

Public Values Theory: What Is Missing?

American Review of Public Administration
2019, Vol. 49(6) 635–648
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DOI: 10.1177/0275074018814244
journals.sagepub.com/home/arp



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Abstract

Scholars of public value and public values have sought to develop theory by defining, identifying, classifying, and measuring the values, some of which articulate theoretical problems and prescriptions such as values pluralism and the scope of the concept itself. Despite the richness of both theoretical and empirical developments, scholars of public values recognize the fragmentation of related research and seek to re-think and re-organize studies of public values. Considering these works, this current study is an effort to articulate and synthesize the issues in the research approach in public values. Our study provides an overview of public values theory and research with an emphasis on major developments related to value classification schemes and analytical frameworks. The study examines three problems in theory research of public values, namely, the identification problem, motivation problem, and instrument problem. After describing the detailed problems with some examples, the authors suggest approaches to the improvement of theory and research in public values, emphasizing the utility of longitudinal and historical studies.

Keywords

public values, theory research, classification, history, context

Introduction

Public values research has during the past decade become a significant focus in public administration scholarship (e.g., Alford & O'Flynn, 2009; Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Beck Jørgensen & Rutgers, 2015; Bozeman, 2007; Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014; Moore, 1995; Nabatchi, 2010, 2018; Prebble, 2018; Rutgers, 2015; Talbot, 2009; Van der Wal, Nabatchi, & de Graaf, 2015; Williams & Shearer, 2011). Its popularity perhaps owes to the belief that it can prove a complement to public interest theory (Bozeman, 2007) and its potential to be a guiding concept in theory and in practice of public administration (Moore, 1995; Rutgers, 2015, p. 30). Public values research has taken at least two primary streams, converging only occasionally. On one hand, there is a stream of *public value* studies starting with Moore (1995). These studies are more focused on management issues and public employees' values, and the title of Moore's book, *Creating Public Value*, suggests the intent of the literature, namely, helping public managers better serve public value. On the other hand, studies of *public values* have emerged with distinctly normative foci and with more concern about identifying and enacting those values qualifying as public values. In the public values stream (e.g., Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Beck Jørgensen & Rutgers, 2015; Bozeman, 2002, 2007; Nabatchi, 2012), scholars seek to highlight and achieve public values not only by enhancing the work of public managers but also as a critical agenda issue for politicians, citizens, organizations, and society. Although the latter stream is the primary focus in this study, our study addresses both streams, especially their intersecting aspects.

Public values researchers seek to define, identify, and classify public values, difficult tasks requiring attention to concept definitions, boundaries, and origins (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; de Graaf, Huberts, & Smulders, 2016; Rutgers, 2015). Converging with the Moore (1995) focus, the empirical literature tends to focus on the public values preferences of public employees and administration. In addition to the identification and ordering of values among public administrators (Beck Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2013; Witesman & Walters, 2015), studies examine how governments and public managers can better serve the public values (Bruijn & Dicke, 2006; Moore, 1995; Rosenbloom, 2014) or investigate a more specific but public value-related focus such as the integrity of public employees and administration in tax administration (Blijswijk, Breukelen, Franklin, Raadschelders, & Slump, 2004). In managerially focused studies, public value is regarded as an approach employed to shape the principles, practices, and premises of public employees and public organizations, an approach often set in contradistinction to traditional public management and New Public Management (Alford & Hughes, 2008; Bryson et al., 2014; O'Flynn, 2007; Stoker, 2006). Thus, public values have long been an important part of the scholarly work in public administration, although some public values seem

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more relevant to public administration than do others, and some values may be better studied in other fields such as philosophy and sociology. Rosenbloom (2017) addresses the dynamism of public values, noting especially that values that are fundamental to the public sector and administration change periodically in response to changing social and political conditions.

The aim of the current article is to re-think public values theory, engaging in a synoptic review of theory development and theory gaps. While public values research has made a great deal of progress during its brief history (Nabatchi, 2018; Prebble, 2018; Rutgers, 2015; Van der Wal et al., 2015), some methodological and theoretical issues continue to provide barriers to advance the public values scholarship—thus the subtitle of the current article “What is Missing?” While one can take any of a wide variety of perspectives on a reflection about public values, the current study examines public values theory and research in three related categories, three theory problems needing greater attention. We refer to these as, respectively, the *identification problem*, the *motivation problem*, and the *instrument problem*. As will be clear, we do not view these issues as exhaustive but rather especially critical to theory progress. The recognition of obstacles and prescriptions in theory and research might be necessary for studying public values because, as Nabatchi (2010, p. S310) notes, public values research deal with the “big questions,” ones that pervade public administration and policy. Milward and colleagues (2016) identify disincentives to study “big questions” in contemporary public administration, those involving the scope of research, funding environments, and pedagogy of the scholarly field itself. As opposed to more narrowly focused research topics, intellectual issues as complex and ubiquitous as public values often require for their resolution considerable attention, time, and resources.

Instead of providing another review of public values literature that replicates or closely overlaps with the valuable studies already provided (e.g., Van der Wal et al., 2015; Williams & Shearer, 2011), the current study examines the roots and evolution of public values theory in a selective manner and then focuses on the development and arguments of the classification and analytical frameworks of public values thus far provided. The study aims at exploring what is “missing” in public values theory and research. Throughout the study, the authors maintain that a major element missing from public values scholarship is a close attention to historical perspectives, which is part of the general trend for the field of public administration for decades (Adams, 1992; Moynihan, 2009; Raadschelders, 2010), with some possible exceptions (e.g., Charles, Martin de Jong, & Ryan, 2011; Thompson, 2016). Our study suggests how the integration of historical and socially embedded aspects of public values help to advance public values theory and research, including the historically relevant path dependence of different societies’ public values and more informal values that may not be

explicitly present in the formal forms such as laws and government documents.

