

Exploring the Public Values Universe: Understanding Values in Public Administration

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Introduction

There can be little doubt that public administration is a field where values not only matter, but where they regularly spawn conflict and “create dilemmas – situations without clear winners or easy answers – whose resolution is the major work of individual bureaucrats, administrative agencies, public administration scholars, and, for that matter, the public sector as a whole” (Buchanan and Millstone 1979: 280). Because resolving values conflicts is a central feature and activity of the field, there has long been intellectual debate about the role of values in public administration and which value or set of values should form the foundation of and guiding treatise for the field. Such discussion has recently resurged in the literature, particularly in the growth of what might be labeled as public values research (e.g., Bozeman 2007; Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Pesch 2008; Spicer 2009, 2010; van der Wal and van Hout 2009).

Although various camps of scholars sometimes advocate for one value or set of values to dominate the others, most take “the more catholic view that multiple values are relevant guides to scholarship and practice, and part of the complexity of public administration is finding an appropriate balance” (Moynihan 2009: 813). Given the dominance of this view, the recent revival of public values research risks being sidelined, remaining on the periphery of mainstream scholarly work, or worse, fading out as yet another academic “fad.” This risk is increased by the fact that the field has no systematic framework for understanding (let alone finding the ‘appropriate balance’ among) the multiple public values at play in public administration. In short, for public values research to be of use to both academics and practitioners, we need a better understanding of the public values universe in which public administration is situated.

The risk of relegation is problematic because the issues surrounding public values and their role in public administration are not simply the stuff of intellectual self-gratification – they

also have important real-world implications for the creation of public value and the prevention of public values failure. These implications are likely to become even more profound and pressing in light of the current (and growing) political, social, environmental, and economic policy problems faced around the world – problems that “are exacerbated by mounting complexity, increasing interconnectedness, greater uncertainty, and the escalating pace of social, economic, and political globalization” (Nabatchi, Goerdel and Peffer 2011: i33).

For public values research to reach its theoretical and practical potential, the field needs more conceptual clarity and a framework for understanding and assessing public values as they relate to values conflicts in administrative and policy matters. This paper takes a first step toward these goals. Specifically, the first section of the paper clarifies and distinguishes among several terms, including value and values, and public value and public values. It also briefly discusses the notions of creating public value and preventing public values failure, and the role of values pluralism in public administration. Next, the paper presents the public values universe, which includes four public values frames (political, legal, organizational, and market) and several itinerant values that shape the academic study and professional practice of public administration. Each frame includes a profile of several distinct content values, as well as a particular methodology and mode of rationality that ensure its continuity and consistency. The paper concludes with a discussion of implications and suggestions for future research.

Value and Values in Public Administration

Before examining the public values universe for public administration, it is useful to clarify and define some terms. First, it is important to distinguish between two sets of concepts: 1) ‘value’ and ‘public value’ (e.g. Moore 1995), and 2) ‘values’ and ‘public values’ (e.g., Bozeman 2007). While related, these terms represent distinct concepts, and using them

interchangeably is problematic for theory building efforts. It is also useful to briefly explore how these terms relate to the concepts of creating public value and preventing public values failure.

Second, it is important to briefly examine the issue of values pluralism in public administration.

The term *value* generally refers to the worth of something; in government, *public value* refers to an appraisal of what is created and sustained by government on behalf of the public.¹

The notion of creating public value is most frequently attributed to Moore (1995: 28) who argues, “the aim of managerial work in the public sector is to create *public* value just as the aim of managerial work in the private sector is to create *private* value.” Public value is created when policy and management strategies are politically legitimate, feasible, and sustainable, operationally possible and practical, and of substantive value to the citizenry (Moore 1995). In contrast, public value is destroyed when the wrong decisions are made about the needs to be satisfied, the strategies to satisfy the selected needs, and the processes to produce and deliver services (Spano 2009: 335). Today, the notion of creating public value has become part of an overall managerial philosophy wherein public services are oriented toward outcomes that meet local needs and are authorized by service users and their communities.

In contrast, “*values* are complex personal judgments based on knowledge as well as an emotional reaction” (Bozeman 2007: 13). They are emotio-cognitive assessments that are relatively stable and guide behavior.² In government, *public values* are those values that provide “normative consensus about (a) the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; (b) the obligations of citizens to society, the state, and one another;

¹ I understand that the term ‘public’ denotes something beyond government, and that ‘government’ is only one important manifestation of the public (cf. Frederickson 1997; Matthews 1994). However, for the purposes of this analysis, I am generally constraining my use of the term to a narrower and essentially governmental definition.

² Bozeman (2007: 117) defines a value as, “a complex and broad-based assessment of an object or set of objects (where the objects may be concrete, psychological, socially constructed, or a combination of all three) characterized by both cognitive and emotive elements, arrived at after some deliberation, and, because a value is part of the individual’s definition of self, it is not easily changed and it has the potential to elicit action.”

and (c) the principles on which governments and policies should be based” (Bozeman 2007: 13).

It is also important to note that related public values can be grouped into a values-set, or a constellation of associated public values (see for example, Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007; Rutgers 2008).

“Public values failure occurs when neither the market nor public sector provides goods and services required to achieve public values” (Bozeman 2007: 144); the possibilities for public values failure increase to the extent “there are insufficient means of ensuring articulation and effective communication of core values, or if processes for aggregating values lead to distortions” (145). Thus, “a key issue of public policy and management is identifying and assessing the best means of moving from disparate individual public values (deLeon 1995) ... to the society’s public values. More difficult still is determining the best means of linking public values in specific action contexts (e.g., policy making) to the public interest” (Bozeman 2007: 14). This again speaks to the need for more conceptual clarity around public values and a framework with which to assess their role and application in public administration.

One of the challenges in gaining clarity and developing a framework emerges from the fact that public values are found “nearly everywhere” and provide the much of the structure for societies (Bozeman 2007: 141-142). Indeed, civilization is rich in values, such as autonomy, prosperity, creativity, justice, equality, equity, efficiency, merit, fairness, friendship, truth, and beauty. These and other public values are used differently to guide and justify the behavior of individuals, governments, and societies. However, there are occasions (perhaps more frequent than not) when “pluralistic societies inevitably have fundamental cleavages on public values” (Bozeman 2007: 138), and there is seldom a guarantee that “aggregate individual values or individual public values in a given society coalesce into a normative consensus” (133), or that a

particular public value or values-set will serve as a trump card. Thus, public values pluralism presents significant challenges for public administration.

