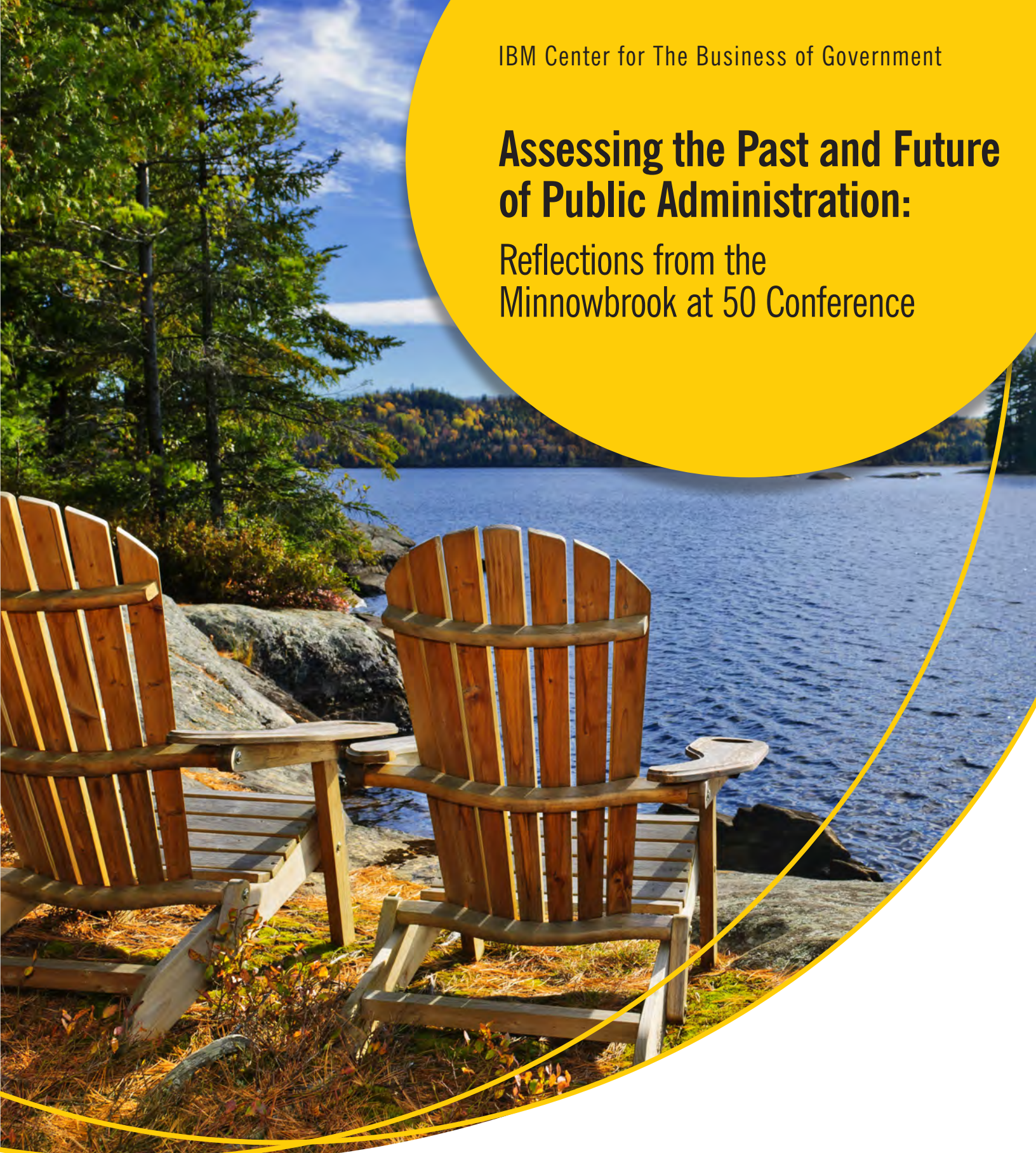IBM Center for The Business of Government

Assessing the Past and Future of Public Administration:

Reflections from the Minnowbrook at 50 Conference

Tina Nabatchi and Julia L. Carboni

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University

IBM Center for
The Business of Government

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FOREWORD

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, *Assessing the Past and Future of Public Administration: Reflections from the Minnowbrook at 50 Conference,* by Tina Nabatchi and Julia Carboni, with the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

The field of public administration has contributed significant insights that have informed practice, research, and teaching for many years. Government leaders rely on expert analyses from academia to help them understand their impact on the citizens and nations they serve. Scholars advance the profession through their writings and dialogues. Students benefit by learning about the influences on and the outcomes of public sector action in a way that helps build a future workforce. Understanding how public administration has evolved in the past can help all stakeholders to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities that matter for all stakeholders in this diverse profession.


DANIEL J. CHENOK

The Minnowbrook conferences, hosted periodically over the past 50 years by the Maxwell School, have reflected major milestones in public administration. These sessions have brought together a range of experts to discuss and debate how research and teaching can best contribute to a vibrant public sector, as well as how the field should address larger social and economic challenges facing nations and the world. The conferences address questions of high relevance today, such as:

- How should schools of public administration balance a focus on broad societal goals with the need to understand and teach empirical frameworks to students who will become tomorrow's government officials?

- How can new technologies improve the productivity of researchers and the performance of practitioners?

- How can the field best reflect diversity of thought and experience that provides for rich and varied content, reflecting the realities of the world served by the public sector?

DR. JEFFREY TALLEY

These and many other key questions contributed to the agenda of the "Minnowbrook at 50 Conference." In this report, the conference organizers recap the Minnowbrook at 50 discussions, summarize insights from participants and from specific expert groups that formed during the conference, and present relevant issues and recommendations that inform general progress on the professional and academic sides of public administration.
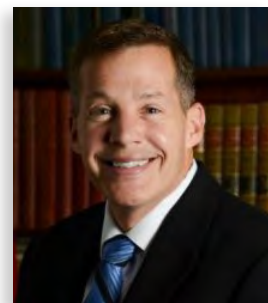
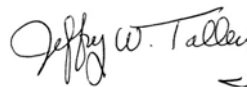This report builds on the Center's longstanding interest in strengthening the linkages between research and practice for the public sector. Most of our 350 reports over the past twenty-one years apply analyses and recommendations from academic experts into actionable recommendations for government. This history is reflected in the 2018 book marking the Center's 20th anniversary, *Government for the Future: Reflection and Vision for Tomorrow's Leaders,* which assessed trends across government over the past two decades to develop scenarios for what government may achieve in the next two decades. These trends and scenarios would not have been possible without the careful research and impactful insights of hundreds of authors from the field of public administration. The import of this connection was reinforced by the recent introduction of the Government Effectiveness Advanced Research (GEAR) Center, which similarly seeks to link academic insights with public sector innovation.

We hope this report will spark discussion of the important role that public administration plays for government, scholars, students, and the world that they continue to shape.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The field of public administration has a profound impact on the public sector. The Minnowbook Conferences frame this impact for government and academia.

