

ASPA at 70: Symposium on Public Professionalism and the Future of ASPA

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The Present Challenges to ASPA as an Association That Promotes Public Professionalism

What is ASPA's place among core public professional organizations as well as public official associations? All public organizations are affected by tough competition for membership. Relatively few members of other public associations join ASPA, and vice versa. Only a minority of faculty members who teach in public affairs programs belong to ASPA, and at top schools, the proportion is even lower. When comparing ASPA to other public official associations, it is smaller in size and broader in scope, yet it remains a uniquely pan-generalist organization. Its pan-generalist character puts it at a disadvantage, but also offers distinct advantages. Like all public associations and nonprofits, ASPA faces stiff competition from increasingly specialized associations for membership. Its key future challenge, the authors suggest, will be to match its membership benefits effectively to the rapidly shifting expectations and needs of current and prospective members.

Public administration has emerged as an important profession (or interlinked group of professions) and field of academic study in the past 70 years. The range of social, economic, and political needs addressed by government has widened, and the number of people holding positions in government has expanded during this period, especially at the state and local government levels. The number of students studying public administration, particularly in master's-level professional degree programs, has mushroomed since the 1960s, when many states lacked even a single university specializing in the field. During the past three decades, however, the extent of antigovernment feeling has grown as well, and governments are reorganizing such that more of the public's work is being performed by people who are not employed by government. It is easy for those who are interested in the core institutions and activities that advance the public interest to feel beleaguered. In this climate,

the declining membership of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)—the overarching association that focuses on purpose and performance in the public sector—and the fragmentation of organizations involved in public affairs professional development, research, and education may be interpreted as signs of weakness in the field.

An examination of the state of public professionalism also must consider the nature of ASPA as an association and the changes in social connections and social networking that are occurring in American society. To be sure, ASPA finds itself in a challenging position, but it is not unique in this regard. Other kinds of associations are feeling the same strains. The inexorable drive toward organizational differentiation and specialization produces centrifugal forces that ASPA must understand and counter, to some extent, but also must learn to live with.

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This discussion starts with an examination of organizational interactions at the core of the public administration field. The next section places ASPA in a typology of public service organizations and compares ASPA to other public official organizations. The discussion turns to the issue of member benefits and changes in social capital for society as a whole and identifies trends that disadvantage generalist organizations. In view of these considerations, a set of possible roles for ASPA is outlined and its current situation is assessed.

Interactions at the Core of Public Administration

The field of public administration, at its center, has a number of organizational actors. Efforts to advance education, research, and practice related to public administration are undertaken by two organizations

made up of leaders of academic programs and leaders in practice and research, respectively, in addition to ASPA. Furthermore, there are three other associations of primarily academic researchers with a public affairs focus.

NASPAA and NAPA

It is well known that ASPA helped found both the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). As Jeremy E. Plant discusses in this symposium, there are many shared activities between these organizations.

NASPAA operated within ASPA from 1970 to 1975, when it became an independent organization. ASPA has no role in promoting or shaping the content of graduate education in public administration and public policy. The association lacks the benefits that come from having institutional members to supplement its individual membership base, as is the case, for example, with departmental members of the American Political Science Association. Currently, 268 schools are members of NASPAA.¹

Two approaches have been taken to compare the number of ASPA members with academic affiliations—a total of 1,296 people—and the teaching faculty in NASPAA schools. NASPAA estimates that there are 3,200 faculty positions in their member schools. Thus, the ratio of these positions to ASPA membership is approximately 5:2. It would be misleading to calculate the percentage of ASPA members from the NASPAA faculty positions because there are ASPA members in faculty positions at universities that are not NASPAA members. Still, the ratio gives some indication about the potential membership pool among academicians in public affairs compared to the actual membership.

A precise count has been made of the top 10 programs identified by *U.S. News & World Report* in the specialization of public management.² There are 69 faculty members at these universities who are members of ASPA, or 18 percent of the total. The number of tenured or tenure-track faculty members at the 10 schools ranges from 14 to 108. The number of ASPA members ranges from 1 to 12. There are three programs with 50 percent or more of their faculty who are members of ASPA and three programs with less than 10 percent who are members.

The National Academy of Public Administration is composed of leaders in practice and scholarship in the field, including many former presidents (and the current president) of ASPA. Candidates for fellows are nominated by current fellows, placed on a ballot by a membership committee, and voted on by all fellows. NAPA, as Plant observes, is recognized as the source of views on governance, policy, and management for the public administration community. NAPA's standing panels may invite individuals who are not fellows to be associate members to provide special expertise. The exception is the Standing Panel on Social Equity, whose fellow and associate members are self-selecting. The implications of having prestigious leaders

in a separate organization from ASPA depend on the extent of cross-participation. Of the 647 current fellows and senior fellows in NAPA, 175, or 27 percent, are members of ASPA. The number of ASPA members who serve on panels as associate members is not known, but there are many who make important contributions to the Social Equity panel.

