

## Journal of Public Affairs Education

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# The Values of Public Administration

**David Schultz**  
Co-Editor

Is public administration neutral and, if not, what are the values that define its practice? Advocating for a normative theory and practice of public administration has long been a major theme of many articles in this and other journals, yet such a call runs contrary to much of the field's received wisdom and the idea of an "objective" science of public administration and policy. How, if at all, is it possible to reconcile the two viewpoints?

Consider, first, that the tradition of public administration and policy dates back to the 19th century. Students of public administration and policy are familiar with the concepts of neutral competence and the politics/administration dichotomy that emerged at the end of that century (Schultz, 2004). This dichotomy called for removing politics from the administration of government, leaving politics to the realm of elected officials who make policy. This movement arose in reaction to the spoils system that had developed under U.S. president Andrew Jackson and the corrupt and often politicized administrations of other presidents. In the United States, civil service reform legislated by the Pendleton Act of 1883 became one mechanism to address these problems.

However, reformers' goals were broader, seeking to reconcile the operation of the federal bureaucracy with the mandates of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights (Schultz & Maranto, 1998). Reformers asked how a politically neutral merit system and a tenured civil service could operate within a political system that respected repre-

sentative democracy and accountability for public office holders through competitive elections. One solution was to try to distinguish politics from administration and to advocate for the goal of neutral competence.

The experiences of foreign regimes offered late 19th- and early 20th-century Americans a model for civil service reform and how to purge politics from the administration of government. Woodrow Wilson (1885/1968a), writing in his "Notes on Administration," contended that "the task of developing a science of administration for America should be approached with a larger observance of the utilities than is to be found in the German or French treatment of the subject" (p. 49). In this essay, Wilson stated for the first time that "administration should be subservient to the politics," a distinction that he would make more forcefully in his now famous essay "The Study of Administration" (Wilson, 1887/1968b, p. 359). Administrative questions, for Wilson, were distinct from political questions because while political questions are policy questions, public administration is simply the "detailed and systematic execution of public law" (p. 372). Borrowing from German writers, Wilson argued that administration is the detailed execution of general government policies and "lies outside the proper sphere of politics" (p. 372). Policies should be set by elected leaders and their appointees. Administration is the province of politically neutral, permanent officials selected for their expertise.

While Wilson's writings had little influence until decades after his death, Frank J. Goodnow's *Politics and Administration* was perhaps the most influential book upon early 20th-century administrative thinking (Goodnow, 1900/1967). It sought to clarify the various functions of the state, which Goodnow described as politics and administration. He defined politics as the "expressions of the state will" and administration as the "execution of these policies" (p. 18). While these are distinct functions, there is a need for harmony between the expression and execution of the law, because a popular government must be able to control the execution of the law if its will is to be expressed. Yet, while politics should control administration, there is a limit to how much politics should penetrate into administration lest the latter become inefficient.

For Wilson and Goodnow, a politically neutral bureaucracy was essential to respecting the values of a democracy. Thus it is the task of elected leaders, not unelected bureaucrats, to make normative policy decisions. If voters are to be able to control their leaders, they must be able to hold them accountable via elections. The theory, then, is that voters through elections select representatives who then make policy choices that are neutrally implemented by administrators. This is the process—or at least the theory—of how popular will is translated into law and policy.

Except in reality, this is not how it is done. Countless studies point to how elected leaders delegate policy functions to the bureaucracy. The field of administrative law is all about this process, and empirical political science, public administration, and policy studies also point out how the bureaucracy makes normative policy choices. And of course, increasingly, these descriptive studies themselves have turned normative. Beginning in 1968 with the Minnowbrook Conference under Dwight Waldo, there were calls for public administrators to reject the traditional formalism of public administration. This movement advocated for public administrators to become more concerned with social issues such as equity. Public administrators

were thus to become advocates or guardians for democracy and democratic values.

Today that normative mandate manifests itself as calls for social equity and cultural competence. More specifically, during my editorship of *JPAE* I have seen in this journal and others repeated arguments for both of these concerns to become central components of what we teach. While it is not my intention to quarrel with these values, it is important to understand the tension that such advocacy poses. Yes, good public administration and policy should consider these issues, but is it the purview of unelected bureaucrats to make these choices? Conversely, should public administrators simply serve neutrally and ignore threats to important democratic or other values? When President Donald Trump fired acting U.S. attorney general Sally Yates because she refused to defend his travel ban, believing it unconstitutional, was that a legitimate role for her or did she act beyond her scope of authority? There are powerful arguments on both sides of this issue.

I write about this tension between neutral and normative public policy and administration because it remains an important issue that is often ignored. As educators, we need to be cognizant of what role values play in our pedagogy and how what we advocate in our work addresses the complex issues and line drawing that follow advocacy for different teaching and research imperatives. The articles in this issue of *JPAE* explore these issues and offer a variety of answers.

Thomas P. Dunn and Manfred F. Meine lead off this issue examining a recurrent topic and concern of public affairs education today: online learning and programs. In "MPA Programs and Internet Education: Validation of Quality and Acceptance Despite Challenges Surrounding Online Delivery," the authors look to the U.S. military's significant role in the initial growth of online programs, and they also investigate recent enrollment declines. They

examine the connections between the two and discuss the future of online learning as it potentially faces a new crossroads.

Personality assessments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are staple tests in many human resources departments. Yet, as Christopher A. Cooper, Whitney Campbell-Bridges, and David M. McCord contend in “Personality and the Teaching of Public Administration: A Case for the Big Five,” such tests or, more specifically, discussions of personality types, seem absent from public affairs programs. Their article offers suggestions for how examination of personality types can be useful as a frame for many issues in public administration, even if Myers-Briggs is not in their opinion the best measure of personality.

Business administration programs have long employed case studies as pedagogical tools, but their use in public affairs has lagged, especially when it comes to teaching public administration in non-U.S. contexts. In “Providing Context and Inspiring Hope: Using the Case Method to Teach Public Policy in Developing Countries,” Robert Mudida and Nadia Rubaii explore the use of case studies in Kenya, arguing that contextual use of cases is critical to understanding the unique issues present in many developing countries.

One of the contemporary trends in education is reaching out to, or facilitating, life-long learners. Educators often think of themselves as educating current students, but what about those who are already in their careers? In “Expanding the Classroom: Local Government Practitioners’ Use of Academic Resources,” Willow S. Jacobson and Kristina T. Lambright undertake a survey of practitioners to determine if and how they use academic resources as part of their work. This article offers some surprising ideas and data regarding new ways that academics and schools might engage practitioners.

Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise curricula are increasingly large components of many public affairs programs. But who is teaching about these subjects and how?

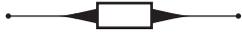
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Roseanne Marie Mirabella and Angela M. Eikenberry begin to answer these questions in “The Missing ‘Social’ in Social Enterprise Education in the United States.” They examine course offerings in public affairs programs and seek to determine how they address issues such as social capital and community building.

One challenge in teaching public affairs is how to deliver content in programs that are more applied as opposed to traditional liberal arts, especially at the undergraduate level. It is often difficult to reach students and make some concepts relevant to them. In “The Relevance of Regulation: Teaching Public Affairs Students in Applied Fields,” Marco Castillo addresses this conundrum, using student career interests as a hook to bridge the gap.

This issue of the journal also inaugurates the new *JPAE* Tools section, including the first of what will be useful case studies for teaching and classroom use. This issue features “Assignments for Studying Frontline Bureaucracy,” by N. Alexander Aguado, which describes coursework that teaches about what street-level bureaucrats do, helping students to examine and possibly consider public affairs career options.

Finally, this issue concludes with Muhittin Acar’s review of *Surveillance, Transparency, and Democracy: Public Administration in the Information Age*, by Akhlaque Haque. This excellent book, writes Acar, points to the challenges that technology poses to both public administrators and democratic governance. This book is a suitable companion to many classes that explore contemporary issues in public administration as well as other classes that critically examine the impact of new information technologies upon public affairs.

This issue of *JPAE* delivers a kaleidoscope of perspectives regarding the concerns of public administration, policy, and affairs. The articles all address implicit or explicit values and normative concerns that educators, students, and practitioners confront. I hope you enjoy what you read and feel that you, too, want to contribute to the dialogue by submitting an article,

book review, or case study. Please contact me at dschultz@hamline.edu if you have questions, comments, or suggestions. Thank you.

— *David Schultz*

CO-EDITOR

*Journal of Public Affairs Education*

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

dschultz@hamline.edu

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## ABOUT THE CO-EDITOR

**David Schultz** is professor of political science at Hamline University and professor at the Hamline and University of Minnesota Schools of Law. He is a three-time Fulbright Scholar and the author of more than 30 books and 100+ articles on various aspects of American politics, election law, and the media and politics. Schultz is regularly interviewed and quoted on these subjects in the local, national, and international media, including the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Economist*, and National Public Radio. His most recent book is *Presidential Swing States: Why Only Ten Matter* (Lexington Books, 2015).

# MPA Programs and Internet Education: Validation of Quality and Acceptance Despite Challenges Surrounding Online Delivery

**Manfred F. Meine**  
*Troy University*

**Thomas P. Dunn**  
*Troy University*

## **ABSTRACT**

Following tenuous beginnings in the 1990s, online education expanded dramatically as students “voted with a mouse,” resulting in even the most prestigious American universities adopting online courses. The often overlooked but extensive financial involvement of the U.S. military helped drive rapid growth in enrollment nationwide. This growth has declined significantly since 2009 and as of 2012 appeared to be stagnating. This article reviews the online education journey in detail, examines the U.S. military’s impact on the field’s growth, and discusses the potential crossroads facing online education. We discuss the ongoing speculation about why the growth in online enrollment may be declining and examine the perhaps pivotal implications of professional accreditation in general and Master of Public Administration programs in particular.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Online education, professional accreditation, U.S. military financial impact, MPA programs online

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Following auspicious beginnings in the 1990s as the ill-defined “classroom of the future,” online education enjoyed an unprecedented proliferation as students “voted with a mouse.” The U.S. military’s financial involvement facilitated this growth, and even the most prestigious American universities incorporated online offerings. Despite this rapid growth, this trend does not enjoy universal acceptance. Concerns about academic integrity and quality in online education are paramount for each of the three primary stakeholders: faculty,

students, and educational administrators (Amirault, 2012; Baggaley, 2014). Faculty concerns center on the time-honored traditions of academic freedom and its derivative, faculty autonomy. Online students, especially adult learners, many of whom have extensive family and career obligations, continue to be frustrated with pragmatic issues, such as the time and financial commitments required to achieve their educational goals online. The daunting task of resolving these critical issues falls to academic administrators, who must operate

within their own financial and regional accreditation imperatives. Unfortunately, these and other concerns may now be contributing to a decline in the growth of student participation in online education.

Research organizations such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, with their own definitions and research methodologies surrounding online education, have been monitoring the number of students enrolled in at least one online course since the onset of the military-based programs. There is no discernible disagreement that the rapid growth of online enrollment has slowed significantly since 2009, seeming to stagnate since 2012 (Allen & Seaman, 2015). Whether these trends will affect MPA programs is an important question.

Speculation about the reasons for slowed enrollment involves the possible saturation of the online adult-learner marketplace. There is intense competition among colleges and universities for adult learners. Of greater concern, however, is that remedies for declining enrollment may negatively affect the most crucial aspects of online education—namely, academic integrity and quality assurance—because of the financial pressures on schools to recruit and retain students.

Enter the pivotal role of professional accreditation for online Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs. As of 2015, of the 42 Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) member schools that offer full or partial MPA and related programs online, 32 had received professional accreditation from NASPAA, whose stringent standards and rigorous monitoring are widely recognized. The proliferation of online MPA programs seems unlikely to slow. Should that be true, it can be safely predicted that competition for the best and brightest MPA students will also intensify. What is less predictable is whether such competition will ultimately result in a decline in the growth of MPA online enrollments.

Given the decline in enrollments, the increase in competition among programs, and the uncertainty of future growth, online education in general is at a crossroads. Is the same true for online MPA offerings? Enrollment data indicate continuous growth in MPA programs, likely resulting in part from rapidly expanding online availability (NASPAA, 2015). So perhaps online MPA programs are at no such crossroads. Indeed, given the increasing validation of online offerings via NASPAA accreditation, it may be that MPA programs delivered online, either fully or in part, have already successfully navigated a significant challenge: the acceptance of online education by professional accreditors.

This article seeks to examine the current state of online education in general and online MPA programs in particular. We emphasize the endorsement of online delivery offered by professional accreditation as well as the philosophical and pragmatic significance of programs' achieving such accreditation from NASPAA.

## THE EVOLUTION OF DISTANCE LEARNING

### **The Early Years: A Fledgling but Promising Pedagogy**

Educators have debated the use of technology as a teaching tool since the beginning of the 20th century (Jaber & Moore, 1999). Early on, motion pictures were thought to be the cutting-edge technology that could redefine distance learning; but, by the 1930s, it was the skillful use of radio that was deemed critical to the success of distance education in a wireless new world (Kentnor, 2015). Soon, however, television was the technology paving the way for a revolution in teaching and learning, typified by the emergence of "telecourses" and even the mailing of video-taped classes or lectures, sometimes dubbed the "Pony Express" at Troy University. With the logistical aspects of even the most advanced technology becoming increasingly labor-intensive, distance learning was primed for the innovation that would ultimately replace all its predecessors: Internet education.

### Distance Learning Comes of Age

Since its inception as a potentially revolutionary pedagogy, and despite its having yet to achieve universal acceptance, Internet-based education has experienced unprecedented proliferation. Since the 1990s, online offerings have become firmly entrenched among even the most prestigious American universities (Allen & Seaman, 2015). Driven in part by the opportunity to deliver courses and programs to a segment of the academic marketplace, the adult learner, that had become increasingly disenfranchised by the logistical impediments associated with traditional brick-and-mortar campuses, colleges no doubt also considered the lucrative financial implications of acquiring even a small share of this emerging market. And to reap that potential benefit, universities were sorely in need of dependable revenue to jump-start their participation in online education (Kentnor, 2015).

Enter the U.S. military. Recruiting is a significant challenge for the military, and two services created innovative partnerships with institutions of higher education in an effort to use funded education as a recruiting and retention tool. In 2000, the navy launched a program known as the “Sweet Sixteen” (named for the sixteen schools chosen to participate). Not to be outdone, the army scooped the navy initiative by announcing in January 2001 an even more ambitious online education program, the centerpiece of which was the lure of \$700 million in funding designed to attract the enthusiastic participation of partner colleges and universities. These high-profile programs, and others soon launched by other branches of the military (e.g., Marine Corps Education and the Community College of the Air Force), had a profound impact on the ultimate proliferation of Internet-based learning in higher education. Well-established, military-focused schools were among the key initial players, and larger and more prominent institutions soon joined as a way to expand their academic programs via increased enrollments and enhanced, tuition-based revenue.

The broader education market took notice of this expanded funding, and the number of institutions competing for military dollars increased dramatically, especially among for-profit institutions. Some schools were even established with a primary focus on the military, such as the American Military University. Vastly increased veterans’ benefits enacted after the events of 9/11 further expanded the competition for military-generated education funding. Unfortunately, this fierce competition also eventually led to significant negative results, as evidenced by the recent suspension of tuition assistance benefits to one of the largest private universities in the United States because of alleged predatory practices (Bilodeau, 2015).

As could be expected, MPA programs were directly involved in and affected by the explosive growth of online learning and the increasing competition for students. Troy University seized the opportunity to capitalize on its already well-established reputation as a provider of quality education for military personnel to become one of the largest MPA programs in the United States (NASPAA, 2015).

Ironically, the intense competition among military services to initiate online education may have also contributed to the recent downward trend in online enrollments. That initial competition among military branches first declined due to budgetary constraints associated with rising educational costs and reduced recruiting needs in a defense reduction environment. Then came the increasingly intense competition among schools for a share of the lucrative adult learner demographic. And these factors combined to slow the growth of online enrollments for many educational institutions.

### The Continuing Evolution of Distance Learning

By the turn of the millennium, the Internet had evolved as the new revolution in educational delivery (Meyen, Tangen, & Lian, 1999). Schools throughout the nation joined in or at least began to consider this rapidly evolving medium as a solution to education delivery

challenges and a way to expand existing education markets. The inherent advantages of online education (e.g., the focus on flexibility) quickly evolved such that some schools began offering courses that could be completed on handheld personal digital devices, such as the once-popular Blackberry, with or without access to the Web (Malecki & Snyder, 2005).

The advent of online learning allowed schools to dramatically extend higher education to nontraditional students, whose previous access to postsecondary education had been limited by logistical issues in general and geographical limitations in particular. Increasingly sophisticated electronic delivery of distance education was characterized by the proactive incorporation of advancing technology, leading to fully online as well as hybrid (online and in-person) offerings. There was a seeming explosion in educationally focused technology, which in turn prompted concerns that this development was driven more by market forces than by what the technology might solve or improve (Bosch, Hartenberger, & Alhamzy, 2015).

Keeping up with the rapid growth of online distance learning generated significant obstacles for colleges and universities, such as technology expansion and online student services support, and these likely escalated with the continuing expansion of this educational delivery method. Questions as to meeting these early challenges remain (Udas, 2008), but they may soon be superseded by new challenges associated with both stagnation in online enrollment and the specter of an actual decline in enrollment.

### **The Military and Online Education: Some Functional and Dysfunctional Consequences**

Despite misgivings, students, especially those in the military, initially accepted online pedagogy. For example, a start-up distance learning effort at Troy University that had accounted for fewer than 124 enrollments per year at the turn of the 20th century grew to over 17,000 per year just five years later (Meine, 2002, 2005), a

growth in line with or even exceeding national trends (Allen & Seaman, 2008). However, while the growth appeared to be unending, there were already indications that the playing field was changing (Meine, 2008). A similar phenomenon occurred at the University of Maryland's University College, which through distance learning evolved to become one of the largest schools in the world, serving some 90,000 students (Maryland.Gov, 2016).

A sizable portion of enrollments at these and other schools came from and continue to come from military personnel (Allen & Seaman, 2015), including many students who once attended on-base classes but made the transition to Web-based education. Of note at Troy University, the student migration to online settings resulted in the elimination of most in-class, off-campus, and on-base MPA programs, as these offerings became financially unfeasible due to the dwindling number of students. Although the reasons for this migration are speculative, the convenience and lure of asynchronous education likely had much to do with the shift; in addition, Troy's efforts to offer its entire curriculum online every term may have also attracted students.

A negative side effect of the distance learning phenomenon was the difficulty of maintaining viable on-base education programs in the face of the exodus to online classes. Not only did most colleges with on-base programs see their own students choose online coursework, in part or in full, but on-base programs concurrently faced competition from numerous distance learning programs offered by schools without an on-base presence. Education officials on military bases frequently voiced concerns about military education dollars going to 60, 70, even 80 colleges or technical schools while there were typically only a handful of on-base education providers (M. F. Meine, personal communication with U.S. Air Force education officials and at meetings of the Advisory Councils on Military Education and the Council of College and Military Educators).

As of 2015, more than 2,700 schools that managed over 14,000 teaching locations were approved for Department of Defense tuition dollars (Department of Defense, 2015). By this time, the ramifications of distance learning on higher education had also begun to affect traditional on-campus delivery. Specifically, it was not uncommon for resident students, especially undergraduates matriculating on traditional campuses, to sit in their dorms or fraternity houses and take online courses. This practice has persisted and become a cause for concern among colleges and universities.

Until recently, and perhaps most important, officials from colleges and universities with on-base programs frequently raised concerns about being held to strict guidelines and being subject to accreditation-like reviews through the Military Installation Voluntary Education Review process; off-base schools offering distance learning, however, are not held to the same standards. The military review process, managed by the American Council on Education, is akin to a regional accreditation review; it concentrates on installation-based military education officials and examines on-base education programs using teams of visitors. Responding to the concerns of on-base schools, the Department of Defense assembled a task force to examine establishing rules and standards for off-base education providers, including those primarily offering distance learning programs. The resulting policy, or memorandum of understanding, requires schools to meet certain conditions and standards to be eligible for military tuition dollars (Department of Defense, 2015). This memorandum is how the Department of Defense suspended the University of Phoenix in 2015 from on-base efforts and from receiving tuition dollars, a controversial move to some lawmakers (Altman, 2015; Dickstein, 2015) and one remedied by early 2016 (Associated Press, 2016).

**Military-assisted MPA Programs.** MPA programs that risked offering courses online also saw growth in enrollments. Troy University's

MPA program, which through its long-standing focus on supporting military students and offering on-base programs had already become one of the largest such programs in the United States, also grew with the influx of military-funded students. Unfortunately, that growth was short-lived.

Many military-friendly or military-focused schools continue to operate in the military education marketplace, but they are increasingly challenged by the military's effort to seek college credits and degrees for service members. The military's stated focus in this effort is on quality, but the military also expects programs to be short-term and low-cost while providing maximum experiential credit. Not surprisingly, this emphasis might conflict with the stringent requirements of professional accreditation.

Military funding continues to be a lure motivating schools to participate in online instruction. But the lucrative financial aspects of Internet-based distance learning have become more than sufficient to attract schools not directly focused on providing online education for military personnel, thus expanding competition for students. The proliferation of institutions attracted to online delivery also brought schools that had not undergone the military's stringent quality control review, thereby fostering not only an increasingly competitive playing field but an increasingly uneven one as well. This was true especially because a number of NASPAA member and NASPAA-accredited schools—such as Bowie State, Central Michigan University, Golden Gate University, the University of Oklahoma, Troy University, and others operating in the military environment—were subject to and underwent the additional military review process.

## CONTINUING ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND CHALLENGES

### Technology: The Ultimate Challenge

For online delivery of academic information to have become not only a viable but highly

regarded and widely utilized pedagogy, the technology had to be affordable, efficient, and user-friendly for all stakeholders. As a result, and by necessity, initial concerns focused on the efficacy of such entrepreneurial systems as WebCT and Blackboard. Once most concerns regarding delivery technology were resolved, significant logistical and academic questions began to emerge.

To make Internet-based education in general, and specific programs like the MPA, viable included garnering faculty acceptance. And to achieve acceptance, courses had to be secure from both an academic perspective (e.g., ensuring testing integrity) and a student privacy perspective (e.g., ensuring protection of personal information), while still offering seamless access from anywhere, at any time. Course delivery systems also needed to maintain compatibility with ever-changing technology. The need for academic integrity in general and testing integrity in particular were paramount. When initial efforts to solve the problem of testing integrity via a mandate for human proctoring proved logistically problematic, if not prohibitive, the search for a technological solution became the order of the day.

As an example, recognizing the need for a new methodology that would be compatible with the online testing environment, Troy University, an institution already involved in online program delivery, committed to combining nontraditional students with cutting-edge technology. To that end, Troy partnered with the Secureexam Corporation to develop the Remote Proctor. This device was designed to resolve the two most crucial issues in online testing: ensuring that the person being tested is in fact the appropriate student; and ensuring that the student being tested does not have access to unauthorized resources. Other innovative technological solutions that enable the use of remote human proctoring, such as those provided by ProctorU (Troy University, 2017), have since gained tacit, if not enthusiastic, acceptance.

### **Faculty Concerns: Academic Freedom and Faculty Autonomy**

Faculty reluctance remains among the most contentious and crucial challenges for colleges and universities involved in online education. The reluctance of many faculty (especially senior faculty) to accept online delivery as a credible, much less a viable, academic approach is not yet fully resolved. Indeed, this issue is further complicated by the concern that there is “little good research on what constitutes the best approaches to online learning” (Baggaley, 2014, p. 133). In addition, many faculty object to the intrusions on academic freedom and faculty autonomy that have resulted from specialized oversight processes and course design efforts.

During the transition to online delivery, administrative scrutiny of the online environment led to faculty being pressured to engage in more frequent and time-consuming communication with students than in traditional classroom instruction, contributing to an “always at work” mentality for faculty and staff. A 2008–2009 survey of more than 10,000 faculty members confirmed this perception (“Faculty views,” 2010). Increased workload and scrutiny in the online environment, as well as pressure for courses to conform to externally imposed designs or standards, added credible substance to faculty apprehension about the incremental loss of academic freedom and autonomy.

Additional faculty concerns included differential criteria for evaluating instructors, developing syllabi, and establishing exam parameters; difficulty in obtaining an adequate number of student evaluations, resulting in inequities in evaluating faculty performance; differential processes for handling student complaints and for academic advising; administrative influence on course content (e.g., requiring group projects and attempts at mandating the process and content of class discussion); and the arguably unresolvable debate about quality differences between online and face-to-face courses.

### **Administrative Issues: Financial Parameters and Accreditation Imperatives**

In addition to dealing with the seemingly endless academic concerns surrounding the growth of distance learning, administrators must also confront questions of financial viability and accreditation imperatives. The increasingly competitive education environment began to negatively affect the growth of academic programs, which intensified the search for new marketing strategies to improve student recruitment and retention. The pressure to ensure comparable quality of all courses, regardless of delivery format, in order to satisfy regional and specialized accreditation criteria and increasingly proactive scrutiny from funding sources resulted in rising administrative oversight of online courses. There was also extensive pressure to standardize course format and content, especially among universities that employ large numbers of adjunct faculty to teach online courses. Finally, the online delivery format raised administrative concerns about faculty compensation, class size, and overhead costs.

### **Student Issues: Pedagogical, Technological, and Financial**

Students' initial resistance to online formats quickly faded in light of the conveniences associated with asynchronous online coursework. This expanded acceptance by students no doubt contributed to the explosion in the growth of online enrollment nationwide, but it is possible that student concerns previously masked by asynchronous convenience might now be reemerging owing to unanticipated frustrations. Indeed, this could be a contributing factor to the declining growth in the number of online students.

Unresolved issues include the expense of online testing options, such as equipment purchases (e.g., Remote Proctor devices) or testing fees at commercial testing centers (e.g., Sylvan Learning Centers, ProctorU, etc.); frustrations with inevitable technical problems (lockouts, loss of data) that may occur during testing, to the

extent that some students have to retake exams; and, perhaps most important, the realization that online courses may well require more effort and self-motivation than anticipated, in part due to required and documented student-faculty and student-student interaction.

## **EMERGING ISSUES**

### **Online Course Design, Adult Learners, Student Recruiting, and National Accreditation**

Because initial online courses tended to feature written exchanges between students and with their instructors (not unlike the increasingly devalued correspondence-course concept), a cottage industry focusing on course design soon evolved. This included proactive efforts to "spruce up" courses using audiovisual bells and whistles, and live interaction was often strongly encouraged despite its potentially negative impact on the asynchronous approach.

Another emerging issue is the increasing prominence and influence of contemporary adult learners. Historically these students have been a sufficiently distinct minority, earning the designation "nontraditional." But their rapidly expanding numbers in online courses has shifted that view: they are the "traditional" students in Internet-based instruction. Successful marketing of online higher education to these potential students, especially adult learners, regardless of their physical location, is critical for enrollment growth, or at least to prevent a decline in enrollment. Online enrollment can prove especially lucrative by attracting large numbers of students who pay higher out-of-state tuition. The importance of this phenomenon is reflected in the University of Florida's terminating (or renegotiating) its contract with its "enabler" Pearson, which failed to attract sufficient out-of-state students into the University of Florida Online (Jaschik, 2015).

Enrollment growth in and financing of the future of distance learning are also tied to federal

student-aid policies that have greatly expanded financial-aid eligibility beyond the previously required regional accreditation. This led to additional accrediting bodies, the “national accreditors,” which include specialized accreditation bodies for distance education that allow schools to operate under arguably less stringent requirements so they can enter the increasingly competitive higher-education marketplace.

### **Availability, Quality, and Tradition**

The ultimate goal of making higher education available to as large a constituency as possible is admirable. But educational institutions must ensure that students, both military and civilian, are receiving the quality of education they deserve. The fierce competition for students and education dollars should not preclude academic institutions from working in unison to ensure that quality education is widely available and that the interests of students and institutions are recognized and systematically protected.

In addition, to protect and enhance the quality of distance education, colleges and universities need to prepare students to use emerging technologies and to undertake their education without the more immersive environment of the traditional brick-and-mortar university. While ensuring that online students receive a top-quality education, providers of that education should also strive to create an experience equal to the one delivered on campus. The dramatic expansion of distance learning has meant recruitment of numerous new faculty for online teaching. Often, professors are not adequately prepared to make use of the latest educational technology, resulting in the need for increased training and participation incentives (Smith, 1999). Troy University now requires online faculty to complete a training course and pass an examination to ensure at least basic knowledge of how to successfully teach online and provide proper support for online students.

Thousands of years of face-to-face interaction between teacher and student is a tradition not easily modified. Nelson’s (1998) preliminary assertion, however, has likely come to pass: distance learning programs will never replace the traditional classroom but will serve those otherwise unable to continue their education. Even in light of the recent declines in online enrollment, there is reason to believe that this prediction will continue to be true.

### **Logistics: Erasing Geographical Boundaries**

The expansion of distance learning has challenged governmental entities. Federal financial-aid policies had a significant impact on distance learning, though the states have traditionally retained the authority to regulate educational institutions within their boundaries. Unfortunately for state regulatory bodies, the growth of Internet-based education created a new problem: the elimination of state boundaries and the declining importance of a school’s geographical location (Amirault, 2012).

It became difficult if not impossible for states to fully control schools that had no physical presence within their boundaries. More specifically, an uneven playing field developed when schools were able to enroll online students and “beam in” their course work without being required to adhere to various state policies. States have tried several methods to bring online institutions under their control. Washington State, for example, requires any institution advertising educational offerings in the state to submit all programs for review. However, such policies are difficult to enforce, as the growth of for-profit institutions demonstrates. To make the situation even more complex, regulatory agencies in at least one state (Florida) raised “nonattribution” complaints that some institutions intentionally located offices or headquarters in certain states to shop for the most lenient regional accrediting bodies.