The Minnowbrook Conferences, organized by the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in 1968 (Minnowbrook I), 1988 (Minnowbrook II), and 2008 (Minnowbrook III), have iconic status in the academic field of public administration. In 2018, the Maxwell School honored and celebrated the 50th anniversary of Minnowbrook I by bringing together 44 diverse scholars and practitioners in a nontraditional conference format to "Revisit the Administrative State" in a time of revolutions.

This report recaps the Minnowbrook at 50 conference. It provides a brief history of the three previous Minnowbrook conferences—and an overview of the Minnowbrook at 50 conference.

During the conference, small groups formed around seven issues of concern in public administration. Each group developed a set of key findings and primary recommendations:

(1) **Relevance of Public Administration Scholarship.** Relevance has been a long-standing concern in the study of public administration. While "relevant scholarship" has many dimensions, it ideally requires being connected to and having an impact on practical and social realities. However, compartmentalization, silos, and problematic institutional incentives, among other issues, make it difficult to achieve this ideal. Academic institutions, journals, and professional organizations have a role to play in addressing these challenges and improving the relevance of public administration scholarship.

(2) **Analytical Frameworks: Micro, Meso, and Macro Level Research.** Methodological and conceptual thinking in public administration can be improved if scholars clarify whether their research is operating at the micro (individual), meso (group or organizational), or macro (systems) level. Unspecified or mistreated analytic levels in research undermine the accountability, generalizability, and scalability of findings, and ultimately hinder the field's ability to solve problems. To build coherent bodies of theory and evidence, scholars must explicitly reference and define the analytic level used in research and work toward integration across levels in research activities.

(3) **Overcoming American Centricity.** Although public administration is, and should be, a global endeavor, the majority of research focuses on the United States and other Western nations. This is problematic for scholarship, academic institutions and programs, and professional associations and journals. To overcome such problems, the field must actively foster macro-level scholarship across contexts, encourage curricular revisions, integrate international concepts and standards, focus on the needs of the international civil service, and support regional and other international efforts.

(4) **Integrative Public Administration.** The disconnect between academic research and practitioner realities can (and should) be addressed through integrative public administration, an approach that aligns public problems and research through stakeholder engagement. To achieve this goal, scholars should reframe intellectual agendas to be more reflective of the problems, issues, and opportunities identified by practitioners. In addition, the academic community should adjust four key institutional areas to increase relevance to practice: doctoral admissions, doctoral student training, academic publishing and conference formats, and standards for promotions and tenure.

(5) **Automation and Artificial Intelligence.** Emerging technologies related to advanced automation, artificial intelligence, and big data create possibilities for both social benefit and harm. A framework based on the nature of the task for which such technologies are being used, as well as the context in which they are being used, could help administrators make choices about when (and when not) to use such tools. Moreover, evaluation criteria—such as effectiveness, efficiency, equity, managerial capacity, and political legitimacy—can help advance public administration research in this area.

(6) **Democracy, Public Administration, and Public Values.** The interplay and challenges of democracy, public administration, and public values must be addressed in this era of public distrust, political polarization, and populism. To improve and strengthen the links between democratic institutions and public administration, the field needs to develop a robust intellectual agenda that advances research, connections to practice and the public, and education.

(7) **Social Equity in Public Administration.** Despite decades-long efforts to promote social equity in public administration, challenges persist. On the academic side, social equity is not well integrated into research and teaching. On the practice side, inequities and disparities abound in terms of both policy outcomes and workforces. Agreement on key social equity principles can help both sides of public administration foster intentional and sustained action aimed at embedding social equity as a core value and practice in public administration.

INTRODUCTION

A major 20th century scholar, Dwight Waldo, suggested that nearly all of the triumphs and all of the tragedies of civilization could be traced to public administration.

There is little doubt that public administration is key for effective government. Strong administrative systems—those that are efficient, equitable, accountable, and responsive—are far more likely than weak systems to advance public goals and create public value.

Academic research and professional practice in public administration have always focused on building and sustaining strong administrative systems. However, several challenges—increasing interdependence, complexity, and uncertainty; the pace of globalization and technological development; growing demands for collaborative efforts; and new governance arrangements—are fundamentally reshaping the public sector. These and other issues require new thinking about public administration. Minnowbrook at 50—a conference hosted in August 2018 by the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs—sparked that thinking for both scholars and practitioners.

Across the past five decades, the Minnowbrook conferences have had great influence on the public administration canon. Named for the idyllic facilities in which they have taken place, the Minnowbrook conferences have been referred to as "the cicadas of public administration"—occurring once every generation and leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of the field.[1]

Minnowbrook I, organized by Dwight Waldo in 1968, sought to reestablish the relevance of public administration in a time of social, political, and cultural upheaval. Minnowbrook II, organized by H. George Frederickson in 1988, examined the evolution of public administration and the consequences for scholarship and practice. Minnowbrook III, organized by Rosemary O'Leary in 2008, explored the future of public administration in an increasingly complex and globalized world. Each conference engaged an extraordinary roster of intellectual talent and culminated in the publication of books, articles, and/or special issues of journals that left lasting impressions on scholars and practitioners around the world.

As the 50th anniversary of Minnowbrook I drew near, the Maxwell School sought to celebrate the Minnowbrook legacy while also addressing the modern context of public administration. The Minnowbrook at 50 conference, held in August 2018, brought together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners to discuss current opportunities and challenges in public administration, with a specific focus on the administrative state during a time of great change.

This report presents key highlights and findings from the Minnowbrook at 50 conference. First, the report provides a brief history of past Minnowbrook conferences to give context about their importance to public administration. Next, the report examines Minnowbrook at 50, presenting an overview of the conference, the participants, and the process. It then summarizes key findings and primary recommendations across the seven issue groups formed during the conference. Finally, the report concludes with a short discussion about keeping Minnowbrook's spirit of advancing public administration alive until the next gathering.

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1.   Soonhee Kim, Rosemary O'Leary, David Van Slyke, H. George Frederickson, and W. Henry Lambright. 2011. Introduction: The Legacy of Minnowbrook. In R. O'Leary, D. M. Van Slyke, and S. Kim (eds.), *The Future of Public Administration around the World: The Minnowbrook Perspective,* 1-16. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

History of the Minnowbrook Conferences

Located on Blue Mountain Lake in the Adirondack Mountains of Upstate New York, the Syracuse University Minnowbrook Conference Center provides a setting ideal for critical reflection, deliberative discussion, and meaningful engagement. Named for this location, the Minnowbrook conferences have inspired thinking about the study and practice of public administration, and over time have acquired iconic status in the field. The following sections offer brief overviews of the three main Minnowbrook conferences.[2]

The Main Lodge at the Minnowbrook Conference Center

A View of Blue Mountain Lake

2.   For more details about the Minnowbrook conferences, see Kim *et al.* 2011.

Minnowbrook I (1968)

> 66 *Is public administration responding at a high level of consciousness and self-consciousness to the fact that we are in a time of revolutions?* 99
>
> – Dwight Waldo, 1968[3]

1968 was an eventful year. The United States faced domestic turmoil on multiple fronts. Public opinion was turning against the Vietnam War and the Johnson Administration. The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, along with urban riots and violent protests at the Democratic National convention, focused people's attention on civil rights and inequality.

