

Grant Professionals as Stewards of Public Resources: A Mixed-Methods Content Analysis of Grants Management Curricula in Master of Public Administration Programs

William Luke Parker | Arkansas State University | Jonesboro, AR

INTRODUCTION

Grants are a major driver of public policy. State and local governments received over one trillion dollars in federal grants in fiscal year 2021 (FY21) (OMB Historical Table 12.1). Yet, public administration scholarship gives little attention to grants management as a curriculum component. A review of the literature posits the professionalization of the vocation to the development of a theory-grounded curriculum (Atkinson et al., 2007; Renninger & Stinson, 2016). This research aims to examine the extent to which Masters of Public Administration (MPA) programs adequately prepare grant professionals through mixed-methods content analysis of online curricula.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How well do Master of Public Administration programs prepare public administrators to steward grant programs?
2. How do grants management competencies align with the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) competencies?
3. What does grants management scholarship add to the public administration research agenda?

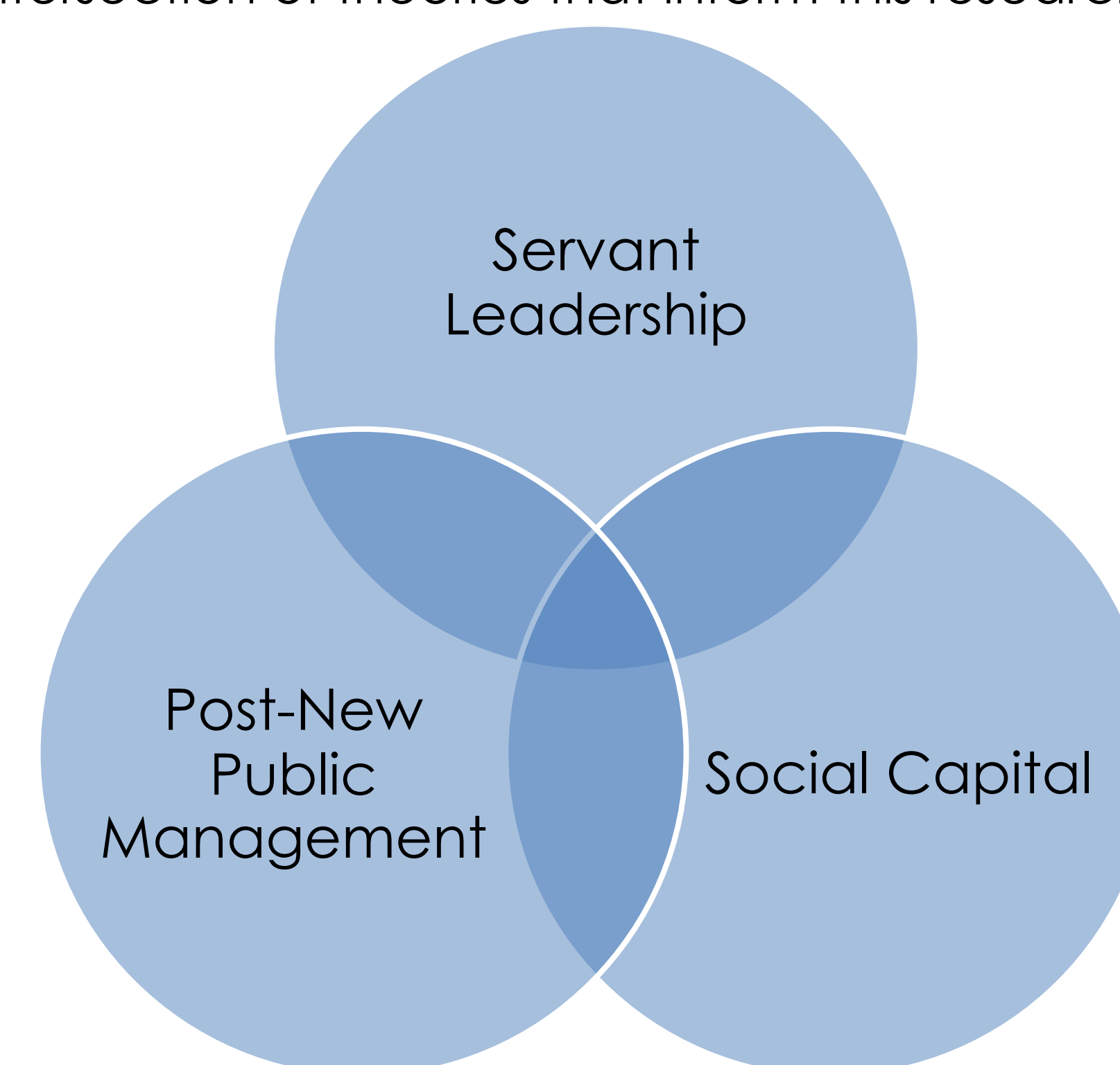
METHODS

- Systematic Literature Review
- Identification of Typologies
- Analysis of Curricula
- Statistical Comparison



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1. *Theoretical Framework*. This figure demonstrates the intersection of theories that inform this research.



APPLICATION

It is the author's stance that grant professionals are public administrators, thus research to inform curriculum for one furthers both. Themes uncovered from the literature review for this research show that grant professionals comprise the following domains:

1. research administration,
2. intergovernmental relations,
3. nonprofit management.

This research will help articulate the epistemology of the grants profession so that curricula may be analyzed, critiqued, and enhanced to meet the needs of the public sector. Further, it will facilitate the development of a research agenda that brings together the above domains under public administration as a topical focus.

The outcome of this research thus furthers the grants profession by advancing scholarship and curriculum that is comprehensive of the competencies required of the field.

DISCUSSION

Grant professionals are commonly understood to comprise a myriad of backgrounds to such an extent that the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) uses fundraising and public relations employment categories to draw anecdotal information about the profession (Torpey, 2014). Perhaps what makes the grant profession appear so ambiguous is that it is named after a form of financial assistance. Other types of federal financial assistance include cooperative agreements, non-cash contributions or donations of property, direct appropriations, food commodities, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, and other types of funding mechanisms (grants.gov, n.d.). A 2018 hearing before the United States House of Representatives related grants workforce issues to the silos of grant management functions (Keegan, p. 46). This research examines whether there is an underlying theme or function that more accurately describes the work of these individuals than "grants profession."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Emily Devereaux – Thesis Chair

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University – Travel Funds

All photos used in this presentation are stock images from Microsoft PowerPoint.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, T. N., Gilleland, D. S., & Barrett, T. G. (2007). The dimensions of influence on research administrator behavior: Toward a theoretical model of research administration as a public service profession. *The Journal of Research Administration*, 38(1), 55.
- Grants.gov. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.grants.gov/>
- Keegan, N. (2018). "Statement of Natalie Keegan." Federal Grant Management Hearing (United States, House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations). Washington D.C.: House of Representatives. Retrieved from <https://docs.house.gov/Committee/Calendar/ByEvent.aspx?EventID=108606>
- OMB Historical Tables. (n.d.). Table 12.3—Summary Comparison of Total Outlays for Grants to State and Local Governments: 1940–2027 (in Current Dollars, as Percentages of Total Outlays, as Percentages of GDP, and in Constant (FY2012) Dollars). [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/hist12-1-fy2023.xlsx>
- Renninger, P., & Stinson, K. (2016). Steps to develop a grantsmanship degree program. *GPA Strategy Papers*, 3 (2), 82-88. <https://doi.org/https://grantprofessionals.org/page/archivedjournals>
- Torpey, E. (2014, September). Grant writer: Career outlook. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2014/youre-a-what/grant-writer.htm>