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The Profession of Public Administration: An Ethics Edge in Introductory Textbooks?

Given the substantial interest in public service ethics, this study examines its foundations as reflected in paradigmatic textbooks—a unit of analysis that informs both theory and practice in the field. The interpretative framework employed evaluates the context (the amount and placement of the topic, the use of graphics, and sources cited) as well as the content (conceptualization of management ethics and inclusion of implementation issues) of ethics found in the publications. A limited definition of a professional—one in possession of largely technical skills—is reflected in the textbooks. The implications of the findings are explored.

The ethics boom ignited by Watergate has echoed throughout the corridors of government and the halls of academe for more than a generation after the Nixon presidency. Rather than dissipating through the years, the echoes seem to intensify. In the practice of public affairs, the result has been sensational revelations, numerous investigations, new laws, and chastened officials and agencies. Within the study of public administration, national ethics conferences have been convened, course offerings have been expanded, and a growing literature has been created (Bowman and Menzel 1998). Quite clearly, moral considerations are of fundamental importance to the quality of democracy and its administration—the soul of modern public administration (Frederickson 1996).

Given the considerable interest in the topic, this study examines the attention introductory public administration textbooks devote to it. These volumes define the proper area and focus of a discipline, its paradigm and essential elements (Kuhn 1970); they also likely affect how ethics is presented in the classroom (if it is).¹ Since standards of practice are inherent in professional life, such self portraits reveal the nature of the commitment made to excellence in both technical competence and moral character. Indeed, the distinguishing characteristic or *edge* of a professional (Berman et al. 1998) is not merely the possession of expertise, but also a dedication to ethical practice. How this com-

mitment is fulfilled, especially in light of recent evidence demonstrating the value of ethics training and education (for example, Bruce 1998; Menzel 1997), has important implications for the profession and the public it serves.

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It should be noted that no formal standards exist for the scope or content of ethics in public administration education; the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs, Policy, and Administration (1992) requires only that the curriculum “enhance the student’s values, knowledge, and skills to act ethically and effectively” (3). Nevertheless, textbooks discuss the topic, and it is therefore sensible to ask what might and should be included.

The data reported here should be of interest to the entire profession: those involved in standard setting and accreditation (who could require reconsideration of this essential subject), practicing managers (who sometimes wonder about the efficacy of academic treatises, especially on ethics), book authors and their publishers (who might need to review ethics coverage in their volumes), and students and instructors (who may wish to check the adequacy of the textbook they use). The investigation begins with the identification of essential dimensions comprising public service ethics. The conceptual framework used in the research is then presented, followed by the findings from the study, and concludes with a discussion of the implications of the data.

Pillars of Ethics

As Callender (1998) observes, “The sense of public service, a strong emphasis on ethical behavior, a well-developed group identity, and well established professional bodies that support the ideals of public service all provide part of the professional identity of the public service practitioner” (1767). Clearly, those who aspire to such status need to buttress their mastery of specialized learning and managerial skills with ethical sensitivities and a commitment to public service. Given the central place of ethics in professionalism, it is important to briefly canvass its role in current public administration theory and practice.

A body of literature has developed that goes beyond values to be upheld and includes insights into ways ethics can be understood and encouraged in oneself and others. Specifically, there are four pillars of ethics: (1) value awareness; (2) reasoning skills; (3) the role of law; and (4) organizational implementation (modified from Ozar 1998; West et al. 1998).

A near-consensus exists about the values that underpin public life: responsiveness, fairness, economy, integrity, and competence. While authors vary, virtually all believe that these values constitute administrative responsibility. Such norms are thought to promote citizen service and democracy as well as to avoid corruption that causes widespread distrust in government (Bell 1997; Cooper 1991; Lewis 1991).

A critical practical question is, how are officials to incorporate these values into individual actions and organi-

zational decision making? The second pillar, ethical reasoning, can be illuminated using Kohlberg’s stages of moral development. Stewart and Sprinthall (1993) find that administrators (regardless of rank, age, gender, or race) are more likely to achieve a high level of moral reasoning when they are familiar with ethical problems and their context. Accordingly, helping managers frame issues and improve policy making is the focus of an increasing number of ethics workshops (International City/County Management Association 1999). While, in the past, such training often narrowly concentrated on certain values, adherence to legal standards, and avoidance of wrongdoing, today’s efforts promote value-centered decision-making processes.

These workshops include scenarios, role-plays, and group activities that provide in-depth information about cases and simulate the workplace (Killilea, Pasquerella, and Vocino 1998; Nelson and Van Hook 1998). Typically, decision making involves a three-step process of fact gathering, analysis, and problem resolution. Managers are sensitized to ethical warning signs (such as, “no one will ever know” or “everybody does it”) and understanding consequences of actions (Does the proposed action violate an ethical code? My personal values? Those of the community? Does it harm someone else? Would I be comfortable explaining it on television?)