That fall, Dwight Waldo joined Syracuse University's Maxwell School as the Albert Schweitzer Professor of Humanities, one of ten New York State-funded "super professorships." With help from three assistant professors—H. George Fredrickson, William (Harry) Lambright, and Frank Marini—Waldo organized what would become known as the Minnowbrook I conference.

Minnowbrook I gathered 34 leading young scholars—most from highly regarded political science departments and all white men—who set out to examine the relevance and role of public administration in a time of chaos. The participants (sometimes called "Minnows") wrote papers for the conference, but when debate and discord erupted during the first presentation, the group threw out their papers and formed groups around topics of interest. These topics included, among others, the relevance of public administration, the democratic grounding of the field, public administration as a moral enterprise, the role of institutions in governance, and the importance of social equity.

The conversations largely centered on issues implicit in a highly chronicled debate between Dwight Waldo and Herbert Simon. Following the tenets of Waldo, some Minnows called for political, historical, theoretical, and philosophical approaches to public administration that emphasized democratic over bureaucratic ethos.[4] Others affiliated with Simon's perspective, and called for empirical investigations that drew on organizational and behavioral approaches to decision making and incorporated tools of management and social psychology.[5] Regardless of which camp they supported, most Minnows found the field inadequate in its "set of concepts and ideas to explain the modern world of administration."[6] Through conversation that was sometimes heated, the participants formulated the beginnings of

3. Dwight Waldo. 1968. Public Administration in a Time of Revolutions. *Public Administration Review,* 28(4): 362-368.
4. Dwight Waldo. 1948. *The Administrative State: A Study of the Political Theory of American Public Administration.* New York, NY: Ronald Press Co. Dwight Waldo. 1952a. The Development of Theory of Democratic Administration. *American Political Science Review,* 46(1): 81-103. Dwight Waldo. 1952b. Reply to Simon and Drucker. *American Political Science Review* 46(2): 500-503.
5. Herbert Simon. 1947a. A Comment on "The Science of Public Administration." *Public Administration Review,* 7(3): 200-203. Herbert Simon.1947b. Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization. New York, NY: Macmillan Co. Herbert Simon. 1952. Reply to Dwight Waldo. American Political Science Review, 46(2): 494-496.
6. Richard S. Page. 1969. A New Public Administration? *Public Administration Review,* 29(3): 303-304.

"New Public Administration"—an action-oriented perspective that embraced normative inquiry and advocated for social equity and citizen participation among other issues and values.[7]

Minnowbrook I represented a watershed moment for public administration, and the field continues to celebrate its spirit and substance. The conference was followed by several symposia, workshops, and other gatherings of scholars. Conference papers were published in an edited volume, *Toward a New Public Administration: The Minnowbrook Perspective,*[8] and conference themes influenced articles in top journals like *Public Administration Review*. Though the conference is perhaps best remembered for launching the New Public Administration movement, its broader, subtler impact on the field took the form of a break from traditional scholarly conferences with presentations and critiques of research. Instead, Minnowbrook I provided a space for deliberative discussion around larger issues around the past, present, and future of public administration.

Minnowbrook II (1988)

> 66 *In public administration as governance, it is essential that we do not diminish our institutions to such an extent that we lose our capacity to support the development of sound public policy, as well as our ability to effectively implement that policy.* 99
>
> – H. George Frederickson, 1997[9]
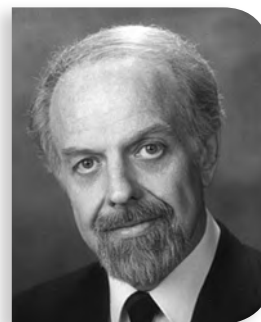
Twenty years later in 1988, the world was a different place. The era of big government was being called into question. Growing numbers of political and governmental leaders had begun to avow anti-governmental and anti-bureaucratic sentiments, giving rise to ideologies antithetical to a strong public sector. At the same time, others saw the world marching steadily toward "the end of history" with the ascension of liberal democracy over other political systems.[10] Amidst this context of government contraction, H. George Frederickson, the Edwin O. Steene Distinguished Professor of Public Administration at the University of Kansas, organized the Minnowbrook II conference "to compare and contrast the changing epochs of public administration."[11]

Minnowbrook II differed from its predecessor in many ways beyond context. First, the Minnowbrook II participants were more diverse. Beyond the fact that nearly half of the participants were women, the group included a mix of junior scholars and original "Minnows" who had, by that point, advanced significantly in their careers.

Second, Minnowbrook II was less "radical" both in its assessment of politics and in its process. A more pragmatic focus centered on the role and relevance public administration in an era of small(er) government. Moreover, the conference format did not generate as much

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7.   H. George Frederickson. 1989. Minnowbrook II: Changing Epochs of Public Administration. *Public Administration Review,* 49(2): 95-228. Marini, Frank (ed.). 1971. *Toward a New Public Administration: The Minnowbrook Perspective.* Scranton, PA: Chandler. Waldo, Dwight. 1980. *The Enterprise of Public Administration.* Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp.

8.   Marini 1971.

9.   H. George Frederickson. 1997. *The Spirit of Public Administration.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

10. Francis Fukuyama. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man.* New York, NY: Free Press.

11. Frederickson 1989: 95.

energy as its predecessor. All participants read the commissioned papers before the conference. At the conference, preassigned participants responded to an individual paper, then opened the floor for discussion among the entire group. The result was a more "placid mood, with the younger participants possibly being intimidated by the more senior participants."[12]

Minnowbrook II Participants

Finally, and perhaps because of its format, Minnowbrook II had fewer clearly identifiable themes.[13] There were echoes of the approach that Waldo had championed, but the papers—which had a more technocratic and individualist flavor, with foci such as productivity and performance measurement—tended to have greater connection to the positivist perspective associated with Simon. Social equity and diversity were largely accepted as basic values of public administration, though participants expanded these approaches to include gender and age. Overall, attention leaned more toward questions of policy implementation and away from big questions about bureaucracy and democracy.

Like its earlier counterpart, Minnowbrook II produced a significant volume of literature, including a special issue of *Public Administration Review*[14] and an edited volume, *Public Management in an Interconnected World: Essays in the Minnowbrook Tradition.*[15] Almost ten years later, a special issue of the *International Journal of Public Administration*[16] centered on Minnowbrook II. Overall, these materials arguably have had less impact on the field than the Minnowbrook I publications. Nevertheless, the conference continued the Minnowbrook legacy by providing a space for discussion about the state of public administration.

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12.   Kim et al. 2011: 6.
13.   Kim et al. 2011.
14.   Frederickson 1989.
15.   Mary Timney Bailey and Richard T. Mayer. 1992. *Public Management in an Interconnected World: Essays in the Minnowbrook Tradition.* Westport CT: Greenwood Press.
16.   George F. Frederickson and Ralph Clark Chandler. 1997. Democracy and Public Administration: The Minnowbrook Perspective. *International Journal of Public Administration,* 20(4-5): 817-1155.