Defining Public Values

If we take public values to mean “those providing 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; and (c) the principles on which governments and policies should be based” (Bozeman, 2007, p. 13), we can perhaps take for granted the social and political significance of public values and, instead, give attention to the obstacles to advancing research theory for an inherently unwieldy topic.

Early studies of public value typically focus on the values public employees identify, inculcate, and realize (Bryson et al., 2014; Moore, 1995; Williams & Shearer, 2011) and then expanded domain of public values that includes the values of citizens, organizations, and society and values as manifested in public policy (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Nabatchi, 2012). Nabatchi (2010, 2012, 2018) articulate the distinction between value and values and public value and public values. According to Nabatchi (2018), in the government context, “public value refers to an appraisal of what is created and sustained by government on behalf of the public” (p. 60), and public values are more about normative consensus as the values are based on emotional and cognitive assessments of individual persons.

To re-think the approaches in studying public values, we consider below some of the tap roots and evolution of public values. We see that though the term public values has only recently come into widespread use, its antecedents are ancient and venerable ones.

The Roots and Evolution of Public Values Theory

Early work on public values theory was to some degree a self-conscious response to both the attractions and limitations of public interest theory (Bozeman, 2007). Thus, understanding the lineage of public values theory requires some knowledge of the meaning and intent of public interest theory and is intellectual tributaries.

Public interest theory was a primary theory focus in political science and public administration for many decades, especially the first half of the 20th century when intellectual giants such as Carl Friedrich (1940), Harold Lasswell and McDougal, 1942, and Emmette Redford (1954) framed their work in public interest concepts. Pendleton Herring’s (1936) work in public interest theory provided a spur, not only because of his academic credentials but also due to further attention received during his service as president of the American Political Science Association. When public administration was further developing as an academic field and as a profession, and both scholars and practitioners were looked

for a theory anchor in the formation of code of ethics, public interest theory was brought front and center (Monypenny, 1953). At the same time, public interest theory was becoming increasingly relevant to public policies with the development of policies that explicitly required regulation “in the public interest” (Herzel, 1951; Huntington, 1952) or implementation “in the public interest” (Feller, 1940; Keith-Lucas, 1957). Legal admonitions about regulation or administration in the public interest remain prevalent in contemporary public policy (Varuhas, 2016).

A major blow to public interest theory was rendered by no less than the authors of what was at the time the most influential public administration textbook in the field, which argued that “when one looks in a mirror, one sees one’s own image” (Simon, Smithburg, & Thompson, 1950, p. 551), implying that concerns with the public interest were in fact just attempts to put one’s private interests to the fore while by wrapping them in flowery prose.

Moreover, academic interest in public administration peaked in the 1950s, largely as a result of the rise of “behavioralism” in political science (Easton, 1957) and an accompanying decline in all things normative. Public interest theory was attacked not only as old fashioned but as invalid, unscientific, and, most scathingly, as “childish myths” (Glendon Schubert, 1957, p. 348).

Recently, scholars seem to have a renewed interest in public interest theory (e.g., Branston, Cowling, & Sugden, 2006; Lawton, Lasthuizen, & Rayner, 2013; Riccucci, 2010), perhaps in part because some of the original criticisms seem less compelling than they did when they were launched during the apex of the behavioral revolution.

Public values theory can be thought of as an effort to focus on some of the concerns of public interest theorists by formulating concepts and theories that strive for many of the same goals but with greater specificity. While some of the criticisms of classical public interest theory seem overwrought, one continues to ring true—that public interests concepts are inconsistent and ambiguous. For example, let us consider the most familiar scholarly definition of public interest, Walter Lippmann’s (1955), as “what men¹ would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, [and] acted disinterestedly and benevolently” (p. 40). The requirements for this definition present high hurdles. How many see clearly, think rationally, disinterestedly and benevolently? Even among those few who perhaps do, how does such a standard help mere mortals adjudicate policy choices? True, the Lippmann concept presents an ideal and ideals can be quite useful (consider the perfect rationality model in economics), but it is difficult to develop a consensus about rational, disinterested benevolence.

Public interest conceptualizations, whether Lippmann’s or the more detailed and specific ones offered by others (e.g., Cochran, 1974; Mitnick, 1976), perhaps serve best as a referential frame, reminding the decision maker that there may be broad, collective implications to be considered in the choice

of policy and institutional design choices. However, despite its many advantages in helping frame normative issues, public interest theory does not compete well against analytical frameworks that are precise and offer measure approaches to accompany core concepts. In a sense, the most valid set of values for the individual decision maker are private values, ones that may not be intersubjective. Such assessments necessarily have a high degree of face validity as there is a unitary decision maker.

There is long-standing controversy about whether anyone pursues any action independent of personal values (Kangas, 1997). For example, even the seemingly selfless decision maker can be viewed as having a personal value to taking others’ needs into account. Still, it seems possible to say that some decision makers are motivated *only* by values and outcomes that will provide great benefit to them, perhaps at the expense of others, and this seems to us more important than quibbles about the psychology of value enactment.

Public value theory was designed, in part, with a view to developing a set of ideas that provide an alternative to the ubiquitous influence of liberal economic reasoning in general and market failure criteria (Bator, 1958) in particular. While Bator’s caveat is in the ineluctable language of economics, we can also consider Dahl and Lindblom’s much more direct statement. They note that focusing exclusively on market failure reasoning not only is undesirable but that it derives from a particular intellectual history, one that was in no sense inevitable. In considering the dominance of economic reasoning and efficiency criteria in public policy deliberations, Dahl and Lindblom (1953, p. 161) observe, “How different this situation might have been had economists felt the same enthusiasm for defining an optimum distribution of income as for the optimum allocation of resources(.)”