Third, managers are expected to comply with ethics laws covering financial disclosure, post-employment, private gain from public office, preferential treatment, impartiality, and public trust. Little is known about the effectiveness of these statutes, but what is known suggests that the laws, and the ethics commissions that investigate violations, are insufficient to ensure exemplary behavior (Dobel 1993; Smith 1999; Williams 1996, 1999). Legal compliance is not adequate to avoid wrongful conduct, and fostering proper behavior requires ongoing initiatives relevant to daily management (Menzel 1999).

Fourth, beyond training aimed at individuals are programs to nurture ethics across the organization. Some suggest that a key to creating an ethical climate is moral leadership (Berman, West, and Cava 1994; Cooper and Wright, 1992; Moore and Sparrow 1990). Brower (1999), for example, paraphrases Shakespeare, all men are but players on stage, to explain how managers model and employees learn behavior. Other studies (Brumback 1991; Menzel and Carson 1999) suggest that leadership is most effective in conjunction with efforts such as incorporating ethical concern into the personnel systems (from selection through training to evaluation), adopting an ethics code, and requiring compliance with pertinent laws. At present, the challenge is to persuade organizations that they can impact ethical behavior and that this can be done through a multifaceted approach. This is made easier by empirical research revealing a positive relationship between ethics

and performance (Berman, West, and Cava 1994; Bruce 1994; Burke and Black 1990; Menzel 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1999). There is also evidence that this behavior affects responsible risk taking and community perceptions of organizations, although the nexus between employee behavior and community trust is difficult to firmly establish (Berman and West 1997, 1998).

In short, the tenets of public service ethics include value awareness, reasoning skills, law, and implementation strategies. These foundational elements are adapted and applied below to inform the conceptual framework used in this inquiry.

The Study

Included here are 12 elementary public administration textbooks from 1995–99 (see appendix).² As noted, these works are an appropriate barometer because they certify the significance of ethics in the profession. The next section reports raw data on the *context* of the ethics material in the publications: the amount and placement of the topic, key values and laws, the use of graphics, and sources cited.³ The five-part interpretive framework below evaluates the *content* of ethics coverage found in the texts. The first three categories focus on the components of ethics in public administration—why it is significant, what it is, and how it is presented—and speak to the value awareness and reasoning skills components of the foundational elements previously discussed. The last two rubrics specify how the books conceptualized the management of ethics in public agencies, and concerns found in carrying out ethics programs; these dimensions pertain to the role of law and organizational implementation aspects of the foundational elements.

- (1) The stated (or implied) *importance* of the topic (the nature of the justification for inclusion in the textbook).
- (2) The *definition* of ethics (the presence of a clear explanation of the term).
- (3) The descriptive or normative *style* of the discussion (the objective or subjective quality of the narrative).
- (4) The use of a legal compliance or individual/organizational development *approach* (conformity to imposed standards to penalize misconduct or participatory creation of standards to enable responsible behavior) in providing decision-making guidance.
- (5) The presentation of *implementation* techniques and issues (an analysis of ways ethical norms and practices are transmitted, and the desirability as well as feasibility of so doing).

While the taxonomy facilitates the task at hand, it is certainly not definitive; the five classifications are, however, reasonable and useful for exploratory purposes. We independently evaluated the textbooks; ambiguous cases were discussed and resolved. Since the purpose is to provide an overview of the general treatment of ethics, individual textbooks are not evaluated separately. However, examples from the database are used to illustrate the inquiry.

Findings

Context

By definition, an introductory textbook (with an average length of 500 pages) typically presents parameters of the profession by devoting chapters to a broad scope of public administration topics—the political environment, history of the field, organization theory, human resource management, planning–implementation–evaluation, budgeting and finance, policy decision making, and so forth. The ethics chapter(s), not necessarily so designated (see appendix), is placed at or near the end of six of the books, close to the beginning in three, and in both locations in one. It constitutes an average of 6 percent (332 of 5478 pages) of the 10 textbooks that have separate ethics chapters. In addition, many of the publications (including two that have no chapter-length treatments) have several relevant, often short, sections elsewhere; when included, the total attention given to ethics is 7 percent in all 12 books (473 of 6450 pages).

Most textbooks identify prominent laws and values in these discussions. Among the former, the most frequently cited include the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, the Freedom of Information Act of 1967, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989, the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946 followed by the Hatch Act of 1939, the False Claims Act of 1986, and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. Oft-noted values are accountability, responsibility, honesty, benevolence, public interest, respect for law, fairness (for example, trust, consistency, truthfulness, integrity, impartiality), equity, loyalty, democracy, representativeness, efficiency, and merit. Commonly found index listings in the volumes are terms such as administrative responsibility, codes, conflicts of interest, legality, professionalism, values, Watergate, and whistleblowing.

