Policy and Management: Considering Public Management and Its Relationship to Policy Studies

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As part of this special issue, this article explores the relationship of public management research to the study of public policy and the policy process. Beginning with a review of the study of public management, this article then examines some current big questions in public management, with a focus on where these questions intersect with policy studies. This article concludes with several recommendations for fostering cross-field research.

KEY WORDS: public management, policy studies, nexus

Introduction

Understanding and drawing the boundaries around a body of knowledge can be a challenging endeavor (Frederickson, 1999; Fuller, 1991). Within public administration, scholars have devoted significant attention to the question of boundaries, examining what public administration is, the question of whether public administration is a discipline or a field of study, an art or a science, debating the lack of and/or the need for a paradigm within public administration, and whether this overall definitional or boundary question is even worth answering (Goodnow, 1900; Lynn, 1996; Ostrom, 1989; Raadschelders, 1999; Riccucci, 2010; Waldo, 1955). Public administration is a field informed by many areas of study (including but not limited to political science, organizational studies, sociology, and economics), drawing on many different theories to understand how the will of the state is transformed from expression to execution (Goodnow, 1900, pp. 9–13), and explored through many diverse research methods (Perry & Kraemer, 1986; Raadschelders & Lee, 2011; Riccucci, 2010). These challenges have led many to conclude (or at least reconcile with) the fact that an overarching theory or single approach to public administration may never be achieved and perhaps would even be limiting to this robust area of study and practice (see Riccucci, 2010, for a very useful summary of this history).

Further complicating this discussion of boundaries is the growth of prominent subfields within public administration. Public management is one such area of interest for scholars concerned with how government (and governance in more recent
parlance) works, leading to questions of where this body of knowledge nests within the larger study of public administration. The differing perspectives on what is public management are explored later, but one definition is “the process of ensuring that the allocation and use of resources available to the government are directed toward the achievement of lawful public policy goals” (Hill & Lynn, 2009, p. 10). Some scholars treat public administration and public management as synonymous where others view public management as a distinct area of study within public administration (Lynn, 2006). Whatever the point of view one holds, public administration and public management are both concerned with how government seeks to create public value through problem solving, regulation, and improving the well-being of its citizens. The differentiation between the two (to the degree that there is actually any), which is addressed later, remains a contested area of debate.

While the public administration/public management boundary line is far from settled (and probably will not be resolved definitively any time soon), as public management continues to grow in interest and richness, as with any area of study, it is useful for scholars to take a step back and evaluate the path of development and the future trajectory of an area of study. In addition, considering the intersection of a field of study with others that inform it within a larger discipline can help ensure that critical connections are captured and the richest set of theories and perspectives are brought to bear in answering the field’s questions. Drawing on seminal reviews of public management (including but not limited to Behn, 1995; Hill & Lynn, 2009; Lynn, 1996, 2006), this article examines public management in the new millennium, with a focus on some of the central questions examined today and where public management intersects with one of the more prominent areas of research concerned with how the state accomplishes its goals and how other interested actors, institutions, and stakeholders influence governance—public policy process research and overall policy studies.3

Scholars of public management will be well served to consider how their research aligns with that of scholars in policy studies, as we are all considering the question of how to accomplish public policy goals and what constitutes and leads to effective governance when we consider the policy process; we just may be coming at it from different directions. In addition, as public management is one of the primary ways by which policy ideas are turned into action, failing to incorporate public management research into policy studies would leave a significant gap in the research base. As part of this larger special issue, we hope that by discussing what public management is and its connections with policy studies, this could create a rich dialogue for these two sets of scholars to begin exploring the connections or nexus between these areas of study.

This article has three sections. We first begin with a discussion of public management, drawing on seminal past examinations and focusing on definitional questions of what is public management. We also briefly examine how various traditions of research in public management align with policy studies, opening the door for improved connections. Recognizing that no one summary can comprehensively capture a large area of study, we then turn to the question of what are some of the major areas of focus or interest in public management research
today, discussing a selection of the questions being explored as public management transitions into the new millennium. As we explore these questions, we consider the nexus of these questions with the field of policy studies, reflecting on how public management intersects with this field and provides a different lens on how to accomplish the goals of public policy. Finally, we conclude with proposing some themes and actions for future research that could bring together policy studies and public management scholars to generate conversation and cross pollination to further the lofty goals of empirical research designed to help further the goals and purposes of government and governance.

What Is Public Management?

To explore public management, it is first important to focus on definition and core concepts, including where there is consensus and where there is disagreement. There is no one single, overarching definition of what is public management upon which scholars have agreed; in fact, Kettl and Milward (1996, p. vii) argue “public management has long been a field in search of structure. Its scholars and practitioners know what it is not.” While public management draws on ideas from a number of disciplines and fields of study, incorporating theories of institutions, management, individual and group decision making, and democracy, the challenge of narrowing in on the exact boundaries of public management has resulted in a variety of perspectives.

The important question is first to differentiate (to the degree possible) between public administration and public management. There are a number of scholars who maintain that the difference between public management and public administration does not really exist, that we can consider the study of how we accomplish the work of government as a combination of public administration and management (see Lynn, 2005, 2006, for a discussion of these perspectives). From this perspective, public management is more a subset of questions or a subfield of research within public administration. For example, Rosenbloom (1983) described managerial, political, and legal dimensions of public administration. In this way, public management represents increased attention to the managerial side of public administration. However, others have maintained public management differs from public administration in its focus on leadership and results as opposed to administration as a more stable and maintenance focused approach to how government workers go about accomplishing their work (see Hood, 2005, for a discussion of this). Finally, others differentiate public management from public administration on the basis of the nature of inquiry in public management, with the focus being on empirical work designed to provide evidence on how we do the work of government as opposed to more normative discussions of what is the role of public administration in the operation and maintenance of the state (see Riccucci, 2010, for a discussion of this). This debate is by no means resolved, but for the purposes of this article, we are considering public
management a subset of research within public administration, similar to how policy studies is considered by many as a subset of research within political science (Sabatier, 1991).