There are no cross-links on the Web sites of these three organizations.

Academic Associations

ASPA has always been an organization that combines practitioner members who primarily work in government and academic members who are affiliated with universities. The main journal of ASPA, *Public Administration Review*, has been the major national outlet for research on public affairs. The American Political Science Association (APSA), which was once home to political scientists specializing in public administration and which often chose specialists in this field to head the organization through the 1940s, became less hospitable to public administration specialists starting in the 1950s, and public administration topics began to disappear from the political science journals (Henry 1975). The "symbolic nadir" of the field's relationship with APSA came in 1982, when no paper was commissioned to review the traditional subfield of public administration for the annual meeting's theme of the "state of the discipline" (Hill 1992, 41). In the next year, however, a new section on public administration was organized and attracted a large number of participants. The section currently has 523 members; 181, or 35 percent, are also among the academic members of ASPA.

The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) is a multidisciplinary organization dedicated to improving public policy and management by fostering excellence in research, analysis, and education. Founded in 1979 by representatives from 15 policy schools and research institutes, APPAM held its first annual conference the same year in Chicago, and published the first volume of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* in 1981. Since its inception, the association has grown to nearly 2,000 individual members (including students), as well as more than 100 institutional members. It is estimated to have approximately 910 members affiliated with academic institutions.³ Of these, approximately 100, or 11 percent, are also members of ASPA.

The Public Management Research Association (PMRA) is an academic membership association that furthers research on public organizations (see <http://www.pmra.org>). PMRA grew out of a biannual series of public management research conferences. PMRA now publishes the *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory (JPART)*, which has emerged as one of the premier journals in the field. Both PMRA and *JPART* emphasize the links between the study of public institutions and their management and the study of public policy. There are currently 136 members of PMRA. Of these, 70, or 52 percent, also belong to ASPA.

There are considerable gaps from the ASPA perspective particularly as it pertains to academicians who provide the membership base for most of the comparison organizations. ASPA is not attracting a very high share of the faculty members who teach in the public affairs area.

Table 1 Cross-Membership in Public Affairs Associations

	Total Members	Members of ASPA	Percent	Share of ASPA Academic Members Who Belong
APPAM	910 ¹	100	11.0%	7.7%
APSA (Public Administration Section)	523	181	34.6%	14.0%
PMRA	136	70	51.5%	5.4%
NAPA	647	175	27.0%	—
NASPAA faculty ²	3,200	1,296	—	—
Faculty in top 10 public management programs ³	381	69	18.1%	—

1. For APPAM, this is an estimate of the number of members who are academicians.
2. No percentage is given, as calculating such a figure would be misleading.
3. Based on U.S. News & World Report rankings, 2008.

A summary of the cross-memberships discussed in this section is presented in table 1. There are considerable gaps from the ASPA perspective, particularly with respect to academicians, who provide the membership base for most of the comparison organizations. ASPA is not attracting a high share of the faculty members who reach in the public affairs area. This may be explained in part by the increasing number of programs focusing on public policy that are part of NASPAA. As the analysis of APPAM membership indicates, just over 1 in 10 members belong to ASPA. With fewer than one in five faculty members belonging to ASPA in highly ranked public management programs, however, ASPA is failing to attract most of the academicians at leading programs.

The involvement of political scientists who are interested in public administration in ASPA is modest. The PMRA cross-membership is high, but the organization is not currently drawing a large number of members. The other half of the cross-membership issue is the percentage of ASPA members who belong to the other scholarly associations. The findings that fewer than 1 in 10 ASPA members belong to APPAM and PMRA, and that only 14 percent belong to the public administration section of APSA, indicate a limited commitment to reciprocity among academicians. The lack of membership does not mean that faculty members who belong to one of the organizations but not others (or belong to none) do not read the journals or newsletters from these organizations. Clearly, the cost of

Membership Base

		Generalist	Generalist with Focus on One Level	Specialist by Function
Degree of professionalism	High	ASPA	ICMA* American Association of School Superintendents* Federal Managers Association	APA APWA NASW IACP* IPMA GFOA NRPA
	Low		NLC** U.S. Conference of Mayors** NGA** NACo** NCSL** National Association of Regional Councils**	International Institute of Municipal Clerks National Sheriffs Association*

Without asterisk—Primarily individual membership.
 * Individual membership, but payment by organization is probably common.
 ** Organizational membership.
 Acronyms: APA—American Planning Association; APWA—American Public Works Association; GFOA—Government Finance Officers Association; IACP—International Association of Chiefs of Police; ICMA—International City/County Management Association; IPMA—International Personnel Management Association; NACo—National Association of Counties; NASW—National Association of Social Workers; NCSL—National Council of State Legislatures; NGA—National Governors Association; NLC—National League of Cities; NRPA—National Recreation and Park Association.
 Sources: Arnold and Plant (1994, figure 1/3); Jeremy Plant, personal communication.

