Four Frames for Understanding Public Values in Administration and Governance

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ABSTRACT

This paper builds on recent theory and research to develop and explore four frames of public values for administration and governance. The paper first clarifies and distinguishes among several terms, including value, values, public value, and public values, and discusses the notions of creating public value, preventing public values failure, and public values plurality. Next, it presents four frames of public values for administration and governance (political, legal, organizational, and market). Each frame includes a profile of several distinct content values, as well as a prevailing mode of rationality and a set of dominant methods, which together ensure its continuity and consistency. In addition, the paper discusses several itinerant public values that are foundational to the study and practice public administration, but subject to different interpretations based on the frame from which they are viewed. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of implications and suggestions for future research.
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 is 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 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 this view, the field has not developed a systematic framework for understanding (let alone finding the ‘appropriate balance’ among) the multiple public values at play in administration and governance. Instead, we have a conceptual muddle – a muddle that many public administration scholars outside the stream of research on public values and related issues do not seem to be aware. This is problematic because the issues surrounding public values and administration are not simply the stuff of intellectual self-gratification – they also have important real-world implications for many aspects of governance. For public values research to reach its theoretical and practical potential, the field needs
conceptual clarity and a framework for understanding public values as they relate to administrative and policy matters.

This paper takes a first step toward developing such a framework. 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, preventing public values failure, and public values plurality. Next, the paper presents four frames of public values for administration and governance (political, legal, organizational, and market) and several itinerant values that shape both academic study and professional practice. The paper concludes with a discussion of implications and suggestions for future research.

VALUE AND VALUES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

Before examining the four public values frames for administration and governance, 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 (cf. Alford & O’Flynn 2009; Nabatchi 2012; O’Flynn 2009). It is also useful to explore how these terms relate to the creation of public value and prevention of public values failure. Second, it is important to examine the issue of values plurality 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

\(^1\) 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.
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. 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; and (c) the principles on which governments and policies should be based” (Bozeman 2007: 13). Thus, in the Moore (1995) strand of thought, public value is essentially a management-centered concept, while in the Bozeman (2007) strand of thought, public values are essentially oriented toward broader social outcomes. Thus, we can think of public value as an appraisal of managerial activities and actions conducted by government agents and officials, and public values as social standards, principles, and ideals to be pursued and upheld by government agents and officials.

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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.”
Just as there is market failure, so too can there be public values failure. Public values failure “occurs when neither the market nor the public sector provides goods and services required to achieve core public values” (Bozeman 2002: 150; 2007: 144). Bozeman (2002, 2007) suggests eight criteria for identifying public values failure: 1) Mechanisms for values articulation and aggregation; 2) Legitimate monopolies; 3) Imperfect public information; 4) Distribution of benefits; 5) Provider availability; 6) Time horizon; 7) Substitutability vs. conservation of resources; and 8) Ensure subsistence and human dignity. These criteria can be used to deliberate about and diagnose policy decisions and to help ensure that such decisions are geared toward upholding public values.

If one accepts that public values failure is possible, then one is forced to ask, what public values exist and which should be promoted and/or upheld by government officials and agents? And here emerges a problem – there is an almost overwhelming plurality of public values. Public values are found “nearly everywhere” and provide the much of the structure for societies (Bozeman 2007: 141-142). 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 there are fundamental disagreements about public values and no particular public value or values-set (i.e., a grouping of related public values) serves as a trump card and generates normative consensus” (Nabatchi 2012: 2). Such values-based conflicts are particularly pervasive in public policy. 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, mercy, 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 plurality of public values presents several interrelated challenges for public administration and governance. 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 to resolve policy conflicts, and the resulting legislation often has ambiguous language, uninformed goals, and contradictory guidelines.

Second, 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 conflicts 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

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3 In this paper, the term ‘value conflicts’ 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.
often leaves public managers ill-equipped to solve complex and divisive issues (Goerdel and Nabatchi 2012; see also Bozeman 2007; Nabatchi et al. 2011; Stivers 2008).