### **Continuing Developments in Technology**

As technology in general continues to advance, educational technology will most certainly do

so as well, especially as regards making online courses more appealing to students. While such “bells and whistles” modifications may not serve to improve academic quality *per se*, they might have a significant influence on student interest in and the attractiveness of online courses vis-à-vis their in-class counterparts.

One area that continues to evolve is Massive Open Online Courses. These allow thousands of people to enroll for both credit and noncredit offerings, sometimes at no cost to the student, creating another competitive challenge for educational institutions (Amirault, 2012).

### **LOOKING AHEAD: IMPLICATIONS FOR MPA PROGRAMS**

What does the declining growth in online enrollment mean for MPA programs? Troy University’s experience is again instructive. It has been 20 years since overall university online enrollments began their rapid expansion, which led to offering entire graduate programs online, including Troy’s MPA program. That initiative has been validated, the online program having met NASPAA’s stringent criteria for accreditation. All the same, the university’s move to offer its MPA program online initially prompted skepticism.

Of the 42 NASPAA member schools that offer full or partial MPA and related programs online, 32 have NASPAA accreditation (NASPAA, 2015). As such, while the growth of online education may have slowed, the proliferation of online MPA programs seems unlikely to follow suit. Competition for the best and brightest MPA students will also likely intensify.

A review of NASPAA survey data shows that in 2002, 195 schools reported 16,358 students enrolled in MPA programs and 5,314 MPA degrees awarded. By 2010, 176 schools reported 17,460 enrolled students and 5,621 MPA degrees awarded. For 2002, these numbers reflect an average student population of 83 and an average of 27 MPA degrees awarded. For 2010, the average student population was 99

and each school averaged awarding 31 degrees (NASPAA, 2015).

Although informative, such averages are not conclusive because of the wide fluctuation in student numbers and degrees awarded between schools. Consider that the 274 MPA degrees awarded by Troy University’s Public Administration Department in 2004 was the largest number in the United States among reporting schools. By 2009, however, Troy University ranked third, with 267 degrees awarded, behind Harvard (361) and NYU (269), which were not included in the 2004 list of reporting schools (NASPAA, 2015).

NASPAA accreditation remains critical for the success of MPA programs, both traditional and online, but the significance of professional accreditation for online programs is not limited to MPA programs. For example, in business education, 2015 data provided by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) website show that of 535 business schools reporting, 465 have AACSB accreditation. Furthermore, as of 2012, of these 465 accredited schools, 127 provided online business programs, and 93 of those programs were offered at the Master of Business Administration level. By 2017, the number of accredited schools worldwide had risen to 778, with 270 reporting online offerings (AACSB, 2017).

Given the decline in enrollments, the increase in competition among programs, and the uncertainty of future growth, online education in general is at a crossroads. Is the same true for online MPA offerings? Enrollment data indicate continuous growth in MPA programs, likely resulting in part from rapidly expanding online availability. So perhaps online MPA programs are at no such crossroads. Indeed, given the increasing validation of online offerings via NASPAA accreditation, it may be that MPA programs delivered online, either fully or in part, have already successfully navigated a significant challenge: the acceptance of online education by professional accreditors.

Owing to the leveling off of online enrollment, to competitive factors, and to the uncertainty of future growth, it appears that online education in general is at a crossroads. MPA online offerings, however, are experiencing continued enrollment growth, and NASPAA accreditation continues to validate the shift to online instruction. Accreditation by such bodies as AACSB and NASPAA suggests that perhaps the major quality questions surrounding online instruction have been resolved. This bodes well for future online MPA enrollment growth, although it remains to be seen if MPA online enrollment will fall off as in the general trend for online instruction.

### A FINAL THOUGHT

The primary focus of this article has been to evaluate the current state of online MPA programs. We conclude that NASPAA accreditation may contribute substantially to settling the quality questions around online MPA instruction and that MPA programs are well postured to withstand the stagnation in overall online enrollment trends. That said, we must still ask, how would MPA programs cope with the disruptive development of decreased online enrollment? And perhaps of greater importance, how might those programs begin to prepare for such challenges should they arise, especially in light of the increasingly competitive higher-education environment?

The relevant activities of military-related higher-education organizations may provide helpful insights for developing a strategy to deal with a worst-case enrollment scenario for MPA programs. For example, the National Association for Institutions for Military Education Services and the Council of College and Military Educators provide models of “friendly competition” and cooperation toward the common goal of promoting educational opportunities. The organizations also fight predatory and inappropriate practices in student recruiting and program delivery. The key for MPA programs will be to sustain crucial gains in program quality and accessibility while

recruiting and retaining the best and brightest students to meet the demands of public service well into the future.

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### NOTE

Much of the information in this article is based on the authors’ personal involvement in negotiating education agreements with military education officials and senior administrators at other educational institutions, as well as in providing leadership in establishing and expanding online offerings for Troy University. (The largest of the military online offerings at Troy was the eArmyU program negotiated in 2000 to 2001 with the U.S. Army and PricewaterhouseCoopers. It developed distance learning programs for army soldiers throughout the world, with a potential \$700 million budget.)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Manfred F. Meine** is professor of public administration at Troy University and is the 2011 Wallace D. Malone Outstanding Faculty Award winner at Troy. His research focuses on ethics in government, policing policy issues, and online education.

**Thomas P. Dunn** is associate professor of sociology at Troy University and professor emeritus at Western Kentucky University. His current research interests include the sociological aspects of military ethics and online education.

# Personality and the Teaching of Public Administration: A Case for the Big Five

**Christopher A. Cooper**

*Western Carolina University*

**Whitney Campbell-Bridges**

*Allied Staff Augmentation Partners*

**David M. McCord**

*Western Carolina University*

## **ABSTRACT**

Personality assessment is a key concept in the practice of public and nonprofit personnel management, but many faculty struggle with how to introduce the concept of personality in their courses. When Master of Public Administration curricula do include personality, discussions often consist solely of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a popular but theoretically dubious personality instrument. This article argues that the five-factor model of personality provides a theoretically sound, empirically valid, and open-access measure that can help faculty and students understand the role personality can play in public personnel management and decision making. To demonstrate the usefulness of this framework, we rely on existing research as well as the results of a unique survey of United Way managers.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Personality, teaching, nonprofit management, public management

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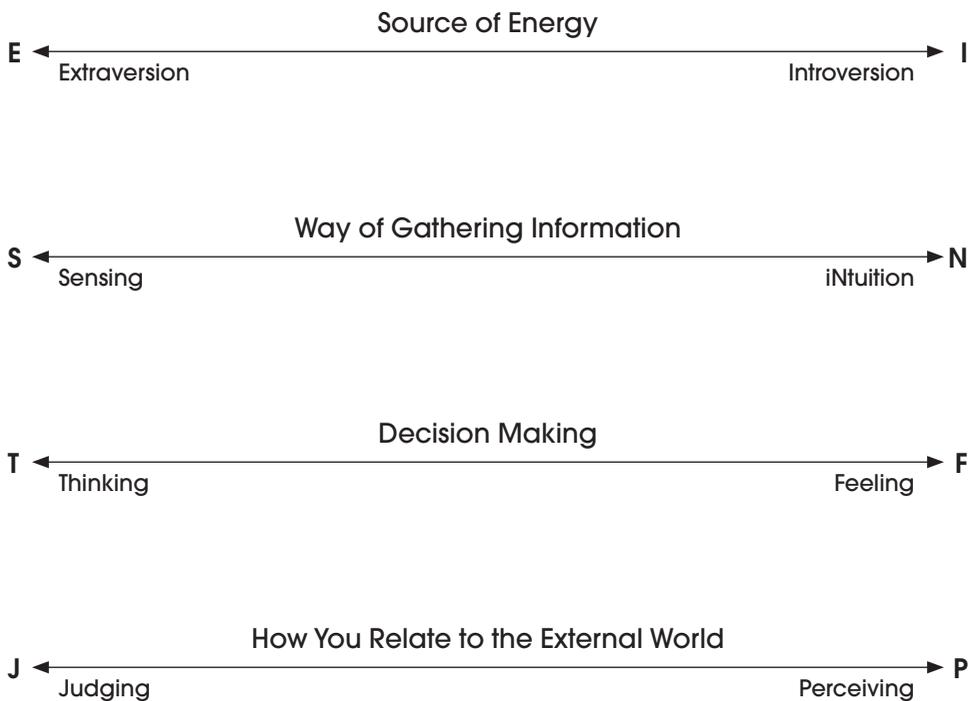
Few people doubt the existence of distinct personality characteristics. Indeed, it is difficult to walk by a watercooler, coffee shop, or bar without hearing groups of people describe the traits, tendencies, and behavior patterns of their friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. Although they may not think of it as such, these people are engaging in what may be described as armchair personality assessment. From a pedagogical perspective, this means that Master of Public Administration (MPA) students arrive in our programs with an intuitive, if not a theoretically rich, understanding of personality assessment and its importance.

Perhaps because personality is such a common and commonly accepted topic of conversation, there is a small cottage industry of scholars and consultants who advocate for the use of systematic personality assessment in public and private organizational and personnel decisions. In the for-profit sector alone, more than 80% of Fortune 500 companies use some form of personality assessment to select and assess their employees (Dattener, 2008). Similarly, more than 60% of public sector managers report using personality measures in their jobs, and more than 20% have used such measures for hiring and promotion (Cooper, Knotts, Johnson, & McCord, 2012).

Professors of public affairs and administration often recognize the importance of personality assessment by giving it some attention in curricula. This content most often comes during Public Personnel courses, although it may also occur in core seminars in the field or specialty courses in nonprofit management. In this article, we argue that MPA professors and instructors should increase attention to personality. Further, we argue that when introducing personality, they should consider using the free, theoretically sound, and empirically verified

five-factor model (FFM) in place of the popular, copyrighted, and less empirically robust Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Previous work has established the importance of personality for public managers; this article expands on this work and demonstrates that personality can also help us understand the attitudes and behaviors of nonprofit managers. Teachers of both nonprofit- and public-management-oriented students may therefore employ the FFM in their classes with confidence.

**FIGURE 1.**  
Schematic of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator



## THE MYERS-BRIGGS PERSONALITY TYPE INDICATOR

Without a doubt, the most popular personality test in the world is the MBTI, which is based on Carl Jung's (1923) theory that differences in human behavior are the product of differences in personality. Jung's theory assumes that an individual exhibits an overarching attitude of either extraversion or introversion. Most people are capable of both, depending on the situation, but we characteristically lean one way or the other. In addition, individuals tend to lean one direction or the other in each of two sets of bipolar functions, which describe how an individual relates to the world. The first set, the nonrational (or perceiving) functions, are sensing versus intuiting. The second set, the rational (or judging) functions, are thinking versus feeling (McCrae & Costa, 1989).

Based on these ideas, and despite having no formal psychological training, Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katharine Briggs, developed the MBTI. Taking some creative liberties with Jung's hierarchical theory, they simplified the system into four essentially dichotomous scales: Extraversion or Introversion, Sensing or Intuiting, Thinking or Feeling, and Judging or Perceiving. By fully crossing the four scales, the MBTI therefore classifies test takers as one of 16 types (see Figure 1). The instrument gives a four-letter type classification and a numeric score that indicates the strength of the classification (Coe, 1991, 1992). Briefly, as noted above, the Extraversion/Introversion factor refers to individual's broad disposition toward relating to the world. The extravert's basic orientation is outward, toward the outside world, while the introvert is more focused inwardly, on the self. Extraverts tend to be socially engaging, active, and adventuresome, whereas introverts are more likely hesitant, reflective, and cautious. Sensors are more likely to take in information through their five senses; intuitors, through their intuition. Thinkers base their decisions on logic, while feelers base their decisions on emotion. Lastly, judgers are more likely to find closure and make decisions quickly, while perceivers wait for more information (Coe, 1992).

Despite its popularity with practitioners, the MBTI has not fared well in the psychological literature. For example, reviews of the psychometric properties of the MBTI generally report negative results (e.g., Boyle, 1995), and Bjork and Druckman (1991) review extant literature on the MBTI and find no evidence to support its utility. Further complicating matters, the descriptions provided by the MBTI are based on Jung's notions of individuals' unconscious and are therefore difficult to assess by self-report measures (McCrae & Costa, 1989).

Many, such as McCrae and Costa (1989), also take issue with the idea of personality *types*, finding no evidence that the cut lines used by the MBTI symbolize distinct personality types and no data to suggest that personality dimensions interact to form distinct types of people. Instead, psychologists like McCrae and Costa (1989) argue that the MBTI only measures quasi-normally distributed personality traits.

Furnham (1996) provides empirical data supporting the proposition that the FFM adequately subsumes all concepts purportedly measured by the MBTI while exhibiting significantly higher correlations with all external criteria used in his study. Also notable, a majority of personality theory textbooks now present Jungian theory as historically interesting but obsolete, not scientifically testable, and of limited heuristic value (e.g., Derlega, Winstead, & Jones, 2005; Pervin & John, 2001); and the MBTI is often omitted entirely (e.g., Pervin, 2003).

From a pedagogical perspective, the MBTI is even more problematic because of its cost. The MBTI is a copyrighted, protected instrument. Therefore, professors who want to introduce students to the MBTI by requiring students to complete the assessment face the problem of whether to pay for the test out of university or grant funds or pass the cost on to students. From theoretical as well as practical perspectives, therefore, the MBTI is not an optimal instrument for teaching MPA students about the importance of personality.

### THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL OF PERSONALITY

In contrast to the MBTI, the FFM is a hierarchy of personality traits organized into five basic dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience (generally referred to by the initials E, A, C, N, and O). The basis for the five-factor model can be found in the lexical hypothesis—the idea that, if personality traits are outward as well as inward facing, people must refer to these traits in language (Cattell, 1943; Norman, 1963). Thus, if we want to find a list of personality traits, they can be found in the dictionary and analyzed in terms of frequency, type of use, and intercorrelations. Based on earlier work by Allport and Odbert (1936), Cattell's (1947) landmark factor analyses yielded a solution very similar to the modern FFM. Cattell's model was replicated by Fiske (1949) and "rediscovered" in 1961 by Tupes and Christal (see also Tupes & Christal, 1992).

Finally, by the mid-1980s, two lines of personality research converged. McCrae and Costa (1983) had developed a three-factor model (Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness) by systematically examining the overlapping content of all previously developed personality questionnaires, including the MBTI. Goldberg (1983) was continuing the factor analytic tradition based on the lexical hypothesis, agreeing on a five-factor solution that included Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness. McCrae and Costa then introduced and operationalized this combined model in their NEO (Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness) personality inventory, now revised as the NEO-PI-R and widely used in psychological research and practice (Costa & McCrae, 1992b). By the mid-1990s, the FFM had become the dominant paradigm for studying personality.

The factor names are not just a matter of convention; rather, the labels reflect conceptualizations of the factors (McCrae & John, 1992). Extraversion (E) is probably the most well known of the five factors, and the most familiar to people in general, probably because it accounts for the most variance in human personality (the MBTI also accounts for Extraversion). Goldberg

(1999) argues that Extraversion is most closely associated with dominance, while McCrae and Costa (1989) argue that the factor is midway between dominance and warmth. People high in E are often described as having energy, and ambition and, on the opposite end, may be shy, silent, and withdrawn (McCrae & John, 1992).

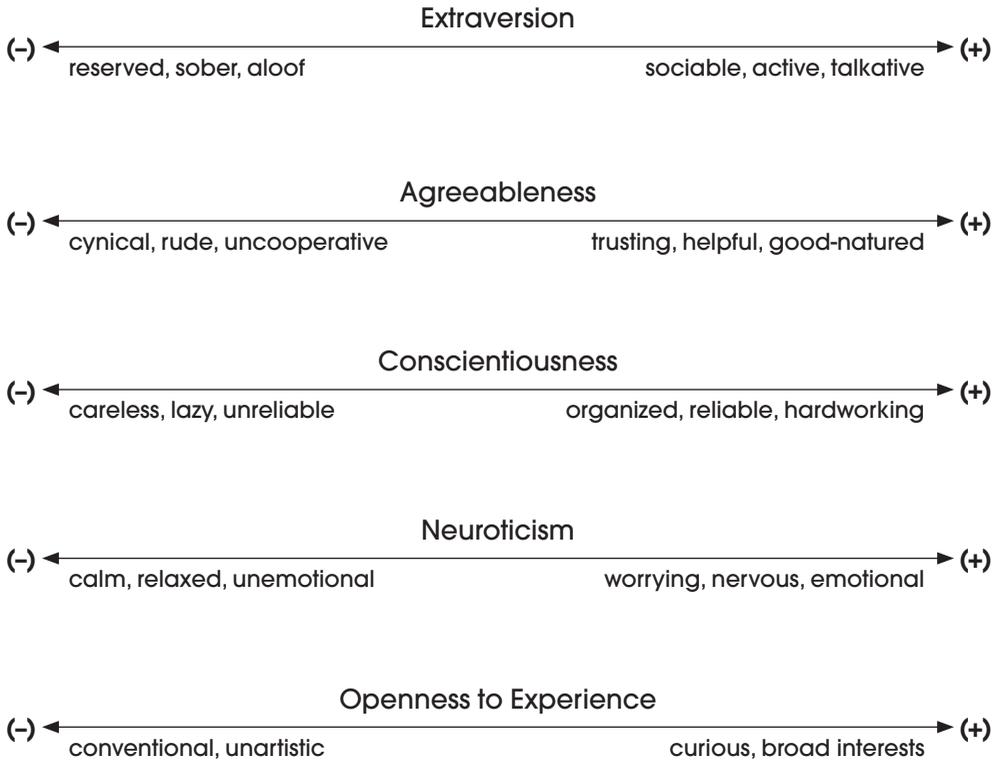
Agreeableness (A) is a domain of human morality. The A factor is comprised of characteristics such as altruism, caring, emotional support, and nurturance as well as self-centeredness, spitefulness, and jealousy (McCrae & John, 1992). Goldberg (1999) defines lower-level facets such as altruism, cooperation, sympathy, trust, and modesty.

Conscientiousness (C) encompasses characteristics such as thoroughness, organization, diligence, and achievement orientation (McCrae & John, 1992). Some view C as a dimension that holds impulsive behavior in check, while others see it as organizing and directing behaviors (McCrae & John, 1992). C combines both aspects because it can mean being governed by either conscience or thoroughness (McCrae & John, 1992). The lower-level facets identified by Goldberg (1999) are self-efficacy, dutifulness, self-discipline, orderliness, and cautiousness.

Neuroticism (N) is the least disputed of the five factors; most agree that the factor represents individual differences in the experience of distress (McCrae & John, 1992). Those who have high N scores are more likely to report depression, anxiety, anger, and embarrassment and are more likely to have psychiatric disorders (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Those with low N scores are more likely to be calm and stable. Goldberg (1999) identifies lower-level facets that include anxiety, depression, anger, self-consciousness, and vulnerability.

The most debated factor is Openness to Experience (O). Some researchers claim that the O factor represents intelligence, while others see a broader dimension that includes intellect as well as creativity, differentiated emotions, aesthetic sensitivity, need for variety, and unconventional values (McCrae & John, 1992).

**FIGURE 2.**  
Schematic of the Five-Factor Model



Source. Adapted from Costa and McCrae (1995)

All five factors are presented in the schematic in Figure 2.

**EVIDENCE FOR THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL**

Scholars in psychology, political science, sociology, and public administration have demonstrated the reliability, validity, and usefulness of the FFM in several arenas and from a number of different perspectives. For example, the five factors are stable across time based on cross-observer validity of the five factors. As evidence, Finn (1986) finds that Neuroticism and Extraversion remained relatively stable in 78 middle-

age men retested after 30 years, and Buss (1991) reports that personality is typically consistent over a lifetime. Putting many of these findings together, Costa and McCrae (1992a) conclude that all five factors have also been validated in longitudinal studies. Surprisingly, life experiences such as divorce, raising children, illness, and retirement have little impact on personality profiles (McCrae, 2011).

The factors are not just stable across time; each dimension of the five factors displays evidence of universality. The five factors are found in

both sexes, multiple races, and different age groups (Costa & McCrae, 1992a). The FFM structure has even been replicated in more than 50 cultures (McCrae, 2011).

In sum, the FFM has proven to be a useful model, especially in applied settings. The factors can be predictors of life satisfaction, academic achievement, vocational interest, and job performance (McCrae, 2011). The FFM as a research heuristic has been astonishingly productive in demonstrating strong links between the FFM personality traits and numerous other consequential outcomes, including happiness and subjective well-being (e.g., Diener & Lucas, 1999), humor (e.g., Cann & Calhoun, 2001; Johnson & McCord, 2010), physical health and longevity (e.g., Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001), psychopathology (e.g., Trull & Sher, 1994), political attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Mondak, 2010), volunteerism and community involvement (e.g., Penner, 2002), and criminality (e.g., Krueger, Hicks, & McGue, 2001). Ozer and Benet-Martinez (2006) review additional outcomes associated with the FFM traits, noting that the extensive empirical literature on the FFM reports hundreds of additional correlates.

Although it arrived later in public administration literature than in other academic research, the FFM has recently produced a number of important findings in public administration. For example, there is evidence that the FFM can predict job satisfaction (Cooper et al., 2012; Cooper, Carpenter, Reiner, & McCord, 2014), ability in managerial decision making (Filiz & Battaglio, 2015), and organizational citizenship behavior. Although evidence in public administration is more scant than in other fields, there is little doubt that the five-factor model of personality can help us better understand the attitudes and behavior of public managers.

In addition to its theoretical basis and empirical reliability, the FFM provides an ideal teaching tool because it is essentially open source. Dozens of available FFM assessment instruments can be used for free. And these instruments

show remarkable reliability and validity, providing instructors with both theoretical and practical rationale for including the FFM in their courses.

### **BRINGING IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR**

Evidence is mounting that the five-factor model can help us better understand public organizational behavior. In addition to its theoretical importance, the FFM offers a number of practical advantages; most notably, its lack of cost and its open-source nature make it an ideal teaching tool. Despite the clear case for including the FFM in public administration education generally, the existing literature does not specifically address the nonprofit sector, an increasingly important MPA constituency (see, e.g., Mirabella & Wish, 2000). Further, although the literature that uses the FFM clearly demonstrates the model's theoretical advantage relative to the MBTI, there has been no head-to-head test of the two instruments. To address both of these potential critiques, we next review the results of a survey of United Way directors that includes both the MBTI and FFM, to determine which instrument does a better job of explaining job satisfaction.

### **The Instruments and the Sample**

Recall that the extant literature has already demonstrated the importance of the FFM for public managers. The task before us, then, was to demonstrate the importance of the FFM for understanding nonprofit behavior (and therefore the model's applicability to public affairs education). To do this, we needed to identify a publicly available sample of nonprofit directors—and ideally, nonprofit directors from similar types of organizations. We ultimately decided to sample United Way directors from 12 randomly selected states. As many readers know, the United Way (now called United Way Worldwide) is a large nonprofit that coordinates the work of more than 1,000 local offices throughout the United States, bringing “people, organizations and communities together around a common cause, a common vision, and a common path forward” (United Way, 2016). This was an ideal sample for our

purposes because, while all local United Way chapters are part of the same parent organization, they still exist within their local communities. (Despite our contention that this was the proper sampling frame, we must acknowledge that the nonprofit world is vast and heterogeneous and the experience of United Way employees might not be generalizable to employees of other nonprofits.)

In all, we distributed three waves of a Web-based questionnaire to 963 people and received a total of 133 surveys back, for a response rate just shy of 14%. We asked each respondent to complete a series of demographic questions as well as a 50-question survey to assess their scores on the FFM; respondents also completed another lengthy questionnaire for the MBTI, as well as a few dozen questions on organizational citizenship behaviors and job satisfaction. In sum, this was extraordinarily difficult and time-intensive task and we were pleased with this response rate.

### Measures

**M5-50.** The M5-50 represents our measure of the five-factor model of personality. It is a 50-item questionnaire derived from Goldberg's International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) that measures the five broad domains of the NEO-PI-R (Goldberg et al., 2006). The M5-50 is a freely available, specific ordering of 50 IPIP items that asks participants to rate on a five-point scale how accurately each statement describes them. Socha, Cooper, and McCord (2010) find that the instrument has excellent reliability and construct validity. We should note that this is a departure from much of the recent literature in political science (Mondak, 2010) and public administration (Jang, 2012), which relies heavily on the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). Although the TIPI can be an extremely useful tool "where very short measures are needed, personality is not the primary topic of interest, or researchers can tolerate the somewhat diminished psychometric properties associated with very brief measures" (Gosling et al., p. 504), we opted for a more fully specified assessment tool that provides additional reliability and validity.

**Neocleous MBTI Proxy.** Although we would like to have distributed the MBTI to every potential participant in our sample, the copyrighted nature of the MBTI prohibits its use in online data collection, which was an essential aspect of our methodology. As a result, we had to find a commonly used reliable proxy. The Neocleous public domain proxy represents our measure for the MBTI. The public domain proxy is a 36-item scale developed from PersonalityTest.net, originally a 68-item scale developed by Nick Neocleous that yields scores similar to the constructs measured by the MBTI. We developed this instrument in a preliminary study of 100 volunteers recruited from the human subjects pool in a psychology department at a midsized university. Participants completed both the MBTI and the proxy in a counterbalanced order. Results showed that the proxy had high correlations with the MBTI (Campbell-Bridges, 2013).

**Job Satisfaction Scale.** While there are a number of valid and reliable job satisfaction scales (van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek, & Frings-Dresen, 2003), we ultimately settled on the Jobs in General (JIG) scale (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul 1989). This 18-item scale has excellent convergent and discriminant validity and is a reliable instrument for assessing job satisfaction (van Saane et al., 2003).

### HYPOTHESES

Based on theoretical expectations about the nature of the factors and previous work in public administration (Cooper et al., 2012) and private management (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002), we hypothesized that individuals who are more agreeable are generally more satisfied with their lives and more positive and will thus report higher levels of job satisfaction. Similarly, previous research has found that people who score higher in Conscientiousness prefer hard work, appreciate receiving positive information from working (Organ & Lingl, 1995), and therefore report higher levels of job satisfaction than their less conscientious counterparts. Neuroticism, however, is typically associated with people who are less comfortable in a variety of situations, including personal relationships

and work. Following this expectation, as well as prior work (Judge et al., 2002), we expected that higher scores on *N* would be associated with lower levels of job satisfaction.

Our expectations regarding the MBTI were more difficult to develop, as few empirical studies have investigated these factors in relevant settings. Further, studies that have attempted to uncover these relationships have reached less than conclusive results. For example, Meeusen, Brown-Mahoney, Van Dam, Van Zundert, and Knape (2010) find that the MBTI can help predict job satisfaction among Dutch nurse anesthetists, but the effects are relatively weak. Baran (2005) finds only slightly more promising results in studying Illinois dentists. As a result of these mixed findings, combined with the theoretical limitations of the MBTI, we limited ourselves to hypotheses surrounding Extraversion—a concept that should be fairly consistent across the MBTI and the FFM. We hypothesized that people who are extraverts according to the MBTI should report more organizational citizenship behaviors. Despite the lack of prior results or strong theory, we believed it was important to explore the potential impact of the MBTI, particularly given its popularity in many fields.

### THE MBTI AND THE FFM: EMPIRICAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Before moving to the results of our substantive models predicting job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors, we pause to consider the results of the five-factor model (our M5-50) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator—correlations both within and between the instruments. As Table 1 suggests, we find that although the five factors are theoretically distinct, they are not empirically orthogonal. In fact, the Agreeableness factor is correlated at  $p < .05$  with Conscientiousness and Extraversion and (negatively) with Neuroticism. In other words, participants who were more agreeable were also more likely to be conscientious; and if extraverted, less likely to be neurotic. Researchers and practitioners who use the FFM to explain attitudes and behaviors should there-

fore take care to include all five factors, or risk making improper inferences about what factors are correlated with which behaviors.

A similar investigation of the MBTI demonstrates that people who are toward the Sensing end of the Sensing/Intuiting factor are also more likely to be high on Perceiving (as opposed to Judging) and Feeling (as opposed to Thinking). Further, people higher on Feeling (as opposed to Thinking) are also higher on Perceiving (as opposed to Judging). Similar to the FFM, the MBTI factors are not empirically orthogonal, and people who use the MBTI as predictor variables must take care to control for other types, or risk making improper conclusions.

We next explored the relationship between the FFM and MBTI. McRae and Costa (1989) find that all four MBTI indices measure aspects of four of the five factors in the FFM. They conclude from this that the FFM can provide a theoretically superior model to interpret many existing MBTI findings. Following this work, we expected that there would be significant overlap between the MBTI and FFM, and the correlations using our data (presented in Table 3) find just that. In fact, all four MBTI proxy scales are correlated with at least one of the five factors. From this, we can expect that we would see significant empirical overlap between the ability of the MBTI and FFM to predict a variety of outcome behaviors. While theoretically distinct, the MBTI and FFM are empirically related. This empirical similarity may explain why the MBTI has remained so popular for so long—despite its theoretical limitations, it can help practitioners learn about their employees.