Figure 1 A Typology of Public Official Associations



multiple memberships can be a constraint that prevents many from acting on their interest in the other organizations.

The overlap between ASPA and NAPA is different from other comparisons. ASPA members cannot choose to be NAPA fellows; they must be selected. Still, NAPA fellows can choose to join ASPA, and almost three-quarters are not doing so. It goes without saying that ASPA would welcome and greatly benefit from not only their membership but also their active involvement. The members of the two separate organizations, both drawing on practitioner and academic members, could choose to work together to a greater extent than they do.

ASPA and Public Official Associations

The public official association occupies the next ring of organizations to compare to ASPA. As defined by Arnold and Plant (1994) (and in Plant's article in this symposium), public official associations (POAs) promote a high level of accomplishment and performance in the organizations they represent, whether they are made up of elected officials who speak for their particular type of government, such as the National League of Cities, or appointed administrators who promote professionalism. POAs generate and transmit knowledge that will be helpful to their members, either individuals or the jurisdictions or organizations for which they work. Their concerns range from broad issues related to advancing the public interest to matters that pertain to the interests of the jurisdiction or the occupational group. Associations representing public officials remain an understated and understudied aspect of governance, in America and worldwide.

Arnold and Plant categorize POAs in terms of their scope, nature of membership, and level of professionalism. An illustrative group of associations is presented in the typology depicted in figure 1. Regarding scope, only ASPA appears to be concerned with the entire organization and spans all levels of government (and encompasses a number of functionally specialized sections).⁴ The generalist organizations that focus on a particular level of government speak for jurisdictions or organizations as a whole (ICMA, Association of School Administrators), and they teach managers what they should know about specialized fields or issues for which the generalist is responsible. For example, the ICMA has provided a great service to city and county managers with its "Green Book" series about general management and the specialized areas that managers oversee, such as planning or public safety. The specialist associations organize key professional groups associated with particular bodies of knowledge, methods, expertise, and values (e.g., planning) or with major functions (e.g., public works). These associations may play a role in approving entry into the specialized field. Associations may be classified as subspecialist when they provide information and support regarding specific functional areas within a broader function, such as community development and code enforcement within planning.

Another key factor is the nature of membership and the source of support.⁵ In some associations, the organization is the member and pays the membership fee. In some individual membership organizations, it is common for the jurisdiction to pay the membership dues,

especially for "full" members of the organization, such as city and county managers in the ICMA. The alternative is individual membership and self-payment of dues. All of the professional organizations contribute to public professionalism, but only ASPA attempts to include a wide array of officials. In addition, ASPA has members from the nonprofit sector. It would be a logical extension to invite as members those who work in businesses that do public work under contract (Williams 2008). ASPA faces the disadvantage of relying on members who pay their own dues.

It is useful to compare ASPA to some of these professional POAs. Table 2 provides information about membership and other features for 10 organizations that represent a small part of the universe of such organizations. Several are linked to specific executive roles or provide professional certification that is required to hold many public positions. Most focus on a specific area of policy or administration. ASPA has the broadest mission and is also the smallest of these organizations. ASPA stands out for its number of sections, 15 of which provide journals as part of section membership, and its network of 100 local and state chapters.

Competition among public official and public service associations is becoming ever more intense as the field becomes more crowded. Specialist and subspecialist organizations have expanded their capacity to secure attention and recognition as the spokesman for a part of the field. They offer more and higher-quality services and products than in the past (Arnold and Plant 1994). In an earlier time, the specialist groups were largely "trade" organizations that focused on the interests and professional development of members in specialized areas, but it was necessary to go to generalist associations to secure high-quality research and broader member benefits and linkages. Many of the specialist organizations now provide these services and benefits as indicated by the publications listed in table 2.

ASPA was founded in part to provide professional support to federal government managers. According to William Mosher, Franklin D. Roosevelt, while assistant secretary of the navy, helped organize the Federal Club, consisting of high-ranking federal government administrators, because "although they were the brains of the administration of the government, they enjoyed no recognized standing in the community, they did not know one another to any considerable extent, and they exercised no concerted influence" (1938, 335). Presumably, speaking approximately 20 years later, Mosher felt that these conditions still persisted. Five of the 27 ASPA presidents in the first 30 years were high-ranking federal government officials at the time they served as president—including Elmer Staats, comptroller general, and James Webb, administrator of NASA. ASPA's early membership drew heavily from the federal government, but the federal presence is now greatly diminished (Williams 2008). Five organizations make up the Government Managers Coalition that seeks to represent federal managers—one of which is the Federal Managers Association, included in table 2.⁶ All are involved in advocacy and lobbying, and several provide publications and training.

