, but for all groups marginalized by the maintenance of the myth of spheres. In this section we discuss varying theories of these spheres and then attempt to provide a framework through which we might discuss the issue of marginalization and oppression in all four spheres.

One of the difficulties of our discussion is that the distinction between public and private carries into four supposed spheres. In both theory and practice these distinctions are in no way clean and are often incomprehensible. We are dealing with, at the least, four theoretical spheres, all of which imply a particular image of society and, in doing so, deny an alternative conception: public and private life (the public vs. private sphere, e.g., politics vs. the home) and public and private “sectors” (the distinction made by neoclassical economics, e.g., collecting taxes vs. paying taxes, as well as by the very phrase “public administration” which implies that there is another kind of administration). These four spheres are further separated by a theoretical distinction between organizational life and public and/or private life—a distinction that Diane’s case makes untenable, but which, by denying authorial authority, makes alternatives to her situation appear unimaginable. At the same

time capitalism, the state, the political, and the personal are active in every sphere, calling into question the existence of spheres themselves!

Nancy Fraser's (1989) discussion of Jurgen Habermas' spheres (public and private, system and lifeworld) draws out the failure of theories of spheres to thematize the subtext of gender. In her critique of Habermas, Fraser identifies two interrelated public/private separations wrapped up in four texts (family, economy, state, and the public sphere):

1. Systems: The separation of the state, or public system, from the (official) capitalist economy, or private system.
2. Lifeworld: The separation of the family, or private lifeworld sphere, from the space of political opinion formation and participation, or public lifeworld sphere. (pp. 123-124)

These four spheres are connected via roles: "the roles of worker and consumer link the (official) private economy and the private family, while the roles of citizen and (later) client link the public state and the public opinion institutions" (p. 124). Fraser's critique is, among other things, that these roles are gendered and that the role of women (childrearing in particular) is notably unaccounted for.

Regardless of which discussion of spheres contextualizes public administration and management, and they likely all do, spheres are boundaries of disguised texts, which conceal the possibility that they are impermanent (Agger, 1989, p. 105). As boundaries they function to exclude and exclusion is always political and often, as Foucault (1995) demonstrated in his discussion of panopticism, disciplining. Perhaps one of the most central feminist insights is that the boundary between home life and work life excludes women's domestic work from the realm of value; it renders what women do as valueless. The corollary is that there is a political category known as "women's work" which functions to discipline women. The examination of the assumption of bounded spheres is a means by which we can reassert the political in order to reveal the function of marginalization. We conduct this examination next.

Binary Sphere One: Public Sector/Private Sector

The public/private distinction is one of the "grand dichotomies" of Western thought (Weintraub, 1997), dependent on liberal and modern notions of separating the public from the private. The public/private distinction has remained a central component in classical liberalism with its emphasis on individualism and the reduction of governmental

encroachment on a person's private life. Hummel and Stivers (1998), like Fraser (1992), view the liberal separation of public and private as barring from public debate most of the lived experience of ordinary people because "only those ideas that can be abstracted from experience, smoothed out and universalized in terms of interests, rights, and voting patterns, are admitted to the public arena" (Hummel & Stivers, 1998, pp. 40-41). For example, the binary between the public sector, in which one performs valued work, and the private sector in which one cares for others, pits work against caregiving, thereby "privatizing" and de-valuing women's labor (Weir, 2005, pp. 308, 323). This distinction effectively removes the experiences of women from the realm of public discourse. Further, this separation within capitalism results in citizens who are limited to "formal public-sector liberal equality in relation to rights, voting, and the law, whereas private-sector inequalities of wealth and power generated by capitalism . . . [are] largely off-limits to collective, public action" (Box, 1999, p. 24).

Modernist theory has served to stabilize the public/private divide. Modernity's emphasis on individual reason, based on Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum," (I think, therefore I am), has created the illusion of a dualistic environment because the self is defined not as part of the community, but in opposition to "the other." In this context, life becomes an ongoing migration between the public and private spheres for the individual. The mega-structures—the state, large economic conglomerates of capitalist enterprise, big labor, bureaucracies—are typically alienating and not helpful in providing meaning and identity for individual existence; individuals are left to their own devices and so become uncertain and anxious (Berger & Neuhaus, 1996, pp. 158-159). Michael Warner (2005) describes this condition:

Imagine how powerless people would feel if their commonality and participation were simply defined by pre-given frameworks, by institutions and laws, as in other social contexts they are through kinship. What would the world look if all ways of being public were more like applying for a driver's license or subscribing to a professional group—if, that is, formally organized mediations replaced the self-organized public as the image of belonging and community. Such is the image of totalitarianism: non-kin society organized by bureaucracy and law. Everyone's position, function, and capacity are specified for her by administration. The powerlessness of the person in such a world haunts modern capitalism as well. (p. 69)

If Warner is even partially right, then a democratic management must re-conceptualize its role as a form of management that "responds

and acts like people do.” The artificial separation of the public and private by the texts of liberalism and modernity serve to exclude marginalized groups from the political.