Core Concepts

There are many definitions of public management, each of which surface a number of core concepts that have structured or focused the research in this area of study (see Hill & Lynn, 2009; Hood, 2005; Lynn, 2006, for systematic reviews of many definitions). For the purposes of this discussion, there are three definitions that guide this review and one larger set of questions that inform where and how we consider major trends in public management research. First, Frederickson, Smith, Larimer, and Licari (2012, p. 100) define public management as having an emphasis on how public managers operate, stating:

Public management is taken to mean the formal and informal processes of guiding human interaction toward public organizational objectives. The units of analysis are processes of interaction between managers and workers and the effects of management behavior on workers and work outcomes.

With this definition, there is an emphasis on the public manager and those engaged in the activities of public administration. Those doing the work—the individuals on the front line and those managing them, and the subsequent interactions and relations between these actors are central to determining public management outcomes. This focus raises questions of what shapes how public managers do their work; how do we get those on the ground to work toward the accomplishment of the goals of public agencies; and what aspect of management, leadership, and overall motivational forces lead to the most effective outcomes for public organizations (Andrews, Boyne, Law, & Walker, 2009; Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, & Musheno, 2015; Van Wart, 2013; Wright, 2001). In this sense, public management is about what happens after the policy process has played out for a cycle, although public management can inform and feedback into the policy process to make policy changes.

This definition also captures the important distinctions between public management and policy research focused on implementation. While much policy research does examine the activities of those involved in turning policy ideas into programs on the ground, a fundamental question associated with policy process and implementation is did the policy work—did it accomplish its specified goals (Cline, 2000; deLeon & deLeon, 2002; Mischen & Sinclair, 2009). Public management focuses more on how the workers experience their work, what shapes their behavior, and how this behavior operates over time (see Sandfort, 2000; Riccucci, 2005, for examples). While the outcomes of the work (and the resultant impacts on the assessment of policy success) are a component of this, it is a different focus from policy studies, as it is about understanding how the outcomes come about versus whether the policy worked. In
this way, this definition of public management adds a personnel dimension to the policy process to examine how to turn policy ideas into desired outcomes, helping open the black box in the policy process and try to understand what happens when policy ideas are handed over to those who do the implementation. Therefore, this definition of public management aligns mostly with policy implementation studies. In particular, this definition approximates top-down and bottom-up approaches of implementation studies, both emphasizing the roles of high-ranking public officials, front-line workers, and their interactions in shaping policy goals and influencing governance outcomes.

A second useful definition is one put forward by Bozeman (1993, p. xiii), who argues “public management research entails a focus on strategy (rather than on managerial processes), on interorganizational relations (rather than intraorganizational relations), and on the intersection of public policy and management.” This definition builds on and also challenges the previous definition; it is useful in that it highlights some of the newer directions of public management research. Public management, while about accomplishing the objectives of government, has recognized that these objectives are not solely accomplished through public organizations or even single organizational actors (Milward & Provan, 2000; O'Toole, 1997; Thomson & Perry, 2006). Therefore, public management, while examining what happens within organizational boundaries, has broadened as a field of study and also must include a strategic focus on the relations across organizations and include other players and stakeholders in the administration of government policies and goals.

This definition is also important for the purposes of this article, as it specifically emphasizes the intersection or nexus between public policy and management. Public management is strongly shaped by public policy, with all its conflict, ambiguity, competing values, and politics. Failing to account for how public policy influences public management misses part of the picture. Where the previous definition aligned with policy implementation studies, this definition of public management could connect public management research with policy process research focused on how actors of various forms work together to foster policy learning and change, such as the research under the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Where public managers fit into this policy process, how they strategically communicate what has been learned on the ground, has an important role in policy process research. It can shape numerous parts of the policy process, including but not limited to how policies are designed, how coalitions are formed, and as a possible venue for policy entrepreneurs (Petridou, 2014). This definition suggests that in order to achieve desired policy goals, public managers and policymakers need to take a more strategic perspective to approach policy problems that government needs to address. This could include such aspects as bringing together relevant actors not only within traditional government boundaries but also across sectors, managing interorganizational and intersectoral relationships at boundaries throughout the policy process, and using public management activities to foster policy learning and inform decision making in a new cycle of the policy process or to influence policy change.

Earlier, we included a definition of public management put forward by Hill and Lynn (2009, p. 10); they expand on this definition beyond how resources are
converted into the achievement of public goals, stating “this definition sees the public manager as both creature—of politics, law, structures, and roles—and creator—of strategies, capacity, and results.” Therefore, in fully understanding public management, we need to explore the actions of public managers; the environments and structures in which these managers operate; and how people, structures, politics, laws, and strategies interrelate to hopefully produce public value. Compared with the previous two definitions, this one defines public management in a more systematic way. According to this definition, public management includes a personnel and a strategic dimension, but puts these together in a larger system of resources, strategies, and other components necessary to achieve legitimate policy goals. In sum, the value of this definition is that it builds on the previous two and provides a more comprehensive understanding of public management. Another reason why this definition is useful in the discussion here is that this definition intersects heavily with policy research. From a policy perspective, in order to achieve specific goals, policy entrepreneurs need to mobilize necessary resources and move them toward policy ends (Kingdon, 1984). In this way, public management and policy studies can be mutually enhancing and we rely on this definition in later discussion on the nexus between public management and policy studies.