Another striking feature of ASPA is the importance of academic membership. Seventeen of the first 27 presidents were from

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Table 2 Comparison of Professional Public Officials Associations

Public Official Association	Number of Members	Periodicals	State Associations and/or Affiliates and Chapters/ Regions	Professional Certification
American Society for Public Administration	8,383	<i>Public Administration Review</i> , <i>PA Times</i> , and 15 section journals	100 chapters and 21 sections	
American Planning Association/ American Institute of Certified Planners	45,000	<i>Journal of the American Planning Association</i> , <i>Planning and Environmental Law</i> , <i>Planning Magazine</i> , <i>Practicing Planner</i> , <i>Zoning Practice</i> , and <i>The Commissioner</i>	47 National Centers, National Centers for Planning	American Institute of Certified Planners
American Public Works Association	29,000	<i>APWA Reporter</i>	64 chapters throughout North America (including Canada)	Accreditation and self-assessment programs
Federal Managers Association	20,000	<i>The Federal Manager</i> , <i>The Washington Report</i>	Eight zones plus chapters	Targeted certificate program
Government Finance Officers Association	17,500	<i>Government Finance Review</i> , <i>GFOA Budgeting Series</i> , <i>GFOA Accounting Series</i> ; <i>GFOA newsletter</i>	Two offices: Chicago and Washington, D.C.	Certified Public Finance Officers Program
International Association of Chiefs of Police	20,000	<i>The Police Chief: The Professional Voice of Law Enforcement</i>	State Associations of Chiefs of Police	Agency certification
International City/County Management Association	9,100	<i>PM magazine</i> , <i>The Municipal Yearbook</i>	State associations	Credentialed managers
International Personnel Management Association	15,000	<i>Public Personnel Management, HR Bulletin</i> , <i>International Newsletter</i>	Four regions, 50 chapters, plus an Armed Forces region	IPMA-HR Certification Council
National Recreation and Park Association	21,000	<i>Journal of Leisure Research</i> , <i>Journal of Park and Recreation Administration</i> , <i>Schole: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education</i> , <i>Therapeutic Recreation Journal</i> , <i>P & M Magazine</i>	3 national affiliates and 52 state affiliates, and 8 Regional Councils plus a Regional Task Force	Certified Park & Recreation Professional Certification and four program and academic accreditations
National Association of Social Workers	150,000	<i>Social Work</i> , plus four specialty issues: <i>Health and Social Work</i> , <i>Children and Schools</i> , <i>Social Work Research</i> , and <i>Social Work Abstract</i>	Chapters in 50 states plus New York City; Metro-Washington, DC; Puerto Rico; Virgin Islands; Guam; and international	Three levels of credentials; eight certifications for MSWs; and four certifications for BSWs

universities (13) or research institutes (4). Of the public official associations listed in table 2, it appears that only ASPA is meant to bring academicians and practitioners together on equal terms. Academicians currently represent about 15 percent of the total ASPA members and one-quarter of the nonstudent members. Certainly other POAs have academic members. For example, in the ICMA, there are 105 members with primary university affiliations out of 9,100 members. The faculty members want to learn from and contribute to the professional members, but they would not claim that the ICMA should achieve a balance between academic and practitioner perspectives. The normal specialization that separates POAs and disciplinary associations does not apply to ASPA.

One other current development on the international level may be noted briefly. ASPA has international members and global interests, which are reflected in its Section on International and Comparative Administration. Some leaders, particularly Donald Klingner (current past president) and Jos Raadschelders (managing editor of *Public Administration Review*), are seeking to reengage the U.S. government in the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), building on Allan Rosenbaum's presidency of the affiliated International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (Newland, forthcoming). ASPA has been a partner in sponsoring five Transatlantic Dialogues with European scholars in public management. These developments are expanding the range of ASPA members still more and may alter the goals of the association. If support grows for the IIAS's "disavowal of unilateralism . . . in favor of shared transnational professional expertise on a planetary level" (Newland, forthcoming), the scope of the public interest that professional administrators seek to advance will be substantially broadened.

When ASPA is compared to other POAs, it stands out as uniquely wide ranging in membership and interests. ASPA is a pan-generalist organization that seeks to connect its practitioner and academic members across levels of government, functional specializations, and sectors, and perhaps increasingly in the future across national boundaries as well.

