Focusing the Public Leadership Lens: Research Propositions and Questions in the Minnowbrook Tradition

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ABSTRACT

Although there is no shortage of general studies and theories of leadership, the same cannot be said for *public leadership*. This concern surfaced as a critical issue among scholars at the 2008 Minnowbrook III conference. Drawing from that discussion, this article calls for invigorating the study of public leadership within public administration (PA). We present the case for public leadership, that is, leadership for the public good, where challenges are complex, stakeholders are many, values are conflicting, and resources are limited. Traditional, generic models of leadership—as in, leading followers toward some specific goal—do not align well with these current challenges. We argue for studying *public* leadership specifically, rather than trying to retrofit existing concepts of leadership from business management or elective politics. PA should be the leading voice in understanding and promoting public leadership. By examining previous public leadership scholarship through three broad lenses—the *character* of public leadership, the *function* of public leadership, and the *jurisdiction* of public leadership—we develop theoretical propositions designed to drive a revitalized research agenda. We conclude with a set of research questions we see as critical to crystallizing the significance of public leadership.

INTRODUCTION

A central theme across all three Minnowbrook gatherings and their subsequent influence on public administration (PA) theory and practice has been the development of public administrators who truly make a difference, who act as ''agents of change'' to transform public problems into solutions that reflect a commitment to public values (Bailey and Mayer 1992; Kee and Newcomer 2008; Marini 1971; Moore 1995). Although the Minnowbrook tradition has called for public administrators to embrace their role in producing public value, we believe that PA has fallen short in its focus on a key area of scholarship integral to accomplishing this goal: the study of *public leadership*.

Considering the themes that emerged from Minnowbrook III and the study of PA in the new millennium, we argue that the time has come to invigorate the study of public

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leadership. Although there is no shortage of general studies and theories of leadership, the same cannot be said for public leadership. We argue that public leadership ought to be considered distinct from general leadership studies and is central to the study of PA. Public leadership is leadership for the common good, for the purpose of creating public value.[1] The context of public leadership today is a boundary-crossing process with those we consider leaders often leading in the absence of formal authority. Effectiveness rests on leadership within as well as across hierarchies.

Leadership for the "new governance" (Salamon 2002) of today's PA is complex, dynamic, and critical to solving public problems. Therefore, as participants in the continuing dialogue in the Minnowbrook tradition, we argue for a heightened commitment to the study of public leadership, discuss conceptual challenges, and offer propositions to direct future research. In addition, given the role of PA in identifying and teaching critical leadership competencies, we also emphasize the development of public leadership capacity among current and future practitioners who answer the call of public service. We conclude with a set of research questions critical to understanding and developing public leadership. We hope that PA scholars will answer our call.

WHY PUBLIC LEADERSHIP?

Across disciplines, there is no dearth of scholarship on the topic of leadership.[2] There are literally thousands of books and articles on the topic and an ever-growing number of leadership development consultants and programs. However, most of these resources treat leadership generically—that is, leadership theories and models are thought to be applicable across all endeavors. When examples of leadership in government are used in these studies, the subjects are mostly politicians or executives at the top of public organizations (Burns 1978; Doig and Hargrove 1987) and thus not representative of the wide range of actors that encompass public leadership.

Research specifically about *public* leadership is predominantly focused on political leaders, such as elected officials and senior appointees (Kellerman and Webster 2001).[3] Although this work is undoubtedly relevant and important, we find the focus too narrow. Political leaders are certainly the most visible and wield a great deal of influence, but they represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of public leadership. Focusing on political leaders tacitly assumes that leaders are those in positions of designated authority. However, public leadership does not always correspond directly with organizational positions. Today's most pressing public problems often require that individuals lead without hierarchical or designated authority. Scholars and public administrators searching for answers in the broader

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1   Public value is used here as a near synonym of the common good or public interest. Public value creation may include efforts to solve or at least mitigate public problems; improve the efficiency, effectiveness, or fairness of public services; create or enhance a public service; or respond to public sentiment in some way (Moore 1995). Although recognizing that there are "widely varying stances toward the concept" of public value (Alford and O'Flynn 2009, 171–2), we are still persuaded by the notion of "public value-seeking leadership" as a description of public leadership in an "era of networked governance" (Wallis and Gregory 2009, 258).