To effectively address public values plurality, 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 more effectively and consciously consider which public values to uphold and which tools and methods are most likely to do so. Numerous 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 analyses of the public administration and political science literatures (Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007), or based on the differences between public and private organizations (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 values related to administrative rationality, democratic morality, and political survival (Buchanan and Millstone 1979).

While these and other classification systems are useful, important, and needed, they do not necessarily assist with identifying and understanding public values specifically related to administrative and governance settings. Rather, most of these classification systems extend beyond public administration and governance, that is, they examine public values in a broader social context, and include, for example, individual public values or values of the private sector. What is of interest in this paper is not the universe of public values (i.e., the total set of public
values espoused and held by individuals, cultures, societies, and so forth), but rather the galaxy of public values that are both historically and presently found in public administration.

One 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; 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). Bureaucratic ethos, which is generally viewed as being the 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, and deontological reasoning that is grounded in history and political philosophy (Pugh 1991). In some ways, bureaucratic ethos is akin to Moore’s (1995) management-centered concept of public value and democratic ethos is akin to Bozeman’s (2007) social outcome-oriented notion of public values; however, this parallel is not exact as both frameworks can contribute to creating public value and preventing public values failure.

Bureaucratic and democratic ethos 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. In part,
this is because the frameworks are highly generalized and suffer from conflation. 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, democratic ethos is populated with broad and imprecise concepts such as citizenship and the public interest; however, one can easily make the argument that citizenship has meaning in both frameworks and that the public interest can be served by promoting both democratic and bureaucratic values. Likewise, bureaucratic ethos is 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 democratic and bureaucratic ethos have been useful in shaping debates about specific issues, they also have contributed to the conceptual muddle in public values research. The next sections of the paper seek to generate more conceptual clarity by presenting four public values frames that are specific to administration and governance.

PUBLIC VALUES FRAMES IN ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

The following sections of the paper examine four public values frames in public administration. The notion of “frames” is used here to connote open structures that give shape and meaning to something, in this case, public administration. Individually, each frame provides a particular lens for viewing public administration or telling a story about administrative actions and activities. Together, the frames provide a mechanism for interpretation, communication, and the negotiation of meanings, particularly with respect to policy and other administrative issues. Two additional points are worth making. First, the frames presented here should probably be
considered ideal types – they are derived from observable reality, but are deliberately simplified constructs. Second, these frames are conceived of in the American administrative setting, though as discussed in the conclusion, these frames may be applicable to other national contexts.

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; 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 of bureaucratic and democratic ethos inconsequential.

Each of the four frames is shaped by core content values, and guided by prevailing mode of rationality and a particular set of dominant methods. The content values are the constellation of associated public 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. Methods refer to the specific tools used to enact the content values. Together, the prevailing rationality and dominant methods help ensure the continuity and consistency of each frame. Table One displays the content values, prevailing rationality, and dominant methods for each of the four frames.

[Insert Table One]

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4 I developed these four frames largely by reflecting on my struggle with using the bureaucratic vs. democratic ethos framework in teaching and research, although I drew great inspiration from two articles: Rosenbloom’s (1983) “Public administrative theory and the separation of powers” and Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman’s (2007) “Public values: An inventory.”
**Political Public Values**

In the United States, the political values frame is inseparably linked to democracy. 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 methods 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.” 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 – 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).  

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5 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, it was only after voting rights were firmly established that attention shifted to mechanisms for direct citizen participation (Nabatchi 2010).
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 prevailing mode of rationality used in the political 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 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); the other 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). It is interesting to note that the former camp seems to argue from the base of bureaucratic ethos and the management-centered concept of public value, whereas the latter camp seems to argue from the base of democratic ethos and the social outcome-oriented notion of public values. Regardless, this controversy and tension is related, in part, 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 (citation omitted).

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 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).

Although it would be difficult to supply an exhaustive list, there related values that are central in the legal frame have been identified: 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.”

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. 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.

