Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present a dynamic and clarifying framework that identifies the key questions and potential relevance of the public value and public values perspectives for both research and practice. This is accomplished by presenting a general framework for the conversion of individual beliefs about the proper role of government (public values) into results (public value) through the use of public institutions (e.g. government). This framework creates a context for understanding incremental public value and public values research in terms of a greater whole and provides a means for identifying both practical implications and research gaps.
Introduction

Of all the critiques levied of the public value(s) research thus far, the pointed words of Shelley Metzenbaum—President of Volcker Alliance, former Associate Director for Performance and Personnel Management at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Harvard trained Ph.D., and lifelong public servant—may have been the most devastating. Addressing a special panel convened to discuss the “Value of Public Value” as a contribution to the field of public administration, she said, “I am your target audience, and I’m telling you—I just don’t get it, and I can’t use it.” The “it” to which she was referring was research on public value, public values and value conflicts and their relevance to practitioners who are “hungry for research that will help us know how to do better” at the work of government through “simplifying frameworks” (Metzenbaum 2015).

Metzenbaum is not the first to suggest failings of the public value and public values literatures (see, e.g., Williams and Shearer 2011, Rhodes and Wanna 2009, Alford and O’Flynn 2009, West and Davis 2011, Dahl and Soss 2014) and confusion about the role and nature of this line of inquiry despite several efforts to provide clarifying reviews of the burgeoning field (e.g. Rutgers 2014, Williams and Shearer 2011, Alford and O’Flynn 2009, van der Wal et al 2013). This despite the claim of its proponents that “There is no more important topic in public administration and policy than public values” (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007, p. 335).

The analysis and synthesis in this paper is not intended to arbitrate between the disagreements of perspective still held by public value and public values scholars. Nor does it seek to develop of the two a single universal definition conjoining the two constructions of “public value” or its component parts “public” and “value.” In this way, the framework presented
here departs from its predecessors. Rather, the purpose of this article is to present a dynamic and clarifying framework that identifies the key questions and potential relevance of the public value and public values perspectives—together—and links them to the broader public administration literature. This is accomplished by presenting a general framework for the conversion of individual beliefs about the proper role of government (public values) into results (public value) through the use of public institutions (e.g. government). This framework creates a context for understanding incremental public value and public values research in terms of a greater whole, and provides a means for identifying both practical implications and research gaps.

The paper proceeds as follows: First, the originating frameworks for the public value and public values perspectives are briefly described. Next, the two streams are differentiated in terms of how they define the terms “value” and “public,” according to their roles in a broader public administration as either inputs or outputs of a larger process of public decisionmaking, and according to their different units of analysis. The areas of similarity and overlap between the streams are also discussed in this section, along with an identification of key remaining research questions. Next, the two frameworks are linked together into a single organizing framework which describes the role and utility of both perspectives in terms of a greater public administration whole. The paper concludes with thoughts about how this framework may aid in the practical utility of both developing fields of research.

A converging evolution

Public values and public value are two different concepts and have been pioneered largely by different sets of public administration scholars (Rutgers 2014, Rutgers and Overeem 2014, Bozeman and Johnson 2015, Meynhardt 2009, van der Wal et al. 2013, etc.). The starting point for the convergence of the public value and public values perspective is an examination of
the similarities and differences between their touchstone works, Moore’s (1995) strategic triangle (see Figure 1) and Jørgensen and Bozeman’s public values framework (see Figure 2). While other, more recent work has added important development to the concepts within these original frameworks (e.g. Bozeman 2007, Moore 2014), the subsequent work has been largely incremental and does not much depart from these general conceptions of how each of the two streams link to the broader public administration literature. Thus, it is reasonable to begin with an extremely brief summary of each approach and describe the ways in which these streams (and scholars) interact.

**Jørgensen and Bozeman’s public values framework**

Jørgensen and Bozeman provide one framework for understanding the relationship of public values to public administration in general, but their purpose was to “[identify] constellations of public values, based on our interpretation of the relationships among them” rather than to relate public values to the creation of public value more generally (see Figure 1 in Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007, 359). The framework presented by Jørgensen and Bozeman (see Figure XX) identifies the role of each of five value sets in linking to the broader role of public administration in society. Government (identified as an interactive relationship between politicians and the administrative apparatus) is distinguished from citizens/users/customers of government. These two then interact with the environment and the society at large. Values sets are focused on 1) evaluating the contribution of government to society, 2) transforming general societal interests into government decisions, 3) arbitrating relationships between politicians and administration, 4) examining the relationship between government and the environment, 5) managing the internal function and organization of government, 6) describing the values of
public employees themselves, and 7) describing the relationship between government and its citizen/users/customers.