### Personality and Job Satisfaction

Next we move to the core models—those that use various personality assessments to predict attitudes and behaviors of nonprofit managers. Our first model, presented in Table 4, predicts the job satisfaction scale using all five factors in the FFM as well as control variables for age and sex. Not surprisingly, we find that people who score higher in Conscientiousness and Agreeableness and lower in Neuroticism are more

**TABLE 1.**  
Correlations Within the M5-50 (Five-Factor Model)

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Extraversion	1.0000				
Agreeableness	0.8110**	1.0000			
Conscientiousness	0.2365	0.3056**	1.0000		
Neuroticism	-0.0739	-0.3679**	-0.1674*	1.0000	
Openness	0.2040**	0.1397	-0.0560	-0.0674	1.0000

Note. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$

**TABLE 2.**  
Correlations Within the MBTI Proxy Instrument

	Extraversion/ Introversion	Sensing/ Intuiting	Thinking/ Feeling	Judging/ Perceiving
Extraversion/Introversion	1.0000			
Sensing/Intuiting	-0.0849	1.0000		
Thinking/Feeling	0.0957	0.3571**	1.0000	
Judging/Perceiving	-0.0904	0.5810**	0.2011**	1.0000

Note. \*\* $p < .05$

**TABLE 3.**  
Correlations Between the FFM and the MBTI Proxy Instrument

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Extraversion/Introversion	-.64**	.17*	-.02	-.04	.02
Sensing/Intuiting	.21**	.16*	-.16*	.05	.50**
Thinking/Feeling	.03	.24**	-.23**	.12	.17*
Judging/Perceiving	.07	-.10	-.53**	.02	.31**

Note. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$

satisfied with their jobs. In addition, Openness to Experience approaches traditional levels of statistical significance ( $p < .1$ ). Clearly, the FFM can help instructors, researchers, and practitioners explain and predict who is likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

The MBTI, however, does not perform as well. In fact, none of the four scales of the MBTI predicts job satisfaction at traditional statistical significance levels. Only the Judging/Perceiving scale approaches significance ( $p = .089$ ), indicating that those who fall on the Perceiving end

of the spectrum may tend toward higher job satisfaction. Neither control variable achieves significance in this model. In sum, at least for job satisfaction, the FFM provides a more robust and empirically helpful measure of personality than the MBTI proxy we used.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Personality assessment can be helpful in understanding nonprofit management attitudes and behavior. Further, the FFM represents a theoretically sound, empirically verified, and open-source framework and assessment instrument

**TABLE 4.**  
Job Satisfaction Models

	Five-factor model	MBTI model
Extraversion	0.008 (.028)	
Agreeableness	-0.092** (.042)	
Conscientiousness	0.076* (.039)	
Neuroticism	-0.076** (.034)	
Openness	-0.054 (.033)	
Extraversion/Introversion		-0.122 (.078)
Sensing/Intuiting		0.018 (.113)
Thinking/Feeling		-0.063 (.100)
Judging/Perceiving		-0.177* (.103)
Sex		0.002 (.046)
Age		0.012 (.016)
Constant		3.169** (.224)
R-squared		.144
F		3.31***
N		125

Note. \*p < .1, \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01

that is ideal for public affairs education. Given the evidence presented both here and elsewhere, we recommend that instructors of both general public administration courses as well as more specialized nonprofit and personnel management courses integrate the FFM into their classroom instruction. Doing so will give the next generation of public servants a better understanding of administrative attitudes and behaviors.

Aside from this central point, our findings also point to important methodological lessons for instructors and practitioners who are choosing between various personality assessment tools. The MBTI and FFM are distinct assessment tools, but they do have some similarities. Notably, we discovered significant overlap between the two instruments, with parts of the MBTI being subsumed in the FFM.

Although there are some empirical similarities between the FFM and MBTI, we recommend that classroom instructors embrace the FFM over the MBTI. The psychology literature has established with little doubt that the FFM has much stronger theoretical justification, suggesting that the conclusions that can be drawn from its use are likely to be more robust. In addition to the theoretical rationale, the FFM is the assessment-tool equivalent of open source; scholars are free to use, cite, and create their own FFM assessment tools. The MBTI, however, is copyrighted, making usage expensive and replication difficult. This benefit of using the FFM is extremely important in the classroom context. Whereas a classroom instructor would have to pay for the MBTI out of a department or university budget, the FFM can be easily distributed to a class of students at no cost.

Teaching with the FFM, therefore, does not have to be merely theoretical; faculty can ask students to fill out the FFM, and students can learn more about their own personalities. Personality assessment of this type is also ripe for role-playing exercises, in which students talk with each other about how their personality inventories may influence their attitudes and behaviors. Most important, students can brain-

storm about how to use these personality instruments in practice. As Coe (1992) suggests, there is no “correct” personality type, but future public and nonprofit managers would be well served by understanding how knowledge of one’s own personality and the personality of one’s coworkers can “improve organizational communication and teamwork” (p. 44). This knowledge would improve the practice of both public and nonprofit management, and today’s MPA pedagogy should reflect this development.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Christopher A. Cooper** is professor and department head in the Department of Political Science and Public Affairs at Western Carolina University. His current research in public administration focuses on the role of personality assessment in public and nonprofit management and the role of trust in public administration.

**Whitney Campbell-Bridges** is a graduate of Western Carolina University's Master in Experimental Psychology program. She is currently a resident of Charlotte, North Carolina, where she is senior staffing specialist at Allied Staff Augmentation Partners.

**David M. McCord** is professor of clinical psychology at Western Carolina University. His research areas include personality theory and personality assessment, in both the normal and abnormal domains.

# Providing Context and Inspiring Hope: Using the Case Method to Teach Public Policy in Developing Countries

**Robert Mudida**

*Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya*

**Nadia Rubaii**

*Binghamton University, State University of New York*

## **ABSTRACT**

This article asks: What makes for good cases when teaching public policy in a developing country? How important is geographic proximity relative to other factors in determining relevance? Building on literature about the unique public policy needs in developing countries and the case method as a pedagogical tool, and using a survey from a program that serves midcareer professionals in Nairobi, Kenya, the authors find the following to be key criteria for case selection: being set in a comparable developing country context; representing a similar array of public problems as the local context; demonstrating alternative public policy approaches to achieve progress; and inspiring optimism and hope by virtue of overcoming barriers. The authors share information on two cases that students identified as best meeting these criteria, one set in Asia (Singapore) and the other in Latin America (Colombia).

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## **KEYWORDS**

Case methodology, developing countries, comparative policy studies, Africa, Asia, Latin America

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Case studies are a pedagogical tool used in many public policy programs around the world. They help students experience the types of problems they are likely to face as public policy professionals. The goal of using case studies is to consider an interesting situation that requires a creative response. In a typical public policy program, cases include some combination of local, regional, and international cases, depending on the program's priorities. An underlying assumption of using international cases is that

different regions of the world face similar public policy problems and thus there are opportunities to learn from each other. But context matters; there is often concern about whether students will be able to discern the applicable versus unique aspects of a case. The problems in international cases may occur in contexts distinct from where the cases are used, raising the question of whether lessons apply to the local context. Can specific policy actions in response to corruption in Asia or public transit

challenges in Latin America be replicated in the Kenyan context? Is the broad process of addressing the problems in such cases more critical than their detailed handling? In other words, what is the best way to use international cases in public policy programs, particularly in developing countries, so as to enhance the effectiveness of using cases? Do international cases serve a different purpose than more local ones? Do students recognize and value the role of international versus local cases differently?

This article is situated within the existing literature on public policy challenges in developing countries and the separate literature on the case method as a proven pedagogical approach. Our research site is the Master of Public Policy and Management (MPPM) program at Strathmore University in Nairobi, Kenya. We present results of surveys conducted with faculty and students affiliated with the program during its first two years of operation, and then we share our recommendations for how to maximize the benefits of international cases, noting two cases that have been particularly effective and summarizing important case selection criteria.

### **PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

The simple division of the world into developed and developing countries is a common but imperfect and imprecise categorization. Even states classified as developed aspire to improve quality of life for their citizens and hence have not yet achieved their full potential. In addition, major disparities exist among developing countries; for example, between low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and the upper middle-income countries in East Asia and Latin America (Todaro & Smith, 2015). Common characteristics of developing countries are lower standards of living, productivity, human capital, industrialization and manufactured exports, along with higher levels of inequality and absolute poverty. Developing countries are also characterized by greater social fractionalization, larger rural populations, more rapid migration to cities, underdeveloped financial and other markets,

and low-capacity institutions as a colonial legacy (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

Poverty is the condition of insufficient levels of income to provide basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, education, medical care, and security. Absolute poverty, as measured by a head-count index represented by the proportion of a country's population living below the poverty line, exists to some degree in both developing and developed countries (Todaro & Smith, 2015). The more dramatic distinction is the total poverty gap present in developing countries. The total poverty gap is the sum of the difference between the poverty line and actual income levels of all people living below that line (Perkins, Radelet, & Lindauer, 2013); it is effectively a measure of *how* poor and destitute the poor are within a country.

Income and poverty levels, while important, are not the only measures of development. Sen (1999) argues that the goal of development is to expand the capabilities to people to live the lives they choose to lead. Other factors include measures of quality of life for diverse populations (the young and old, the ill, the disabled) and variations in social climate (e.g., the impact of crime, civil unrest, and violence). Other scholars explain differences in development as arising from whether countries developed extractive or inclusive institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Extractive institutions exist when the rules of the game benefit a small elite rather than the masses. Inclusive institutions, in contrast, benefit a broad section of society (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Politically, many developing states have largely extractive institutions and struggle to transition to more inclusive institutions. Challenges exist in making this transition, particularly because elite groups with vested interests in the status quo resist fundamental changes in institutional structures that could adversely affect them.

Public policy in developing countries suffers from several unique challenges relative to their more developed counterparts. Developing

states have much larger numbers of illiterate, poorly educated people and, on average, a much younger population (Cloete & de Coning, 2015). In many developing countries, there is a large gap between the demands for change and the capacities of government institutions to fulfill those demands. With their lower *per capita* incomes, economies often based on subsistence agricultural activities, and mineral extraction and production as the main industrial activities, developing countries are limited in their capacities to respond (Cloete & de Coning, 2015).

In many developing countries, the responsibilities of governments have changed considerably over the past two decades, shifting power and responsibility for service provision from the central government to localities. Decentralization is a key trend in many developing states in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, and scholars usually portray it as an important aspect of participatory democracy and increased accountability to the citizenry (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006). Decentralization has dramatically increased the number of policy players in regional and local governments (Morse & Struyk, 2006), although there are vast differences in the pace of decentralization reforms across developing states. Decentralization can be a way of achieving more inclusive institutions, but many developing states still have a long way to go in achieving effectively functioning decentralized institutions. The role of public policy education within a developing country in the midst of decentralization is thus, in part, to help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to increase the capacities of their local governments. The case method offers one mechanism by which to advance that goal by offering potentially valuable lessons from comparative public policy.

### THE CASE METHOD

Within professional disciplines, there is widespread recognition that teaching methods and course content must be relevant to the work contexts of practicing professionals and must help such professionals develop the skills

needed to solve complex problems. Interactive and engaged methods of teaching are preferable to the traditional lecture approach. Similarly, course content that incorporates practical, real-world examples is more useful than an entirely theoretical and conceptual focus. As such, the case method pedagogy has experienced growing popularity in many disciplines (Kimball, 1995), including the fields of medicine (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980), business (Spangler McBride, 1984), education (Merseeth, 1991, 1996), public administration (Feldman & Khademian, 1999), and public policy (Chetkovich & Kirp, 2001).

Cases are “a vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom ... [and a] record of complex situations that must be literally pulled apart and put together again before the situations can be understood” (Lawrence, 1953, p. 215). The case method has proven an effective means of enhancing the application of theory to practice (Christensen & Carlile, 2009; Michel, Carter, & Varela, 2009), critical thinking (Salemi, 2002; Michel et al., 2009), and creativity (Salemi, 2002). In the field of public administration and public policy, the case method has helped students engage in systematic assessment of options and strategic decision making (Feldman & Khademian, 1999), apply ethical principles (Winston, 2000), and practice collaboration (Morse & Stephens, 2012). In public policy classes in particular, professors credit cases with helping illustrate that the real world of policy process cannot be fully understood as an exercise in “rationality, objectivity, and economics” but rather is also greatly influenced by “politics, subjectivity, and democracy” (Foster, McBeth, & Clemons, 2010, p. 517).

Cases differ in scope, purpose, and complexity, and they may be presented in a variety of formats. Conventionally, they are in written form prepared specifically for use in a teaching context, but they can also include videos and other media as well as descriptions or analyses written for other purposes that can be adapted to the classroom. The most well-known and

extensive case banks that serve public affairs educators are based in the United States, including those at the Harvard Business School, the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government, the University of Washington Electronic Hallway, and the University of Minnesota Hubert Project. Case banks are starting to develop in other countries and regions, but they are not as well established and many regions lack such resources. The U.S. case banks provide access to fully packaged cases, including clear learning objectives, instructional guides, and supporting materials. Individual instructors can also develop cases, bringing together materials from multiple sources (media reports, current policy debates, published studies, etc.). The scope of a case may be limited to a single individual, decision, policy, or organization, or it may extend to an entire community, region, or nation. Instructors can present students with information about a case all at once or gradually, in phases (Morse & Stephens, 2012).

In selecting a case to use in a class, key considerations include ensuring that it is relevant and comparable to the context in which students live and work, that it is engaging and challenging, and that it is clearly linked to instructional goals (Kim et al., 2006). The best cases are not hypothetical or fictional but rather rely on careful research and study of a real-world situation (Merseth, 1996). Cases should encourage critical thinking by forcing students to weigh facts and opinions, identify normative or ethical issues, and identify alternatives available (Gini, 1985). Cases set in the same city, country, or region as students offer the clear advantage of contextual relevance, but such cases may offer fewer opportunities to learn from experiences elsewhere. Such experiences based on comparative public policy may offer innovative solutions from other jurisdictions that could be adapted to the local context.

Comparative cases have value when teaching in a cross-national context, allowing students to assess the extent to which problems or solutions from one country apply to another, but only if

such cases maintain sufficient contextual relevance. Referring to the unique political and social circumstances facing Colombia after more than 50 years of armed conflict and in the midst of an active peace process, Careaga, Rubaii, & Leyva (2016) suggest that the cases available through existing case banks are of limited relevance. For many developing countries, the multitude of cases set in the United States and western Europe are interesting but offer few transferable lessons, especially because the institutional and social contexts of these cases differ widely from those in developing states.

### **USING THE CASE METHOD IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY CONTEXT**

In light of the unique public policy challenges facing developing countries, and the established literature on the importance of contextual relevance for the effectiveness of the case method, the focus of our research is examining what makes a case relevant and to what extent geographic proximity should be an important consideration. Our research takes place in a master's-level program at a private university in Nairobi, Kenya, that relies heavily on cases in all its required classes. We turn first to the country and program contexts, which are important for understanding the results of the survey data we collected.

#### **The Kenyan Context**

On December 12, 1963, Kenyans celebrated independence from British colonial rule, anticipating a prosperous future. The Independence Constitution adopted at that time was subsequently amended 38 times, resulting in such dramatic changes that ultimately the amended constitution's values and orientation differed considerably from its original version, despite technically maintaining legal continuity (Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, 2005). Rulers in Kenya in the several decades following independence adopted constitutional provisions that enabled them to reign without significant obstacles or restraints. In Kenya, like in many other African states, an overriding aim in the early post-independence period was

to create a political order more congenial to the group in power. Ethnicity has proved to be a powerful force in national politics since independence (Branch, 2011), and the centralization of power continued in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the early 1990s, however, strong demands for constitutional reforms began in Kenya. These demands must be understood against the backdrop of broader changes in the global and African context. Pressures for reform were not unique to Kenya but rather part of a global wave of democratization and constitutional reform after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its satellite states in the late 1980s and the consequent realignment of geopolitical relations in the post-Cold War era. This led to a spread of liberal ideas about state organization, thus challenging the ideology of the developmental state that was still prevalent among the African elite. A consequence of this trend was the opening up of political space for internal dialogue in most African countries, including in Kenya, which led rapidly to pressure for constitutional reform (Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, 2005).

In August 2010, a referendum approved a new constitution in Kenya, providing for a devolved system of government. This marked the culmination of several decades of struggle in Kenya's evolution from a highly centralized state that had engendered many constitutional conflicts to a more decentralized one (Mudida, 2015). Decentralization efforts in Kenya continue to face major implementation challenges, and strong tensions exist between the national and county governments. As such, the intended benefits of decentralization have yet to be realized in Kenya. The lingering challenges facing the Kenyan government include developing an accountable and effectively functioning decentralized system, reducing poverty, creating employment, improving education and health for long-term human capital development, and enhancing economic growth and competitiveness (World Bank, 2013).

### **The Program Context**

Initiated in 2012, the Master in Public Policy and Management program at Strathmore University was established in direct response to the new needs of government under the Constitution enacted in 2010. The program attracts students from government, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector, who proceed as a full-time cohort, taking classes in the evenings to accommodate work schedules. Housed within the Strathmore Business School, the MPPM program embraces the school's emphasis on the case method as a central pedagogical approach. The MPPM program strives to prepare exceptionally talented individuals from all sectors who will contribute to improved public policy and quality of life in Kenya and throughout Africa. Students need to develop practical problem-solving skills suited for a rapidly changing world, and the case methodology, drawing on both local and international cases, is a deliberate program element intended to support that goal.

In light of increasing globalization and the consequent interconnectedness of public policy problems, the Strathmore program expects students to develop a global outlook in their analyses. The program therefore emphasizes teaching comparative public policy and uses international case studies to enhance students' global level of analysis and comparative skills. To achieve these diverse but interrelated objectives, faculty must be clear about what using international cases can and cannot achieve, explicitly addressing what lessons and policy elements are most likely transferable from international cases to the local context. The MPPM program encourages full-time Kenyan faculty to use international cases where appropriate but also incorporates international guest faculty, who bring outside experiences and perspectives and are expected to utilize cases from outside of Africa.

### **METHODOLOGY**

We developed two survey instruments to gather feedback from faculty and students affiliated with the MPPM program during its first two

years of existence (2012–2013 and 2013–2014). Both surveys combined closed- and open-ended questions about case experiences as well as solicited basic demographic information about respondents. We asked students to consider their experiences in the MPPM program and to evaluate the interest and applicability of cases from a variety of regions of the world, the relative value of international and local cases, and the characteristics of cases most important to their learning. The survey also asked students to identify the cases they found most useful and interesting and to briefly describe what they valued most about each of those cases. We asked faculty to report and reflect on their experiences using local and international cases and to evaluate these cases' relative usefulness. The survey also asked them to identify the criteria they used to select cases for teaching. We asked both groups of respondents to provide basic demographic information and report on the extent of their prior international experiences. The appendix presents a summary of questions asked in the student and faculty surveys.

In designing the surveys, we were attentive to the possibility for misunderstandings and inconsistencies in use of the terms *case* and *international case*. We wanted to ensure that as students and faculty considered their experiences with cases in the MPPM program, they did not only think of formally written cases. For the purposes of our research, we defined a case as follows:

A case is defined as a study of a particular situation, policy decision, or program set in a specific location. Cases are generally written but may also be presented in the form of video, oral presentation by the instructor, or some combination of forms. The key is that they are presented with sufficient detail so as to allow student discussion and analysis of the circumstances, the challenges, and the lessons learned.

Because there are so few cases set explicitly within Kenya, we expanded our notion of local

cases to include the larger geographic region. Thus, for the purposes of the survey, local cases included those from Kenya and sub-Saharan Africa (abbreviated as K/SSA) and international cases included "any case from a country outside of Sub-Saharan Africa." We use these same definitions throughout this article.

We administered the surveys during a two-month period from March 16 through May 15, 2015. We distributed and collected student surveys during one first-year and one second-year class; we distributed faculty surveys to teachers in their offices, and we collected them in person for the Nairobi-based faculty and the one visiting professor in residence during the survey period and via e-mail for the other international faculty. The student and local faculty surveys were anonymous by virtue of being collected in a single envelope without personal identifying information. The surveys received from international faculty initially were associated with the identifying e-mail address but we then entered responses into a database without identifying information. We received a total of 49 surveys from the MPPM students and 11 from faculty, representing response rates of 94% and 92%, respectively.

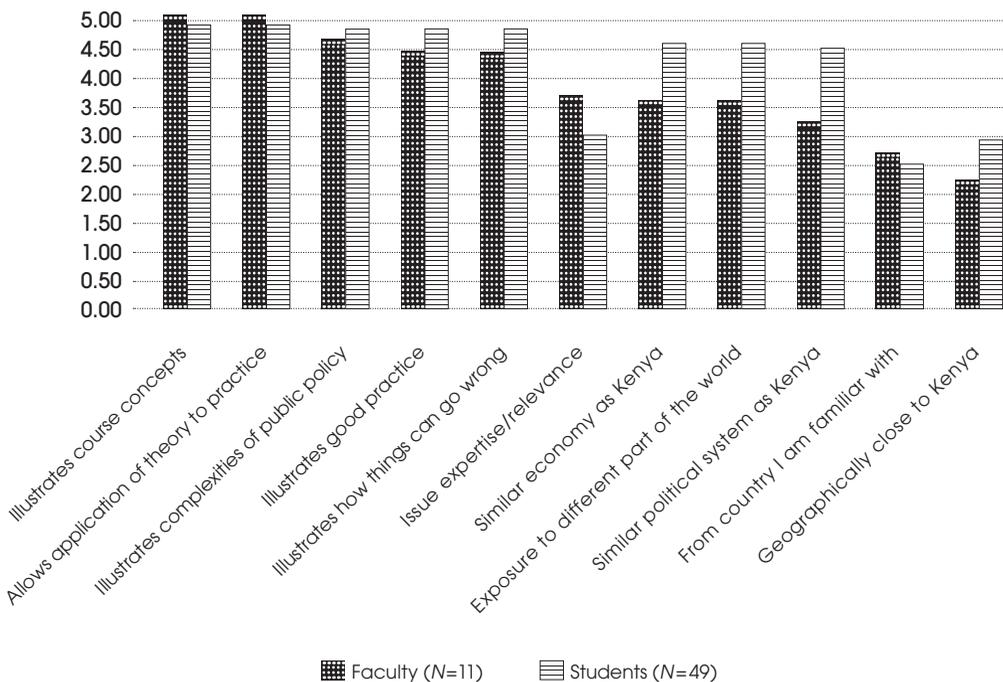
The faculty respondents include individuals relatively new to the profession (four who had fewer than five years of teaching experience) and seasoned instructors (five who had more than 10 years of experience); and six Kenyan nationals who have positions of various ranks at the university and five international faculty from three countries outside of Africa who were guest lecturers in the MPPM program during its first two years. More than 80% of faculty respondents (9 of 11) have extensive international experience, having studied, worked, or lived for extended periods on a continent other than Africa; and all have some experience outside of Kenya. More than 70% have ongoing research and/or teaching collaborations with colleagues on a different continent.

The student respondents include 26 second-year and 23 first-year students, and 53% of

them are male. The MPPM program is limited to in-service practitioners and it intentionally recruits from all sectors; thus the employment sector of the respondents is accordingly diverse. Among respondents, 32% report working in the public sector (13% national, 2% county, 17% other government), 28% in civil society (6% Kenyan, 11% international, 11% supra-national), 38% in the private sector (23% Kenyan, 15% multinational), and 2% in a higher-education organization. All have at least three years of work experience, and more than 40% have more than 10 years of work experience. Most students (54%) report having had no experience using the case method prior to entering the MPPM program. The students also represent a wide array of undergraduate

disciplines from the social sciences (political science, international relations, environmental studies, community development, law, sociology, communications), business (finance, economics, accounting, business administration, commerce), and the STEM fields (mathematics, civil engineering, computer science). Only two students (4% of respondents) have never traveled outside Kenya, and most (73%) have traveled to countries outside the African continent. An analysis of student responses to the survey questions in relation to gender, sector of work, years of experience, and first- or second-year status did not generate any statistically significant differences, thus the discussion of findings simply refers to students as one group.

**FIGURE 1.**  
Relative Importance of Case Characteristics



Note. Scores represent weighted averages on a 5-point Likert scale in which respondents could select from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important).

## FINDINGS

Since the selection of local or international cases and the approach to incorporating them into the teaching of a class are decisions made by faculty, we start by examining faculty perspectives. Perhaps because it is so explicitly part of the MPPM program's design, all faculty report that international cases contribute to course objectives and 73% consider international cases to be extremely important. In justifying why they use international cases, faculty rate as most important the lessons that can be learned from experiences elsewhere and the need for current and future Kenyan leaders to have a global perspective. Faculty did not identify a lack of good local cases as a driving force for using international cases.

The surveys indicate some interesting similarities and differences in the perspectives of students and faculty. The two groups have relatively similar ideas about what makes for a good case. In selecting cases, faculty rate as most important cases that illustrate course concepts and those that allow students to discuss how theory applies to practice (100% of faculty rate these as "very important"). Also of importance (as measured by the combined ratings of "very important" and "somewhat important") are cases that illustrate the complexities of public policy (91%), good practice (91%), how good ideas can go wrong (91%), and policy issues in which the faculty member has expertise (81%). Criteria that receive more mixed ratings but still garner majority rankings as at least somewhat important are cases from countries with similar economic characteristics as Kenya (72%), ones that expose students to other parts of the world (63%), and those with similar political characteristics as Kenya (54%). Among the least important considerations for case selection are faculty member familiarity with the country (45%) and cases geographically close to Kenya (27%). Student perspectives on the most important criteria parallel the faculty priorities in some areas, as illustrated in Figure 1. Students do, however, place a greater emphasis on cases that expose them to different parts of

the world while reflecting economic and political characteristics similar to Kenya.

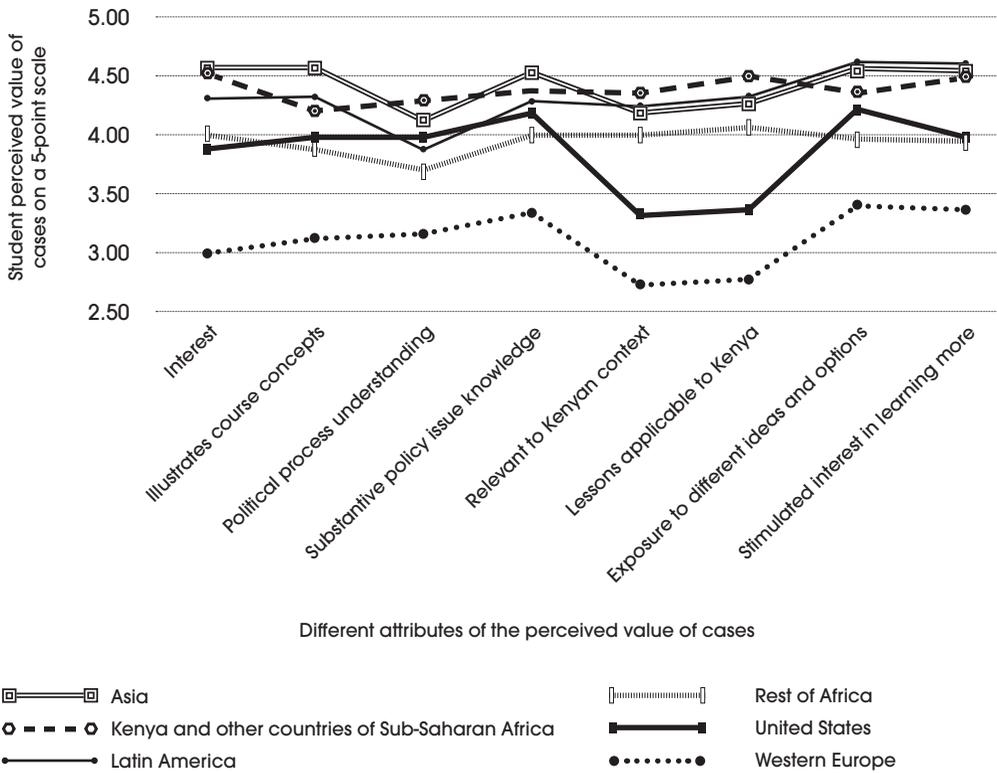
The priorities expressed by students provide context for the feedback they give on cases from various regions of the world. As shown in Figure 2, international cases from the United States and western Europe are consistently rated lower than cases from Asia and Latin America on almost all criteria, particularly with respect to relevance to Kenya and offering lessons applicable to the Kenyan context. Local cases from Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa are generally rated quite high on all criteria, but cases from other parts of Africa are evaluated as less valuable than those from Asia and Latin America.

An overwhelming majority of both groups (91% of faculty and 85% of students) perceive local and international cases to be equally valuable, but among those who have a preference for one type or the other, the faculty and students lean in opposing directions (see Figure 3). The one faculty member who deviated from the others deemed local cases to be more important. Among the 15% of students not in the modal category, 87% (13% of all respondents) rated international cases as offering more value to their learning. Comments from both students and faculty indicate that they appreciate that the two types of cases offer different advantages and benefits.

The survey also asked students to identify their three favorite cases. They could choose from the full range of local and international cases to which they had been exposed. Two cases stand out as the clear favorites: one case from Singapore and one from Bogotá, Colombia. More than 40 students listed these cases in their top three, whereas the next most frequently referenced cases received fewer than 10 mentions.

