

Wicked Governance Research

Wicked Governance Research: Implications of Avoiding Homelessness and Gang Violence

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Introduction

A well-developed research literature has emerged for the study of wicked problems (Head and Alford, 2015). The research literature on wicked problems focuses on the social and political complexity of wicked problems starting with Rittel and Webber (1973) in planning practices, now extending through a wide range of issues, for example forced migration (Geuijen, *et al.*, 2017) or emergency response (Kettl, 2006). The argument in this paper is there is an absence of wicked problem research in governance. The paper explores explanations and implications of researchers in public management and public policy not addressing the full range of wicked problems. This paper will explore two significant problems that are under-researched but which have high human consequence: homelessness and gang violence. The research question in this paper asks why these problems are not studied more thoroughly. The lack of research leads to misunderstandings of the causes of ineffectual policy action, separates problem solving into different policy elements, compartmentalizes public organizations into silos that communicate poorly, and segregates elected officials into partisan or ideological camps. The missing nexus diminishes the capacity of each researcher and democratic governance.

A review of published articles in leading journals suggests that the fields of public administration, public management, and public policy have been primarily concerned with networks of service delivery, surveys of the performance of local and federal executives, and of education administrators in primary schools in Texas and Denmark (where there are large data bases). An examination of the research published in five leading journals since 2013, reveals public sector researchers were chasing the available data, analyzing narrow issues, avoiding wicked problems, and failing to address major societal issues. In this paper, the problems of homelessness and gang violence are considered as wicked problems. Though both are long-standing problems and both are highly consequential, yet only two articles were published on homelessness in leading public administration, public management, and public policy journals since 2013 and none were published on gang violence.

The absence of research activities on gang violence and homelessness suggests there is a neglected research agenda for addressing a range of wicked problems that researchers in public management and public policy have largely avoided. The potential for connecting these types of social challenges to governance research embraces a class of collective action problems that expand the coverage of research.

The paper first establishes homelessness and gang violence as problems as wicked problems. The second part categorizes the types of problems typically researched in major journals. The third section considers seven explanations for the narrow focus of these problems that are actually researched. The fourth section considers the implications of the findings for an agenda of governance research that addresses wicked problems, with consideration of potential impact in both governance research and in practice.

1. Homelessness and Gang Violence as Wicked Case Studies

Logic of case study research

Two case studies on homelessness and gang violence in the County of Los Angeles, California, United States are briefly outlined. The cases provide a starting point for addressing the question of why researchers in public administration, public management and public policy researchers do not study homelessness and gang violence. Los Angeles County with a population of over 10 million residents provides a scope and scale beyond most local governments, offering insights valuable at a state and national level. But the cases also occur within the decision-making authority of local government, with direct administrative decision-making and policy making.

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More generally, the case study methodology is favored as an approach seeking to explain the “how” of an issue (Yin 2014, 9). In addition, governance research calls for “richly textured case studies” derived from field research as more appropriate than other methods (Heinrich, Hill and Lynn 2004, 13). Case studies offer the “historical, descriptive, and institutional orientation” needed as a research strategy (Hill and Lynn 2005, 175). The use of case studies has been used to explain institutional design for complex collective action challenges in Los Angeles (for example, Mazmanian, 2009), as well as for outlining the elements of wicked problems in Hurricane Katrina response (Kettl, 2006), drug addiction policy (Alford and Head, 2017) and across public value cases (Moore, 1995; Bryson and Crosby, 2016), as well as in the study of innovation in the public and nonprofit sectors (Julnes de Lancer and Gibson, 2016). Case studies provide an alternative to depending on large data sets and explicit empirical measures that might leave development of governance research “crying in the wilderness for a long time” (Rainey and Ryu 2004, 20).

As with any case study research there are challenges. First is the challenge of moving beyond the limits of self-reporting. March described this limitation vividly as the lessons from individual experiences that “...are likely to be incomplete, superstitious, self-confirming, or mythic” (2011, 114). Also, case studies inherently require caution in generalizing from one set of circumstances. The particular findings in individual cases and their specific contexts limit the potential applicability of findings to a wider set of cases in varied contexts.

These challenges can be addressed for effective theory building through several steps including careful research design, selection of a range of perspectives in the interviews, and clear presentation of the findings and theory (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 25). Even in scientific fields such as physics, theory can precede experimental data. For example in relativity theory, the theory of mass bending light did not have empirical data until the occurrence of a visible solar eclipse more than a decade after the initial publication of the theory of relativity (Issacson, 2007). Moreover, the 30-year research agenda of Elinor Ostrom, recognized with the 2009 Nobel Prize in economics (Ostrom, 2010), demonstrates the development of case studies around a specific theme, with research across a wide range of countries and contexts, can lead to a set of conceptualizations with wide applicability across varied specific locations (Ostrom, 1990). Other examples of case studies generating enduring insights beyond the initial contexts include the foundational studies of public sector network research of Provan and Milward (1995). The research on delivery of mental health services in four different case studies became seminal in the development of public sector networks across a range of policy domains, different governmental levels and varied nations.

Analytical leverage of the case studies

The conventional understanding suggests that the enduring high levels of gang violence and homelessness result from a combination of political inattention, failure to commit resources, and ineffective models of intervention. Essentially these are questions of governance. It is argued here that the use of detailed case studies, in contrast to quantitative macro data analysis, is valuable for understanding the dynamics of “... particular areas of governance” (Fukuyama, 2013; 363).