Public values pluralism suggests that several values and value orientations can simultaneously exist in society, all of which may be equally valid, correct, and fundamental (e.g., Galston 2002; Molina and Spicer 2004). Moreover, incompatible values may also be incommensurable, in that they cannot be objectively measured, compared, or ordered in terms of importance. There can be little argument that public administration is “characterized by a plurality of sets of values” and “a multiplicity of value systems” that are often in conflict with one another (Pesch 2008: 335; see also Molina and Spicer 2004; Spicer 2005, 2010; van der Wal and van Hout 2009). For example, there are “many public values and sets or clusters of public values, such as impartiality and lawfulness on the one hand, and efficiency and effectiveness on the other, that one might consider to be intrinsically contradictory or even hybrid” (van der Wal and van Hout 2009: 221). Likewise, “the pursuit of liberty can become incompatible with the pursuit of equality, the pursuit of justice with that of mercy, and the pursuit of spontaneity with that of security” (Molina and Spicer 2004: 293).

Values-based conflicts are particularly pervasive in public policy. Indeed, “Nearly all public [policy] controversies entail divergent beliefs about what is right and what is wrong, what is just and what is unjust. Many policy decisions are essentially choices among competing values” (Carpenter and Kennedy 2001: 10). Simply consider how:

- Efforts to promote equal opportunity might result in conflicts among values such as efficiency, justice, equality, diversity, merit, and individual achievement;
- Crime prevention policies might trigger competition among values such as liberty, safety, due process, equity, effectiveness, access, and justice; and

- Domestic security policies might produce conflict among values such as knowledge generation, information sharing, confidentiality, privacy, civil liberties, individual rights, and safety.

The pluralism of public values presents several interrelated challenges for public administration. First, the complexity, scale, and controversy inherent in current policy problems preclude consensus among “risk-averse, resource-dependent, and media-conscious” politicians who are constantly aware of the next election cycle (Durant 1995: 29). As a result, electoral institutions frequently fail at resolving policy conflicts, and the resulting legislation often has ambiguous language, uninformed goals, and contradictory guidelines (Nabatchi et al. 2011). Second, these vague legislative mandates (as well as a number of other issues) force administrators to wrestle with and use their discretion to make significant determinations about values conflicts³ with regard to important policy and administrative matters. These “value[s] conflicts may be especially pervasive in public administration where statutes and regulations that seek to reconcile multiple ends and values often present administrators with conflicting signals as to what they should do” (Molina and Spicer 2004: 296; see also Wagenaar 1999, 2002). This leads to a third problem: although public administrators have become “*de facto* arbiters of political conflict”, they “are almost exclusively bound by the established norms of bureaucratic ethos, which constrain them to focusing on achieving administrative efficiency through the application of utilitarian, market-based tools” (Nabatchi et al. 2011: i38). This narrow focus on managerialist values (i.e., economy-efficiency values) to the exclusion of wider public values and values-sets often leaves public managers ill-equipped to solve the complex and divisive

³ In this paper, the term ‘value conflicts’ generally refers to conflicts among public values or values-sets, not conflicts between an administrator’s personal and professional values or ethics. There is a rich literature beyond the scope of this paper on ethics, ethical decision making, accountability structures, and so on that addresses this latter issue.

issues the United States (indeed the world) currently faces (Goerdel and Nabatchi forthcoming; see also Bozeman 2007; Nabatchi et al. 2011; Stivers 2008).

To effectively address public values pluralism, public administrators need mechanisms with which to view and understand the relevant public values at play for a given policy issue or controversy, that is, they need frameworks that allow them “to consider a broad range of important human values and to avoid neglecting certain of them in the overly zealous pursuit of others” (Molina and Spicer 2004: 298). This issue has not gone unnoticed by scholars and practitioners. Indeed, a rich body of literature has emerged in which scholars have classified public values, focusing for example on core values, chronological ordering, or some kind of bifurcation or dimensional distinction (see Rutgers 2008). Other classifications are derived from an analysis of the public administration and political science literatures (Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007), or based on the differences between public and private organizational values (van der Wal and Huberts 2008). Still other classifications are based on “hard” and “soft” values (Steenhuisen, Dicke, and de Bruijn 2009); individual, professional, organizational, legal, and public-interest values (Van Wart 1998); ethical, democratic, professional, and people values (Kernaghan 2003); or on values related to administrative rationality, democratic morality, and political survival (Buchanan and Millstone 1979).

Perhaps the most common way of looking at values in public administration is the dichotomy between “bureaucratic ethos” and “democratic ethos” (e.g., deLeon and deLeon 2002; Nabatchi 2010; Pugh 1991; Woller 1998). As Pugh (1991) argues, these two distinct intellectual frameworks have shaped the history and modern practice of public administration in the United States (and arguably elsewhere).⁴ Bureaucratic ethos, which is generally viewed as being the

⁴ It should be noted that both bureaucratic and democratic ethos can contribute to creating public value and preventing public values failure.

dominant framework, embraces values such as efficiency, efficacy, expertise, loyalty, and hierarchy; it ensures its continuity and consistency with a systematic methodology that assesses content values against rational goals and objectives using instrumentalism, utilitarianism, and market logic as the criteria for action (Pugh 1991; see also deLeon and deLeon 2002; Woller 1998). In contrast, democratic ethos embraces values such as constitutionalism and regime values (e.g., Rohr 1976), citizenship and public interest (e.g., Lippmann 1955), and social equity and justice (e.g., Fredrickson 1990), among others; it ensures its continuity and consistency through deductive, dialectic, deontological reasoning that is grounded in history and political philosophy (Pugh 1991).