Moore’s strategic triangle

Public value research, on the other hand, began at roughly the same time and takes a different approach. In his 1995 book “Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government,” Mark Moore identifies public value as the central objective of government activity, and defines it as the value an organization contributes to society by acting as its agent. “The definition that remains equates managerial success in the public sector with initiating and reshaping public sector enterprises in ways that increase their value to the public in both the short and the long run” (10). This definition is a variation on common themes in private management that were prevalent at the time (Bennington and Moore 2010) and intended to provide a new trajectory for the New Public Management movement (Moore 1994). Researchers in this stream followed, seeking to identify the means and approaches by which public value is most likely to be achieved (Bennington and Moore 2010, O’Flynn 2007) and methods for identifying and quantifying public value as a construct (Meynhardt 2009). This summative evaluation approach to public value results in a central theme in public value research that seeks to answer the question, “what does government activity contribute to society?” or “what is the worth of the products of government activity?”

The public value perspective centers on the “strategic triangle,” the core framework of the public value approach. The three critical elements of this framework are 1) legitimacy and support, 2) operational capacity, and 3) the public value account. Each of these three elements is viewed as necessary for moving toward ever higher levels of public value through a mutually reinforcing process by which legitimacy and support lead to greater operational capacity, which
allows for the conversion of resources into public value. This public value increase, in turn, reinforces and increases legitimacy and support to begin the cycle again. The strategic triangle is intended as a prescriptive formula for improving (and evaluating) government performance.

Differentiation and cross-pollination

Despite the different origins and focus of these two parallel research streams, the two groups are frequently brought together at research conferences and within conference panels at ASPA, PMRA, and IRSPM, likely due to the obvious similarity in terminology and the shared interest in both government and the evaluation of government activity. However, in such cases, scholars frequently find themselves sorting their work into either of two camps, frequently using the presence or absence of the terminal “s” in the word “value(s)” to define and differentiate the respective orientations (e.g. Bryson et al. 2015, Bozeman and Johnson 2015, Rutgers and Overeem 2014, Jacobs 2014). This positioning occurs both in person and in published scholarship, where scholars not only define their own terms, but also seek to differentiate their usage from that of the alternate camp. For example, Bozeman and Johnson write, “Despite the close kinship of names, the management improvement approach to public [value] is not closely related to our interests or to normative public values in general” (Bozeman and Johnson, 2015, 63). Similar distinctions are made by Rutgers, Bryson, Meynhardt, and others.

The failure to effectively and consistently differentiate between the two research streams due to their similar terminology has resulted in some opportunity for cross-fertilization of ideas. However, this generally results in efforts to bring the terms into a common umbrella term rather than developing a framework for linking the two disparate concepts into a broader whole, and is generally met with little success (Rutgers 2015, Jørgensen and Rutgers 2015). The difficulty of inventing a definition of “public value” that encompasses both the public value and public values
perspectives has caused some researchers to throw up their hands and claim that “There is no singular [public values perspective]…The positivist idea of one coherent, all-encompassing theory does not fit the [public values perspective]” (Jørgensen and Rutgers 2015, 7). Even Meynhardt, who essentially combines the two approaches by identifying them both as part of “PV theory,” acknowledges “[v]alues’ is one of those ambiguous container terms with enormous promise of insight but no widespread consensus” (Meynhardt 2009, 196).

This attempt to unify the public value and public values camps—no matter how ill-fated—are not surprising, as the two concepts share several common points of departure and operate as component parts of the same overall process of selecting and evaluating public activity. What Moore (1995) calls the public value chain, in which the perception of end users shapes the summative value of a government endeavor, incorporates evaluations that can best be described as public values as conceived by Bozeman and others. As observed by Meynhardt, “Since any organizational action is always subjected to heterogeneous “external” evaluations and changing expectations in pluralist societies, there is always a feedback from and to society.” (Meynhardt 2009, 193).

Simultaneously, Bozeman and his colleagues readily acknowledge the need for some end product or outcome to be produced by government if public values are to be applied in the normative evaluation of both government means and ends, which are usefully described in terms of public value. “Indeed, public values and public valuing in some respects define those fields of inquiry and separate them from others” (Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007, 355).

The current public value/values dichotomy does three things to reduce the overall utility of these lines of inquiry in both theory and practice. First, it creates isolated and insular
communities of scholars whose work incrementally builds each of the perspectives, but does not readily provide robust links between the two. Second, it prevents the incorporation of a wider scope of public administration theories and concepts that can readily contribute to the concept of public value creation, public value chains, and the application of normative public values to the evaluation of public sector activity. Finally, it prevents the ready application of either concept to public administration practice, as the research continues to be increasingly focused on definitions and differentiation rather than on overall systems and the diagnosis and resolution of systemic problems (Metzenbaum 2015).