The idea behind public value theory is to develop propositions, choice criteria, and ultimately indicators that shared values, alternatively discussed as collective, communal, or public values, appropriately to compete with the well-developed values, frameworks (e.g., market failure theory), and analytical tools (e.g., cost-benefit analysis) one finds in economics. To the extent to that policy issues hinge entirely on economic efficiency issues, economic criteria generally suffice. However, few broad and complex issues on a social agenda could be described as purely about economic efficiency. Not even tax policy, a policy domain rife with economic indicators and powerful supporting theories, meets this standard; everyone recognizes, including public finance economists (e.g., Okun, 2015), that tax policy also involves equity issues and public purposes not easily are fully addressed by economics.

As is the case in so many areas of theory development, the advance of public values knowledge has not been linear, but rather has proceeded with a set of interrelated but distinct approaches to public values (Alford & O’Flynn, 2009; Beck Jørgensen & Rutgers, 2015; Bryson et al., 2014; Nabatchi, 2010, 2018; Talbot, 2009; Van der Wal et al., 2015; William

& Shearer, 2011). For example, Bozeman and Johnson (2015, pp. 62-64) identify three thematic approaches including public policy application, normative public value criteria, and management improvement. According to Bryson et al. (2014, pp. 448-451), there are more than three streams of public value(s) literature, including the public values research led by Bozeman with its focus on policy and societal needs and outcomes, Moore's public value focusing chiefly on public managers' goals and achievements, and Benington's focus on the public sphere as the site of public values. Beck Jørgensen and Rutgers (2015, p. 4) list three lines of public values research, namely, the administrative ethics with focus on public integrity and corruption, public value management in which public managers are expected to create public value, and public value perspective (PVP) approach to address the normative arguments. Other scholars emphasize the public participation aspects in studying and enacting public value and public values (e.g., Nabatchi, 2012).

As the preceding shows, analytical frameworks and syntheses of public values literature differ substantially in their interpretations and expressed ends. Studies of public values continue to grapple with the most fundamental questions, often providing different and sometimes even incompatible answers (Rhodes & Wanna, 2007). Thus, Benington (2009) articulates a set of elemental questions: What is public value? What adds value to the public sphere? What do we mean by value? Who creates public value? How is public value created? Where is public value created? How is public value measured? When is public value created? These concerns are not dissimilar to those of Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007, pp. 355-356) who posit core questions in public values research agenda around the issues such as the origin of public values and the meaning of public, hierarchy of public values, possible assessment of public values, and their conflicts and compatibility. Bozeman (2009) lists a similar set of big questions in public values, ones focusing on the concept of public value itself, especially differences from private values. He provides preliminary suggestions for identifying and evaluating public values. Nabatchi (2010, p. S310) also presents a set of questions to be addressed in the public value and public values research, including the development of meaningful theoretical identification and classification systems of public values, and detailed empirical examination on the competition and complementarity of values.

The challenges in public values theory and research partly derive from the nature of public values or any values. Bozeman (2007) denotes that values are "complex personal judgments based on knowledge as well as an emotional reaction" (p. 13), which would be applicable to the public values. Steenhuisen, Dicke, and de Bruijn (2009, pp. 494-496) argue that public values are more likely to be soft, which means they may be less visible, difficult to operationalize and enforce, long-term, and these values can be contested. In addition, values may appear in clusters with proximity,

interrelatedness, and subgroupings (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007, p. 372; Wæraas, 2014), and if conceptual boundaries are not more precise, the field may continue to emulate their very expansive approach with a preliminary list of no less than 72 public value candidates. Furthermore, public values, including their content, identification, reasoning, and realization, involve certain institutionalization that can be unique in each time and context (Charles et al., 2011), and it might not be reasonable to assume the existence of the universal and self-evident core values, categorizations, and hierarchies of public values (Rutgers, 2008, p. 109).

The boundary challenges may be even greater as the public values literature evolves from a near exclusive focus (at least with empirical studies) on the values of public managers to concerns with the normative sphere of individuals, organizations, polities, and societies. Van der Wal and Van Hout (2009) argue that the concept and usage of public value(s) do not need to be unitary and the need to pay attention to the multiplicity and hybridity of the values. Others (Bozeman, 2007; de Graaf et al., 2016; Pesch, 2008) and Wagenaar (1999) argue for a healthy pluralism and for contested public values, even going so far as to argue in some cases that conflict is intrinsic to the formation and legitimization of public values.

In sum, as one muses on the issue of "what is missing" in public values, it seems clear enough that one missing ingredient is a consensus about the general objectives and preferred directions of the public values literature. As is so often the case with relatively new bodies of theory, the tug of war for conceptual boundaries remains vigorous with no immediate resolution in sight. However, the fact that the intellectual course of public values remains wide open does not pre-empt the need for identifying missing elements but rather reinforces the importance of clear-cut position-taking about what is missing and what can be done about what is missing. At this current stage of nascent theory development, it seems useful to proffer notions about possible next steps, not only expecting but also welcoming disagreements and alternative perspectives. The conceptual sort needs to continue. Indeed, public interest theory might be much further along today had scholars not engaged in a de facto three-decade-long moratorium on fundamental theorizing about the public interest.²

Frameworks of Public Values

Arguably, public values theory thus far presents only modest instrumental improvements over public interest theory and, despite some progress, remains somewhat unsatisfying as an analytical tool to support social choice and policy decision-making. Not that public value theory lags much behind market failure theory, at least if one is interested not just in a framing tool but an application tool. While values classification is only one of many possible approaches to the development of public values theory, the approach does seem to have helped identify useful possibilities for conceptual sorting and

Table 1. Classifications and Frameworks in Public Values.