Binary Sphere Two: Public Management versus Private Management

There has long been debate in public administration about the potential similarities and differences between public and private organizations and their management. After much theorizing and empirical investigation, the debate has yet to be resolved. This is likely because it *cannot be resolved without a political examination of the relationship between boundaries and marginality*. Such an examination would require recognition that the distinction between public and private management subordinates the value of what is done in the public sphere to the value of what is done in the “private sphere,” rendering democratic management valueless. Discussions of the similarities and differences between public and private management, as with the distinction between political and personal and personal and professional, are discussions about what is valued and what is not valued.

At least two scholarly groups suppose a distinction between public and private organizations and management. The first group finds core distinctions “by virtue of particularistic societal influences” (Scott & Falcone, 1998, p. 128). Thompson (1962), Mainzer (1973), and Fottler (1981) suggest that management differs because public and private organizations “receive support from different subsectors [individuals, groups, and organizations] of society and must be responsive to these subsectors” (Fottler, 1981, p. 3). Additionally, Appleby (1945), Dahl and Lindblom (1953), and Rainey, Backoff and Levine (1976) attribute differences to the presence of legal and political constraints placed on government agencies by the courts, legislatures, executive oversight agencies, and constituent groups (see also: Perry & Rainey, 1988; Rainey, 1997; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000; Ring & Perry, 1985). According to Scott and Falcone (1998), “these constraints result in greater oversight, less autonomy, and reduced authority among public managers, and they lead to higher levels of formalization, red tape, and bureaucratization” (p. 129).

Such a view of public management assumes that “public” can be achieved without the actual public ever making an appearance. By reference to formalization of legitimacy (tax base) this conceptualization has determined “public” to be that which is not illegal or unaccountable (automatically excluding those who are not legal and those who cannot hold the public sector to account). Furthermore, public management is

accountable not to the public, but to the public's money. A false distinction is thus made according to the source of money—money takes on a human dimension and becomes the public when it is spent in one sector as opposed to another. The public sector is thus theorized as responsive to money (which one can only obtain through “valued” labor) not to people (and not to women who are unpaid). According to this distinction, a feminist theory of management would merely have to be accountable to the legal definition of female (not male) and then to a female's money. This is the condition of fast capitalism: we do not imagine a public sphere beyond the appearance of money as a thing.

A second group of scholars sees the need for a theory of public management that considers the democratic environment within which public organizations exist as well as the distinctive values of the public domain (Appleby, 1945; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Ranson & Stewart, 1989; Stewart & Ranson, 1988). For example, Stewart and Ranson (1988) suggest a “public domain model” of management where management approaches are developed “that support the purposes, meet the conditions and achieve the distinctive tasks of the public domain” (p. 16). It considers collective choice in the polity, the need for resources, openness for public action, the equity of need, a search for justice, citizenship, collective action, and the use of voice rather than exit. The role of the public manager in this context is to “enable the reflective participation of citizens but also the government of collective action in the public interest” (p. 19).

In its recognition that there is more to the public domain than accountability and money, this emphasis on values may be a starting point. However, if it were to overcome oppression and marginality, such a view would have to recognize that the public sphere—the democratic environment—is already stratified. Fraser (1992) “calls into question four assumptions of the *bourgeois*, *masculinist* conception of the public sphere, at least as Habermas (1989) describes it” (p. 117):

1. It is possible for interlocutors in a public sphere to bracket status differentials and to deliberate *as if* they were social equals; the assumption, therefore, that social equity is not a necessary condition for political democracy.
2. The proliferation of a multiplicity of competing publics is necessarily a step away from, rather than toward, greater democracy, and that a single, comprehensive public sphere is always preferable to a nexus of multiple publics.
3. Discourse in public spheres should be restricted to deliberation about the common good, and that the appearance of private interests and private issues is always undesirable.