The books had slightly less than two charts or tables (most often a code of ethics or a narrative case), although three had ten or more such exhibits (Garvey 1997; Shafritz and Russell 1997; Starling 1998;), and two included photos or cartoons (Shafritz and Russell 1997; Starling 1998). The chapters were substantiated by an average of 32 sources (ranging from 4 to over 50) plus an additional readings

section in four cases. These citations comprised a wide variety of sources (philosophers, politicians, novelists, scholars, government agencies, newspapers),⁴ but rarely incorporated empirical research (save Henry 1999). With these descriptive background data in hand, it is now time to turn to the actual content of the literature.

Content

Using the conceptual framework outlined earlier, the rationale for considering ethics, its definition, as well as the style of presentation, is shown below. Then the focus shifts to how the books perceived the management of ethics in agencies and whether implementation issues were explored.

Importance. All the publications (in an ethics chapter, section, an exhibit, a preface, or elsewhere) had either a stated or implied justification for including the topic (respectively, Berkley and Rouse 1997; Denhardt with Grubbs 1999; Fesler and Kettl 1996; Gordon and Milakovich 1998; Henry 1999; McKinney and Howard 1998; versus Cooper et al. 1998; Johnson 1996; Rosenbloom 1998; Shafritz and Russell 1997; Starling 1998).

These rationales, with interpolation, were corruption prevention, decision making, or role definition. Three authors noted, first, the importance of preventing corruption. The key issue for one is the question “Who guards the guardians?” with an explicit focus on accountability in order to understand why some abuse the public trust (Rosenbloom 1998, 529–30). Another notes the importance of morality by emphasizing the detrimental effects corruption has on the political and social structure of the nation; ethics is therefore central to deter corrupt behavior (Shafritz and Russell 1996, 592–6). The heavy burden of accountability and untoward problems is again implied by Garvey (1997, 305–13) who indicates that the study of ethics is necessary to avoid undesirable actions; moral demands are imposed on the individual public servant and must be dealt with.

Regarding the second rationale, decision making, one author takes a neutral, pragmatic stance by indicating that ethics can lead to making quicker, better, and more consistent judgments (Starling 1998). Most, however, go beyond this and articulate an important consequence of corruption: the reintroduction of ethics into public affairs and the reaffirmation of it as central to the lives and role definition (the third rationale) of professional managers (for instance, Cooper et al. 1998, vii).

Thus, Denhardt with Grubbs (1999) state, “every action of every public official ... carries value implications” (115) and “establishing a proper ethical basis for public action is itself one of the most important challenges facing the public service” (425). This includes, according to Gordon and Milakovich (1998), “defining, establishing,

and maintaining a high level of ethical behavior ... (to) ... enhance workforce effectiveness, improve employee morale, and promote better public relations” (41), a viewpoint echoed in an exhibit provided by Berkley and Rouse (1997, 371). Henry (1999) opines that “Public administration is a profession of large responsibilities and moral choices, and ethical obligations will always be an integral part of these responsibilities” (472). Since officials are expected to model leadership, they need a clear moral framework to deal with ethical challenges if the public is to be served (McKinney and Howard 1998, 4). “Nothing is more basic to the role definition of the public administrator,” according to Fesler and Kettl (1996, 367), than the two elements of bureaucratic responsibility: accountability and ethical behavior.

Definition. How, then, do the textbooks interpret ethics? Reflecting the eclectic nature of these chapters, as well as the putative ambiguity of the term itself, most do not attempt a formal textbook-like definition. Four of the 12 volumes (Berkley and Rouse 1997; Garvey 1997; Henry 1999; Johnson 1996) provide no explanation at all (although the latter briefly describe several philosophical approaches). Another four (Cooper et al. 1998, 75, 95; McKinney and Howard 1998, 14; Rosenbloom 1998, 529–30; Starling 1998, 186;) proffer, respectively, brief statements about a moral compass, self-accountability, studying values, or a “subjective force” as definitions.

A third group, while not clarifying the word ethics, does explain closely related terms. Two books discuss ethical behavior as “emphasizing personal honesty and integrity (that) calls for avoiding personal gain that results from the fulfillment of one’s duties” (Gordon and Milakovich 1998, 42), and as “adherence to moral standards and avoidance of even the appearance of unethical actions (Fesler and Kettl 1996, 367). Likewise, Shafritz and Russell (1997), in a book containing many formal definitions, do not define honor or ethics in their “Honor and Ethics” chapter. They do, however, furnish a thorough literary treatment of the former as well as a definition-like hierarchy (personal, professional, organizational, societal) of the latter.