The three definitions of public management are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. The first definition emphasizes a vertical dimension of public management; that is, public management needs to pay attention to personnel issues and align public managers and front-line workers in program administration and policy implementation. The second definition suggests a horizontal dimension; that is, public management needs to take a strategic perspective to align stakeholders within and beyond government boundaries in the policy cycle. The third definition proposes a holistic approach; that is, public management needs a system to aggregate resources necessary to the achievement of desired policy goals. In sum, all three definitions advance our understanding of public management and inform its nexus with policy studies.

Hill and Lynn (2009) provide a useful framework through which to examine public management, detailing three dimensions for understanding the multiplicity of research encompassed under public management: (i) structure, (ii) culture, and (iii) craft.6 We draw upon these dimensions when discussing much of the past research in public management and therefore are strongly influenced by Hill and Lynn’s (2009) work in classifying and organizing the rich body of knowledge in public management.

Structure

The role of structure in public management has been a central question. How the activities and actions of public management are organized and structured and what this organization means in terms of influencing the overall outcomes of governmental action has led the field since its inception (Andrews, Boyne, & Walker, 2011; Bozeman, 2004; Moulton, 2009; Nutt, 1999; Perry & Rainey, 1988; Pesch, 2008). Hill
and Lynn (2009, p. 48) define structure as “lawfully authorized delegation to administrative officials of the authority and responsibility to take action on the behalf of policy and program objectives.” Questions of structure in public management include the public versus private debate, the study of organizational design and the capacity of public service organizations to accomplish public policy objectives, and a growing focus on inter-organizational structures and arrangements and of the use of alternative policy tools and structures to accomplish public policy objectives.

The question of how public management and public organizations differ from other organizations has been a continuing avenue of inquiry in public management. There are numerous studies comparing public versus private organizations along many dimensions to understand the differences in operations and outcomes (see Boyne, 2002; Rainey, Backoff, & Levine, 1976; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000, for just a few examples of this large body of research). In addition, as nonprofit organizations are increasingly involved in the business of government and the administrative state, these studies have expanded to include nonprofits as an additional comparison group (e.g., Goulet & Frank, 2002; Houston, 2006).

Others have examined this as not a public versus private question, but more on how the state acts on organizations—that the appropriate way to consider this structural question is the degree to which an organization is public, with “publicness” conceptualized more as a continuum versus a dichotomous variable (Bozeman, 2004; Bozeman & Bretschneider, 1994; Bozeman & Moulton, 2011). Growing from an initial set of research put forward by Bozeman (2004), scholars continue to examine this question and what publicness means for public management in terms of shaping the design of government and governance, the actions of public managers, and the outcomes of public policy (e.g., Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997; Moulton & Eckerd, 2011). In addition to the question of organizational differences in structures, scholars have also examined how structure influences the operation and actions of public managers, how public managers in turn influence structure, and the results of organizational actions in the public service (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Sandfort, 1999, 2003; Wright & Pandey, 2009). This is one area in which structure, culture, and craft intersect, as structure is not purely constituted and acting on public managers—this relationship is complex and iterative in practice.

When considering structure in public management, scholars have also focused on the question of organizational design from the perspective of the resources and capacity provided to public managers, with an eye on what this means for public value and public outcomes (Hill & Lynn, 2009). How do we know the best ways to design organizations to enable public managers to be able to do their jobs well and serve the public and the public interest? Are there reforms or changes that could be made to the design of organizations involved in the public service to improve how they operate? What are the ways in which organizational structures create particular practices that influence how resources are used, such as budgeting practices and personnel practices (Melkers & Willoughby, 2005; Selden, 2009)? How do we define the capacity of public managers and public management and relate that capacity to public outcomes (see Ingraham, Joyce, & Donahue, 2003)?7
Finally, the question of structure has considerably broadened as government moved away from public organizations as the sole method of achieving public outcomes to encompassing a multiplicity of policy tools, other organizational actors, and inter-organizational arrangements to accomplish the overall objectives of government (Salamon, 2002; Schneider & Ingram, 1990). Often referred to as the “new governance” and well captured by Salamon (2002), public management in its current status includes the use of nonprofit organizations to deliver public services; the use of tools that encourage individual choice on the part of the public, such as vouchers and tax incentives or expenditures; and the larger question of exposing public management to market mechanisms through the use of competitive contracting and privatization. Many of the government tools discussed in public management are essentially the policy tools or instruments discussed in policy studies. The form and method of this privatization includes many different sets of research, but the overall importance of this for public management is the recognition that the structural dimension of public management has moved far beyond the classic bureaucratic organizational form to include many different structural arrangements and many different questions associated with how we should structure public management activities and processes to accomplish public policy outcomes. Indeed, all these tools are also under policy scholars’ study. In this way, both public management and policy studies scholars could collaborate to help us understand what these tools are, the assumptions underlying how they work, and the context under which a tool is used.

In considering the structural dimension of public management research and how it intersects with policy studies, we find at least two things emerge. First, how can public managers appropriately design organizational components that could facilitate effective policymaking and implementation? Can structures be designed that both improve implementation but also allow for feedback and learning from public management to flow back into the policy process? Second, how can policymakers appropriately structure the entire policy process in a way that could bring in multiple actors within and outside government boundaries and encourage their continuous engagement, as a response to the rise of “new governance” in public management? Questions of structure are not just questions of administration and management—structure facilitates or impedes implementation; structure is influenced by policymakers and public managers; and structures can be inclusive or exclusive, bringing in new actors to improve policymaking and implementation or keeping them out of the process.