4. The assumption that a functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation between civil society and the state. (pp. 117-118)

Fraser counters with the necessity of an egalitarian society, “nonstratified societies, societies whose basic framework does not generate unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination . . . they need not be homogenous . . . they are likely to be inhabited by [diverse] groups” (p. 125). Fraser’s conception breaks down the boundary between personal and political through the conception of a public sphere in which discourse is not limited to “the common good,” what public administration frequently discusses as the “public interest.”

MANAGEMENT AS DISCOURSE OR, HOW MANAGEMENT IS POLITICAL

There is precedent for discussion of public administration as discourse (see for example: Farmer, 2002; Fox & Miller, 1995; McSwite, 1997; Patterson, 2000; Stivers, 2000b) and limited precedent for management as discourse (Renard & Eastwood, 2003). Our aim here is not to recommend discourse as a cure-all for what ails the public sector, what Patterson (2000) has called the “talking cure.” Discourse alone cannot end marginality, it must be accompanied by actual structural changes, a point made by Fraser’s (1992) insistence that egalitarianism is a prerequisite for discourse. Furthermore, discourse is not naturally democratic; it is frequently a means to maintain domination (Agger, 1992; Benhabib, 1992). As our discussion of fast capitalism indicates, discourse (or lack of critical discourse) is one means by which marginality is maintained and structure is portrayed as natural (see also Farmer, 2002; Schram, 2006). Our aim is therefore to demonstrate that *management is discourse* and discourse shapes not only public life, but private lives as well.

Discourse provides us with a means to understand not only the nuances of power relationships, but also to understand how these power relationships are portrayed as natural through the exclusion of the public by way of hiding the author, what Agger (2001) calls secret writing. The point is therefore to treat management in all spheres—public and private—as discourse and then move toward a critical democratic discourse (discourse that would reveal the author and re-read social texts) as opposed to the pre-written and scripted discourse described by Warner (2005). We therefore broaden the spectrum of what counts as discourse to include texts, what counts as texts to include ideology (Ag-

ger, 1989), and recognize management as ideology (Gantman, 2005). Once management is read as ideology, as a text, it can be read politically and thus become part of the discourse that governs our lives. Building on our earlier discussion of fast capitalism, a period in which text disciplines imagination by appearing not to be writing (Agger, 1989, p. 86), we write authorless management as a discourse of domination. Both public and private management in fast capitalism pretend to be apolitical, concealing that they are authored.

We therefore move our discussion from public and private spheres to discursive and non-discursive spheres. This helps us to overcome the residue of the boundaries of the liberalist and modernist tradition, if only barely. Discursive spheres are political in that the author is present and are democratic in that they are open to re-reading by the public. Non-discursive spheres disguise their political stance by pretending not to be written (Agger, 1989) and are anti-democratic in that they exclude the public from the discussion. Our aim, then, in the concluding sections, is to introduce a discursive democratic feminist theory of management.

OVERCOMING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE AND PUBLIC LIFE: TOWARD DEMOCRATIC FEMINIST MANAGEMENT

In this final section we take on Denhardt, Denhardt, and Aris-tigueta's (2002) task and devise an agenda for alleviating Diane's stress. The point of our conception of a discursive democratic feminist theory of management is to facilitate social imagination through the re-assertion of the political into organizational life. Management and organizational life would thus deny their permanence, revealing to Diane that she could try to change things rather than just cope. Her entire life, not only her paid time within the organization, would achieve value. This is recognized by feminist theories of management, which are not feminist by virtue of being inherently "feminine." We have already dismissed the idea that femininity is anything other than a social construction—men are equally capable of equality, caring, and nurturance and women are equally capable of hierarchy and dualism. The theories that we discuss here are feminist because they are critical of the marginalization of women and all marginalized groups. This marginalization takes place through the subversion of that which would allow these groups to thrive. This happens to be the valueless work typically associated with women because it is typically assigned to women.

Feminist theories are built on a foundation of feminist ontology, which places an emphasis on the fundamental relational aspects of the world and the self, one that is non-oppositional, nonhierarchical, and non-dualistic. This approach does not define the self against the other, seeing the other as something that must be controlled or eliminated; instead, it sees people understanding and knowing themselves through others (King, 2000; Morton & Linquist, 1997). From this ontological basis, feminist management is “based on . . . eliminating false dichotomies or artificial separations, empowering women [and people generally], democratizing organizational structures, valuing process, and linking the personal and the political” (Chernesky, 1995, p. 73). It embodies notions of equality, caring, and nurturance over hierarchy, inequality, and impersonality (Ferguson, 1984). It is exemplified in a relational leadership approach that assumes the “intrinsic value of all persons” (Beck, in Burnier, 2003).