2   For additional review of leadership literature, see Northouse (2004), Bass (1990), and Yukl (2001).

3   The review essay by Kellerman and Webster (2001) or a more recent article on public leadership by Moynihan and Ingraham (2004) are representative of the majority of scholarship on "public" leadership. Public leaders, more often than not, are viewed either as elected officials or those at the top of bureaucracies.

leadership knowledge base may find themselves struggling to connect these theories of leadership within the context of PA today.

Complicating the issue of public leadership are the ghosts of the PA orthodoxy. The perceived "pathologies" of public bureaucracies—the politics and administration dichotomy, abuse of discretion, and unchecked bureaucratic power—suggest leadership as bureaucratic vice rather than a virtue. Fairholm (2004, 578) summarizes this perspective as the "three D's: 1) dichotomy arguments that say that leadership looks too much like politics and therefore should be eschewed; 2) discretion arguments that simply define leadership as a maverick and undesirable version of administrative discretion; 3) domination/authority arguments that suggest leadership is merely another form of domination authority and therefore is inherently dangerous because it tends to create societal units that are dominated by the whims of the unchecked."

The orthodox perception that leadership does not belong in the domain of PA has essentially dismissed a critical link in the policy process. Today's public administrators are expected to embrace the political dimensions, to employ authorized discretion and authority granted by law to lead in the policy process, through development, implementation, and enforcement (Svara 2007). Recent examples such as the US Office of Thrift Supervision's failure to enforce accounting standards that resulted in bailout of the banking industry demonstrate that the absence of leadership can lead to far worse problems than the exercise of bureaucratic discretion may ever produce. Public organizations and their leaders must solve complex problems with limited resources, meet ongoing demands for performance, and rise to new expectations for working across boundaries (Goldsmith and Eggers 2004; U.S. General Accounting Office 2003).

The changing context of governance complicates definitions of public leadership. Public managers are operating in an environment characterized not by hierarchical leadership but by integrative leadership with partners across organizational and sectoral boundaries (Huxham and Vangen 2005).[4] With such leadership, public managers must align their values with the values of their partners as they collectively deliver public services. Serving the public interest, respecting the Constitution/law, demonstrating personal integrity, promoting ethical organizations, and striving for professional excellence are at the heart of values-based leadership for the public manager (Newell 2008).

Although elected officials, political appointees, and senior career civil servants best fit the traditional concept of public leadership, the variety of forces affecting the provision of public services necessarily expands the definition of both public organizations and public leaders. For example, private and nonprofit organizations increasingly deliver public services as part of an ever-growing "hollow state," whereas the public sector is taking on unprecedented responsibilities in managing private sector use of stimulus funding as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Additionally, citizen leaders

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4   An interdisciplinary group of scholars at the University of Minnesota, including John Bryson and Barbara Crosby of the Humphrey Institute, are advancing "integrative leadership" as a broad umbrella term for "how collective action across sectors (business, government, nonprofits, media, academia) and geographic boundaries can solve some of the world's most pressing and complex societal problems." Scholars from a variety of fields (including management, PA, and education) share an interest in boundary-crossing leadership for the common good, yet do not share a common understanding of it or a common language for describing it. The Center for Integrative Leadership at the University of Minnesota seeks to develop a common, interdisciplinary understanding under the banner of "integrative leadership." They have hosted research symposia and initiated a research grant program. See http://www.leadership.umn.edu for more information. A symposium on integrative public leadership is forthcoming in *The Leadership Quarterly*.

engage in public advocacy and reform. This complex dynamic illustrates sector spanning public leadership where many different actors, regardless of organization or sector affiliation, can adopt the leadership mantle.

