

Loose Cannons and Rule Breakers, or Enterprising Leaders? Some Evidence About Innovative Public Managers

One element of the debate over New Public Management concerns public-sector entrepreneurship. Critics see entrepreneurs as people prone to rule breaking, self-promotion, and unwarranted risk taking, while proponents view them as exercising leadership and taking astute initiatives. This article examines two samples of the best applications to the Ford Foundation–Kennedy School of Government innovation awards, one between 1990 and 1994 and the other between 1995 and 1998, to see whether they are more consistent with the critics' or proponents' views. The second sample closely replicates the first, and the evidence from both strongly supports the proponents' views. Innovators are creatively solving public-sector problems and are usually proactive in that they deal with problems before they escalate to crises. They use appropriate organizational channels to build support for their ideas. They take their opponents seriously and attempt to win support for their ideas through persuasion or accommodation.

Introduction

One of the many controversial aspects of the New Public Management is its encouragement of public-sector entrepreneurship. In his review of Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government*, Goodsell (1993) points out that entrepreneurship could conflict with traditional values such as due process and accountability. In a seminal article defining the New Public Management, Hood (1991) notes that its emphasis on the values of economy and parsimony could come at the cost of the ethical values of honesty and fairness and the organizational values of robustness and resilience. Similarly, Jane Jacobs (1993) differentiates between commercial values and guardian, or traditional public-sector values, and argues that transposing one sector's values to another sector's institutions will lead to ethical lapses.

This theme has also been taken up in discussions of public-sector ethics. Gawthrop (1999) provides a number of cases that demonstrate an increasing preoccupation on the part of public servants with entrepreneurship, competition, efficiency, and performance management that could undercut values such as benevolence and justice. On the other hand, Cohen and Eimicke (1999) analyze a number

of cases considered to be examples of failed public-sector entrepreneurship, and they conclude that the problems could have been avoided had the individuals involved followed simple ethical guidelines, such as "ensure thorough analysis" and "act with compassion and empathy." In their view, public-sector entrepreneurship should be encouraged, and the application of these ethical guidelines will mitigate any risk of increased corruption. Similarly, Kernaghan (2000) calls for the creation of governmentwide statements of key values that will incorporate both new values (service, innovation, quality) and traditional values (fairness, accountability, honesty) and will serve as the basis for ethical standards and training.

The pages of this journal have seen a particularly sharp debate over the merits of public-sector entrepreneurship. In the 1998 symposium on leadership, democracy, and the New Public Management, Terry (1998, 197) argued that

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public-sector entrepreneurs are obsessed with rule breaking, self-promotion, power politics, and risk taking, and concluded that their “penchant for rule-breaking and for manipulating public authority for private gain has been, and continues to be, a threat to democratic governance.” On the other side, Behn (1998) felt that public servants should “exercise leadership about issues for which the elected chief [who is rightly concentrating on key priorities] either lacks the inclination or the time.” The frequent failure of legislation to provide clear direction for public servants, coupled with other systemic failures, led him to urge public managers to display “leadership that takes astute initiatives designed to help the agency not only to achieve its purposes today but also to create new capacity to achieve its objectives tomorrow” (220). Recently, deLeon and Denhardt (2000, 92), following Terry, have claimed that public-sector entrepreneurs’ “single-mindedness, tenacity, and willingness to bend the rules make them very difficult to control. They can become loose cannons.”

One problem with this debate is that it has been conducted in the abstract or on the basis of a small number of examples given by either side of the laudatory or blame-worthy behavior about which they generalize. DeLeon and Denhardt (2000, 92) do acknowledge Hyman Rickover, Herbert Hoover, and Robert Moses as “giants among public managers” who bent rather than broke the rules and pushed the limits of what was possible, but they suggest that this approach on the part of lesser mortals would lead to questionable results.

The objective of this article is to use a body of evidence about entrepreneurial public servants, some giants like Hoover and Moses, others far less exalted, to see whether they fit the deLeon-Denhardt-Terry image of loose cannons and rule breakers, or Behn’s counterimage of enterprising leaders. The body of evidence comprises two large samples of the best applications to the Ford Foundation–Kennedy School of Government (Ford–KSG) Innovations in American Government Awards Program: 217 semifinalists from 1990 to 1994, encompassing state and local government, and 104 finalists between 1995 and 1998, including the federal government as well. Semifinalist applications detail the nature of the innovation and characteristics of the process of innovation—where in the organization it initiated, who supported the innovation, and how the innovators overcame obstacles.