The survey further asked students to explain the basis for each of their top three selections. This provided us with 135 comments ranging in length from a single sentence to two paragraphs (49 students each asked to report on three cases; nine of these students only identified

**FIGURE 2.**  
Student Ratings of Cases by Regions of the World

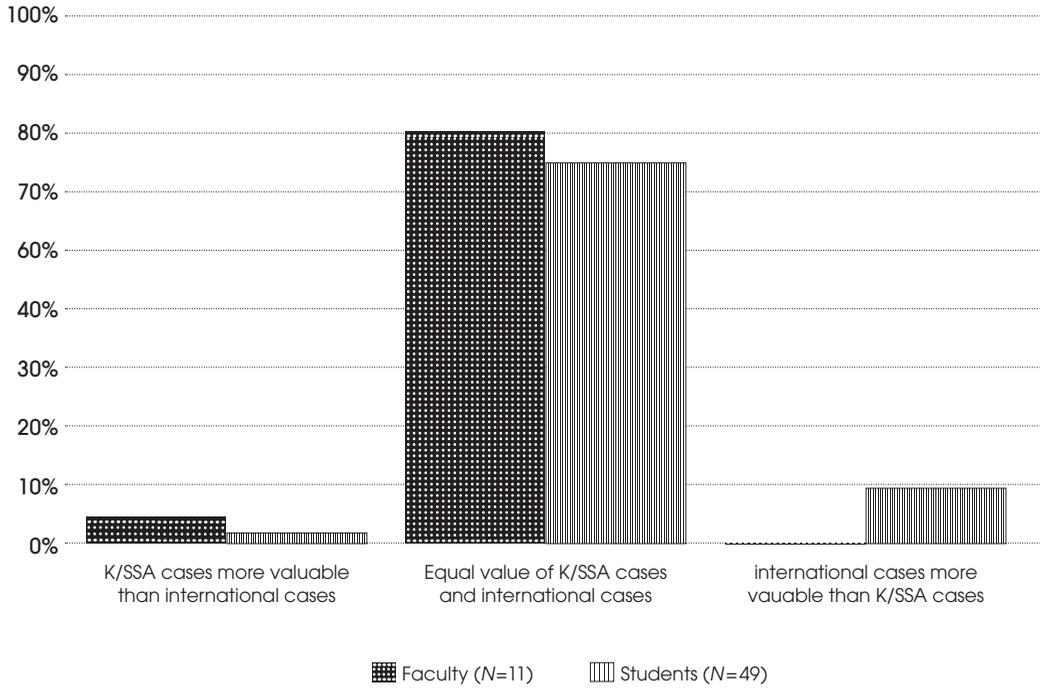


two cases, and one student identified the cases without providing a rationale). These comments enable us to more systematically understand student selection criteria. We were able to identify four interrelated themes, or criteria, each of which were referenced between 93 and 130 times. Students’ key considerations for valuing a case were (1) being set in comparable developing country contexts; (2) representing a similar array of public problems as their local context; (3) demonstrating alternative public policy approaches to achieve economic, social, and political progress; and (4) inspiring optimism and hope by virtue of overcoming barriers. Student comments about the Singapore and Bogotá cases reflect these themes, and in more than 50 instances student comments reference these characteristics’ being absent in the cases they did not find as useful.

Notably, both the Singapore and Bogotá cases dramatically illustrate examples of overcoming even worse conditions than Kenya’s current circumstances and thus offer students a sense of hope for positive change in their own country.

In referencing the Singapore case, students indicated that it offered an example of “how a third world country rose up the ranks to be a power economy” or rose “from obscurity to become an Asian Tiger.” They were impressed with lessons about “how, in the interests of economic development, a benevolent dictator can be an effective institution in his/her own right provided that the public interest is put first.” One student found the case to offer very personal value and referred to the story of Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore’s first prime minister) as “particularly inspiring for a young policy professional.”

**FIGURE 3.**  
**Faculty and Student Perspectives on the Relative Value of Local and International Cases**



With respect to the Bogotá case, students noted the comparability of problems, including a “chaotic transport system,” “traffic jams and pollution,” and a “congested, dirty city.” They also emphasized the value of seeing Bogotá’s “transformation” as offering a “dynamic solution through good governance” that provided “new ideas for how to tackle Kenya’s transport problems” and that could serve as “a precedent for Kenya.” They further referred to this case’s demonstrating the power of “passion to use a simple method to decongest a city.” They saw the case of “transformation of the transport system” as “very relevant to the current problems facing Kenya” and said that it showed “how the policies can be contextualized in Kenya to improve real life issues.”

**SAMPLE CASES FOR A DEVELOPING COUNTRY CONTEXT**

Student comments and faculty experiences suggest that the Singapore and Bogotá cases have potential to maintain relevance and value in other developing country contexts outside of Kenya. Accordingly, we shift our focus now to these two specific cases to illustrate how they were taught and what made them so popular and effective. Our goal is to provide sufficient information for other instructors to use these same cases or to identify and use other cases that would be equally appropriate and effective.

Both cases have been used in a required Strathmore MPPM class titled Theory and Practice of Public Policy. The course is designed to intro-

duce students to the main concepts and debates in public policy with particular reference to developing countries. Key topics include the nature and role of public policy, theories and models for analyzing public policy, history and development of policy studies and policy analysis, public policy in developed and developing states, the policy process (agenda setting, policy design, decision making, implementation, evaluation), the dynamics of change, failure and success, and the institutionalization of policy analysis in government. The overarching objectives of the course are as follows:

- Analyze the politics, institutions, norms, and actors involved in the agenda setting, legitimating, and decision making of public policy.
- Study analytical frameworks that explain how the policy-making process works, relates to the substance of policy, and applies to real-world issues.
- Compare public policy processes in developed and developing states.

The two cases are aligned with particular course topics and intended to illustrate particular concepts. The Singapore case is taught as part of the first unit of the semester as a means of introducing students to the application of theory to practice in public policy. The Bogotá case is taught at the very end of the semester amid units devoted to policy implementation, policy evaluation, and factors that influence policy success and failure. As in real-life policy, the cases raise issues that span all stages of the policy process, encompassing problem definition, policy design, selection, implementation, and evaluation, as well as issues of theory and practice, the role of institutions and actors, and technical and financial considerations. In the following section, we highlight the rationale for selecting each case, the learning objectives, what materials are assigned to students in advance, and how the class discussion and activities are structured. We also provide some guidance for using the cases based on our experiences over several years.

### Combating Corruption and Advancing Economic Development in Singapore

The Singapore case is a Harvard Business School case (Reinhardt & Prewitt, 1995). It focuses on the economic transformation of Singapore from a poor, developing country into a developed and economically prosperous one. The case is useful because students often find it very inspirational; when Kenya gained independence in 1963, Singapore was even poorer than Kenya according to key development indicators such as income *per capita*, health, and educational outcomes. The case is structured into several parts: The case first provides a brief history of Singapore. Then it examines the challenges at independence, including the difficulties of forging a common Singaporean identity. Finally, an explanation follows of different economic policies that Singapore pursued in its transformation as well as the many challenges faced in the process.

The students first prepare the case themselves. Key issues that the case tries to bring out are threefold: First, students seek to understand what factors contributed to Singapore's success. In the 1950s and 1960s, different developing countries chose different developmental paths distinguished by aspects such as degree of export orientation. Three decades later, one could talk about development lessons and how countries taking different paths had performed. Singapore as one of the most successful East Asian economies has a lot to offer in terms of policy lessons for developing countries in general. Second, students gain an understanding of the challenges that Singapore has faced and how it has overcome them. The main point here is that public policy proceeds in a nonlinear fashion, with many unexpected challenges, but that such challenges can be addressed in a focused way. Third, students are expected to draw lessons for Kenya from the case. Here, it is vital to emphasize that inferring lessons for Kenya does not mean that all policies undertaken in Singapore are exactly applicable to the Kenyan context. Even so, though policy details may not be directly transplanted from one situation to another, sometimes the broad process of policy making is what is critical to understand.

Faculty give students preparation questions for the case specifically based on the issues above. The students prepare for the case discussion both individually and in small groups. Students then discuss the case with the instructor in a plenary session; students provide answers to the preparation questions, and this forms a basis for detailed discussion in which the instructor critically evaluates each student's contribution.

Students who know Singapore as it is today are often surprised by its difficult start at the beginning of the 1960s, having been an extremely poor country, expelled from the Malaysian federation, and extremely small in size. The odds seemed completely stacked against the country, and its prospects appeared very bleak. The challenges faced by Singapore in its economic transformation provide a reality check on the difficulties often faced during broad-based change in developing countries.

When the case was initially taught, focus was on reading of the case itself and subsequent discussion. More recently, the instructor has incorporated video clips about the Singapore story that promote more insightful discussion. The instructor introduces the video clips at appropriate points during student discussion. For example, when students mention the inspirational leadership of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, the instructor plays clips from Lee's key speeches so that students can better understand his vision from hearing him articulate it himself. Other video clips show images of Singapore both at independence and more recently (underscoring the transformation) and feature other top Singaporean public policy officials talking about the country's policies and trajectory. Adding the clips was a major pedagogical improvement, achieved after teaching the case several times and after learning from visiting international faculty who tended to use more videos in their presentations, to good effect.

### **Buses, Bikes, and More in Bogotá, Colombia**

The transformation of Bogotá beginning in the mid-1990s—from a violent, chaotic, congested, and polluted city to a world-class destination

known for its public transportation system, network of bicycle paths, and a multitude of high-quality shared public spaces—is well documented in academic and popular sources. The case provides numerous lessons regarding policy design, funding and implementation, the interconnectedness of public problems, the value of changing minds as well as behaviors, and the role of policy leaders as change agents. The MPPM students at Strathmore find the case particularly relevant because they recognize many of the same circumstances in Nairobi as those that formerly existed in Bogotá.

The case focuses on the Transmilenio Bus Rapid Transit system and the Ciclovía and Cicloruta programs, as well as related programs initiated during the mid- to late-1990s and expanded since then. As of 2015, the Transmilenio system included 115 stations, nine trunk lines in which 1,262 articulated and bi-articulated buses travel 84 kilometers of designated lanes, and 83 feeder lines in which 500 conventional buses travel more than 660 kilometers. Transmilenio moves more than 1.4 million people per day at close to 29 kilometers per hour. It was designed and is operated by a public-private partnership that assigns initial construction, infrastructure maintenance and expansion, and scheduling and real-time monitoring duties to a city agency created for that purpose. Bus purchase, operations and maintenance, and fare collection are assigned to private vendors selected through a competitive bidding process. Transmilenio is augmented by Cicloruta, a 300-kilometer network of bike paths (the most extensive in any Latin America country) linked to the transit stations. Bogotá also developed a vibrant recreational bike program called Ciclovía. Every Sunday and holiday (72 times per year), 121 kilometers of major roads are closed to motorized vehicles to allow pedestrian, bicycle, and other forms of nonmotorized activity to occur safely; the program also provides exercise classes, entertainment, and other social events in the city's parks. Ciclovía serves 600,000–120,000 users per Sunday and is credited with creating a greater sense of community as well as a healthier population.

Teaching the case involves assigned readings in advance of class sessions, videos shown during class, structured discussions, and group activities. Because the MPPM program serves practicing professionals who work full-time while attending class three nights per week, instructors should adjust the volume of reading accordingly. Many good readings exist, and instructors can select assignments based on the issues they want to emphasize. At a minimum, readings should include those that provide basic background information (e.g., Ardila, 2007; Ardila & Menckhoff, 2002; Cervero, Sarmiento, Jacoby, Gomez, & Neiman, 2009; Hidalgo & Graftieaux, n.d.; UN Development Programme, 2012). Additional readings can emphasize technical design decisions (Valderama & Beltran, 2007); the broader sustainability perspective (Teunissen, Sarmiento, Zuidgeest, & Brussel, 2015); evaluations of user satisfaction (Hidaglo, Pereira, Estupinan, & Jimenez, 2013); assessments of various initiatives' economic (Montes et al., 2011), environmental (Turner, Kooshan, & Winkelman, 2012), or health benefits (Torres, Sarmiento, Stauber, & Zarama, 2013); and comparisons of Bogotá's policies with those elsewhere (Montes et al., 2011).

With the readings as a common basis of understanding, we begin by comparing the countries of Colombia and Kenya and the cities of Bogotá and Nairobi, using maps and data to illustrate geographic, economic, political, historical, and demographic similarities and differences. Students then provide their initial impressions of the various policy changes enacted in Bogotá based on the readings. Invariably, students express interest because they recognize the issues of traffic congestion, pollution, excessive commuting times, unsafe streets for pedestrians and cyclists, absence of sidewalks, and heavy reliance on small, privately operated, and poorly maintained minibuses or vans (*matatus*) for public transit. Students also tend to express doubt that the changes in Bogotá are possible in Nairobi because of extensive corruption and the depth of the problem in Kenya. Pessimistic student reactions provide the perfect entrée to the videos, which challenge that perception.

The first video is the one-hour documentary *Cities on Speed: Bogota Change / The Inspiring Story of Antanas Mockus*. The video illustrates the extreme level of violence present in Bogotá and the ways in which the mayoral candidacies and terms of Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa managed to both overcome and change the culture of violence. The video personalizes these leaders, who served as key change agents. More important, the film illustrates that the starting point for Bogotá's transformation was in many ways much worse than Nairobi's situation, and this provides the students with a sense of possibility.

Three more videos are shown in subsequent classes, interspersed with discussions and exercises. A TED video by Enrique Peñalosa, *Why Buses Represent Democracy in Action*, frames transportation in terms of equity, poverty reduction, and quality of life. This helps illustrate the interconnectedness of public problems, which often cannot be solved through single-pronged approaches. This video also provides a philosophical basis for the Transmilenio design issues described in the readings. A 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-minute *New York Times* video, *The Buses of Bogota*, provides more recent (2009) images of the Transmilenio system and testimonials from users, giving a street-level view of how the system is working. The final video, *Streetfilms: Ciclovía, Bogotá, Colombia*, is a 2007 film by Clarence Eckerson Jr. that, in less than 10 minutes, conveys the popularity and creativity of Ciclovía and why it has become the model for the developing world.

Interspersed with the videos are class discussions, presentations of information about related policies in Bogotá (e.g., *Pico y Placa*, literally "Peak and Placard," which limits driving during peak hours according the last digit on a license plate). Class time also includes small group exercises designed to allow for the explicit application of theory to the cases, specifically theories related to factors that contribute to and inhibit policy change, that affect policy success and failure, that establish conditions necessary for sustained policy suc-

cess, and that influence transferability of policy or the effectiveness of policy diffusion efforts.

Throughout the entire process, emphasis is on lessons (regarding policy process and substantive issues) that may be applicable to the Kenyan context. Student participation in classes is active and enthusiastic. Over the course of the multiple sessions, student attitudes notably transition from skepticism to tempered optimism, their attention to policies shifts from a general overview to specific details, and their understanding of the case evolves from a narrow focus on public transit to broad notions of sustainable development. Students end in appreciating how the Bogotá example reflects a culture of citizenship and promotes social, economic, and political equity that extends beyond traditional economic measures of development.

#### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS**

We began by asking several questions about the relative value of international cases as a teaching tool within developing countries. As a means of identifying lessons learned through this research, it is useful to revisit those questions. In particular, we asked, Can specific policy actions in response to corruption in Asia or public transit challenges in Latin America be replicated in the Kenyan context? Or is the broad process of addressing the problems in such cases more critical than their detailed handling? In short, what is the best way to use international cases in public policy programs so as to enhance the effectiveness of using cases? Do international cases serve a different purpose than more local ones? Do students recognize and value the role of international versus local cases differently?

Student reactions to the cases from Singapore and Bogotá suggest that both the broad decision processes discussed as well as the policy details were relevant and valuable. Students were able to juxtapose current circumstances in Nairobi with the examples from Asia and Latin America with relative ease. They quickly identified similarities in economic and political circumstances

as well as in policy needs. With guidance from the instructor, they were also able to critically evaluate logistical constraints as well as the potential for policy diffusion. As they learned about the actions of individuals and groups, and the details of specific policy instruments, students were able to select which they could envision being effective in Kenya and to discuss the roles they could play in their respective organizations to advance similar changes.

The findings of our research both reinforce earlier studies and uniquely contribute to discussions about how to use cases in a developing country context. Our survey results reinforce the general value of the case approach. With respect to the case method as pedagogy, one student noted that “the case study method is so interesting and informative. [It] makes learning easier and interesting. I got a glimpse of what I would otherwise not have known. The cases are so well researched and written. Best part is they are REAL.” Another remarked, “Case studies are the best learning method—they are real, relevant, applicable.” In the words of another student, the case method “has been the most effective form of learning as it has connected theory to actual practice. It is easier to remember theory through everyday occurrence.”

Our findings support the importance of both local and international settings. From case studies, policy students learn “what works when, where and how, and what to avoid in their local settings.” As one student aptly summarized, “Cases from Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries speak to what we are experiencing on a day-to-day basis, [and] international cases then help in comparison of the two environments and lesson sharing/learning.” In their summary remarks, several students focused on the value of both international and local cases. One student indicated that the international cases “allow me to travel (in my mind)” and another referred to the international cases as “very relevant” and “offering the possibility of replication in the Kenyan context” based on “what worked and did not work.”

Feedback from students also demonstrates that they see a distinct and important role for international cases, which should inform their selection. The practitioner students in Strathmore's MPPM program were not interested in international cases solely as a means of learning about other parts of the world or best practices from incomparable settings. They were interested in examples of both successful and unsuccessful policy change efforts from contexts that shared enough in common with Kenya so as to make them realistic models. In particular, students were interested in cases from other developing countries that illustrated the potential to overcome social, political, and economic obstacles similar to those facing Kenya, in particular those related to decentralization and corruption.

Student comments also suggest opportunities for improvement in case instruction; for example, moving away from text-only case presentations to incorporate multimedia formats and ensuring that case analysis involves discussion beyond individual analyses. Several students indicated a preference for limiting the amount of reading for a case, ensuring that cases are not too technical, including visual aids, and allowing sufficient time for "interrogating" and "contextualizing" the cases. Regarding the format of case instruction, a student said, "The cases are amazing learning tools/instruments. I noticed the guest [international] lecturers adopt the use of visual tools (e.g., videos that break the monotony of text and make class more enjoyable). Strathmore lecturers can borrow a thing or two, those TED videos work wonders!" In response to these comments, several Kenyan faculty have begun to incorporate short video clips as part of their cases.

Finally, our research supports previous findings about the importance of selecting cases that are relevant, are based in real-world situations, and offer timely lessons for the practicing professional. The real contribution of our work is what *relevance* means within a developing country context. For a program based in a developing country, the key is to identify cases that are set

in a comparable developing or recently developed country, that address policy problems that are also being experienced in the local context, that may include some setbacks and failures but that ultimately show progress, and most important, that provide students with a sense of optimism and hope by virtue of demonstrating examples from comparable or even more severe situations. In the language of the literature on development, the best cases illustrate reduction of absolute poverty and the poverty gap (Todaro & Smith, 2015), improvement in quality of life (Sen, 1999), and a transition from extractive to inclusive institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Based on our research, we offer four specific recommendations to faculty interested in using the case methodology when teaching public policy in a developing country:

1. Use a balance of local and international cases, drawing the international cases from other developing or recently developed countries.
2. Select cases that document policy change over time so as to illustrate the inevitable mix of policy successes and failures that might not be evident from a snapshot at a single point in time.
3. If multimedia cases do not exist, create them by bringing together a variety of source materials around the same policy example.
4. Recognize the dual role that cases serve in both providing technical policy ideas and inspiring hope about the potential to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges, and facilitate case discussions accordingly.

The key to effective use of the case methodology in any context is the careful selection of cases to ensure relevance to the course and organizational, sector, or country context. In a developing country context, relevance is easier to achieve through the use of cases from other developing or recently developed countries

because these offer transferable lessons, unlike cases from the United States, which students often perceive as presenting unattainable processes and results. International cases, if selected appropriately, can offer considerable benefits in the teaching of public policy in a developing country. Public policy professionals in developing countries are keen to learn from cases that contribute to a sense of optimism about the potential for change.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Robert Mudida** is academic director and associate professor of political economy in the Master of Public Policy and Management program at Strathmore Business School in Nairobi, Kenya. His research addresses issues of international political economy, financial management, and constitutional conflict in Kenya.

**Nadia Rubaii** is associate professor of public administration in the College of Community and Public Affairs and codirector of the Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention (I-GMAP) at Binghamton University, State University of New York. Her research focuses on issues of diversity and cultural competence, innovative pedagogies, and internationalization of public affairs education.

## APPENDIX

### The Survey Instruments

[Note: In the interest of space, we have removed or modified some survey language and formatting, leaving only essential content.]

### The Student Survey

#### Introduction

As you know, the MPPM at SBS [Strathmore Business School] systematically uses the case method as part of the pedagogical design and deliberately provides students with cases from different parts of the world. An underlying assumption is that this strategy contributes to the quality of your education in that the cases allow the application of theory to practice and that cases from diverse countries contribute to your ability to identify, evaluate, and apply lessons to the Kenyan context. International cases are also intended to help you develop a more global perspective and engage in more sophisticated analyses of the complex public policy problems of the 21st century. This survey is intended to assess the extent to which your experience as a student corresponds to the program intent. We are interested in your experiences with the use of cases in your MPPM classes and the relative value of cases drawn from different parts of the world. In responding to the questions, please consider *all of the courses* you have completed or are currently taking in the MPPM program.

#### Definitions

For the purposes of this survey, please utilize the following definitions of the terms *case* and *international case*.

**case:** A case is defined as a study of a particular situation, policy decision, or program set in a specific location. Cases are generally written but may also be presented in the form of video, oral presentation by the instructor, or some combination of forms. The key is that they are presented with sufficient detail so as to allow student discussion and analysis of the circumstances, the challenges, and the lessons learned.

**international case:** Any case from a country outside of Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Questions**

1. Please use the five-point scale for each of the following regions on each of the listed criteria (5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Somewhat agree; 3 = No opinion; 2 = Somewhat disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree; 0 = No basis to evaluate because no cases from this region). If you have had exposure to multiple cases from any given region, think about them on average. Regions: (1) Kenya and other countries in Sub-Saharan African; (2) countries in other parts of Africa; (3) countries in Asia; (4) countries in Latin America; (5) the United States; (6) countries in western Europe; (7) countries in all other regions.

*Criteria:*

- a. The cases have interested me.
  - b. The cases have helped illustrate course concepts.
  - c. The cases have contributed to my understanding of political processes.
  - d. The cases have contributed to my substantive policy issue knowledge.
  - e. The cases have been relevant to the Kenyan context.
  - f. The cases illustrated lessons applicable in Kenya.
  - g. The cases exposed me to different ideas, perspectives, and options from parts of the world I knew little about.
  - h. The cases stimulated my interest in learning more about or visiting those countries.
2. With respect to the relative value of international cases, which of the following statements best describes your experience as an MPPM student?
- Cases from Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries are more valuable than international cases.
  - Cases from Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries are equally as valuable as international cases.
  - International cases are more valuable than cases from Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries.
  - Please explain the basis for your response: \_\_\_\_\_

3. From your perspective, how important are each of the following case characteristics to your sense of the case's usefulness? (Very important, Somewhat important, No opinion, Somewhat unimportant, Not at all important)
- a. The case is from a country with similar economic characteristics as Kenya.
  - b. The case is from a country with similar political characteristics as Kenya.
  - c. The case is from a country with similar socio-cultural characteristics as Kenya.
  - d. The case is from a country geographically close to Kenya.
  - e. The case illustrates the course concepts.
  - f. The case allows us to discuss how theory applies to practice.
  - g. The case exposes me to parts of the world I know little about.
  - h. The case illustrates good practices.
  - i. The case illustrates how good ideas can go wrong.
  - j. The case is in a country I am already familiar with.
  - k. The case deals with an issue related to my job.
  - l. The case illustrates the complexities of public policy.
  - m. Other (please specify)
4. Identify the three most interesting and/or useful cases you have used in your classes during your time as a student in the MPPM program. Provide enough information to help us know what case it was (country or region, issue, and course) and explain briefly what made it particularly valuable or memorable. [open-ended]
5. What other information would you like to share about your experience with cases as an MPPM student? [open-ended, space provided]

[Demographic information collected from students included current year of MPPM study, gender, sector of employment, number of years of work experience prior to entering the MPPM program, prior experience with the case method, undergraduate field of study, and international travel experience.]

## The Faculty Survey

### Introduction

[The introduction is largely the same as in the student survey, using *students* in place of *you* and *your* and a slightly different phrasing of the final three sentences, as follows.] This survey is intended to assess your experience as an instructor in MPPM courses with the case method. In answering the questions below, please think about the classes you have taught or are currently teaching in the MPPM program, and consider both your observations of students in their case discussions and analyses as well as any feedback you have received from students about cases.

### Definitions

[Definitions of *case* and *international case* are the same as in the student survey.]

### Questions

[The faculty survey includes Question 2 from the student survey, a modified version that survey's question 3 (asking about the importance of criteria for *selecting* cases), two unique questions (listed below), and space to provide general comments about the use of local and international cases.]

1. How important do you consider it to include international cases in your classes?
  - Extremely important; international cases are vital to the course effectiveness.
  - Somewhat important; international cases contribute to the course objectives.
  - Somewhat unimportant; they can be useful but are not necessary.
  - Not at all important; there is no need for international cases in the course(s) I teach.
2. How would you rank the following reasons why you use international cases in your classes? (1 = Most important; 5 = Least important)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ There are not enough good cases from Kenya or Sub-Saharan Africa.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ There are interesting lessons to be learned from experiences elsewhere.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Students find them interesting.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ I have international expertise I want to share with the students.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Current and future Kenyan leaders need to have a more global perspective.

[Demographic information gathered from faculty included years of teaching experience, faculty rank or affiliation at the university, full- or part-time status at the university, nationality, extent of international experience, and extent of international collaboration experience.]

# Expanding the Classroom: Local Government Practitioners' Use of Academic Resources

Willow S. Jacobson

University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

Kristina T. Lambright

Binghamton University, State University of New York

## ABSTRACT

Drawing on E. L. Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990), we propose that public affairs education could be conceptualized to include the education of not just current students but also practitioners throughout their careers. To explore knowledge diffusion from academics to such practitioners, we conducted 40 phone interviews with county human resources (HR) directors in New York and North Carolina and examined the extent to which this population directly used academic resources. There was moderate use of academic resources from higher-education institutions across the sample; many North Carolina HR directors consulted publications and personnel from one university that offers tailored services for local government officials in that state. Several HR directors who do not use academic resources indicated that they would be willing to do so. At the same time, many respondents were unsure what academic resources were available or when they would be helpful.

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## KEYWORDS

Professional development, human resources, local government, academic-practitioner divide

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Articles published in the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* typically focus on the education of current students in public affairs programs. However, public affairs education can be conceptualized as more comprehensive, to include the education of public affairs practitioners throughout their careers. In his seminal book *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer (1990) argues that the concept of scholarship

should be broadened to encompass the scholarship of teaching, which focuses on sharing knowledge with others. Building on Boyer, public affairs education could be expanded beyond the walls of the traditional classroom, with public affairs academics sharing their knowledge with practitioners. Examples of public affairs programs trying to forge stronger relationships between academics and

practitioners include the growth of executive education programs (Posner, 2009) and the widespread use of service learning (Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Campbell & Lambright, 2011; Carrizales & Bennett, 2013; Gazley, Bennett, & Littlepage, 2013; Imperial, Perry & Katula, 2007; Stout, 2013).

Despite such efforts, several public affairs scholars have expressed concerns about a growing disconnect between academics and practitioners (e.g., see Box, 1992; Lambright, 2010; Posner, 2009; Streib, Slotkin, & Rivera, 2001). While scholars have speculated about the implications of this problem and proposed a variety of solutions (Bushouse et al., 2011; Lambright, 2010; Posner, 2009; Van Slyke, 2010), there has been surprisingly little empirical investigation on the extent to which public affairs practitioners actually use academic resources. Without understanding the problem's scope and causes, it is difficult to identify effective solutions.

This article responds to this gap in the literature by empirically examining use of academic resources by local government practitioners. Our research focuses on the information that county human resources (HR) directors use, investigating the extent to which this population directly uses academic resources and its level of interest in using these resources in the future. We define academic resources broadly as the personnel who work for higher-education institutions and the written materials such personnel and institutions produce; our definition includes academic resources from any discipline, not just those from public affairs programs. We focus on HR directors because human resources is a key function in local government as well as a core course in many public affairs programs, making these practitioners a natural audience with whom public affairs academics would want to share their knowledge.

We begin by discussing past scholarship about knowledge diffusion from academics to public affairs practitioners. Next we present our methods and key findings. Finally, we explore

the implications of our research and propose strategies to expand public affairs education to better serve practitioners throughout their careers.

### **KNOWLEDGE DIFFUSION FROM ACADEMICS TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS**

Historically, there was a strong connection between public affairs academics and practitioners. The birth of public administration in the United States was closely tied to the Progressive movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Shields, 2003). During this time period, several universities created programs to provide technical assistance to state and local governments in order to improve their efficiency and effectiveness (Whorton, Gibson, & Dunn, 1986). In addition, early leaders in the field such as Luther Gulick, Charles Merriam, and Leonard White were boundary-spanning "pracademics," individuals with significant career achievements in both public service and the academy (Bushouse et al., 2011; Posner, 2009). Their experiences as practitioners shaped their scholarly writings (Bolton & Stolcis, 2003). However, as public affairs has matured as a field, many scholars have voiced dismay over a perceived lack of knowledge diffusion from academics to practitioners (Box, 1992; Bushouse et al., 2011; Lambright, 2010; Posner, 2009; Streib et al., 2001). Reasons for this lack of knowledge diffusion include barriers that inhibit career mobility between the two sectors (Posner, 2009), the pressure to publish inherent in the tenure and promotion process (Lambright, 2010; Posner, 2009; Van Slyke, 2010), and the complex research methods and technical writing style used by academics (Box, 1992; Lambright, 2010).

While many have expressed concerns about knowledge diffusion from academics to practitioners, there is only a small body of empirical research assessing this within the field of public affairs. Furthermore, most of this limited scholarship focuses on academic publications rather than on academic personnel. Research indicates that leading journals publish articles on topics important to practitioners. An analysis of *Public Administration Review* articles

published from 1984 to 1998 revealed that approximately 30% provided information that could enhance the effectiveness of local governments, although there was variation in the coverage of issues relevant to local government managers (Streib et al., 2001). In a similar study of *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* articles (Bushouse & Sowa, 2011), roughly 75% of articles published from 2000 to 2010 involved topics relevant to nonprofit practitioners, and 69% of the articles that focused on issues relevant to practitioners did not fully develop the implications of their findings for practice.

