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Public Values

An Inventory

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Exploring boundaries and meanings of public value, the authors seek to identify some of the impediments to progress in the study of public values. The study of *public* values is often hamstrung by more general problems in the study of *values.* The authors begin by identifying analytical problems in the study of values and public values. Then they take stock of the public values universe. To identify public value concepts, relevant literature is reviewed and interpreted. Finally, the analytical questions posed in the first section are addressed, focusing specifically on issues related to the hierarchy, causality, and proximity of public values.

Keywords: *public values; values hierarchy; proximity of values; values causality*

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of public values in governance and public service, our understanding of public values seems to have progressed relatively little in recent times. This limited progress is especially disappointing inasmuch as less traditional, more market-oriented approaches to public service have presented challenges to traditional public values, and these challenges are often well articulated and framed to economic theory.

This article explores the boundaries and meanings of public value and, at the same time, seeks to identify some of the impediments to progress in the study and elucidation of public values. An underlying theme is that the study of *public* values is often hamstrung by more general problems in the study of *values.* In the first section of this article, we identify some of the analytical problems in the study of values and public values. In the second, we take stock of the public values universe. Our method of inventorying public values is a simple one: We review and interpret the relevant literature.

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This does not, of course, lead to a fully populated public values universe, but at least it provides candidates for public values as well as some indication of the likely difficulties of identifying and, particularly, agreeing on a public values set. We have two guiding questions in our inventory: (a) When researchers write about public values, to which values do they refer? (b) After sorting through the thicket of public values concepts to develop a research program on public values, what issues must one address? In the conclusion, we suggest some possible approaches to ameliorating problems identified in the following sections.

Core Questions for a Public Values Research Agenda

There is no more important topic in public administration and policy than public values. Indeed, public values and public valuing in some respects define those fields of inquiry and separate them from others. But taking up an analysis of public values is similar to studying governance or politics—the topic is so fundamental as to be unmanageable. At the same time, if researchers can advance, even incrementally, the study of public values beyond its current ambiguous and unbounded status, then those advances could serve many different theory developments and even practical purposes. In pursuit of such incremental advance, we examine in this study several questions that seem to us the key to progress in the analysis of conceptualization of public value.

1. What is the origin of public values, and what does the "public" mean in public values? Do public values attach to political action, to public authority, or to more deeply seated prerogatives of the governed? Unless one answers that question, it is not clear who is the presumed purveyor of public value. For example, do private businesses purvey public value, or are they accountable for public values? If accountable, are they accountable simply by virtue of obligation to public law, or is there a broader sense in which private enterprises relate to public value?
2. Is there a hierarchy of public values? What are the implications of hierarchy? Potentially, one of the means of dealing with the chaos of public values is to determine if some are inherently superior to others. For example, if there is a set of prime public values, some rudimentary hierarchy can be established. Although it might seem that making such distinctions among values would be impossible, there are at least some instances in which one value or set of values is logically contained in another.
3. What are the possibilities for assessing public values? The *identification* of public values does not require the *assessment* of public values. Not all

high priests are also confessors. Although assessment-free public value inquiry may be of great interest to philosophers, students of public administration and policy surely find public value inquiry more compelling and certainly more useful if it includes an assessment component. Assessing public values is a much more difficult task than identifying them. A variety of approaches to identifying public values are available, including our approach of reviewing the literature's treatment of public values. The problem of assessing public values is not only infinitely more complex but probably much more disputatious.

4. How do public values fit together? How does one handle conflicts in values? We are especially concerned about the ways in which public values fit together. Hierarchy is one sort of fit, but there are many other considerations. Are some closer than others? Does the attainment of some values cause the attainment of others, or are they preconditions for the attainment of others? Are there constellations of public values? Most important, if public values conflict, how does (or should) this affect governance?

Each of these four questions is inordinately complex, and we cannot hope to make much headway providing detailed responses to them. A great deal of space would be required even to consider the alternative answers to these questions. In the spirit of provoking discussion, we provide our own answers to each of these questions but make no attempt to examine the range of possible answers.

Public values, political legitimacy, and responsible government are mutually reinforcing. In his study using public opinion measures as indicators of political legitimacy, Weatherford (1992) concludes that "the more effectively the [political] system's representational institutions work to connect citizens meaningfully to the world of politics, the more optimistic they are likely to be about the prospects for collective social efforts" (pp. 160-161). This seems to suggest that political deliberation and public discourse not only point the way to public values but also contribute directly to them (see Bohman, 2000). Public discourse must start somewhere, and an inventory of public values is as good a place as any.

A Preliminary Inventory of Public Values

Because the literature relevant to public values is nearly boundless, it is useful for us to provide information about how the literature we examined was selected. In the first instance, it derives from general research into public administration. To a lesser extent, it is derived from organization theory, with particular attention paid to public organization theory, and from the

literature on effectiveness, which often includes more wide-ranging discussions of objectives and values than some might expect. Although we examine some general political science research, this has been in a limited fashion, focusing particularly on research intersecting with public policy and administration.

More specifically, we examined the leading (largest circulation) public administration periodicals in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Scandinavian countries and studies chiefly published during the period 1990–2003.[1] We chose the literature of these nations because of the simple expedient that they represent the authors' respective national origins and, more important, because the journals of these nations comprise the vast majority of writings on public value. The comparison between Scandinavian countries and the United States and United Kingdom is useful inasmuch as the governments represent very different positions on the spectrum of the welfare state and, perhaps, different views about public values. Naturally, we make no claims that the literature we examined is representative of literature from countries with quite different political and public value traditions. The outcome is approximately 230 studies dealing with public values.