It could be argued that this is an inappropriate sample for this purpose, because it includes only the applications deemed best by the judges of the Ford–KSG awards program. The judges determine merit on the basis of the application’s novelty, results achieved, and replication or replicability. The innovative process itself is not taken into account in choosing the best programs, so winning pro-

grams could emerge from processes that deLeon, Denhardt, and Terry would find illegitimate. The Methodology section addresses this issue in detail, noting that only semifinalists were asked detailed questions about the innovative process, making it impossible to sample all applications.

This article will focus on five characteristics of the two samples: (1) the level in the organization where the innovations originated; (2) the nature of the innovations; (3) the factors leading to the innovations; (4) where the innovators received support; and (5) the obstacles the innovators faced and how they overcame them. Taken together, these characteristics should provide evidence to allow us to draw a portrait of actual public-management innovations and innovators and to compare it to the expectations of deLeon, Denhardt, and Terry on the one hand, and Behn on the other. Additionally, the two samples will enable us to see whether the results are consistent from the earlier sample to the later, and between state and local government and the federal government.

Methodology

The academic literature on innovation distinguishes between *invention*, the creation of a new idea, and *innovation*, the adoption of an existing idea for the first time by a given organization (Rogers 1995). Public-management innovation awards do not recognize new but unproven ideas; they choose the best applications on the basis of results (such as improvements in the well-being of program clients, service improvements, or reduced cost), as well as replication and originality. Ideally, the winning applications are relatively recent inventions that have been in operation long enough to show results and to be replicated. If the diffusion of an innovation is represented by a logistic (S-shaped) curve, with time on the horizontal axis and the percentage of the relevant community using the innovation on the vertical axis, then the judges of innovation competitions are attempting to give awards to programs on the lower end of the curve. As they are making the award relatively early in the life of the innovation, they are predicting that future adoption of the innovation will trace out a rising logistic curve.

Any policy area will have a number of innovations spreading more or less rapidly throughout its population of agencies at any given time. Since the Ford–KSG awards program does not limit applications by theme, its best applications encompass many policy areas. The common denominator is that they are all at relatively early points in the diffusion process. The program allocates substantial resources to eliciting as many initial applications as possible—for example, sending applications to all government departments and agencies, searching for newspaper articles about innovative programs and encouraging the managers

to apply, and working through professional networks in many policy areas. Therefore, its initial applications constitute a representative sample of innovative activity in all policy areas.

The initial application asks about the characteristics of the program, in particular *how* it is innovative; the program's beneficiaries; the program's funding sources; verifiable evidence of the program's achievements; and the program's replicability. From approximately 1,500 initial applications received each year, juries of academics and practitioners with expert knowledge of the relevant policy areas choose 75 semifinalists, who represent each policy area in the same proportion as the 1,500 applications. Semifinalists complete a more detailed questionnaire, including many questions about the innovative process. The present study initially analyzed a large, coded sample of 217 of the 350 open-ended semifinalist questionnaires completed between 1990 and 1994, when the awards program was open only to state and local government. Two coders were used for each questionnaire, and levels of inter-coder reliability were a respectable 80 percent (Borins 1998, 12–18). This study did not attempt to define innovation a priori, but rather used the judges' choices to determine what constitutes innovation in each policy area.

A similar procedure was applied to the 1995–98 sample, which includes 104 finalists. Twenty-five finalists are chosen from the 75 semifinalists on the basis of expert evaluation of the detailed semifinalist questionnaire. The award was changed in 1995 to include the federal government. The 104 finalists in this sample include 29 federal, 44 state, and 31 local applications. The total sample includes 104 applications because 30, rather than 25 semifinalists were chosen in 1995, and because one program was a finalist twice, but was coded only once. The appendix lists the questions discussed in this paper.

Local Heroes

Table 1 identifies the initiators of the innovations, that is, the person(s) who conceived the idea. (Because more than one initiator could be cited for a given innovation, the percentages sum to more than 100.) A surprising result in the 1990–94 sample is that the most frequent initiators of innovations were not politicians (18 percent) or even agency heads like Rickover, Moses, or Hoover (23 percent), but career public servants below the agency-head level, that is, middle managers and front-line staff (48 percent). A strongly similar result was obtained for the later sample, and the correlation between the frequencies of the different initiators in 1990–94 and 1995–98 was .99, significant at .01.

This result might appear to be at odds with one of the basic tenets of American democracy: Voters elect politi-

Table 1 Initiators of Innovations (percent)

Initiator	1990–94	1995–98	1995–98	1995–98	1995–98
	state, local	total	federal	state	local
Politician	18	27	14	30	36
Agency head	23	28	24	25	36
Other public servant	48	57	72	46	58
Middle managers	n.a.	43	62	30	45
Front-line staff	n.a.	27	24	27	29
Interest group, nonprofit	13	14	0	16	26
Individual citizen	6	10	0	16	10
Clients of program	2	5	10	2	3
Other	4	10	10	11	7
Total initiators	114	151	130	146	176
N	217	104	29	44	31

N = number of innovations.