Culture

While structure is important, public management does not operate in a vacuum. Scholars have long since moved from the view of management as operating a closed system and recognize that management is strongly influenced by environments, institutional rules, and values. Hill and Lynn (2009, p. 192) describe the cultural component or dimension of public management as “the values, beliefs, ethics, and motives of individual participants in addition to the shared norms and
understandings that broadly characterize the organization or its subunits.” The question of how culture influences public management has focused on such aspects as how to ensure that public managers act in the public interest, what values should be reflected in public management, what drives public managers, and how culture influences the overall outcomes of public management (Hill & Lynn, 2009).

The cultural dimension can include the many studies of accountability in public management. As Kettl (1996) argues, Americans have an inherent culture of examining not only whether government actions work, but also whether government behaves in an accountable way. Following this tradition, public management research has paid substantial attention to accountability issues, from the classic debates about the best ways to ensure administrative accountability to studies evaluating different accountability mechanisms and how those shaped public management activities and results (Adams & Balfour, 2014; Finer, 1941; Friedrich, 1940; Johnston & Romzek, 1999; Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). When examining how public managers behave and how culture shapes the ability of institutions to hold these managers accountable, studies include such questions as what is ethical behavior on the part of public managers, how does ethics connect to accountability, and what are the larger values that public managers do (and perhaps should) hold as they undertake their duties (Brewer & Selden, 1998; O'Leary, 2006).

The cultural dimension is perhaps one of the areas of public management in which there is the least amount of consensus, with fundamental scholarly divides over what are the “appropriate” public values to pursue. Across the public management research base, even narrowing the scope of public values has proven challenging, as Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) found a long list of different public values in the knowledge base, ranging from the role of the public sector in relation to society, how public managers and politicians interact, how public employees should act overall, and how public managers should interact with the citizenry.

Connecting back to the Hill and Lynn (2009) definition of culture as including motives, a rich body of research has grown around understanding the motives of those who work in the public service, with the most researched aspect of this being public service motivation (Perry & Wise, 1990). Are public managers driven by fundamentally different motives than those working in other industries? If so, so what does that mean for staffing and managing in the public service? While significant consensus has developed around the idea of public service motivation, there are still debates about the conceptualization, operationalization, and relationship of public service motivation to key public management concepts (see Perry & Hondeghem, 2008; Wright & Grant, 2010, for recent reviews of this research).

Finally, drawing on theories from the general organization theory knowledge base, public management scholars have begun to examine how culture influences the ability of public managers to achieve results. Do public organizations or larger institutional arrangements charged with achieving public management objectives have cultures that support performance improvement and organizational learning over time (Kroll, 2015a; Moynihan, 2008)? Can public management adjust and innovate to solve the challenging policy problems that persist over time (Damanpour &
Schneider, 2009; Walker, 2008)? In addition, drawing on theories of learning, culture, and performance, scholars have considered what can be done to create structures and practices in public management that promote high performance and new ideas and solutions to public problems over time. While this area of research is still growing and is still far from having reached a point of coalescing, research has shown that we need to think about how culture, structure, and craft interact to support or inhibit the accomplishment of public management objectives.

Policy studies can provide some insight on the role of culture in public management. For example, policy scholars also explore the ways in which moral and political values come into play in the policy process, such as tensions between competing values and moral dilemmas underlying policy debates (Stone, 2002; Wildavsky, 2007). Again, policy studies have long examined the impact of cultural and ideological components in shaping policymaking and implementation (Lowi, 1969). In sum, all these studies contribute to the normative frameworks for understanding public management and public policy, or more broadly, governance processes.

Craft

In addition to structure and culture, public management focuses on the way in which public managers fundamentally do their work, with craft defined as the “responses by individual public managers to the challenges and opportunities inherent in their positions” (Hill & Lynn, 2009, p. 229). This is the area of public management well informed by general or business management. Many management skills and techniques such as strategic planning, program evaluation, and total quality management originated from business management and were later introduced into public management as means to improve public management efficiency and effectiveness (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Indeed, when considering the craft of public management, research can extend back to early studies of the science of management and the classic operating principles (POSDCORB) put forward by Gulick and Urwick (1937) that influenced much of public management research, education, and practice.

There have been numerous examples of accounts on what it means to manage in the public service and what are the characteristics of public managers who are perceived to be or found to be effective (e.g., Chase & Reveal, 1983; Riccucci, 1995). People are one of the most critical inputs into organizations and institutions—how these people behave and how their human capital, social capital, and motivations are translated into action toward the public interest is the final main focus of public management research. Public management research has sought to distill the key principles associated with public leadership and how leadership impacts various critical public management outcomes (see Getha-Taylor, Holmes, Jacobson, Morse, & Sowa, 2011, for a review). Scholars are also interested in introducing different measurement techniques to better capture employee and government performance and promote data-driven decision making (Ammons & Rivenbark, 2008; Behn, 2003; Poister, Aristigueta, & Hall, 2015). More recently, how to use social media and other
information technologies to optimize public management has drawn growing scholarly attention (Ganapati, 2011; Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013).