Exploration of the two case studies on homelessness and gang violence issues in Los Angeles offers a range of conceptual advantages. The cases can be compared against the elements of the wicked problem framework to establish their features as wicked problems in the public sector. Moreover, the features of the cases can also be compared to the type of research done in public value, strategy, networks and other typical public administration, public management, and public policy research to illustrate how these cases could potentially develop synergies with that research.

The significance for research on these case studies include redressing the current incomplete understanding of the governance dimensions of collective action efforts to reduce gang violence and

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homelessness; secondly, the human aspects of the problems, with lives lost and damaged; and thirdly, demonstrating that failure to engage with these types of cases in public sector research leaves unaddressed the pressing questions for democratic governance of mastery of public challenges (Roberts, 2017) and capacity for problem solving (Kettl, 2016).

Wicked Problems

Having argued that case studies are an appropriate methodology for the study of wicked problems, the next step is to establish how the case studies on Los Angeles homelessness and gang violence may be aligned with the logic of wicked problems. Kettl's discussion of the failed response to Hurricane Katrina in the United States (2006) provides a framework for testing the fit between the wicked problem framework and the case study research on homelessness and gang violence. Kettl finds four significant features characterize wicked problems, and these features are applied in the following section for describing the case studies:

- 1) The problems cross political jurisdictions;
- 2) A significant cost of failure;
- 3) An immediate and pressing need; and
- 4) Currently depleted intellectual capital for generating new solutions.

Homelessness

Within a month in 2016, the front page of three major newspapers declared homelessness an emergency in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *New York Times*, and *Los Angeles Times*. I had the experience of reading *Los Angeles Times* newspaper columnist, Steve Lopez's book, *The Soloist*, (2008) describing the plight of a homeless man and former musician prodigy, Nathaniel Ayers. The dimensions of the problems of homeless men in downtown Los Angeles he recounts are remarkably similar to the varied challenges discussed at a public hearing convened in 1985 by Supervisor Edelman. The names had changed but the problems endured across three decades.

Crossing Political Jurisdictions

The governance framework gets at the coordination through incorporating ideas on "the 'conjunctions' or 'associations' among organizational entities" needed to address the administrative fragmentation driven by a range of centrifugal forces (Hill and Lynn 2004, 174). Researchers recognize the need to better understand the administrative dimension in governance "because turning policy aspirations into reality has become far more difficult" (Kettl 2002, 157-158). Fragmentation of administrative approaches and public finding has been a long-standing critique of the problem solving approaches in Los Angeles County.

Reviewing 30 years of efforts, Ed Edelman, a former Los Angeles City Councilman, from 1965 to 1974, and Los Angeles County Supervisor, 1974 to 1994, described the fragmentation of funding to each city council district and the failure of the City of Los Angeles to partner with the County. Observing this process for 30 years, Edelman concluded that the efforts to reduce gang violence "were never truly integrated" (Edelman 2012). Edelman's conclusion is consistent with the governance challenge outlined by Kettl: "In addition, coordination is expensive: it requires substantial investment by supervisors and public officials to build and nurture the required links" (Kettl 2002, p 152).

Cost of failure

The number of homeless men, women, and children in Los Angeles County in 1985 was estimated as between 25,000 to 50,000. In that year, the Los Angeles County Grand Jury recommended that the downtown Los Angeles be formally declared a state and national disaster area to bring additional resources to assist the homeless (Connell 1985b, 29). To address an "appalling" lack of coordination between the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles (Feldman 1988, 2), a joint City-County

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Task Force was proposed and subsequently formalized as a Joint Powers Agreement, signed by Mayor Tom Bradley (Edelman 2012). Yet the numbers increased even with this new governance structure.

Pressing Need

By 2006, the estimated homeless count ranged from 96,000 to over 150,000 annually (Burt 2008, 6), with a comprehensive program evaluation report concluding: “Los Angeles does not yet have consistent information about the characteristics of people who are homeless or how those characteristics affect the duration of homelessness” (Flaming et al. 2009, 6). Despite over 25 years of efforts to improve coordination, leveraging of resources, and development of strategy, the governance problems endured.

Crossing political jurisdictions

The boundaries of homelessness are fairly well defined geographically, with the homeless population in Los Angeles concentrated in the downtown of the City of Los Angeles. However, the responsibility for providing social services, general relief, mental health, and health services are in the jurisdiction of the County of Los Angeles. Starting in 1985, the proposed City-County Homeless Task Force was designed to address these cross-jurisdictional issues. A snapshot of the continued complexity of cross-jurisdictional engagement emerges from a 2009 study of the costs of homelessness (Fleming et al. 43). The following city, county, and private services providers expend funds for services to the homeless:

Probation

Sheriff mental health jail	DPSS General Relief	Private hospitals-ER
Sheriff medical jail	DPSS Food Stamps	Health Services - ER
Sheriff general jail	Paramedics	Health Services- outpatient
LAHSA homeless	Public Health	Private hospitals-inpatient
GR Housing Vouchers	Mental Health	Health Services- inpatient

An equally complex snapshot develops from a study of the funders across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors contributing to construction of housing units for the chronically homeless (Burt 2005, 16):

LIHTC	Other Local	McKinney-Vento
Redevelopment Agency	Mainstream Service	(SHP and SRO Mod
Housing Finance Agency	Agencies	Rehab)
Housing Trust Fund	HOME	Other/Other Private
CDBG	Public Housing	Federal Home Loan Bank
Commercial Bank	Authorities	

Significant cost of failure

One measure of the cost of homelessness is simply financial. In 2009 a study of over 10,000 homeless in Los Angeles found: “The typical public cost for residents in supportive housing is \$605 a month. The typical public cost for similar homeless persons is \$2,897, five-times greater than their counterparts that are housed” (Fleming et al. 2009, 1). The human dimensions are significant with the high-end estimate of over 96,000 individuals experiencing homelessness in 2009 (Fleming et al., 2009, 6).