Table entries are the percentage of a given group displaying a particular characteristic. For example, the "18" in the first cell of the first column means that in 18 percent of the 217 innovations in the 1990–94 sample, one of the initiators of the innovation was a politician.

Totals add to more than 100 percent because some innovations had more than one initiator.

Correlation coefficient (*r*) between 1990–94 distribution and total 1995–98 distribution = .99, *t* = 15.7, significant at .01 with 5 degrees of freedom.

Correlation coefficient (*r*) between 1995–98 federal and 1995–98 state and local distributions = .66, *t* = 2.45, significant at .05 with 6 degrees of freedom.

cians to develop new programs or to terminate existing ones. The most senior appointments to agencies are political, precisely to make the bureaucracy responsive to politicians and, in turn, to the public who elected them. The standard model of public bureaucracy emphasizes the existence of stringent central-agency constraints on public servants' entrepreneurship and innovativeness to minimize corruption and ensure due process (Barzelay 1992). The legislative branch often micromanages the executive. The media's interest in exposing public-sector failings (management in a fishbowl) is yet another impediment to innovation. For all these reasons, career public servants may not be rewarded for successful innovation and will likely be punished for unsuccessful innovation. A consequence of these asymmetric incentives is adverse selection, namely that innovative people do not choose careers in the public sector. Despite controls, asymmetric incentives, and adverse selection, career public servants—front-line staff and middle managers—do innovate.

The 1995–98 sample was used to probe this result in several ways. In the coding, a distinction was made between middle managers and front-line staff. Middle managers were the most frequent initiators (43 percent), but front-line staff (27 percent) were initiators as frequently as politicians (27 percent) and agency heads (28 percent). The data were analyzed to distinguish among cases with one initiator, two initiators, and three or more initiators. The most frequent sole originators were middle managers (19 cases), agency heads (10 cases), politicians (9), and front-line staff (8). By far, the most frequent pair of initia-

tors was middle manager and front-line worker (9 cases), followed by politician and middle manager (3), public-interest group and middle manager (3), and agency head and middle manager (2). The data were also disaggregated by level of government: Both politicians (14 percent federal, 30 percent state, 36 percent local) and agency heads (24 percent federal, 25 percent state, 36 percent local) were more frequently initiators in smaller governments, while middle managers and front-line staff (72 percent federal, 46 percent state, 58 percent local) were more frequently initiators in larger governments (albeit an imperfect ranking, because large cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles have larger governments than many small states).

These data demonstrate that in addition to elected politicians, agency heads, middle managers, and front-line staff are frequent innovators. The question considered in the following sections is whether the data show that those public servants who innovate are loose cannons and rule breakers or that they are enterprising leaders.

Characteristics of Innovations

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the innovations as identified by the applicants. The table entries indicate the percentage of programs displaying a given characteristic. Where responses are closely related, the union of responses is provided. For example, an innovation was considered holistic if the applicant said that it takes a systems approach to analyzing a problem, coordinates the activities of several organizations, or provides multiple services to clients. If an application displayed one or more of these characteristics, it was counted as holistic. That is why “total holistic” is always less than the sum of “systems approach,” “coordinates organizations,” and “multiple services.”

Five characteristics stand out in both samples: holism (85 percent in the later sample and 61 percent in the earlier), the use of new technology, usually new information technology (approximately 30 percent in both samples), process improvement (approximately 35 percent in both samples), empowerment of communities or citizens (17 percent in the later sample and 34 percent in the earlier), and using the private sector to achieve public purposes (30 percent in the later sample and 17 percent in the earlier). The correlation coefficient between the frequencies of the characteristics of each sample is .88, significant at .01.

The theme of holism was developed in the original study (Borins 1998, 19–22 and 26–9). Borins approached the data with his own classification scheme for the characteristics of the innovations, one component of which was partnerships. In coding the applicants’ own testimony about what made their programs innovative, it became clear that, while

some programs were formal partnerships, other applicants were often referring to a wider range of interorganizational arrangements. (This category would also include the case of two municipalities sharing two expensive pieces of road maintenance equipment that deLeon and Denhardt (2000, 92) cite as “sav[ing] the taxpayers money through their effective use of resources.”) Applicants, particularly in social service programs, often described their innovations as dealing with the whole person, rather than any one problem a person faced. Finally, a third group of applicants emphasized their programs’ focus on developing a systemic understanding of how the problem they were attempting to solve interacted with other problems and programs. Thus, the overarching category of holism was introduced to encapsulate the three concepts that applicants most often expressed. This finding is consistent with other contemporary research on public-sector innovation; for example, Bardach (1998) examined a sample of successful interagency collaborative programs to deduce smart practices in developing and maintaining such arrangements.

