Democracy Administered

How does representative government function when public administration can reshape democracy? The traditional narrative of public administration balances the accountability of managers – a problem of control – with the need for effective administration – a problem of capability. The discretion modern governments give to administrators allows them to make trade-offs among democratic values. This book challenges the traditional view with its argument that the democratic values of administration should complement the democratic values of the representative government within which it operates. Control, capability, and value reinforcement can render public administration into democracy administered. This book offers a novel framework for empirically and normatively understanding how democratic values have, and should be, reinforced by public administration. Bertelli's theoretical framework provides a guide for managers and reformers alike to chart a path toward democracy administered.

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How Public Administration Shapes Representative Government

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For Larry Lynn

Most citizens encounter government (if they encounter it at all) not through letters to congressmen or by attendance at school board meetings but through their teachers and their children's teachers and through the policeman on the corner or in the patrol car.

Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (1980)

If representatives assume that voters will make up their minds at the next election solely on the basis of the programs put forward at that time, they have complete freedom of action.

Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (1997)

It was assumed that future policies were implicit in the terms of the electoral decision simply because that decision was framed by a predictable universe of choices structured by disciplined organizations with well-defined programs and clearly understood differences. This is no longer the case.

Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy* (2011)

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Preface

This book is a synthesis of my own thinking on the problem of maintaining democratic values in contemporary public administration. This problem has been at the core of my scholarly interests for more than two decades, and it flows consistently through my teaching and conversations with colleagues.

The argument of this book originated in one of the most unique academic opportunities I have had in my career. The Jacob Javits Visiting Professorship at New York University, which I held in Spring 2015, gave me the opportunity to develop an argument about democratic public administration for a general audience. In May 2015, I presented my ideas to an engaged group of scholars, practitioners, family and friends of the late Senator Jacob Javits, and the general public at the New York University Law School. My lecture that evening was motivated by a thought exercise: If I were to read the contemporary literature from the perspective of a *citizen*, rather than that of a *scholar* of public administration, what lessons would I draw about democracy? Taking this perspective revealed a challenge for citizenship. Retrospective evaluation may well be a crucial theory behind voting in a representative democracy, but identifying responsible politicians and evaluating their behavior is a very high burden for citizens. Still, all is not lost. There are some criteria for understanding the possibility of democratic evaluation of government performance even when governance is complex. That event, the comments from the audience and the Javits family, as well as some excellent feedback from Peter John, Aram Hur, and Paul Light gave me the resolve to develop a book-length argument. Some of the core ideas in that lecture are present in the pages that follow.

Kaifeng Yang and Melvin Dubnick, who organized a symposium at the American Society of Public Administration conference in Chicago in April 2015, gave me another stimulating opportunity for the argument in these pages. The paper I wrote for that event, and the generous comments of participants and referees, became an article in the symposium's special issue in *Public Performance & Management Review* (vol. 40, no. 2). My paper in that issue, "Who Are the Policy Workers and What are They Doing? Citizen's Heuristics and Democratic Accountability in Complex Governance," contains ideas that are central to this book, and particularly to Chapter 2. In addition to helping me think about the problem, Gregg Van Ryzin devised a way to test the argument with a survey experiment and the resulting paper appears in *Research & Politics* (vol. 7, no. 3). Those results are discussed in Chapter 2 as well.

As my notes evolved into a sketch of the argument in this book, I took my ideas on the road. Seminar presentations at the University of Leiden, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the University of Delaware, the German University of Administrative Sciences – Speyer, and Rutgers University – Newark were extremely useful. During these visits, Andrei Poama introduced me to a literature that would focus my argument on representative government as it is practiced. Madalina Busuioc and I developed the idea for a paper, now appearing in *Public Administration Review*, which challenges the epistemic view of bureaucratic reputation from an accountability perspective and makes its way into these pages. Susan Webb-Yackee encouraged me to bring value reinforcement into the traditional narrative of public administration. Donald Moynihan made me see that exemplifying the values and trade-offs was pivotal to the success of the presentation, which shaped Chapters 4 and 5. William Resh, Daniel Smith, and Michael Bauer stimulated me to think about the need for justifying value trade-offs that is now a highlight of my argument. The list of thanks is certainly longer than my notes could possibly reflect.