It is important to note that quite a large proportion of the literature is very much of its time. In particular, much of the literature praises recent reforms such as "new public management" and "reinventing government." As a result, this article may understate historic state traditions and political cultures because they are taken for granted or consciously overlooked. However, there is an emerging literature that, as a reaction, praises the old virtues of classic administration or, alternatively, launches new progressive models such as "new public governance" or "new public service."

The literature we examine is chiefly journal articles. This is not so much an omission as one might expect. Despite the fact that many studies in public administration and political science touch on public values, few systematic studies are available. Apart from Frederickson (1997) and Van Wart (1998), the issue of public values seems to have been dealt with only in articles, in chapters of readers, or as a secondary topic in books. For example, a well-known book by Mark Moore (1995) has the term "public value" in its title, but the book is really more about quality public management and presents no stable concept of public value.

In what follows, direct reference is made to only a fraction of the literature we examined. Bearing in mind the objective of identifying public values, it would be meaningless to mention all the repetitions.[2] Our approach has both advantages and disadvantages. The chief disadvantage is that values are quoted out of context. This loss of context manifests itself in three

ways: (a) The values are removed from the message or argument of which they form a part, thus robbing them of specific meaning. For example, the importance of classical virtues can be oversold if one is a strong opponent of new public management. (b) The historical background is lost, as is the specific (national, local) political culture, which means an important framework for interpretation is out of sight. A value such as public insight is probably weighted differently in countries with major differences in the right to keep public decisions and documents secret, for example, Great Britain, Sweden, and Denmark. Such differences have led to explicit prescription to identify and study traditions (Bevir & Rhodes, 2001). (c) Finally, the values are plucked out of any intellectual context or relationship to the history of ideas. For example, a value such as protection of individual rights may not mean the same to every lawyer because the concept of rights is defined differently depending on whether the person using the phrase is a legal positivist.

The advantages of the method used in this article are threefold. First, our method provides an overall impression of the scope of public values, whereas researchers usually mention only a small number of values. This is in accord with our objective of surveying broadly public values. Second, taking values out of context creates room for contemplation. The values are set free from partial understandings and from deadlocked, polarized debate, making it possible to construct new perceptions and judgments. Third, it is possible to identify closely related values and weed out synonyms.

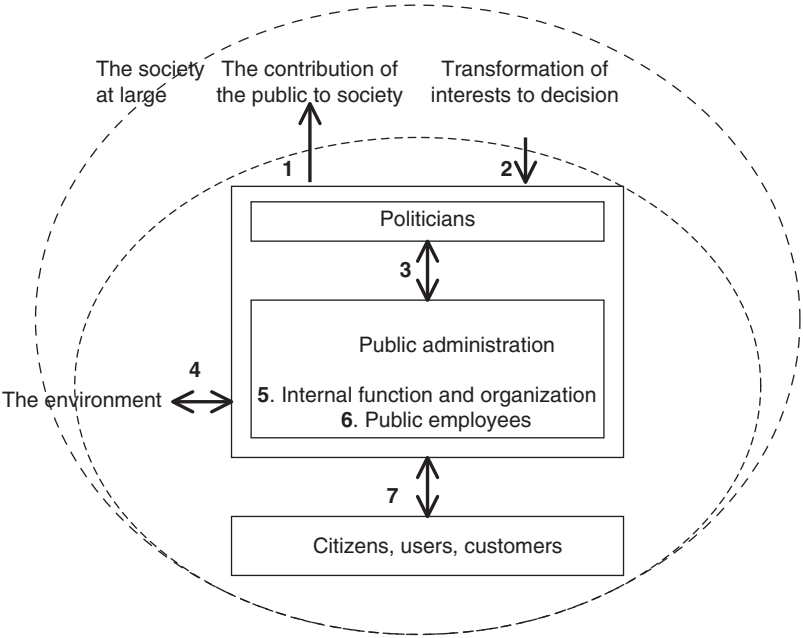
As is the case in any literature survey, the analysis is more one of interpretation than science. However, the authors attempted to be as systematic as possible, within the confines of interpretive literature reviews.[3] We recognize that our approach to interpreting values and their relationships is neither replicable nor objective. But, first, literature reviews are not, in general, objective and, second, we feel this is a useful interim approach, one that illustrates the possibility of relating constellations of values and one that can ultimately be used in a more robust fashion, such as mechanized text analysis or content analysis.

Unfolding the Values Universe

The survey resulted in 72 registered values. The values that were identified, were analyzed, and survived critical comparison (including a weeding out of apparently synonymous values) are listed alphabetically in the appendix.

How can we derive meaning from this list of values? Few studies provide methods of classifying values, and no single approach or typology is

Figure 1
Structure of the Public Values Universe



widely accepted. Our study used a classification based solely on which aspects of public administration or public organization the value affects. As a method of classification, it has the significant advantage of being open, an important advantage at this stage. We identified constellations of public values, based on our interpretation of the relationships among them, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Constellation 1: Values Associated With the Public Sector's Contribution to Society

As can be seen in Table 1, our effort to elicit public values from the literature resulted in a large number of values, some of which are at odds with one another. Four different types of general social values fall into this category.