Information technology (IT) innovations appear in the first sample as ingenious applications devised by middle managers with a technical background who saw opportunities that politicians and agency heads were unaware of. In the 1995–98 sample, awareness of IT’s potential was

Table 2 Characteristics of Innovations (percent)

Characteristic	1990–94	1995–98
Takes systems approach to problem	26	66
Coordinates organizations	29	57
Provides multiple services to clients	28	25
Total holistic	61	85
New technology	28	31
Simplified technology	2	2
Total technology	29	31
Faster process	31	35
Simpler process	7	8
Total process improvement	34	38
Empowerment of citizens or communities	34	17
Prevention of a problem	16	19
Uses incentives, not regulation	8	15
Use of private sector for public purposes	17	30
Use of volunteers	7	9
New management philosophy	15	13
Changes public attitudes	13	7
Lays groundwork for other programs	6	10
Spillover of benefits from program	8	12
Pilot program	1	18
Total (percent)	249	304
N	217	104

N = number of observations.

Correlation coefficient (*r*) between 1990–94 and 1995–98 distributions = .88, *t* = 5.99, significant at .01 with 11 degrees of freedom.

more widespread, evidenced by innovations with greater involvement by politicians and agency heads, entailing extensive transformation of the manner in which agencies conduct their business. For example, they often involved creating new information systems, such as using employment records to enforce child-support obligations of non-custodial parents (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1998) or using crime data from precincts to drive outcome-oriented policing (NYPD 1996). Web sites did not figure in the sample because the rapid spread of Internet technology in the public sector in the mid-1990s meant that they were quickly considered standard practice.

The third characteristic frequently observed—process improvement—refers to innovations designed to make governmental processes faster, friendlier, or more accessible. These initiatives often involved “one-stop shopping” for recipients of related government services; applications of the Pareto rule to separate a few complicated cases from many uncomplicated ones (U.S. Department of Labor 1995); separation of high-and low-value users through payment mechanisms such as electronic toll roads (California Department of Transportation 1997); voluntary compliance, especially in the regulation of business (US Consumer Product Safety Commission 1998); and alternative dispute resolution (Vermont Department of Corrections 1998)—a process that deLeon and Denhardt (2000, 94) advocate. Voluntary compliance and alternative dispute-resolution initiatives begin by recognizing that judicial processes are expensive, adversarial, and time consuming and looking for ways to streamline or circumvent them. Empowerment initiatives involve consultation with citizens’ or community groups in policy making or inviting them to play a role in policy implementation (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1998).

Using the private sector to achieve public purposes sometimes involved initiatives opening up public-sector activities, such as municipal services or military supply, to private-sector competition (City of Indianapolis 1995), but also used voluntary or nongovernmental organizations for program delivery in job training and placement (City of San Antonio 1995).

Analyzing these most-often-cited characteristics discloses a set of approaches and behaviors that challenge the image of public-sector innovators as self-promoters, rule breakers, and individuals intent on manipulating public authority for private gain. Getting autonomous agencies to work together requires both a commitment to the effectiveness of the partnership and a renunciation of egotism and the desire for individual dominance. Similarly, process improvement and new technology initiatives seek to help the public sector do its work faster, more effectively, and more compassionately, with little scope for grandstanding or self-promotion. Finally, ini-

tiatives that empower citizens or communities, by definition, entail a willingness to share power and renounce some measure of control. While deLeon and Denhardt (2000, 95) fear that reinvention represents a narrowing of the political sphere and an expansion of the market sphere, that theme was not observed very frequently in these samples. The image that emerges from the description is that the innovators developed creative solutions to public-sector problems, using tools such as interorganizational cooperation, process reengineering, information technology, citizen empowerment, and assistance from the private or voluntary sectors.

Why Innovate?

In their narratives, innovators described the different conditions or challenges that led to their innovations. These conditions fell into five groups: (1) initiatives coming from the political system, due to an election mandate, legislation enabling an innovation, or pressure by politicians; (2) new leadership, whether from outside or inside the organization; (3) a crisis, defined as a current or anticipated publicly visible failure or problem; (4) a variety of internal problems (failing to respond to a changing environment, inability to reach a target population, inability to meet demand for a program, resource constraints, or an inability to coordinate policies); and (5) new opportunities, created by technology or other causes. The frequency of these causes is shown in Table 3. Political initiatives, internal problems, and opportunities were all comprised of two or more subcategories, and the table reports the union of the subcategories in the same way that Table 2 reported the union of the three subcategories of holism.

