

ARNOVA
Theories, Issues, and Boundaries Section Meeting
Wednesday, November 17, 2004
Los Angeles, CA

Section Chair, Felice Perlmutter, convened the meeting at 1:00.

Coordinating Committee:

Felice Perlmutter, Chair

Roseanne Mirabella, Vice Chair

Brenda Bushouse, Treasurer

Peg Hall, Secretary

Kathryn Cheever, At-Large Member

Martha Golensky, At-Large Member

Tim Peterson, At-Large Member (not able to attend)

Other members in attendance included:

Lewis Auerbach, Debra Beck, David Billis, Wolf Bielefeld, Thomasina Borkman, Eleanor Brilliant, Dwight Burlingame, Miriam Caiden, Susan Chambre, Richard Clerkin, Chris Cornforth, Peter Frumpkin, Dave Garvey, Mark Hager, Margaret Harris, Sarah Hicks, Graeme Lindsay, Keith Lee, Roger Lohmann, Mike Moody, Laurie Mook, Becky Nesbit, Yuko Nishide, Susan Ostrander, Lyuba Palyvode, Laurie Paarlberg, Susan Reyes, Sherida Ryan, Prema Thirupathy, Keith Seel, Jeff Trexler.

Non-member guests included 30 graduate students from the Cal State, LA China Exchange Master's of Public Administration Program.

Plenary Session: What's In a Name?

Mark Hager and Roger Lohmann

The presenters spoke about the "nonprofit organizations" and the "voluntary action" segments of the ARNOVA name. Their presentations were followed by discussion of the conceptual divergence and convergence in thinking about these two approaches to research and practice concerning nonprofits. The presentations and discussion dealt with:

- The framing of our area of interest using a management approach versus an agentic approach;
- The various words used to describe the nonprofit sector by scholars, practitioners, laymen, the IRS and US government agencies, and scholars and governments of other countries;
- The varying conceptual and theoretical approaches to the field and their dependence on the frames discussed earlier; and,
- The changes over time in ARNOVA's approach to its own identification with each paradigm.

Concurrent Session 1

Laurie Paarlberg led a roundtable discussion of the issues raised in the Plenary Session. Topics included:

- Naming and Framing

- Differences concerning terminology across national boundaries, with comments by participants from France, the UK, Ukraine, the US.
- The value of these cross-national labeling/naming distinctions as a tool to help us tease out the conceptual differences among the organizations in the nonprofit sector.
- The potential value of a “general theory” of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action
 - The need to have theory that is adequately robust to deal with the growth in the number and types of nonprofit organizations
 - The impact of the diversity movement in the US on the concepts of “public good” and “common good.”
- The question of whether we are marginalized as scholars within our universities because the study of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action is not a discipline that fits any one scholarly field.
- The confusion caused by our specialized use of words that have more general meanings to laymen, such as “philanthropy”.

Laurie Mook led a second roundtable discussion of the issues raised in the Plenary Session. Topics included:

- “Nonprofit organizations” and “Voluntary action” components of ARNOVA
 - The fact that ARNOVA is changing from an “individual action” organization to a “group action” organization. As such, it is normal that we re-examine our self-definitions.
 - Query about why foundations did not come up as a category in the discussion of “nonprofit organizations” and “voluntary action.”
 - Discussion of structuralism and interactionism as conceptual framework for the dichotomy between nonprofit organizations and voluntary action in our name.
 - The role of practitioners in both paradigms
- “Personal good” versus “public good”
 - The meaning of “public good.” How a group could form for personal good, such as to play cards together, and grow to be a huge card-playing organization that decides to incorporate as a tax-exempt organization. At any point would it have become a “public good”? All tax-exempt organizations are not purveying “public good”; KKK is an example of the point. The use of the term “public good” is a “bait and switch.” Every organization seems to believe it is a “public good.”
 - Discussion of the need for the theories that deal with the migration of organizations across the boundary from “personal good” to “public good.”