Table 1
Elicited Public Values, by Category

Value Category	Value Set
Public sector's contribution to society	Common good
	Public interest
	Social cohesion
	Altruism
	Human dignity
	Sustainability
	Voice of the future
	Regime dignity
	Regime stability
Transformation of interests to decisions	Majority rule
	Democracy
	Will of the people
	Collective choice
	User democracy
	Local governance
	Citizen involvement
	Protection of minorities
	Protection of individual rights
Relationship between public administrators and politicians	Political loyalty
	Accountability
	Responsiveness
Relationship between public administrators and their environment	Openness–secrecy
	Responsiveness
	Listening to public opinion
	Advocacy–neutrality
	Compromise
	Balancing of interests
	Competitiveness–cooperativeness
	Stakeholder or shareholder value
Intraorganizational aspects of public administration	Robustness
	Adaptability
	Stability
	Reliability
	Timeliness
	Innovation
	Enthusiasm
	Risk readiness
	Productivity
	Effectiveness
	Parsimony
	Business-like approach

Table 1 (continued)

Value Category	Value Set
	Self-development of employees
	Good working environment
Behavior of public-sector employees	Accountability
	Professionalism
	Honesty
	Moral standards
	Ethical consciousness
	Integrity
Relationship between public administration and the citizens	Legality
	Protection of rights of the individual
	Equal treatment
	Rule of law
	Justice
	Equity
	Reasonableness
	Fairness
	Professionalism
	Dialogue
	Responsiveness
	User democracy
	Citizen involvement
	Citizen's self-development
	User orientation
	Timeliness
	Friendliness

First, there is the idea that the public sector should create or contribute to the common good and to the public interest. Critics often call these concepts insubstantial and worthless. What exactly does the *common good* or the *public interest* mean?[4] This article ignores this criticism because no matter how diffuse the concepts may be, they do incorporate certain characteristic expectations: The public sector must not serve special interests, it must serve society as a whole; the public sector is there for everybody, it is not the extended arm of a particular class or group. Related values include the will of the people, loyalty to society, altruism, and solidarity. Social cohesion is another obvious value to place in this group, that is, the idea that society is not divided up into a series of mutually conflicting fractions or subcultures but that certain bonds unite us all.

Altruism and human dignity belong in the second subgroup. Altruism implies that one should act in the interest of others. This is one of the values that has many related values, some with a hint of humanity (ethical consciousness, moral standards, fairness, justice, and benevolence), whereas others convey a hint of influence (democracy, user democracy, and citizen involvement). Human dignity involves acting according to principles to a high degree, being prepared to bear other peoples' burdens, and protecting other people. A large number of other values are related to human dignity: self-development of the citizen, citizen involvement, protection of the rights of the individual, justice, benevolence, the voice of the future, and equity. Human dignity and altruism might be said to add a form of human authenticity to the creation of the common good and contribute to the public good.

A third subgroup consists of sustainability and the voice of the future, both of which point in the same direction, to concern for future generations. Sustainability is about bequeathing a clean environment and plentiful resources to our descendants, instead of willfully consuming and destroying what was created millions of years ago. However, sustainability has started to be used as a more generalized value: For example, organizations are sustainable if they do not wear out or use up material and nonmaterial resources such as the workforce, the good will of regulatory bodies, the production apparatus, and so forth. Sustainability has a host of related values branching off in different directions: (a) stability and continuity; (b) the common good and public interest; and (c) moral standards, ethical consciousness, and solidarity.

The voice of the future is a more specific value. The idea is that democracy is flawed because it is impossible to represent future generations in a politically elected assembly. As a result, other ways need to be found to redress the imbalance between the present and the future. Related values include fairness, moral standards, ethical consciousness, and protection of the rights of the individual (in this context, the rights of future generations).

Whereas the first subgroup—the common good and public interest—implies respect for society as a whole, the second subgroup implies generalized respect for the individual, with a hint of belief in human potential, human rights, and Christian behavior toward others. The third subgroup extends these values into the future.

The fourth subgroup highlights a quite different aspect: how the public sector presents itself to the outside world. The values are regime dignity and regime stability. The public sector acts as a public power, backed by all the public's resources. This privilege has to be associated with accountability, and when acting as an authority, it must act in a manner that commands

respect. Related values are the rule of law, equity, and reliability; the latter, along with stability and continuity, lead to regime stability because regime dignity is somewhat unthinkable without regime stability.

It is the big values that are launched in this group, that is, public interest values (e.g., see Van Wart, 1998). These values are underpinned by the fear that executive power can be misused to the advantage of those who already wield power, that executive power can be inhumane, and that present-day political conflicts may lead to the cake that all must share to be created so big that no ingredients will be left over for the future.

Constellation 2: Values Associated With Transformation of Interests to Decisions

This group of values is predominantly associated with how opinions should be channeled from society into the public sector. The first subgroup in this context consists of the will of the majority, democracy, the will of the people, and collective choice. All four values are related to one another and involve a core element consisting of a majority of people being affected by decisions and, therefore, having a right to exert influence. Nevertheless, in this study they are kept separate because there are important, subtle differences. Democracy is a superordinate value in relation to the others because it takes many forms. The will of the majority does not necessarily have to be based on the people as such, just as the will of the people is not necessarily expressed as an electoral majority. Even Adolph Hitler claimed to represent the will of the *Volk*. Finally, collective choice involves choice for a majority of people without necessarily being expressed in the form of a vote.

The values in the second subgroup may be said to constitute local variants of the first subgroup. Although the local aspect appears in different guises, the common denominator is that the individual ought to be involved—often, but not exclusively—in local matters. The values are user democracy, local governance, and citizen involvement. User democracy is usually prevalent in small local institutions such as schools and day care centers. Citizen involvement consists, for example, of local planning hearings, whereas local governance usually concerns the autonomy of local government in relation to the state. Here, too, the values are related to one another, and the related values overlap. However, citizen involvement must be considered a superordinate value. It has the largest number and greatest variety of related values: the will of the people, listening to public opinion, responsiveness, dialogue, balance of interests, and self-fulfillment.

A third subgroup consists of protection of minorities and protection of the rights of the individual. It is, of course, most relevant to see this group

as a form of counterbalance to the first group. It is particularly easy to imagine the will of the majority being perverted into the tyranny of the majority and the will of the people into lynching. This is why minorities need protection and the individual needs to be guaranteed basic rights. Protection of minorities has as related values fairness, justice, balance of interests, and human dignity, whereas protection of the rights of the individual also relates to more legalistic values such as equal treatment and the rule of law.