Pressing need

A notable set of demonstration projects have been developed for the downtown homeless population, including services for the chronically mentally ill. However these programs have served in the range of 100 participants a year, of a population numbering in the thousands. Additionally, for the Skid Row Collaborative, three-year outcomes on the benchmarks for reducing chronic homelessness, while better

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than hotels, are at the rate of 60 % (Burt 2005, 23). After 25 years of significant efforts a pressing need remains.

There have been successes with some projects. “Federal demonstration projects have contributed solid evidence that PSH with substantial service levels and innovative approaches are very effective strategies to ending the homelessness of people with many disabilities who have not responded to other program structures or who quickly fail in them because they do not receive the types of attention they need” (Burt 2008, 27). The challenge becomes how to develop the intellectual capital needed for scaling up these programs, for greater coordination of efforts across programs, for additional resources, and mechanisms for accountability. Namely, the same challenges identified in 1985.

Depleted intellectual capital for generating new solutions

The continued pressing need in not only the downtown area of the City of Los Angeles but extending to the Westside and the City of Santa Monica, led the California Endowment to fund the meeting of judges, legislators, the California Chief Justice, as well as experts from NY and the RAND Corporation to consider developing new approaches to addressing homelessness (Edelman 2012). A notable feature of Steve Lopez’s moving account in *The Soloist* (2008) of a homeless man with a formerly prodigious cello talent is of the very few mentions of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. Absent was public management coordination to assist Mr. Nathaniel Ayers and thousands of other homeless in Los Angeles after over three decades of efforts calling for improved coordination across political jurisdictions and professional fields.

The role of politics in governance reform is captured in the comment of the longest serving elected official in Los Angeles County history, Supervisor Kenny Hahn, who described the “Politicization and jockeying for leadership on the homeless issue [as] ‘This is an ugly thing’” (Connell 1985a, 1).

The challenge continues over 20 years after Supervisor Hahn’s comment. A 2008 study of homelessness notes some positive trends in the demonstration project to reduce homelessness, but overall finds that “...expectations that the agencies offering supportive services will devote local resources to maintaining these services have for the most part not been fulfilled” (Burt, 2008, p. 26). This lack of sustained commitment is a feature the research predicts typically occurs in designing on-going institutional arrangements.

Along these lines, analyzing three decades of professional involvement, former City of Los Angeles Councilman and Los Angeles County Supervisor, Ed Edelman described the leadership challenge as “getting along with other officials, knowing that you need to get along with those who disagree” (Edelman, 2012). A comprehensive study of the number of homeless and durations of homelessness concludes with an description of the leadership failure by stating “Los Angeles needs to get its arms around homeless population...” (Fleming et al., 2009, p. 61).

Gang Violence

In 2006, I listened to Pete Carroll, head football coach of the University of Southern California, discuss the need for community-based strategies to reduce gang violence. Coach Carroll’s description of the problem and the solutions sounded remarkably similar to discussions convened in 1980 by then Los Angeles County Supervisor, Ed Edelman. The names had changed, but the problems remained not only unsolved but also past efforts were no longer informing current efforts.

Crossing political jurisdictions

In 1981 the County Board of Supervisors created the Interagency Gang Task Force through the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee to develop “cooperative strategies to combat

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gang violence” (CCJCC 2002, 5). Gang violence occurred regularly in the unincorporated jurisdictions of the County of Los Angeles, adjacent to the City of Los Angeles. A major driver in the formation of the task force was the need to coordinate strategies between the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles, particularly across law enforcement agencies. “The CCJCC was created to be able to discuss current problems, with the LAPD and Sheriff, DA, Public Defender and others” (Edelman 2012). As an entity with over 40 agencies participating in the meetings of the principals, the CCJCC embodied the cross jurisdictional complexity of addressing gang violence.

The significant cost of failure

Gang violence in Los Angeles County has taken the lives of over 400 victims in each of the past 30 years. While at one point there was a decline in the total numbers of homicides, the total gang related homicides have been similar for the past four years. These gang related homicides represented over 50 percent of all homicides in the country in 2006. For the first five months of 2007 there was a 32 percent decrease in gang related homicides in the City of Los Angeles. Similarly the Sheriff’s Department reports a 15 percent decrease in gang related homicides in its jurisdictions this year”(IGTF 2006, 3). The cost of gang violence remains with hundreds of lives taken each year into 2010.