One volume, however, unambiguously provides a comprehensive definition of ethics as “a systematic attempt through the use of reason to make sense of our individual and social moral experience in such a way as to determine the rules which ought to govern moral conduct” (Denhardt with Grubbs 1999, 116 quoting DeGeorge). In short, while there are a variety of negative, neutral, and affirmative reasons offered for including ethics in these volumes, the term is not usually clearly explicated. With this in hand, is the subject matter itself presented in a generally descriptive–objective or normative–subjective style, or in a blend of both?⁵

Presentation Style. Half of the volumes supply a balanced treatment between sheer factual narrative and value-laden opinion (Denhardt with Grubbs 1999; Gordon and Milakovich 1998; Henry 1999; Johnson 1996; Shafritz and Russell 1996; Starling 1998). While such coverage contains clear instances of both outright description and value judgements at selected points, the typical approach is to examine, in some detail, the value of administrative responsibility (for instance), but level that with a discussion of the importance of readers adhering to proper standards (Starling 1998, 169ff.).

Those less likely to provide this type of presentation include Berkley and Rouse (1997); Cooper et al. (1998); Rosenbloom (1998); Fesler and Kettl (1996); and Garvey (1997). For instance, Berkley and Rouse (1997, 371) insert a short, normative, free-standing exhibit on the importance of honesty and how to nurture ethical leadership in an otherwise descriptive narrative on administrative law, discretion, and internal-external controls. The others have still less evaluative material as they might discuss several perspectives on public service standards (such as, Cooper et al. 1998, 4-85), but do not offer advice or urge readers to develop personal or organizational ethics.

Such guidance, however, is more explicit in McKinney and Howard (1998) who indicate that public administration can no longer be taught apart from ethics (xi); the civil servant is expected to model moral leadership (4) and, therefore, "this text assumes a moral stance ..." (xi). While pertinent sections and chapters are more objective in character, a normative style animates a greater portion of the material than that found in the other texts.

Approach to Ethics Management and Implementation. Given the rationale for inclusion, terminological definition, and presentation tone, do the publications emphasize a legal compliance, human development, or a hybrid approach to ethics in organizations? While this time-honored distinction—the low road, punitive, stay-out-of-trouble versus the high road, preventive, how-to-do-right-things approach—proved serviceable, classification was not an easy task. Still, while entries had characteristics of both strategies, general tendencies were evident especially when comparing the 12 books.

Six textbooks best represent the developmental category. Thus, one emphasizes that organizations mirror the values and behavior of people; yet, ethical controls are inadequate because they reactively focus on incidents, not preventive organizational processes. Individual and agency development for "education and training for accountability" is therefore central (McKinney and Howard 1998, 170, 467, 474-6). Another concentrates on the nurturing of personal morality by focusing on integrity and honor, with minimal attention to legal issues (Shafritz and Russell 1997). Similarly, Starling (1998) frames ethics around the attributes

and values of an "ideal administrator," thereby emphasizing a developmental approach. Garvey (1997), likewise, although mentioning procedural and substantive due process, stresses high moral standards and duties over legal compliance. Relatedly, Henry (1999), while noting the legalities of fraud corruption as well as those in the Orange County, California financing case, focuses on issues such as role morality, individual responsibility, organizational humanism, and justice. Finally, Gordon and Milakovich (1998) examine key values, the ethical setting of public servants, and moral dimensions of decision making while devoting little attention to legal concerns.

A greater mix of the two is found in two works. Denhardt with Grubbs (1999) give substantial individual and organizational coverage, but also examine legal concerns (notably federal executive orders and statutes) in some detail—their achievements, effects, and compliance issues. Johnson (1996) reviews formal control mechanisms, while indicating, "procedural checks cannot fully replace individual moral character ..." (443). The analysis indicates a need for individual and organizational development in discussing administrative discretion, ethical principles, and whistleblowing. Finally, the legalistic approach is more evident in four volumes. Thus, in the context of an "Administrative Law and Control" chapter, Berkley and Rouse (1997) explore internal and external controls as well as administrative discretion and responsibility, but just two paragraphs focus on development-related matters. Similarly Cooper et al. (1998), in a chapter entitled "Law Against Ethics," note the importance of individual values, yet little is said about their development as nearly exclusive attention is devoted to legal compliance issues. Fesler and Kettl (1996), too, include a small amount of information on ethics and accountability, but from a perspective of legal restrictions and sanctions. Although exhibiting more balance, Rosenbloom (1998), in a discussion of accountability and ethics, emphasizes difficulties in guarding the guardians plus the need for oversight, regulations, inspections, audits, and enforcement with limited attention to nurturing personal responsibility (in discussing New Public Management) and organizational ethics.