Concurrent Session 2

Mike Moody led a discussion concerning **emerging theories**. Topics included:

- Discussion of whether we need new theory. To what would it apply? Where would we look for it? Should it be mid-range, or a unifying theory?
- Discussion of whether we want to be a separate academic field, or stay in our distinct fields and contribute to interdisciplinarity?
- Suggestions that new theories might better explain why nonprofits exist, how they behave, how they began, what impact they have, their ethics.

- Discussion of the role of impact measures in expressing fundamentally-held values
- Discussion of functionalist, symbolic interactional, and taxonomic theories
- Discussion of potential “genetic” theories that might unlock the “code” and “evolution” of nonprofit organizations

David Billis led a discussion concerning the **hybridity among nonprofit organizations**. Topics included the following.

- There is a debate in the literature on how to encompass two fields in one theory. Here are some of the hybrid threads that run through the literature:
 - Are nonprofit organizations government agencies in disguise?
 - Are nonprofits really for-profits?
 - The government sector’s influence on the policy of nonprofits
 - A new sector has emerged: the social enterprise sector.

The conclusion is that we are living in an age of hybrid organizations. Hybrid organizations are organizations with an origin in one sector, but characteristics of another sector. Hybrids often show characteristics of more than one sector.

- The group then considered several questions and a discussion ensued:
 - What are advantages and disadvantages of being a hybrid?
 - When does one of the hybrids move over the line to another sector? This is the boundary question.
 - Do we care where the organizations are?
 - Here is a test that was recommended to determine an organization’s parenthood:
 - Who can close you down?
 - Who can close the YMCA down?
- Defining Hybrids: Use “benefits” to describe what organizations do:
 - Common benefits
 - Social benefits
 - Public benefits
 - Private benefits

Brenda Bushouse led a discussion of **Intersectoral/Intrasectoral Issues**. Topics included:

- Delivery of services in areas such as education, child care, health, and social welfare, by nonprofits, for-profits, and the public sector.
- Theory and empirical studies pertinent to these changes (e.g., market failure, contract failure) and its limitations
- How do intersectoral differences compare to intrasectoral differences?
- Does sector matter?
- Implications for research to build new theory

Business Meeting

1. Chair Felice Perlmutter presided. She recognized the work of the Coordinating Committee over the past year and thanked the members.
2. Treasurer Brenda Bushouse provided an interim report on the finances of the Section at the meeting. Subsequently additional detail has become available.

As of December 31, 2004, membership stands at 125, an increase of 70 members since June 2004. Revenues and expenses, as of December 31, 2004 are as follows:

Revenue (from membership dues)	\$1250.00
Expenses	
Administrative charge	\$125.00
Refreshments at the Annual Mtg	\$560.05
Current Balance	\$564.95

Because the hotel's charge for refreshments is very high, Brenda has requested a detailed accounting.

3. Secretary and Chair of the Nominating Committee, Peg Hall, thanked committee members Connie Baker, Kathryn Cheever, Dave Garvey, and Roger Lohmann, and presented the slate of officers. It was accepted by acclamation. The new Executive Committee is:
 - Felice Perlmutter, Chair (two-year term)
 - Roseanne Mirabella, Vice Chair (one-year term)
 - Brenda Bushouse, Treasurer (one-year term)
 - Kathryn Cheever, Secretary (two-year term)
 - Timothy Peterson, At-Large Member (one-year term)
 - Martha Golensky, At-Large Member (one-year term)
 - Michael Moody, At-Large Member (two-year term)
4. There was a discussion of the content and format of the Plenary and Breakout sessions. Members were pleased with both and recommended that the format continue next year, with the possible addition of a panel during the regular ARNOVA meeting to encourage additional participation in the discussions of theories, issues, and boundaries. Suggestions were solicited for the content of next year's program. Ideas included:
 1. Discussion of various models of nonprofit organization taxonomy across national boundaries in order to seek conceptual similarities and differences
 2. Discussion of the role of nonprofit organizations in social change
 3. Discussion of the reasons for seeking new theories of nonprofit organizations
 4. Discussion of the possible need to be defined as a discipline in order to become a legitimate academic field
5. The Chair requested that members state their willingness to serve on the nominating and program committees. Peg Hall volunteered for the former, Dave Garvey and Jeff Traxler for the latter.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00.

Minutes presented by
Margarete R. Hall, Secretary