	Foci	Points relevant to classification and framework
Site of values	Constellations of public values	Seven constellations: contribution of the public sector to society, the channel between society's interests to decisions, public administration and politicians, public administration and the environment, internal functions and aspects of public administration, public employees' behavior, and public administration and citizens. (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007)
	Governance modes	Values in the four different governance modes as hierarchy, clan, network, and market (Andersen, Beck Jørgensen, Kjeldsen, Pedersen, & Vrangbæk, 2012)
	Values frames	Four public values frames in administration and governance, namely, the political, legal, organizational, and market values. (Nabatchi, 2018)
	Civil service values	Societal values, workplace values, civil service values, administrative values, and public sector values. (Thompson, 2016, pp. 20-21)
Nature of values	Chronological order	Chronological order of public values, including old and new and traditional and emerging values. (Rutgers, 2008)
	Core values, value hierarchies	Ordering of core values, distinction between prime values and instrumental values, and value hierarchies. (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007, pp. 372-383; Beck Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2013; Rutgers, 2008; Witesman & Walters, 2015)
	Proximity of values	Some values may be unrelated to other values, but values may have certain proximity, which could be understood with neighbor values, covalues, and nodal values. (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007, pp. 370-372)
	Public service values categories	Four categories of public service values, namely, the ethical, democratic, professional, and people. (Kernaghan, 2003)
	Public value dimensions	Four dimensions of public value, namely, the moral-ethical, hedonistic-esthetical, utilitarian-instrumental, and political-social. (Meynhardt, 2009)
	Mission-extrinsic public values	Public values might be present as the values within core missions of organizations, policies and government, or as mission-extrinsic public values. (Baehler, Liu, & Rosenbloom, 2014; Rosenbloom, 2014)
	Procedural and substantive values	Public values can be either of procedural values or substantive values. (de Bruijn & Dicke, 2006)
	Softness of values	Five interrelated characteristics to assess the softness of values, namely, the visibility, ability to operationalize, enforceability, duration, and contested nature. (Steenhuisen, Dicke, & de Bruijn, 2009)
Assessment criteria and framework	Public value failure and mapping	Public value failure concept and criteria and public value mapping, in reference to market failure criteria. (Bozeman, 2002, 2007; Bozeman & Sarewitz, 2005, 2011)
	Inequity and distribution	Distribution of impacts (social and individual impacts) and potency of impacts (capacity and hedonic impact) in science and technology impacts. (Bozeman, Slade, & Hirsch, 2011, pp. 238-241)
	Value change mechanism	Three types of value change mechanisms in public sector, namely, the teleological, conflictual, and value internal. (Beck Jørgensen & Vrangbæk, 2011)

has resulted in a variety of interpretations and descriptions of public values (Andersen, Beck Jørgensen, Kjeldsen, Pedersen, & Vrangbæk, 2012; Rutgers, 2008, p. 715). Table 1 provides an overview of some of the major developments in these classifications and frameworks, chiefly with site of public values, nature of values, and assessment criteria and framework.

First, the classifications of public values may rely on identifying the locus of public values. The seven constellations of public values by Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) expand the locus of public values to include broader political, societal, and relational spheres rather than exclusively focusing on public administrators. Each constellation entails different set of values, for example, values such as common good and altruism in public sector's contribution to society, and values such as legality, equity, and dialogue in relations between government and citizens (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007, pp. 358-369). Andersen and colleagues (2012) suggest the multi-dimensionality of public values and

identify four different governance modes related to notions of hierarchy, clan, network, and market, with each having different roles for citizens and organizations and each having distinctive central values. According to Andersen and colleagues (2012, pp. 717-718), hierarchical governance aligns with the classical Weberian bureaucracy, clan governance relies on the norms and goals in the relevant group, network governance emphasizes the inclusion of different societal interests in government and policy, and market governance relies more on the basic market principles with supply and demand of public services. More recently, Nabatchi (2018) presents the four public values frames in administration and governance, namely, political, legal, organizational, and market values. The four frames involve different sets of values, respectively, such as the participation and representation in political values, individual substantive rights in legal values, administrative efficiency in organizational values, and cost-saving and productivity in market values

(Nabatchi, 2018). Grouping of values for public employees in civil service in Thompson (2016) is also based on the sites of values, namely, societal values, workplace values, civil service values, administrative values, and public sector values (Thompson, 2016, pp. 20-21).

Second, some of the classification criteria in various schemas relate to the nature of values. Rutgers (2008) suggests a set of possible criteria for ordering public values including the chronological order and core values. For Rutgers, core values are “the most frequently referred to values” (p. 97) and other scholars examine the actual hierarchies and presence of values (Beck Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2013; Witesman & Walters, 2015). Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) also address the hierarchy of values and distinguish prime values from instrumental values, arguing that “The central feature of a prime value is that it is a thing valued for itself, fully contained, whereas an instrumental value is valued for its ability to achieve other values (which may or may not themselves be prime values).” (p. 373) As Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007, pp. 372-373) note, this point aligns with the long-standing arguments of hierarchies of values and interest in political science (e.g., Van Dyke, 1962). Furthermore, Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007, pp. 370-372) argue the proximity of values, presenting the organizing categories of neighbor values, co-values, and nodal values.

Furthermore, Kernaghan (2003) presents four categories of public service values, namely, the ethical, democratic, professional, and people. These four categories have possible overlaps, but entail a different set of values, such as integrity and fairness in ethical values and caring and tolerance in people category (Kernaghan, 2003, p. 712). Meynhardt (2009) presents four dimensions of public value in the public value landscape, namely, the moral-ethical, hedonistic-esthetical, utilitarian-instrumental, and political-social dimensions. In addition, public values might be present within the core missions of organizations, policies, and government, or values might be extrinsic to the core missions (Baehler, Liu, & Rosenbloom, 2014; Rosenbloom, 2014). According to Rosenbloom (2014), mission-extrinsic public values are “not typically central or ancillary to the achievement of public agencies’ core missions” (p. 17), but shaping the management of financial, human, and other resources. Baehler et al. (2014) contrast the mission-extrinsic values and regime values, in which the mission-extrinsic public values are less fundamental and more transitory, while regime values involve the normative preferences and beliefs that are fundamental to the government and society. This distinction might partly coincide with the contrast between procedural public values and substantive public values (e.g., de Bruijn & Dicke, 2006, p. 719). Another useful set of distinctions is provided by Steenhuisen et al. (2009) who distinguish between hard public values and soft public values, presenting five interrelated characteristics to assess the softness of values, namely, the visibility, ability to operationalize, enforceability, duration, and contested nature of values.