We contend that in the evolving leadership discussion, PA scholars and practitioners should assert a strong voice: the changing definition of public leadership must recognize both the value of boundary-spanning leadership and the responsibilities associated with maintaining the public trust. As noted, although public leadership includes elected and appointed officials and people outside government in nonprofits, business, and social movements, we focus on the important area of PA and public managers.

PA has struggled with tackling the topic of leadership directly, often favoring a more narrow focus on managing public organizations (Fairholm 2004). PA research has often incorporated dimensions of leadership as independent variables (as environment terms or error terms) within broader studies given the challenge of addressing it directly (Brewer and Selden 2000; Vigoda 2002). However, in recent years, a small but growing voice has developed in the field, seeking to articulate the relevance of leadership within PA (Behn 1998; Crosby and Bryson 2005; Fairholm 2004; Ingraham 2006; Luke 1998; Morse and Buss 2007; Terry 2003; Van Slyke and Alexander 2006; Van Wart 2003).[5] The studies have demonstrated that the extant frameworks and arguments (either narrowly defined as political leadership or organizational leadership) endanger PA's impact on defining and understanding public leadership.

Building on these studies of public leadership, we argue that future research should examine: 1) leadership that acknowledges the competing tensions of public governance, 2) leadership that solves complex problems with public stewardship in mind, 3) leadership that respects core PA principles while incorporating the modern context of public management, and 4) leadership that recognizes the prevalence and influence of individuals throughout and across organizations, not just those with formal designated leadership positions.

THE MINNOWBROOK TRADITION, PA, AND LEADERSHIP STUDIES: PROPOSITIONS FOR PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

PA scholarship on leadership reflects an acknowledgment of the increasingly complex environment of the public sector, the expanding functions (both explicit and implicit) of public administrators, and the recognition of leadership opportunities and challenges in a range of governance settings. The scholarship encompasses three broad lenses: character of public leadership, function of public leadership, and jurisdiction of public leadership. We review the research through these three lenses, developing theoretical propositions designed to drive an invigorated research and practice agenda for public leadership. These propositions are normative, signaling where we argue avenues for the study and practice of public leadership should progress. We end each section with a proposition focused on training and development concerns of public leadership given the importance and need for it in the field. In the Minnowbrook tradition, these propositions are not intended to comprise an exhaustive agenda but to challenge and push scholars as they consider public leadership.

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5   See also the symposium on leadership education in Public Affairs programs, edited by Barbara Crosby, in the July 2005, issue of *Journal of Public Affairs Education* (vol. 11, no. 3).

Character of Public Leadership

The *character of public leadership* reflects the normative commitments and resulting be-
haviors of individual leaders. Ethical theories have comprised a major component of the
leadership literature (Northouse 2004) and have particular significance for public leader-
ship given the longstanding value tensions inherent in the field of PA. First, since the found-
ing of PA, the field has struggled with the twin value clusters around bureaucracy and
democracy, which are often in conflict with each other (Mosher 1968; Redford 1969).
On the one hand, PA has embraced the values of neutral competence, the 'three Es' (ef-
ficiency, effectiveness, and economy), and the notion that politics can be separated from
administration and that government can be run like a business (Denhardt 2004). On the
other hand, the field has also embraced democratic values such as responsiveness, self-
governance, and public trust (Frederickson 1991, 1997; Waldo 1984; Wamsley and Wolf
1996). We have seen these two poles manifested in labels such as traditional (or "old") PA
versus New PA and New Public Management versus New Public Service (Denhardt and
Denhardt 2007). However, in practice, we find that these values are not either/or;
public leaders grapple with them simultaneously. The tension between bureaucracy and
democracy, between efficiency and responsiveness, will always be there.[6]