The craft of public management is an area in which the intersections with the other dimensions are most pronounced, as studying the practice of public management separate from the structure in which this practice is executed would fail to produce meaningful research. In addition, the practice of public management, the craft, both shapes organizational cultures and is shaped by them; therefore, it is critical to examine this relationship. Public managers, when directing the behavior of those they work with or supervise, can create particular cultural practices that have significant ramifications on outcomes. In addition, while a public manager may influence culture, that culture can also constrain public managers, facilitating their behavior or inhibiting their ability to enact desired change (de Lancer Julnes & Holzer, 2001; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Mahler, 1997; Nyhan, 2000).

The craft dimension of public management is perhaps where the connections to policy studies are more indirect, as craft involves what has traditionally been the domain of public administration. As with structure, the craft connects to policy implementation questions. Questions of the challenges experienced while executing the mandate of policymakers connect to policy studies in terms of questions of implementation, feedback, and policy learning, but scholars have often drawn a divide between policy and management in this component of public management. We consider later in this article where research on the craft of public management, such as studies of performance, could connect better to policy studies.

**Connecting Current Research in Public Management with Policy Studies**

Any discussion of current patterns or areas of focus in a field of study will never fully capture the richness of inquiry and fundamentally are influenced by the perceptions of those doing the evaluation. In a discussion of how to advance the field of public management, Behn (1995) advanced what he termed a selection of “big questions” to assist scholars in thinking about what public management is in a more systematic fashion. To identify and study big questions is important, as jurisdictional fights and methodological disagreements can often shift scholars away from remembering what is important in growing a field of study—what are you looking to answer? To Behn (1995), the study of public management should coalesce around three main areas: micromanagement, motivation, and measurement.

The questions associated with micromanagement were fundamentally about how do we create structures that enable public managers to make a difference, while still holding them accountable (Behn, 1995). The significant body of knowledge on government reform and new approaches to structuring public management all speak to this larger question (see Light, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, for a small selection of this research). The questions of motivation are inherently those tied to the cultural dimension discussed above—how to direct the actions of public managers (conceived as including numerous different actors) to accomplish the goals of government. Finally, the question of measurement is fundamentally the craft question—how do we know if public management makes a difference (Behn, 1995)? What are
the ways in which we can assess the performance of public management and use that assessment to foster learning and growth over time (Moynihan, 2008)? Indeed, these three big questions are still strongly relevant to public management research today, with scholars pursuing many research trends that continue to align with Behn (1995).

In considering what people are studying today in public management, we followed Behn’s notion of big questions. Each author compiled a list of topics that were prevalent in the public management knowledge base over the past 15 years. Examining those topics, we then used Behn’s approach to think about what are these various topics seeking to address: what questions are they looking to answer? We maintain that these topics are coalescing around several main questions that are explored from a variety of directions, with some harkening back to and expanding on Behn’s (1995) seminal piece. As we discuss these questions, we highlight where public management research could connect better to the research in policy studies to emphasize questions that cross the divide between the fields and create a nexus of scholars working on questions of public concern.

How Do We Deliver Public Services?

The question of how public management operates—what are the various ways in which actors work to accomplish public policy goals—has changed over time. In the past 20 years, it could be argued that this research has coalesced around several main areas of rich inquiry, including but not limited to the growth in the use of contracting, privatization, and multiactor service delivery arrangements (e.g., the new governance), and the role of discretion and the motivations of public managers at various levels of governance and what this means for public management outcomes. In addition, growing out of frustration with the managerialism movement and the challenge of solving “wicked policy problems,” scholars are increasingly questioning who should be involved in delivering public services, with a renewed focus on coproduction and how the field of players in public management must be expanded to accomplish these goals (Alford, 2009; Rittel & Webber, 1973). This big question on public service delivery is our main focus of this section, not only because it has attracted substantial scholarly interest in recent decades but also because it is the area in which there are natural connections to policy studies and an area where we can raise research questions that engage scholars operating in the nexus between these two fields of study.

For example, questions of contracting and privatization are fundamentally questions of policy process—the choice of contracting a public service changes the values, assumptions, and practices underpinning policymaking and implementation. The increasing involvement of the private sector in public program development and service delivery in many policy areas redefines conventional policy theories such as iron triangles and issue networks and gives rise to new theories like policy networks (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Rhodes, 2006). Contracting can raise questions about principal-agent relationships and how these are managed, how to design policies
and programs that allow for a contracting relationship to be objectively evaluated, and how to evaluate the performance of these contractors to determine whether the policy goals are being achieved and the efficiency and overall effectiveness of implementation (e.g., Alford & O’Flynn, 2012; Brown & Potoski, 2006; Gazley, 2008; Lu, 2016).

Studies have demonstrated that the theoretical assumptions underlying moving a government service from production to provision, with the production function being taken over by private actors, is far messier in practice than in theory (Sclar, 2001), raising the question of how much has the body of knowledge in public management developed around contracting and privatization been brought into policy process and implementation research? There are scholars working at the intersection of this field (see Sandfort & Moulton, 2015), but a coherent research agenda with questions for policy and public management scholars could be a productive avenue of attention for both fields. This research agenda could include questions such as:

1. When policymakers decide to contract out all or a portion of service delivery, but the existing market in some jurisdictions is too thin to meet full competition requirements, what are the next steps? For theory and practice? Should public managers cultivate the market first or just use the market as is? How to compare the cost and benefits of these two options? How do we include market analysis and contracting effectiveness to inform contracting decision making (Bel, Fageda, & Warner, 2010; Brown & Potoski, 2004; Johnston & Girth, 2012; Malatesta & Smith, 2011)?