Table 1 provides indicators of compliance, low-road strategies, and the extent to which they receive emphasis. All but one work (Berkley and Rouse 1997) mention at least one of the fifteen restrictions listed, and four (Denhardt with Grubbs 1999; Fesler and Kettl 1996; Henry 1999; Johnson 1996) include eight or more; the average number is five. The most frequently covered are: conflicts of interest (nine); financial disclosure (six); open meeting requirements (six); use of public position to obtain personal advantage (six); gifts, favors, or extra compensation (five); and post employment issues (five). Extensive attention to restrictions is interesting in light of repeated expressions

Table 1 Textbook Coverage of Restrictions Found in Ethics Legislation and Policies

Restrictions	Number of textbooks discussing
Conflict of interest	9
Requiring financial disclosure	6
Requiring open meetings	6
Use of public position to obtain personal benefits	6
Gifts, favors, or extra compensation	5
Prohibitions on post-government employment	5
Public records access	4
Competitive bidding	3
Discrimination (hiring/promotion)	3
Requiring approval of outside activities	3
Disclosure of confidential information	3
Political activity by employees	2
Fees by public officials	2
Employment of relatives	1
Representation of private clients	1

in these publications about the futility of relying on low-road approaches (indicators of developmental, high-road approaches are examined below).

Whichever ethics-management approach the textbook adopted, does it provide guidance in decision making? One gauge is the extent to which it analyzes ethical principles to stimulate questions—the hallmark of moral reflection. Table 2 reports four categories reflecting 16 decision-making principles. The five most frequently included questions,

derived from principles, are:

- Will my action deprive any person affected by it of a right that must be respected? (rights ethic = seven)
- What course of action brings the greatest good for the greatest number of people? (utilitarian ethic = six)
- What are the good and bad results of this decision and do the good outweigh the bad? (proportionality ethic = six)
- What course of action feels right to me? (intuition ethic = six), and
- Will my contemplated action restrict others from actions that they have a legitimate right to undertake? (equal freedom = six)

All textbooks, except Fesler and Kettl (1996), mention at least one of the 16 principles, and Denhardt with Grubbs (1999) note 11; on average, five are discussed. The authors recognize, albeit to varying degrees, that ethical insight from principles can be useful.

The presence of information on implementation techniques and issues is a cardinal concern. Is there scrutiny of the ways ethical practices are transmitted as well as the desirability and feasibility of doing so? Nearly all of the books offer some coverage, but seldom in-depth. For example, Berkley and Rouse (1997) supply a brief editorial box that lists ideas as well as control mechanisms to increase responsibility and safeguard the public interest. More developed, yet not extensive, is Denhardt with Grubbs

Table 2 Textbook Coverage of Questions Derived from Ethical Principles

Ethical principle	Questions	Number of textbooks discussing
Consequences		
Utilitarian ethic	What course of action brings the greatest good for the greatest number of people?	6
Proportionality ethic	What are the good and bad results of this decision and do the good outweigh the bad?	6
Theory of justice	Does this action apply impartially to each employee and organizational unit?	5
Golden rule	If I were in the position of another person affected by my decision, would my actions be considered fair by that person?	3
Protect health, safety, welfare	What course of action will best protect the health, safety and welfare of others?	3
Reversibility rule	Would I be willing to change places with the person affected by my contemplated action?	1
Integrity		
Intuition ethic	Which course of action feels right to me?	6
Professional ethic	Can my action be explained before a committee of my peers?	5
Virtuous character	Would this action be undertaken by someone of exemplary or virtuous character?	4
Disclosure rule	What course of action would I be comfortable with if it was examined by my friends, family, and associates?	2
Rights		
Rights ethic	Will my action deprive any person affected by it of a right that must be respected?	7
Principle of equal freedom	Will my contemplated action restrict others from actions that they have a legitimate right to undertake?	6
Practicality		
Organizational versus personal ethic	Is this action consistent with both organizational ethics and personal ethics and do organizational considerations override personal ones?	5
Organizational loyalty	What are the organizational goals and what can I do that is good for the organization?	3
Conventionalist ethic	What action will further my self-interest without violating the law?	2
Darwinian ethic	What course of action will enable me to succeed and survive in this organization?	2

(1999), which considers steps in deliberation and establishment of an ethical climate. More typically, authors may indicate the need for pertinent methods (such as, codes, training, financial disclosure, leadership), but offer no discussion of how to use them, their effectiveness, or overall results. Finally, several textbooks (Johnson 1996; Rosenbloom 1998) do not directly address this issue.

A broad range of strategic initiatives can be used to improve the ethical climate. Such strategies can be categorized as code-based, leadership-based, or employee-based, and have been used with varying degrees of success by cities, counties, states, and federal agencies (Berman, West and Cava 1994; Bowman and Williams 1997; Goodman et al. 1996; Herrmann 1997; Menzel 1992, 1996a; Menzel and Carson 1999; West, Berman, and Cava 1993; Williams 1996, 1999; Zajac and Comfort 1997). To what extent do these textbooks refer to such strategies and report empirical research to document their efficacy? Table 3 shows that ethics management receives very modest treatment: two books do not mention any of the 16 strategies listed (Cooper et al. 1998; Garvey 1997), two others mention two (Henry 1999; Johnson 1996), while one covers 13; the average is 4.