By far, the most frequent impetus for innovation was internal problems, appearing in 49 percent of the earlier sample and 64 percent of the later. Although the definition of “crisis” was broad, crises appeared in only 30 percent of the earlier sample and 25 percent of the later sample, calling into question the view that public-sector innovation occurs primarily in response to a major crisis (Levin and Sanger 1994; Wilson 1966). The argument underlying this view is that many agencies, because they are monopolies and because they lack performance measures, perform poorly for a long time without improvement until they encounter a publicly visible crisis. The relative infrequency of crisis-driven innovation, however, suggests that crises are not a necessary condition for public-sector innovation. Innovators are more likely to respond to internal problems before they reach crisis proportions or take advantage of opportunities, such as the availability of new information technology. It could be argued that a risk-seeking self-promoter would even seek to create a crisis because it would provide an opportunity for dramatic action.

Table 3 Conditions Leading to Innovations (percent)

Condition	1990-94 total	1995-98 total	1995-98 federal	1995-98 state	1995-98 local
Election	2	5	6	5	7
Legislation	11	18	17	27	7
Pressure, lobbying	6	22	17	34	10
All political	19	40	35	54	26
New leader (from outside)	6	14	21	7	19
New leader (from inside)	4	2	0	5	0
New leader	9	16	21	11	19
Crisis	30	25	31	21	26
Environment changes	8	23	28	18	26
Can't reach market	27	29	38	23	29
Can't meet demand	11	14	17	14	13
Resource constraint	10	15	17	18	10
No policy coordination	4	4	7	0	7
All internal	49	64	79	57	61
Technology opportunity	18	8	10	7	7
Other new opportunity	16	9	3	14	7
Total opportunity	33	15	10	21	13
Total conditions	154	162	179	143	146
N	217	104	29	44	31

N = number of observations.

Correlation coefficient (*r*) between 1990-94 and total 1995-98 = .60, *t* = 2.49, significant at .05 with 11 degrees of freedom.

Correlation coefficient (*r*) between 1995-98 federal and 1995-98 state and local = .85, *t* = 5.35,

significant at .01 with 11 degrees of freedom.

The original study explored differences among innovations conceived by politicians, agency heads, and middle managers or front-line staff. Politicians were more likely to conceive of innovations that responded to crises, agency heads were more likely to innovate when they took over the reins, and public servants were more likely to innovate in response to internal problems or to take advantage of technological opportunities (Borins 1998, 48-9). Repeating these correlations for the 1995-98 sample produced similar results, which is consistent with Behn's picture of leadership at the political and bureaucratic levels. Politicians tend to focus on their chosen priorities or on crises. Public servants tend to innovate in areas that are not high on the political agenda, doing so by taking advantage of opportunities or proactively solving problems before they escalate to crises. This does not look like rule breaking or self-promotion on the part of public servants.

Finally, the correlation coefficient between the frequencies of the different conditions leading to innovation in the 1990-94 and 1995-98 samples was .6, significant at .05, while the correlation coefficient between the 1995-98 federal and total state and local frequencies was .85, significant at .01, again showing the similarity of the results over time and across levels of government.

Table 4 Supporters of Innovations, 1995-98 (percent)

Type of supporter	Total	Federal	State	Local
Supervisor	20	35	7	26
Agency head	27	28	27	26
Middle managers in agency	23	35	14	26
Other senior managers, board	24	35	16	26
Total within agency	62	79	46	68
Public-sector unions	15	17	11	19
Other agencies	44	48	36	52
Total other public sector	53	59	43	61
Political head of agency	23	24	21	26
President, governor, mayor	40	14	57	42
Other politicians	14	14	18	6
Legislative body	36	24	50	26
Total political	67	55	80	61
Public interest group	37	24	46	36
Clients of agency	36	45	39	23
Business lobby	39	35	46	32
Media	5	3	7	7
General public	23	17	27	23
Total public	91	90	96	97
N	104	29	44	31

N = number of observations.

Gathering Support

Applicants to the awards program were asked who their strongest supporters were. Table 4 shows the results for the 1995-98 sample. (It was not coded in the earlier sample.) The table shows supporters within the agency, elsewhere in the public sector, at the political level, and in the public. For each of these four groups, the table shows its union, that is the percentage of the total number of applications receiving support from one or more of the parties in the group.