Related to the bureaucracy-democracy value tension is the friction between constancy
and change. At the core of most conceptions of leadership is the value of change or prog-
ress. Leadership is about leading change or as Cleveland (2002, xv) explains, making
"something different happen." Yet at the same time, a core value of PA is one of steward-
ship (Kass 1990) and of constancy and reliability (LaPorte and Keller 1996). Terry's (2003)
model of administrative conservatorship captures this perspective well, particularly as it
relates to leadership. Terry's (2003) approach to public leadership emphasizes the admin-
istrators' normative commitments to preserving agency mission, values, and survival. In
contrast to the conservator role, and more consistent with popular notions of leaders as
"change agents," administrative leaders have been encouraged to be entrepreneurial
(Osborne and Gaebler 1992) and take on the role of negotiating and managing the political
process (from the administration side of government), including managing policy windows
(Roberts and King 1996) and embracing political skills and coalition building (Doig and
Hargrove 1987; Riccucci 1995). Again, like efficiency versus responsiveness, the academic
literature tends to treat these values as opposites, whereas in practice they are mutually
embraced (Kee and Newcomer 2008), yet remain in tension with one another.

A third tension inherent to the character of public leadership is balancing the self-
interested, "rational" orientation (Simon 1948) with an orientation toward the public good
(Denhardt and Denhardt 2007; Frederickson 1991, 1997). A growing body of research on
public service motivation (PSM) offers a contemporary lens to consider this balance in light
of the inadequacies associated with explaining public service based on rational self-interest
alone. The PSM construct centers on motivational forces that are more self-sacrificing than
self-serving and include an attraction to policy making, compassion, and commitment to
the public interest (Perry 1996; Perry and Wise 1990; Wright 2001).

In contrast to the existing paradigm in which leadership effectiveness depends on the
ability to elicit desired performance with rewards that speak to individual self-interest, the
developing body of work on PSM is beginning to unravel the ways in which PSM can also

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6   See Rainey (2003) for a more extended discussion.

contribute to performance (Alonso and Lewis 2001; Francois 2000; Naff and Crum 1999). A key to unlocking this potential, however, rests with leaders (Paarlberg, Perry, and Hondeghem 2008). Regrettably, an understanding of the mechanisms by which leaders create the conditions necessary for such engagement is lacking as is research on ways leaders can increase PSM among members of the workforce (Perry and Hondeghem 2008).

Scholarship on the character of public leadership reflects the changing perceptions of governance itself, from transactional relationships within hierarchical systems to political and strategic skills to maneuver within complex environments and to intermediary actions that balance competing stakeholders and interests. Given what we know about the character of public leadership, we offer the following normative propositions that address where we believe the study of public leadership should progress:

Proposition One: Inherent to public leadership is a commitment to protecting the public interest and preserving key public service values. In an era marked by cross-sector collaboration, scholars must determine the degree to which these commitments are reflected in collaborative public management service arrangements, public-private partnerships, and other methods of contemporary policy implementation and service delivery.

Proposition Two: Preserving democratic values, cultivating public trust, and enhancing PSM are fundamental commitments of public leadership. Exploring the link between these commitments and public leadership is critical.

Proposition Three: The field requires theoretical and empirical investigation into the nature and desired outcomes of public leadership. From this investigation, it is then critical for training and development to address the link between character and outcomes.

Function of Public Leadership

The second lens is concerned with the *function of public leadership*. Public administrators are expected to engage in policy development, implementation, and monitoring. But are they expected to engage in public leadership and to what end? The Minnowbrook tradition has emphasized the need for public administrators to engage the larger normative implications of their actions. With fits and starts, PA scholars have asserted not only the right of public managers to lead but an obligation to lead in order to mitigate governance failures (Behn 1998), implement public policies (Behn 1988; Derthick 1990; Golden 1990), guide government reform (Ingraham, Sanders, and Thompson 1998; Sanders 1998), and infuse organizations and society with values (Denhardt 1981; Fairholm 1991; Selznick 1983).