**Differentiating the research streams**

Despite the converging evolution of the public value and public values research streams, there are four specific ways in which these literatures systematically differ. These differences comprise the central reasons that these two literatures have remained primarily distinct from one another, and ways in which studies linking the two concepts have been relatively limited. First, the two approaches differ in the ways they approach the meaning and definition of the term “value.” Second, while the two approaches ostensibly focus on some dimension of “public” activity, their definitions and approaches to what is meant by “public” are conceptually distinct. Third, public values literature focuses primarily on the inputs of the public value chain, while the public value literature focuses centrally on the outputs. And finally, the research streams are focused on different units of analysis. Each of these differences will be discussed in turn below.

Though there are clear differences in the origins, scholarship, orientation, methodologies, and approaches of the public value and public values streams, there are also many ways in which the two streams are convergent and/or overlapping. In each of the areas identified as distinctive characteristics of each research stream in the previous section, we also see a trend toward
convergence of the concepts and ideas toward a synthetic framework that encompasses the unique contributions of each of the two perspectives, and ways in which the two sets of scholars have come to similar and/or compatible conclusions.

Definition of value

Both public value and public values research hinge on what is meant by the term “value,” (e.g. Meynhardt 2009). In public values research, each individual value is commonly envisioned as a specific psychological construct that captures a rationale for action (Schwartz and Bilsky 1990, Witesman and Walters 2014a). This approach is derived from the psychology literature and encompasses the robust and cross-cultural study of individual preferences and cognition (e.g. Schwartz 1992, Schwartz 1999, Rokeach 1968, Rokeach 1973). The reason the term “value” is invoked in this psychological approach is that some of these justifications for the rationalization of action may be valued more than others; that is, individuals may find some justifications for action more important, useful, or worthwhile than others. Thus, a specific type of rationale may be valued more than others and termed one of that person’s values. A value set is comprised of those justifications for action on which the subject places the greatest emphasis or import. Despite considerable scholarly effort, such views cannot correctly be categorized hierarchically, but rather in context-dependent groupings or oppositional pairs (Schwartz 1992, Witesman and Walters 2014b, van der Wal and van Hout 2009).

Public value research, on the other hand, is centered on using the term “value” just as we would invoke the related terms “valuation” or “evaluation” of an endeavor, capturing a concept of “worth,” “utility” or “goodness.” The term is inherently normative, with higher levels of value being good and lower levels of value being bad. The value creation concept from the broader management literature defines value thus: “Satisfying customers is the source of sustainable
value creation. Strategy requires a clear articulation of targeted customer segments and the value proposition required to attract and retain targeted customers” (Kaplan and Norton 2004). Unlike public values which justify and rationalize action, public value summatively—and often holistically—evaluates the result of this action, typically from the view of the consumer public.

While it is true that the public value and public values streams have different conceptions of what is meant by “value,” both approaches clearly involve the subjective weighting or appraisal of actions—whether before or after such actions have been taken. Though the values research seeks to identify and order the means for performing such evaluations absent a specific context, while the value research applies valuation heuristics to specific results of government action, the two are fundamentally similar activities and are limited by related methodological challenges. In both cases, determining value requires identifying scales of subjective and fairly nebulous conceptions of “good” and “bad,” “valuable” and “worthless,” or even “valued” and “unvalued.” Both also require reconciliation across different criteria for assigning worth. That in one stream (public values) the valuation process being examined is primarily internal and cognitive and in the other stream (public value) the valuation process is largely external and social does not diminish the potential for similarity and cross-fertilization between the two approaches.

More specifically, the public value literature could draw both conceptual and methodological strength from the public values literature, which identifies both criteria for evaluating activities in the public sphere and instrumentation for doing so. Using public values dimensions as evaluative categories could help public value scholars to better describe and explain the ways in which different individuals or groups perceive public endeavors differently. Conversely, the public value literature contributes a level of pragmatism that could help focus
the diverse universe of atomistic public values and identify those criteria that are most commonly applied by people and groups when they are determining whether or not a particular decision or endeavor has contributed social worth. In other words, by focusing more on a summative and cohesive valuation of an activity—rather than all the different dimensions from which metrics can be derived—public value may be able to help the public values literature to reduce the impossibly large quantities of possible value judgments to those that are most likely to influence a cumulative perception of value.

Definition of public

The definition of the term “public” is perhaps the most contested in all of public administration (Frederickson 1991, Bozeman and Moulton 2011, Moulton 2009, Meynhardt 2009, Benington 2009). Different conceptions of the public include the role of various collections of people (Frederickson 1991), competing and/or collective interests (Brady 2003, Frederickson 1991, Benington 2009), institutions and sources of authority (Bozeman 2007, Bozeman and Moulton 2011, Moulton 2009), and even a set of psychosocial relationships between people and their perceived roles in larger social groups (Meynhardt 2009). It is no surprise, therefore, that the public value and public values literatures have come to embrace different conceptions of the meaning of the term “public.”