Working with Christopher Kam on the topic of accountability has made immeasurable contributions to my thinking in the pages that follow. Our paper with Alexander Held that appears in the *American Political Science Review* (vol. 114, no. 3) provides not just data but, rather, a way of thinking about accountability that is crucial to Chapters 2, 4, and 5. My collaboration with Peter John in developing the concept of conditional representation in our book *Public Policy Investment: Priority-Setting and Conditional Representation in British Statecraft* (Oxford University Press) has been indispensable to the pages

of Chapter 2. George Krause also helped me substantially in my thinking about conditional representation. His efforts resulted, at one point, in a joint working paper entitled "Agenda Construction, Representation, and Presidential Policy Priorities" that was presented at the annual meeting of the European Political Science Association in 2016. Some of the material in Chapter 2 reflects what we learned from writing that paper.

Excellent research assistance was contributed by New York University students Jessica Sederquist, Dahlia Darwiche, Michael Cohn-Geltner, Savanna Fox, Maria Navarro, Nahima Uddin, and Christian Hansen as well as Bocconi University students and researchers Silvia Cannas, Rebecca Kirley, Giulia Leila Travaglini, Eleanor Florence Woodhouse, Federica Lo Polito, Fiona Cece, Nicola Palma, and Benedetta Scotti. I thank students in my Democracy and Public Policymaking and Advanced Public Management seminars at Bocconi University for enduring and helping to clarify the argument. Maria Cucciniello, Valentina Mele, Giulia Cappellaro, Dan Honig, and Jason Anastasopoulos contributed greatly to my thinking about the research agenda in Chapter 6. Helen Ewald and Silvia Cannas served as research assistants without parallel as the book took shape. A special note of thanks goes to Christian Hansen, whose help on this project and on all matters kept me productive while I served as Vice Dean of the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University between 2014 and 2016.

Because my thesis has emerged over many years, I simply cannot thank all of those who made it possible. More recently, I have benefited from the comments and suggestions of Quentin Skinner, Mark Bovens, Thomas Schillemans, Sjors Overman, Stefanie Beyens, Gerhard Hammerschmid, Kai Wegrich, Andrew Whitford, Norma Riccucci, Valentina Mele, Melvin Dubnick, and Sherry Glied. Special thanks are due to Mark Warren, Nadia Urbinati, Andrew Sinclair, Geert Bouckaert, Ryan Pevnick, Norma Riccucci, Sandra Léon, and Stefania Gerevini who each offered more detailed comments and were exceptionally giving of their time. Christopher Ansell, John Bryson, Keith Dowding, Dan Honig, Andrei Poama, and Norma Riccucci read a draft version of the manuscript in the late spring and summer of 2020 and helped to refine the book before you in many ways. I simply can't thank them enough for their generous investment of time and thought. And my wife, Tamaron, endured far too much while this book was being developed and, for her unwavering support, I will always be grateful.

As I completed the manuscript, I was encouraged by the memory of two unforgettable courses with two exemplary teachers who sadly are no

longer with us. Mark Perlman's course in the history of economic thought at the University of Pittsburgh, and my many discussions with him, compelled the conclusion that, as a scholar, I should take a chance on big questions, though my efforts might result in "a magnificent failure." That was the title of my last course paper. Mark disagreed, in one way or the other. Bernard Silberman's class at the University of Chicago, for which I read *Economy and Society*, was the first place in which I thought that value reinforcement might not be the same thing as political control. That extraordinary seminar made me understand that academic silos are all of one's own making.

I submitted the first version of the complete manuscript to Cambridge University Press on the very day that I had planned to give a lecture on this subject. I had been chosen as the recipient of the Herbert Simon Award for significant contributions to the scientific study of bureaucracy at the Midwest Political Science Association meetings in Chicago. Instead, my email to Robert Dreesen, whose patience with this book will be responsible for any success it has, was sent from my apartment in Milan on the forty-eighth day of coronavirus lockdown. I am all the more humbled by the award because of the number of previous recipients whose contributions are sprinkled throughout these pages. I am all the more convinced that value reinforcement is essential to public administration because of the government responses to the pandemic that I watched from that isolated vantage.

I dedicate this book to my mentor, collaborator, and friend Larry Lynn. The work that Larry and I did – and the ideas we shared while doing it – influence every page of this book. Larry has long encouraged me to write a book with a big idea. No one may read it, Larry, but you were absolutely right that I should try.