The functions of public leadership are firmly entrenched in the distinctiveness of public versus private actions, intent, and resources. The "publicness" is represented in terms of the degree of political and economic authority (Bozeman 1987), ownership, funding, and social control of organizations (Perry and Rainey 1988; Wamsley and Zald 1973). Key among these distinctions are the ways in which public leaders exercise authority, make decisions, assess performance, and reward their employees. External constraints, often competing demands for accountability, transparency requirements, and diffuse goals complicate the practice of public leadership on these dimensions. This is not to say that private

sector leaders do not face similar challenges. In fact, as the boundaries between public and private organizations continue to blur due to the influence of increased collaboration, contracting, and oversight functions, studies of leadership also must evolve.

Acknowledging the shift of governance from traditional command and control conceptions toward partnerships and networks, recent scholarship reflects the diversity of public leadership functions. Leadership activities that emphasize the intermediary roles of public administrators in engaging diverse stakeholders and interests are reflected in the transformational (Gingrich 2007; Kee and Newcomer 2008), catalytic (Luke 1992), collaborative, (Bingham and O'Leary 2008; Crislip and Larson 1994; Huxham and Vangen 2000), and facilitative perspectives of leadership (Svara 1994).

Conceptions of the functions of public leadership tend to fall into two categories that we refer to as kitchen-sink and archetype models. The US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Executive Core Qualifications reflect a kitchen-sink model. Federal employees vying for Senior Executive Service positions must demonstrate success in an exhausting set of competencies in ''leading change, leading people, results-driven, business acumen, and building coalitions.'' Further, the US OPM also identifies a set of six ''fundamental competencies'' which are expected to serve as ''the foundation for success in each of the Executive Core Qualifications'' (http://www.opm.gov). These foundational competencies include interpersonal skills, oral communication, honesty/integrity, written communication, continual learning, and PSM.

Archetype models of public leadership reflect the evolving perceptions of functional representations of public leadership, such as being entrepreneurial (Osborne and Gaebler 1992), integrative (Ingraham, Sowa, and Moynihan 2004), or innovative (Doig and Hargrove 1987). Archetype perspectives on the function of public leadership, while often compelling, are short lived, waiting to be replaced by the next ''big thing'' in leadership. These ephemeral, unitary images of leadership miss a needed long-term approach that identifies enduring principles and concepts that can stand the test of time.

The lens of function and the notion of varied and occasionally competing competencies is summarized in the following propositions for further exploration of public leadership:

Proposition One: Public managers must balance the demands of many masters, including a variety of internal and external stakeholders and partners. As compared to their private and nonprofit partners, public leaders' concerns for responsiveness and accountability are complicated by this reality (Jensen and Kennedy 2005). Therefore, in the context of new governance, an important role of public leaders is to bridge the multiple relationships operating to accomplish public purposes, while stewarding or conserving important accountability concerns.

Proposition Two: In contrast to elected officials and (most) political appointees, the time frame for public managers is extended and necessarily includes a long-term vision. Therefore, the leadership tasks of public administrators must include acknowledgment of historical context of policies, recognition of long-term consequences of policy actions, and support of sustainable strategic planning.

Proposition Three: Associated with proposition two, organizational processes applied to public managers must support the exercise and development of

leadership. Public leaders cannot be encouraged to take risks and show leadership initiative if the traditional protections in place for these government employees have been removed (Coggburn 2005; Hays and Sowa 2006). We must not only design human resource systems that encourage and develop leaders but also offer them protection for taking chances and possibly failing. Few true leaders get it "right" the first time out of the block.