The Benefits of Membership

The decisions that professionals make about joining organizations are affected by the perceived purpose and value of the growing number of organizations that compete for their membership. Individuals join voluntary and civic associations based on some combination of common interests, personal interests, and sense of professional responsibility. Merton contended that "the professional association is an organization of practitioners who judge one another as professionally competent and who have banded together to perform social functions which they cannot perform in their separate capacity as individuals" (1958, 50). The association is an arena for individuals to discuss, develop, and take collective action based on common interests (Knocke 1981; Stolle and Rochon 1998). The thread of shared values may initially connect individuals to associational life, but members are looking for other benefits as well. Cafferata observed that "participants' satisfaction with social interaction in the society is a function of the number, kind, and value of rewards that this interaction provides" (1979, 472).

Associations may serve as tools for developing skills and establishing social or professional standards. Merton argued that "the foremost

obligation of the association is to set rigorous standards for the profession and help enforce them: standards for the quality of personnel to be recruited in to the profession; standards for the training and education of the recruits; standards for professional practice; and standards for research designed to enlarge the knowledge on which the work of the profession rests" (1958, 52). Considering the value that collective and private rewards play in the robustness of an association, a professional society's ability to cultivate a culture of communal policy or standard setting for its members and to contribute to their professional development is an important element of organizational success.

The aims and functions of the organization often dictate membership selection. Associational purpose is closely linked to the different types of organizations that are available for collective action. According to Gordon and Babchuk (1959), associations typically align themselves functionally in an expressive or instrumental fashion. The expressive association focuses more on the provision of activities in order to cultivate relationships among members internally, such as a fraternity or a social club. Expressive associations provide a venue for individuals with shared interests to interact with each other and activities are confined to the organization itself, much like conferences or activities provided by local chapters. In this type of organization, "the orientation of the group is not the attainment of a goal anticipated for the future but to the organized flow of gratifications in the present" (Gordon and Babchuk 1959, 27).

Instrumental associations, on the other hand, "serve as social influence organizations designed to maintain or to create some normative condition or change" rather than simply providing activities for members as end in itself (Gordon and Babchuk 1959, 25). For example, while ASPA provides its annual conference and a wide variety of sections and chapters for its members to interact with each other, is its primary objective to influence the broader society? Within instrumental associations, the purpose and means for their implementation are generally agreed upon by the membership, and the significance of the organization for its members "may depend upon the relationship of its activities to objectives which lie outside the organization and the effectiveness of their implementation" (Gordon and Babchuk 1959, 27). These associations might serve as an advocate for practical change or a mediating structure between a group's membership and broader social institutions (Eberly 2000).

The instrumental purposes can vary in the extent to which they enhance the position of the members in their practice or focus on societal change. For example, Cafferata (1979) measured the satisfaction of members of a prestigious medical professional society based on an assessment of whether the association focused real concern on four functions: goal attainment, adapting the profession to change, integrating the profession and promoting effective working relationships, and preserving and maintaining the heritage, traditions, and important values of the profession. She found that the satisfaction of the general members increased when they perceived that the organization had greater instrumental success in achieving goals outside the organization that benefited them collectively, such as political influence over the process affecting professional activities and the association's prestige in the medical profession. Satisfaction was also high among members who felt that organizational leaders showed concern for quality of new physicians

and a desire to raise the quality of care. Thus, member satisfaction reflected a balance of external impacts that expanded their status and influence as well as improving medical care. It is interesting to note that leaders in the association tended to be more satisfied than members overall and felt that the association was doing a better job. The collective benefits shared by all were not as strongly related to the satisfaction level of the leaders who derived satisfaction more from their leadership contributions.

Finally, Knoke's investigation of the relationship between voluntary associations' social control systems and individual members' commitment to and detachment from the collectivity identifies the importance of access to decision making. Centralization of policy making reflects the "leaders' theft of policy making," and it is both a cause and consequence of "membership apathy" (Knoke 1981, 143). Knoke concluded that "the more centralized the decision making, the lower the members' commitment to the association and the greater their sense of detachment." Moreover, while formal associational goals and values may be the guiding factor when an individual initially decides to join one organization over another, the control that members have over the substantive (such as the development of professional standards) and procedural (who is involved and how) aspects of an association may be "more important in decisions to remain or exit" (Knoke 1981, 156). More comparative analysis of the internal workings of professional POAs is needed, but it appears that ASPA has a strong commitment to giving the elected leadership of the organization a large role in shaping the organization's goals and giving leaders along with committees of members the opportunity to determine the specific actions to be taken to achieve those goals.

Thus, associational purposes and characteristics, on the one hand, and sources of member value, on the other, vary widely and can be combined in multiple ways. When skill development and standard setting are linked to controlling access to a profession, there is a very strong connection between organizational purpose and member benefits. Some organizations offer information and networking that have clear focus and relevance to specific functions or levels of government, whereas others approach development from the perspective of promoting consideration of broad issues. All associations have some expressive purpose—this may be a well-developed aspect of closely knit associations of specialized professionals—but an important distinguishing characteristic is the extent to which meeting the social needs of current members is emphasized in the group.