When public values researchers invoke the term “public” in describing their research, the primary distinction they are trying to draw is between public values and the concept of values more generally. Thus, the term “public” is intended to draw out of the general values literature those values which are particularly relevant to public sector activity and which are commonly invoked by public servants as justifications or rationales for action (Witesman and Walters 2014a, Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007, Bozeman 1988, Bozeman 2007, Van Wart 1998). In some
cases, scholars are seeking to expand the set of values beyond those that have been traditionally identified by the psychology literature, to encompass appropriate normative tools for evaluating the work of the public sector. Thus, though concepts about what constitutes “public authority” or “publicness,” challenge traditional notions of what we mean when we refer to the “public sector” (Moulton 2009, Bozeman and Moulton 2011, Bozeman 1988), public values scholars are largely trying to invoke those values associated with traditionally public institutions, including formal organizations like government entities and also encompassing less centralized sources of public authority that may or may not exist in the public sector proper.

While the public value literature was also initially primarily focused on government management, the broader management concept of value creation from whence it was derived necessitates a somewhat wider lens for viewing the meaning of the term “public.” The original contribution of the public value concept was to take a private management concept (as was common in this age of New Public Management; see Lane 2000) and apply it to government work. Thus, though applied to the public sector, the concept of “public value” was actually a more broad term in which “public” was more compatible with the idea of the “general public” or the “consumer public.”. While Moore’s central assertion was that the work of government should be to create public value, the term “public value” itself was in no wise limited only to government activity or perception.

Though their constructions of “public” clearly differ, however, both the public value and public values approaches use the term “public” to distinguish themselves on a continuum ranging from public to private. For example, Beningtoon and Moore (2010) identify “What is the difference between public and private value?” as one of the key questions of public value research. At the same time, Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) and subsequently Bozeman (2007)
clearly distinguish between public and private values, even though the blurry lines between the publicness and privateness remain contested (Bozeman 1988, Bozeman and Brettschneider 1994).

While the values researchers distinguish public from private primarily based on sector and the value researchers do this primarily by focusing on collective rather than individual valuations, both acknowledge an interest in societal phenomena rather than merely individualistic orientations. This is true even of the naturally individualistic and psychologically derived values literature. Thus, the two orientations are both more concerned with collective interest, collective action, and the reconciliation of diverse perspectives than they are the atomistic and individualistic approach that might be pursued by a more general study either of value or of values.

The implication of this similarity is that the study of public value and public values is distinct from the general management and psychology literatures in a similarly unique and important way. Thus, the two streams together can help us to better understand not only value and values, but publicness as well. What are the ways in which collective decisions and actions differ from private ones, either in conception, process, or result? How does the transfer of values to value differ when many actors are involved in the process rather than just one or a few? How does the public sector value chain differ from the private sector value chain, and are there ways in which these two different mechanisms may complement and/or improve one another? To what extent do private values and private processes generate or destroy value for the general public? How does this compare to public values and public processes? What makes a value, process, or outcome “public”? Each of these questions is of practical relevance and would benefit from both theoretical development and empirical study.
**Input vs output**

As implied by the focus on psychological values, the public values literature focuses primarily on the cognitive and psychological *inputs* of the value creation process. Similarly, as suggested by the summative evaluative focus of public value research, this literature focuses primarily on the *outputs* of this process. This distinction is implicit in the orientation of Moore’s value creation chain toward the evaluable results of government activity as much as it is in the vast catalogues of psychological values used to describe individual perceptions and preferences exemplified by Jørgensen and Bozeman’s inventory. The implication of these distinct areas of focus and study is simultaneously that such studies should be clearly distinguishable and also that they are inherently related as components of the same overall process. This is a point to which we will return later in the paper.

The very fact that the public values and public value streams are examining different components of a process—public values examining inputs and public value examining outputs—suggests that they are inherently linked through the process they describe. That is, while they may examine different components of the same phenomenon, they ultimately are, in fact, describing the same phenomenon. The two streams also converge in their utility in describing the process of quantifying the worth of public endeavors *post hoc*. While this is the ostensible purpose of the public value research, public values research also has contributions to make in this vein. Specifically, as the public value research readily acknowledges, the value of an endeavor may differ for different stakeholder groups. In order to determine whether or not value has actually been created, there must be some reconciliation of potentially divergent perspectives. These divergent perspectives are, at least in part, based on the different and competing values held by members of the public and/or the stakeholder groups they comprise. Thus, the values that
initially justified the action at an individual level are likely also the criteria on which public value is ultimately assessed once the endeavor has been completed.

The fact that both research streams are linked through observation of the same overall phenomenon suggests an opportunity to connect the literatures through theoretical development and empirical study, thus providing greater insight to the practice of public administration. Theory can be used to identify the mechanisms by which individual values may be concentrated to support and enact some public action, resulting in the creation or destruction of public value. Theory of this type would require concepts about the transformation of individual values and preferences into collective action and implementation. Thus, a combined theory of public values and public value would also link with broader themes in public administration into a more cohesive and yet characteristically multidisciplinary whole.