Finally, there is another set of frameworks for analyzing and assessing public values. Public values failure and mapping (Bozeman, 2002, 2007; Bozeman & Sarewitz, 2005, 2011) pay a considerable attention to the context and history of public values. Bozeman (2002, p. 150) contrasts public failure with the market failure, arguing that “Public failure occurs when core public values are not reflected in social relations, either in the market or public policy.” The public failure criteria include factors such as the insufficiency of mechanisms for articulating and aggregating values in political and social context, scarcity of providers, and short time horizon (Bozeman, 2002, p. 151). Bozeman (2002, 2007) notes that his public failure criteria are not fixed and exhaustive and, indeed, in a co-authored article (Bozeman & Johnson, 2015) adds a supra-value related to the health and well-being of the public sphere, the arena in which public values are debated and assessed, as well as a criterion related to social and economic opportunity. Bozeman, Slade, and Hirsch (2011) present a framework of evaluation pertaining to public values but specifically focusing on the inequity and distribution of science and technology outcomes as public values. They compare and contrast social impact versus individual impact in terms of the distribution of impacts and capacity impact versus hedonic impact in terms of the potency of impacts. In addition, Beck Jørgensen and Vrangbæk (2011) seek to develop a framework to analyze the dynamics of value changes in public sector, articulating the three types of value change mechanisms, with varying patterns, origin, and magnitude of value changes. The teleological change mechanism is basically the intentional value changes including the value-based management, the conflictual change derives from the collision of different values, and the value-internal change mechanism is an autonomous development of values in the life cycle of values (Beck Jørgensen & Vrangbæk, 2011).

Clearly, there is considerable diffidence in the focus and content of the respective frameworks and classification schemes. Each of the frameworks has strengths and insights for studying public values. However, despite the richness of each of these frameworks to organize and study public values, their development is still underway and much work remains. The rest of this study focuses on the theory development work still needed and explores the three problems in public values theory and research, factors related to identification, motivation, and instrumentation.

Three Problems: Identification, Motivation, and Instrumentation

A related study (Bozeman & Crow, forthcoming) suggests three major obstacles to the advancement of public value theory and its ultimate application, namely, the identification, motivation, and instrumentation problems. These three problems might not offer a comprehensive coverage of possible problems in public values research. However, in a sense, examination of these problems helps us understand and

analyze the life cycle of the values from up-stream (birth, identification, and elaboration) to the middle-stream (instrumentation and implementation) and down-stream (realization and outcomes) which may involve various motivations and instruments. The streams may not be that linear or mutually exclusive, and they may sometimes get dispersed, tangled, steep, or mutable. The detailed problems below involve overlaps and interrelated issues.

The Identification Problem

Most fundamental is the “identification problem,” which entails knowing a public value when we see it. To this point, scholars have not agreed upon an approach to identifying public values, though several approaches have been suggested (for overview, see Van der Wal et al., 2015). Scholars have suggested that public values can be distilled from governmental documents and records such as constitutions, public laws, executive orders and judicial decisions (Baehler et al., 2014; Rosenbloom, 2014), official core value statements by public agencies (Wæraas, 2014), surveys of public managers (Witesman & Walters, 2015), and through public participation and deliberative processes (Davis & West, 2009; Nabatchi, 2012). While the present study is clearly not the first to note the difficulty in identifying public values, most others do not delve into particular difficulties or possible remedies. Here, we take a tentative, if somewhat wobbly, step toward doing so.

Availability, differences, and limits of identification instruments. While the early studies of public value tend to focus on the values of public employees, studies of public values increasingly involve the values of multiple individuals and groups such as the politicians, citizens and society (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Beck Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2013; Nabatchi, 2012). The identification of public values in the broader spheres of public values might entail greater challenges, in which we may learn from the general trend in public policy and management such as the inclusion of various stakeholders and broader citizen in the decision-making and analysis (e.g., Fung, 2006; Gregory & Keeney, 1994). There are some possible instruments and sources to identify the citizenship public values such as polls, surveys, document analysis and other participatory mechanisms. Although the citizen participation in the values identification and reconciliation might be desired (Nabatchi, 2012), their availability may be limited. Some identification instruments may need more resources including the financial costs and participation of the individuals. Furthermore, some identification instruments may require a certain length of time, which could be a problem if the immediate identification and assessment of public values are desirable. In addition, different identification mechanisms potentially provide different results.

Majority rule, or else. Public values may in some case be identified through either the participatory deliberation with citizens

(Nabatchi, 2012) or through observation of the versions of articulated common good in political partisanship (Lindblom, 1990). Some of the core public values may themselves be related to the adjudication of values in the public sphere (Bozeman & Johnson, 2015) and may include majority rule, user democracy and protection of minorities (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007). There may be a persisting question whether the public value is a value which gets the majority’s consensus, or public values can be the values without the consensus of the majority of the citizens. This is partly related to the question about the origin of public values, as it concerns with the fundamental question about the definition and nature of public values. As a preliminary point, it is not realistic to ask all the relevant individuals, such as the citizens of a country or community, on each of the possible public values. However, even if we can ask all the citizens about their values, it is still questionable if it is appropriate to apply the simple majority rule as in the election voting. For example, some people may support the public value and related instruments to provide the food supports or medical care for the people in need, but these values may not get the majority agreement. Regardless of the supports by the majority or not, the government may support a public value-related policy in some cases. Furthermore, some people may be more likely to be heard with bigger voices and these values may be more easily supported, apart from the simple majority rule.