Instrumental purposes are common in professional associations, although the goals can differ in the degree of focus on the status and contributions of the association's members themselves, on the one hand, and addressing public problems and advancing the public interest, on the other. And of course, purposes can be combined. The American Planning Association and the National Association of Social Workers, both large organizations devoted to professional

The opportunity to shape the organization's policies and practices can be an important pull for some members, and the absence of this opportunity can push them away. It is useful to carefully diagnose those areas in which members want a voice and can make a contribution with extensive input. It is important to remember that leaders and members may assess the organization differently and find different sources of satisfaction.

development and controlling entry into professional practice, have a strong commitment to articulating and addressing the broader social purposes of their professions (Svara 2007). Finally, overlapping all of the other categories is the degree of internal democracy. The opportunity to shape the organization's policies and practices can be an important pull for some members, and the absence of this opportunity can push them away. It is useful to carefully diagnose those areas in which members want a voice and can make a contribution with extensive input. It is important to remember that leaders and members may assess the organization differently and find different sources of satisfaction.

Social Capital and the Challenges to Generalist Organizations

The nature of associational life affects the level and kind of development of social capital in a society. Putnam (1995a) documented the society-wide decline in association membership between 1967 and 1993. His extensive work (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000) has advanced the argument that through sustained, face-to-face interaction with people from different backgrounds, we learn to trust each other (Wollebaek and Selle 2002). But much like the distinction made by Gordon and Babchuk, associations may engage in activities that generate trust only between members or broaden their spectrum of activities to include the generation of greater societal trust. Just as Putnam distinguished bridging and bonding social capital, Stolle and Rochon (1998) differentiated this phenomenon through the concepts of *public civiness* and *private or personalized civiness*. Rather than enhancing public trust within one's immediate circle, public civiness aims to generate social capital through collective action beyond the association. As the authors observed, "militia groups, right-wing extremists, and terrorists from the left or right all meet regularly and interact with each other, but to our knowledge they do not foster a generalized trust . . . beyond their immediate group and specific projects" (Stolle and Rochon 1998, 49). Generalized trust beyond the association is related to the organization's ability to integrate the values and interests of broader social categories, as opposed to an association whose membership is socially constricted. To be sure, specialized professional associations are not the same as militia groups, but the shift of professional interactions to specialist from generalist organizations can contribute to diminished capacity to communicate and reach understanding among disparate professional actors in public affairs.

There has been an enormous proliferation of associations that may contribute to more private civiness. The *Encyclopedia of Associations* listed approximately 6,500 associations of all kinds in 1958 at the national level, and the total grew to almost 23,000 in 1990 (Skocpol 1999).⁷ There has been a strong trend for specialized organizations to gain at the expense of general ones. Focusing on civic and political associations, Skocpol found that previously, the largest membership groups had members from across class lines (but not gender or racial lines), combined regular local meetings with assemblies at the state, regional, and/or national levels, and took on wide-ranging

rather than narrowly specialized pursuits. They have been replaced with larger assemblies of like-minded people who pursue narrow interests or focused political issues and belong only in the sense that they sign up and send money. The parallel in membership behavior is not exact in the growth of specialized professional associations, but their focus on a narrower range of concerns is similar, and the decline of professional associations with broad interests whose diverse members have extensive personal interaction in local chapters matches the experience of large civic federations.

With these trends in mind, generalist organizations such as ASPA face two interesting dilemmas. Is the function of the society to build trust, professional standards, and a commitment to governance within the confines of public administration scholarship and practice as an expressive association, or is the development of social capital and the achievement of objectives that bridge the instrumental organization to the broader community a priority? How does ASPA compete with specialized professional public official associations and with purely academic associations?

Not surprisingly, with an increase in the number of associations available to professionals who are looking for professional fulfillment and career enhancement, the rewards and types of social interactions offered can play a significant role in the recruitment and retention of members. Some appear more or less attractive than others relative to the price of membership. The total cost and the time required to sustain multiple memberships can be daunting.

Possible Visions for ASPA

ASPA's *Strategic Imperatives 2008–2010* report opens by optimistically stating, "We need to change, we can change, we are prepared to change, we will change . . . 'ASPA Moving Forward!'" This report and other ongoing efforts, such as the association's Strategic Imperative Groups, are important initiatives that attempt to align ASPA's goals and objectives (as well as governance structure and technology) with its evolving membership. The continuing debate on how to integrate the values, interests, and skill sets of public administration scholars and practitioners can be viewed as one of the fundamental issues related to the future of ASPA, as is the challenge of maintaining cohesion and connections across the multiple lines that divide members by level of government, sector, and functional specialization. As this discussion progresses, settling on a clear vision for the association should provide its diversified membership with a better understanding of whether or not they wish to contribute to the organization's future. There are many possible visions for ASPA, as Plant notes in his article in this symposium. Addressing them one by one does not mean that they are mutually exclusive, but it is misleading to think that all can be pursued simultaneously.