2. What evidence have we accumulated about how to effectively manage principal-agent problems when public management happens through contracting or privatization? What is an effective contracting or privatization structure? From a bottom-up approach, with policy implementation dependent on contractors, how do contractors as advocates participate in the policy process to shape policymaking in an either desirable or undesirable way? To what degree has the evidence accumulated in public management been connected back to policy theory to shape how policies are designed (Kelleher & Yackee, 2009; Witko, 2011)?

3. When should alternative service delivery arrangements (including contracting or inter-organizational relationships) be used to implement policy and when would it be better to do public management solely in-house through the authority of government? Further, if we consider public service delivery arrangement as a dynamic process moving between contracting out and contracting back in under different contingencies, how much has public management and policy studies come together to think about how research has informed the provision/production question and how we can move from normative arguments about tools of government to evidence-based arguments (Hefetz & Warner, 2004; Johnston & Girth, 2012)?
Coproduction was an area of research that gained prominence in the late 1980s, but was overtaken in public management research by the growth of managerialism and the New Public Management reforms of many Western countries (Alford, 2009). Coproduction fundamentally is about the involvement of multiple actors, including members of the community and the clients of services, in the production function of a public service (Bovaird, 2007; Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Brudney, 1983; Brudney & England, 1983). In many areas of public policy, the participation of those being served is critical for the success of that policy, including but not limited to areas such as education, public health, environmental stewardship, and crime prevention (Alford, 2009; Schachter & Liu, 2005; Thomas, 2012). Coproduction, the processes associated with it, the design components and implications for the production of public services, and the overall impact for policy goals, is an area of resurgent interest and discussion in public management. In addition, this is an area of research with clear intersections with policy studies, both historically and today. Therefore, research bridging these fields could ask questions such as:

1. How well does the policy design in particular policy fields support the ability to engage clients and other actors in coproduction? What do we know about which policy tools are appropriate in particular situations? How to involve multiple stakeholders in coproduction along the entire policy process (Bingham, Nabatchi, & O'Leary, 2005; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004)?

2. What insights can be drawn from policy studies to inform coproduction on the ground? How can public management draw lessons from the formation stage of the policy process to inform delivery? How can policy theories like the Advocacy Coalition Framework and policy feedback shape how public management understands coproduction (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Moynihan & Soss, 2014; Pierson, 1993; Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009)?

3. What are the roles for nonprofits in coproduction? Partner, supplier of labor, broker between government and the people? What are the implications of these different roles for effective policy? Conceptually, nonprofits play two major roles in coproduction, service provider and policy advocator. However, these two functions are not always in line with each other. How would policymakers balance these two things and encourage nonprofit participation (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Mosley & Grogan, 2013)?

Lipsky (1980, 1984) introduced the concept of street-level bureaucrats to capture the inherent challenge with directing the performance of public managers on the ground. This work, while considered a founding theory in policy implementation, has been fully incorporated into public management research, with scholars examining front-line workers in terms of how they behave, what this means for the services clients receive, and the implications of front-line work for those delivering high-intensity and high-pressure public services (see Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2008). However, compared with other research areas in
public management and policy process, street-level bureaucrats have received less scholarly attention. As a good example of the nexus between public management and policy process, street-level bureaucrats deserve more attention from different disciplines. In addition, with more and more public services delivered by contractors, it is important to consider what it means to be a front-line worker in a contractor delivering a public service, even further removed from direct government control and oversight. Therefore, the front-line worker provides a useful unit of analysis for developing a coordinated research agenda across policy studies and public management.

1. Although the role of street-level bureaucrats has been widely acknowledged, more research is still needed to advance our knowledge in this regard. How do local contingencies shape the behaviors of street-level bureaucrats? How does policy design encourage or constrain street-level discretion? How to connect street-level bureaucrats to policy process? Where are street-level bureaucrats in the policy feedback process? What are their roles in advocacy coalitions (Keiser & Miller, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Riccucci, 2005)?

2. With more and more services delivered by contractors, contractors become new street-level bureaucrats. What shapes contractors’ discretion? Do nonprofit contractors enjoy more discretion? How do contractors as new street-level bureaucrats share authority and discretion with traditional street-level bureaucrats? How do the interactions between new and traditional street-level bureaucrats influence the policy process (Brodkin, 2011; Brodkin & Marston, 2013)?

In recent decades, there has been a reconfiguration of public management and policy. Policymaking and implementation is no longer a top-down process, but proceeds with negotiation and collaboration among various stakeholders throughout the policy process. Service delivery is no longer delivered by a public workforce within government domain, but is contracted out to nongovernment actors or coproduced by citizens and communities beyond the traditional government boundaries. In this sense, public policy and public management confront similar challenges, i.e., neither could function without the participation of citizens and nongovernmental actors. How to effectively connect citizens and nongovernmental actors to the governance process constitutes a common question for public policy and public management scholars. As such, policy studies and public management research largely intersect with each other and should be able to inform each other in order to advance good governance.

How Effective Is Public Management?

A large body of public management literature in recent decades has explored management effectiveness and organizational performance. Based on the accumulated body of knowledge, one would be hard pressed to conclude that management does not matter in terms of how we accomplish the goals of government. Beyond the question of whether management matters, an equally important question is how
management matters. Scholars have focused on trying to better understand the relationship between managerial action and public outcomes, seeking to tease out the complicated relationship between management and organizational outcomes in general, in directing those on the ground delivering services, in coordinating the joint action of multiple actors involved in delivering services (Brewer & Selden, 2000; Favero, Meier, & O'Toole, 2016; Ingraham et al., 2003; O'Toole & Meier, 1999; Ricucci, 2005).