These two frameworks simultaneously derive from and contribute to several bodies of literature in public administration, and while they have been useful in outlining the contours of many debates in the field – concerning issues such as discretion, ethics, and citizen participation among others – they are, in reality, of little practical use to administrators facing values conflict. In part, this is because the two frameworks are highly generalized and suffer from conflation. On the one hand, for example, though acknowledged as being “more eclectic and less clearly defined than its bureaucratic counterpart” (Woller 1998: 86), the values embedded in democratic ethos range from specific values such as social equity, to more general values such as regime values, to arguably universal values such as justice. Moreover, this framework has been implanted with broad and imprecise concepts such as citizenship and the public interest. This is problematic because, for example, it is not a challenge to make the argument that citizenship roles (e.g., Mintzberg’s (1996) citizen, subject, client, consumer typology) matter and have different meanings in the frameworks, or that the public interest can be served by promoting values falling under both democratic and bureaucratic ethos. On the other hand, bureaucratic ethos is said to be

infused with market values, yet market values and mechanisms (e.g., innovation and entrepreneurialism) are sometimes in tension with traditional bureaucratic values and mechanisms (e.g., authority and chain of command).

Thus, while discussions about democratic and bureaucratic ethos have been useful in understanding many public administration issues and in shaping the debates around those issues, they are less helpful in developing a fuller understanding of public values in public administration and in assisting administrators in understanding values conflicts as they apply to policy matters. The next sections of the paper focus on the public values universe, and what might be considered a disaggregation of democratic and bureaucratic ethos into four distinct public values frames. This disaggregation not only provides a better picture of the public values universe in public administration, but also represents a first step toward generating a framework for understanding public values and considering their potential application to public problems.

The Universe of Public Values in Public Administration

The following sections of the paper examine the universe of public values in public administration.⁵ Four public values frames are identified and discussed first, followed by a discussion of several itinerant public values (i.e., values that are foundational to public administration, but that are subject to different interpretations based on the frame from which they are viewed). The four public values frames in public administration are political, legal, organizational, and market. The first two frames, political and legal, might be considered subsets of democratic ethos, while the latter two frames, organizational and market, might be considered subsets of bureaucratic ethos. However, and as discussed in the conclusion, the potential addition of other public values frames may render this disaggregated view inconsequential.

⁵ I consider public administration to be a broad conceptual umbrella that covers several distinct subfields, including for example, public policy, policy analysis, and public management, among others.

Each of these four frames is shaped by core content values, and guided by a particular methodology and mode of rationality. *Content values* are those values that form the basis of the frame and provide the standards to be achieved in actions. *Rationality* refers to how reason is exercised so as to reach conclusions about an issue under consideration; it is, in part, a function of the beliefs that shape and guide systematic decision making processes. *Methodology* refers to the specific tools used to enact the content values. Together, rationality and methodology help ensure the continuity and consistency of the values frame. Table One displays the content values, rationality, and methodology for each of the four frames in the public values universe.

[Insert Table One]

Political Public Values

In the United States, the political values frame is inseparably linked to democracy, which is, after all, the bedrock of the American political system. Scholars throughout the history of public administration have examined problems related to discretionary administrative authority and democratic control and accountability, and sought to integrate administrative practices with democratic values (e.g., Appleby 1945; Croly 1914, 1909 [1963]; Follett 1942 [2003]; Frederickson 1997; Gaus 1923-1924, 1950; Lindblom 1990; Lindblom and Cohen 1979; Lippmann 1914 [1961], 1929 [1957]; Long 1962; Mosher 1968 [1982]; Sayre 1951; Waldo 1948, 1980). For example, Sayre (1978 [1997]: 201) notes,

Public administration is ultimately a problem in political theory: the fundamental problem in a democracy is responsibility to popular control; the responsibility and responsiveness of the administrative agencies and the bureaucracies to the elected officials (the chief executives, the legislators) is of central importance in a government based increasingly on the exercise of discretionary power by the agencies of administration.

Although the question of what democracy is continues to be debated (see for example, Dahl 1989; Held 1995; Riker 1982), one can, with relative ease, identify the content values that

shape the political frame in public administration: participation (primarily indirectly through voting, but also through direct participatory processes), representation, political responsiveness, liberty, and equality. Interestingly, and unlike in the other public values frames, many of these content values also supply the methodology for decision making in the political frame, that is, the content values are both “the ideal and the method” (Riker 1982: 2). As Riker (1982: 5) explains, “All the elements of the democratic method are means to render voting practically effective and politically significant, and all the elements of the democratic ideal are moral extensions and elaborations of the features of the method that make voting work.”

To elucidate this argument, Riker (1982: 5), like other scholars (e.g., Dahl 1989) asserts that “[t]he crucial attribute of democracy is popular participation in government” by those who have citizenship status. The most prominent form of popular participation is voting, which in democracy is “surrounded with numerous institutions like political parties and free speech, which organize voting into genuine choice.” Thus, participation is both a value (embedded with notions such as self-control or self-determination, human dignity, and self-respect), as well as the method by which democracy is to generate the values of political representation and responsiveness. Likewise, various democratic liberties (civil, religious, or economic), which constitute another feature of democracy, are necessary to make popular participation in government work. The historic purposes of democratic liberties were to: 1) protect elected officials from prosecution based on their ideas or ideologies, and 2) allow political factions to form and exercise the ability to vote against politicians in elections (Riker 1982). Thus, although they “originate[d] as an instrument to organize voting and popular participation in government”, “once in existence ... [they] became a part of the democratic ideal” and were “found good ... as a part of self-control and human dignity” (Riker 1982: 7). Finally, like the values of participation

and liberty, equality “originated in some rough sense as an instrument of voting” (i.e., to ensure equality at the ballot box), but then took on “moral significance” as “an instrument facilitating self-respect and self-realization,” because “[t]o permit serious inequality means to deny to some people the chance to the self-control and cooperative management involved in democratic justice” (Riker 1982: 8).

One additional point must be made before discussing rationality in the political public values frame, namely that participation, both as a value and as a method, has been expanded over time from indirect participation through voting, to also incorporate direct participatory mechanisms for the expression of political voice in administrative decision making (see generally, Roberts 2008).⁶ Thus, intrinsic to the notion of participation are other values geared toward the government’s responsibility to promote and maintain civic education (for a discussion, see Nabatchi 2010).