Although research suggests that journals are publishing articles relevant to practitioners, Landry, Lamari, and Amara (2003) report that practitioners frequently do not view academic research as useful. Based on their survey of Canadian government officials, 78% of respondents indicated that the research publications they received from universities were never, rarely, or only sometimes relevant to their jobs; and 41% of the sample reported that the publications never or rarely influenced decisions. Although these findings are disheartening, the study also identifies steps scholars can take to increase the likelihood their work will be utilized by practitioners. Specifically, Landry et al. (2003) report that practitioners are more likely to use academic publications when scholars adapt their research to meet practitioner needs and have stronger relationships with the practitioners with whom they share their research. Lomas and Brown (2009), in a study on the use of health research in the policy process, reach similar conclusions regarding steps researchers can take to make their work more appealing to practitioners. Albeit dated, there is also limited research suggesting that state and local government officials believe that university services specifically targeted to them are helpful. In a study investigating the use of academic personnel as information resources, local and state government officials were generally satisfied with the training and technical assistance they received from university programs (Whorton et al., 1986).

As evidenced by this literature review, several scholars are concerned that there is a lack of knowledge diffusion from academics to public affairs practitioners. To address this gap in the literature, we next turn to examining county HR directors' direct use of academic resources. By deepening our understanding about current use of academic resources, public affairs programs will be better positioned to expand their reach to include the education of practitioners throughout their careers.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

We conducted semi-structured phone interviews with 40 county HR directors: 20 from New York and 20 from North Carolina. By examining these two states, we were able to consider how regional differences and variation in the services provided by higher-education institutions to local governments might influence county HR directors' use of academic resources. North Carolina is home to the School of Government (SOG) at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. According to the SOG website, it is “the largest university-based local government training, advisory, and research organization in the United States,” offering courses, seminars, and specialized conferences for public officials. There is no comparable system of higher-education support for local governments in New York.

We randomly selected respondents from counties with workforces of 500 employees or greater, excluding counties located in New York City. We excluded these counties from the sampling frame because the size and function of government in these counties is on a different scale compared to the other counties in New York and North Carolina and could introduce confounding factors into our analysis. We limited our sampling frame to counties with workforces greater than 500 employees to ensure that a county's workforce would be of sufficient size to warrant a need for a county-level HR director. In addition, we wanted to ensure that respondents would be involved in policy-making decisions that were sophisticated enough to enable them to answer our interview questions. Our sample represents 41% (New

**TABLE 1.**  
County Demographics

Population	Count (%) (N = 40)	Workforce size	Count (%) (N = 40)
Less than 75,000	10 (25%)	500 to 750	13 (33%)
75,000 to 124,999	12 (30%)	750 to 1,249	13 (33%)
125,000 to 174,999	6 (15%)	1,250 to 1,749	3 (8%)
175,000 to 224,999	4 (10%)	1,750 to 2,249	3 (8%)
225,000 and above	8 (20%)	2,250 and above	8 (20%)

York) and 45% (North Carolina) of the counties eligible based on these criteria. While collecting our data, we observed a high level of data saturation. Based on a review of the data conducted after approximately 30 interviews, we found that respondents were consistently identifying the same key themes. After completing an additional 10 interviews, we reviewed the responses and found no new patterns emerging from the data. At this point, we had achieved the intended coverage of our sampling frame (more than 40% of eligible counties were included from both states) and were confident that we had reached data saturation.

The counties included in our sample had populations ranging from 29,967 to 1,419,369 (with a mean of 210,895) and workforce sizes ranging from 500 to 11,735 (with a mean of 1,698). The smallest HR department had two employees and the largest had 120 employees; the average HR department had 12 employees. Tables 1 and 2 provide additional information about the counties in our sample.

At the start of each interview, we guaranteed confidentiality. The average interview lasted 45 minutes. When designing our study, we were

interested in the extent to which respondents were regularly using academic resources. We were concerned that generic questions about

**TABLE 2.**  
Form of County Government

	Count (%) (N = 40)
Board of representatives	1 (3%)
Board of supervisors	1 (3%)
Chief administrative officer	1 (3%)
County administrator	7 (18%)
County executive	8 (20%)
County manager	22 (55%)

use of academic resources might cause respondents to overstate the extent to which they utilize these resources. To minimize this concern, we first asked respondents about all of the information resources they used (not just academic ones) in three different contexts: in the policy-making process, in the development of management initiatives, and for general information. We asked respondents to think of the most recent policy they had helped develop or revise as well as a recent HR management initiative and to discuss the information resources they had consulted in both instances. We also asked respondents to discuss any other commonly occurring circumstances in their jobs in which they used another information resource they had not had an opportunity to discuss. Following this broad discussion, the interviewer asked respondents to describe any circumstances they had not yet discussed in which they had used academic journals, papers, or books. We also asked about any circumstances in which respondents had used university or college personnel as information resources. Our questions were broad and allowed respondents to discuss

their use of academic resources from any discipline, not just those from public affairs programs.

In the final portion of the interview, we collected basic information about the counties where respondents worked and respondents' professional backgrounds. Tables 3 and 4 summarize this background information, including information about respondents' education. While our sample is a population with whom public affairs academics would want to share their knowledge, just two respondents (5%) had Master of Public Administration (MPA) degrees. Most respondents did not have advanced degrees in any field: only 10 respondents (25%) held a master's degree, and one respondent had a law degree. For nine of the 10 respondents with a master's degree, the degree was in an HR-related field such as public administration, business administration, or HR management.

We recorded and transcribed all interviews, and we analyzed data using the qualitative data analysis software QSR NVivo. We developed coding definitions to ensure consistent code use

**TABLE 3.**  
Respondent Experience

<b>Years of human resources experience</b>	<b>Count (%) (N = 38)</b>	<b>Years in position</b>	<b>Count (%) (N = 38)</b>
<b>Less than 5</b>	3 (8%)	<b>Less than 5</b>	21 (54%)
<b>6 to 10</b>	7 (18%)	<b>6 to 10</b>	11 (28%)
<b>11 to 15</b>	5 (13%)	<b>11 to 15</b>	3 (8%)
<b>16 to 20</b>	6 (16%)	<b>16 to 20</b>	3 (8%)
<b>21 to 30</b>	11 (29%)	<b>21 to 30</b>	1 (3%)
<b>31 and greater</b>	6 (16%)	<b>31 and greater</b>	0 (0%)

**TABLE 4.**  
**Respondent Formal and Continuing Education**

Highest degree	Count (%) (N = 40)	Certification	Count (%) (N = 40)
High school diploma	2 (5%)	No certification	25 (63%)
Associate degree	1 (3%)	Certification (community college, state, other)	5 (13%)
Bachelor's degree	20 (50%)	SHRM Certification (PHR, SPHR) <sup>a</sup>	10 (25%)
Bachelor's degree, some graduate	6 (15%)		
Graduate degree (JD, MPA, MBA, etc.)	11 (28%)		

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>SHRM = Society for Human Resource Management, PHR = professional in human resources, SPHR = senior professional in human resources

age and used both pattern matching (Yin, 1994) and memoing (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in our data analysis. Both researchers independently coded all of the interview data.<sup>1</sup>

This study's research design enabled us to collect rich qualitative data in two states with different political cultures, policies, and access to university-based services to examine practitioner use of academic resources. There are some limitations to the research design. This study is exploratory, as there is little empirical research on the extent to which public affairs practitioners use academic resources. With 40 interviews, we are not able to provide definitive answers to our research questions. We hope to achieve analytical generalizability rather than statistical generalizability. It is also possible that our respondents overstated their use of academic resources because we both work for universities.<sup>2</sup> However, as discussed previously, we carefully structured our interview protocol to minimize concerns about social desirability bias. In addition, county HR directors' utilization of information resources in New York and North Carolina may not be representative of the resources used by other types of public

managers or county HR directors in other states. Finally, this article focuses on direct diffusion of academic knowledge to a field that is a core function in public organizations and a focus of considerable public administration scholarship. It does not assess the extent to which HR directors were using practices that originated from academic research but the directors learned about from their professional networks and resources.

**FINDINGS**

We begin by providing a broad overview of the various resources HR directors mentioned when asked about the information they used when developing personnel policies and management initiatives, as well as more generally in their jobs. Next we describe respondents' current use of academic resources. This section concludes by discussing respondents' interest in using academic resources in the future.

**Overview of Information Resources Used by HR Directors**

When asked to describe the information resources they consulted when creating a recent HR policy, respondents most commonly mentioned

personnel and policies from other jurisdictions. Table 5 details the frequency with which respondents used various information resources for policy development, management initiatives, and general information. As Table 5 illustrates, 36 respondents (90%) reported consulting other jurisdictions in the policy development process. When developing policy, respondents also relied heavily on a range on internal resources. Of the 40 HR directors, 33 (83%) sought input from personnel in other departments, 24 (60%) from county attorneys or retained council, and 22 (55%) from the county executive or executive staff. Sixteen HR directors (40%) had a standing personnel committee or had established an internal committee as part of the policy development process, and 15 (38%) elicited feedback from the broader county workforce. In addition, 22 respondents (55%) used state and federal agencies as resources. Another key resource was the Internet: 19 directors used it in the policy development process. North Carolina HR directors also often consulted SOG publications and personnel. Twelve directors (60% of the North Carolina sample) reported utilizing SOG publications and/or personnel when developing policy. In contrast, none of the New York or North Carolina HR directors reported using academic resources from other institutions in the policy development process.

Management initiatives are distinct from policies and were defined as programs, practices, or initiatives that the HR department had some discretion in implementing. Examples of management initiatives that respondents discussed included wellness programs, training programs, compressed work weeks, employee suggestion programs, and employee recognition programs. The resources HR directors used to develop management initiatives were generally similar to those consulted in policy development. However, HR directors tended to rely more heavily on internal resources than on other jurisdictions: 25 (63%) consulted colleagues in other departments (within their own county), 18 (45%) consulted the county executive or executive staff, and 16 (40%) consulted other jurisdictions. When creating management initiatives, 16 respondents (40%) sought advice from

vendors, which was more common than with policy development. HR directors from North Carolina were less likely to report having used the SOG as an information resource when developing management initiatives than when developing policies. Just three had consulted SOG resources when implementing management initiatives. Moreover, only two HR directors in the entire sample reported using publications or personnel from another academic institution to help develop a management initiative. One of these respondents indicated that her county's training officer consulted materials from her graduate studies, including MPA coursework, when helping to develop their management initiatives.

When asked what resources they used in general, not tied to policy development or a specific management initiative, respondents most commonly identified state and federal agencies and professional associations as general information resources: 13 HR directors (33%) used state and federal agencies and 14 (35%) used professional associations. Respondents consulted a variety of professional associations, ranging from local associations of HR professionals to national associations such as the Society for Human Resource Management and the International Personnel Management Association. Some respondents reported reading publications from these associations to stay informed, such as *HR Magazine*, while others said they used local associations for networking and sharing general information. While only two respondents mentioned consulting books either when developing policy or management initiatives, five people reported using books as a general means to stay informed. Three HR directors reported consulting SOG personnel and publications more generally in their jobs, and no one mentioned using resources from other academic institutions.

### Use of Academic Resources

After generally asking HR directors about the information resources they used in their jobs, we asked specific questions about the different types of academic resources they may have used but had not discussed previously in the inter-

**TABLE 5.**  
Information Resource Use

Resource	Count (%), resource used for policy development (N = 40)	Count (%), resource used for a management initiative (N = 40)	Count (%), resource used for general information (N = 40)
Personnel or policies from other jurisdictions	36 (90%)	16 (40%)	4 (10%)
Other departments within the county	33 (83%)	25 (63%)	1 (3%)
County attorney or retained council	24 (60%)	3 (8%)	7 (18%)
Executive or executive staff	22 (55%)	18 (45%)	0 (0%)
State or federal agencies	22 (55%)	3 (8%)	13 (33%)
Resources from professional associations	20 (50%)	13 (33%)	14 (35%)
Internet	19 (48%)	11 (28%)	2 (5%)
Laws or general statutes	19 (48%)	2 (5%)	9 (23%)
Listserv	18 (45%)	6 (15%)	2 (5%)
Internal committee or working group	16 (40%)	15 (38%)	1 (3%)
County employees	15 (38%)	13 (33%)	0 (0%)
SOG <sup>a</sup> personnel or publications	12 (30%)	3 (8%)	3 (8%)
Board or legislature	11 (28%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)
Consultants	9 (23%)	3 (8%)	3 (8%)
Union personnel or documents	9 (23%)	6 (15%)	1 (3%)
Vendors	6 (15%)	16 (40%)	6 (15%)
Private sector examples	4 (10%)	5 (13%)	1 (3%)
Books	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	5 (13%)
Academic journals, papers, or personnel from institutions other than SOG	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)

Note. <sup>a</sup>SOG = School of Government at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

view. When considering the use of academic resources in any context, 18 county HR directors from North Carolina (90% of the North Carolina sample) indicated they had used either publications and/or personnel from the SOG. This includes responses to questions about resources for policy development, management initiatives, and general information as well as to more specific questions about use of academic publications or personnel. Directors from both states were less likely to report utilizing academic resources from academic institutions other than the SOG.

Table 6 summarizes, by state, HR directors' use of academic resources for any reason. As illustrated by Table 6, 15 North Carolina HR directors (75% of the North Carolina sample) reported using SOG publications. The resources referenced were specifically targeted at practitioners and tailored to the needs of this population. Ten respondents from the entire sample (25%) reported using written materials from other academic institutions: five were from New York and five were from North Carolina. Nine of these 10 respondents reported reading academic papers. Three used books, including one respondent who specifically noted consulting old textbooks from her graduate program. Just one respondent reported using academic journals as an information resource, and even this director reported that she did not currently use academic journals as much as when she had first become HR director:

Initially when I took this position three years ago, I probably relied more heavily on those [academic journals] than I do now due to connectivity issues. I don't have access to easily do that. There was a time when I could leave and go to the library and do that kind of research. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts we've lost a person so I'm more limited in what I can do.

Finally, one respondent reported referring to one university's website for information on labor relations.

Many respondents who were using written materials from academic institutions other

than the SOG did not appear to be deliberately seeking information from academic sources. Five of these respondents reported that they only used academic papers when such sources were identified as part of a larger Internet search. As described by one respondent,

I may Google and say "HR leave form" and see what comes up. I was trying to get interview questions one time and I did a search and ended up with great questions from a thesis on interviewing and they had samples. I will do a search to see what comes my way.

Despite the fact that few HR directors used written materials from academic institutions other than the SOG, four who did found these materials helpful. For instance, one respondent commented:

I never thought about it [going to an academic site] as a first point of reference. The reality is once there the information is invaluable I think. More research has gone into it. I'm glad we are having this conversation because it will make me think to use that as a resource and maybe I will think of using that first whereas before it was an afterthought.

Another six respondents (15%) specifically reported reading papers and books published by professional associations such as the Society for Human Resource Management and the International Personnel Management Association. According to one of these respondents, "A lot of these [professional] associations have libraries that you can tap into and look for publications, articles, research material on specific topics, a lot you can do online so that's useful to us." Some of these professional associations' publications are written by practitioners or consultants, but academics also write for these organizations. Although we do not know the authors of the specific material used by our respondents, these HR directors may be reading "academic" publications too. Similar to the individuals who used academic papers identified as part of a larger Internet search, these six re-

spondents were not actively seeking academic resources but were happy to use papers and books if these resources could help them in their jobs. In addition, several respondents made generic references to using resources from professional associations. However, since they were not clear as to the specific resources they were using, we did not include them in this category. Thus, we may be understating respondents' use of "academic" resources from professional associations.

In line with responses regarding use of written materials, the academic personnel whom HR directors in North Carolina consulted most frequently were those from the SOG. Twelve respondents from North Carolina (60% of the North Carolina sample) indicated that they used SOG personnel as information resources, particularly for legal-related issues. Eleven of the 12 reported consulting specific personnel, while the remaining respondent had attended a training provided by the school. Seventeen HR directors (43%) had consulted personnel who worked for academic institutions other than the SOG: eight of these respondents were from New York and nine were from North Carolina. None of the academic institutions that respondents reported consulting was mentioned in more than one interview. Moreover, in all but one interview each institution was located either within the respondent's county or close to it. Five of the 17 respondents indicated that they contacted the institution because either they or someone they knew had a personal connection to the college. For example, one respondent reported:

Professor W was in the School of Business. At College X, I had him when I was in school down there. When I came to work with County Z 16 years ago, it was obvious that there were compensation studies that needed to be done. I did not have the manpower or resources to get that done in-house. I knew Professor W had done work in that area. I called him up. He had done a lot more work than I realized. He ended up performing those studies for me, job description work. I stay in contact with him.

The most common reason that HR directors had consulted personnel from other academic institutions was for training purposes: 13 respondents (33%) reported having done this. As one of these respondents explained, "It's [working with local colleges is] a way we can train our staff, and we don't have expertise on every topic." Nine of the 13 respondents used community colleges for training, two used four-year colleges, and the remaining two used both community colleges and four-year colleges. In some cases, counties encouraged employees to attend regular courses offered at local colleges. In other cases, local colleges designed courses to meet specific county training needs and offered the courses to county employees only. For instance, one respondent described the following partnership his county had developed with a local community college:

I contacted him [someone I knew at the College Y] and told him what we were looking for [in a management training]. He said we could work it out. They put together a course, talked about the outline and what we would like to see in that, and it worked out well.

The trainings most frequently focused on supervisory and leadership skills. Other training topics mentioned by HR directors included succession planning, computer skills, and time management. Providing ongoing opportunities for professional development for county staff was important to this group of respondents, as illustrated by the following comment:

The county manager and myself are very big on continuing education and life-long learning. In order to encourage that, I have brought in a number of people from the community college or from the local four-year school Z to talk at the department head staff meeting about the services we can offer to employees.

Another common reason that HR directors had consulted personnel from other academic institutions was for expertise related to county HR initiatives. Seven (18%) reported seeking

advice on current initiatives. The topics of the projects varied. As just one example, a respondent reported using a faculty member from a local college to help collect citizen input prior to the implementation of an HR customer service initiative:

We used one of their professors who is a citizen of City A to help us do some information gathering when we started this customer service initiative. One of the things we wanted to do up front was [figure out] how could we improve customer service without knowing what they thought of us. One of the professors who lives in City A agreed to assist us in facilitating some citizen meetings we had over a period of several evenings, and we left the meetings up to him. We intentionally stayed away from the meetings. We wanted it to be a meeting where people could talk about their experiences in interacting with county government agencies.

In contrast to the academic institutions that respondents approached for training purposes,

most respondents were consulting local four-year colleges for their expertise on policy and management issues. Five of the seven sought the expertise of personnel who worked for local four-year colleges and just two respondents contacted community colleges.

Eight HR directors (20%) also indicated that interns from local colleges occasionally worked for their counties: seven of these eight HR directors were from North Carolina. In many cases, the interns worked in other county departments, and the HR department only handled the paperwork related to the internships. Four of these respondents specifically highlighted the importance of designing internships that were both beneficial for student interns as well as the county. For instance, one commented, “It helps us [the county] too as well as them [the student interns].” While the counties were not using personnel from academic institutions as information resources, their willingness to use students may represent a first step in creating relationships with these academic institutions. These relationships have the potential to evolve over time and result in the county consulting academic personnel for assistance on HR-related initiatives as well.

**TABLE 6.**  
Use of Academic Resources by State

	North Carolina count (%) (n = 20)	New York count (%) (n = 20)
<b>SOG<sup>a</sup> publications</b>	15 (75%)	NA
<b>Written materials from academic institutions other than the SOG:</b>		
<b>Papers</b>	5 (25%)	4 (20%)
<b>Books</b>	3 (15%)	0 (0%)
<b>Journal articles</b>	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
<b>Websites</b>	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
<b>Publications from professional associations</b>	3 (15%)	3 (15%)
<b>SOG personnel</b>	12 (60%)	NA
<b>Personnel from academic institutions other than the SOG</b>	9 (45%)	8 (40%)
<b>Student interns</b>	7 (35%)	1 (5%)

Note. <sup>a</sup>SOG = School of Government at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

To assess HR directors' overall direct use of academic resources, we looked at the use of academic publications and personnel together. Respondents received a point for using written materials from any academic institution (including the SOG) and a point for consulting personnel from any academic institution (including the SOG). We did not give respondents a point for using interns, since in many cases the HR department's contact with the intern was limited to handling the internship paperwork for other county departments. The average overall use score was a 1.18, suggesting moderate direct use of academic resources. However, there was considerable variation between the two state score averages: the average scores for New York and North Carolina were .70 and 1.65, respectively. In North Carolina, 14 respondents (70%) used academic publications and personnel while just two New York HR directors (10%) used both types of resources.

We were curious if there were any patterns between use of academic resources and the characteristics of respondents or the counties for which they worked. For instance, might HR departments with larger staffs have more time to gather information resources and be more likely to use academic resources? Or perhaps respondents with more years of education and exposure to the array of resources that universities offer would be more likely to use academic resources. We examined the relationship between academic use and a wide range of respondent and jurisdictional characteristics, including the form of county government, county government workforce size, HR department size, the role of the HR department in the county's strategic planning process, respondent education, respondent private sector experience, respondent certifications, respondent involvement in professional associations, and respondent attendance of conferences. However, we found no discernable patterns between any of these characteristics and the extent to which respondents used academic resources. Given the focus of our article, this lack of pattern between academic use and respondent education was of particular

interest. We also specifically examined the usage patterns of the two respondents with MPA degrees. To our surprise, neither of these respondents reported using any academic resources.

### **Interest in Using Academic Resources in the Future**

Although many HR directors, almost all from New York, had not used written materials or personnel from academic institutions in the past, several indicated that they would be open to using these resources in the future: six of the 15 who had not read any academic publications would be willing to read them, and 12 of the 13 who had not had any contact with academic personnel would consider working with them. Reflecting the sentiments of many, one respondent commented, "If I thought there was someone with information that would be helpful to us, I wouldn't think twice about reaching out to them." The most common reason for not using these resources was uncertainty about what resources were available and/or how to access them: 10 respondents (25%) cited this concern. As one HR director explained,

I'm not sure how to even get to the point to know which book you needed to get to obtain an answer. That's the nice thing about a Google search. It gives you a whole bunch of things. Sometimes it's not exactly what you thought you were looking for and you end up finding the information.

Eight respondents (20%) also indicated that they did not use academic publications or personnel because they were satisfied with their existing resources and did not believe they needed any additional information. As an example, one HR director commented,

First of all, we've got everything already. And I mean each person involved in the development of these things are people who have college degrees, advanced college degrees. I don't think if we're planning to do something we're going to go and seek out a book or paper. We're going to be dealing with the practical realities of the situations that we have in front of us.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Drawing on Boyer's (1990) scholarship of teaching, we propose that public affairs education could be conceptualized as including the education of both current students and public affairs practitioners throughout their careers. We are hopeful that this study can generate more discussion about the reach of public affairs education, as there is little empirical research on the extent to which public affairs practitioners use academic resources. To explore knowledge diffusion from academics to public affairs practitioners, we examined the extent to which county HR directors in New York and North Carolina directly use academic resources. When asked about the different information resources they use in policy making, in the development of management initiatives and for general information, our respondents typically did not report using academic publications or personnel. One exception was the widespread use of SOG resources by North Carolina HR directors in the policy-making process: 60% of these directors reported consulting SOG publications and/or personnel when making policy decisions. Instead of academic publications or personnel, key resources for HR directors in both states included other jurisdictions, colleagues in other departments within their county, state and federal agencies, and the Internet.

When specifically asked about their use of academic resources, a higher percentage of respondents indicated that they had utilized academic resources in some way as part of their jobs. Among the North Carolina sample, use of SOG resources was commonplace: 90% said that they had consulted SOG publications and/or personnel. In both states, use of academic resources from institutions other than the SOG was more limited: 25% of the full sample had utilized written materials from academic institutions other than the SOG, and 43% had consulted personnel from other academic institutions. Overall, there was moderate direct use of academic resources across our entire sample, although there was a large difference between the two states: North Carolina HR directors on average had used more than twice as many types of academic resources as New

York HR directors. This difference is primarily due to North Carolina HR directors' use of SOG publications and personnel.

We also examined whether use of academic resources was related to either respondent or jurisdictional characteristics. But we did not find any patterns. Our qualitative data suggests a possible explanation for this null finding. When discussing their use of academic resources from institutions other than the SOG, many respondents made comments that suggest they may have used these resources because it was convenient. Several reported accessing academic publications as part of general Internet searches rather than deliberately seeking them out. In addition, respondents often opted to use academic personnel because of preexisting relationships. SOG resources were also convenient to access. For example, the school distributes materials to this population through electronic mailing lists. There is no reason to expect that the respondent or jurisdictional characteristics we examined would influence how convenient it is for respondents to use academic resources.

Taken as a whole, our research suggests only a moderate amount of knowledge diffusion from academics to public affairs practitioners, validating concerns raised by several scholars (Box, 1992; Lambright, 2010; Posner, 2009; Streib et al., 2001). At the same time, our findings provide hope that there could be greater diffusion in the future, as many respondents who had not used written materials or personnel from academic institutions in the past were receptive to using them.

Drawing on our research, public affairs academics could use several strategies to facilitate greater knowledge sharing with practitioners. First, similar to past empirical research (Landry et al., 2003; Lomas & Brown, 2009), we found that HR directors were more likely to use academic resources tailored to meet their needs. In addition to writing traditional academic research, the SOG faculty and research staff produce many publications targeted to local government officials. Moreover, when HR

directors in our sample contacted personnel from academic institutions, they were typically seeking specific information relevant to current county HR policies, initiatives, or practices rather than general knowledge.

Second, academic resources not only need to be tailored to practitioners' needs; they also need to be easily accessible. The most common reason respondents gave for not using academic resources was that they were unsure what resources were available and/or how to access them. Further underscoring the importance of ensuring that resources are easily accessible, the one respondent who had read academic journals in the past reported no longer reading them as much because it was difficult for her to access them without going to a library.

Finally, like Landry et al. (2003) and Lomas and Brown (2009), our results highlight why building relationships between academics and practitioners matters. In the interviews in which HR directors reported consulting academic personnel from an institution other than the SOG, several respondents indicated they had contacted the academic institution because either they or someone they knew had a personal connection to the college, including one respondent who had continued to stay in touch with one of his professors.

One limitation of our analysis is that it is impossible to know the extent to which some of the nonuniversity sources consulted by our respondents draw on academic publications and personnel. For example, as discussed previously, academic personnel often write publications for professional associations. Additionally, consultants sometimes utilize academic scholarship. Furthermore, some ideas HR managers use have their origins in academic research even if the HR managers themselves learned of them through conversations with colleagues or reading articles in professional journals. Taken together, this suggests there may be considerable indirect diffusion of academic knowledge to the field even if there is only a moderate amount of direct diffusion as our results suggest.

Building on this exploratory research, future studies should examine the topics addressed using a larger sample in more than just two states and for other types of public managers, such as finance or information technology professionals. Scholars also should examine use of academic publications and personnel by some of the nonuniversity sources our respondents consulted, to better understand indirect diffusion of academic knowledge. There are additional questions that researchers interested in an expanded approach to public affairs education may want to explore, which go beyond the topics covered in this study. For example, what are the best means for public affairs academics to disseminate their work to practitioners? How are relationships between academics and practitioners built? Do service learning projects, executive education programs, or student internships help forge these relationships? What factors predict practitioner use of academic resources? How does the tenure and promotion process affect faculty willingness to engage in the activities recommended in this article?

We recognize that expanding public affairs education to include the education of practitioners throughout their careers may not be right for every public affairs program. Some programs may wish to or only have the capacity to focus on current students. But as a field, moving in this general direction could increase the impact of academics. An expanded approach could give public affairs faculty a chance to influence professionals with whom they otherwise would not have contact, such as those who do not have public affairs degrees. As detailed in our research design section, just 5% of our sample held MPA degrees. While it is difficult to know how representative our sample is given its small size, the fact that few respondents had MPA degrees suggests that there may be considerable opportunity for public affairs programs to increase their impact by broadening the population they serve. Hopefully, expanding public affairs education would benefit not just practitioners but also academics. Ideally, such efforts could enrich scholarship and teaching, giving academics a more thorough understanding of the context in

which practitioners operate and the complexity of the challenges they face.

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## NOTES

- 1 The *kappa* statistic, which is a measure of interrater coding reliability, was .89. A *kappa* score of .81 or above is considered to be “almost perfect agreement” (Viera & Garrett, 2005). We evaluated the coding discrepancies, and most were due to variation in the length of text that was coded.
- 2 None of the respondents noted either author as a primary resource they consulted.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Willow S. Jacobson** is associate professor of public administration and government as well as director of the Local Government Federal Credit Union Fellows Program at the School of Government at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. Her research looks at ways to better use human capital to achieve organizational success, including strategic human capital management, workforce planning, and leadership. Jacobson earned her doctorate from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.

**Kristina T. Lambright** is associate professor in the Department of Public Administration in the College of Community and Public Affairs at Binghamton University, State University of New York. Her research interests include contracting, organizational performance, citizen participation and campus-based civic engagement. She has published in a cross-section of public administration and nonprofit management journals.

# The Missing “Social” in Social Enterprise Education in the United States

Roseanne Marie Mirabella

*Seaton Hall University*

Angela M. Eikenberry

*University of Nebraska–Omaha*

## ABSTRACT

This research critically examines social entrepreneurship and social enterprise curricula in the United States, addressing the following questions: What curricular models are used to educate future social entrepreneurs? To what degree do social enterprise programs reflect what the literature deems to be important aspects of social enterprise values and outcomes? And finally, what curricula should exist to enhance these values and outcomes? Methods include analysis of program descriptions, courses offered, and course syllabi of social entrepreneurship and enterprise programs. We find that the programs reviewed reflect largely performative and managerialist values and have little focus on social aspects of social enterprise, such as building social capital, community organizing, or political engagement. We conclude by suggesting changes to curricula that highlight aspects important to social enterprise values, outcomes, and democratic governance.