Code- and leadership-based strategies are the most frequently included: notably, adopting an ethics code (ten textbooks), protecting dissenters (nine), adopting standards of conduct (five), emphasizing moral leadership (five), and requiring training (five). While addressed, the discussion in most is underdeveloped; often it is limited to mentioning the strategy with no elaboration or discussion of empirical research regarding its use and effectiveness.

To summarize briefly, (a) all books contained a stated or implied logic for including the topic; (b) most did not provide a rigorous definition of it; (c) half were written in descriptive-normative hybrid style (five in a descriptive tone, and one in a relatively normative manner); (d) six represented the developmental approach to ethics (four the legal compliance and two the hybrid approach); and (e) ten of the twelve briefly noted follow-through techniques.

A *Finale*? In the end, did the authors offer the reader a conclusion, a normative statement (not factual summary) about ethics in public service? Just over one-half of the volumes, in varying degrees of detail (and inspiration), ventured an *envoi* on the centrality of ethics in government. Berkley and Rouse (1997) point out that democracy rests on the principles of accountability and responsibility; realization of these tenets “requires a comprehensive system of control ... (It) will continue to be needed ... but growing professionalism ... may make extensive and elaborate control systems somewhat less necessary” (372, 374).

“Accountability is a critically important fact of public administration life,” according to Cooper et al. (1998, 91). The two mechanisms of accountability, law and ethics, however, may be “contradictory in concept and practice ...” This, they indicate, “has lead to a number of ethics-in-government programs where it is not ethics but professional conduct that is in question, and where laws seek to coerce public service ethics that may, in truth, only be elicited ... (O)ver time, society may move to reconcile the two (law and ethics) ... but there will always be differences ... (and) some degree of tension in any given case” (91). Accountability, Johnson adds (1996, 459), involves two dilemmas: conflicting responsibilities and the “many (sometimes dirty) hands” problem in the making of policy.

It follows, as Henry (1999) observes, “Public administration is a profession of large responsibilities and moral choices ... will always be an integral part of these responsibilities” (472). As a consequence, it “offers an unusually rich variety of opportunities for ... ethical or unethical choices ... (If you enter the field) ... ask yourself how people will be helped or hurt by your decisions. Few questions are more important” (473).

Denhardt with Grubbs (1999), then, emphasize that “It is within your power as an administrator to undertake programs to encourage and facilitate a more moral climate within your organization ... and the most important message you can send is that communicated by your own actions” (141). Such accountability, based on power and morality, actually produces more accountability and power, an acceptable consequence provided that internal and external checks ensure that the two are balanced (McKinney and Howard 1998, 476).

Rosenbloom (1998) captures the crux of the challenge, “(T)he hard work lies less in identifying ... diverse ethical

Table 3 Textbook Coverage of Ethics Management Strategies

Ethics management strategies	Number of textbooks discussing
Code-based strategies	
Adopting a code of ethics	10
Adopting a standard of conduct	5
Monitoring of adherence to the code of ethics	3
Required familiarity with the code of ethics	2
Regular communication to employees about ethics	2
Periodic rereading of the code of ethics	1
Statement of principles	0
Leadership-based strategies	
Exemplary moral leadership by elected officials	5
Exemplary moral leadership by senior management	4
Employee-based strategies	
Protecting whistle-blowers for valid disclosures	9
Mandatory ethics training for all employees	5
Voluntary ethics training courses	2
Mandatory ethics training courses for violators	1
Making counselors available for ethical issues	1
Surveying employee's opinions about ethics	1
Establishing an ethics hotline	1

requirements than in integrating them in real world ... situations. Knowing what to emphasize when, how to combine or prioritize disparate requirements ... are all part of the art and craft of contemporary public administration. (I)mproving accountability and advancing ethics ultimately depends on individual action of public servants" (557). If we are to build trust, he argues, then we have to do it ourselves. To the contention that this can take a very long time, Rosenbloom quotes Al Gore: "then there's no time to lose" and we had better start now (557).

Discussion: An Ethics Omission?

By encompassing the nature of much of the field, the writers of textbooks under review are owed a debt of gratitude by the profession. In addition to addressing a wide variety of topics, they examine the context and content of ethics in government. All offer some coverage of ethics, discuss a broad group of laws and values, and illustrate and document their work with several graphics and references. There is generally an implied or stated rationale for including the topic, but not necessarily an explicit definition of it. The presentations are frequently a blend of descriptive and normative styles. Fully one-half of the books take a developmental approach, four focus on legal compliance, and two demonstrate a greater mix of the two strategies. Most mention implementation techniques (but choose not to examine them in detail), and a slim majority posits a conclusion about public service ethics. Analyzing them in the sequence used above, what can be said of these findings?

Regarding the context within which it occurs, the sheer quantity of ethics discussion can only be described as modest. The present authors cannot quantify what volume of relevant materials should be found in introductory textbooks—after all, quality is more important—but the existing amount is clearly not overwhelming. If a professional is defined not only as one with technical expertise, but also ethical bearing, then perhaps the technical dimension could be informed by more ethical discourse—and vice versa. It is remarkable, to take just two examples, that ethics is seldom mentioned in budgeting and personnel chapters (or budgeting or personnel in the ethics chapters) where opportunities for corruption as well as human development are so evident.