Pressing need

Long time civil rights attorney, Connie Rice has described the pressing need in meeting with City officials as “if it is too dangerous for you to be here from HACL A after 5 PM, then what about how dangerous it is for the kids you leave behind” (Rice 2011). Despite calling for increased inter-agency cooperation in 1981, a reduction in gang violence is noticeably missing from the 2002 report on 20 years of accomplishments for the CCJCC. In that report there is no mention of success of the Interagency Task Force on Gangs that became a standing committee of the CCJCC in 1985 (CCJCC 2002, 5)

Depleted intellectual capital for generating new solutions

In leading a nonprofit organization committed to social change, Connie Rice has noted that there is still a “need to do what counter insurgency does, take a completely different set of strategies (Rice 2011). After three decades of calls for greater attention, improved coordination, added resources, and increased accountability for results, there remains the call for more of the same. “Ultimately, it is a question of leadership’s will to overcome the inherent political aversion to confronting complex issues, and the inevitable bureaucratic, union and community based organizations’ resistance to the changes that will be needed for comprehensive, non-bureaucratic approaches” (Advancement Project 2007, 7).

Along similar lines, the Los Angeles City Controller’s Office issued a report (2009, 1) that examined the City’s social services and gang prevention programs and provided a Blueprint to develop a new comprehensive citywide anti-gang strategy. The primary recommendations of the Blueprint (Controllars 2009) are as follows:

- 1) Create a single office to coordinate City-wide anti-gang services;
- 2) Build upon and develop regional partnerships with LAUSD, LA County and other local governments;
- 3) Conduct community-based and department-wide needs assessments;
- 4) Redirect funds to the gang reduction strategy;
- 5) Reinvent youth and family services; and
- 6) Establish rigorous performance measures and conduct evaluations of both City and County contracted programs.

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Each of these six proposals aligns strongly with the policies advocated by County Supervisor Edelman in 1981 in proposing a comprehensive gang violence reduction program modeled on a successful approach in the City of Philadelphia (Edelman 2012).

In 1985, The County Board of Supervisors reluctantly continued funding of a joint Los Angeles County—City Community Youth Gang Services Project, calling for Los Angeles City to pay an equal share (Vollmer 1985). Ten years later, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that 3,073 gang related deaths occurred in the previous four years, concluding that “Although this gang epidemic has been highly active during the past 10 years, there is not a comprehensive plan of action aimed at maximizing interagency collaborations in the area of gang prevention, intervention and suppression” (Frias 1995, 9). In 2008, the City of Los Angeles Office of the Controller issued a report that called for a new comprehensive citywide anti-gang strategy emphasizing a need for greater coordination and accountability (2008).

Even within the City of Los Angeles, the problem of organizing an effective city led responses emerges in three aspects in the Urban Institutes program evaluation. First, in the initial year, the lack of standardized reporting data emerges across the different zones. Second, a major component of the reduction efforts, Summer Nights Lights, is not anticipated to become the major component of the program that emerges in year one. Third, the former gang reduction program, LA Bridges, is noted for the failure of accountability (Urban Institute, 2010).

Two features emerge in 2012 discussion on gang violence: a question of what success can be attribute to contemporary leadership and that leadership to address the problem of gang violence is needed for several decades. The *Los Angeles Times* editorial board commenting on an Urban Institute report that finds a reduction in gang related violence, and the effectiveness of the Mayor’s program to reducing gang violence, questions “Whether the mayor, who was first elected in 2005, can take credit for the drop is less clear” (*LA Times*, 2012). Writing in response to the *LA Times*, Connie Rice credits the Mayor, but notes that: “And we know that entrenched violence dynamics, such as those in L.A., require sustained and long-term intervention efforts. GRYD programming is too new for definitive findings” (Rice, 2012) “The solutions require cross-silo creativity, bold leadership, smart strategy, and sustained focus. The challenge is not what to do, but finding the will to do it” (Advancement Project 2007, 7).

Very Wicked Problems

In exploring the wicked problem description, Alford and Head (2017; Figure 1) develop a nuanced contingency framework as a three by three matrix, with nine cells that account for both the degree of problem complexity and the varied range of participants in problem solving. The most complex of the cells described “very wicked problems” as the intersection of lack of clarity on problem definition with increasingly difficulty stakeholders. In the cases described above, three features stand out to align with the Alford and Head “very wicked problems.” One is a lack of agreement on the problem. For homelessness the problems are economic, mental health, housing, job training, or other factors. For gang violence the problems are law enforcement, education, sociological, economic opportunity or other factors. For both cases the solutions are elusive, with 30 years of efforts encountering continued growth in homeless and continued levels of gang violence. For stakeholder complexity in both cases the location is contested between local governments, county government, law enforcement, as well as across types of agencies social services, education and health with potential roles for federal funding and assistance of federal agencies.

2. Types of problems researched

More than Wicked Problems

These cases each have elements that lend themselves for wicked researchers to choose these cases. The conventional understanding suggests the enduring high levels of gang violence and homelessness as resulting from the combination of political inattention, failure to commit resources, and ineffective models of intervention. The contemporary discussion can fail to recognize the repetition over years in the calls for focused political attention, increased funding, and community based models of intervention. This failure to observe that pattern obscures the difficulty of structuring cooperation across political jurisdictions, in effect the governance dimensions of these wicked problems.

Describing three decades of professional involvement with both issues, former City of Los Angeles Councilman and Los Angeles County Supervisor Ed Edelman described the challenge as “getting along with other officials, knowing that you need to get along with those who disagree” (Edelman, 2012).