Minnowbrook III (2008)

> ❝ *Minnowbrook is a challenge to every scholar studying public administration, public management, and public service to do better. We need to better link what we do to the compelling problems facing every level of governance, from municipal to state to federal to international organizations and nongovernment organizations. There are enormous new problems that need to be understood and confronted.* ❞
>
> – Rosemary O'Leary, 2011[17]

By 2008, the world had again experienced fundamental change. The United States was still struggling to understand the September 11, 2001 attacks and the resulting War on Terror, and still reeling from the problematic governmental response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Internationally, the Cold War had ended and the European Union had come into existence. China was rising as a superpower, and Iran and North Korea were new players in the nuclear age. Domestic and international matters had become inextricably linked through an increasingly global economy and growing cross-national interdependencies, and the nation (indeed the world) was on the brink of the Great Recession, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression in the 1930s.[18]

The field of public administration had also changed. On the academic side, there were more professional associations, journals, conferences, and programs in the United States and abroad. The standardization and credentialing of programs through accreditation had become routine, and greater competition, due to program rankings and the development of subfield specialties, the norm. On the practice side of the field, public administration had become "increasingly technocratic, performance oriented, and directed toward managing by results."[19] These trends represented a continued shift of public administration away from big questions of democracy and bureaucracy toward an applied field increasingly focused on positivist science and technocratic issues.

Against this backdrop, Rosemary O'Leary, distinguished scholar and the Howard G. and S. Louise Phanstiel Chair in Strategic Management and Leadership at the Maxwell School, organized Minnowbrook III in two phases. Phase one involved a preconference workshop for 56 junior scholars who had been nominated because of their intellectual promise. The phase one Minnows wrote and presented short thought pieces examining and critiquing the current state and future of public administration, public management, and public service. The group then engaged in a Future Search exercise, during which participants envisioned the field of public administration in 2018. As part of this exercise, the participants self-organized into small groups around topics of interest and reported back in whole-group sessions.

Phase two involved a larger, more traditional conference at Lake Placid, New York. In addition to at least thirty veterans of either Minnowbrook I or II and many from phase one of Minnowbrook III, participants included more than 200 scholars and practitioners of all ranks and levels of

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17. Rosemary O'Leary. 2011. Minnowbrook: Tradition, Idea, Spirit, Event, Challenge. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 21(suppl 1): i1-i6.

18. Tina Nabatchi, Holly T. Goerdel, and Shelly Peffer. 2011. Public Administration in Dark Times: Some Questions for the Future of the Field. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 21(suppl1): i29-i43.

19. Kim et al. 2011: 8.

Minnowbrook III Phase One Participants

experience and from thirteen different countries.[20] Phase two participants engaged in paper presentations on formal panels organized around a dozen focal areas.

Despite its size, diversity, and phases, Minnowbrook III was fairly traditional. Animated but largely civil debate focused on established issues and research agendas in the broader field, including performance measurement and management; globalization and comparative administration; information technology and management; law, politics, and public administration; public administration theory; social equity and justice; leadership; research methods and interdisciplinarity; financial management; networks; transparency and accountability; and public administration values and theory.[21]

Perhaps because of this more conventional focus, the Minnowbrook III conference generated many well-received products, including an edited volume, *The Future of Public Administration around the World: The Minnowbrook Perspective*[22] and a special issue of the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.[23] In addition, ten phase one scholars published a "Statement of Commitment for New Public Administration Scholars."[24] *Public Productivity & Management Review* published several phase one papers,[25] and *Administrative Theory & Praxis* published essays about the Minnowbrook III conference.[26] Once again, a Minnowbrook conference provided scholars—both new and established—the opportunity to reflect and deliberate on the issues of the day.

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20.   Kim et al. 2011.

21.   Kim et al. 2011. Nabatchi et al. 2011.

22.   Rosemary O'Leary, David M. Van Slyke, and Soonhee Kim (eds.) 2011. *The Future of Public Administration around the World: The Minnowbrook Perspective*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

23.   Beth Gazley and David M. Van Slyke. 2011. Minnowbrook III: A Special Issue. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 21(suppl1): i1-i198.

24.   See Kim et al. 2011: 10-11.

25.   Kaifeng Yang. 2009. Searching for New Directions of Public and Performance Management: Introduction. *Public Performance & Management Review,* 32(4): 562-564.

26.   Jennifer Eagan. 2009a. Minnowbrook III—Part 1. *Administrative Theory & Praxis,* 31(1): 96. Jennifer Eagan. 2009b. Minnowbrook III—Part 2. *Administrative Theory & Praxis,* 31(2): 242.

Minnowbrook at 50 Conference

> *At precisely the moment in which we confront serious political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental challenges on a truly grand scale, the field of public administration seems reluctant (and perhaps incapable) of responding in a meaningful way.*
>
> – Tina Nabatchi and Julia Carboni, 2018

Today, 50 years after the original Minnowbrook conference, the field of public administration is once again at a crossroads.[27] Leaders in governments around the world are challenging traditional norms, and promoting new norms associated with calls for the "dismantling of the administrative state." Heads of agencies advocate major changes to the missions of the organizations they lead. Public coffers are strained, and in some cases, drained. Public trust in governmental, administrative, and democratic institutions is at an all-time low. At the same time, academic experts in public administration have given little attention to these sweeping changes—instead operating within the bounds of current academic structures and processes and producing research that too rarely influences practice. Despite daily news coverage of significant, arguably groundbreaking, governance issues and administrative events, the field largely has remained silent on salient issues for public administration.

Against this backdrop, the Maxwell School hosted the Minnowbrook at 50 conference. More than just a celebration, Minnowbrook at 50 continued the tradition of advancing public administration scholarship through critical reflection, substantive analysis, and deliberative dialogue.[28] The following sections provide an overview of the conference, describing both the participants and the process, and summarize the key findings and primary recommendations that resulted.

Conference Overview

Minnowbrook at 50 was organized by faculty from the Maxwell School (see Appendix A) and an advisory board consisting of thought leaders in the field of public administration (see Appendix B). Together, the team decided the Minnowbrook at 50 conference should not only connect to Minnowbrook I, but also to Waldo's broader concerns about public administration in democracy, and settled on the theme of "Revisiting the Administrative State."

As articulated in the invitation to participants, renewed reflection on and analysis of the administrative state could not be more timely. Despite important differences in the contexts of previous Minnowbrook conferences and today, public administration is once again in a time of revolutionary change. Citizen estrangement from government is at historic highs and political trust at historic lows. An inability to converse across sociopolitical lines constitutes the new norm. Anti-government sentiments and active attempts to delegitimize bureaucracy are increasingly common. Moreover, the world is witnessing growing threats to democratic norms, evident in the undermining of democratic ethos and public values in administration as well as the rise of new authoritarian strains in modern governance. Yet in many ways, public administration research has not kept pace to address these and similar challenges facing the public sector.

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27.   Portions of this section draw on Tina Nabatchi and Julia L. Carboni (2018, August 13). Minnowbrook at 50: Revisiting the Administrative State. *PA Times Online.* Available at: https://patimes.org/minnowbrook-at-50-revisiting-the-administrative-state/
28.   For more discussion, see Dana Cooke. 2019. The Big Questions in Public Administration. *Maxwell Perspectives,* Winter: 10-15.