Constellation 3: Values Associated With the Relationship Between the Public Administration and Politicians

Three values are particularly relevant: accountability, responsiveness, and political loyalty. These values stress that politicians are the ones who make the final decisions and provide the funding. Public administrators, therefore, must act in an accountable fashion in relation to politicians. Responsiveness is close to accountability. However, whereas accountability relates, for example, to reliability and professionalism, responsiveness stresses listening and reacting quickly to the wishes of others.

Accountability and responsiveness are very much rubber values, with little substance per se because a person can be responsible to all sorts of people. The situation is slightly different when it comes to loyalty, which is typically mentioned in connection with management and hierarchies and refers in particular to political loyalty. Political loyalty is stronger than accountability and responsiveness in the sense that the opposite—disloyalty—insinuates active insubordination vis-à-vis one's mayor or minister, whereas lack of accountability and responsiveness may be due to unintentional carelessness or improper training. Related values to political loyalty are accountability, stability, neutrality, the will of the people, and public interest, which makes it a central value in a democratic state.

Constellation 4: Values Associated With the Relationship Between Public Administration and Its Environment

These values are divided into three subgroups. The first one has to do with public insight. At one end of the scale we have openness; that is, the public administration is transparent. Openness may take different forms. The administration may be open in a passive way, publish what it has to, answer questions from the public, and so forth. Responsiveness, on the other hand, implies that the public administration complies more actively with public demands, and listening to public opinion means responding

more specifically to the opinion as expressed in the media or in opinion polls. A large number of values are related to openness, such as accountability (openness counteracts carelessness) and the rule of law (openness counteracts abuses of power), dialogue (openness is a precondition for dialogue), democracy, the will of the people, and collective choice (openness facilitates popular control of the public administration).

At the opposite end of the scale is secrecy. In its most brutal sense, this covers the secrecy of the police state in order to increase its power over its citizens. In a less brutal sense, it covers confidential information and strategies when dealing with foreign powers. Finally, secrecy may be seen as protection of citizens in the sense that registered information by public authorities about citizens must not be published. A large number of values are related to secrecy that point in different directions. Secrecy may lead to stability and continuity (by sealing off the organization for external demands). Secrecy may also be related to the rule of law and protection of the rights of the individual. Finally, secrecy may be related to productivity and effectiveness because it may eliminate external disturbances.

The second subgroup is based on advocacy versus neutrality. If a public organization is to champion a particular point of view, or make sure that a specific problem is always on the agenda, then it might be said to live up to the value of advocacy. Examples are legion. The Ministry of the Environment is expected to protect the environment, the courts to guarantee legal rights, and the consumer ombudsman to take the side of consumers. Related values are professionalism and enthusiasm. Enthusiasm (or commitment) is self-evident. It is difficult to be a credible watchdog if you cannot muster any enthusiasm for the issue. Professionalism often implies dealing with groups of clients whose problems must be interpreted within the context of a professional code.

At the opposite end of this scale are values such as neutrality and impartiality. The two values relate to one another. Important subtle differences do exist, however. Impartiality stresses the very fact that parties are involved. Related values are objectivity and justice. Neutrality can, of course, mean remaining neutral in relation to the parties involved, but the most common meaning is that administrators do not have personal feelings or interests involved. Professionalism is, therefore, a related value, especially compared to the meaning of having a professional relationship to something or somebody.

Somewhere between advocacy and impartiality are the values balancing interests and compromise, that is, influencing the relationship between two or more parties in such a way that the strong do not unreasonably dominate the weak and finding a solution that is sufficiently satisfactory to everybody

involved. Again, these are values that are close to one another but still have important subtle differences. Values related to balancing interests are openness, democracy, and stability because the desire to create balance implies openness and democracy and balancing interests promotes stability. Compromise heads in a slightly different direction. Related values are reasonableness, fairness, and dialogue because peoples' points of view are listened to; adaptability because compromising reflects the capacity to adapt to others; and robustness because decisions built on compromises are longer lasting than those built on dictates.

Finally, there are the latest (newest) values of shareholder value and competitiveness. Shareholder value is related to parsimony, productivity, and effectiveness. Competitiveness has various meanings. In the narrow sense, it means market success. In the broader sense, which has become more relevant in the public sector, it also infers the ability to win contracts. Competitiveness is related to values such as a businesslike approach, risk readiness, responsiveness, and effectiveness. At the opposite end of the scale, we find cooperativeness. This is clearly a classic public administration virtue. Because of the lack of market forces, public organizations must be coordinated by cooperation.

Constellation 5: Values Associated With Intraorganizational Aspects of Public Administration

We now approach organizational values. The common denominator in the first subgroup is captured by the machine metaphor. The values are robustness, adaptability, stability, reliability, and timeliness. They are closely related. Organizational robustness is all about a suitable combination of stability and adaptability, about being immune to outside influences, and about the ability to flow with the tide when necessary. Adaptability relates to flexibility and responsiveness, whereas stability relates to continuity, legality, and social cohesion. Reliability adds subtle new dimensions by being related to timeliness, effectiveness, and the rule of law. Finally, timeliness relates to a number of values from another subgroup, that is, parsimony, productivity, effectiveness, and a businesslike approach. Working in a public administration based on these values might not be fun, but its operations would be trustworthy.

Two subgroups of values contrast with the reliable machine. One subgroup includes innovation, enthusiasm, and risk readiness. Organizations characterized by these values are rarely weighed down by precedence or held back by worries about the future. They tend to be more in the here and

now as well as dynamic. Innovation seems to be the central value. It relates to both risk readiness and to enthusiasm, as well as to dialogue, adaptability, and flexibility. Although innovation is about creating something new, it is perfectly feasible to be enthusiastic about something that is in no way associated with innovation. Rather, enthusiasm is related to altruism and a good working environment. Risk readiness entails yet another subtle difference. Risk readiness is not necessarily about innovation; it is about taking chances. This value is related to flexibility and competitiveness. The link between the three values seems to be that it is difficult to imagine an innovative organization without enthusiasm and risk readiness, whereas it is possible to imagine enthusiasm or risk readiness in organizations without it leading to innovation.