Empirically, this linkage between the streams could be accomplished by examining particular public endeavors through both lenses simultaneously and examining the impact of the one on the other. In other words, how does an appeal to the public values of various stakeholders and/or decisionmakers affect the ultimate value of an endeavor? Which values, processes, and perspectives are most influential on the ability to achieve good outcomes? To what extent does convergence among groups or individuals in initial values and/or preferences result in convergence when those same groups perceive and evaluate the end result? Though such studies would require significant investment of time and development of methodology—particularly to achieve the statistical power necessary to achieve rigorous analysis across cases—the contribution of such studies to practice would be undeniable.
Unit of analysis

The final distinction between the two research streams is a difference in units of analysis. Public values are—almost by nature—observed primarily at the individual level. Most conceptions of values—public values included—are derived from psychological constructs, and research in this vein is centrally focused on the impact of various values and value sets on individual decisionmaking and individual action (Meynhardt 2009, Schwartz 1992, Rokeach 1973, Schwartz and Bilsky 1990). This approach builds public sector theory by observing the individuals who comprise the public sector (whether narrowly or broadly conceived) and understanding the ways in which they—as a collection of individuals—differ in their cognition, motivation, or psychology from others. In this way, the public values and public service motivation and public service ethos literatures are somewhat linked (Witesman, Walters and Christensen 2013).

Public value research, on the other hand, is concerned with evaluating and increasing the summative worth of government endeavors. As such, this research is focused both on the process of identifying and carrying out such endeavors and, more centrally, on determining how much contribution these endeavors make to the collective wellbeing of observer-citizens. While such valuation may involve gathering perceptions of value from multiple stakeholder perspectives, the unit of analysis is really the endeavor itself, as this is the unit to which value will ultimately be attached. Thus, the collected body of scholarship in public value seeks ultimately to identify the characteristics of endeavors that contribute higher quantities of public value than others.

This difference in the unit of analysis between the public value and public values literatures poses methodological challenges to drawing empirical linkages between them, and has also made theoretical and practical linkages less likely to occur.
Though values researchers focus primarily on individuals and value researchers focus primarily on outcomes or endeavors as their respective units of analysis, both the public value and public values literatures must deal with the challenge of reconciling multiple perspectives when considering an endeavor. In particular, values researchers must determine how individuals weigh the different considerations inherent in their pluralistic value profiles, just as public value researchers weigh different considerations of multiple stakeholders.

One way in which the public value and public values research can synthesize their respective questions about the reconciliation of multiple valuations is to determine the extent to which individual values are reflected in individual preference, and the extent to which individual values and individual preferences are reflected in group preferences. Are there certain values that are over- or under-played in social settings when normative pressures come into play? In what ways does group cognition reflect individual cognition? To what extent does this affect the decisions made and actions taken? To what extent does it affect how individuals and groups perceive the result? This suggests two high-level questions that can only be adequately addressed by a joining of the public value and public values literatures: How are individual values and preferences reflected in actions taken by a collective, and how is the collective valuation of such actions influenced by individual values?

**Value and values in a single framework**

Both public value and public values are answers to the New Public Management paradigm and demonstrate a decided shift in approaches from the privatization/contracting/citizen-as-consumer models of the New Public Management era (Moore 1994, Bozeman 2002, 2007; Talbot 2009; Brodsky 2014, Benington and Moore 2010, Bryson et al. 2014, O’Flynn 2007). This shift has been met by a vocal opposition and robust debate around whether or not a
public value-promoting role in public administration is sufficiently democratic (Rhodes and Wanna 2007, Dahl and Soss 2014, Jacobs 2014), though both public value and public values scholars identify pluralistic and democratic institutions as central to their conceptions of this new paradigm (Bryson et al. 2014, Alford and O’Flynn 2009, Moore 2014, Bozeman 2007).

A fusion of the public value and public values frameworks would provide richer theory, greater opportunity for meaningful empirical research, and a greater applicability to practice. In particular, such a synthesis could identify connections both between the public value and values literatures and ways in which these two streams of research mesh with broader themes in public administration. Cross-fertilization across the two approaches could also help to resolve issues and conflicts faced by the two streams individually, such as methodological questions and problems of practical relevance. To pursue this objective of synthesis, we begin by providing a framework that might aid us in think about how the mechanisms by which individual-level public values ultimately lead to collective outcomes that create public value.