It is noteworthy that the innovators received support for their ideas from many sources, both inside and outside the public sector. Still, there are significant patterns. Table 1 shows that the highest proportion of initiators at the federal level were public servants, and Table 4 shows that the highest percentage of innovations receiving support within the agency and from elsewhere in the public sector was in the federal government. Conversely, the highest proportion of political initiators was at the state level, and the highest percentage of innovations receiving support at the political level was in state government. Correlations were calculated between the initiators of the innovations and the nature of their supporters. Innovations initiated by public servants had a positive correlation with support from immediate supervisors and a negative correlation with support from the president or governor, the legislature, business lobbies, and the general public. Innovations initiated by agency heads had a

positive correlation with support from the political head of the agency and business lobbies. Innovations initiated by politicians had a positive correlation with support from the president or governor, the legislature, business lobbies, the media, and the general public. These correlations indicate relatively independent paths to innovation. Public servants worked through bureaucratic channels, rather than going over the heads of their colleagues to appeal directly for political support, and politicians went through political channels and mobilized public support. Working through appropriate channels is the hallmark of a responsible public servant whose commitment to desired ends does not negate respect for due process.

Winning Hearts and Minds

Question 5 asked about obstacles to the innovative program or policy initiative, how the initiator attempted to overcome them, and whether, in fact, they were overcome. Table 5 outlines the obstacles identified and compares the relative frequency of occurrence for both samples. The obstacles were divided into three groups. The first, obstacles arising primarily within the bureaucracy, included attitudes in the bureaucracy, turf wars, difficulty coordinating organizations, logistical problems, difficulty maintaining the enthusiasm of program staff, difficulty implementing a new technology, opposition by unions, opposition by middle management, and opposition to entrepreneurial action within the public sector. The second group identified obstacles arising in the political environment, such as inadequate funding or other resources, legislative or regulatory constraints, and political opposition. One obstacle with both bureaucratic and political aspects was inadequate resources, which could result from funding decisions made at the bureaucratic or the political level. The third group addressed obstacles in the environment outside the public sector, such as public doubts about the effectiveness of the program, difficulty reaching the target group, opposition by affected private-sector interests, public opposition, and opposition from private-sector entities that, as a result of the innovation, would be forced to compete with the public sector.

The three groups of obstacles appear with similar frequencies in both samples. In addition, the correlation coefficient using the frequencies of all obstacles is .86, with a *t*-statistic of 6.9 with 16 degrees of freedom, significant at .01 in a two-tail test. The largest number of obstacles arose within the public sector, reflecting the tendency of these innovations to change occupational patterns, standard operating procedures, and power structures. Many instances of obstructive attitudes were cited, particularly on the part of occupational or professional groups. For example, police officers were sometimes opposed to com-

Table 5 Obstacles to Innovation

Obstacles	1995-1998		1990-1994	
	Occurrences	Percent of total	Occurrences	Percent of total
Internal Obstacles				
Bureaucratic attitudes	18	8.7	48	9.4
Turf fights	3	1.4	9	1.8
Other bureaucratic resistance	15	7.2	35	6.8
Total bureaucratic	36	17.4	92	18
Difficulty coordinating	14	6.8	52	10.2
Logistics	15	7.2	51	10
Maintaining enthusiasm, burnout	5	2.4	33	6.4
Implementing technology	9	4.3	30	5.9
Union opposition	6	2.9	7	1.4
Middle-management opposition	4	1.9	7	1.4
Opposition to entrepreneurs	2	1	4	0.8
Total internal	91	44	276	53.9
Political Environment				
Inadequate resources	24	11.6	89	17.4
Legislative, regulatory constraints	14	6.8	34	6.6
Political opposition	13	6.3	8	1.6
Total political	51	24.6	131	25.6
External Obstacles				
External doubts	22	10.6	48	9.4
Reaching target group	19	9.2	30	5.9
Affected private-sector interests	14	6.8	14	2.8
Public opposition	6	2.9	7	1.4
Private-sector competitors	6	2.9	6	1.2
Total external	65	32.1	105	20.5
Total	207	100	512	100

Correlation coefficient (*r*) between 1990-94 and 1995-98 = .86, *t* = 6.9, significant at .01 with 16 degrees of freedom.

munity policing initiatives because it required them to do what they considered “social work.” Health professionals opposed initiatives that employed community health workers or advocates in outreach programs. To generalize, programs often encounter opposition by professional groups when they require professions normally having little contact to work together; when they require professionals to do something not traditionally viewed as being within the scope of their work; and when they use volunteers, community workers, or paraprofessionals (Borins 1998, 67, 288). The internal obstacle encountered least frequently was opposition to acting entrepreneurially, which constituted only 1 percent of the occurrences in both samples. If innovators were in fact behaving in the irresponsible and freewheeling manner of which they stand accused, we would expect to see a much higher incidence of opposition based on the perceived illegitimacy of their initiatives. Instead, most innovators experienced reactions to the anticipated effects of successfully planned programs.