The other contrast consists of typical new public management values: productivity, effectiveness, parsimony, a businesslike approach, and timeliness. These are also values generally associated with economic thinking, cost consciousness, downsizing, and contracting out. These values are related almost exclusively to one another, but a businesslike approach is also related to risk readiness.

The final subgroup focuses on the organization or the public administration as a workplace. The values are the self-development of employees and a good working environment. A good working environment is associated with enthusiasm, innovation, and productivity, whereas self-development relates to professionalism.

To an extent, these four subgroups are each other's opposites, and it is also in association with organizational values that the expression "competing values" appears for the first time (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981).

Constellation 6: Values Associated With the Behavior of Public-Sector Employees

Rulers of large territories have always needed organization and planning and, therefore, loyal servants and advisors. Drawing up a genealogy of public values would probably be a good place to start. This section is not particularly copious simply because some of the relevant values have already been mentioned as values by which an organization, or the whole of the public sector, ought to abide. However, some of these values are also obviously relevant to public sector employees because organizational values alone will not do. The staff also has to think and act inspired by values. For example, it is impossible to imagine an organization being innovative if exclusively timid creatures of habit populated it. Put differently, it is difficult to see some values only as system values and not as personal values

too. Probably, this goes for a number of diverse values such as altruism, respect for democracy, political loyalty, impartiality, enthusiasm, and risk readiness.

Are no genuine values associated with public-sector staff then? First, accountability and professionalism ought to be mentioned. Even though they both have already been mentioned in other groups, they belong primarily in this subgroup. They imply that the public employee works in a serious, reflective, and competent manner.

Furthermore, values such as honesty, moral standards, and ethical consciousness are associated quite directly with the individual. Honesty is related to a number of other values such as objectivity, impartiality, openness, integrity, and accountability. The three values also relate to each other.

It seems, however, that the central value in this group is integrity. A person with integrity is a person who remains unmoved by personal motives, interests, bribery, popular opinion, changing fashions, smears, and so forth but has sufficient backbone to stick to a certain point of view or principle. A person with integrity has a solid core. Integrity is also one of the values that relate to a large number of other values because it takes so many words to define the meaning of integrity: honesty, dignity, fairness, ethical consciousness, moral standards, professionalism, openness, impartiality, and regime loyalty. The latter may sound surprising but is included because a person with integrity has to remain loyal to the system within which he or she works—or resign.

Constellation 7: Values Associated With the Relationship Between Public Administration and the Citizens

For the past two decades, the relationship between public administration and the citizen has been one of the most widely discussed problems in connection with administrative reforms and is also one of the most important areas of administrative law. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that quite a lot of values belong to this group. They consist of four distinct subgroups.

The first one has to do with the legal status of the citizen in relation to the public administration. It includes values such as legality, protection of the rights of the individual, equal treatment, and the rule of law. What these values all have in common is that they can be related to one another systematically, indicating that the group is very consistent. Other related values are stability, neutrality, and impartiality.

However, important subtle differences exist yet again between these values. Legality refers to the fundamental idea that the relationship between public administration and the citizen should be regulated by law (as opposed to discretionary administration or the arbitrary exercise of power).

Related values are reliability and stability. Protecting the rights of individuals and equal treatment under the law are legal constructs and relate to values such as fair treatment, human dignity, and social cohesion. The rule of law can be seen as a superior value because it is presumed that the rule of law is achieved only by means of legality and protection of the rights of the individual and that equal treatment is a necessary component of the rights of the individual. Finally, justice is included in this subgroup because it is the recurring objective of these values. Thus, justice is a prime value.

Justice serves as an ideal transition to the next subgroup, which is based on the fact that laws, if applied rigidly and insensitively, result in justice not being served. The values in the second subgroup are equity, reasonableness, and fair treatment. The common denominator in these values is that circumstances have to be taken into consideration; the citizen has to be treated on the basis of a holistic approach and moderation rather than excessive adherence to abstract principles. On the other hand, these characteristics must not lead to this subgroup being perceived as merely corrective to the first subgroup. Equity, reasonableness, and fairness may also be said—especially along with professionalism—to be the core of the many services provided on the basis of professional discretion.

The third subgroup is based on the idea that the citizen learns and develops through contact with the public sector. The values are dialogue, responsiveness, user democracy, citizen involvement, and the citizen's self-development. This subgroup clearly stems from the tradition of participatory democracy. Related values are, for example, responsiveness, balancing interests, compromise, the will of the people, and listening to public opinion. By taking on board these values, the public administration not only accepts active responsibility for the development of the citizens, but also transforms its relationship to the citizen from an authoritarian relationship to a channel for democratic input.

The final subgroup is the new public management version of the relationship. The citizen is a customer and is epitomized primarily by the value user orientation, that is, based on the user's/customer's needs. Services have to be supplied on time, and the customer has to be met with friendliness.

Constructions on the Basis of the Values: Proximity, Hierarchy, and Causality

By discussing a great many of the values in the value universe, it becomes evident that values are not considered equally important, that some values

are so closely related that they seem to form clusters, and that values can be related to one another in a variety of different ways. Three dimensions on which we can consider values are (a) proximity, (b) hierarchy, and (c) causality. The proximity of values tells us about the closeness of one particular value to another. Thus, the value *neutrality* seems close to the value *objectivity* but not so close to the value *democratic participation*. The hierarchy of values pertains to their relative primacy. For example, for any particular individual (or social group, or even a state) liberty may be viewed as more important than efficiency. Quite possibly both values are viewed as important, but it is nonetheless possible to specify or infer a hierarchy of importance. Most troublesome is the causality of values. When we say that one value is a means to an end, then we are making a causal claim, even if ever so informally or unself-consciously.