These growing challenges to governance are matched by increasingly critical public problems. Climate change, migration and immigration, new technologies, pandemics, and similar issues impact daily realities. Mounting complexity and uncertainty, alongside increasing interconnectedness and the escalating pace of globalization, demand collaborative efforts across organizational, sectoral, jurisdictional, and sovereign boundaries, and call for new thinking about the role of public administration. However, at precisely the moment in which we confront serious political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental challenges on a grand scale, the field of public administration has seemed reluctant (and in some ways incapable) of effectively addressing these challenges.

Minnowbrook at 50 provided an opportunity to reflect on these issues, reinvigorate the study and practice of public administration, and regain the field's voice on pressing issues. With the spirit of Minnowbrook I in mind, the conference also provided an opportunity to be "disruptive" in the most positive sense of the word.

As with previous Minnowbrook conferences, participants came together to step out of their comfort zones, challenge the status quo, push the field in new and interesting ways, and drive greater value from scholarship for practitioners. Minnowbrook at 50 is the most diverse Minnowbrook convening to date.[29] The conference had 44 participants (see Appendix C), including an almost equal number of women and men, significant representation from people of color, and scholars at all ranks and from schools beyond the traditional "top" programs.[30] For the first time, it also included practitioners in an effort to reestablish the relevance of public administration scholarship. In addition, to expand the dialogue across the public administration community, Minnowbrook at 50 was followed by roundtable sessions at several conferences and many online discussions.

Minnowbrook at 50 Participants

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29.   Phase two of Minnowbrook III may have been more diverse, but with over 200 participants, it was also much larger and held off-site.
30.   Minnowbrook conferences always trigger questions about who gets to participate. There are not enough opportunities for people in public administration to come together and have extended, meaningful conversations about our field. Minnowbrook at 50 strived to be as inclusive and diverse as possible given the limited space at the conference center. Members of the faculty committee and advisory board nominated people who could engage big questions and stimulate new ways of looking at challenging issues. Through voting, numerous discussions, and countless emails, a list of participants was constructed.

Prior to the conference, participants wrote short, two to three page "concept papers" based on an advance invitation that provided questions intended to inspire (but not constrain) their thinking (see the box below). The majority of the concept papers are available on the Minnowbrook at 50 website (see https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/minnowbrook/readings/).

QUESTIONS FOR THE CONCEPT PAPERS

Several questions were listed in the invitation to stimulate thinking for the concept papers:

- Is public administration in a time of revolutions, and do we need to rethink the administrative state? What are the implications of recent political developments for traditional notions and themes in public administration, such as bureaucratic and democratic ethos, the politics-administration dichotomy, citizens and citizenship, and social equity and inclusion? What are the implications for education in public administration?

- What is public administration and what can it be as a field of study? How do (can) we balance Simonian visions that seek a "science of administration" (e.g., behavioral public administration and the use of experimental research) with Waldonian visions that seek to understand administration through big questions addressing normative values, cultural settings, and larger societal shifts?

- How do we make public administration research more inclusive, more international, and more responsive to the forces of globalization? How do we address the persistent problem of ethnocentrism in public administration research? How do we explore and integrate the impact of "large forces" on the development of administrative systems, with micro-level insights about administrative behavior, and can these be generalized across contexts?

- Is public administration relevant, and if so, why it is so difficult for scholarship to have an impact on the world of practice? How do we catalyze research in public administration that is analytically rigorous and informs the public—government leaders, policymakers, NGOs, interest groups, and citizens—and shapes their engagement in governance processes and activities?

Through an affinity diagramming process, themes from the concept papers were consolidated into seven issue areas, which became the foci of small group work that took place over the duration of the conference. In addition to small and large group discussions, some participants engaged in what became called the "boathouse conversation," an unplanned, late-night session in which people expressed concern about issues that were not being addressed in the main conference venues. In the following section, we report on the key findings and primary recommendations from each self-organized issue group. (For more about the conference process and the boathouse conversation, see the box on the next page).

THE CONFERENCE PROCESS AND THE BOATHOUSE CONVERSATION

The Minnowbrook at 50 conference began on Friday evening with an opening reception and dinner, during which an affinity diagramming process was used. Specifically, themes and issues in the concept papers—as well as new ideas from participants—were consolidated and clustered according to the affinity, or similarity, of the ideas.

On Saturday morning, a professional facilitator guided the entire group through the affinity clusters. Some ideas were added, and others were clarified. Some clusters were dismantled, and others were created. By early afternoon, seven groups had formed, each focusing on an issue area that had emerged from the affinity diagramming process. Over the rest of Saturday and through Sunday, participants engaged in small group discussions and facilitated large group plenaries. Participants were told to "vote with their feet," meaning that they could move freely among any of the small groups, or stay with one group. Each small group was asked to address five questions: (1) What is the problem, issue, or topic? (2) Why is the problem, issue, or topic critical to address? (3) What does the research say? What do we already know? (4) Where are the gaps? What is missing? (5) What is an agenda for the future? What might we do to address to the problem, issue, or topic, take advantage of opportunities, and move ahead as a field?

By Sunday afternoon, the small groups were having meaningful discussion and making progress on these questions. It was clear, however, that for some participants, the conference was not living up to its "disruptive" goal and not channeling the "radical spirit" of previous conferences (or at least of Minnowbrook I). This prompted the "boathouse conversation," an impromptu late-night gathering that generated some of the most passionate debate of the weekend.

During the boathouse conversation, many participants expressed alarm and anxiety about issues that were not being addressed in the plenaries and small groups: climate change, wealth and income inequality, social justice and human rights, and democratic roll backs, among many others. Some went a step further, decrying the silence of the field's intellectual leaders and professional associations on these and other important issues, and advocating for the assertion of our role as stewards of democracy and justice.

Following these debates, discussion emerged around academic customs and traditions. Some participants felt constrained by publishing conventions, conference formats, promotion and tenure standards, and other academic mechanisms. Others, particularly junior schools, raised important but seldom discussed issues about the impacts of academic pressures on mental and physical health.

The participants in this session concluded by drafting and agreeing to a Minnowbrook at 50 declaration meant to capture the spirit of the Boathouse Conversation. The declaration was presented to the whole group on Monday morning, along with final reports from the small groups. After much debate and discussion, but no consensus, the declaration was put aside. Instead, a brief statement describing the activities and conversations of Minnowbrook was issued by the conference organizers (see https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/minnowbrook/about/).

Minnowbrook Conversations and Activities
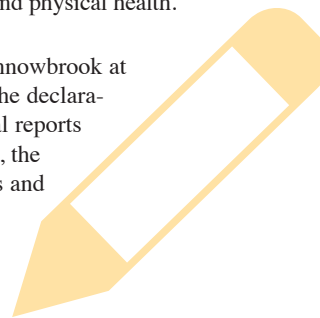
Issue Groups—Findings and Recommendations

As noted above, small groups self-organized around seven key topics in public administration:

1. Improving the *Relevance of Public Administration Scholarship*

2. Using *Analytical Frameworks* that operate at and link micro-, meso-, and macro- level research

3. *Overcoming American Centricity* in the field

4. Developing *Integrative Public Administration*

5. Expanding research to include *Automation and Artificial Intelligence*

6. Addressing questions of *Democracy, Public Administration, and Public Values*

7. Attending to *Social Equity in Public Administration*

Key findings and primary recommendations from each group appear below, drawing from short reports authored by members of each group, which are available on the Minnowbrook at 50 website (see https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/minnowbrook/about/), as well as from longer articles published by each group in volume 2, issue 4 of *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* (2019).