Secondly, perhaps the location of the ethics chapters in the textbooks signals its significance in the profession as either a capstone to the entire work or as a keystone close to the beginning. A reading of the constituent chapters reveals that neither appears to be the case. Discussions near the end often seem more like an add-on than a culmination as they seldom flow from the foregoing discussions. Those that appear early on do not usually affect topics found else-

where. Given that excellence in ethics and technical ability are key to the profession, they seem curiously unrelated in this literature.

Third, the books allude to many disparate norms, but rarely as a set of personal, professional, organizational, and societal values and the conflicting demands that inevitably arise among them. A clear delineation of crucial values would no doubt be helpful for readers in comprehending the environment of ethical concerns. And finally, with less than two ethics exhibits in these books, the rich diversity of conceptual schema, provocative commentaries, controversial case studies, and empirical data (as noted) seems underrepresented. The discussions, while innocent of the growing body of behavioral work (summarized in Menzel with Carson 1999), are in fact generally well-documented with qualitative research. In terms of context, then, there is no omission of the topic or non-empirical references; however, there does exist something of a lacuna with respect to the impact of the ethics chapter (wherever placed), a comprehensive set of values confronting the manager, the use of illustrations, and references to quantitative literature.

Concerning the content of the material, all texts include a criterion of inclusion for the topic. Laudably, most refer to the role obligations and opportunities of the professional; those that do not might wish to consider a more affirmative logic than to simply avoid wrongdoing, however important that is. The second content factor, definition, yielded a serious deficit, as most publications here do not directly explain the "e" word. Surely students deserve a lucid detailing of this complex term in order to have a working understanding of the rest of the reading. Third, the style of presentation (suitable for a professional field) in many books was a hybrid of factual description and normative analysis. Other authors, less comfortable with normative literature, might supply editorial exhibits to illustrate its importance for both their pre-professional and professional students.

In light of the frequent overemphasis found on legal compliance in government ethics, just four textbooks used that strategy—a refreshing finding. Instead, most emphasized individual/organizational development or took a balanced compliance-development approach. The latter is recommended here simply because to minimize the legal enforcement is to deny the world of practice—a hazardous route at best. Still, the case can be made for a *generally* developmental stance (found in the six books) on the grounds that some legal issues will be addressed; beyond that, the intricate, jurisdiction-specific details are a more suitable topic for on-the-job training.

A major oversight occurred in the fifth evaluative criterion of the conceptual framework: implementation techniques and issues. If ethics *is* action (a common implication

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Notes

1. Their significance is enhanced by the fact that most masters of public administration programs do not require an ethics course; thus, the initial class may be one of the few opportunities to study the topic.
2. Excluded are commonly used textbooks that make no pretense to be core works (for example, anthologies, casebooks, specialized publications).
3. This section follows Cigler and Neiswender's study (1991) on the treatment given bureaucracy in elementary American government textbooks.
4. Below is a more specific listing of the most commonly cited and referenced authors.

Author cited	Number of texts citing and/or referencing	Number of times cited and/or referenced
James S. Bowman	7	14
Terry L. Cooper	5	12
Melvin Dubnick	4	4
Herman Finer	8	9
Carl J. Friedrich	10	11
John Rawls	4	4
John A. Rohr	8	11
Barbara Romzek	4	4
David H. Rosenbloom	3	5
Woodrow Wilson	3	3

5. While textbooks inherently are heavily descriptive, each of these categories represents an overall tendency—for instance, a broadly narrative treatment does not imply that it is devoid of normative concerns or any balance between subjectivity and objectivity. It simply indicates that the bulk of the material was factual in nature.

of ethics definitions), then a discussion in greater depth than typically provided is needed. That is, to realize the values and strategies included in the textbooks, to fulfill agency missions, to accomplish goals of democratic government—indeed, to complete the chapters—a careful review of tools and their efficacy is a necessity to authenticate the rest of the material. In a similar vein, those books that do not attempt a conclusion about the significance of ethics in government would do well to do so—if for no other reason than to inspire better ethics initiatives and their execution.

The baseline data reported here sheds light on the presentation of ethics in the profession. If the expertise of the public administration professional with a master's degree consists largely of the possession of technical skills, then that characterization is faithfully reflected in the textbooks. While clearly specialized abilities to analyze issues are necessary, the capacity to grasp those problems in a manner consistent with professional principles and personal integrity is also essential (Bowman 1998). There are, then, several implications of the findings for stakeholders in the field.