One vision is to be an expressive organization and focus on providing activities that will strengthen the social connections among members and reflect their values and commitments. This vision implies

a membership recruitment strategy that stresses finding people like those who are already members. Related to this approach is an emphasis on development activities to help members advance professionally and the provision of other benefits and services for members.

Second, ASPA could seek to be more of an instrumental organization and advocate for substantive change in governance and the broader society. Advocacy and the goals that ASPA seeks to advance could focus on the improvement of processes in policy making, administration, and management and the strengthening of governance. It could also advocate for social change and emphasize the transformation of society. This movement away from a more expressive orientation would extend ASPA's agenda beyond an internal focus by creating more elaborate relationships with policy makers and agencies at all levels of government, and by attempting to build social capital beyond the association's formal membership. As an intermediary association between the public and governing institutions, ASPA's practitioner and scholar members could generate substantive proposals for change.

Third, ASPA may be seen as an elite organization (with nonelite members as well) that speaks for the public administration community in an authoritative way.

Fourth, ASPA may be seen as an academic organization that advances research in the multiple disciplines that define public administration as a field of research and study. The standard contribution of a discipline is to develop theory and generate research that expands the knowledge base of the field. Although it is not the exclusive function of academic disciplines, "theorization" is an important part of institutional and intellectual change (Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings 2002). Scholars have contributed to a succession of new paradigms over the past century that have influenced the ways in which we think about and practice public administration (Gargan 2007).

Fifth, ASPA could be seen as an umbrella organization for its chapters and sections. ASPA would provide more wide-ranging opportunities for individuals to interact with others. Through chapters, it connects people who share a location and work in the full array of the organizations from which ASPA members come, and through sections, it links those who share substantive interests in different organizations and places. These venues for discourse and networking, while smaller enclaves, may reinforce the institutional values and procedures accepted by the national association. They could also be the locus for

new thinking and the development of innovation, as the study of the accounting association in Alberta by Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings (2002) demonstrates.

This brief description of possible visions is by no means the only collection of practical solutions for transitioning ASPA from its previous mode of operation to its new strategic focus. However, advancing any vision calls for three inquiries: a comprehensive analysis of ASPA's

The continuing debate on how to integrate the values, interests, and skill sets of public administration scholars and practitioners can be viewed as one of the fundamental issues related to the future of ASPA, as is the challenge of maintaining cohesion and connections across the multiple lines that divide members by level of government, sector, and functional specialization.

goals and objectives, a needs assessment that examines the values and interests of its members or prospective members, and an examination of competing and complementary associations that currently occupy the same space in the muddled public administration landscape.

Conclusion

This assessment of ASPA as an association in competition with others at the present time leads to an important conclusion. ASPA's most important qualities are potentially its greatest weaknesses—its generalist, boundary-spanning mission and its organizationally diverse membership. ASPA, in its Strategic Imperative Groups, has identified the core and auxiliary groups it wishes to engage, with an emphasis on students, new professionals, and practitioners. Obviously, academicians are part of the association's core membership as well. We have stressed the importance of finding the benefits that make an association valuable to current and potential members. ASPA is swimming against the current of association change toward greater differentiation and specific member benefits. How do ASPA's characteristics match up with the target groups for membership? Furthermore, how can ASPA address the competition with other core groups in the field of public affairs that also engage practitioner and academic members?

The broad mission and generalist qualities presumably are appealing to academicians who work across the entire field (although they get trapped in their specializations) and are naturally drawn to the conceptual issues in the field. There is substantial potential for ASPA to build on its leading role in attracting members in faculty positions to draw in more of those who teach and do research in public administration and public policy. There are large numbers of academicians who are not members of ASPA. Furthermore, ASPA should encourage its own members to affiliate with other scholarly associations. Discounts for multiple memberships should be explored.

The generalist mission and encompassing approach are also attractive to students who are considering a wide range of options for their careers. ASPA should continue to remind faculty members to encourage students to join ASPA and to look for ways to remain connected with the student members after they finish academic programs. ASPA should explore working with NASPAA's energetic "Go Public" outreach campaign, which is aimed at attracting students to graduate programs in public affairs.