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## KEYWORDS

Social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, education

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Is there truly an alternative to traditional charity, corporate philanthropy, and public service when it comes to solving “wicked” social and environmental issues? Maybe!

*—From a U.S. social enterprise course description*

The market seems to pervade more and more facets of our lives, so much so that we hardly recognize it (Sandel, 2012). Within this context, a normative ideology that values market-based solutions and business-like models has become pervasive in the thinking and management of nonprofit organizations (Dart, 2004b). The result is that these organizations are increasingly adopting the language of the market, including emphasizing efficiency, customer service, and

profit (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Sandberg, 2013). Entrepreneurship has been growing in popularity even as scholars debate balancing it with democratic values. Board members, funders, and executive directors urge nonprofit organizations to be more entrepreneurial and self-supporting (Foster & Bradach, 2005), seeing social enterprises as tools to “shape up” the inadequacies and “flabbiness” of nonprofit organizations (Dey, 2006; Dey & Steyaert,

2010). With the growth of social enterprise and entrepreneurship has come an increase in social enterprise and entrepreneurship educational programs and courses. These are offered in a variety of institutional settings in the United States, but the majority are in business schools, which are focused on market, general management, and philanthropic skills rather than on political and leadership skills (Mirabella & Young, 2012).

The purpose of this research is to critically examine social entrepreneurship and social enterprise curriculum in the United States. This article adds to previous research (e.g. Wiley & Berry, 2015) that reviews social entrepreneurship programs to determine the curricular models being used to educate future social entrepreneurs. However, we extend this work by asking, To what degree do social enterprise programs reflect what the literature deems to be important aspects of social enterprise values and outcomes? What curricula should exist to enhance these values and outcomes? We address these research questions by gathering and analyzing data through several methods, including analysis of U.S. program descriptions, course offerings, and course syllabi of social entrepreneurship/enterprise-related programs. We find that these programs reflect largely performative and managerialist values and have little focus on social or political aspects of social enterprise—such as building social capital, community organizing, or political engagement—deemed in the literature to be perhaps the most important aspect of social enterprises. Based on this analysis, we argue that addressing the world's deepest needs will require a broader approach beyond performativity or market-oriented skills. We conclude by suggesting curricular elements that should exist to enhance democratic values, efficacy, and outcomes.

This research is important for several reasons. First, although social enterprise and entrepreneurship are growing in popularity, much of their attractiveness appears to be based on anecdotal evidence rather than systematic research. This study begins to address this issue through

critical examination of the curricula in social enterprise programs; that is, through what is actually being taught in the classroom. Next, as the millennial generation is now the primary “consumer” of higher education, there will be increased demand for social entrepreneurship programming. Saddled with tremendous debt, yet wanting to make a difference in their world, millennials seek to harness the power of the private sector to make a difference while also making a decent living. What does the literature tell us about the efficacy of social entrepreneurship practices and is there a cautionary tale for students fascinated by the possibilities of doing well while doing good? Finally, and perhaps most important, recent trends suggest the continued growth of social enterprise programs within the university (Wiley & Berry, 2015, p. 393). Given that what we teach in professional degree programs will undoubtedly influence the world of practice, it is imperative that we critically examine the values inherent in this approach and its potential impact on third sector and public values of pluralism and democracy.

### **THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ITS VALUES**

Social entrepreneurship as an idea, discourse, and practice has gained prominence in the public and nonprofit sectors over the past decade or more. There has been a general acceptance of its legitimacy and its perceived ability to do what business, government, or traditional nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations on their own have not been able to do (Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Hervieux, Gedajlovic, & Turcotte, 2010; Wiley & Berry, 2015). Social entrepreneurs around the world have been held up as the new heroes who will change the world through the power of new ideas (Bornstein, 2007). Stories of these individuals and their accomplishments have proliferated. They are almost always about inspiration and success, perhaps with some mention of failures along the way, and almost always are lauded as examples of the positive benefits of an entrepreneurial spirit (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010; Nicholls, 2010).

Despite these claims, there is no clear consensus on the definition of social entrepreneurship, and its meaning and practice appear to vary by place and perspective (Kerlin, 2013; Teasdale, 2012b; Wiley & Berry, 2015). In the United States, Kerlin (2006) notes that among academics and consulting firms,

social enterprise is understood to include those organizations that fall along a continuum from profit-oriented businesses engaged in socially beneficial activities (corporate philanthropies or corporate social responsibility) to dual-purpose businesses that mediate profit goals with social objectives (hybrids) to non-profit organizations engaged in mission-supporting commercial activity (social purpose organizations). (p. 248)

However, much of the practice termed social enterprise in the United States remains “focused on revenue generation by nonprofit organizations” (p. 248).

Research suggests that there are competing discourses within social enterprise and entrepreneurship between those who practice it and those who set policy and fund it (Dey, 2006; Dey & Teasdale, 2013; Froggett & Chamberlayne, 2004; Hervieux et al., 2010; Parkinson & Howorth, 2008; Teasdale, 2012b). Parkinson and Howorth (2008), for example, found among the discourses of practicing social entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom a preoccupation with local issues, collective action, geographical community, and local power struggles. As these authors write, “These findings are at odds ideologically with the discursive shifts of UK social enterprise policy over the last decade, in which a managerially defined rhetoric of enterprise is used to promote efficiency, business discipline and financial independence” (p. 285). Others have noted that the people and organizations with the most influence on the paradigmatic development of the field (funders, policy makers, etc.) have a particular discourse that promotes market-based initiatives as a legitimate means of

funding a social mission (Hervieux et al., 2010, p. 37) and business-model ideal types led by the “hero” social entrepreneur (Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Nicholls, 2010; Nicholls & Cho, 2006). Dey and Steyaert (2010) write that this dominant discourse is chiefly buttressed by what philosopher Jean-François Lyotard calls performativity (rationalism, utility, progress, and individualism).

In response, several social enterprise scholars have called for rejuvenating the “sociality” or relational ethic of social entrepreneurship (Bull, Ridley-Duff, Foster, & Seanor, 2010; Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Hjorth, 2009; Humphries & Grant, 2005; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006). For example, Hjorth (2009, p. 227) wants to re-establish a “public” entrepreneurship—an entrepreneurship belonging to society and not simply the economy. Ridley-Duff and Bull (2013) propose a “communitarian pluralist approach” to constituting social enterprise. Given the emphasis social enterprise practitioners already put on local issues and collective action, many social entrepreneurs may already be implementing such a perspective: “it appears that political engagement and collective action still have currency to those operating on the ground and that democratic structures may be equally as prominent as the focus on social activity” (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008, p. 305).

### THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Claims about the impact of social enterprise are wide and varied. Grenier (2009) identifies four main arenas in which social entrepreneurship is thought to make a potentially critical impact: community renewal, voluntary sector professionalization, welfare reform, and democratic renewal. Teasdale (2010) notes that some profess that social enterprises are effective at delivering services in areas characterized by market failure, providing employment opportunities for excluded groups, and creating more enterprising communities. Proponents claim that these impacts are linked by social enterprises’ ability to mobilize and reproduce social capital.

However, according to published accounts, the actual efficacy of social enterprise is mixed. Contributions of social enterprises to local economic development do include providing goods and services that the market or public sector is unwilling or unable to provide, developing skills, creating employment (focused particularly on the needs of socially excluded people such as ex-convicts, people living with disabilities, and the homeless), offering work and educational experience to young people, creating and managing work space, and providing low-cost personal loans. But Peattie and Morley (2008) also show that social enterprises appear often to be providers of relatively low-skilled jobs and practice creaming (Teasdale, 2012a, p. 519). Blackburn and Ram (2006) write:

Generally, employees in small firms have lower wages and inferior employment terms and conditions than in larger firms. ... Small firms are also shown to experience higher rates of physical injury and fatalities than larger organizations, although this is partly accounted for by the sectors in which they operate. ... They are unable to offer childcare facilities, are renowned for their inconsistent employment practices, and have to operate in a structure and market environment over which they have limited and varying influence. ... What evidence that is available suggests that even the most recent attempts to combat social exclusion through enterprise have yet to demonstrate convincingly that they are an effective route to combating social exclusion. (pp. 77–80)

The authors argue that the recent expectations of the role of small firms and entrepreneurship in combating social exclusion are overly optimistic (p. 73).

The literature seems to suggest that social enterprises may have an equally important im-

pact on building social capital, infrastructure, and engagement (Bertotti, Hardin, Renton, & Sheridan, 2012; Borzaga & Depedri, 2012; Smallbone, Evans, Ekanem, & Butters, 2001). Teasdale (2010) found in several case studies, for example, that social enterprises can help build participation, social interaction, political engagement, and bonding social capital and they sometimes help individuals escape exclusion altogether. In addition, in their examination of seven case studies of the “most successful” social enterprises, Alvord, Brown, and Letts (2004) show that some social enterprises build social movements to deal with powerful actors and shape activities of decision makers, and some transform economic circumstances and increase voices of marginalized groups. The authors characterized four of the cases they examined—Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Grameen Bank, Self-Employment Women’s Association, and Highlander Research and Education Center—as high reach and high transformational impact (p. 280). In addition, social enterprises can often support other social enterprises through their involvement in networking activities (Smallbone et al., 2001, p. 33).

But there is a noted challenge in balancing the competing demands of economic and social outcomes within social enterprises (Dart, 2004a; Teasdale, 2010; Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2014). Bertotti et al. (2012) found in a case study of a social enterprise café that it builds “bonding” and “bridging” social capital while also addressing “downside” social capital; however, the role of the social enterprise in building “linking” social capital was minor. Teasdale (2010) notes further that it is “unclear whether encouraging the development of social enterprise in deprived communities creates social capital, or whether existing social capital in an area is a prerequisite for social enterprise to flourish” (p. 95). Garrow and Hasenfeld (2014) suggest that when the work integration social enterprises they studied are dominated by a market logic, they commodify their clients as production workers and erode social rights.

## THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTERPRISE EDUCATION

U.S. universities and colleges offer a growing number of courses in social entrepreneurship and enterprise. Business schools in particular have embraced social entrepreneurship (O'Connor, 2006). In the late 1990s, there were only four social entrepreneurship courses offered, while today there are over 100 courses offered (Seaton Hall University, <http://academic.shu.edu/npo/>). According to Mirabella and Young (2012), in the United States there are more than a dozen social entrepreneurship programs, from the certificate program jointly offered by the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the Kelley Business School at Indiana University, Bloomington; to the full Master in Social Enterprise program within the School of International Service at American University. Most frequently, universities offer a concentration or specialization in social entrepreneurship or social enterprise within the master's degree program. Almost three quarters of the programs Mirabella and Young (2012) examine are offered within a business school. Mirabella and Young further show that as the number of social entrepreneurship courses within a business setting have grown, there has been an accompanying decline in nonprofit courses offered by these programs. In other words, nonprofit courses are sometimes being replaced by social entrepreneurship or social enterprise courses. In addition, when business schools retain their nonprofit course offerings, it appears that they are also adding an increasing number of social innovation and entrepreneurship courses to their catalogs.

Although there is a vast literature on education for entrepreneurs, far less has been written on the special case of educating social entrepreneurs. Business scholars can publish in more than 40 English-language entrepreneurship journals (Katz & Boal, 2002), two of which exclusively address education issues—the *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education* and the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship Development, Education and Training*. Those studying social entrepreneurship from the

vantage point of public affairs have far fewer platforms for publication. Although a few articles on social entrepreneurship have been published in nonprofit journals such as *Voluntas* and the *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, most of these are recent publications and only two articles engaged questions specifically related to pedagogy (Andersson, 2011; Wiley & Berry, 2015).

Professor Donald Kuratko (in Bielefeld, 2009, p. 82) identifies some of the challenges facing those who would create education programs for social entrepreneurs, including the lack of academic respect for faculty teaching in this area, the incongruence between business and academia, the administrative reliance on these programs as “cash cows,” and a lack of quality research on the efficacy of the approach. In 2007, the *Academy of Management Learning and Education* journal published a special issue on the role of management training for entrepreneurs but neglected to include an entry on social entrepreneurship. In their rejoinder to this special issue, Tracey and Phillips (2007) argue that business schools must pay attention to growing interest in the field, particularly as there are an “increasing number of social entrepreneurs entering business schools in order to learn the skills and competencies required to build sustainable businesses” (p. 265). The complex balancing act facing social entrepreneurs creates tensions for curriculum development:

The challenges of social entrepreneurship education are compounded by the considerable disagreement, both within the social enterprise movement and among scholars, about how to balance social and commercial objectives. For some social entrepreneurship is fundamentally about social change and developing community capacity, and this must take precedent over building competitive advantage. For others business development and profitability must be prioritized. (Tracey & Phillips, 2007, p. 265)

Tracey and Phillips (2007) identify three key challenges for curriculum development around social entrepreneurship, owing to the “hybrid nature” of these activities, including “managing accountability, managing a double bottom line, and managing identity” (p. 266). Social entrepreneurs must consider various stakeholders when managing accountability, specifically those of the community in which the social enterprise takes place. The authors next discuss the difficult balance between earning income and making expenditures to support services to the community (p. 267). The third key challenge is one of identity; those moving from the nonprofit sector to a hybrid model of business may experience discomfort with the commercial side of the enterprise, while those moving from the private sector may have difficulty identifying with the a ventures social mission (p. 267). Tracy and Phillips take the position that social entrepreneurs should not be separated from other future entrepreneurs in the business school setting; rather they should be educated alongside their for-profit peers, and the curriculum should incorporate course content on social entrepreneurship.

Others argue that social entrepreneurs, regardless of interdisciplinary home, need business skills but must also be “conversant with philanthropy, government, and volunteerism and the skills required to successfully negotiate these institutions ... areas of expertise now emphasized ... in nonprofit management education” (Young & Grinsfelder, 2011, p. 564; see also Mirabella & Young, 2012). More recently, Wiley and Berry (2015) suggest that public affairs programs “focus on empowering students who work in the governance arena to be social change agents and to understand the existing tools and development process for creating radically new programs or organizations,” rather than preparing students to be “professional social entrepreneurs” (p. 294).

Considering these tensions, what curricular models are being used to educate future social entrepreneurs? To what degree do social enterprise programs reflect what the literature

thinks are important aspects of social enterprise values and outcomes? What curricula should exist to enhance these values and outcomes?

## METHODOLOGY

To address these questions, we conducted a content analysis of 17 social entrepreneurship and enterprise programs in the United States, examining how each describes itself and the courses offered in its program description as well as various aspects of course syllabi. Content analysis is a detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings (Berg, 2008, p. 338). We used a “directed” approach to analysis (Berg, 2008), identifying both analytic codes and categories derived from existing literature relevant to the research focus but also noting other themes that emerged.

We compiled the programs under analysis from a database of nonprofit education programs maintained by Seaton Hall University (<http://academic.shu.edu/npo/>) and from a wider Internet search. All of the programs examined lead to a master’s degree, and only programs with a stated concentration or specialization in social entrepreneurship were included. Most of the programs are located within a business school, many of which have created centers of social entrepreneurship and enterprise. One of the programs is a joint venture between a business school and a school of public administration, while the remainder are in various other institutional settings (see Table 1).

We gathered data for the 17 program descriptions in August 2014. While program descriptions will not always reflect exactly what goes on in a program, how programs describe themselves to the public is in itself an important reflection of how a program perceives itself and is perceived by others (Fairclough, 1995). Additionally, websites play an increasingly prominent role in the process of choosing a college program (Anctil, 2008). To try to address the limitations of looking at program descriptions only, we also examined specific courses and their syllabi.

**TABLE 1.**  
**Institutional Location of Social  
 Entrepreneurship Programs**

Institutional location	Number	Percent
Business	12	71%
Education	1	6%
International service	1	6%
Interdisciplinary: Business and public administration	1	6%
Public administration	1	6%
Social work	1	6%

*Note.* N=17.

We copied and pasted text from websites Microsoft Word documents and then used MAXQDA software for qualitative data analysis. Our analysis involved an iterative process of contextualizing and categorizing strategies. This process included reading text completely to get a sense of the whole, rereading and coding segments, and then recoding and grouping codes into broad clusters of similar topics or nodes, primarily around emergent topics. We then iteratively recoded these clusters into more specific and simplified nodes, creating “trees” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 29).

A request to program directors resulted in syllabi for 10 of the 17 programs, collected from August to November 2014. We used ATLAS.ti software for qualitative data analysis of the syllabi, using the iterative process outlined above. Analyzing syllabi gives insight into the choices faculty make regarding readings, learning goals, course content, and evaluation methods. Taken collectively, the syllabi for these courses can highlight the areas considered

most important and the resources selected to complement class sessions. However, there are limitations to using syllabi review as a measure of curriculum content. Understanding the content of the course and the knowledge that students obtain during the course is quite complex, and syllabi provide a somewhat limited insight into the knowledge and skills actually contained within the course curriculum (Madson, Melchert, & Whipp, 2004, p. 559). Syllabi also give no basis for understanding the complexity of the interactions between instructor and students as the course progresses. Nonetheless, triangulated with analysis of program descriptions, reviewing the syllabi for these courses provides some important clues as to the topics and approaches considered most essential by faculty who deliver social entrepreneurship curricula.

## FINDINGS

Among the 17 programs reviewed, program descriptions were dominated by these main description areas:

- “change” (97 mentions in 15 programs)
- “effective” (41 mentions in 15 programs)
- “social impact” (40 mentions in 8 programs)
- “innovation” (36 mentions in 11 programs)
- “global” (36 mentions in 11 programs)
- “application of tools from private sector/management” (23 mentions in 10 programs), and
- “sustainability” (19 mentions in 16 programs)

See Table 2. As an example, using several of these key words, the social enterprise program at Duke University notes the following in its program description:

Frustration with traditional governmental and charitable approaches to social problems has prompted social sector leaders to tap into the strengths of the business and entrepreneurial world in their search for more sustainable and systemic solutions. Thus, homeless shelters are starting businesses to train and employ their residents; environmental

**TABLE 2.**  
**U.S. Social Entrepreneurship Program**  
**Descriptions: Key Areas and Terms**

Key areas and terms	
<b>Most frequent (16+ mentions in half or more programs)</b>	Change Effective Social impact Innovation Global Application of tools from private sector/management Sustainability
<b>Less frequent (6-15 mentions in half or fewer programs)</b>	Collaborative/collaboration Policy Social and financial returns Ethics Diversity Root causes
<b>No or little mention (5 or fewer mentions in 1-3 programs)</b>	Social justice Empower Social capital Democracy

organizations are partnering with corporations to find economically sound ways to protect natural habitats; and arts groups are exploring new ventures that promise stabilizing revenue and enhance community development. Many philanthropists are increasing their focus on outcomes and strategies for sustainability. Numerous nonprofits are adopting the language and tools of business and some are actually converting to for-profit status. At the same time, for-profit firms are competing directly with nonprofits by moving into social sector arenas, ranging from education to economic development to environmental conservation. This rash of sector-blurring activity has created an opportunity for leading business schools to have significant social impact by constructively exploring the adaptation of business concepts for the social sector.

Less frequently mentioned in program descriptions were areas such as:

- “collaborative” or “collaboration” (15 mentions in 8 programs)
- “policy” (15 mentions in 7 programs)
- “achieving social and financial returns” (13 mentions in 8 programs)
- “ethics” (14 mentions in 7 programs)
- “diversity” (14 mentions in 6 programs), and
- “root causes” (6 mentions in 4 programs)

One of the programs that mentioned policy and diversity was at Northwestern University, in the Kellogg School of Management:

The education received in the distinct Social Enterprise courses provides an understanding of the concerns and issues of a diverse constituency, the values-based approach to management underscored at the Kellogg School, key public policy issues and specific nuances of managing in a nonprofit or governmental setting.

There was very little to no mention in these areas:

- “social justice” (7 mentions in 4 programs)
- “empower” (5 mentions in 3 programs)
- “social capital” (2 mentions in 2 programs), or
- “democracy” (1 mention in 1 program)

If any of these were mentioned, it was mainly in the program at American University. Among the programs studied, American University’s Master in Social Enterprise in the School of International Service seemed the most comprehensive and socially and critically engaged, including providing information about its core values.

Regarding curriculum or competency areas specifically, many programs emphasized “experiential learning and doing” (24 mentioned in seven programs) as a pedagogical approach, often linking students to social enterprises in a local or international community. For example,

American University notes that its program “is oriented at developing practitioners. Its focus is more on the doing of social enterprise than its study as a subject of inquiry.” Several programs also focused on teaching various business-related skills or techniques (18 mentions in six programs), such as designing an implementable social enterprise action plan, evaluating financial outcomes, or practicing presentation and selling skills. Rarely mentioned were “understanding context and applying theory” (five mentions in four programs) or “critical thinking” (five mentions in one program).

Examination of courses and course syllabi provided further insight into the themes emphasized in these programs. Within the 17 programs examined, 83 courses were connected to the social enterprise/entrepreneurship concentration, specialization, or master’s degree; 37 (44%) were a course either in social enterprise or social entrepreneurship. Another eight (10%) focused on tools for social innovation (i.e., the skills needed to create social change or a social venture) and two (2%) focused on leading social change. In all, more than half the courses (56%) in these programs fall within the social entrepreneurship and enterprise category. In other words, most courses in these programs provide direct instruction on preparing students to undertake innovations and enterprises for social change.

An additional 14 courses (17%) involved examination of the double or triple bottom line, where the double bottom line accounts for the economic and social impact of a venture, while the triple bottom line adds assessment of its environmental effects. A few courses (8%) connected to the social enterprise concentrations were more generic business courses (e.g., accounting, marketing, information technology), and 7% covered coursework more traditionally found in nonprofit management programs (e.g., planning and program evaluation, political economy, community organizing, nonprofit management). The remaining 12% of courses addressed specific issues related to the environment of the social entrepreneur,

including courses in globalization, poverty, and international development, and several discussed the triple bottom line of sustainability.

Our analysis showed only one course in ethics as part of a social entrepreneurship concentration, Pepperdine University’s Faith, Ethics, Diversity and Philanthropy course, described as follows:

The central focus of this course is on an examination of personal values that guide those engaged in change in their ethical decision making and their motivation to participate in providing essential services to their communities. This examination will be guided in part by a review of historically important and still significant theoretical approaches to ethics. Students will critically examine ... their individual faith and belief system plans that may guide them toward purpose, service and leadership in change and philanthropy. At the heart of this examination lies the role [that] a commitment to diversity and promoting social justice plays in our approach to philanthropy. Finally, the knowledge acquired in the course will be used to examine contemporary societal issues such as poverty, social justice, famine relief and crime and punishment.

We conducted a more in-depth analysis of 10 syllabi, in which we assessed course descriptions, learning goals, readings, and weekly topics for discussion. A review of the course descriptions reveals a clear focus on helping students acquire the knowledge, skills, and mind-set for social entrepreneurship; 9 of the 10 courses highlighted this aspect in their descriptions. The following description from one program was indicative of most:

This course enables students to master the fundamentals of social entrepreneurship. It explores how entrepreneurship has become a driving force in the social enterprise sector, provides tools for devel-

oping and evaluating new ventures, and explores the blurring line between for-profit and non-profit social initiatives. The course also teaches hands-on social venture business plan development tools, from assessing markets to developing financial and operating plans.

The only outlier was the course offered at Indiana University, Bloomington, in a collaborative program between the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the Kelley Business School. This course examined the value of social entrepreneurship through the lens of political economy, using a more critical approach informed by social science:

We will take a critical look at social entrepreneurship by rigorously examining what value is, what value various organizations create, for whom they create value, how they create value, why they create value, and where and when they create value. This process will be more than an intellectual exercise. In applying the business model canvas to numerous organizations, you will be exposed to a number of novel approaches to problem solving in the hope that you can move beyond critique and into the far more challenging task of designing organizational solutions to social problems. ... Although a political economic approach to dissecting the institutions of capitalism is helpful, it is insufficient. Social, psychological, and moral issues interact to enable and constrain these institutions, the action of individuals and groups, and the efficacy of social entrepreneurs' initiatives. ... Even when benign, failure to consider social, psychological, and moral issues may lead social entrepreneurs to introduce innovations that, while otherwise economically beneficial, fail to diffuse owing to the cultural contradictions they introduce.

Additional topics explored by most programs included the social enterprise field in general

and the blurring of boundaries between the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

Seven of the 10 syllabi identified as learning goals the ability to understand social enterprise and its role and to understand how social entrepreneurs create value. More than half the syllabi also included the ability to execute a plan for a social enterprise. Among other outcomes were learning to access funding, identifying market failures, evaluating the impact of social ventures, and understanding the players involved in social enterprises. Grading and evaluation were closely aligned with these learning objectives, and team-based papers on the blueprint for action were the primary mechanism for determining course grades. Case write-ups were also a component of the final grade, as was class participation (the latter from a low of 10% of the final grade to a high of 50%).

Once again, the Indiana University course was an outlier: midterm and final exams were the major components of the course grade. This reflected the course emphasis on the theory of political economy rather than the "doing" of social entrepreneurship. Most of the courses we reviewed emphasized learning how to do social entrepreneurship, with seemingly little or no critical analysis of the approach. Similar to our findings concerning the program descriptions, a keyword search of the 10 syllabi found no mention of social capital, democracy, or citizens (with one exception in the latter case: use of the term *citizen sector*, coined by the Ashoka organization to replace *nonprofit sector*).

An examination of assigned readings provides additional insight into the focus of these courses. Instructors relied on a variety of materials, articles, and cases and less on textbooks. Key individuals associated with the social entrepreneurship movement were represented, including 12 works by J. Gregory Dees, a pioneer in social entrepreneurship from Duke University; six works by David Bornstein, the journalist and author who writes on social

innovation; articles by Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka; and the book by Stephen Goldsmith with a foreword by Michael Bloomberg, elected leaders of the civic entrepreneur and re-inventing government movement. Instructors assigned quite a few readings from the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* and the *Harvard Business Review*.

The reading requirements for the 10 courses examined included 100 cases. In almost all courses, cases were presented each week as part of the coursework. Multiple courses assigned several of the same cases, including New Profit Inc., a social innovation and venture

philanthropy fund (included in all 10 courses); City Year, a service corps of young people engaged in the charter school movement (included in all 10 courses); Kiva: The Fee-Lee Broker of Microfinance, a microfinance nonprofit that lends money to people in over 70 countries (included in six courses); the Ben & Jerry's Foundation (included in five courses); Grameen Bank, a microfinance organization in Bangladesh (included in five courses); and the Robin Hood Foundation, a nonprofit created by hedge fund and financial managers that provides grants to nonprofit organizations (included in four courses). While the case method is an appropriately used pedagogical approach in graduate education, the use of cases as empirical evidence for the generalizability of the efficacy of social entrepreneurship is dubious. Lounsbury and Strang (2009) posit that "the key empirical cases are the success stories of particular individuals and organizations around the world that are identified as 'social entrepreneurs'" (p. 73). In other words, cases seem to be used as evidence that social entrepreneurship is a successful approach, with apparently little systematic empirical evidence to support this.

Further, in his review of social entrepreneurship literature in top management journals, McKenny (2014) found that as the field has evolved, researchers have increasingly drawn on a variety of techniques in their studies: "While case studies remain the most popular analytic technique ... as the research questions asked in social entrepreneurship research continue to become more complex, so too will the methods used to test them" (p. 291). He further argues for more use of longitudinal studies to determine the efficacy of the social entrepreneurship approach over time. Given the increasing sophistication of the knowledge base on social entrepreneurship and its efficacy, we argue that the pedagogy in social entrepreneurship should likewise move beyond the sole use of cases as proof of efficacy and expose students to a more comprehensive set of studies regarding the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship in practice.

**TABLE 3.**  
**Weekly Topics in U.S. Social Entrepreneurship Courses**

Weekly course topics (N = 98)	Percent
Social capital markets, the role of profit, and impact investing	19%
Presentations, consulting skills, networking, and pitch training	18%
Social change theory and structures	18%
Scaling up and mission lock	8%
Social enterprise approaches, operating plans and making ventures work	7%
Defining social entrepreneurship	7%
Assessment, performance, and accountability	6%
The role of social entrepreneurs	5%
Social innovation in the public and philanthropic sectors	4%
Introduction	3%
Institutional failures	3%

A review of the weekly topics covered in the courses (Table 3) showed them to be quite closely aligned with the program descriptions. The most frequently covered topics involved assessing the market and identifying sources of income for the social venture. About one fifth of course content focused on markets. This included discussions of innovative impact investing and moving beyond the role of profit. One syllabus described this as follows:

Innovations in Capital Markets analyzes approaches to identifying and acquiring critical resources for high performance and scale. The course examines two types of capital markets: nonprofit capital markets dependent on philanthropy, contracting, and donations; and, the emerging impact investing markets that combine nonprofit and for-profit models including venture philanthropy. The sources of capital and the users of capital interact under conditions and standards that differ markedly from those of the business sector.

Given that these courses are focused on experiential approaches and doing social entrepreneurship, it is not surprising that about 18% of class sessions were concerned with presentations, discussion of consulting skills and networking, and training to “pitch” a venture. Another 18% of the sessions also focused on creating social change, through discussions of theories of change, finding a preferred vehicle (nonprofit, for-profit, or hybrid), and designs of social innovation, as typified in this syllabus:

For a social enterprise to be successful in achieving its goals, it should have a clear picture of how the goods and services it offers contribute to changing the lives of its target clients. Such a “theory of change” should present a cogent and compelling argument about the links between what the organizations does—and the human and financial resources

invested—and the social outcomes it hopes to achieve.