Under political obstacles, lack of resources appeared most frequently. This can be explained by the fact that many innovations, particularly in the social services, were pilot

programs looking for additional resources to increase their scale of operations. Legislative or regulatory constraints occurred when an innovator was hampered by existing legislation or by regulations that had previously been enacted, for other reasons. Opposition from elected politicians appeared least frequently. It occurred more frequently in the later sample (6.3 percent of the total number of obstacles) than in the earlier (1.6 percent of the total) because the later sample had a somewhat greater incidence of innovations initiated at the political level, particularly in state government. The infrequency of political obstacles may mean that bureaucratic innovators are working far enough from the political level that their work isn't very noticeable to politicians or, if their work is noticeable, that they understand what is and is not politically feasible and gauge their actions accordingly. In those cases in the earlier sample where there was political or public opposition, however, it was overcome approximately 70 percent of the time (Borins 1998, 67).

The third set of obstacles—external obstacles—includes problems of program design, such as reaching the program's target population, public doubts about a program (approximately 10 percent of all obstacles in both samples), and more active public opposition (approximately 2 percent of all obstacles in both samples). The earlier study showed that external doubts were overcome 90 percent of the time and public opposition approximately 70 percent of the time (Borins 1998, 67). The infrequency of both political and public opposition and the substantial frequency with which obstacles were overcome suggests that the public recognizes that the performance of the public sector can be enhanced and that policy outcomes in many areas can be improved. They are not wedded to existing policies nor to existing procedures, and they are receptive to innovation and change.

Table 6 shows various tactics that were used to overcome the obstacles to innovation and the number of times each was cited for both samples. The correlation coefficient of the frequencies of the different obstacles between the two samples was .82, significant at .01, again showing stability over time. The tactics most commonly used in both samples could be described broadly as persuasion—showing the benefits of an innovation, establishing demonstration projects, and social marketing—and accommodation—consultation with affected parties, co-optation of affected parties by involving them in the governance of the innovation, providing training for those whose work would be affected by the innovation, compensating losers, and making a program culturally or linguistically sensitive. The innovators took objections seriously and attempted to change the minds of opponents or skeptics or modified the innovation so that opponents or skeptics would be more comfortable with it.

It is instructive that the tactic used least frequently in both samples was something that might be considered a “power politics” approach—changing the manager responsible for program implementation. The innovators usually attempted to persuade or accommodate their opponents, rather than appealing to superiors to use their authority to overcome them. They were using consensus-building rather than strong-arm tactics.

Table 6 Tactics to Overcome Obstacles to Innovation, Total Frequency Used

Tactic	1990–94		1995–98	
	Number of cites	Percent of total	Number of cities	Percent of total
Demonstrate to opponents that program really advances their interests, provides benefits to them	56	11	17	8
Social marketing	29	5	23	10
Demonstration project	28	5	13	6
Total persuasion	113	21	53	24
Training affected parties	51	10	25	11
Consultation with affected parties	50	9	25	11
Co-optation/buy-in (opponents/skeptics become participants)	40	8	20	9
Program design made linguistically, culturally sensitive	14	3	2	1
Compensation for losers, design so that losers not worse off	5	1	6	3
Total accommodation	160	30	76	34
Finding additional resources of any kind	55	10	17	8
Persistence, effort	49	9	20	9
Logistical problems were resolved	41	8	11	5
Other	28	5	8	4
Gaining political support, building alliances	25	5	11	5
Focus on most important aspects of innovation, develop a clear vision	21	4	6	3
Technology was modified	20	4	6	3
Legislation or regulations were changed	10	2	10	4
Provide recognition for program participants or supporters	7	1	2	1
Changing managers responsible for program implementation	4	1	4	2
Total use of tactics	533	100	224	100

Correlation coefficient (*r*) between 1990–94 and total 1995–98 = .82, *t* = 5.7, significant at .01 with 16 degrees of freedom.

The earlier study matched up the individual obstacles presented in Table 5 with the tactics used to overcome them, presented in Table 6 (Borins 1998, 73). For example, there were 92 instances of bureaucratic opposition, and innovators most frequently responded by providing training (24 percent), demonstrating the benefits of the innovation (23 percent), consultation with affected parties (20 percent), and persistence (20 percent). When the obstacle was diffi-

culty coordinating organizations, something often faced by holistic innovations, the most frequent responses were consultation with affected parties (31 percent), co-optation of affected parties (27 percent), focusing attention on the most important aspects of the innovation (19 percent), persistence (15 percent), and providing training (12 percent). These tactics are explicit examples of how an innovator who wants to make a holistic innovation succeed would renounce egotism and individual dominance.