ASPA is also a natural for young professionals who have flexible goals and who are more likely than their predecessors to move across organizations and sectors in their careers. A closer working relationship with the Young Government Leaders association at the federal level in a sensible first step, and a search should be made for comparable organizations at other levels of government and in the nonprofit sector. A current issue of enormous consequence is how the federal government is recruiting large numbers of new and predominately early career staff members. The interest in public service is high, but the processes for recruitment and selection do not seem well matched to the interests and aspirations of young professionals.

This problem offers a good example of how ASPA's characteristics work to its advantage.

The special characteristics of the federal government personnel process require that reforms be designed specifically for this level of government, but the general principles will be relevant for state and local governments when they start hiring again as the current fiscal crisis wanes. Furthermore, the experience of successful "next generation" recruiting in local governments and nonprofits before hiring was frozen can provide useful insights to the designers of the federal systems. ASPA is uniquely positioned in the public affairs community to contribute to this effort of mobilizing young professionals.

The major challenge is broadening the appeal to practitioners who face the trade-offs between membership in specialized organizations that directly benefit their current job performance and immediate professional advancement opportunities and in ASPA, with its broader, career expanding (and often overlooked immediate informational and networking) benefits. One obvious response is that the choice is not either/or, and, as is the case with academicians, agreements for multiple member discounts could encourage the choice of generalist as well as specialist memberships. Second, it is possible to make the research promoted by ASPA more accessible. In addition to making *The Public Manager* available to members, a new *ASPA Research for Practitioners* newsletter distributed by e-mail several times a year, with selected articles from ASPA journals rewritten in shorter versions with an emphasis on implications and applications would expand the utilization of scholarly research. Third, in addition to the experimental second annual meeting aimed at practitioners, a practitioner planning group could identify key topics for sessions at the annual conference.

A separate issue is the involvement of top-level practitioners. Their absence is often attributed to the presence of NAPA, but there are two objections to this explanation. First, NAPA includes only a small number of highly accomplished, high-ranking officials. There are many more available if the benefits can be clarified, and a rewarding role can be developed for them. Second, NAPA and ASPA could be better integrated than they are currently, both organizationally and individually, with higher membership and involvement by NAPA fellows in ASPA nationally and in chapters.

There are two final resources for tapping into the advantages of being a boundary-spanning organization. Sections already bring diverse elements together across levels of government and sectors. Shared interest in a theme can unite people who do not normally interact with each other. Some sections may focus too much on educational and research issues and thereby push away practitioners. A larger share of annual conference panels organized by sections would give them more time to focus on shared substantive interests that are relevant to both practitioners and academicians.

In addition, local and state chapters provide networking opportunities across the multiple ASPA segments. New forms of social networking need to be added as well as using meetings to bring members together. Shared geography is no longer the only reason to assemble a group of people, but it still has great value. Meetings for presentations and socializing provide face-to-face interactions and build trust across the organizations that interact in local, regional,

... local and state chapters
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and state-level governance. They are also a key part of the expressive nature of the organization.

Considering how ASPA relates to other organizations and how it fits into its organizational context, there is continuity along with change from its founding days. From the beginning, ASPA has filled a niche as a general-purpose organization dedicated to public affairs. It now operates in a much more crowded field, but ASPA still has a unique contribution to make because of its boundary-spanning character and enduring values that are salient to its diverse membership.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Ljubinka Andonoska, doctoral student in public administration at Arizona State University, for her creative assistance in compiling the data used in this article.

Notes

1. According to <http://www.naspaa.org/students/faq/graduate/sch-searchresult.asp>, 157 programs are NASPAA accredited.
2. These universities are American University, Arizona State University, Harvard University, Indiana University, Rutgers University–Newark, the University at Albany, Syracuse University, the University of Kansas, and the University of Southern California. The public management specialization was chosen over the general ranking, which includes universities that focus on public policy and whose faculty may be less likely to identify closely with ASPA. The overlap between ASPA and APPAM membership is considered later. The total faculty count is based on tenured and tenure-track faculty. Titles such as professor of practice, adjunct professor, professor emeritus, and other titles that do not indicate tenure-track positions were not counted.
3. Erik A. Devereux, executive director of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, estimates that there are approximately 1,900 total members in APPAM, of which more than 600 are students. Of the nonstudent membership, about 70 percent are academic and 30 percent practitioner, with a substantial proportion from policy research firms and think tanks (personal correspondence).
4. There is no obvious generalist organization of public officials with nonprofessional members. An association of elected officials spanning levels of government would fill in the empty quadrant, but there is no POA that represents legislative and chief elected officers from local, state, and national government.
5. Jeremy Plant suggested this variable in correspondence with the authors.
6. Federal Managers Association (drawing originally from the Department of Defense), Public Managers Association (drawing originally from the Internal Revenue Service), the Senior Executives Association, and two organizations for managers in the Social Security Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration.
7. The current count in the *Encyclopedia of Associations* in the United States at all levels is 127,360.

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