Relevance of Public Administration Scholarship

Key Findings

The issue of relevance is a long-standing concern in the field of public administration—one raised, debated, and investigated at all the Minnowbrook conferences. The repeated calls for scholarly relevance stem not only from the need to increase scholarly and practical knowledge, but also from a desire to create more public value and improve the world around us.

Unfortunately, the challenges to achieving widespread scholarly relevance are numerous. The study of public administration is increasingly characterized by compartmentalization, institutional incentives that do not reward practitioner relevance, rigid and narrow definitions of productivity, and methodological sophistication—all of which discourage scholarly risk taking, creativity, and innovation, and make research less interesting and informative to practitioners.

Practitioners lack the resources, time, and motivation to access research trapped behind paywalls, and scholars who want to communicate their research more broadly are limited in their options. Finally, perhaps because of a desire to remain politically neutral, public administration professional associations are largely invisible in political debates, creating another barrier to reaching important audiences.

Primary Recommendations

For the academic field of public administration, being relevant means being connected to and having an impact on practical realities:

- Through socially relevant research questions that respond to social problems, rather than to gaps in the literature

- Through research and teaching that reflect and address the perspectives and needs of diverse groups

- Through research and teaching that acknowledge and explore the issues of an increasingly global world, and are not unique to the context of developed, Western nations

- By translating and actively communicating the findings of scientific research to the general public, policy-makers, public managers, the media, and other groups

- By effectively using professional forums and organizations, such as national associations, to inform public discourse on important social topics

To achieve this ideal, academic institutions need to build and support new faculty incentives to encourage and promote experiences that enrich scholarship. In addition, attention should be given to the nature of the publication format and cycles, alternative vehicles for translating and communicating research to practitioners, and the role and purpose of professional associations.

Analytical Frameworks: Micro, Meso, and Macro Level Research

Key Findings

The field of public administration can improve scholarship by giving more conceptual and methodological attention to analytical frameworks and how they operate at and connect the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis used in research. Micro-level research examines individuals and individual-level interactions of various kinds, including people's intentions, feelings, and beliefs. Meso-level research examines the study of groups, including teams, units, and organizations. Macro-level research examines the political-administrative environment, including national systems, regulation, and cultures.

Each level of analysis has value. Micro, meso, and macro level research can generate knowledge and insights that improve both the practice and study of public administration. However, scholars are seldom explicit about the level of analysis; they often do not specify whether their research centers on micro, meso, or macro level phenomena of public governance.

The lack of specification poses problems for public administration research. The current opaque treatment of levels of analysis creates a lack of accountability and an inability to draw valid conclusions about how to scale insights. Without the ability to scale insights, public administration scholars are less effective problem solvers, less prepared to advance theory and inform practice, and less able to create scholarly coherence for the field.

Primary Recommendations

To improve analytic frameworks, public administration scholars must make explicit reference to and consciously define the level of analysis in research, whether that research is conceptual, theoretical, or empirical. Doing so will improve scholarly accountability, and help build a more coherent body of knowledge across levels of analysis.

Moreover, scholars need to think about integration across levels of analysis. For example, a micro-level study brings more value if it explains implications for expected results at the meso- or macro-level. Similarly, meso- and macro-level studies have more impact if they explain the potential implications for individual behavior at the micro-level. Such integration can be improved not only by scaling insights, but also by jointly pursuing research questions associated with different levels of analysis or engaging in multi-level analyses.

Specifying the level of analysis used in research and establishing conceptual accountability across those levels will improve the credibility of public administration scholarship. Such actions will help public administration scholars clarify and refine basic assumptions that inform theory, improving the scientific validity of scholarship. In turn, scholars will become more effective problem solvers, and better able to advise practitioners on complex and uncertain societal dilemmas.

Overcoming American Centricity

Key Findings

Public administration is, and should be, a global endeavor, but the overwhelming majority of research focuses on the United States, and to a lesser extent other Western nations. This raises concerns about the generalizability of findings and the appropriateness of transferring theories and practices from one context to another. Moreover, the typical focus on a single issue within an agency or ministry in a single nation neither responds adequately to fundamental changes in governance, nor helps the field analyze and respond to global trends and pressures.

American academic institutions historically have served as important training grounds for public administration practitioners and scholars from around the world; however, the relevance of these schools and applicability of their curriculum in addressing global issues is being challenged. This may become an issue for university enrollments in the United States as the number of high-quality universities abroad, many of which are accredited, increasingly present attractive options for study.

Many associations and journals are working toward the goal of making public administration a global endeavor by sponsoring conferences outside the United States, creating sections dedicated to specific world regions, and including international scholars on editorial and governance boards. Yet progress is slow and uneven.

Transforming the study of public administration into a truly global endeavor, one that embraces contexts outside of the United States and other developed nations, presents challenges such as language and resource barriers and lack of common frameworks and tools for cross-case comparison and generalization. In addition, the push toward big data and sophisticated statistical analyses raises challenges regarding data access and different understandings of how to define "knowledge."

Primary Recommendations

To overcome these issues, scholars should integrate international concepts and standards, such as the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, into their research. This would help improve comparison across national contexts and cases.

Scholars should engage in more macro-level research across states and administrative contexts, asking questions about major issues and giving attention to the larger forces shaping the national and international environments in which public administration occurs. Researchers can engage with normative and globally relevant questions such as: What does it mean to have 'good' governance? What are appropriate criteria for good governance beyond efficiency and effectiveness? How does good governance vary across political structures (e.g., democracies vs. authoritarian regimes)? Must a bureaucracy be democratically responsive to be good? Is there an obligation for public administrators to promote and protect the interests of underrepresented populations? In answering these and similar questions, scholars can link macro-level analyses back to the meso- and micro-levels.

More attention should be given to developing curriculum relevant for public administrators around the world, including the growing ranks of the international civil service and civil society organizations. Resources should be allocated to help develop the capacity of less integrated regions and to build and strengthen forums for discussion.

Integrative Public Administration

Key Findings

Making public administration scholarship relevant to practice remains a salient issue, as academic research agendas are often disconnected from the challenges faced by public administrators. As a result, calls for more practice-oriented scholarship often lack widespread implementation.

Modest shifts in how research is conducted would greatly reduce the distance between academic scholarship and practice, bringing academics in public administration into better alignment with the problems, issues, and opportunities faced by public service practitioners and professional communities. This shift is referred to as "integrative public administration." When faculty engage with practitioners, research and teaching become better connected to practical and current issues.

Primary Recommendations

Academic communities should frame research agendas in ways that (a) more closely align with the problems, issues, and opportunities identified by public service practitioners, professional communities, and the public, and (b) better reflect the delivery of public services and public policy formation, implementation, and evaluation.