Instructors, first, may wish to change reading assignments, expand lecture material, or suggest to authors and publishing representatives that additional attention be given to the topic. Writers and their publishers, accordingly, can help readers understand that public administration never has been regarded merely as a technical enterprise by providing more thorough coverage, and fuller integration, of ethics in their titles. Administrators, too, can contribute by volunteering as guest speakers, applying to become adjunct professors, providing internship opportunities, and attending professional society meetings to assist in bringing the real world of ethics to students. Accrediting bodies can serve in all of these endeavors by enforcing—as well as strengthening—their standards.

The profession has witnessed much progress in the post-Watergate era. There has been substantial improvement in the amount and quality of materials available to students, a maturation that has included the treatment of ethics. Both casual observation and the literature confirm that the self-portraits represented by paradigmatic works are more complete and accurate than a generation ago. Yet, like medicine, public administration is more than knowing specialized information; rather, the consummate professional is one who exercises the ethical edge of responsible discretion. Clearly, ethics is key to the identity and legitimacy of the public service. It is not suggested that a robust examination of ethics in beginning textbooks could be some sort of magic bullet. But ethics material found in elementary books today represents a small, and in most programs perhaps the only required, occasion to study the subject (Bowman 1998). This is all the more reason that the edge needs honing and that any omissions be addressed.

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Appendix Summary of Ethical Content

Authors	Ethics chapter title and page numbers	Ethics section(s) or subsection(s) and page number(s)	Total number of pages	Percentage
George Berkley and John Rouse	None	"The Craft and Political Culture" (18–21) "Conflicting Doctrines in Public Administration" (122) "Administrative Discretion and its Limits" (351–5) "Administrative Controls: Internal and External" (363–70) "The Emergence of the Whistleblower" (370–2) "Administrative Responsibility" (414–6)	446	.051
Phillip J. Cooper, Linda P. Brady, Olivia Hidalgo-Hardeman, Albert Hyde, Katherine C. Naff, J. Steven Ott, Harvey White	"Law Against Ethics: Legal Accountability and Ethical Responsibility" (75–93)	"The Accountability Problem" (30) Part of "Management Framework" (66) Part of "Policy Formulation" (176) "Accountability" (398–400)	457	0.052
Robert B. Denhardt with Joseph W. Grubbs	"The Ethics of Public Service" (115–48)	"Ensuring Accountability" (17–8) "The Ethical Challenges Facing Public Service" (425–6)	495	0.074
James W. Fesler and Donald F. Kettl	"Conclusion" (367–86)	"Values" (219–20) "Corruption" (306–7)	512	0.044
Gerald Garvey	"Introduction to the Ethics of Public Roles" (305–56)	"Five Competing Values in Civil Service System" (43–7) "The Public Bureaucracy as a Rule-Bound Environment" (128–9) "Is Cost Benefit Analysis Ethically Suspect" (381–4)	542	0.114
George J. Gordon and Michael E. Milakovich	None	"Administrative Values" (38–41) "The Ethical Setting: New Emphasis on an Old Challenge" (41–3) "Bureaucratic Power and Political Accountability" (67–72) "Ethical Dimensions of Decision Making" (175–80)	526	0.036
Nicholas Henry	"Toward a Bureaucratic Ethic" (457–74)	"Professionalism" (85–6) "Waste, Fraud, and Abuse: The New Meaning of Corruption" (197–8) "Ethical and Moral Problems in Evaluation Research" (232–3) "Revolving Foreign Agents" (378–9) "The Corruption Question" (381–3) "ASPA Code of Ethics" (492–3, Appendix)	511	0.064
William C. Johnson	"Administrative Accountability" (431–60)	"The New Public Administration" (23–4) "The Ethics Issue" (24–7) "Sources of Conflicts of Interest" (329–30) "Procedural Controls and Legislative Standards" (330–2) "Public Employee Rights, Responsibilities and Empowerment" (332–4) "The Concept of Waste" (427–8)	494	0.091
Jerome B. McKinney and Lawrence C. Howard	"Ethical Foundations and Imperatives of Public Management" (3–19) "Balancing Power and Accountability" (463–79)	"Accountability" (36–7) "MLMs and the Changing Environment of Accountability" (55) "Manipulation in Administration" (78–9) "The New Public Administration" (171–4) "Praxis as a Learning and Humanizing Factor" (175–6) "Organizational Humanism: A Summary" (176–8)	511	0.090
David H. Rosenbloom	"Accountability and Ethics" (529–59)	"The Political Approach to Public Personnel Administration" (244–7) "The Individual in the Administrative State" (456–61) "Personal Responsibility" (568–9)	616	0.068
Jay M. Shafritz and E.W. Russell	"Honor and Ethics" (581–620)	"Moral Leadership" (372–4) "The Challenge of Accountability" (376–87) "The Savings and Loan Scandal" (557–60)	670	0.088
Grover Starling	"Administrative Responsibility and Ethics" (151–204)	"Legislation with Pervasive Influence" (69–72) "Federal Audit" (522–3)	670	0.088