Proximity of Values

With respect to the proximity of values, we can say that values are unrelated, neighbor values, covalues, or nodal values. Some values are close to each other in meaning but are nevertheless not identical, for example, parsimony and productivity. These we label as *neighbor values.* We identified an abundance of neighbor values. Even though their proximity to each other may sometimes appear self-evident, it is often a matter of interpretation whether two values are too far apart to be neighbor values or whether they are so close to one another to be considered synonyms.[5] Neighbor values are important in two ways. First, identifying neighbor values helps define in greater detail the value used as the starting point. Second, the number of neighbor values provides a clue about the importance of the value. We assume that the larger the number of neighbor values, the more richly faceted the starting point and the greater the significance of the value, just as there are many words for snow in Greenland.

Additionally, values may be related to one another in the sense that they frequently appear at the same time or covary. One of the values may have a positive effect on the other, or one of the values may be a precondition for the other. For example, it might be argued that the rule of law is promoted by openness. These are covalues. Again, a large number of covalues are taken to be an indicator of the value's importance.

Values with large numbers of related values we label *nodal values.* They appear to occupy a central position in a network of values. Our nodal values terminology is in some respects similar to the concept of centrality in network theory, but we prefer the term *nodal* because there is less implication

Table 2
Nodal Values, Neighbor Values, and Covalues

Nodal Value	Neighbor Values	Covalues
Human dignity	Citizens' self-development, citizen involvement, protection of the rights of the individual	Justice, benevolence, voice of the future, equity
Sustainability	Voice of the future	Stability, continuity, the common good, the public interest, moral standards, ethical consciousness, solidarity
Citizen involvement	The will of the people, listening to public opinion, responsiveness	Dialogue, balancing interests, self-development
Openness	Responsiveness, listening to public opinion	Accountability, rule of law, dialogue, democracy, the will of the people, collective choice
Secrecy		Stability, continuity, the rule of law, protection of the rights of the individual, productivity, effectiveness
Compromise	Balancing interests	Reasonableness, fairness, dialogue, adaptability, robustness
Integrity	Honesty, dignity, fairness, ethical consciousness, moral standards, professionalism, openness, impartiality, loyalty to the regime	
Robustness	Stability, adaptability, reliability	Legality, social cohesion, flexibility, responsiveness, rule of law, timeliness, effectiveness

that the value is necessarily more important than others. Table 2 lists important examples of nodal values.

Openness is a particularly interesting nodal value. First, it has many and varying covalues. Second, it is ambiguous how openness actually affects some of these values. Openness may enhance as well as endanger the rule of law and effectiveness. Openness is not made any less interesting by the fact that its opposite—secrecy—also may have ambiguous impact on the rule of law and effectiveness. This means that it is difficult to discuss openness and secrecy in general. Moreover, a potential conflict is identified

because openness and secrecy may have positive as well as negative effects on the rule of law and effectiveness.

The exact meaning of these nodal values is open to discussion. Note that values regarded as highly central—such as effectiveness, the rule of law, and democracy—have not been classified as nodal values. Rather, it is suggested that if nodal values are forgotten, this may have knock-on effects, which—depending on the value under discussion—may branch out in many different directions.

Many of the values seem to appear in clusters. This is already implicit in the subgroupings. It is most obvious in the categories that refer to the intra-organizational aspects of public administration and the relationship between administration and citizen. In both cases, there are four groups of values that are mutually interrelated; indeed, they form almost a single entity. The four clusters of organizational values are robustness, innovation, optimal performance, and a good workplace. These four clusters may also be taken as four ideals of public administration. They are quite different, not to mention independent of one another, and therefore also potentially in conflict with one another. A line can be drawn, however, from a good working environment to innovation and productivity. Four value clusters have also been identified in the relationship between administration and citizen: the rule of law, professional discretion, citizen involvement, and customer orientation. Again, these are four independent and potentially conflicting clusters of values.

We believe that value clusters and nodal values indicate important organizational design problems in the public sector. On one hand, it might be argued that there is a choice between conflicting values or value clusters. It may not be possible to have both the rule of law and citizen involvement or robustness and innovation. Choices have to be made, so it is a matter of identifying pure models based on harmonious values. On the other hand, it might be argued that reality is never so pure that it can be encapsulated in a single pure model. For example, situations will always exist in which there is a need for both robustness and innovation. Perhaps the question, then, is how to balance values.

Values Hierarchy and Causality

To reiterate, values hierarchy pertains to their relative primacy. Although the problem of relationship and hierarchies among values is not exclusive to the issue of public values, the problem is especially acute. In general, the sorting out of values is a remarkably difficult analytical task. We cannot avoid some considerable conceptual and terminological analysis in route to the question of how to sort public values, and the place to start is with value itself.

We consider the hierarchy of values and their causality because these issues are to some extent inseparable. For example, if one value is considered a prime value, one pursued for its own sake, and the other an instrumental value, then there is an imputation both of hierarchy and causality. Although it is possible to conceive of a highly differentiated hierarchy of values, with gradations of preference for each, the distinction in value theory between instrumental values and prime values is a common one. Prime values are those that are ends in themselves, which once achieved represent an end state of preference. The central feature of a prime value is that it is a thing valued for itself, fully contained, whereas an instrumental value is valued for its ability to achieve other values (which may or may not themselves be prime values).