While examining how management matters, public management scholars have paid special attention to the question of management matters for what. Indeed, public management scholarship has made significant progress in terms of understanding how public services are measured in terms of their performance, the role of managers in shaping and understanding this performance, the use of performance management, and what some of the barriers or challenges to performance measurement and management in the public service are. However, there remain some significant underexplored questions, such as the degree to which performance information is successfully used in public management (see Kroll [2015a, 2015b] for a review of this). In addition, scholars are still wrestling with the many paradoxes associated with performance management, including measurement challenges over time and the need for systematic updating, placing challenges on public managers to both maintain their capacity to measure their performance and to use performance information to truly learn and adjust (Kroll, 2015a, 2015b; Moynihan, 2008).

Moreover, the rise of contracting and other indirect government tools in public management discourse further complicates the performance management endeavor. Under the new governance model, a comprehensive government performance management system needs to include two components: performance management in traditional bureaucratic system and performance management in indirect government tools such as contracts and grants (Frederickson & Frederickson, 2006; Lu, 2016). In this way, to improve policy and management effectiveness, we need to advance knowledge in both categories. Currently, we have relatively rich knowledge about the first category, but our understanding about the second category seems still in its infancy.

To advance the nexus between public management and policy studies, public management needs to further explore the questions of how program and personnel management influences the policy process and how management shapes different policy outcomes. On the other hand, policy studies could help illuminate the design of policies and the choices about what capacity to attach to implementation. Policy studies could also help address social construction questions like how the policy process shapes policy and the overall political environment and then also influences public management behaviors.

1. With increasing attention on evidence-based policymaking and management in the current policy environment, performance management research has more potential to inform policy and management practice. For example, how could policymakers better incorporate performance information into decision making?
How does management matter in performance information collection and use? How would management influence performance information use effectiveness?

2. Under new governance, is performance management in direct government systems and performance management in indirect government tools alike? If so, how can we apply our knowledge in the first category to address the challenges in the second category? If not, to what extent? In particular, how could public management and policymakers design effective incentive structures to manage the performance of third-party actors without direct government control and oversight?

For questions of performance, this critical component of the craft of public management, research on policy feedback could provide guidance and be better connected into the public management research on performance management to connect the dots between policy and management and show how performance management, if done right, might have larger implications for policy studies and public management (Pierson, 1993; Soss & Schram, 2007; Wichowsky & Moynihan, 2008). This is an area of the nexus between public management and policy studies ripe for future collaborations between scholars.

How Do We Understand Public Problems?

While the study of collaboration crosscuts many of the previously discussed questions, the growing focus on collaboration in the form of collaborative governance, defined as “a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage nonstate stakeholders in a collective decision making process that is formal, consensus oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets” (Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 544) deserves separate attention. Collaboration to make decisions and shape the direction of public action is different than collaboration used to deliver services on the ground. Studies focused on collaborative governance at the decision-making or governing level ask different questions from ground-level collaboration, as this collaborative governance is concerned with the question of what do we know about what works in addressing an area of public concern and how can we leverage shared or pooled knowledge and joint action to harness new ideas and approaches to addressing public problems (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012). It actually points to a normative question of how we perceive the environment where public management and policy operate, isolated or connected. Collaborative governance studies have focused on a number of different policy areas, including but not limited to environmental policy, education, and natural resource management (see Heikkila & Gerlak, 2005; Gerlak & Heikkila, 2011).

If collaborative governance wrestles with questions of how decisions are made to affect public policy issues or public problems, there are fundamental connections between collaborative governance studies in public management with public policy. With more and more public management researchers starting to look at public
problems inter-institutionally and examining collaborative governance in different policy areas, public management scholarship actually sheds light on policy process research in various specific policy areas. On the other hand, policy studies has a long history of looking at joint actions by various actors in the policy process. For example, Hjern and Porter (1981), in a seminal early work, called for a multiorganizational policy implementation structure approach to understanding how to bring together multiple actors in a way that reduces the costs associated with the complexity of joint action in many policy areas. Recent studies of how coalitions form, policy networks, and the overall process by which actors come together to shape definitions of problems and drive forward policy solutions speak directly to studies of collaborative governance in public management (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Weible & Moore, 2010).

1. To what extent have we fully explored these connections? To what extent have researchers from public management used theories and practice from policy studies to inform their own research, and vice versa?

2. In addition, many participants involved in collaborative governance are non-state actors. For example, nonprofits, as nonstate actors, are clearly critical participants in collaborative governance. Do we fully understand their role distinct from other actors? More broadly, how do we reconcile actors with different characteristics in management and the policy process in order to achieve desired policy outcomes?

3. What composition of coalitions to engage in collaborative governance produces the best outcomes, outcomes that may lead to broader public value? How does management matter in this regard? What defines best collaboration effectiveness and public value? How does coalition composition evolve over time? How does such evolution shape collaborative governance outcomes (Ansell & Gash, 2008; deLeon & Varda, 2009; Sandström & Carlsson, 2008)?

Where Do We Go from Here?

In considering how to chart a course forward to bring together public management and policy scholars to enrich each of their knowledge bases, we need to consider what would be an action agenda for fostering this nexus. In thinking about the big questions we have addressed, what could be some approaches that would help us answer these questions across public management and policy studies research? We conclude this article by briefly discussing several possible solutions.