In the broader field of public administration, there are additional areas of study that, if synthesized into a more cohesive research agenda, may provide significant insight to this process of transforming public values into public value. Ongoing research streams on individual and collective decisionmaking, public processes, public institutions, implementation and public program evaluation may provide useful concepts that may powerfully link public values research with public value research. However, without an overall framework connecting public values to public value, we are less likely to capitalize on the advances that have already been made in these intermediaries between the value and values research streams.
One of the central issues with both the Moore and Jørgensen and Bozeman frameworks is that neither fully elucidates the mechanisms by which values are aggregated from society to influence or interpret governmental mechanisms and outcomes, nor how public value is assessed, measured, evaluated, and reconciled across multiple individuals and stakeholder groups during the process of increasing (or decreasing) legitimacy and support. While the authors acknowledge the need to do so, theory and frameworks are needed to aid in this effort. In both models, relationships between value sets or strategic elements are merely represented by double-facing arrows. While the text identifies the reasons for this bidirectionality in both cases, little attention is paid to the specific mechanisms and interactions by which these endogenous relationships exist. This limits the development and testing of public administration theory.

In the framework that is elucidated in more detail below, we view public values as the origin of individual preferences regarding the field of potential collective action. These individual preferences must then be somehow harnessed—though various preference aggregation mechanisms and public institutions—to generate group decisions that result in actual collective action. These actions, once taken, either produce or reduce value for that collective public and/or for other stakeholder groups (i.e. “public value” is either created or destroyed). Whether public value is increased, reduced, or remains unchanged by an endeavor is a subjective valuation that is ultimately founded on the individual perceptions of the people and groups that comprise the affected public(s). Their valuations of the endeavor result from their application of individual or group public values as a set of evaluative criteria.

The intent of this proposed framework is to help provide definitional clarity in the research literature and provide practitioners with a better view of why an apparent dispute about the presence or absence of an “s” in the term public value(s) is actually a substantive
conversation about two unique and important aspects of collective action. In particular, a framework could provide a valuable structure and language for examining 1) how individual public values are identified, and 2) how these values are selected and organized to produce individual preferences that are synthesized from multiple public values within or across varying contexts; 3) how aggregation mechanisms and institutional decision rules are used to express and aggregate individual values and preferences to create group values and preferences; 4) how such institutions result in specific decisions or actions that represent the collective interest that 5) must be implemented to 6) produce ends/results/or outputs that are 7) perceived and valued summatively according to whether or not they produce public value.

Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the framework proposed in this paper. We begin and end with relatively familiar conceptions of public values and public value, respectively, but through a synthesis of additional public administration concepts and mechanisms seek to connect these two streams of research both with one another and with the broader fields of public administration research and practice. The following section of the paper examines each element of this broader framework in turn.

*Individual public values*

Values, as conceived both by public administration scholars and their counterparts engaged in the study of psychology, originate as individual-level cognitive heuristics for making decisions. Public values scholars have focused primarily on identifying and quantifying those values that are particularly relevant for individuals in a public sector context, defining lists of potential public values and distinguishing them from other values (e.g. Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007, van Wart 1998, van der Wal et al. 2013, Witesman and Walters 2014a). Such values are ultimately
the origin and impetus of any public action, and some derivative of these originating individual
public values will also be invoked to evaluate the ends of such action.

**Aggregated public values**

While public values are traditionally viewed as being individually-held, it has been
increasingly clear that stakeholder groups and even formal organizations can also hold and
express values (Gregory and Keeney 1994, Martin et al. 2000, Finegan 2000, Posner and
Schmidt 1993). These group or organizational values play a role in group decision making and
organizational outcomes, and may sometimes influence the value systems of individuals. Thus, it
is clear that some mechanisms exist for socially and informally aggregating or sorting individual
values into collective values. The type and level of such value aggregation may be expected to
change the prevalent and/or relevant public values at play in a given context.

Public values, both individual and aggregate, have been the primary area of study for
public values researchers. Public values research has examined public values both associated
with specific contexts and in a more general sense in order to distinguish public values from
other value sets. They have also begun to examine the relationship of public values—either
individually or in aggregate—to other elements in the broader framework as described below.
However, the primary purview of public values research to this point has been circumscribed, at
least in part, by these two aspects of the public decisionmaking process.

**Individual public preferences**

Public preferences are here distinguished from public values, as done by others before
(see e.g. Rokeach 1968). While public values are means for evaluating various proposals for
action, public preferences identify the initial result or conclusion of the cognitive process of
identifying the context and preference options, selecting salient values, ordering them, applying
them, and ultimately determining both a preference and strength of preference. Thus, public preferences are value-based decisions about what an individual will or will not support, and thus from which actions (either her own or those of an external actor) he/she/they will draw pleasure or satisfaction. Preferences are outcomes of value-based decisionmaking.