Jurisdiction of Public Leadership

The third lens through which we examine public leadership has to do with where leadership takes place in PA, the boundaries or *jurisdiction* of public leadership. Jurisdiction is a crucial concept in the study of public leadership in that most treatments of leadership begin with an assumption that the boundaries, or jurisdiction, define where and how leadership takes place. By jurisdiction, we speak of formal boundaries, specifically organizational (for public organizations, these boundaries include legal authority and often geographic boundaries as well) and political jurisdictions. These boundaries provide both real and perceived barriers to public leadership (Kettl 2006).

The contemporary landscape of public leadership has become more and more amorphous (Frederickson 2007). Implementation studies have demonstrated that much of the action of PA that truly influences the public can occur at different levels of government and across multiple public organizations (not to mention nongovernmental authorities). The diffusion of authority to "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky 1983; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Vinzant and Crothers 1998), to all jurisdictions of government (local, state, federal, public authorities, and other trans-jurisdictional entities), and beyond the boundaries of government institutions (nonprofits, collective policy arrangements, and private firms) requires greater attention to leadership across the entire spectrum of governance.

What is evident and important for this discussion is the extent to which these studies of public leadership are rooted firmly in the notion of jurisdiction. Whether leading from the bottom or the top, leadership is viewed as taking place within specific boundaries. Although jurisdiction certainly is a critical component of understanding the context and constraints of public leadership, we must also embrace in our research the reality of what Frederickson (2007) has called a "bureaucrats without borders" phenomenon and recognize that public leadership may actually (and perhaps most often) be exercised in the absence of jurisdictional authority (Gardner 1990). It is not mutually exclusive. Public leadership is not about leading within bureaucracies or leading across them, it is both. Public leaders deal with the context of organizations with specific jurisdictions (authoritative, geographic, or otherwise) but at the same time are working *across boundaries* to create public value and solve public problems because the nature of the problem or opportunity simply demands it. Research on public leadership can accept the idea of a leadership context where jurisdiction matters less but at the same time factor in the ways in which it still does matter. One's authority is diluted outside one's jurisdiction.

Shifting boundaries also affects leadership development. The need to invest resources including time and research into best methods for leadership development is pressing (Jacobson 2007; Morse and Buss 2008). Federal, state, and local governments will face a great challenge in the next decade as they strive to replace a large number of retiring workers (Abbey and Boyd 2002; Liebowitz 2004; U.S. General Accounting Office

2001; Young 2003). In thinking about how to develop the next generation of public leaders, we must take into consideration this changing nature of public leadership—although it remains by-and-large rooted in boundaries and jurisdiction—it also is increasingly about crossing or transcending those traditional boundaries.

Leadership development in the public sector has traditionally been about developing organization-specific leadership competencies. These must now be expanded. We need to develop leaders for the new governing environment, who can lead effectively within an organizational context and lead across boundaries, when necessary, to create public value and solve public problems. Recent research (Getha-Taylor 2008) illustrates the inadequacies of current competency models in capturing boundary-spanning leadership skills. This research highlights the importance of continually reevaluating competency frameworks and associated individual evaluation/reward to reflect changing leadership demands.

The lens of jurisdiction, and the notion of leading across boundaries, is summarized in the following propositions for further exploration of public leadership:

Proposition One: The diffuse nature of public governance makes drawing finite boundaries around public leadership difficult. Given the fragmented system of governance and evolving collaborative relationships, identifying specific acts of public leadership and individual public leaders are difficult tasks.

Proposition Two: We need to look for public leadership at all levels within PA (as defined by formal bureaucratic boundaries) as well as across sectors. The identification and investigation of leadership across policy fields and organizational levels is necessary to study and understand public leadership.

Proposition Three: Leadership development is historically an organizational phenomenon. We argue the jurisdiction of public leadership to be *both* intra- and interorganizational (or rather, within and across jurisdictions); in most cases, there is a gap between how leadership is enacted and how it is developed. There should be greater attention on developing *public* leaders, not just leaders of public *organizations*.