The most frequent responses to legislative or regulatory constraints were attempting to change the legislation or regulations to permit the innovation (27 percent), building political support for the innovation (23 percent), persistence (20 percent), demonstrating the benefits of the innovation (9 percent), and consultation (6 percent). This is not breaking or bending rules, but rather accepting the need to conform to current rules while working to change them. Political opposition was most frequently overcome by building political support for the innovation (25 percent), demonstrating the innovation's benefits (25 percent), and persistence (25 percent). Finally, public doubts were most frequently overcome by demonstrating the benefits of the program to opponents or skeptics (31 percent), consultation with affected parties (23 percent), demonstration projects (21 percent), co-optation of affected parties (19 percent), and social marketing (17 percent).

Overall, the responses to the obstacles raised show that the innovators took objections seriously and attempted to meet objectors on their own terms, rather than appealing to authority or using strong-arm tactics. They did not necessarily view opposition to change as a bad thing, but rather as a challenge to communicate their message more clearly and a suggestion about how to improve the design of their programs.

Conclusion

Previous research based on the 1990–94 sample argued that innovators demonstrated integrity in innovation in numerous ways: by proactively solving problems before they became crises; by taking opposition seriously and attempting to deal with it forthrightly through persuasion or accommodation, rather than through power politics; by developing a clear vision of an innovation and staying focused on that vision; and by objectively evaluating an innovation to see if it is working (Borins 1998, 283–9). The results of the 1995–98 sample strongly replicate the earlier sample, as demonstrated by the statistically significant correlations. This evidence from the Ford–KSG awards paints a picture of public-management innovators that is far closer to Behn's vision of enterprising leaders taking astute initiatives than it is to deLeon, Denhardt, and Terry's loose cannons, rule breakers, self-promoters, power

politicians, and manipulators of public authority for private gain.

Research advances by accumulating evidence. Those who hold the viewpoint expressed by deLeon, Denhardt, and Terry may be unconvinced by the evidence presented in this paper. If so, let them design their own empirical studies of public-management innovators to search for the reckless self-promoters, the irresponsible entrepreneurs, and the profiteers in reformers' clothing. Undoubtedly there will be such cases; one who most readily comes to mind is Robert Citron, the elected treasurer who bankrupted Orange County through risky investments in derivative securities (Cohen and Eimicke 1999). The question to be explored, however, is whether there are many such cases, or at most a handful. Has the reinvention movement turned loose upon American government a plague of rule breakers, profiteers, and self-promoters? An objective accumulation of evidence would determine whether such fears are justified or exaggerated.

The debate over public entrepreneurship is a debate about trade-offs. Proponents of reinvention call for a relaxation of central-agency controls and advocate experimentation, for example in the federal government's reinvention labs. While it is in the nature of experimentation that some individual experiments will not be successful, they argue that, on balance, these initiatives will enhance public-sector effectiveness and efficiency, with little degradation in other important values, such as probity, fairness, and justice (Jones and Thompson 1999). Critics believe the potential gains are smaller and the risks in terms of other values greater. This debate is not merely academic, but will influence the regulations governing public servants. The vast majority of the innovators discussed in this study did not work in reinvention labs or in other environments that were particularly supportive of innovation. If elected politicians take to heart the fears expressed by the critics, the public sector will likely become increasingly inhospitable to innovation. That would be most unfortunate, because the evidence presented here shows innovators who achieved beneficial results—such as enhanced client well-being, improved service, and lower cost—and did it with integrity.

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Appendix Questions Discussed in This Paper

1. What individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of the program or policy initiative? Please specify their position or organizational affiliation at the time they initiated the program or policy initiative (see Table 1).
2. What makes your program or policy initiative innovative? Compare it with other programs currently operating in your region, state, or nationally that address the same problem. How does your approach differ? (asked in 1990–94).
Describe your innovation; include the specific problem it addresses, and how it has changed previous practice. (asked in 1995–98) (see Table 2).
3. When and how was the program or policy initiative originally conceived in your jurisdiction? Please describe any specific incidents or circumstances that led to the initiative. (see Table 3).
4. What individuals or organizations are the strongest supporters of the program or policy initiative and why? (see Table 4).
5. Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program or policy initiative. How did you deal with each of the obstacles? Which implementation obstacles or difficulties remain? (see Tables 5 and 6).