About 8% of the weekly meetings discussed creating permanent social change through scaling up and “locking in the mission” or examined emerging legal forms for social enterprises that require assets to be used only for mission purposes. Understanding social entrepreneurship and social enterprise approaches, including the role of social entrepreneurs, comprised about 19% of course content. For example, the first week of classes at a prominent business school covered this topic: “What is social entrepreneurship? A new kind of service provider, a new kind of funder, and venture philanthropy.” Assessment and performance measurement made up an additional 6% of syllabi content. For example, as explained in one syllabus:

We will examine different approaches to impact assessment. The “gold standard” of impact assessments is the academically rigorous approach employed by many scholars and policy makers: the randomized control trial (RCT). An RCT addresses “the fundamental evaluation question . . . : ‘How are the lives of the participants different relative to how they would have been had the program, product, service, or policy not been implemented?’” We will also explore other—less rigorous, but perhaps more practical—ways of developing metrics to gauge social outcomes.

Little attention appeared to be paid to critical perspectives on social ventures or failures; only about 3% of class sessions were dedicated to such discussions.

## DISCUSSION

Our findings show that U.S. social entrepreneurship and enterprise curricular models were dominated by areas such as innovation, application of tools from private sector/management, and effectiveness, with a heavy emphasis on

experiential learning and doing as a pedagogical approach. These findings are similar to those of Wiley and Berry (2015, p. 391) in their review of social entrepreneurship courses. There was very little to no mention of areas such as ethical reasoning, critical thinking, social justice, democracy, or social capital. In addition, most coursework in the programs we reviewed provided direct instruction that prepared students to undertake innovations and enterprises for social change; there was only one course in ethics in the 17 social entrepreneurship programs analyzed. The most frequently covered topics in social enterprise courses focused on assessing the market and identifying sources of income for the social venture. Critical perspectives on social ventures or failures received little attention.

As noted in the methodology section, there are limitations to our content analysis approach, such as missing content that occurs in lectures and discussion between students and instructors. The key descriptors of the social enterprise programs studied nevertheless clearly related to managerialism and performativity rather than democracy, community organizing, or political engagement. More than half the courses we reviewed were dedicated to social entrepreneurship and social venture knowledge and skills, with little if any attention paid to community building or developing social capital. A review of syllabi confirmed the focus on managerialism, reflecting the discourse of performativity and the market. Few if any of the weekly class sessions provided critical perspective on the outsourcing of government functions to the private sector, empirical or critical analysis of the social enterprise and social entrepreneurship approach, or assessment of the implications of this trend for democratic systems of governance.

The dominant discourse of these programs, then, is the one promoted by funders and policy makers rather than that used by practitioners (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008). Students in social entrepreneurship and pro-

grams seem to be learning very little about community organizing, engaging citizens, building social capital, or changing public policy, even though these are areas in line with the work of social enterprise practitioners and key areas of contributions for social enterprises, as noted in the literature review. This also despite the literature's being scant and quite mixed on the impact of social enterprise (Blackburn & Ram, 2006; Peattie & Morley, 2008; Teasdale, 2012a). The literature suggests that social enterprises may have an equally (or perhaps even more) important impact on building social capital, infrastructure, and engagement than on creating jobs and sustainability (Bertotti et al., 2012; Borzaga & Depedri, 2012; Smallbone et al., 2001; Teasdale, 2010). In addition, even though scholars note the complex balancing act of social entrepreneurship for curriculum development (Tracey & Phillips, 2007), the programs and courses seem to do little to acknowledge such complexities.

Some public administration scholars have argued for democracy and citizenship to be the basis for public administration theory and practice (e.g., Box, Marshall, Reed, & Reed, 2001; Dahl & Soss, 2014; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). There is also a growing body of literature that highlights the importance of the sociality of social enterprise (Bull et al., 2010; Dey & Steyaert, 2010; Hjorth, 2009; Humphries & Grant, 2005; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006) and calls for an infusion of politics and values into social enterprise discourse (Cho, 2006; Durking & Gunn, 2010; Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006; Kerlin, 2009; Musso, Weare, Bryer, & Cooper, 2011). We concur that enhancing these aspects, rather than the performative and managerialist focus of funders and policy makers, is essential for democratic governance and the place to begin to address this is in the classroom. To this end, we recommend a starting place for curricular revisions to social entrepreneurship and enterprise programs and courses, in whatever their disciplinary home.

### **Acknowledge Social Entrepreneurship as a Political Phenomenon**

As understood by Cho (2006, p. 36), the domain of social entrepreneurship includes choices that are political in nature. As currently taught in our classrooms, social entrepreneurship is an activity of the individual entrepreneur, a leader or visionary pursuing innovative ends. However, we must see it as a subset of civil society, achieving stated aims but not replacing public deliberation “that could produce more inclusive and integrative systemic solutions” (p. 53). Young and Grinsfelder (2010) find that the skill set for social entrepreneurship should be over and above that required in generic entrepreneurial programs:

Social entrepreneurs must be conversant with philanthropy, government, and volunteerism and the skills required to successfully negotiate those institutions. These are areas of expertise now emphasized in the hundreds of programs in nonprofit management education that have developed in U.S. universities, largely in schools of public administration. (p. 562)

In comparing social enterprise approaches in European Union nations with those in the United States, Kerlin (2006) maintains that

governance in social enterprise is an ... area the United States can learn from Western Europe, specifically in its multi-stakeholder approach and democratic management style. Governing boards in Europe are made up of multi-stakeholders and operate according to democratic management style, build civil society and strengthen democracy. (p. 260)

### **Transition from Social to Public Entrepreneurship**

The curricular content of social entrepreneurship programs are “overly economic and individualistic in orientation” (Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006, p. 119). The result is that students come

to understand problems in the community as economic problems requiring only an infusion of money from investors. Students are taught to frame the problem, develop an innovative solution, acquire funding, and scale it up for greater impact. For the most part, pedagogical approaches are devoid of sociological, political, and historical dimensions of entrepreneurial decisions and approaches.

We believe that courses must emphasize and prioritize the local concerns of communities in crafting solutions to public problems. Bellone and Goerl (1992) refer to this as a civic-regarding entrepreneurship, where citizens have “a greater opportunity [for] design and delivery of their public goods and services” (p. 132). Hjorth and Bjerke (2006) describe the transition that must take place, first from social to public and second from consumer to citizen:

Entrepreneurship belongs to society and not primarily to business. We have to understand how everyday living is made possible through entrepreneurship as forms of social creativity, as the creation of sociality in local settings. Local history and culture is far too important to allow for a generalized template as the one circulated in the “social entrepreneurship” discourse. ... We believe creativity is a genuinely social force. Our focus should be on the in-betweens, the relationships, and not on individuals. Entrepreneurship is about the everyday, daily life, the civic practices of living, rather than an extraordinary accomplishment. (p. 119)

### **Integrate Ethics into Social Entrepreneurship Curriculum**

Tesfayohannes and Driscoll (2010, p. 92) suggest that we weave into our courses questions concerning the common good, the purpose of business and its connection to questions of life, the meaning of work, and social justice. Although the authors were specifically addressing generic courses in entrepreneurship, their

suggestions are applicable to the social entrepreneurship classroom as well. As they note,

The fundamental tenet ... logically advocates [that] entrepreneurial education should not deal with profit and enrichment only, but also with ethical and social responsibility attributes that are vital for promoting and nurturing the resourcefulness of entrepreneurship as an engine of economic growth and competitiveness, as well as of ethical business practice and ecologically sustainable development. (p. 93)

Williamson, Burke, and Beinecke (2011) further suggest incorporating ethics and entrepreneurship as “bridging” topics within our curricula, giving students opportunities to discern important similarities *and* differences between public and private approaches.

#### **Instruct on Both the Good and the Bad**

Social enterprise programs seem to embrace the assumption that social entrepreneurship is good by definition. However, Mitchell and Scott (1987) argue that “there is simply no empirical support for the idea that certain traits (such as vision or risk taking) lead to either innovation or success” (p. 447). Dart (2004b) contends that the moral legitimacy of social enterprise can better explain its emergence and growth than its pragmatic legitimacy based on demonstrated outcomes. That is, because of the consonance between social enterprise and the probusiness ideology that has become dominant in the wider social environment, the moral legitimacy perspective frames social enterprise not merely as something that earns revenues or achieves outcomes but as a preferred model of organization.

Engaging faculty from multiple disciplines may be one way to add this critical perspective. One study on the views of diverse faculty regarding the increase of entrepreneurial courses on campuses in the European Union found differences in attitudes between the engineers

and material scientists and the social scientists and liberal arts faculty. The latter group

voiced concerns regarding the potential implications of entrepreneurship on the curricula and the students ... [and] center[ed] on the migration of societal and humanitarian roots of their primary fields of study towards more capitalist ideologies. Additionally, concerns related to the potential student attrition and conflicts of interests linked to an increase in market initiatives sponsored by the university were voiced by this group of faculty. (Mars, 2007, p. 43)

Finally, Terry (1998) argues that public (and social) entrepreneurs are “oblivious to ... values highly prized in the U.S. constitutional democracy” (p. 198). Thus our coursework must point out the pitfalls of neomanagerialism and the oversized influence of public choice theories and behavioral economics.

#### **Discuss Entrepreneurship Toward the Other**

Dey (2006) argues that to truly become “social, social entrepreneurship must be able to exceed the economic and performative circles of input-output relations” (p. 141), embracing the other (those who are jobless, disabled, living in poverty, etc.). This postmodern understanding of entrepreneurship transcends the boundaries of neoliberalism and its dominant discourse. Social entrepreneurship must eliminate the current model with one where entrepreneurial acts are for the benefit of the other. We must revise our curricular models to transcend the neoliberal approach and its instrumentality, replacing it with an openness toward those who will be served. In his understanding of ethics as “hypernorms,” Simms (2006) asserts that two forms of respect emerge:

One is the respect for the unique identities of each person independent of gender, race, and ethnicity. The second is respect for the practices and worldviews associated with and valued by members

of minority groups and cultures. ... This awareness informs present and future ethical corporate practice. (p. 175)

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to critically examine the focus of social entrepreneurship and enterprise curricula in the United States. We did this through analyzing program descriptions, courses offered, and course syllabi as well as a review of literature on social enterprise and its impact. Our findings show that U.S. social enterprise programs reflect largely performative and managerialist values and do not focus on social aspects such as building social capital, increasing participation of the marginalized through community organizing, or boosting political engagement. We recommend that social entrepreneurship and enterprise programs and courses provide an understanding of social entrepreneurial activities as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, processes of governance and deliberation; transition from social entrepreneurship in which economic values describe recipients as consumers to a public entrepreneurship in which beneficiaries are embraced as citizens in full partnership with entrepreneurs; integrate ethics, critical thinking, and reflection into the curriculum; familiarize students with the good and the bad of entrepreneurial efforts, warts and all; and imagine social entrepreneurship as an act addressed to the other.

The results of our research serve as a cautionary tale for nonprofit and social enterprise practitioners, or students who want to be practitioners, who increasingly embrace social enterprise and entrepreneurship as a model for creating social change. Focusing on the managerialist and performative aspects of social entrepreneurship without paying equal attention to sociality or social capital building may jeopardize the historic role that nonprofit and voluntary organizations have played in building civil society and democratic governance (Eikenberry, 2009). Such practitioners or want-to-be practitioners should also be cautious in assuming that social

enterprise will unquestionably lead to good outcomes. Students who desire to create social change might be better off seeking out social enterprise, nonprofit, public affairs, or other programs that do more to emphasize social aspects such as organizing for collective action, enhancing political engagement, and building social capital. Finally, nonprofit and public affairs programs might do more to emphasize the social role of public and nonprofit organizations; for example, they might follow Mirabella's (2013) advice to implement a curricular approach that reframes authority to include a positive understanding of freedom, embraces interdisciplinarity and connections, includes democratic feminist theories of management, shifts our understanding of accountability from individual competition to collaborative discourse, and ends lip service to praxis by focusing outward on governance issues and on viewing and practicing administration through multiple lenses.

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## NOTE

- 1 *Creaming* means to work with clients who have the greatest chance of success rather than those who have deeper-seated problems.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Roseanne Marie Mirabella** is a professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Affairs at Seaton Hall University and is executive director of the Center for Community Research and Engagement. She conducts research on philanthropy and nonprofit management education, international education for managers of NGOs, and critical perspectives on nonprofit organization management.

**Angela M. Eikenberry** is David C. Scott Diamond Alumni Professor of Public Affairs in the School of Public Administration at the University of Nebraska–Omaha. Her research focuses on the social, economic, and political roles of philanthropy, voluntary associations, social enterprise, and nonprofit organizations in democratic governance. More information about her work can be found at [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Angela\\_Eikenberry](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Angela_Eikenberry).

# The Relevance of Regulation: Teaching Public Affairs Students in Applied Fields

Marco Castillo

*New York City College of Technology, City University of New York*

## ABSTRACT

Teaching about public affairs can be difficult in applied programs of study. Undergraduate students in applied fields tend to have more utilitarian perspectives on higher education, valuing it for the accomplishment of specific career-related objectives. This can make teaching about government difficult because students may not see the immediate relevance of such study for their career paths. This article posits that instructors can frame undergraduate public affairs classes to emphasize the relevance of government and public affairs for students' careers. By taking a constructivist approach and focusing on government regulation as it pertains to students' majors and programs of study, instructors can transform students' career-related self-interest into a foundation for deeper learning about government, public affairs, and the challenges of modern governance.

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## KEYWORDS

Constructivism, regulation, undergraduate, general education

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Both academics and practitioners have noted a crisis in the degree of public interest in civics and public affairs. This is an unfortunate reality that we as instructors of public affairs must contend with as we seek to educate our students.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this problem is not universal, and many of us have the good fortune of preaching to the converted, so to speak, as we teach undergraduate government majors or graduate students pursuing master's or doctoral degrees in related fields. Teaching such a select group of students allows us to delve into the latest developments in our fields and engage students in intricate debates about the nature of politics, public administration, and/or current events related to government and public affairs. But at some point in our careers, many of us have had to cope with lack of student interest and develop strategies to tackle the problem.

The problem of a lack of interest in civic and public life is not new and has been well documented. In 2000, Robert Putnam published *Bowling Alone*, calling attention to a decline in civic engagement and discussing reasons for it and possible solutions. Putnam makes the case that factors such as suburbanization, economic pressures, and the availability of myriad entertainment options have led Americans to become less involved in civic institutions that have historically connected citizens and fostered strong social ties. Americans have increasingly become more isolated and compartmentalized into discrete social units, resulting in decreased quality of society's social capital. This loss of social capital—the social, political, and economic value resulting from social ties—is especially problematic for poor and working-class communities, as social capital can be critical for social and economic

progress (Saegert, Thompson, & Warren, 2002; Whiteley, 2000). Social capital is also important for the proper political functioning of the American democratic republic, because citizen participation is necessary for the formation and maintenance of a legitimate government responsive to public needs (Paxton, 2002).

Certainly, counterarguments and qualifications of Putnam's perspectives are also relevant. Some scholars qualify the notion that civic engagement has been on a steady decline, positing that the concept of civic engagement itself is complex, requiring a more nuanced discussion. Ekman and Amnå (2012, p. 284) argue that the growing academic interest in civic engagement has led to "conceptual stretching," because the very term *civic engagement* has been applied to a growing set of phenomena, including "everything from voting in elections to giving money to charity, or from bowling in leagues to participating in political rallies and marches." Civic and political participation are multidimensional concepts and it is possible that some aspects of civic engagement are on the decline while others are not.

Other scholars posit that civic engagement has not declined but rather has changed in recent years; for instance, new forms of digital civic engagement may be increasing and should be recognized even as traditional forms may be decreasing (Carpini, 2000; Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014; Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2007). Still others counter the generational explanation for a decline in civic engagement, noting that such declines seem to be driven by economic factors, especially increases in economic inequality, rather than changes in the lifestyle or values of modern generations (Clark, 2015). Taken together, these arguments show the need for a more precise discussion of declining civic engagement and interest in public affairs. Nevertheless, changes in engagement are relevant for us as professors, because their effects are often evident in the classroom and can make teaching more difficult.

Other related factors can also make teaching today's students in applied fields difficult. One

challenge relates to changing student and societal views regarding the purpose of higher education. Simply stated, there has been a shift in the public's understanding of the role and purpose of higher education, from a perspective that emphasized the intrinsic value of higher education toward one that increasingly sees education in light of the economic benefits it can bring to individuals and society. Some of this shift is positive, as improved access to higher education has indeed expanded economic opportunity for people across the socioeconomic strata. The passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (the GI Bill) in 1944, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the expansion of community colleges at midcentury were just some of the twentieth-century governmental initiatives that reflected this shift, making higher education and its benefits accessible to a broader cross-section of the populace (Loss, 2012; Mettler, 2007; Vaughan, 2006).

While imparting the knowledge necessary for Americans to function successfully in the economy has long been an important aspect of the mission of higher education, the economic function has steadily intensified, now reaching a point where some note that it may be eclipsing college's traditional mission. This shift in the priorities of higher education, often referred to as the neoliberalization of higher education, has resulted in a substantial transformation in how colleges are funded, how they function, and how they are viewed by students and society. Critics of this shift note that colleges have changed from developing the intellectual, moral, and civic character of young people toward producing the human capital to supply the increasingly skilled labor needs of global businesses and corporations (Giroux, 2014; Holborow, 2012; Shultz, 2012). Higher education has increasingly moved toward programs in applied fields and professional education, leaving traditional academic fields in a precarious situation. This reductionist view of higher education's purpose fundamentally alters and undermines the civic and cultural significance of colleges and universities and sacrifices the intellectual, moral, and civic development of young people (Giroux, 2014).

## CONSTRUCTIVISM AND RELEVANCE

Instructors who have considerable discretion regarding the content of their classes can take advantage of approaches to cope with, and perhaps even counter, this unfortunate dynamic. In this educational context, it is important to pinpoint key factors that act as barriers to teaching public affairs to students in applied fields who are seeking primarily vocational or technical careers. One major barrier may involve the difficulty of establishing a sense of topical relevance for this student population.

Establishing relevance in subject matter for learners is an important concept that education scholars have increasingly noted; it has become a central topic in the development of learning theory that guides instruction as well as new concepts and innovations in classroom practice (Patchen & Cox-Petersen, 2008; Powell & Kalina, 2009; Splitter, 2009). Central to this discussion is constructivist learning theory, a school of pedagogical thought that puts the concept of relevance at the center of student learning. Constructivist learning theory emphasizes the need for information to be relevant to students within their own contexts, to maximize student learning; and in this emphasis, constructivism differs from prior learning theories. For instance, behaviorism, the earliest school of thought in learning theory, emphasizes human learning as a set of behaviors; as such, learning can be best achieved by finding ways to alter individual behavior patterns or by changing the environment to change behavior patterns (Anderson, 2008, p. 6). Learning is considered a change in observable behavior under this model, caused by external stimuli in the environment (Skinner, 2011). While influential in its time, behaviorism gradually gave way to cognitivist theories of learning, which emphasize more internal aspects of learning such as memory, motivation, thinking, and reflection. Cognitivists emphasize that learning is an internal process rather than an external behavior and that one's ability to learn depends on the capacity of the learner, the intensity of effort exerted during the learning process, and the learner's prior knowledge (Ashman & Conway, 2002; Flannery, 1993; Mandler, 2002).

Constructivist learning theory, in turn, emphasizes learning as a process by which the individual builds new ideas based on prior knowledge and experience. Under constructivist models, learners interpret data according to their personal reality and this interpretation is the foundation of learning. The external world is observed, data are processed and interpreted, the individual forms his or her understanding of this data, and that becomes personal knowledge. Individuals learn best when new information is placed in the context of what they already know and is applied in a real-world setting, such that the new data acquire personal context and meaning for individuals (Anderson, 2008, p. 7). As such, constructivism offers a promising framework for addressing the challenges of teaching public affairs to students in applied fields. A constructivist approach to civics education can potentially transform the difficulties of teaching public affairs into strengths, as students tailor and transform the curriculum to benefit themselves and their understandings of their own fields while simultaneously developing knowledge about civics and public affairs.

The question is, how do we do this? How can we tailor instruction in public affairs such that students in applied fields can immediately see the relevance of public affairs for their future career paths?

## THE RELEVANCE OF REGULATION

As students and scholars of public affairs, we are well aware of the significance and impact of American government on people's everyday lives; in fact, this is how fields like public administration generally see and study government, less in terms of theory and more in terms of practice, focusing on how governmental functioning actually affects society (Rosenbloom & McCurdy, 2006; Stillman, 1997; Waldo, 1948). And government's regulatory function is a primary way in which government affects society, influencing our lives and the economy through regulatory action to protect the general welfare while simultaneously considering the needs and concerns of industries that must comply with such regulation. Given

that students in applied fields are primarily focused on subject matter that is directly relevant for their career aspirations, it makes sense for public affairs instructors to teach in light of how governmental activity, in assorted ways, has an immediate impact on and significance for students' intended fields of employment.

While traditional topics such as the institutions of government and the concept of checks and balances are central to public affairs education, we can frame the teaching of such topics to be more relevant to our students' specific fields. At the outset of a semester, for instance, we can focus on how the American constitutional system arose in part out of a desire to create a legal framework that would encourage a strong national economy. As part of the Federalist and anti-Federalist debates, the founders recognized that the confederate form of government would not be sufficient to facilitate a robust national economy, as self-interested sovereign states could engage in protectionist activity that would undermine a national economy. A more robust national government with broader powers over commerce was needed to prevent such national economic infighting.

Students in applied fields might also be well served to learn about the development of Congress's commerce power over the 20th century. Beginning as a response to public calls for regulation of the industrial economy of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, the U.S. regulatory state has since developed to encompass numerous regulatory bodies that exercise extensive powers over the national economy. Many regulatory agencies and laws created during this early period continue to affect our economy and industries today, making them relevant for students in applied fields. For instance, the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 affects modern-day business. Corporations planning for mergers to improve competitiveness and profitability must seek U.S. Justice Department approval and clearance by relevant regulatory agencies. Learning of this regulatory function may be of immediate value to students entering the technology or telecommunications industries. And this would give instructors an

opportunity to draw such students into a conversation about the role of government in the economy and the judgments made when balancing the right of private companies to pursue profit with the need to protect consumers from monopolies and resulting economic exploitation.

One concern about this approach is that students in applied fields may still find connections between the topics and their career concerns to be too distant. As a remedy, instructors might assign fluid and open-ended projects that allow or even require students to make specific connections at the outset of a semester, prompting students to see the relevance of governance and regulation for their fields. Computer science majors, for instance, in their rather focused programs of study, may not ordinarily learn about government and how it affects their industry. Nevertheless, developments in computer technology have had a great impact on society and the technology industry is an increasingly important area of governmental regulation and policy making. A public affairs class focused on establishing relevance with computer science majors would first seek to familiarize students with the historical link between government and the technology industry, emphasizing the effect of this relationship on technological advancements. Instructors could introduce students to the history of federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), explaining how DOD activities affected development of technology, especially after World War II. A host of technological innovations, such as personal computers, the Internet, and global positioning systems, originated in DOD-funded projects, and the agency continues to be a significant source of financial support for technology research (Blumenthal, 1998).

More recently, the technology industry has been involved in prominent public policy debates, such as those about net neutrality and national security. Net neutrality—the idea that telecommunication companies must treat all Internet data the same in terms of pricing and speed—has become a topic for public affairs as

the nation argues over how to balance the right of companies to function freely, on the one hand, with consumer protection and the preservation of competition and innovation, on the other. As regards questions of national security, many of America's top technology companies, such as Microsoft, Google, Facebook, and Apple, have found themselves in unexpected struggles with the federal government as they seek to protect customer privacy in light of government requests for access to user information (Perlroth, Larson, & Shane, 2013; Semitsu, 2011; Soghoian, 2010). And the controversy surrounding Edward Snowden's leaking of information about the National Security Agency's surveillance program revealed how the realms of technology and public policy can cross in unexpected ways. Familiarity with government and the Constitution is thus clearly potentially important and relevant for computer and technology professionals.

### ENGAGING LEARNING PROCESSES

A properly crafted public affairs class for applied majors could also prove relevant for students by helping them develop the general education skills critical for success in modern organizational settings. While computer science students, for instance, will likely work in technically sophisticated positions, they will also work in human organizations and thus be required to utilize communication and critical thinking skills beyond the technological realm. One author reviewing the experimental use of a computer-science-oriented public policy class at MIT was "struck by the lack of student familiarity with how large institutions work and/or any kind of politics" (Blumenthal, 1998, p. 16). The author noted how one student, in a class evaluation, revealed his or her struggles in dealing with the complexities of public policy as they pertain to computer science; this student implored the instructor for "less ambiguity, please!" in the public policy coursework (Blumenthal, 1998, p. 16). Thus, there is an opportunity here to help students develop skills in communication, in engaging with others who have diverse perspectives, in civic learning, and in critical thinking (Adelman, Ewell, Gaston, & Schneider, 2011).

Unfortunately, there is growing evidence that undergraduate students are not developing these skills to a sufficient degree. In their 2011 book *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, Professors Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa expose the growing crisis in the teaching and development of general education skills at American colleges. They found that during students' first two years of college, about half did not demonstrate any significant gains in critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and other higher-level skills. After four years, about a third of students still did not demonstrate significant improvements in these areas. While the problem has multiple causes, there are steps we can immediately take to address the issue in our own classes. Many professors have considerable latitude in how we teach our classes and what skills and competencies we emphasize as we deliver instruction and assess student learning.

One way to creatively incorporate a strong general education component into public affairs classes, while making assignments engaging and more immediately relevant for students, is through building a prominent online component that emphasizes general education skills. The online world is replete with engaging examples of media reports on public affairs topics, which can introduce students to controversies in public policy while at the same time capturing students' attention. These media-based introductions can be further developed through research projects that allow students to learn the issues, and potential solutions, in greater depth. Assigning students to write a blog throughout the semester is one example. This type of assignment could gradually draw students into a public affairs research project while allowing them to exercise their communications skills, building in complexity and detail throughout the course. Blogging is a resilient form of communication on the Internet, making development of skills in this area both academically and practically valuable and relevant. Blogging is also a form of writing likely to be familiar and accessible to students, perhaps making a blog as an ongoing project more natural than other types of writing. Further, blogging is usually perceived

as an informal and low-stakes style of writing and, because it is done in a digital format, it is easily editable and correctable, potentially lessening student anxiety about writing. Students might then use their blogs as a foundation for more thorough research projects.

Related, vlogging—the video counterpart to blogging—is another digital online practice familiar to millennials and available via open-source and open-access tools. Vlogging supplements text and still images with video, making it a more complete communications medium for personal expression. And while vlogging is a visual form of communication, it also requires a certain amount of research, scripting, and processing of information in order to complete video production projects. As such, vlogging is another avenue for teaching students about public affairs topics subjects, perhaps serving as a Trojan horse of sorts: students who may not have an initial interest in public affairs topics might nevertheless be open to learning about the technological and stylistic aspects of vlogging.

### **THE VALUE OF SIMULATIONS FOR HIGHER-LEVEL LEARNING**

While the general education skills of research, reading, and writing are important, we should also help students in applied fields develop higher-order learning skills such as critical thinking and an understanding of ethics and values systems. Silvia (2012) highlights the value of simulations in inspiring student learning, especially higher-level learning. According to Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning, higher-level skills include analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Silvia (2012) notes that these skills are often not sufficiently developed through "the traditional pedagogical techniques of assigned readings, lectures, tests, and papers" because these techniques "often fail to replicate the real world" and "frequently do not require the students to integrate, synthesize, and apply the course material in realistic situations" (p. 400). In contrast, simulations, defined by Queen (1984, p. 144) as "concentrated learning exercises specifically designed to represent important real-life activities by providing the learners with the essence or

essential elements of the real situation without the hazards, costs or time constraints," give students the chance to develop higher-level skills, preparing them to function effectively in real-world organizations (see also Figueroa, 2014). Simulations also provide opportunities for students to develop skills that go beyond those in Bloom's taxonomy but are typically a focus in public affairs classes, including "increasing responsible citizenship, developing a continued interest in public affairs and policy, building the capacity to integrate the course materials to develop policy arguments, and fostering the ability to apply theoretical concepts to real-life situations" (Silvia, 2012, p. 400).

At first glance, classes about regulatory issues might not seem like natural fits for simulation assignments. The study of government regulation is inherently a technical endeavor, leaning toward development of analytical techniques such as cost-benefit analysis rather than the higher-level learning facilitated through engaging classroom simulations. But studies of the regulatory state can indeed offer a variety of opportunities to develop higher-level knowledge that could benefit students in applied fields. For instance, much of the development of public policy occurs within deliberative committee settings, giving instructors the opportunity to design simulation assignments that prompt students to research policy questions, outline potential impacts on specific industries, and then debate differing perspectives. Simulated legislative committee hearings can be constructed in the classroom, allowing students to play a variety of roles in the policy formation process and advocate for and/or against different policy positions. This would allow students to experience firsthand the complexities and competing values inherent in regulatory policy making. Participating in simulated committee hearings, in addition to writing more standard research papers, would supplement students' research and writing practice with the development of communication skills, including through using graphic presentations often used by stakeholders in such hearings.

Focusing on the theme of government regulation offers opportunities for learning that also go further. Additional learning arises because the act of regulation, though technical, is in fact a human enterprise, one characterized by vigorous interaction among interest groups and actors, thus requiring participants to be skillful in the arts of negotiation, compromise, and collaboration. Many private, public, and non-profit employers value these skills, making their development through regulatory simulations especially relevant for students in applied fields.