But the focus of research need not be limited to wicked researchers. Elements of these cases readily fit into research described as public value (Moore, 1995; Bryson and Crosby, 2015) with the potential to research the authorizing environment, the operating capacity and the public value created. In addition, Moore’s (2015) discussion finds space for discovery of new solutions as type of work in creating public value, not simply technical management issues (Moore, 2015; 121). Few would dispute the reduction of homeless and of gang related deaths as public value.

Similarly, with network research as a dominant activity for public managers (Agranoff, 2012), both cases can readily be described as public sector networks as well as cross-sectoral networks linking nonprofits and public funding and oversight. Other research streams account for the issues found in these cases, including the challenges of reform of public agencies, due to “the problematics of attention” by elected officials (March and Olsen, 1983), and the question developed in the politics of structural choice asking if public agencies are designed for success (Moe, 1990b). Also, research that considers the political calculus of political appointments for policy considerations at the federal level (Bertelli, 2007) could be extended to local government appointees addressing the political charged questions of homelessness. Along related lines, the research on “thinking in time” can readily be applied to the Los Angeles cases to access political decision making on an extended timeline of institutional change (Neustadt and May, 1986)

More generally, in the big questions of public management (Behn, 1995) and public administration (Kirlin, 1996) there is a call for research on the discretionary actions of public managers to problem solve, as well as the role of public administration creating place value through institutional design. Similarly, the developing research on strategic planning in the public sector (Bryson, *et al.*, 2015) offers a description that readily accommodates the demands of research in homelessness and gang violence. “In short, public-sector planning is strategic when given the context participants have a clear recognition of, and desire to stabilize, what should be stabilized, while maintaining appropriate flexibility in terms of goals, policies, strategies, and processes to manage complexity, take advantage of important opportunities, and advance resilience and sustainability in the face of an uncertain future.”

Publication Focus

In the time frame of 2013-2016, across seven highly ranked journals in public administration, public management, governance and public policy very little published research appears on homelessness or gang violence. A snapshot of the articles published in 2013-2016 in seven journals finds two articles,

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both by Jennifer Mosely (2014 and 2015) focused specifically on homelessness. No articles focused on gang violence. The topic published most frequently was education performance, followed by civic engagement. As to be anticipated with journals having different focus, the public administration and public management journal publications did not often overlap, with the exception of education and with civic engagement, with articles in public policy journals.

The journals reviewed that were chosen as highly ranked in their field are as follows:

Public Administration and Management

Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory

Public Administration Review

American Review of Public Administration

Public Policy

Journal of Public Policy and Management

Policy Studies Journal

Policy Sciences

Governance

Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions

The review looked at each article published in each journal in a three-year period 2013-2016. This was an actual review of each article, not limited to word search. Articles were categorized by content, the level of government, and the process studied.

These findings are consistent with other reviews of journals. For example, identification of eight specific policy domains and one “other” category” none listed explicitly homelessness or gangs” (Pierce, *et al.* 2014). At the level of policy making in local and county government that would address homelessness or gang violence in Los Angeles or other local government jurisdictions, the review found that “Only 12 percent of the applications focus on state policy and six percent on local. Multiple levels of policy, such as state and federal or state and local government, represent five percent of the applications. Only one publication explicitly examines regional government policymaking. This demonstrates that the primary focus of scholarship using the theory of social construction and policy design is on the federal government at the detriment to state and local policymaking” (Pierce, *et al.* 2014; 10). For a journal such as *Public Administration Review*, a bibliometric review found very few citations from 1990 to 2013 from research in social work (1.45 percent) or criminology (0.88 percent) where one might expect to find research on homelessness and gang violence (Ni *et al.*, 2017).

The recent review also aligns with past work that finds in a study of governance articles from 1999 through 2001, researchers found that the bulk of research consisted of the study of individual and societal outputs on subjects “such as cigarette consumption, child support payments, injury rates, and infant birthrate” (Hill and Lynn 2003, 182). A review of an edited volume of published papers from academic conferences on governance finds topics such as welfare to work, banking, trucking, airline, telecommunications, welfare policy, and the Job Training Partnership Act Program (Heinrich and Lynn, 2000). Governance research has also focused on school expenditures, teacher performance, and alternative dispute resolutions (Hill and Lynn 2005, 181). Despite the tragic human consequences of governance failures in reducing gang violence and homelessness, research on the governance dimensions of these challenges remains understudied and incomplete.

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3. Why Not Researched

The previous sections place homelessness and gang violence as public management and public policy issues that fit into the criteria of wicked public sector problems, but without recently being published researched as wicked problems or on other potentially related problems. This raises the questions in this section, why do researchers of wicked problems and other public sector research avoid these problems? The argument could be made that these are researched, but not published in the top journals. However, the dispersion of topics published in the review of articles from 2013-2016, including children's protective services, disaster management, immigration, state building, nuclear power, health care, gun control and poverty response policies, all with two or more articles, suggest the potential to publish on substantive social problems in these journals. In addition, with 'networks' included in more than 13 articles published across six of the journals, there would be potential to be linked to publishing in that area as well.

The question in this section of why the issue is not studied then sets up the question in the next section of the consequences arising from this lack of research. This section's question of why not researched provides insight into the implications for further study and for practice. The logic here is that if these are long-standing public sector challenges, and there is little research on these challenges, there are significant consequences for the fields of research and for various fields of practice.