Academic organizations should view practitioner communities as partners in research. Such partnerships will result in richer, more relevant research and reduce the distance between scholarship and practitioner realities. Partnerships may also lead to better education of public administration students through greater access to real world knowledge, cases, and simulations.

The field should reform four institutional mechanisms that run counter to integrative public administration to better ensure relevance for practice: doctoral admissions, doctoral student training, academic publishing and conference formats, and standards for promotion and tenure.

Automation and Artificial Intelligence

Key Findings

Advanced automation, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other forms of algorithmic automation, as well as and these systems' use of big data, creates immense and unforeseen possibilities for both social benefit and harm. Automated systems should augment (rather than replace) human decision making.

The dynamic development of these technologies coupled with the nascent state of social science research has led to disagreement in public administration about the appropriate role of emerging technologies in governance. Levels of optimism about the true capacity of these systems, the likelihood of effective implementation, and genuine benefits and costs in both fiscal and social program contexts vary considerably.

Current uses of these technologies have generated observable benefits, including efficiency and effectiveness gains in "smart cities" applications, fraud detection, and national security. At the same time, such technologies can amplify structural biases and inequalities, the inability to audit decisions, and the dangers associated with over-reliance on quantitative reductions of complex social phenomena. Public administration can contribute to critical thinking about the contexts and situations in which the benefits of using these technologies are likely to outweigh the risks, as well as how to evaluate their potential use ex ante and observed use ex post.

Primary Recommendations

Public administration scholarship and practice must grapple with and address the governance impacts of emerging technologies. Unfortunately, this issue largely has been ignored outside of a select group of specialty journals. Artificial intelligence, automation, and the ever-increasing measurement and analysis of how public policies and actions are affected by these trends should be a central discussion within the field. Scholars of public administration must address such issues to expand relevance for and understanding of 21st century governance.

An integrating framework that focuses on two major lenses for assessing the usefulness of artificial intelligence and its impact on human discretion—levels of governance and consequences for government action—could help prompt and improve research relating to emerging technologies and governance. Evaluative criteria to assess the risk and benefits of emerging technologies could focus on effectiveness, efficiency, equity, managerial capacity, and political legitimacy.

Democracy, Public Administration, and Public Values

Key Findings

Public administration is operating in a new era of estrangement with government, characterized by a rising tide of public distrust and political polarization that threatens to erode democratic foundations.

This era of estrangement is exacerbated by issues that include "hollowing" of government capacity and expertise, which undermines public values and political legitimacy, and fortifies a professional ethos that reduces social issues to technical problems. In turn, this has narrowed the intellectual agenda around social programs, diverting scholarly attention from many of the most critical issues of the day.

Primary Recommendations

Public administration must actively respond to this estrangement and seek to repair and strengthen the links between democratic institutions, public administration, and public values through scholarship, connections to practice and the public, and education.

Schools of public administration should cultivate scholarly inquiry that highlights public values, their trade-offs, and their bearing on public actions, examines the role of public participation in identifying public values and generating better policy and outcomes, and uses multi-level analyses and methodological diversity.

Public administration scholars and practitioners must tie the field to public values by articulating them clearly and integrating them into practice. This can be done through a focus on professionalism and participatory processes.

Public administration programs must educate students to understand, uphold, and advance broad sets of public values, including democratic, constitutional, and legal values, especially in situations when those values are hardest to realize.

Social Equity in Public Administration

Key findings

Despite the decades-long efforts of policies, practices, and programs designed to promote equity in public administration, both the scholarly and professional sides of the field still face many challenges.

On the scholarly side, social equity is often called the third pillar of public administration. However, unlike the other two pillars (efficiency and economy), it has not been well integrated into research or teaching at the course, let alone curricular, levels.

On the professional side, public sector inequities and disparities based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and gender identity abound in education, health, housing, criminal justice, and other policy areas. These inequities and disparities result in detrimental harms for marginalized communities.

Moreover, the practice of creating diverse and inclusive workforces in government and academia has been a challenge. Women and people of color are underrepresented in certain sections of the public sector and academia, and concentrated in others. There also are discrepancies within and across geographic areas, as well as in inclusion, compensation, retention, and promotion to senior positions and levels.

Primary Recommendations

To better anchor social equity to the foundation of public administration, the field of public administration must recognize that research and teaching can have substantial impacts on the public sector workforce and its outcomes. Scholars broadly examine, question, theorize, and ultimately, seek to understand the public sector. Educators seek to prepare future public servants by equipping them with the educational knowledge and tools needed for the workplace.

The field needs more research on understudied topics such as inequities, disability, age, and gender, among others, as well as on the intersections of these and other categories. Academic programs should include more equity courses, and federal, state, and local governments should expand equity initiatives.

Scholars and practitioners must commit to a set of principles that focus on ways to incorporate social equity in research, teaching, and practice in public administration.[31] These principles seek to foster intentional and sustained action aimed at embedding social equity as a value and practice in the field.

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31. As part of their work, this group developed a "Social Equity Manifesto" that presents a call to action and seven principles intended to anchor social equity to the foundation of public administration research, teaching, and practice of public administration. The Manifesto can be reviewed and signed at: https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/minnowbrook/social-equity-manifesto/.

CONCLUSION

Minnowbrook at 50 covered a lot of ground. The conference convened a diverse group of scholars and practitioners to consider the state of public administration 50 years after Minnowbrook I. New and old themes emerged in both the small group sessions and large group plenaries. The seven small groups tacked a variety of topics. In each of the groups, participants discussed the problem, its importance, and how to address it.

Large group plenary discussions also surfaced numerous tensions in the field. Some wanted the academic field to encourage normative scholarship in the tradition of Dwight Waldo, while others wanted it to focus on positive research in the tradition of Herbert Simon. Some asserted the field should advocate or take a stand on current issues, while others advocated for remaining neutral and impartial. Some believed in asserting the centrality of democracy to the field's professional identity, and others believed professional associations should expand to include schools and activities in non-democratic settings. Some argued scholars should actively acknowledge the role of public administration in influencing social and economic challenges, while others argued that scholars should focus on generating objective knowledge.

Many also expressed concerns about the norms and promotion and tenure standards for junior faculty, wondering whether those standards are a disincentive for asking big questions and doing engaged scholarship and whether they harm the health and well-being of young scholars.

Many other important issues remain. Moreover, while the Minnowbrook at 50 gathering was diverse, more voices need to be heard. To this end, organizers and participants hosted Minnowbrook at 50 panels and sessions ("Mini-brooks") at a variety of conferences, including the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (October 2018), the National Academy of Public Administration (November 2018), the American Society for Public Administration (March 2019), and the Public Management Research Conference (June 2019).[32] The Maxwell School also created a website to share resources and information about Minnowbrook at 50 (https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/minnowbrook/). Geert Bouckaert and Werner Jann launched European Perspectives on Public Administration in 2018 (EPPA, also fondly called "Eurobrook" by some) to provide a continental counterpart to the Minnowbrook conferences (see Appendix D for more information), and some have called for similar efforts in other regions of the world.

Clearly, Minnowbrook holds a special place in public administration. This legacy continues through conversations on Facebook (Minnowbrook at 50 Discussion Forum) and Twitter (#Minnowbrook50), and the discussions and findings from Minnowbrooks past, present, and future will continue to involve and shape public administration.