The government rulemaking process is another setting in which diverse public and private sector actors meet to discuss and promote perspectives on policies that will result in enforceable government regulation. Simulations of the rulemaking process, especially the federal negotiated rulemaking process, can help students learn collaboration and negotiation skills. Federal agencies began using negotiated rulemaking in the early 1980s, concerned that traditional rulemaking was excessively adversarial and did not sufficiently draw affected parties into the process (Carey, 2013). While negotiated rulemaking can become considerably complex, often characterized by many months and stages of multistakeholder meetings, the process can be simplified for pedagogical purposes. And even a simplified simulation can illustrate the complexities inherent in negotiating rules that seek to protect the general welfare while accounting for economic costs to companies and society. Such simulations let students role-play as various actors, whether as an interest-group representative, a public policy mediator charged with providing direction and focus for the group, an elected official favoring a particular course of policy action, or an agency administrator interested in creating a rule that she or he believes is in the public interest. Students can try out many roles in a simulation of the negotiated rulemaking process, helping students in diverse applied fields see the regulatory issues that affect their industries from a variety of perspectives, challenging them to broaden their views on complex issues in their chosen fields.

The regulatory process also lends itself to assignments that go beyond simulations. Due to public participation requirements of the regulatory process, well-crafted assignments can prompt students to become real and active participants in that process as it relates to their industries. Agencies seeking to promulgate new rules must provide a time period for public participation. Public participation can consist of allowing comments on proposed regulations through public hearings or written submissions. As part of this process, the regulating agency is required to consider and respond to all well-written comments submitted during the allotted period. Thus, while logistics may limit students' ability to attend public hearings, assignments that use the notice and comment process would enable students to participate through submitting well-researched and -written letters to regulatory agencies. Such assignments would allow students to exercise their research and writing skills while giving them firsthand experience with an important but often overlooked process of our democratic system.

### **IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTION**

This approach can be used in a variety of public affairs classes, depending on student and instructor needs. For instance, an introductory course in American government can highlight the relevance of the regulatory state in the latter part of the semester, after discussing the context of American government and politics and familiarizing students with the institutions of government. A more advanced course in public policy and administration might present the relevance of the regulatory state more uniformly throughout the semester, presupposing student knowledge about the basic institutions of government and allowing instructors to shape the class and semester around regulatory issues applicable to students' career fields. A class emphasizing issues related to public participation and civic engagement could address regulatory issues affecting students' chosen careers, stressing the importance of participating in the policy process to help ensure well-considered and durable regulations.

In short, this approach of incorporating the regulatory process in teaching public affairs is

flexible and appropriate in a variety of classroom settings. This constructivist approach, because it emphasizes using relevant subject matter and engaging learning processes, is also likely to promote fuller absorption of the material, giving public affairs instructors a unique opportunity to effectively teach and connect with that cross-section of the student population geared toward applied fields.

Although we can incorporate this approach to public affairs instruction in various ways, a semester-long assignment is a good avenue for exposing students to the political and policy-making activity relevant to their specific industries. Such a semester-long project could begin by asking students to identify their professional association(s)—the organizations that represent specific industries and seek to have industry perspectives reflected in government policy. This simple introductory assignment would immediately connect the class subject matter to students' majors and career interests, helping quickly establish the topical. Instructors could then build on this initial assignment by requiring students to research contemporary legislation or policies that affect their industries and that their professional association(s) are addressing. This would draw students further into considering the public affairs subject matter and reinforce the relevance of governmental activity for their industries.

Additionally, by prompting students to begin looking at policy issues analytically, taking into account the perspectives of their professional associations as well as competing interests, this project would engage students in the analytical form of learning reflected in Bloom's taxonomy. The culminating portion of the semester-long project could press further, prompting students to go beyond analytical thinking to assess the value systems underlying the debates surrounding their chosen public policy issues. Weighing the perspectives and interests of multiple stakeholders would also help students develop a sense of knowledge about and appreciation for civic activity and the workings of public affairs. This last is essential to what we seek to teach in the classroom as well as to the

general education learning outcomes deemed so important today (Adelman et al., 2011; Hart Research Associates, 2016; Schneider, 2015).

## CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

As we seek innovative ways to teach government to students in applied fields, it is important to acknowledge the possible unique challenges of doing so. We should try to empathize with our students, as they face a job market characterized by intense global, and not just local, competition. Today's jobs require increasingly sophisticated technical skills, and students must enroll in college to gain access to well-paying jobs of almost any sort. Continuously rising tuition costs have understandably pushed students to focus on maximizing the immediate economic value of their college education, leaving them less room to explore topics such as government and public affairs. Even so, there are ways to reach such students and make seemingly extraneous subject matter relevant to them. With a bit of creativity and flexibility, we can teach such students about public affairs in a way that captures their attention and more directly connects with their career goals.

We can begin by grounding learning about public affairs in career-based self-interest, to avoid the criticism that such instruction has little relevance for students in applied fields. And focusing on the government's regulatory powers, which are so central to our modern economy, provides an avenue to achieve this. But in implementing this approach to civics education, we should nevertheless remind ourselves not to limit the understanding of public affairs only to students' most immediate career interests. Focusing on career relevance may prove useful for inspiring student learning, but we should not see this approach as an end in itself. Rather, it is a pathway for student learning about broader issues of public affairs. As students study and learn about how government regulatory activity affects their lives and career fields, they will also, in the process, inevitably learn about society's competing economic interests and government's struggles to craft regulations that further the public good (Sunstein, 2014).

Thus, a nursing student who may have been interested in only learning her discrete craft may come to learn how nursing is integral to the greater health care system, a complex system that the government struggles to regulate so that all Americans can have access to high-quality health care. Architecture students interested in only learning the art and science of their field in order to secure a professional position may come to appreciate the historical reasons for local building codes, developing an appreciation for the challenges of architectural design in modern cities. There are countless such examples, but the point is that public affairs instructors have real options and opportunities when teaching students in applied fields. When properly woven into public affairs education, a student-centered approach can be a powerful motivator for student learning and an alternative pathway for teaching students in applied fields about the importance and relevance of government, civics, and public affairs.

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## NOTE

- 1 This article uses the term *public affairs* generically to refer to the broad array of government-related classes typically taught at American colleges and universities.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Marco Castillo** is associate professor of political science at the New York City College of Technology, City University of New York. His research focuses on public participation in the administration of government, deliberative democracy, social equity in the provision of public services, and representations of government in popular culture. He also serves as chair of the NYCCT College Council.

# Assignments for Studying Frontline Bureaucracy

**N. Alexander Aguado**

*University of North Alabama*

## **ABSTRACT**

This article outlines a set of assignments in an undergraduate class on public policy and public administration. The assignments are designed to pique student interest in public administration, consider what it means to implement public policy at the street level, and to teach students to critically assess the purpose of public administration and the meaning of public interest. Students achieve these objectives by completing several papers throughout the course. Most students have never considered careers in public service. In these assignments, students first broadly consider public administration and then focus on a specific public service occupation. Students research a specific job; articulate its duties, compensation, and required qualifications; describe what an average day looks like; and outline the job's challenges. Finally, students address the abstract concept of how the profession they researched contributes to the public interest.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Teaching undergraduates, case-study research, curriculum design, frontline bureaucracy

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Public administration and public policy courses at the university level are in the unique position of being able to interest students in public service careers. This article outlines assignments taught in an undergraduate course that help students to recognize the importance of public administration and its integral, often neglected, role in the delivery of public services. The assignments stress that the competence of public service professionals meaningfully affects people's quality of life. Public administrators are not vague figures who exist in the abstract. Rather they are well-trained professionals who also happen to be our friends, family, and neighbors. The course and its assignments discussed here encourage students to consider the frontline government worker who is committed to her profession, guided by training, and devoted to implementing the law.

Public administration serves as the important link between citizens and the concept and exercise of democracy. That is, the laws passed by legislatures can be deemed successes or failures depending on how public administrators implement those laws. Political science undergraduates study how the government produces legislation, despite the separation of powers and checks and balances, but do not necessarily understand how laws are transformed into governmental workers' actions, which can ultimately shape the public's behavior. What results from a law ultimately rests on the ability of unelected bureaucrats, who are charged with implementation.

The policy text (Anderson, 2011) for the course described here addresses the policy process and the difficulty of getting bills passed into law.

The politics and drama between governing institutions at the national, state, and local levels make for interesting reading and vibrant class discussions. Students quickly come to realize the serendipitous nature of the passage of any proposal into law (Kingdon, 1984). But often overlooked is the role of regular citizens who are entrusted with implementation of laws and delivering public services. Bringing this reality to light is one goal of the assignments discussed in this article. The study of street-level bureaucracy is important because it represents “the primary interface between citizens and government” (Smith & Larimer, 2013, p. 160). The assignments seek to demystify the careers and tasks of bureaucrats, especially because these actors possess substantial power. Students thus learn that street-level bureaucrats “have broad discretion on how they do their jobs, they have a big impact on the lives of citizens, and there are few watchdogs on hand to catch misdeeds” (Kettl, 2015, p. 427).

Another goal of the assignments is to encourage undergraduate political science majors to consider careers in public service. Recent figures indicate that federal, state, and local governments are facing a “brain drain” crisis owing to upcoming retirements. In 2005, “the percentage of workers older than 45 [was] almost twice as high in the civil service (60%) as in the private sector (31%)” (Barr, 2005). Maciag (2013) reports that government, compared to other industries, consistently has the oldest employees. Some state and local governments have recognized the dire need for young, talented workers and are scrambling to attract millennials in anticipation of the baby boomers’ mass exodus. Bright and Graham (2015, p. 576) write that only 6% of surveyed college students plan to work in government. Likewise, the Center for State and Local Government Excellence (2015) reports that, for a second year in a row, state and local governments are hiring. The same study indicates “a sense of urgency about recruitment, retention, and succession planning” (p. 2) among many state and local governments. The assignments described in

this article aim to familiarize students with government job listings, online databases, the qualifications needed to apply for those positions, and the positions’ salaries.

What follows is a discussion of three assignments that require students to think critically about public administration, the people and professions that deliver public goods and services, and the public good itself. The student experiences described are from an undergraduate course in public administration and public policy offered at a regional university. These assignments comprised the writing component for the course, accounting for 30% of a student’s grade. Other components included the midterm and final exams. This course is the only public administration and public policy class required for all political science majors and it consists of sophomores and juniors. The majority of students come from working-class backgrounds, and many are first-generation college students.

**ASSIGNMENT 1:  
WHAT IS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?  
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

Definitions of public administration have taken up much ink and it seems that every textbook in the field seeks to define it anew. The esteemed collection *Public Administration: Concepts and Cases* (Stillman, 2000) begins with fifteen definitions of public administration. The abundance of definitions, though, leaves each wanting. In some, public administration is a field of study that seeks to understand the distribution of public goods and services. Public administration is also a vocation that includes a wide array of work that involves people who work in the public sector. *Public sector*, for its part, is a very inclusive term that involves governments at many levels, nonprofit organizations, and private companies that contract with governments.

In the face of such definitional drift, students are encouraged to craft their own definition. The instructions for the first assignment are as follows: What is public administration? Write a paper that defines public administration and why it is important. The learning objective is to

understand the complexity and necessity of public administration. In addition, several assigned readings inform students in developing their arguments (Bertelli & Lynn, 2006; Rosenbloom, 1983; Yang, 2012).

All students were able to articulate the difficulty of defining public administration. Furthermore, many discussed the important role that public administrators play in delivering services that define quality of life (e.g., public safety, potable water, clean air, education). One student wrote,

No matter how it is defined, public administration provides the public with services. The lives of everyday Americans are significantly affected by public policy-making and public administration [such] that it would be almost unfathomable to surmise how we as a society would manage without the various services provided. Without public administration, society as we have come to know it could not exist.

As a general political science course offering, I integrated the U.S. Constitution into this portion of the class and relied heavily on Rosenbloom (1983) for that purpose. Many used Rosenbloom's (1983) framework to help them define public administration and did so in a way that made the concepts of political science relevant to the practical issues they see in their everyday lives. The students in my class concluded that administrators in the United States have to "get things done." What many of them took from this assignment was that all of the constitutional functions, i.e., separation of powers, have been collapsed in the executive branch. Public administrators make rules (legislation), implement these rules (executive), and adjudicate questions concerning their application (a judicial function). One student succinctly put it, "Public administration is the avenue in which public policies are transformed into results." Indeed, the ambiguity of public administration (Rosenbloom, 1983) means that at many points in the discharge of their authority, street-level bureaucrats are making public policy (Lipsky, 1971).

## ASSIGNMENT 2:

### CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

This second assignment requires students to research a specific profession in public service. They are to report what a person in that job does, what sort of training and qualifications are needed to attain a position in that field, and what that job pays. The assignment prompt is as follows:

#### Case Study of Public Service

Pick a public service position, including but not limited to social worker, police officer (or law enforcement any level), city manager, urban planner, human resource manager, nonprofit fundraiser, utilities manager, etc., and *research what that profession entails.*

What sort of training is required? What kind of degree is needed? How much does it pay? Consider using the databases and reports issued by the Bureau of Labor Statistics ([bls.gov](http://bls.gov)) to find pay rates. [FedJobs.gov](http://FedJobs.gov) also has federal job announcements that list qualifications and pay rates for vacant jobs in the federal government.

What does a typical day in the life of that professional look like? The last part will be the most challenging part of your paper. If possible, consider interviewing a public servant. You will find that public servants are all around us and may include your friends, neighbors, and family. The research on "frontline bureaucracy" is particularly helpful. [In this part of the assignment, students are directed toward the literature on street-level or front-line bureaucracy.]

The learning objectives of this assignment are to identify careers in public service, become familiar with the necessary qualifications, and get a realistic look at compensation for front-line bureaucrats. In preparation for this assignment, students could draw from several provided sources (Loyens & Maesschalck, 2010;

Maynard-Moody, Musheno, & Palumbo 1990; Vinzant & Crothers, 1996). The assignment also instructs students to search government jobs databases (whether federal, state, or local) and to use the Bureau of Labor Statistics website in their research.

In their reports, several students reflected on the “role of unelected public employees in a democratic system” (Vinzant & Crothers 1996, p. 458) and said that researchers more or less ignore frontline bureaucrats. Many students found this troubling, considering that, as one student put it, such government workers are “important to the process of implementing public policy.” Others cited Vinzant and Crothers’s (1996) prescient statement about “anti-government sentiment” (p. 459) and ill will toward bureaucrats, pointing out the persistence of such sentiment even 20 years after the work’s publication. Class sessions stressed that public administrators teach classes, patrol streets, issue licenses, process disability claims, deliver mail, pick up the trash, and serve in the military. Discussion centered on the fact that frontline bureaucrats deserve study because of their ubiquity and, ultimately, necessity in delivering public services.

In my class, students researched a variety of positions. Eight students chose to write about law enforcement officers at different governmental levels; seven wrote about social workers; two wrote about school teachers; one student each researched the positions of city manager, firefighter, municipal judge, government attorney, human-resource manager, and water-plant operator. Nine students opted to interview either family members or friends who were public servants. Other students relied on literature provided by professional organizations. Many also reported on professional expectations and the professions’ codes of ethics.

In terms of qualifications, students found that local police departments required applicants to have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, to pass a physical fitness test, and to pass a criminal background check to apply. One student

researched agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and found that positions did not require, but favored, college degrees; students also found that successful applicants had attended the ATF’s Criminal Investigator Training Program. All students who researched careers in law enforcement found that applicants had to pass physical fitness exams and drug screenings. The other field that numerous students researched was social work. Students noted that most positions required college degrees in social work or related fields and that social workers needed to be licensed or certified by the state. Students found that both law enforcement and social work required some vocation-specific training or certification beyond an undergraduate degree.

This second assignment also asked students to report on compensation, using websites of the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the like. One student reported “that the median annual wage for social workers was \$44,200 as of May of 2012. The lowest ten percent earned less than \$27,450 and the top ten percent earned more than \$72,980.” Another student found that pay scale for state troopers “varies greatly with the location, as well as the troopers rank: starting pay is high school diploma/GED: \$35,609.60; Associate degree: \$37,356.80; Bachelor degree or higher: \$39,270.40.” Students also found discrepancies between elementary and high school teachers: “the BLS [Bureau of Labor Statistics] reported that the median annual salary for elementary school teachers was \$53,400 and \$50,120 for Kindergarten teachers in May 2012. ... The median annual salary for high school teachers was \$55,050 in May 2012.” To find more-local rates of compensation, students looked to the Alabama League of Municipalities ([alalm.org](http://alalm.org)). Students reported that police officers in Decatur earned \$30,550; a new city manager in Phenix City, \$113,948. The various website sources were useful for gathering information about compensation, especially when students interviewed friends and family. As one student pointed out, “This is my neighbor. I just can’t ask him how much he makes.”

Finally, students described a typical day in the profession they chose to research. One student noted that

Officers on the clock spend the majority of their time on patrol looking for citizens who are not properly following the law. ... Extreme danger is the main challenge of being a police officer; the fact that every day your life could potentially be on the line is a huge obstacle for people who are interested in becoming police officers. (See also Bell, Virden, Lewis, & Cassidy, 2015)

Another student quoted a local police officer, who said, "My job can have me doing desk work one day followed by a long night of patrolling the next." A student who interviewed a local judge found that "the most common type of cases a municipal court hears are domestic and physical violence cases, DUIs and possession of marijuana in the second degree and other misdemeanor drug offenses, misdemeanor property crimes, and traffic and ordinance violations." Another found that

an ordinary day for a Department of Human Resources worker would most likely begin with a case assignment. The social worker would meet with a client, investigate the situation, assess his/her needs, and develop a plan to help resolve the situation. Every step taken must be documented with paperwork, be in compliance with the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, and be evidence-based.

This assignment sought to give students an idea of what qualifications these jobs require, what these jobs pay, and what these and similar jobs in public service entail. One of the more fascinating issues that students found was how much some of these jobs pay. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated 2014 median income of public servants to be \$53,657 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). In some student reports, compensation was at or above the national median. Where there was a pay gap, students found that

public service professionals sometimes supplemented their incomes. In one case, one interviewee had a side business of renting bouncy castles for children's birthday parties. And other public servants found part-time or seasonal work during winter and summer vacations.

### **ASSIGNMENT 3: WHAT IS THE PUBLIC INTEREST?**

The final assignment encourages students to think broadly about the challenges faced by public service professionals and about how such jobs serve the public good. The assignment is as follows:

What are the challenges that public service professionals face in the field you have written about?

Using the literature discussed in the course, describe how those in this position (job) serve the public good.

Again, students had a list of sources to draw on in addition to the course text (Benditt, 1973; Frederickson & Hart, 1985; Staats, 1988). Students who wrote about teachers found that educators had to deal with difficult students, incompetent administrators, uncooperative parents, and changing education policies. Many teachers struggled with issues over which they had little control, such as class size, which students would be in their classes, and how home life affected in-class performance.

Among students who covered law enforcement, many pointed out that danger was part of the job. One student concluded that Frederickson and Hart's (1985) opening lines defined the challenge that police officers face every day: "When one sees one's fellows in danger, one's duty is to go to their aid; strong men do much, the weak little, but being weak is no reason for folding one's arms and refusing one's cooperation" (p. 547). Other students discussed the difficulty of managing life with irregular work hours. Curiously, only one student mentioned the challenge of community and race relations. This was rather disappointing, considering how in-class discussion was devoted to race, policing,

and the cases of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Tamir Rice in Cleveland; and Freddie Gray in Baltimore.

Students who researched social workers thoughtfully noted that these professionals sought to change to their clients' lives but often did not have the means or authority to meaningfully do so. Finally, another student commented on the emotional toll of working with troubled clientele (e.g., victims of abuse and recovering addicts); this student argued that emotional stress coupled with low pay could be very demoralizing.

This final assignment also required students to argue for how the profession they chose to study served the public interest. One student made an important link between public servants and Staats's (1988) view that "government effectiveness translates into prosperity and security" (p. 601). For example, for a city to be habitable, trash must be collected and a city manager may need to coordinate the routes; for businesses to thrive, they must be secure from being robbed; and for the vitality of the local economy, school performance is critical. Following an extended class discussion of Frederickson and Hart (1985), a significant number of students argued about the "character" of public servants and the need to staff government with "good people," because "in the end, they hold lots of power," making staffing all the more "important because in some cases, there is not a lot of supervision going on." This perspective suggests that having the right personnel in place will achieve the public interest. And in order to serve the public good, it is thus incumbent on government to hire professionals who view their jobs in terms patriotism and benevolence (see Frederickson & Hart, 1988).

Students also gathered evidence that the teachers interviewed were devoted to teaching their students, that social workers did as much as they could within the limits of their authority, and that other professionals had rigid codes of ethics that steered them in the right direction. Students found that public servants self-select into the positions they hold because street-level bureaucrats are guided by "what is right" and

have "a profound commitment to the democratic values of their nation" (see also Frederickson & Hart 1985, 549).

## CONCLUSION

This set of assignments can be improved upon. In future courses, I plan to solicit more-critical analyses in two areas. The first concerns a more nuanced and complete discussion about pay and compensation. Initially, I was most concerned about students learning how to navigate various databases and websites to obtain credible information about salaries. In the future, I plan to focus on the factors that determine *how* governments decide to compensate their employees. Are some states more generous than others? Does the federal government pay more than the states? Why? This discussion could also be directed in a more practical direction. For instance, what does it mean to be a social worker who earns \$44,000 a year, or a state trooper who is paid less than \$40,000, or a city manager who is compensated \$113,000? That is, if these jobs pay this amount, what kind of homes do these workers buy, if they can even afford to buy a home? What kind of cars do they drive? What kind of vacations do they take? These are all important aspects of choosing careers that are, for better or ill, often ignored in higher education.

The second area that needs more-critical analysis involves the challenges faced in various careers. For instance, most students cited the danger and low pay of police work as the main challenges for law enforcement; and while these are relevant challenges, they are also superficial. By the end of the semester, students understood that public service occupations are not lucrative positions. A more meaningful analysis would have addressed the fact that attempts to professionalize the police force—for example, by requiring that applicants have college degrees and other training—have nevertheless not translated into higher salaries. Similar was true for social workers. Many students reported that this work was emotionally draining and that the job did not pay well. In several cases, students noted that adhering to the profession's code of conduct was a challenge. But analysis did not go further.

Some students, however, did offer original and thoughtful insights. For instance, one saw race relations, claims of police brutality, and police militarization as challenges for law enforcement. Another pointed out that the danger and pay for firefighters made it difficult to recruit personnel. And, one student argued that social workers are bound by the limits of their agency's mission to initiate change and administer the help that can make a difference in someone's life. To that end, the student concluded, social workers must use their discretion wisely.

Another recommendation for using these or similar assignments is to set aside a class session to discuss students' perceptions of the challenges faced by the positions under study. This could be done using short presentations, where students briefly discuss the professions they have chosen and their challenges. As a class, students could discuss the credibility of the suggested challenges. Then, instructors could guide students toward additional readings that students might incorporate into their written work before submitting a final draft.

Finally, I want to stress that public administrators are representative citizens who faithfully carry out the laws of the state (Frederickson, 1997). Compared to elected governing bodies (Mansbridge, 1999), public servants better represent the population in terms of race, socio-economics, and gender (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011). This form of representative government allows for public servants to best serve the public, because they understand the needs and hardships of those they serve. Ultimately, the interviewed teachers were trying to teach children; the police officers were trying to protect the public; the social workers were making their rounds at the local rehabilitation center or dealing with abuse cases; and the water-plant operator ran tests on water quality, fixed pumps, and inventoried chemicals. The public good is an abstract concept that is often invoked but difficult to define. As one student pointed out, we "struggle to formulate an indisputable definition of what public interest is."

In sum, this set of assignments had several goals: to familiarize students with the concept of public administration and frontline bureaucracy; to pique student interest in public service; and to teach students to navigate various online databases that they might someday use as job applicants. The assignments also helped establish realistic expectations of workload, pay, and qualifications needed to apply for these positions. The big picture was to convey to students that the public depends on regular citizens to carry out laws. These regular citizens are students' family members, friends, and neighbors. Many of these people do their jobs with their best intentions, to the best of their training, and because they are called to the work itself. At the same time, each individual interviewed seemed to disconnect their position in public service from the broader idea of democratic governance. Recognizing the ubiquitous services delivered by frontline bureaucrats allowed students who had not considered public service as a vocation to think about the issues they care about in terms of actual jobs they could see themselves doing.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**N. Alexander Aguado** is associate professor of political science at the University of North Alabama. His research focuses on social capital, public administration, and public policy.

# Surveillance, Transparency, and Democracy: Public Administration in the Information Age

by Akhlaque Haque

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REVIEW AUTHOR

**Muhittin Acar**

*Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey*

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What are the key challenges awaiting public administrators in the information age? How should contemporary societies properly use technology in general and information and communication technologies (ICT) in specific? Why and how is the administration/practice dichotomy becoming crucial in the debate about government and citizen interactions? What are the distinctive (and contrasting) values of formal versus informal knowledge and of quantitative versus qualitative information in shaping public policies and debates? How might we conceptualize and combine these oppositions in creative and constructive ways to best serve the public? Can we reconcile thinking and doing by being equally concerned with questions of why and how in the design and delivery of public programs and services? What are the most important leadership and ethics challenges in today's public organizations and services dominated by technological determinism, instrumental rationality, and private sector influence? Could emerging social

networking tools and information contextualization help public administrators sustain citizens' trust through encouraging informal practice-based governance?

Akhlaque Haque's *Surveillance, Transparency, and Democracy: Public Administration in the Information Age* attempts to address these questions, albeit with varying degrees of depth and success. The book's range of topics related to the implications of ICT for public administration is extremely broad, from the increased role of information in public policy making to critical perspectives on its limits, from ensuring transparency in the public's business to protecting privacy of citizens, from ways of avoiding public technology failures in supply-driven markets to the values and means of learning from context and practice in the information age. At the outset, Haque writes, "This work seeks to fill a void in the literature dealing with the role of information and information technology in government ... [by

discussing] how technology can be [an] effective (and democratic) vehicle for organized institutional reform” (p. xv). Given the significance of interested, informed, and involved citizens in shaping and sustaining public policies and programs across democratic societies, grasping both the enabling and constraining features of technology, especially of ICT, becomes a critical task for scholars and practitioners alike. Thus the book under review is both timely and relevant.

Apart from a lengthy and informative introductory chapter, *Surveillance, Transparency, and Democracy* is organized into two thematic sections, each covering issues of significance to the theory and practice of public administration in the information age. Part 1, “Value of Information,” is divided into two chapters. Chapter 1, “Introduction to the Theory of Information,” succinctly discusses the complementary (at times contradictory) roles of formal and informal knowledge in public policy making as well as the principles, classification, and flow of information. Chapter 2, “Information Technology in Action,” critically reviews interactions between information technology and human experience, focusing especially on the consequences of employing various rationalities when it comes to choosing and evaluating technology in public administration (e.g., instrumental versus political rationality). Part 2, “Value of Public Service,” consist of three chapters. Chapter 3, “Information Contextualization,” demonstrates the importance and implications of contextualizing information by mobilizing both the science and art of decision making in public administration. Chapter Four, “Leadership, Ethics, and Technology,” discusses the crucial roles of ethics and leadership in making choices regarding use of technology and data in institutional and societal settings. Finally, Chapter 5, “The End of Surveillance,” builds on and expands on the previous chapters to emphasize “the missing link between information and practice” (p. 107) as well as of “the practice-administration dichotomy” (p. 115) in the information age.

Haque aptly cautions against “technology the hero” (p. 49). The very same technology that

can contribute to democratization of public institutions and policies by empowering citizens might also be used as tools of undemocratic surveillance and control. Specifically, Haque writes that

the disconnectedness between information and action cannot be blamed on technology when our morality is not attuned to the social relations that bind us. ... We must acknowledge that as we rise up to make ourselves better protectors of humans and nature, our technologies will also reveal solutions that bind them for the same cause. Information technology can either *constrain* human creativity by routinizing human activities or it can *enable* (as interpretive lenses) new and emerging ideas to be incorporated into future actions. How it will be used depends on our own morality and judgment of good and evil. (p. 84, emphasis in original)

Yet, Haque does envision “administrator the hero,” so to speak, when it comes to addressing the challenges stemming from the rapid growth of ICT. This role for public administrators, unfortunately, is unrealistic given the supply-driven nature of many ICT-related programs and projects. The increasing influence of private sector vendors and values in determining public sector technology creates an array of dilemmas and difficulties for public administrators. Haque furthermore largely eschews discussing the roles and responsibilities of citizens and private sector actors, such as ICT entrepreneurs and executives, in reconciling emerging technological tools with existing democratic values. Also missing is even a brief discussion about the causes and consequences of the “digital divide” between the West and the rest. Finally, the book could have been improved by discussing questions such as, How might “interpretive capacities” be developed in public administrators? Who should be the guardian of the public interest when “institutionalization” simply means penetration of not-so-democratic values and habits into public policies and organizational practices? What should be the

roles and responsibilities of politics and politicians in the information age?

In conclusion, despite its shortcomings, *Surveillance, Transparency, and Democracy* is a welcome addition to the literature addressing the challenges facing public organizations and managers in these early years of the 21st century. It raises important questions about contemporary public administration in democracies, especially those related to interactions between advancement of ICT and protecting such values as privacy, trust, transparency, and participation. In addition to offering a critical approach to these issues, the book provides an extensive list of references for further reading and research. Thus I strongly recommend *Surveillance, Transparency, and Democracy* to researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and citizens engaged in contemporary debates surrounding ICT. The book is also especially relevant for undergraduate and graduate teaching, particularly for courses related to ICT use in public administration, ICT development and evaluation, critical perspectives on contemporary public administration, and emerging ethical issues. Finally, the book could prove useful as essential reading in faculty professional

development and executive training programs, especially those involving ICT specialists, managers, and evaluators.

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## REFERENCES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Muhittin Acar** is professor of public administration at Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey. He earned his bachelor's degree from Ankara University, his Master of Public Management from Carnegie Mellon University, and his doctorate from the University of Southern California. His major research topics are transparency, accountability, and integrity in public governance.

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