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6 Before the enactment of the Fourteenth Amendment, individual substantive rights 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 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 governments.

7 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.”
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).

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 dominate methods by which legal rationality is applied in decision-making “maximize 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 methods 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 methods, 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 among others – 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.” 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

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8 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).
organizational frame 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 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, 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). 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 generally uses technocratic rationality, which “elevates the scientific-analytical mindset and the belief in technological progress” (Adams and

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

10 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).
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 equated with the relationship of these two factors, that is, ‘efficiency,’ or ‘inefficiency’” (Simmons and Dvorin 1977: 271; cited in Rosenbloom 1983: 220).

The dominate methods behind technocratic and functional rationality focuses on solving problems by engineering, scientific method, rationally established procedures, and empiricism. These methods “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), is 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 (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 predominantly 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 methods 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

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 are 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 methods of the market values frame seek 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, and legitimacy. 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. 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 methods, to decipher and give meaning to itinerant public values.

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11 Simply consider that for some, justice means an eye for an eye, yet others believe that an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind.
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? *Citizenship* is another important public value in the field. One could write a treatise on citizenship and public administration, but space precludes such treatment here. 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 (viewed in the Mintzberg typology of customers, clients, citizens, and subjects) 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.’ If we agree that these values have different meanings in the different frames, then it holds the methods by which to promote these values will vary depending on context.
Likewise, legitimacy might also be considered an itinerant public value. 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, that is, when the governed consent to the governing institutions and believe that those institutions will rule in the public interest. Again returning to the notion of itinerant values, legitimacy takes different meanings in the four frames. In the political frame, legitimacy might be obtained by ensuring the provision of institutions that guarantee democratic decision-making, while in the legal frame it might be obtained by protecting individual rights from unreasonable intrusion and abridgement by government. In the organizational frame, legitimacy might be obtained by the administratively efficient and politically neutral delivery of public goods and services, and in the market frame it might be obtained through the cost-efficient provision of public goods and services. Again, different methods are necessary to fulfill and uphold the value of legitimacy in different contexts.

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 based on the frame through which they are viewed, and consequently, upholding and fulfilling these values in public administration requires different ways of thinking and methods of acting. It is important to note that 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

As suggested in the introduction, 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 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 characterized by significant, persistent, and systemic policy failures and the loss of public spaces in which citizens and government officials can wrestle with important social questions (Isaac 1998; Nabatchi, et al. 2011; Stivers 2004, 2008). 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 galaxy of public values in administration and governance 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 four public values frames is complete. As noted above, these frames are derived from the American setting. It will thus be important for future research to determine whether these four public values frames are generalizable to other nations or whether the frames varies based on context. For example, the political frame as currently construed will not apply in nations that do not have a democratic
political system. Such a determination is likely to depend on answering three important questions.

First, what other public values frames might be developed? In the interests of parsimony, I have not developed some frames that may warrant inclusion. For example, one might add a frame that explicitly addresses civic or citizenship values, that is, values related to community social structures and relations, or to the civic dispositions and skills necessary for robust civil societies. Similarly, one might add a frame that addresses the values 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? In addition to accountability, citizenship, and legitimacy, 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, understood, and enacted in light of the content values, rationalities, and methods of the frames.

Third, how do other classifications of public values fit within these frames? For example, scholars may want to assess the location and operation within these frames of “public” and “private” values (van der Wal and Huberts 2008) or “hard” and “soft” values (Steenhuisen, Dicke, and de Bruijn 2009). Likewise, they might examine 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). Doing so might be one step toward moving from galaxy to universe.

At an empirical level, we must begin to operationalize these (and perhaps other) frames such that they can be useful 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 four public values frames and itinerant public values presented here are 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 methods 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.

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 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 methods 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 public values in administration and governance 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.
### Table One: Four Public Values Frames in Administration and Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values Frame</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Legal</th>
<th>Organizational</th>
<th>Market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **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 |
| **Prevailing Mode of 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) |
| **Predominate Methods** | 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) |
References