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32. For summaries of these events, see Julia L. Carboni and Tina Nabatchi. 2019. Minnowbrook at 50: A Postscript. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance,* 2(4).

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Faculty Committee

All faculty committee members are from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Department of Public Administration and International Affairs

Tina Nabatchi (Chair)	Joseph A. Strasser Endowed Professor in Public Administration
Julia Carboni (Co-Chair)	Associate Professor
Robert Bifulco	Professor and Department Chair
Catherine Gerard	Director, Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration
H. William Lambright	Professor
Sean O'Keefe	Howard G. and S. Louise Phanstiel Chair in Strategic Management and Leadership
Sabina Schnell	Assistant Professor
Saba Sidikki	Associate Professor
Matthew Young	Assistant Professor

Appendix B: Advisory Board Members

Anna Amirkhanyan	Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration and Policy, American University
Naomi Barry-Perez	Director of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Labor
Walter Broadnax	Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Public Administration and International Affairs, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University
Dustin Brown	Deputy Associate Director for Performance and Personnel Management, U.S. Office of Management and Budget
Susan Gooden	Professor of Public Administration and Policy, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University
Jocelyn Johnston	Professor, Department of Public Administration and Policy, American University
Kenneth Meier	Distinguished Scholar in Residence, Department of Public Administration and Policy, American University
Don Moynihan	McCourt Chair and Professor, McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University
Rosemary O'Leary	Edwin O. Stene Distinguished Professor of Public Administration, University of Kansas

Appendix C: Minnowbrook at 50 Participants

This list only includes attendees. It does not include individuals who were invited, but did not attend the conference.

Khaldoun AbouAssi	American University	H. Brinton Milward	University of Arizona
Anna Amirkhanyan	American University	Stephanie Moulton	The Ohio State University
Jonathan Beagles	Syracuse University	Tina Nabatchi	Syracuse University
Robert Bifulco	Syracuse University	Sean O'Keefe	Syracuse University
Gloria Billingsley	Jackson State University	Rosemary O'Leary	University of Kansas
Brandi Blessett	University of Cincinnati	Asmus Olsen	University of Copenhagen
Dustin Brown	US Office of Management and Budget	James L. Perry	Indiana University
Justin Bullock	Texas A&M University	Suzanne Piotrowski	Rutgers University
Julia Carboni	Syracuse University	Beryl Radin	Georgetown University
Todd Dickey	Syracuse University	William Resh	University of Southern California
Jennifer Dodge	University at Albany - SUNY	Norma Riccucci	Rutgers University
Beverly Edmond	University of Montana	Alasdair Roberts	University of Massachusetts Amherst
Kirk Emerson	University of Arizona	Tom Ross	Volcker Alliance
Catherine Gerard	Syracuse University	Jodi Sandfort	University of Minnesota
Holly Goerdel	University of Kansas	Sabina Schnell	Syracuse University
Susan Gooden	Virginia Commonwealth University	Saba Siddiki	Syracuse University
Andrea Headley	University of California Berkeley/The Ohio State University	Jeffrey Talley	IBM Center for the Business of Government
Sebastian Jilke	Rutgers University	David Van Slyke	Syracuse University
Jocelyn Johnston	American University	Curtis Ventriss	University of Vermont / Johns Hopkins University
Jesse Lecy	Arizona State University	Brian Williams	University of Virginia
Randolph Lyon	National Academy of Public Administration	Matthew Young	Syracuse University
Laurel McFarland	Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration		

Appendix D: Overview of European Perspectives for Public Administration (EPPA)

Written by: Geert Bouckaert and Werner Jann (Past Presidents of EGPA)

The Public Administration (PA) research community in Europe has changed significantly in the last decades. PA teaching and research has become more European, more theory based, and more comparative. The stable and sustainable growth of EGPA, the European Group for Public Administration, clearly indicates this. The size of its conferences and the stability of its thematic study groups demonstrate that PA networks are productive and functioning. The volume of research money at the national and European level also has expanded and financed substantial research programs and networks. It has pushed the quantity and quality of research in the field of PA. Researchers and PhDs have circulated within Europe and between research teams. Doctoral programs have professionalized. PA-teaching networks have become more European with an effort to guarantee exchange, learning, and quality control and to promote knowledge transfer across Europe.

But PA needs to stay relevant for practice. Contemporary PA must focus on both current developments in the field and knowledge relevant for the future. To guarantee PA's relevance for the future, there is a need for greater organization across the academic community.

Several such efforts have been organized in the past, mostly in the U.S. The Minnowbrook tradition, including its three major conferences, Minnowbrook I (1968), Minnowbrook II (1988), Minnowbrook III (2008), are fine examples of how to reflect upon remaining relevant and anticipating the future. On the European side, the Bielefeld project at the beginning of the 1980s was a landmark initiative. EGPA, on the occasion of its 35th anniversary in 2010 (as a regional group within IIAS which celebrated its 80th anniversary), reflected on the identity of its European PA community (Bouckaert and van de Donk 2010). Some prominent scholars have also made their own analysis and assessment of the field (e.g., Pollitt 2016).

When these past efforts of 'taking stock' or 'substantial reflections' are analyzed, there seems to be a set of common denominators, assumptions, and expectations from a European context (Bertels, Bouckaert, and Jann 2016):

1. Public Administration research and teaching runs behind practice and actualities. It also should be in front of the facts, both pushing and pulling government and scholarly activity and realities.

2. Public Administration is too strongly dominated by specialized disciplines. It should work to take several disciplines into account, resulting in a more balanced approach.

3. Public Administration thinks too much in causal terms. As a social science, it also should think in terms of purposes served.

4. Public Administration often pretends to be disconnected from time and space. It should actively take context and culture into account.

5. Public Administration research remains relevant for practice. It should work harder to anticipate future relevance.

Even though these undertakings offer many inspirations, we were convinced that this discussion needed new inputs, and that we needed a distinctively European view on the future of PA. Thus, we launched European Perspectives on Public Administration (EPPA), which as part of EGPA will hold Minnowbrook-style conferences every other decade. The basic question for EPPA is how will and should researchers and teachers deal with the changing role of public administration and the public sector in Europe? Our aims are to define the role of public administration as an academic undertaking in the future academic world, to become more practically relevant, to take alternative cultures and futures into account, to take inter- and multidisciplinarity seriously, and to strengthen the European voice.

The inaugural EPPA conference therefore pursued four interrelated questions:

1. Keeping an eye on disciplines: How can we cooperate and learn across the established disciplinary boundaries, which seem to become ever more siloed and impregnable?

2. Keeping an eye on the future: How can we learn to think beyond short-term problems and solutions, while trying to be as realistic as possible?

3. Keeping an eye around cultures: How can we take different cultures seriously, to promote learning from each other and to avoid a 'one solution fits all' approach?

4. Keeping an eye on practice: How can we teach and help students learn practical lessons that will benefit their research and professional careers?

The EPPA initiative is a research program financed by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Its purpose is to build academic capacity and sustainable results for the academic community. A website allows following the progress and discussions (www.europeanperspectivespa.eu), and results will be published in 2019.

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