A more holistic feminist conception of management is also a possible counter to fast capitalism. As Agger (2004) writes:

Perhaps a postmodern blurring of work and family, but in the direction of familizing and humanizing work, could initiate this process, with work acquiring elements of play, care, nurturance, and love and home losing its privatized, cut-off quality. This is very much the agenda of socialist feminism and Freudian Marxism. Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) wanted to “eroticize” work, to subject it to the rationality of gratification, not the rationality of performance. . . . When I talk about the familization and humanization of work I would transform the workplace as much as the family . . . we would play at work and work at home. Our work would become play, which is what early Marx and Marcuse had in mind. (pp. 64-66)

As we will demonstrate next, Follett and Addams and more contemporary feminist theories in management already offer us an alternative to the meaninglessness of performance and the authorlessness of management.

Arguably, one of the earliest feminist theories of management was proposed by Mary Parker Follett (Morton & Lindquist, 1997). She offered a feminist theory of management as discursive in its denial of the authorless. Writing during the Progressive era, Follett was strongly committed to building a more participatory democracy in the United States (Mattson, 1998, p. xxx; Morse, 2006). She drew both from her own experience in local democratic and community organizing and from theory influenced by German idealism and American pragmatism

(Stever, 1986). For Follett, true democracy was a continual process of creating a general collective will through citizen deliberation and relationship building. This experience of participation was viewed as transformative, where the commingling of citizens meant continuous access to the needs and the wants of others and the creation of shared meaning. Follett (1998/1918) saw politics as a part of the everyday life of ordinary citizens, rather than separate from it; essentially seeing the public and the private as one.

Follett applied this thinking to management in organizations. She saw authority as pluralistic and cumulative and based on function rather than position (Fry, 1989). She also believed authority was a process, not a final moment. This process was designed to enhance “power-with” and discourage power-over (Mansbridge, 1998). Power-with is realized through individuals following the “law of the situation.” According to Follett (1992), “one person should not give orders to another person, but both should agree to take their orders from the situation” (p. 69). In other words, orders come from work, not work from orders. Thus, she emphasized the need for worker participation in decision-making (Fry, 1989). In our interpretation, this hints at the possibility of discursive rather than non-discursive management through the possibility of the re-reading of the situation and decision-making.

The realization of such feminist conceptions of management was put into practice during the Progressive Era by Jane Addams at Hull House. Addams might be conceived of as cultivating what Fraser (1992) has called subaltern counter-publics. Addams founded Hull House social settlement in Chicago in 1889. She held a deep commitment to integrating democratic principles into everyday life and saw the work of the settlement house as democracy in action. From feminist and pragmatist foundations (Seigfried, 1996; Shields, 2005), “Addams created an organizational culture and structure that encouraged individual initiative and self-governance” (Knight, 1991, p. 125). Her approach was to give residents who stayed and worked at Hull House the “freedom to shape their own volunteer work and to organize as a team to decide institutional issues” (Knight, 1991, p. 126). This cooperative management style, along with Addams’ leadership method of empowering others through a commitment to their self-actualization, created one of the most successful and well-known settlement houses in the country.

More than this, Addams and other residents of Hull House challenged taken-for-granted social structures in an effort to create progressive social change. A core aspect of the settlement movement was its emphasis on building community and “binding” the social classes in a

common purpose. This was done primarily by bringing the “affluent and the poor in contact with one another by attracting idealistic, college-aged, upper-middle-class youths to settle in poor neighborhoods or, at least, to volunteer some time” (Husock, 1993, para. 8). Settlement workers were compelled to take an active role in social and political reform efforts that affected the poor because they lived in the neighborhood with those they were trying to help (Chambers, 1963; Davis, 1984/1967). In addition, by bringing people together and through its programming, settlements became a space for civic deliberation and discourse (See also Stivers, 2000a).