This section explores potential explanations for why the issues of homelessness and gang violence are avoided by researchers. The unit of analysis is the field of research, not individual researcher motivations. Admittedly speculative, this section outlines reasons suggested by long-standing researchers of public sector research. So there is an examination of the fields of research by researchers. But that type of reflection does not get at individual motivation. What emerges are a range of explanations for why homelessness and gang violence are not researched

Methodology

As research methods drive research the initial question is the availability of information for research. An emphasis on quantitative methods results in a search for public sector problems with large data sets for analysis. A limit in the typical study of governance is described as resulting from the "bright streetlights effect" by two of the leading researchers, Carolyn Hill and Larry Lynn (2005, 188). In this metaphor, governance researchers are similar to the man searching for lost car keys only under a street light because that is where the light shines. Similarly, Hill and Lynn find that governance research tends to study available data sets. More recently finding cases on performance management clustering around data sets in local government and education (O'Toole and Meier, 2015), with the need for future research in performance management to consider contextual variables. Radin (2016) also notes the limiting effect of a drive for big data in program evaluation. Paradoxically, the problems that have administrative capacity to readily generate meaningful data sets are often times in the public agencies that are well developed in their problem solving, typically not addressing long-standing wicked problems.

Institutions

A second explanation is the challenge of researching institutional design for complex and dynamic public sector challenges, in effect wicked problems, in the public sector. Long-standing researcher James March finds that public management research does not address "...the capacity of public institutions to deal with emerging challenges" (March, 2016; 1). Similarly, a long-standing researcher on public policy implementation, Dan Mazmanian concludes that for institutional frameworks, the theory has not caught up to practice (Tang and Mazmanian, 2010).

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Content

Homelessness and Gang violence might be traditionally seen as issues of social services and criminal justice. Though finding public administration as an inherently interdisciplinary field, these topics are not discussed as part of the historical conversations in the field, as part of the landscape on the map or set of conversations on public administration (Raadschelders, 2011). Gingrich develops a set of insights on the nature of the client that might help explain the lack of funding for research, finding that: “However, where programs cater to an unpopular or weak clientele, policymakers proposing cuts or other substantial reform risk less electoral backlash or strong lobbying by organized interests.” (2015; 46). In a much earlier discussion of the challenges of homeless policy, Schon and Rein (1994) find that the funding support is fragmented much along the lines of the constituency groups. Finally, research on related topics of poverty may emphasize issues such as substance abuse, urban planning, or food systems.

Politics

The reality of politics makes these difficult issues to research. Current efforts are notably remiss in giving credit or acknowledging the efforts of previous political administration. Past efforts are often overlooked in reports by public agencies, for example the Office of the City Controller (2009) and in program evaluations, Dunworth *et al.* (2010). This failure to connect with the past is not a surprising feature of politics. The disconnection from the history of an issue has been described as the failure of “thinking in time” (Neustadt and May, 1986). The absence of “thinking in time” results in a failure to identify that the contemporary calls for focused political attention, increased funding, and community based models of intervention, obscures the governance dimension of the challenge to structure cooperation across political jurisdictions. A methodological bias can overlook a range of case studies, including those where governance solutions have evolved over time, as in the Los Angeles region Air Quality District’s 30-year effort (Mazmanian, 2009) or the 20-year effort to move freight from the Los Angeles-Long Beach harbor more quickly through the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (Callahan 2007). And the political reality of blame avoidance makes it difficult to study wicked problems where political leadership does not introduce programs in recognition of negativity bias in the public (Nielsen and Baekgaard, 2015; Soroka, 2014).

Leadership Research

A further explanation emerges with Bennis’ dichotomy between leadership as fundamentally different than management (2009). With much of the performance management research focused on managers as the unit of analysis, the leadership roles in responding to homelessness and gang violence would not be readily studied. Long-standing researchers in governance suggest that leadership research has not been well developed because of the focus on management (Hill and Lynn 2005, 183-184). Additionally, long-standing public sector researchers Patricia Ingraham, Don Moynihan and Hal Rainey recognize a need for improved modeling and the study of leadership in governance research (Ingraham, Sowa, and Moynihan 2004, 168; Rainey and Ryu, 2004, 36).

Wicked Problems

Conceptualizing homelessness and gang violence as wicked problems suggests intrinsic difficulties in researching. In their work on developing a typology of wicked problems, Alford and Head (2017; 5-6) delineate four aspects explaining the difficulty of research when generalizing about wicked problems. One, the totalizing “intractable masses of complexity, so conflict-prone ... defy definition and solution” leaves researchers without starting points. Two, the temporal dimension as fast moving requires “dramatic transformation interventions that settle things decisively” leaves researchers frustrated with partial problem definitions. Three, defining success as either total or a defeat- binary offers no room for the study of incremental solutions. And four, the very term implies that there is no space left for degrees of wickedness. Taken together, the problem that Alford and Head address with

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distinguishing types of wicked problems acknowledges the current difficulty confronting wicked researchers.

Large forces

A final explanation emerges with the argument developed by Al Roberts (2014) that public administration has retreated from addressing the large forces driving societal problems. The framework outlined by Roberts finds that the teaching and study of public administration has discarded a consideration of the large forces in society that drove public administration in the early years of the field. As a result, Roberts finds that contemporary public administration research fails to deal with complex societal issues with significant public sector roles and expenditures, as well as tragic human consequences.