Aggregated public preferences

Just as the process of converting individual values to individual preferences is a cognitive process, the process for aggregating values and preferences among multiple individuals is a social process. Such aggregation, even (and perhaps especially) in an informal setting, is influenced by sociology in addition to psychology. The introduction of the social element to the need for groups of individuals—often related to each other through some specific set of common characteristics or circumstances—creates an opportunity for social learning, adaptation, and development of group preferences that may not resemble the mere sum of individual value or preference aggregation. In other words, group decision making differs from individual decision making, and this can influence both the process and end result of the conversion of public values to preferences. Such group preference aggregation dynamics are likely to come into play both in the formation of stakeholder or interest groups and in the social dynamics that inform individualistic behaviors such as voting.

Expression of aggregated preferences via public institutions

For aggregated public preferences to become actionable, they must generally undergo an explicit aggregation mechanism by which formal decisions may be made. There are many ways in which these preferences may be perceived and expressed. These include systems such as democratic vote, representative democracy, authoritarian rule, unanimous action, or any number of variations on the process of formally eliciting a decision from multiple individuals or groups.
The expression of preferences through public institutions converts aggregated public preferences into a single decision or set of actions. The ways in which this occurs depend on the nature of the institution—its formality, the size of its constituency, and the like. The efficacy of this process is also influenced by the legitimacy and capacity of such institutions, including the presence of rule of law, public trust, and satisfactory public participation.

Not all public institutions for the aggregation of preferences need to address the whole public; while some processes like democratic elections are more bread-based, some, like committee meetings, similarly engage both individual and group public values and preferences and convert them through institutional means to yield actionable decisions. However, members of the public are likely to perceive and evaluate these institutions—regardless of participation—according to their own public values.

As a side note, collective agreement about the mechanisms by which future collective decisions will be made are themselves collective decisions. Formation of democracies, republics, authoritarian regimes, hierarchies, and other power structures are central to the aggregation of public preferences but are also themselves a manifestation of aggregated public preference. Bozeman and Johnson (2015) explicitly distinguish between public values and public institutions, while acknowledging that we can have public values about public institutions.

Collective decisions and actions

Formal expression of aggregated preferences through public institutions result in decisions and actions. It is important to recognize decisions and actions as distinct from the institutions that generated them—different aggregation mechanisms and decision rules may result in different decisions or actions, and these will bear varying resemblance to the “raw”
aggregation of preference that preceded formal institutional aggregation. Thus, the actual
decision or action resulting from a particular decision process can be properly viewed as a short-
term outcome of those institutional processes.

The outcome of a public decision process will likely appeal only to those whose values
and preferences supported the selected decision or action. Thus, these decisions/actions will be
perceived and evaluated according to individual and aggregated public values. When the formal
aggregation mechanism is viewed as legitimate, individuals are more likely to accept and abide
by the outcome of the process; however, their ultimate evaluation of the decision will still be
shaped by their individualistic values.

*Operational capacity and implementation*

Decisions made or actions taken through the collective decision process frequently
require some level of additional administration or implementation to take place (Pressman and
Wildavsky 1984). The practical realities of implementing a policy, program, or decision
frequently results in at least some level of interpretation and alteration during the implementation
phase. This implementation process mediates the process of converting decisions and intended
actions into actual ends/results/outputs. This can cause discrepancies between the decision or
action resulting from a collective preference aggregation process and the ultimate results as
perceived by the public.

*Ends/results/outputs*

Once a policy, program, or decision has been implemented, the result or outputs of that
collective action may be objectively and subjectively perceived by members of the public. These
outputs have objective characteristics but can also be perceived subjectively by individuals and
stakeholder groups. The end result may or may not perfectly conform to individual and group conceptions of what had been collectively decided, both because the process of implementation involves at least some element of administrative discretion and the challenges of unforeseen practicalities, unintended consequences and externalities and because the process of communication during the decision process may have imperfectly captured the specific preferences and visions of individuals and groups in the first place. In either case, following implementation, the results of the collective decision or action may be perceived by both those who made the decision or took the action and those who are affected by it.

Public value

Public value is the perceived worth of ends/results/outputs by individuals and groups. Whether public value is created by the endeavor is dependent on whether these individual and groups perceive that the ends/results/outputs yielded improvement relative to their individual or group values. The public value approach value presumes all of the previous stages of value development, aggregation, and conversion to outcomes, and summatively determines whether or not they have ultimately achieved their purpose. In this sense, public value and public values are indelibly linked: public value sees the fruition of the seeds sown by public values, and evaluates those fruits based on the criteria established by public values.

However, “public value” as an item of observation is clearly distinct from public values. There is no more aggregation, translation, conversion, or implementation—merely an end result that either succeeds or fails at achieving its objective. Thus, what was once a value proposition about what “ought to be” at this point in the cycle has become that which simply “is.” While this result may be viewed differently from different perspectives, there are generally some set of observable facts that may either please or frustrate those who hold differing values about the
result. If those who oppose the result are sufficiently motivated, their values may drive them to engage the process once again from the beginning.