Transformation. Most scholars agree that public value(s), their desired and feasible instruments, and societal and political situations are mutable, at least in the long term (Beck Jørgensen & Vrangbæk, 2011; Charles et al., 2011; de Graaf et al., 2016; Moore, 1995), further exacerbating the identification problem. The change in public values could be incremental or drastic, certain values may indicate the resistance to change, and magnitude of changes may also vary (Beck Jørgensen & Vrangbæk, 2011). Bozeman and Johnson (2015, p. 65) note that public values are less likely to exhibit frequent and drastic changes simply because it takes time and collective effort for public values to emerge and be accepted as such. The change could be in the same direction or opposite direction. For example, there may be a public value that the government should take care of the homeland security. This value may get stronger among the public after the events such as the occurrence of terrorism in and outside the country, compared with the times without the recognized fears of war and terrorism. At the same time, for example, there may be a long-standing public value to accept the immigrants to sustain the growth of the country in the United States, and this value could shift to the opposite direction after the occurrence of the terrorisms. The identification and transformation of values may partly depend on where we find values, because there may be cases in which the rules and laws change drastically but the related norms and cultures see limited change, such as the long-standing gender and racial issues. Likewise, values change that seem to challenge the

existing operations of economic systems will generally transform little, and when they change at all, do so over long periods of time (see Stiglitz, 2013, 2015).

Ordering and priority. There may be the ordering of values based on the level of the core, fundamental status and priority, or a hierarchy of values (Baehler et al., 2014; Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Rutgers, 2008; Witesman & Walters, 2015). Some values may be recognized as more absolute and more easily accepted across the globe, different groups of people, and era, while other values may be more relative or at a lower position in the hierarchy. Absolute public values may not change regardless of the available resources or motivation for the achievement, but relative public values may be disregarded when other values are more pressing and significant or the situations in the society change. The decision-making with priority and limited resources involve the complexity in a sense that it may not be a purely normative argument. Rather, the public values, even in the identification phase, could involve the realistic decision-making in the limited resource and time-frame and embedded in the social and political contexts to a large extent. In terms of creating public value by public managers, Moore (1995, p. 29) argues that “In reality public managers cannot produce the desirable results without using resources that have value in alternative uses” and notes that resources involve not only financial resources but also the authority of the government. Studies of public values often focus on the so-called core values such as accountability, human dignity, and fairness (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Beck Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2013), but the values in the empirical world or values in the instrumentation phase might be more detailed and embedded in the contexts, in which ordering and priority-making could be an important and more challenging issue.

Rights and wrongs. The public values identification arguments basically presuppose that people, decision makers, or politicians are able to identify, discuss, and decide the public values. Or the identified and agreed values are public values by nature because they are decided by the citizens, public administrators, and politicians (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; de Graaf et al., 2016). However, it is possible that these values and instrumentations contain some unethical components such as the principle of racial discrimination and segregation, as we recognize by looking back at our own past. In some cases, people may cling to beliefs, even ones that may pay little heed to conventional moral precepts. Even though it may not be impossible to decide the rights and wrongs of public values, we may reach a more elaborated judgment of public values if we can look at them in retrospect, learn from history and comparisons, or we recognize the potential impossibility of ourselves to decide “rights and wrongs” in public values. Furthermore, the question of rights and wrongs is not binary and involves the questions of why, to what extent, and in what ways they are justifiable as public

values. Here, the longitudinal and historical studies of public values and studies of the contexts and reasoning behind public values are important, rather than just identifying the public values in short-hand abstract terms.

The Motivation Problem

The “motivation problem” briefly described is this: We never can be sure whether the public value-based policies and designs are truly motivated by good intent with and benevolent motives (Bozeman & Crow, forthcoming). In some cases, it may be literally impossible to determine whether raw self-interests are wrapped in a seemingly benevolent values package. However, there is some question whether it really matters if the motivations of public value-based policies and designs are truly and honestly based on the good public intent, rather than the personal and other interests. Above all, motivations in the identification phase, instrumentation phase, and outcomes phase of public values may be connected but they may also come asunder. Although the motivations and justification of public values in the identification phase could more easily be pure and true motivation for the public values, the motivations in the instrumentation phase may involve more diverse stakes such as the opportunities for the companies and individuals to make a profit by providing the instrumentation or politician’s stakes to support the public values-based policy to gain more support from the voters. The motivations and justification of public values in outcome phase could be the mixture of all of them.

Pure and true motivation. Public values may be realized by the public sector, but private and the combination of sectors may contribute to the creation of public values (Bozeman, 2002; Benington, 2009). On one hand, the purity of the motivation to achieve the public values could be one of the foci of theory research. On the other hand, purity may not matter for the effectiveness of instruments and resulting outcomes of public values realization. Some public values may be unexpectedly realized or realized in collaboration with other actors with different stakes and resources. For instance, the housing issue for the low-income population in the urban area could be a part of public values about government role and people’s welfare, which potentially involve multiple values and stakes: citizens may expect the government’s role to support those in need, the neighborhood communities may want to address the problem to improve the neighborhood safety, and local companies may join in with either or both of philanthropic public value motivation or market motivation. In studying the purity or types of motivations, there are multiple levels of analysis such as individual and organizational levels, and we may study different types and combinations of motivations and resulting success and failure. There might be a case that pure and benevolent public values motivation go wrong as noted in the studies of public value failure (Bozeman, 2002).

The Instrument Problem

The third problem, the “instrument problem,” is that the achievement and realization of public values require the appropriate and effective instrumentation and implementation. The identified public values, the instruments, and outcomes can all be interrelated or even designed to be a linear path, but nonetheless separate phases of the public values stream. The same public values may be realized by different instruments, which potentially lead to different ways of public values realization. The realization of public values by different instruments may happen simultaneously, involving a set of the governmental, social, economic, political efforts, as well as science and technology. Furthermore, the instrumentation of certain public values may involve a path dependency, for example, funding decisions may focus on “how much?” questions instead of “why?” and “to what end?” questions (Bozeman & Sarewitz, 2005, p. 120). In terms of public values realization, Bruijn and Dicke (2006) argue that there are three types of safeguarding mechanisms for public values: hierarchy, in which public values may be imposed by forces such as regulation and fines by government; network, in which government may create the conditions for the actors to interact to consult and negotiate public values; and market, in which government may strategically use the market forces to protect public values.