The mode of rationality used in the political public values frame is a direct result of political pluralism in public administration. “[S]ince the administrative branch is a policy-making center of government, it must be structured to enable faction to counteract faction by providing political representation to a comprehensive variety of the organized political, economic, and social interests that are found in the society at large” (Rosenbloom 1983: 222). Consequently, this frame “tends to view the individual as part of an aggregate group” and “identifies the individual’s interests as being similar or identical to those of others considered to be within the same group or category” (Rosenbloom 1983: 222). To preserve and protect

⁶ Of course, “the ideal of a citizenry informed about government and active in its operation – has American roots as deep and as distant as the Revolution” (Pugh 1991: 15). However, until relatively recently, the primary concern about participation focused on gaining and guaranteeing the rights of suffrage (Keyssar 2000). Once these rights were firmly established, the debate about the role of the citizen participation in government shifted to focus on the extent, character, and nature of mechanisms for direct citizen participation, as opposed to simply indirect participation through voting (Stewart 1976).

individuals and groups operating within a pluralistic system, the political frame uses substantive rationality to determine what a social group's goals, values, and ideals should be (e.g., Weber 1946 [1997]), and engages in reasoning that is "deductive (reasoning from a general truth to a particular instance of that truth), dialectical (whereby questions and their answers lead to their logical conclusion), and deontological (where the rightness or wrongness of a moral action is determined by referencing formal rules of conduct rather than the action's results or consequences)" (Pugh 1991: 17). Thus, the political frame is closely associated with Kantian reasoning, grounded in history and political philosophy, and reliant on the case study as the means by which to analyze and test propositions (Pugh 1991).

The Legal Values Frame

While the rule of law is widely considered to be essential to democracy, the role of law in public administration is subject to some controversy. As Christensen, Goerdel, and Nicholson-Crotty (2011) point out, there are two general camps in this debate: one argues that law is "a hindrance to managerial reforms" (i126) and "an unwarranted constraint on the effective implementation of public programs" (i129), and another views law as the "champion of democratic values in the administrative process" (i129) and as "being neglected as the legitimate guiding force in management" (i126). In part, this controversy and tension is related to the distinction between law as a formal framework and law as a set of values used to shape administrative discretion (see Lynn 2009, Moynihan 2009; see also Rohr 1978, 1986, 2002).

Moynihan (2009: 817) explains well the notion of law as a formal framework:

Law – the Constitution, legislation, court decisions, rulemaking, and other aspects of administrative law – provides the formal rules of the game, creating the legal zone of discretion that administrators work within. As this legal framework expands, it generally minimizes discretion in the name of explicitly guiding behavior.

Law as a formal framework is intended to prevent the corruption, loss of rights, personalized authority, and other abuses that arise in insufficiently developed legal regimes. The principles of this approach are to be constitutionally competent, avoid illegal behavior in the exercise of authority, be broadly aware of relevant laws, and interpret law in a reasonable fashion (Lee and Rosenbloom 2005).

The view of law as a formal framework is widely accepted; the problems and controversies surrounding the role of law in public administration emerge when law is viewed as a set of values that are to be used in guiding administrative discretion (e.g., Moynihan 2009; Lynn 2009). In terms of discretion, although law often sets the parameters within which administrative action takes place, legal compliance tends to be the paramount concern for public administrators, rather than discovering and/or promoting higher order legal (and other) values (e.g., Rohr 1978).

The content values of the legal frame might be generally categorized as “regime values” – those values that are manifest in the Constitution and represent “the values of the American people” (Rohr 1976: 399). Although it would be difficult to supply an exhaustive list, scholars have identified three related values that are central in the legal frame of public administration: individual substantive rights, procedural due process, and equity (e.g., Rosenbloom 1983; see also Rohr 1986, 1989).

Individual substantive rights refer to a cluster of rights generally “embodied in evolving interpretations of the Bill of Rights [the first ten amendments to the Constitution] and the Fourteenth Amendment” (Rosenbloom 1983: 223). For example, the Bill of Rights provides the substantive rights of liberty, including freedom of speech, a free press, free assembly, free association, the right to hold private property, the right to counsel, and the rights against unreasonable searches and seizures and cruel and unusual punishments, among others. The Fourteenth Amendment makes “All persons born or naturalized in the United States” citizens of

both the nation and the state in which they reside, and guarantees to every such person equal protection under the law. Thus, equal protection is an additional substantive right, as it is an attempt to secure the promise of the United States' professed commitment to the proposition that "all men [and women] are created equal."⁷

The second major value in the legal frame is the right to procedural due process, the principle that the government must respect the legal rights that are owed to a person according to the law.⁸ Procedural due process "cannot be confined to any single set of requirements or standards," but rather "stands for the value of fundamental fairness and is viewed as requiring procedures designed to protect individuals [and their substantive rights] from malicious, arbitrary, capricious, or unconstitutional harm at the hands of government" (Rosenbloom 1983: 223). This is arguably *the* core value in the legal frame, as it underpins the force and legitimacy of all government decisions.

Finally, equity is a third value in the legal frame, and is derived, at least in part, from the right to equal protection. Like due process, equity

is subject to varying interpretation. However, in terms of public administration in general, equity stands for the value of fairness in the result of conflicts between private parties and the government. It militates against arbitrary or invidious treatment of individuals, encompasses much of the constitutional requirement of equal protection, and enables the courts to fashion relief for individuals whose constitutional rights have been violated by administrative action (Rosenbloom 1983: 223).

⁷ Before the enactment of the Fourteenth Amendment, the substantive rights of individuals as outlined in the Bill of Rights were protected only from invasion by the federal government. However, under the "Incorporation Doctrine", the U.S. Supreme Court has included (i.e., "incorporated") most of the Bill of Rights provisions into the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause, such that individual substantive rights are also protected from abridgment by state leaders and governments.

⁸ Procedural due process is enumerated twice in the Constitution. The due process clause in the Fifth Amendment limits the powers of the federal government; the due process clause in the Fourteenth Amendment limits the powers of state governments. Both read that no person shall be deprived of "life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."