While Follett and Addams are exemplars of first- and second-wave feminism, more contemporary theorists provide guidance for discursive democratic feminist praxis.³ For example, Farmer (2005) offers a description of post-traditional governance that espouses reflection and dialogue that is radically open, shifting away from a reliance on a top-down relationships from political leaders to citizens, and governance practice “where each and every individual is treated in her fullest human dimensions . . .” (p. xiv). Similarly, King and Zanetti (2005) offer a model of transformative public administration that “reconnects the knowledge of expertise with the knowledge of experience” (Zanetti, in King & Zanetti, 2005, p. x). Transformative public administration is a way of practicing public service that is “collaborative, humanistic, emancipatory, inclusive and diverse” (p. xi). King and Zanetti define public service broadly, to include government and nonprofit administrators and provide multiple stories of transformative public service in action; thus demonstrating the impermanence of our current situation and possibility of doing things differently.

Building on Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon’s model of the Universal Caregiver, Allison Weir (2005) envisions a model of the Global Universal Caregiver that would overcome what she calls the deprivatization (and thus invisibility and marginalization) of care through the transformation of work. Weir proposes transforming work in resistance to what Marcuse called the “performance principle” (p. 325). This transformation would involve ending the subordination of caregiving to performance, productivity, and profit (p. 325). Like Agger (2004), Weir would familize and humanize the work place:

Standards of performance and productivity would have to correspond to the amount of time a worker could reasonably be expected to give to (non-care) work, given the demands of carework. Standards of good work could not be based on performance or long hours, or on levels of productivity achievable only through long

hours, because it would no longer be assumed that someone else is doing the care work. (p. 325)

Weir moves beyond the “coping” management strategy and demonstrates that genuinely democratic feminist management requires re-thinking the nature and purpose of work in recognition of the value of caregiving (p. 326).

Thus, a democratic feminist management re-writes Diane’s situation as alterable. Follett’s recommendation that we agree to take orders from Diane’s situation would subordinate the conditions that placed her at the brink of breakdown (the production of value) to the reality of her life (the valueless). Addams’ openness to shared democratic decision-making reveals the author of the situation and thus creates the space for the articulation of the meaning of Diane’s struggle and includes her in the discussion of how her social world is constructed. Farmer and King and Zanetti de-privatize Dianne’s struggle through the insistence that she is fully human and that her experience is a legitimate source of knowledge about how to transform public administration. Agger (2004) and Weir (2005) offer an alternative model of work based in the currently designifed value of what Diane does outside of the organization.

Suggesting that Diane cope is a suggestion that nothing can be done to transform management; democratic feminist management suggests otherwise. It provides not only a theoretical, but an empirical foundation for building a feminist conception of management beyond boundaries, beyond the subordination of valuelessness to valued, beyond marginality, and beyond exclusion. The necessity of the current distinction between public and private management is undercut by this conception of management, suggesting the possibility that public administration and management can do better than cope.

CONCLUSION

A democratic feminist management would discursively deprivatize Diane’s experience through the recognition that it is authored and temporary and thus might be re-written. In our attempt to demonstrate that Diane’s struggle is *significant*, that it is not “just the way it is,” we urge public administration to heed feminism’s call for the elimination of marginality through the recognition of the political construction of spheres and all other boundaries that serve to exclude in the interest of maintaining “society’s ideal image of itself” (Ryan, 1982, p. 127). The struggles disguised by texts in fast capitalism (sexism, racism, poverty,

exploitation, war, gentrification, the destruction of the environment, and the subordination of community to profit, to name a few) are not “just the way it is.” A democratic feminist theory of management would offer the opportunity to discuss how it really is for the marginalized, which live and cope behind the screens of neutrality. The challenge is not to cope with “the way it is”; the challenge is to discuss how it could otherwise be.

NOTES

1. We note the paradox of introducing a “democratic feminist management,” but we have yet to come up with a better way to talk about the issues of working in organizations that we describe here. We invite the field, as David J. Farmer has with the phrase “anti-administration,” to explore alternative ways of describing how we work together toward transformation at the organizational and societal level (we are not sure “anti-administration” works that well as a descriptor). An alternative category for thinking about how we work together within organizations would allow us to break from (man)agement’s association with the “performance principle” and other non-care based standards of achievement. Our hope is that, as a field, we might conceive of a way to move toward something similar to Weir’s global universal caregiver. This is the task of a field concerned with improving the everyday experiences of the public, including those whose experiences are excluded from public view.

2. We should note for poststructuralists and readers of Derrida that, while Agger acknowledges Derrida’s insight, he is insistent that textuality remain political and that deconstruction must be a political project, not a methodology.

3. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that we add a discussion of more contemporary feminist theories (and praxis) of management here.

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