Long-term and historical perspective. Realization of public values may require long-standing continuing efforts and mechanisms, rather than one-time injection of an instrument such as a policy, legislation, or funding. For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the United States may be one of the major instrumentations to pave the way for public values on the non-discrimination of people. However, the movement toward the equal civil rights accompanies numerous policies and programs, and changes not only in the official rules and laws but also in cultures and values of individuals, families, organizations, communities, and society. The case of racial discrimination can be an obvious example that the transformation and realization of public values could be a long-term and incremental process, suggesting that theory and research on public values might require the long-term perspective and examination of the process. Scholars point out the transformation and cycling of public values through the time (e.g., Beck Jørgensen & Vrangbæk, 2011; Charles et al., 2011), and public value mapping might reflect a historical transition of the values such as tobacco sales in 1950 and 2007 (Bozeman, 2007, p. 157). The long-term longitudinal studies and historical studies might be useful in addressing the instrument problem in theory and practice.

Embeddedness and incrementalism. As noted earlier in this study, public values are normative consensus and judgment based on personal knowledge and emotion that guide the

behavior of individuals and these values are relatively stable (Bozeman, 2007; Bozeman & Johnson, 2015, p. 65). In other words, the instrumentation of a specific policy may not linearly realize the value due to the incremental nature of values and related activities. For example, people may agree with a statement of a public value that people with any gender should be entitled to the same basic rights. Governments may implement a set of policy instruments to achieve the equality and equity of people in any gender in society. However, the values, cultures, and behaviors of the individuals, organizations, any communities, and society may require time to adjust to the changing values. The public values in the abstract form such as equity may be more easily agreeable and people may indicate motivation to realize the values, but the actual values and day-to-day practices in individuals and organizations may be less amenable to change. The formal instruments matter, but many other things are going on in the informal or cultural dimensions, too.

Competing stakes and values. It is possible that realization of certain public values disturbs other people's values, given pluralism and possible conflicts of values (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; de Graaf et al., 2016). In terms of the values in public administrators, de Graaf et al. (2016, pp. 1113-1119) list some of the values conflicts examples such as proper versus performing governance and responsive versus performing governance. There may be greater complexity in competing values and stakes in the instrumentation and implementation phase of public values compared with identification phase. For example, there may be a public value that every child should have the access to quality education. This abstract public value may be more easily agreed. However, the quality of education may mean something different for different people, and they may face conflict when they have multiple but competing choices among instrumentations. Or others may put less support on this value and prefer to put more resource in other values realization. In addition, the issue of competing stakes and values may require attention to the distinction between the desirability and feasibility of public values, given the possible limitations of time and resources.

Improving Public Values Research and Theory Development

With a range of potential problems in public values theory research, we suggest that the following points can be the starting points to address the problems. In addition to the improvements in the existing ways of studying public values such as surveys and analysis of aggregate data to elucidate public values, we may need to go in-depth of public values such as the historical background and transformation, reasoning, and obstacles of public values identification and realization. While it is important to identify and understand the core values, the values often inevitably involve pluralism, proximity, and interchanges among subgroups. As such, it

maybe sometimes be misleading to give exclusive focus to distinguishing prime and instrumental values (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007, p. 373). In some instances, they may be to all intents and purposes indistinguishable. Again, this is where historical and longitudinal studies of values in context may have importance, investigating the ways in which values are interrelated and embedded. In the process, public values research may partly learn from other neighboring approaches and concepts such as regime values (Baehler et al., 2014; Overeem, 2015; Rohr, 1989; Rosenbloom, 2014), incrementalism and muddling through (Lindblom, 1979), or even the concept of paradigm may offer utility in examining the life cycle of the values including their emergence, transformation, realization, stabilization, and change (Kuhn, 1962).

History and Longitudinal Approach

This study has strongly emphasized the role of historical perspectives and context and we again return to that theme. Theoretical research on public values inevitably faces the necessity to look at the historical development and transitions of public values in terms their contents, justification, instruments, motivations, and consequences. Scholars have articulated the utility of history, longitudinal approach, and importance of embeddedness in studies of public values and in the field of public administration, but with general focus on administrative values of public administration and employees based on formal documents and records (Adams, 1992; Moynihan, 2009; Raadschelders, 2000, 2010; Thompson, 2016). Thompson (2016) examines the historical transition of public value decade-by-decade between 1881 and 2010, though its focus is chiefly the values of civil service through the content analysis of the Congressional Record documents in selective civil service episodes. Moynihan (2009) also addresses the importance of history approach, but primarily to study administrative values, with laws as the primary site of inquiry. Apart from these, Beck Jørgensen and Vrangbæk (2011) present a notable attempt to develop a framework to analyze the dynamics of public values, with an emphasis on their change mechanisms in historical and socially embedded context, referring to the life cycles, fashions, with varying patterns and magnitude of value changes. Furthermore, the multi-case study by Charles et al. (2011) examine public values and their institutionalization in different time and place. Their multi-case study looks at historical cases such as the Roman Empire and Medieval England with special focus on the two policy areas of possible public values, namely, the transport infrastructure and access to food. Based on the findings, they argue that

it is more likely that economic and political structures *enable* the salience of certain public values, rather than that *the need to realize these values* leads to the kinds of economic and political structures that can support and safeguard them. (p. 86)

And further discuss the influence of the availability of technology on the creation and loss of public values. Studies of the birth, mutation, death, and re-emergence of certain public values may help further theory development, addressing the embeddedness and variations of values and informal values as discussed in the following.