To uphold these values, legal rationality is employed. Legal rationality follows a particular mode of reasoning, which proceeds through five steps: 1) clarification of the specific issue being debated; 2) determination of the legal rule that governs the issue; 3) the elucidation of the facts relevant to the legal rule; 4) analysis of how the rule applies to the facts; and 5) explanation of the outcome or conclusion in light of the application of the rule to the facts. To make the necessary determinations in legal reasoning, one looks to both statute (i.e., laws passed by various legislatures to address problems), as well as common law (i.e., case law or precedent developed over time). Moreover, these steps require both inductive and deductive reasoning: one begins with the general rule associated with the claim, moves to the general rule associated with the sub-issues, then sets up specific exceptions to the rule and any cases that need to be distinguished, and finally relates the more specific cases to the general standard.

The methodology by which legal rationality is applied in decision-making “maximize[s] the use of adversary procedure” for example through independent and impartial adjudication by administrative law judges, hearing examiners, and regulatory commissions (Rosenbloom 1983: 223). Other methodologies employed in the legal frame include “rulemaking, investigating, prosecuting, negotiating, settling, and informally acting” (Rosenbloom 1983: 222, citing Davis 1975: 6). In all of these methodologies, the conduct of the public official under law is governed by the concept of objective reasonableness, wherein “[t]he conduct of a public official is deemed objectively reasonable and, hence, deserving of the defense of qualified immunity [from individual tort liability], if and when the conduct does not violate sufficiently clearly established statutory or constitutional rights that a reasonable person in that position would have known” (Lynn 2009: 806, citing Lee with Rosenbloom 2005: 36; cf. Lee 2004).

The Organizational Values Frame

The organizational public values frame is perhaps the best known and most easily articulated of the four frames presented here. This is not surprising since it is the most closely related to bureaucratic ethos, and deeply entrenched in the history of the field. The core content value of the organizational frame is administrative efficiency; the other content values in the frame –specialization and expertise, authority of positions, merit, formalization, organizational loyalty, and political neutrality – serve to reinforce administrative efficiency.

As a self-conscious discipline, American public administration was born into the tradition of organizational values with Wilson's (1887) essay, "The Study of Administration."⁹ In response to widespread governmental corruption, political patronage, and the need for civil service reform, Wilson argued for the separation of political and administrative matters, an argument that became known as the politics-administration dichotomy. Wilson (1887: 481) also called for the development of a "practical science of administration" to guide public administrators in the objective and efficient performance of their duties: "It is the object of administrative study to discover, first, what government can properly and successfully do, and, secondly, how it can do these proper things with the utmost possible efficiency and at the least possible cost either of money or of energy." This argument established the lasting core of the managerial approach wherein "efficiency is axiom number one in the value scale of administration" (Gulick 1937: 192).

The content values in the organizational frame were institutionalized early in the history of American public administration by several other intellectual developments, such as the Weberian model of bureaucracy (Weber 1946 [1997]), which helped establish the values

⁹ Van Riper (1983) notes that Wilson was not argued to be a founding father of public administration until the 1940s, and Waldo (1948: 79) considered Frank J. Goodnow to be the "father of public administration" "before Woodrow Wilson was belatedly and mistakenly awarded that eminence" (Lynn 2009: 805).

embedded in hierarchy – specialization and expertise, authority of positions, merit, and formalization, among others; the theory of scientific management (Taylor 1967), which helped enshrine efficiency as a core doctrine in the design of organizational processes and workflows; the articulation of POSDCORB,¹⁰ which called attention to the various functional elements of a chief executive’s work and had efficiency as an underlying theme (Gulick 1937); Fayol’s (1946) fourteen principles of management, which reinforced the need for hierarchical designs to enable efficiency; and an emphasis on bounded rationality and satisficing in decision making (e.g., Simon 1947). The dominance of organizational public values has also been attributed to White (1926: vii), who in the preface to the field’s first textbook wrote, “the study of administration should start from the base of management rather than the foundation of law, and is, therefore, more absorbed in the affairs of the American Management Association than in the decisions of the courts” (e.g., Lynn 2009).¹¹ Thus, the development (and consequent dominance) of the organizational values frame should be seen as a function of history and the field’s attempt (and desire) to differentiate itself as a distinct intellectual discipline and area of professional practice.

The organizational public values frame uses technocratic rationality, which “elevates the scientific-analytical mindset and the belief in technological progress” (Adams and Balfour 2009: 28). Teleology and utilitarianism are embraced in the assessment of content values against rational goals and objectives, where the focus is on the finding the most efficient means to an end. “The ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ of a particular organizational pattern [is] a mathematical relationship of ‘inputs’ to ‘outputs.’ Where the latter [is] maximized and the former minimized, a moral ‘good’ result[s] [i.e., content values are upheld]. Virtue or ‘goodness’ [is] therefore

¹⁰ This, perhaps the most famous of public administration acronyms, stands for Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting.

¹¹ Note however that “White was acutely aware of was the lack of concerted attention to management in U.S. institutions”, and thus saw himself as “focusing on an emerging body of knowledge that had not yet established itself” (Moynihan 2009: 816).

equated with the relationship of these two factors, that is, ‘efficiency,’ or ‘inefficiency’” (Simmons and Dvorin 1977: 271; cited in Rosenbloom 1983: 220).

The methodology behind technocratic and functional rationality focuses on solving problems by engineering, scientific method, rationally established procedures, and empiricism. These approaches “assume predictable and stable cause-and-effect relationships” and “that specific problems [can] be identified and addressed according to known procedures by a dedicated workforce” (Adams and Balfour 2009: 110). For example, functional rationality, or “the logical organization of tasks into smaller units” to achieve efficiency (Adams and Balfour 2009: 28), are used to engineer hierarchies based on Weber’s ideal type bureaucracy, which

stresses the importance of functional specialization for efficiency. Hierarchy is then relied upon for effective coordination. Programs and functions are to be clearly assigned to organizational units. Overlaps are to be minimized. Positions are to be classified into a rational scheme and pay scales are to be systematically derived in the interests of economy and motivating employees to be efficient. Selection of public administrators is to be made strictly on the basis of merit. They are to be politically neutral in their competence. Relationships among public administrators and public agencies are to be formalized in writing and, in all events, the public's business is to be administered in a smooth, orderly fashion (Rosenbloom 1983: 220, citations omitted).