4. Implications for Governance Researchers

The consequences of avoiding research on homelessness and gang violence affect not only the field of practice but the research as well. Three consequences emerge from the absence of the research: narrowing of the field of study; public management and public policy research migrating into other fields of study; and a loss of research capacity to explain the driving forces for institutional or societal change.

Narrowing

The argument developed by Roberts (2014; 51) on the narrowing of public administration scholarship draws evidence on seminal textbooks in public administration. The retreat from addressing large societal forces in public administration is evidenced in Fukuyama's (2015) *Political Order and Political Decay*, where the chapter on bureaucracy features no writers who might be categorized as public administration researchers. Those researchers are found primarily in the chapter on clientalism and three references in chapter on the spoils system. The net effect is that Fukuyama's discussion of governance does not draw on public administration, despite his earlier broad definition that "...governance is thus about execution, or what has traditionally fallen within the domain of public administration, as opposed to politics or public policy" (Fukuyama, 2013, 350-351). One book does not make the case but begins to suggest the consequences in scholarship of foregoing research on wicked problems or address large forces. However, the current editor of a top ranked journal, *Public Administration Review*, asks the question "Is public administration vanishing?" and outlines reasons for the disappearance (Perry, 2016).

Another way of seeing the narrowing of the field of public management and public policy research, along with public administration typically comes across as critiques of conceptualizing the field too narrowly. For example, noting the limits of managerialism (Hood, 1991). Or in the critiques of public sector performance being about more than management (Kirlin, 1996b), more than metrics (Radin, 2006) and as public entrepreneurship bounded by constitutional constraints (Ronald Moe, 1995), as well as advancing core value values of human dignity and rule of law (Newland, 2012). These critiques calling for an accounting of a larger set of forces only make sense in the context of a field retreating from these large forces.

Escape

The large forces in society do not go away. The homeless and gang members remain part of society, but what may have occurred is that public administration, public management, and public policy research avoiding these issues has led other fields of research and professional fields to embrace these and other topics. The large forces issues left unattended can be found in emerging research streams in other fields, most significantly in public health research on the social determinants of health in the

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United Kingdom and internationally see Marmot (2015) and in the United State see for example Iton and Ross, 2017. As a field, the social determinants of health accounts explaining health outcomes through explaining the features, typically influenced or in the jurisdiction of public managers, such as public safety, education, environmental protection, housing, recreation, and others. In effect, public health researches large forces.

Similarly, sociologists have displaced governance researchers in explaining the impact of governance practices on neighborhood outcomes. For example in public administration Kirlin's question of what governments must do well to create place based value (Kirlin, 1996a) is currently being answered by sociology research on New Orleans explaining neighborhoods and life outcomes (Gladwell, 2015; 35), rather than public management or public policy research. Another growing theme addressing public management and public policy research over past ten years emerges in social entrepreneurship (Frumkin, 2013), displacing public policy research on social change (Cels *et al.*, 2012).

Consequence

In the absence of research on homelessness and gang violence as wicked problems, public sector problems can be seen as symptomatic of a reduced research capacity for scholars to engage in large forces reasoning. The missing research suggest that public administration, public management and public policy research no longer can explain the drivers for social change. The lessons Roberts (2014) outlines from the 1930s that generated a commitment to address the large forces driving social change, resulting in initiatives such as the New Deal, are no longer generated from research in those fields. As a result there has been the loss of mastery of skills needed to make American democracy work (Roberts, 2017), as well as the loss of capacity in public agencies to engage in needed complex problem solving (Kettl, 2016)

Moving Forward

Drawing on professional reflection of lessons learned offers a way forward on seemingly intractable social problems (Schoen and Rein, 1004) problems of homelessness and of gang violence can be mapped out in the Alford and Head (2017; Figure 1) typology of wicked problems proposes a well-designed matrix of nine cells. They suggest the value of a nuanced contingency framework to account for both the degree of problem complexity and the varied range of participants. Their work suggests the importance of disaggregating wicked problems into constituent parts.

A way forward for future wicked researchers can start with recognizing the complexity and sorting the complexity of these challenges. This approach offers the possibility that some problem, such as homelessness or gang violence can be broken into different parts. Disaggregating the constituent elements of homelessness for example, might place different pieces, such as veterans' homelessness and economic loss driven homeless into different cells. For some aspects of the problem, such as veterans' homelessness the solutions and stakeholders are well know, leading to zero homelessness veterans in some U.S. counties. And for high frequency health system users, which Gladwell (2012) describes as "Million Dollar Murray", the cost effective solution is well developed, but funding commitment is not as readily agreed upon. For other parts of the problem such as dual diagnosis behavior health homeless, neither the problem definition nor solution is clear coupled with multiple parties in conflict.

Research Agenda

The public sector and philanthropic sector investment in homelessness and gang violence (Advancement Project, 2010) offer starting points for action research. For example, The California Endowment's 10 year, \$1 billion investment in 14 place based initiatives to address the social determinants of health (Iton and Ross, 2017). On the public sector, the recently formed San Francisco

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Homeless Department with over \$240 million in annual expenditures provides a starting point, in addition to the efforts in Los Angeles County. Place based initiatives, such as the The Advancement Project, seek reduce gang violence through improving K-12 public education. Identifying the efforts of local government initiatives then looking for contextual variables that explain performance (Meier and O'Toole, 2013) provide an approach. Research on cross-sectoral partnership creating public value can be a leverage point. Similarly, learning forums for performance management (Moynihan, 2008) might lend themselves to future research.