One clear solution would be creating cross-field research teams to develop research projects in specific policy areas that address public management and policy questions. These projects would include multiple units of analysis that could both facilitate answering questions for public management scholars and policy scholars, but also allow for study of how the system and process works overall. For example, a research project on how state government manages water as an important natural resource could include policy scholars who address how the state as a political actor
gathers critical stakeholders together to design policy and what the policy is overall and public management scholars to ask questions associated with the operation of the actors involved in this policy field and what this means for effectiveness in solving this public problem. If policy and management scholars can work together to design comprehensive studies, each can answer questions important for their fields and connections can be drawn to answer questions across the fields.

Another approach could be to build data sets across policy fields with policy and management variables that allow for longitudinal study of the policy process, policy change, and public management. As we know that repeated interactions change the nature of the relationship between actors, the more that we gather longitudinal data in particular policy areas, data that include questions of policy and management, the more that we will be able to understand how these repeated interactions affect the accomplishment of public purposes. Drawing on the aforementioned cross-field teams, creating data repositories that administer repeated surveys over a period of time, such as the American State Administrators Project or the National Administrative Studies Project, but involves policy process and public management scholars through coordinated efforts, would be a significant advance that would drive both fields of study forward and allow for more coordinated and aligned research on how we accomplish policy goals and produce public value. Longitudinal data are more promising not only because they enable us to observe the behaviors of public managers and policy actors over time, but also because they allow us to delineate causal mechanisms. Causality is a fundamental task for scientific research. Current research, sometimes relying on cross-sectional data, could only find associations between variables of interest. If we want our scholarship to truly advance our knowledge about the field and to inform real-world practice, more causal research using longitudinal data is needed.

Finally, across public management and policy studies, we need to encourage the use of a multiplicity of research approaches to capture the nexus between the policy process and public management. Any single method has its own limitation. Social phenomena are more complex than any single method could capture. Reliance on one research method inevitably results in biased conclusions. This is especially the case in policy studies and public management, where subject matters, theories, and approaches are fragmented and multidisciplinary. Connecting this variety calls for epistemological and methodological diversity and exchange. These fields have a rich history of employing diverse methods, but there is a growing emphasis on positivism and behavioral research giving primacy to quantitative methods. We need methodological improvement in normative and empirical (quantitative and qualitative) methods, and we need to use mixed methods to cross-validate findings, that is, “a rapprochement between the so-called organizational and administrative sciences and the humanities” (Frederickson, 2000, p. 51).
Conclusion

Studies of the policy process and public management fundamentally address the question of how do we ensure public value and appropriate action on the part of government in governance process? As both fields of study have reached a certain level of development, the time has come to evaluate what we know, how we know it, and what are some ways in which these fields connect to foster a more comprehensive understanding of governance. This article provides some modest suggestions, drawing heavily on (or standing on the shoulders of) many scholars before us, on where this nexus could be explored. We hope that this discussion is the first of many.

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Notes

1. Unfortunately, there is some disagreement on what this larger body of study is called, which can create some confusion. While some schools and PhD programs use the term public affairs, we were trained in and conceptualize our discipline as public administration. That being said, this article specifically examines public management research, a subset of public administration.

2. The question of what is public administration has preoccupied scholars for at least 50 years. Listing all of the studies on this topic, including works on doctoral research in public administration (e.g., Adams & White, 1994; Cleary, 2000), what is the field, and its relationship to political science (e.g., Whicker, Olshfski, & Strickland, 1993), and what are our dominant approaches would be a book length manuscript. Therefore, we acknowledge that we are only including a small selection of this rich tradition of discussion.

3. In presenting a review essay like this, it is inevitable that one needs to make choices about what to include and what to not include. In addition, citing all of the relevant research could result in a bibliography as long as the essay. Therefore, we recognize that we will have left out material that others might consider central. We hope that this essay will create a dialogue where others can address those omissions or present different points of view.

4. How one defines public management in relation to other areas of study in some ways depends on socialization. For us, public management is a subfield of the larger discipline of public administration.

5. A useful discussion that challenges some of these issues was recently published in Governance, which is a rich debate about the degree to which public management has ignored the state and the implications of this for the field (Milward et al., 2016).

6. It needs to be acknowledged that these three dimensions are not completely independent. The research encompassed in these dimensions, depending on the perspective of the scholar, could be seen as cross-cutting and overlapping. In addition, these dimensions influence each other and interact to form the whole of public management. Therefore, for the sake of brevity, we have made choices...
about where to place certain research traditions, but we recognize the complexity of this and understand that others, including Hill and Lynn (2009), from whom we draw much inspiration, may have different perspectives or may place research into different categories.

7. This is a very brief summary of a huge area of research.

8. Studies on inter-organizational relations to address public problems are almost too numerous to note here. See Bingham and O’Leary (2008) for a good review of this.

9. We consider accountability as a normative construct in that it represents the expectations that different constituents hold on government (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987). It seems necessary to differentiate accountability (i.e., different expectations) from accountability mechanisms (i.e., ways to meet those expectations). The first construct is more culturally oriented, and the second one is more structurally oriented. Certainly, as we mentioned earlier, the distinction is not always clear. While Hill and Lynn (2009) describe three dimensions, there are some overlaps between these dimensions. Accountability is one such area where one could see connections to structure, culture, and craft.

10. In reviews such as this, choices need to be made about where to focus. We are focusing on common questions across the general public management field. We each generated a list of topics we found to be most common in public management research, drawing on our training and reviewing the table of contents in journals of the field. We then compared our lists and sought to identify larger, overarching questions that could encompass a number of different topics. However, it is important to note that there is important research being conducted that deeply concentrates on particular aspects of public management, such as the rich community of scholars working in public finance and human resource management in the public service. Covering these areas is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to recognize that no systematic study of public management would be complete with a deep dive into the specialties within the field.

References