In addition to hierarchy, empiricism and the scientific method are given priority as the means by which to analyze problems and issues. This is not only seen in calls “for more rigorous mathematical, statistical, and formal theoretic applications to questions in public administration” (Gill and Meier 2000: 193), but also in the large volume of published quantitative research in the field (for a discussion, see Raadschelders and Lee 2011).

The Market Values Frame

As noted earlier, market values and organizational values are generally conflated under the rubric of bureaucratic ethos. However, while these two public values frames are often used in concert, they are distinct. Certainly, the roots of market values in public administration are

entangled with the roots of the organizational frame, both of which can be traced to the field's search for a "practical science of administration" based on "general business principles" (e.g., Wilson 1887). The "essence" of these two frames "lies in the belief that there is something called 'management' which is a generic, purely instrumental activity, embodying a set of principles that can be applied to both the public and private sectors" (Boston 1991: 9).

The search for generic management principles that transcend private and public spheres marked not only the classical period of public administration (1880s-1940), but also the birth in the 1970s of 'managerialism' (e.g., Considine and Painter 1997; Pollitt 1990). As Lynn (2006: 105) notes, "While managerialism had been ... an element of what may be regarded as American administrative ideology for nearly a century ... something new" entered the picture in both the United States and in Europe during the 1970s. "Economic crises, fiscal scarcity, demographic change, immigration, and the resultant concerns with the financial appetite of the welfare state gave impetus to public policies emphasizing government retrenchment and efficiency" (Lynn 2006: 104). Thus, this period marked the beginning of the "preoccupation, and in some cases the obsession, on the part of policy makers with reduced-cost public service delivery" (Lynn 2006: 104). It also marked the ascendance of the market values frame in the field. The primary content values in this frame are cost-savings and cost-efficiency; other content values include productivity, flexibility, innovation, and customer service.

Such market values were reinforced during the 1980s by New Right politicians and public choice theorists who contributed to the perception of "failure in public bureaucratic institutions and the delegitimation of the public service", as well as the growing acceptance of the claim that "private business management was superior to public administration and that bureaucracies were inefficient and responsible for the economic problems" of countries (Saint-

Martin 2000: 3). Consequently, politicians pushed for “neo-Taylorist” reforms that would make bureaucracies more business-like (Pollitt 1990; Reed 1999; Terry 1998). A second wave of reforms in the 1990s coupled these efficiency and administrative control concerns with “a complex mixture of public choice theory, agency theory, and transaction-cost economics” (Terry 1998: 194). The mantra behind these reforms was that “the old top-down bureaucratic monopolies delivering standardized services are not effective. To be effective today, an organization must be lean, fast on its feet, responsive to its customers, capable of adjusting to constant change, able to improve productivity continually. In other words it needs to be entrepreneurial rather than bureaucratic” (Osborne 1993: 351). Thus, these reforms emphasized the market and the role of the public administrator as a “policy entrepreneur.” Terms such as flexibility, deregulation, privatization, and reengineering became the lingua franca of the day.

Reasoning in the market values frame is guided by instrumental rationality, which focuses on the most efficient or cost-effective means to achieve a specific end without reflection on the value of that end. Instrumental rationality is the prime mode of reasoning in economic liberalism, which favors markets that are free from government intervention, although it recognizes that the state has a legitimate role in the provision of public goods. Thus, economic individualism, which promotes the idea that “‘economic man,’ using the virtues of self-reliance and independence, coupled with the right to pursue property and material gain in the free market, will contribute to the common good” (Nabatchi 2009: 586), is a strong force behind instrumental rationality in the market values frame.

The methodology of the market values frame can be generally summed up in the phrase “running government like a business.” The principle themes of running government like a business, as espoused in the New Public Management, include:

a shift away from an emphasis on policy toward an emphasis on measurable performance; a shift away from reliance on traditional bureaucracies toward loosely coupled, quasi-autonomous units and competitively tendered services; a shift away from an emphasis on development and investment toward cost-cutting; allowing public management greater “freedom to manage” according to private sector corporate practice; and a shift away from classic command-and-control regulation toward self-regulation (Lynn 2006: 107, citing Hood 1989: 349; reprised in Hood 1991).

Thus, although this frame does not forsake values in the organizational frame such as administrative efficiency, it does “represent a radical shift in focus regarding how these important values are achieved” (Terry 1998: 196). It insists that public managers “are (and should be) self-interested, opportunistic innovators and risk-takers who exploit information and situations to produce radical change ... that public managers should assume an entrepreneurial leadership role” (Terry 1998: 197).

Various market-oriented tools, ideas, and concepts designed to achieve the content values in the market frame can be readily found in both the literature and practice of public administration. For example, zero-based budgeting, management by objectives, program planning budgeting systems, reinventing government, and the general methods of the new public management are all efficiency-based reform movements, rooted in neoclassical economics, and designed make bureaucracy more streamlined, entrepreneurial, competitive, customer-driven, enterprising, and results oriented. The “emphasis on a constellation of cost-cutting and production management concepts” is also seen in methods such as “privatization, downsizing, rightsizing, entrepreneurism, reinvention, enterprise operations, quality management, and customer service” (Box 1999: 21), along with competition, contracting out, franchises, voucher programs, and commercialization. In short, the methodology of the market values frame seeks to allow “managers to manage according to cost-benefit economic rationality” (Box 1999: 21).

Itinerant Public Values

Astute readers will have noticed the conspicuous absence in the four frames of several core values in public administration, such as accountability, citizenship, legitimacy, and the public interest. These public values simultaneously anchor the field and propel the creation of public value and the prevention of public values failure. However, despite the foundational nature of these values in public administration, they do not fit neatly into any of the four frames. Rather, these (and arguably other) public values are better considered as “itinerant” or “floating” values – values, that though central to the field, have conditional meanings and interpretations.