Van Dyke (1962) speaks of instrumental values as conditions and prime values as consequences. This helps clarify only so long as one remembers that instrumental values are not the only consequences affecting the realization of prime values and that the assumptions we make about the conditions required for the achievement of instrumental values often prove wrong. In the social sciences, the distinction between prime and instrumental values is generally recognized, but many different terms have been used for the distinction, some with slight differences of meaning. Dahl and Lindblom (1953) refer to prime and instrumental values, but others (see Van Dyke, 1962, for an overview) use the terms *proximate* and *remote*, or *immediate* and *ultimate*, among other possibilities.

Although it is tempting to argue that the term *public values* should be ascribed only to those that are clearly prime values, doing so is misleading. If one believes, as we do, that there are no inherently prime values, or no indisputable self-evident truths, then the designation of public values as exclusively prime values carries little meaning. We return to the issue of prime and instrumental values and their causal implications in the conclusion.

Conclusion

In this section, we use the public values inventory presented above as a point of departure for providing preliminary answers to the core research questions identified at the beginning of this article.

Public Value Is Not Governmental

Our review suggests that government has a special role as guarantor of public values, but public values are not the exclusive province of government,

nor is government the only set of institutions having public value obligations. Many of the studies we examined posited public values separate from the legal status of the organizations in question. This judgment also comports well with our own previous studies (e.g., Antonsen & Beck Jørgensen, 1997; Bozeman, 1987), which suggest that public value obligations track along the lines set down by political authority. One implication of this view is that the obligations pertaining to public value correspond in some respects to public and civil law. Just as public law pertains to private citizens and private corporate actors, so does public value set obligations of nongovernmental actors. If one accepts this view, the implications are startling. If one accepts that private actors have public value obligations, many of the fundamental axioms of market economies require careful scrutiny and reworking. Particularly crucial is the idea that if one accepts that private actors have public value obligations, then it is not sufficient for corporate actors affected by political authority minimally to comply with the law. A notion of public value that sets extralegal obligations for private actors flies in the face of much of American political culture (and less so in Danish political culture).

Embracing a concept of public value conferring (extralegal) obligations on private individuals and institutions requires some rationalization, hopefully a rationalization that is not entirely dependent on idiosyncratic, personal moral tenets. Our reasoning is that public value is rooted, ultimately, in society and culture, in individuals and groups, and not just in government (Melchior & Melchior, 2001). Even if government is legitimate, it owes its legitimacy to the social covenants and voluntary regime compliance that is the basis of government legitimacy. To put it another way, government legitimacy and public values are different tributaries of the same headwater. Thus, a legitimate democratic government has a special role as guarantor of public value, but because the basis of public value is much broader than government, governments' public values obligations are not exhaustive. Just as private citizens have obligations and expectations from a legitimate democratic government, so do they have obligations and expectations in relation to their society's public values. The fact that public values are neither manifestly codified nor universally agreed on does not mitigate either the obligations or expectations. Similarly, the fact that a legitimate government's laws and public policies are fluid does not diminish either the government's or the citizen's obligations.

In some instances, government is built on bedrock, unlike the murky base of public values; for example, a constitution is a document that even if subject to reinterpretation, nonetheless endures. But some governments

(notably the British government, but many others as well) have no written constitution and, instead, the bedrock for governance is common law. In many respects, a common law basis for a legitimate government is analogous to the unwritten social covenants serving as the basis for a particular society's or nation's set of core public values. Both are organic and mutable but also steeped in tradition, precedent, and consensus. Both evolve slowly, always retaining a strong substantial core even as there are changes in the periphery.

Many Public Values Are Prime Values But Cannot Be Distinguished on That Basis Alone

Our inventory of public values yielded constellations of values, and within those constellations we were able to identify some as more central than others (e.g., nodes). But is there a subset of prime values that are not instrumental but are ends in themselves?

The founders of the United States began the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence with a strong statement about prime values and instrumental ones:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

We make two observations relevant to the issue of public values. First, founding documents of a legitimate government provide insight into the most fundamental public values. Second, even with the most fundamental public values, one should not expect universal assent or immutable self-evident truths. Understandably, certain 18th-century self-evident truths might be subject to very different interpretation today, especially the definition of the enfranchised citizens ("Right of the People") as White male property owners. But even during the 18th century the self-evident truths were, in fact, much in dispute. The rights and obligations of rebellion were certainly in dispute, not only in England but in the United States. Today these self-evident truths serve as one of many starting points for inferring core public

values of the United States but provide little insight into the hierarchy of public values or even the relationship among public values.

Public Values Analysis Is Both Causal Inquiry (Instrumental Values) and Philosophical and Moral Inquiry (Prime Values)

An inventory of public values is not, in and of itself, a satisfying end point. What type of analysis is appropriate to a set of public values? We feel that two quite different types of analyses are in order, and the two often get confused. Analysis of public values requires both moral reasoning and causal reasoning.

From the standpoint of empirical social science, the fact that prime values are not intersubjectively held or experienced is vexing and limits the ability of social scientists to inform. But the role of the social scientists is virtually unbound with respect to instrumental values. All instrumental values can be viewed as causal hypotheses that are, in principle, subject to empirical tests. Consider the following statement: "The government agency's mission is to contribute to the quality of life and economic security of individuals who are unemployed or underemployed due to their having few skills valued in the marketplace." After identifying persons eligible for the program and recruiting them to the program, the program objective is to provide 100 hours of formal training in automobile mechanics and repair and to place the program participants in internships that will prepare them for full-time employment as mechanics. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that the agency's mission is an equivalent of a prime value. Providing jobs that increase economic security and quality of life seems a good end point or consumption point value, a value worth achieving for the benefits if confers. Moreover, it seems an excellent candidate for a core public value. The program objectives—identifying and recruiting personnel, providing training and apprenticeships—seem to be instrumental values.[6]

If one is interested in identifying and measuring public value, it certainly seems advisable to focus on both the prime and the instrumental public values and, when possible, the de facto causal claims of public and private actors enacting public values. But to a large extent, the analysis of those core public values viewed as prime values remains in the realm of philosophical analysis inasmuch as the issues involved are not empirical ones giving rise to synthetic propositions that can be tested. To the extent one wishes to take an empirical posture toward prime public values, perhaps the identification of prime public values is the best one can hope for. For this task, an understanding of history; social covenants, both official and unofficial;

and culture seem the best sources. Our alternative, a preliminary one, has been to review literature on uses of public value. This seems to us to serve some purposes including (a) moving us from a discussion of analytical problems to a discussion of particular values, (b) illustrating some of the problems identified above, and (c) underscoring the chaotic nature of current knowledge about public values.