Embeddedness of Values

The embeddedness might be increasingly important in studying the broader universe of public values, instead of focusing only the values within public administrators. The embeddedness may shape not only the content and reasoning of values but also their instrumentation and realization. In a sense, we need to recognize that there may be a limitation of governmental and legal efforts due to the embeddedness of the values and their realization process, as Mark Granovetter, in his classic piece, argues the social embeddedness of behavior and institution with possible situational constraints (Granovetter, 1985). The content, reasoning, expectations, and possible instrumentation of public values may vary in the different context, and Martinsen and Beck Jørgensen (2010) note that "Some values are 'empty' in the sense that they do not carry any meaning unless operationalized" (p. 747). Charles et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of contexts in public values research and study the institutionalization of public values, which involves factors such as political integration, technological development, and economic ideology. They further consider both formal legal rules and informal cultural expectations and both structural and cultural components (Charles et al., 2011, p. 86). Consideration of the embeddedness of values, including their reasoning, consequences, and obstacles, seem to be crucial in advancing the public values theory and research and for the better planning of policies and government mechanisms.

Public Values Variations

As already noted, scholars have pointed out the pluralism, proximity, compatibility, and transformation of public values (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Van Der Wal & Van Hout, 2009). Some studies indicate national or cultural variation (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2002; Beck Jørgensen & Sørensen, 2013), as well as variation between public and private sectors (Van der Wal & Huberts, 2008; Van der Wal, Huberts, Van den Heuvel, & Kolthoff, 2006). In addition, the value of the same term such as accountability could accompany different meaning, scope, and impact (Martinsen & Beck Jørgensen, 2010). Further research on public values might look at the variation of public values of people in different groups, such as those in different countries, region, social class, financial status, generation, gender, race, religion, political affiliation, and occupations. There are plenty of the examples of the variations, such as the countries with

pros and cons for the death penalty, immigration policy, and small and big government. In addition to the variations of the values themselves, it is expectable that there may be the variation in the reasoning behind the values.

Formal and Informal Values

Public values entail normative inquiry and may be difficult to operationalize (Bozeman, 2007; Steenhuisen et al., 2009), and we may be well advised to investigate both the formal and informal values. As the typical case, it would be possible to identify and study public values based on the materials such as laws, executive orders, constitutions, and codes of conduct (Baehler et al., 2014; Beck et al., 2013; Moynihan, 2009; Rosenbloom, 2014), as well as the formal statements and articulated goals of the organizations (Wæraas, 2014) or public participation mechanisms (Nabatchi, 2012). Compared with these formal values, informal values might inhere in cultures and day-to-day practices of individuals and organizations or implicitly ingrained within individuals, rather than being necessarily manifested in documents or records. They might be more implicit and invisible on the surface, but these values can be deep-seated values, ones that potentially shape the activities and realization or failure of public values. The 2016 US presidential elections, with the rising up of voters embittered over political and social changes perceived as changing the rules about “winners” and “losers” in society, was not anticipated by either the mainstream media or by most elected officials and pundits. Thus, informal values may have importance in the study of public values. The public reasoning, truth, and fact in government and public sphere, as well as related norms and values, might entail increasing complexity in the “post-truth” world, although these issues around truth, values, and their institutionalization might not be brand-new (Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007, pp. 375-376; Jasanoff & Simmet, 2017). Changes in informal values may not be readily obvious but can have considerable effects on the arc of social and political change. The investigation of informal values requires more in-depth and more contextualized and historically informed studies.

As already noted, we do not need to seek a sole perfect all-purpose framework, but we need to be able to articulate the different set of purposes to study and analyze public values. The articulated aims in the current public values research include the identification of the values that are core to public administration and policy and helping the practitioners to make better decisions in policy and governance. If we seek to understand the public values in the social and historical contexts in long term, either for theory development or practical purpose, the longitudinal and history approach with consideration of embeddedness, informal values, and other points presented in this study may be another important focus of public values research.

Conclusion

Public values theory, by its very nature, provides difficult research and theory-building challenges, owing to the mix of normative and empirical issues, the complexities of personal judgment and values, and the juxtaposition of knowledge and emotion (Bozeman, 2007; Nabatchi, 2018; Rutgers, 2015). Equally important, public values are embedded in specific cultures, societies, and politics, such that what one finds in one may not obtain in another. As a normative theory, public values studies may benefit from conducting in-depth, long-term, or longitudinal studies to investigate not only the pluralism, variations, and transformation of values but also the reasons and contexts behind the values. As public values research goes beyond a study of public employees and involves the values in the public values universe including those of citizens and society, we may need to re-think why we study public values, for what sake.

To put it on a finer point, development of public values theory and research may require attention to some approaches not common in contemporary public administration research. For example, truly elucidating the formation and evolution of public values likely requires some cross-national and cross-cultural comparisons (Eglene & Dawes, 2006; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011), approaches more often honored with lip service than with data, either quantitative or qualitative.

Deep understanding of public values may also require public administration researchers to revisit the historical orientation that was much more popular in earlier phases of the field (Gaus, 1950), but whereas earlier studies tended to focus on government agency histories (e.g., Holt, 1923; Schmeckebier, 1923; Somers, 1950; Waldo & Pincus, 1946), what is needed in public values research is a broader approach to a topic that has shifting and permeable boundaries. Why is historiography potentially so important for public values research? Public value is not public opinion. By most definitions, public values are not immutable but they emerge slowly and evolve slowly, and in some cases, the sort of contemporary snapshot that characterizes so much of public administration work cannot fully edify public values.

We must not only look back but look forward in public values research. Although discussed for nearly 100 years (Hopkins, 1925), rarely is public administration scholarship much engaged in anticipatory research. This could prove useful in public values (Quay, 2010). By first establishing public values baselines, documenting the extent to which particular public values are embraced and enacted, we might better understand the evolution of public values and, particularly, the effects on public values of “systemic shocks.” Without a baseline it is not easy, perhaps not possible, to examine evolution in public values. In short, despite progress in public values scholarship, which after all remains in its relative infancy, there is a good deal that is missing.

Authors' Note

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Lippmann was writing at a time when it was customary in the English language to use masculine pronouns to refer to both genders.
2. Yes, there are exceptions to this "moratorium," but few and mostly in studies of law and economics pertaining to regulation (e.g., James, 2000).

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