That certain public values are subject to differing interpretations should not be a surprise.¹² What is interesting, however, is *why* certain public values are interpreted differently, and *how* public administrators can analyze and understand such interpretations. The four frames shed some light on these issues. Simply stated, the interpretation of itinerant public values varies by the frame through which they are analyzed – each frame uses its specific content values, mode of rationality, and methodology, to decipher and give meaning to itinerant public values.

For example, *accountability* is essential to the field of public administration, and particularly important within the context of administrative discretion. Effective administration (and consequently effective government) requires administrators to exercise discretion, and the exercise of discretion requires accountability. The question then becomes, to whom and for what are public administrators accountable? Waldo (1980) identifies 12 obligations of public administrators, including the Constitution, Law, Nation or Country, Democracy, Organizational/Bureaucratic Norms, Profession and Professionalism, Family and Friends, Self, Middle-Range Collectives, Public Interest/General Welfare, Humanity or the World, and

¹² Simply consider that for some, justice means an eye for an eye, yet others believe that an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind.

Religion or God.¹³ While there is clearly truth in this list, that is, administrators may be responsible and accountable to all of these entities, the “broader and more serviceable answer is that public administrators are responsible to citizens” (Frederickson 1997: 232).

For this and other reasons, *citizenship* is an important public value in the field. One could write a treatise on citizenship vis-à-vis public administration, but space precludes such a treatment here. Rather, suffice to say that while interesting and important, arguments about classical versus liberalist traditions of citizenship (e.g., McSwain 1985) are less relevant to public administrators dealing with public values controversies than is perhaps Mintzberg’s (1996) classification of customers (consumers of government products), clients (recipients of government services), citizens (holders of rights bestowed by government), and subjects (holders of obligations to government).

Thus, returning to the notion of itinerant values, accountability (phrased as the question ‘to whom and for what?’) and citizenship take on different meanings in each of the four frames. In the political frame, accountability might be ‘to all citizens and subjects within society *for* acting in accordance with democratic principles and norms.’ In the legal frame, it might be ‘to all citizens and subjects, as well as to government organs and authorities, *for* acting in full compliance of laws, rules, and policies.’ In the organizational frame, it might be ‘to subjects and clients, as well as to administrative organs and authorities, *for* acting in compliance with organizational rules and procedures,’ and in the market frame, it might be ‘to customers and clients *for* maximizing cost-effectiveness.’

Likewise, legitimacy and the public interest might also be considered itinerant values. Although there are numerous types and sources of *legitimacy*, for the purpose of this paper, the term can be defined simply as the popular acceptance of a governing regime, in this case public

¹³ Waldo (1980) states that this list is not prioritized, expandable, and generated from an American perspective.

administration. More specifically, legitimacy arises when the governed consent to the governing institutions and believe that those institutions will rule in the public interest. Of course, the *public interest* is notoriously challenging to define, as the concept is often situated within multiple frameworks (e.g., consensualist, majoritarian, procedural; for a discussion see Bozeman 2007). Again, however, for the purposes of this analysis, the public interest can be viewed as a normative ideal, wherein “there is a common good that is different than the aggregate of private benefit and that common good is something that is in the interest of the [larger] community, even if against the interest of some individuals in the community” (Bozeman 2007:89). According to this normative standard, public managers would pursue policies and implementation strategies favoring *net* common or public interest.

Again returning to the notion of itinerant values, when legitimacy is interpreted in light of maximizing the public interest, both values take on different meanings in the four frames. In the political frame, legitimacy and the maximization of the public interest might be obtained by ensuring the provision of institutions that guarantee democratic decision-making, while in the legal frame they might be obtained by protecting individual rights from unreasonable intrusion and abridgement by government. In the organizational frame, legitimacy and the public interest might be maximized by the administratively efficient and politically-neutral delivery of public goods and services, and in the market frame they might be maximized through the cost-efficient provision of public goods and services.

Certainly, these are not the only “itinerant” values that exist in public administration -- several others might be identified. The point is that certain values, and perhaps even the most important values in public administration, are subject to various interpretations that are contingent on the content values, rationality, and methodology of the frame through which they

are viewed. In general, one interpretation is not necessarily better than another; however, one must be aware of the lens through a specific situation is analyzed. Since each frame offers a different meaning of these itinerant values, using an inappropriate frame in a certain context could negatively affect the creation of public value and the prevention of public values failure.

So What? Implications and Future Research

Answering the “so what?” question is often a challenge in conceptual papers – a struggle to give practical meaning to what otherwise might be an academic exercise. As suggested in the introduction, however, the study of public values has real-world implications for the study and practice of public administration. At the most basic level, public values are what shape (or should shape) the activities of government, and in doing so, they assist with the creation of public value and the prevention of public values failure. Thus, understanding the universe of public values can help the field better understand how we might move forward in addressing the critical issues of the day.

Such understanding has arguably never been more important. Some have gone so far as to assert that “humanity is living in dark times”, an era where public administration is “characterized by numerous and growing catastrophic events in the social, political, environmental, and economic arenas, significant, persistent, and systemic policy failures across policy domains, and the loss of vibrant public spaces in which citizens can wrestle with important social questions and engage government officials in discussions” (Nabatchi, et al.

2011: i29, i33; see also Arendt 1968; Isaac 1998; Stivers 2004, 2008).¹⁴ Regardless of whether one buys the “dark times” times argument, there can be little doubt that collectively, we face serious and immediate policy problems that require significant values trade-offs. Having, at a minimum, conceptual clarity about the universe of public values will be useful in efforts to address these and other problems. More work needs to be done, and such work will be a major undertaking for public administration. Several areas for future conceptual and empirical research immediately come to mind.

At the conceptual level, we must determine whether this presentation of the public values universe in public administration is complete, that is, is this universe universal? To call something a universe suggests that it is applicable in all settings; yet, it might well be that this conceptualization is U.S.-centric or applicable only to certain political systems (e.g., western liberal democracies). It will thus be important for future research to determine whether this public values universe is generalizable to other nations or whether it varies based on context. Such a determination is likely to depend on answering three important questions.