EMBRACING THE CHALLENGE OF PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP: ENDURING QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This call for additional research is organized around the character, the function, and the jurisdiction of public leadership. Our goal is to provide greater direction to future research on public leadership through the propositions provided in the previous section as well as a set of research questions outlined below that we believe are critical to furthering understanding of the importance, relevance, and application of public leadership. In addition to providing questions aimed at furthering the research agenda on public leadership theory and practice, one question in each section (character, function, and jurisdiction) speaks specifically to application/leadership development. Transferring lessons from research and practice to the context of public leadership development is an important component of this article and reflects a connection to the Minnowbrook III conference which focused on the future of PA, including: research, practice, and education.

Character of Public Leadership Questions

Question One: In the context of new governance, what forces are influencing how leaders balance competing values, how and with what impact?

Question Two: How do public leaders identify, prioritize, and balance the myriad of commitments, such as preserving democratic values, cultivating public trust, and enhancing PSM?

Question Three: How do we create personnel systems which support, protect, and instill a culture of public leadership?

Function of Public Leadership Questions

Question One: Given the inherent complexity of practicing public leadership, including the need for accountability to a variety of stakeholders, to what end, or audience, should public leadership be focused?

Question Two: Are there some enduring responsibilities of public leadership that supersede changing trends?

Question Three: How should public leadership competencies connect to organizational rewards or consequences? Do performance management and evaluation systems in public organizations assess and recognize leadership competencies and behaviors?

Jurisdiction of Public Leadership Questions

Question One: What kinds of research methodologies are most appropriate for studying leadership that is both intra- and interorganizational? In other words, how do we best study public leadership that is for the most part unbounded, yet at the same time centers on actors that work within hierarchies and jurisdictions?

Question Two: What cues direct scholars and practitioners to identify effective and ineffective public leadership when leadership stems from a diffused set of jurisdictions and hierarchical boundaries?

Question Three: Which programs, strategies, and curricula are most appropriate to build and nurture leadership skills for public leadership ''across boundaries''?

Pursuing the Questions

Our call for an energized research agenda reflects the diversity and complexity embedded in public leadership. To effectively answer the above research questions, we acknowledge the need for new perspectives in research methodology. First, research must embrace the long view. Gordon and Yukl (2004) assert that a significant missing variable in evaluating the impact of leadership is time. Yet the preponderance of analysis of leadership focuses on a specific moment in time. Incorporating time into the analysis is critical to understanding the effect of leadership development programs and perceptions of leadership. To this end, conducting longitudinal studies that assess the career path of public administrators, or better

utilize existing data sets such as the Federal Human Capital Survey,[7] is vital to reclaiming the relevancy of leadership in PA.

Second, research should apply heuristic inquiry. At its most basic level, heuristic inquiry allows individuals and groups to reflect and add meaning to a phenomenon (Douglass and Moustakas 1985). In the case of public leadership, heuristic inquiry offers an opportunity to explore how public leaders perceive their own actions and choices. Further, as research-in-action, there is a better opportunity to learn from leadership failures as well as successes. Most studies of public leadership are retrospective and as such emphasize so-called success stories. The research by Ospina and Dodge (2005) using narrative inquiry for understanding how social change occurs in communities offers a useful model to explore this kind of interpretive research agenda.

Third, research on public leadership needs to go beyond solely focusing on individual agents (leaders) and recognize that public leadership is also enacted through structures and processes (Huxham and Vangen 2005). Research in the field has examined the importance of structure and process, particularly in collaborative settings, but the link to leadership has received little attention. And in research on individual leaders, a focus on those in positions of formal authority is limiting in that it overemphasizes the individual nature of leadership, rather than the collective act of leadership. Moreover, it ignores large swaths of public service where acts of leadership are occurring at all levels and domains of public service.

As we make this call for more research, we recognize that we are standing on the shoulders of those that have come before us. From this position, we look to the future with optimism that PA will take the charge to become the leading voice in public leadership research and practical development.

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7   See http://www.fedview.opm.gov/.

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