Values Relationships Are Many and Unwieldy But Must Be Sorted Out

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to analysis of public values is the interrelationship of so many values, so often stated ambiguously. If there is any single item for a public values research agenda, it is developing approaches to sorting out values and making sense of their relationships. Two important elements of relationships are hierarchy and distinguishing prime values from instrumental values. Once this has been accomplished, then it may be possible to determine whether values are in alignment and whether the values that seem prerequisites for others actually enable the achievement of prime values. Our inventory has been a modest step in that direction. A next step needs to be a more careful one with more intensive analysis of fewer values. We feel it would be useful to build on the approach we have set here, identifying constellations of values and then determining their network properties. At the same time as we are being good empiricists, it is important to understand that there is no science of values. There can be no means of developing a public values calculus or an intersubjectively experienced hierarchy among putative prime public values. No calculus can make prime values either objectively or intersubjectively valid. In this respect, public values remain analogous to the principles of common law—an ambiguous but potentially viable set of criteria for action and accountability.

Appendix
A Public Values Inventory

Accountability, adaptability, advocacy, altruism
Balancing interests, benevolence, businesslike approach
Citizen involvement, citizens' self-development, collective choice, common good, competitiveness, compromise, continuity, cooperativeness
Democracy, dialogue
Effectiveness, efficiency, employees' self-development, enthusiasm, equal treatment, equity, ethical consciousness

Fairness, friendliness
Good working environment
Honesty, human dignity
Impartiality, innovation, integrity
Justice
Legality, listening to public opinion, local governance
Majority rule, moral standards
Neutrality
Openness
Parsimony, political loyalty, professionalism, protection of individual rights, protection of minorities, productivity, public interest
Reasonableness, regime dignity, regime loyalty, regime stability, reliability, responsiveness, risk readiness, robustness, rule of law
Secrecy, shareholder value, social cohesion, stability, sustainability
Timeliness
User democracy, user orientation
Voice of the future
Will of the people

Notes

1. The journals reviewed include *Public Administration Review*, *Public Administration*, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *Governance*, *Nordisk Administrativt Tidsskrift*, *Norsk Statsvitenskapligt Tidsskrift, Statsvetenskapligt Tidsskrift*, and *Politica*. Searches for relevant literature were made in the database of the Royal Danish Library and in interconnected network databases.

2. The identified values in this article have been found in Antonsen and Beck Jørgensen (1997), Beck Jørgensen (1993), Bozeman (2002), Brereton and Temple (1999), Butler (1993, 1994), Caiden (1991), Chapman (1993), Christensen and Lægreid (1997), deLeon (1994), K. G. Denhardt (1988), R. B. Denhardt, (1993), DJØF's fagligt etiske arbejdsgruppe (1993), Egeberg (1994), Eriksen (1993), Forvaltningspolitiska Kommissionen (1997), Frederickson (1997), Goodsell (1989, 1994), Greenaway (1995), Gregersen (1996), Harmon and Mayer (1986), Heffron (1989), Hermansen-utvalget (1989), Hesse (1993), Hood (1991), Hooijkaas Wik (2001), Keating (1995), Keraudren (1995), Kernaghan (1994), Kickert (1997), Lawton and Rose (1994), Lundquist (1998, 2001), Milward (1996), Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (1995), OECD (1995, 1996a, 1996b), Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981), Rainey (1997), Smith (1991), Stewart and Clarke (1987), Stewart and Walsh (1992), Toonen (1993), Van Deth and Scarbrough (1995), Van Wart (1998), and Wamsley and Wolf (1996).

3. In reviewing the literature, Step 1 entailed the two authors separately, for each value, answering this question: To which other values is this value related? In the initial presentation, these are referred to merely as *related* values. However, along the way, it became clear that there are two meanings of *related*: First, a value may be related to another in meaning; second, the occurrence of one value may promote the occurrence of another. This will be looked at again in greater depth after the values have been introduced. For each value, the authors then compared results and worked toward agreement or identified disagreements. During these

discussions, certain values were deleted because they were obvious synonyms for ones that had already been discussed. To avoid a bias in these discussions, the values were addressed in random order. Consequently, which similar concepts were adjudged to be synonyms and which survived was very much a matter of chance. This method is inspired by the one used by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981) in their analysis of the effectiveness concept.

4. Particularly in American public administration research, it has been more or less *comme il faut* not to use the concept of public interest after it was heavily criticized in the late 1950s. The concept is, however, enjoying something of a renaissance. For example, see Goodsell (1990), who lists important elements of the concept debate, plus Lundquist (1998) and Van Wart (1998).

5. Thus, objectivity was removed from the list, which already included impartiality, neutrality, honesty, and integrity. It is open to discussion whether the decision was correct.

6. We mentioned that values are not inherently prime. Thus, for example, there are some people who derive aesthetic satisfaction from automobile mechanics, even if it does not lead to an improvement in their employment status. Similarly, the recruiting of persons for the program may have some consumption point value for both the agency and the program recipients: The agency is more likely to thrive and sustain itself if it has program participants, and the recruits may enjoy the social interactions and acquaintances provided by the program. But it is reasonable, if not necessary, to view these program objectives as close equivalents to prime public values.

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