The question of the attractor effect of more services drawing homeless from neighboring jurisdictions has been explored in public health for other services and offers avenues into governance research for regional problem solving, as well as on the intergovernmental and cross-sectoral problem solving.

Generating New Intellectual Capital

An expanded research framework can anticipate the challenges of sustaining focus, of developing strategy, and of the leadership skills needed to advance governance solutions. This framework can move the research and practice beyond a focus only on structure, whether hierarchical or networked. The challenges of gang violence and homelessness solutions are not unique to either the policy issues or the geographical setting. An enhanced framework of governance anticipates the politics of institutional design, the compromises of politics, and the difficulty of sustaining focus.

Generating new intellectual capital address the perception of gang violence and homelessness in Los Angeles County remains consistent over the course of 25 years. What are the problems of coordination of resources, development of strategy, leveraging of assets, that explains the enduring perception? The emerging body of research on governance in the past 20 years promised a framework to systematically study the variables to anticipate and explain the challenges of moving from governmental organizations multiple sectors delivering services. The shift creates challenges for understanding the coordination of governmental efforts across the public and nonprofit sectors, the development of inter-organizational networks, the tension between hierarchy directing public programs and the limits of formal authority. However, despite a significant range of publications on governance, the research does not extend to an in-depth study of the intractability of reducing gang violence and homelessness.

Placing the homelessness and gang violence as questions for wicked research in governance and others provides a range of conceptual advantages. First, the institutional design between homelessness and gang violence can be explored and contrasted. Secondly, the search for frameworks to generate solutions does not have to be limited to the fields of criminal justice, juvenile justice, social work, or mental health. It has been shown that the capacity to draw on a wider set of research findings in a multidisciplinary approach may generate breakthrough thinking (Johansson, 2006). As Elinor Ostrom (2010) noted in her Nobel Prize award speech, bringing together diverse researchers working across their academic disciplines drove the development of common pool resource findings, revealing shared connections across different perspectives on shared problems. This type of research approach offers the potential to replenish needed intellectual capital (Kettl 2006). Thirdly, a conceptual shift moves these issues beyond the locational limits of the specific context of Los Angeles County. These wicked problem challenges can be seen as part of a class of collective action governance problems that have the potential for case studies to be researched and meaningfully compared across varied American jurisdictions. A comparison across countries could follow, as occurred in the example of institutional design mechanisms for protecting common pool resources (Ostrom 1990).

The wicked problem approach potentially frames the challenges of reducing gang violence as beyond the need for more law enforcement or community engagement. Similarly, reducing homelessness is not simply a function of increased community-based mental health. An expanded model of research

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provides the analysis to anticipate leverage points in the institutional design, to anticipate the problems of cooperation that need to be addressed, and to identify the mechanisms that can be transferred from other governance solutions. Wicked researchers could anticipate issues for policy makers, as well as other researchers, through analyzing predictable governance tensions. Analysis through a governance lens has the potential to address the tension between law enforcement and community programs in gang violence, as well as the tension between a community based mental health model and medical model of mental health.

Conclusion

The main points

The challenges of gang violence and homelessness solutions are not unique to either of these policy issues or to the geographical setting. The paper first establishes homelessness and gang violence as problems as wicked problems. The second part explores what are the types of problems typically researched. The third section considers a range of explanations for the selection of the problems researched. The fourth section considers the implications of the findings for a separate set of wicked research, with suggestions for potential impact in as research agenda and in practice.

The paper finds that the potential for research on homelessness and gang violence can be tested across a wider range of locations and cases. An extended research framework offers the potential to explain the repeated pattern of recurring failures and the incomplete understanding of past efforts to reduce these problems in Los Angeles. An enhanced framework of governance anticipates the politics of institutional design, the compromises of politics, and the difficulty of sustaining focus.

Limits

The research on these two case studies limits the generalizability of the findings. Rather this approach should be considered exploratory. There is a limit in the review of the seven top journals in a three-year span, as neither exhaustive of the wide range of public administration, public management, public policy and governance related journals. Also, the time frame may miss a trend that occurs prior or subsequent. Also, the discussion of why these problems are not researched is speculative.

Democratic Governance

The research suggests that similarity of dialogue over three decades on reducing gang violence and homelessness can be explained by the avoidance of these issues in the research community, as well as the challenging nature of these issues. The failures in Los Angeles City and County governments in reducing homelessness and gang violence for policy makers and political leadership to learn across decades provides an opportunity for wicked researchers to contribute to public sector impact.

However, beyond research agendas, what is at stake is deepening the understanding of democratic governance. These are research problems in one of the four challenges of American democracy as identified by Roberts (2017) as the challenge of mastery of problem solving or as developed on similarly lines by Kettl (2016) as the challenge of government capacity. In the case of homelessness the mastery or capacity to assist those who are physically, economically and mentally vulnerable. In the case of gang violence, the mastery or capacity of protecting residents' lives from random and targeted deadly violence. The wickedness is not in the researchers avoiding these problems, nor in the problems themselves. The wickedness is a collective action failure that undermines democratic governance by calling into question both mastery and capacity.

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