**Conclusion: Proposing a cohesive public value(s) research agenda**

This paper has identified key areas of public sector research and scholarship that may both enhance and be enhanced by links between the public values and public value literatures. These questions specifically address the mechanisms by which individual public values are transformed into public value through collective action. While both the public value and public values streams have been largely hampered by issues of measurement, multi-subjectivity, and definitional growing pains, a broader theoretical perspective provides insights from more areas of public administration literature and clarifies various important questions that remain unanswered not only within these burgeoning streams of research, but also in the very core of public administration. Thus, while the public values literature has focused on *what values* are important at various stages of the governance process, and public value literature has been focused on *how much value* has been generated by the governance process and how this quantity can be increased, this paper proposes a more cohesive look at *what mechanisms* impact the conversion of values to value and the perception of value by values.

This framework may therefore be viewed as a template on which we might overlay both the public value and public values frameworks, and from which we might access other useful notions in public administration research such as governance (Lynn, at al. 2001) and institutional analysis (Ostrom 1995). This integrated framework, then, becomes the source of specific research questions for a new theory of public value(s) that integrates both the value and values perspectives with the broader public administration literature, but without conflating the two.
Metzenbaum (2015) suggests little practical application of the public value and public values concepts to broader administrative practice. While some early attempts at incorporating public value and public values concepts into practice directly refute this claim (such as Nabatchi 2012, Bozeman and Sarewitz 2011, Benington and Moore 2010, Mussari and Ruggiero 2010, and the embattled examples cited in Alford and O’Flynn 2009), it is true that both theory refinement and internal debates have both hampered our ability to effectively move forward toward practical application and crowded out the systematic and rigorous effort of researchers to apply public value[s] theories to practice.

However, this is not to say that the public value and public values perspectives cannot provide tremendous benefit to practice. An appeal to the broader range of public administration scholarship demonstrates that while the focus on public values and public value provide unique and important perspectives to the study of public administration, they are part of a broader context in which citizens engage in the process of taking collective action. While previous literatures on public and collective decisionmaking and preference aggregation have answered important questions about how and why collective action takes place, both the motivation for collective action and the evaluation of public activities were incomplete without the advent of public values and public value research. A broader shift in scholarship from a positivist to a more relativistic and social constructivist stance has also provided an opportunity for more development of theory in multi-perspective evaluation than was previously common (John Bennington who wrote with moore). However, the full richness of the potential of these streams of research cannot be fully realized without re-integrating them into the broader public administration literature. This involves identifying and answering key questions about the relationship of individuals and their individual values to public action and its value in society.
Figure 1: Moore’s strategic triangle

- Legitimacy and support perspective: What sources of legitimacy and support do we rely on and how can we increase legitimacy and support in the future?
- Operational capacity perspective: How well and how reliably do our programs, policies, and procedures work to create value and how can they be made more efficient and effective in the future?
- Public Value Account: What dimensions of public value do we produce and how can we produce more net value in the future?

Direction of policy development, implementation, and impact

From: Recognising Public Value, Mark Moore, 2013
Figure 2: Jørgensen and Bozeman value contexts

Figure 1 in Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007, 359).
Figure 3: A framework that incorporates both public value and public values perspectives

INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC VALUES
Derived from many sources, including broad social values, group and professional values, and individual experience/personal values.

OTHER VALUES
Individual and group values not related to expectations of government, social welfare, and public life (e.g. private values).

AGGREGATED PUBLIC VALUES
Collected systems of aggregated individual public values. Varying types and levels of aggregation cause aggregated public values to be polycentric. May be organized as stakeholder groups.

LEGITIMACY
Capacity and legitimacy of institutions, including rule of law, stability, public trust, and levels of public participation.

ENVIRONMENT
External environmental or historical factors that influence the process of converting decisions into results.

AGGREGATED PUBLIC PREFERENCES
Public values contribute to collectively expressed preferences for institutions, processes, and outcomes. External factors including additional values (e.g. private values, etc.) may also influence preferences. Aggregated public preferences are polycentric, but not formally expressed through a formal aggregation mechanism.

EXPRESSION OF AGGREGATED PREFERENCES VIA PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
Public preferences define and shape the processes and institutions that are active in the public sphere. Includes political/administrative/economic institutions, laws, norms, voting rules, etc.

DECISIONS/ACTIONS
Public preferences are expressed through public institutions such that decisions are made or actions taken in the public sphere.

OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND IMPLEMENTATION
Decisions and actions are filtered through the limits and capacities of the administrative apparatus through the process of implementation.

ENDS/RESULTS/OUTPUTS
Decisions/actions result in observable and measurable results (outputs) that may be perceived by members of the public.

PUBLIC VALUE
Individuals and groups perceive the results/outputs subjectively relative to their individual and collective public values. This individual, group, and collective valuation determines the worth of the endeavor from the perspective of the end user, according to the values they choose to use as evaluative measures.
References