First, are any public values frames missing in the conceptualization presented here? For example, one might contemplate adding a frame that explicitly addresses civic or citizenship values, that is, values related to community social structures and relations, or to the civic

¹⁴ Numerous “systematic policy failures” are easily identified. Simply consider: the impoverishment of educational access and attainment; disparities in access to and the quality of health care; growing and institutionalized prison populations; the crumbling of transportation, utility, and other infrastructure systems; reductions in the supply of and access to energy; the mortgage crisis and the concomitant disintegration of housing markets; and the collapse of financial markets and the attendant problems of industry and business failure, unemployment, and the rise in the need for welfare and social services.

Other dark problems are found beyond the borders of the United States. Nations throughout the world suffer starvation and drought, genocide and extermination, ethnic conflict, civil and other war, terrorism, and violent oppression. When scaled to the global level, event and policy forms of dark times are even more discouraging. Climate change, food and water shortages, infectious disease, human trafficking, the growing fragility of the global economic system, the illegal arms trade, and the possibilities of biochemical and nuclear war threaten not just security but humanity as a whole (Nabatchi et al. 2011: i32-33).

dispositions and skills necessary for robust civil societies. Similarly, one might contemplate adding a frame that addresses public values implicit in network management or collaborative public management. Recent research and practice suggest that managers need and frequently use skills and tools such as collaboration, coalition building, and conflict resolution (see generally, Bingham and O’Leary 2008; O’Leary and Bingham 2007); however, it is not clear where these methods and associated values would be placed, or if they could/should be placed, within these four frames. Moreover, it is not clear how such additions would affect the view of the four frames as a disaggregation of democratic and bureaucratic ethos.

Second, what are the itinerant public values in public administration? That is, what values are foundational to public administration yet subject to varying interpretations? In addition to accountability, citizenship, legitimacy, and the public interest, one might consider adding integrity, transparency, leadership, and professionalism among others. Likewise, it will be important to determine how the various itinerant public values are interpreted and understood (and enacted) in light of the content values, rationalities, and methodologies of the frames.

Third, how do other classifications of public values and public values-sets fit within these frames? For example, scholars may want to assess the location and operation within this universe of “public” and “private” organizational values (van der Wal and Huberts 2008) or “hard” and “soft” values (Steenhuisen, Dicke, and de Bruijn 2009). Likewise, they may wish to examine this universe vis-à-vis other categorizations, such as individual, professional, organizational, legal, and public-interest values (Van Wart 1998), ethical, democratic, professional, and people values (Kernaghan 2003), or administrative rationality, democratic morality, and political survival values (Buchanan and Millstone 1979).

At an empirical level, we must begin to operationalize this universe of public values such that it has broad applicability in both scholarship and practice. This potentially fruitful area of research involves developing frameworks, clarifying theories, and testing models of public values (for a discussion of these categories, see Ostrom 2007). Frameworks specify sets of variables and their relationships to each other. The universe presented here (i.e., the four public values frames and the itinerant public values) is not yet fleshed out enough to be considered a framework; however, it is a first step in that direction. More work needs to be done to understand how and when these frames work to create public value and prevent public values failure. We also need to develop indicators and measures for public value, public values failure, and the content values, rationalities, and methodologies of the frames, as well as for the itinerant values (and perhaps even for their varying interpretations). Once the field has a framework, it can begin to apply theories (i.e., sets of propositions that seek to explain and generalize events or phenomena) and test models (i.e., precise hypotheses about variables and outcomes) that can help guide the application of the four frames in administrative action.

To that end, two possibilities are readily apparent for placing the public values frames within a scaffolding, or ordering, appropriate for developing a framework. One might consider these frames as being funnel-shaped, with the political frame representing the broadest, and highest-order moral values, followed by the legal, organizational, and market frames respectively. In this case, one could argue that the narrower public values frames feed into, or supply mechanisms for, the attainment of the broader public values frames. Alternatively, one might view the organizational and market frames being co-equal tools in the attainment of legal and political values. Regardless of how the scaffold for a framework is constructed, such work would be a significant advance in the maturation of public values research.

One final area ripe for future research is to examine how public administrators identify, analyze, select, and apply public values in decision making. There are few studies that examine how public managers consider values in their day-to-day decision making, and even fewer studies about the competencies managers need to make decisions commensurate with values. Future research will be needed in this area.

In conclusion, it is important to note that that public administration cannot (and should not) operate using any of these public values frames alone – there are few decisions that involve the content values, rationality, or methodology of a single frame only. This is especially true given the complexity of issues and problems we face today. Nevertheless, given the scope, scale, risk, and controversy inherent in modern (and future) problems, there can be little doubt that public values are of critical importance. Studying and seeking to understand the universe of public values is thus more than an academic exercise, it provides a foundation for understanding how we might move forward in addressing the critical issues of the day. In short, understanding the universe of public values is crucial to the future of public administration.

Table One: Four Frames in the Public Values Universe

Values Frame	Political	Legal	Organizational	Market
Content Values	Participation Representation Political responsiveness Liberty Equality	Individual substantive rights Procedural due process Equity	Administrative efficiency Specialization and expertise Authority of positions Merit Formalization Organizational loyalty Political neutrality	Cost-savings Cost-efficiency Productivity Flexibility Innovation Customer service
Rationality	Substantive Rationality (using deductive, dialectical, and deontological reasoning grounded in history and political philosophy)	Legal Rationality (using inductive and deductive reasoning in light of issues, rules, and facts)	Technocratic and Functional Rationality (using teleology, utilitarianism, and instrumental reason)	Instrumental Rationality (reinforced by economic liberalism and economic individualism)
Methodology	Popular participation (both indirect and direct) Institutions that ensure democratic liberties and equality Civic education Interest aggregation	Adversary procedure (including processes such as rulemaking, investigating, prosecuting, and negotiating, among others)	Hierarchy Empiricism Scientific methods (e.g., rationally established procedures to assess content values against goals and objectives)	“Running government like a business” Market-oriented reforms (e.g., privatization, downsizing, rightsizing, streamlining, competition, contracting out, franchises, voucher programs, and commercialization)

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