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Ideas and crisis in policy and administration: Existing links and research frontiers

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Abstract

The study of ideas and crisis in public policy and administration has generated two literatures with shared interests, but often distinct approaches. In this Symposium introduction, we argue that crisis studies and the "ideas school" have much to learn from each other. To facilitate cross-pollination, this article reviews key insights from the two literatures with relevance across the divide. In our view, crisis studies offer important parameters that can help realize some of the ambitions expressed in the ideas school, such as how different crises and crisis stages affect opportunities for institutional and policy change. Similarly, ideational studies show new ways for crisis scholars to approach coherence in coordination among crisis actors, network information, and public communication. We conclude by assessing the contribution of the three Symposium papers to drawing new links between the fields and suggest future avenues for research.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Crisis and ideas are core subjects of study in public policy and administration. On the one hand, empirical and theoretical accounts have traced the management of economic and environmental crises, natural disasters, public health events, and terrorist attacks, to name a selection. Managing crisis is not simply about responding after an event, though active and coordinated crisis response is critical. It also includes a cycle of risk management and prevention, creating and maintaining preparedness, crisis detection and recognition, recovery and normalization, and evaluating

and learning from past efforts. With the onset of major global crises, such as the Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as creeping transboundary crises like climate change and antimicrobial resistance, there is high demand for scholarship that can explain crises' effects in contemporary public administration and policy, and show how to minimize harms to lives, systems, and regimes.

Ideas, on the other hand, occupy public administration, management, and policy scholars mainly as a major category of explanation. Whether ideas are identified as concepts, theories, problem definitions, policy paradigms or value systems, much scholarship has shown and explored their role in shaping policies and public sector processes (Béland, 2005; Mehta, 2010). A core quality of influential ideas is that they are shared or accepted among key elites or populations. For instance, sharing ideas enables the construction of ideational and advocacy coalitions (Carpenter, 2001; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018), more loosely formed discourse coalitions (Fischer, 2003; Hajer, 1993), epistemic communities (Dunlop, 2013; Haas, 1992), powerful professions (Freidson, 2001), various issue and policy networks (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992; Sikkink, 1993; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007), and even broader knowledge regimes (Campbell & Pedersen, 2011). These can use collective force to convert shared ideas into public actions and policies.

Despite the unique developments within their respective fields, scholars of crisis and ideas scholars have often explored these phenomena separately, overlooking important interactions between them. We have undertaken this Symposium because we believe that there is much to learn about how these two bodies of public policy and administration scholarship interact and inform each other. A brief investigation of existing contributions addressing crisis-ideas interactions reveal some of the untapped potentials for these bodies of scholarship to inform each other.

In studies aiming to explain or understand administrative or policy outcomes using ideas, crises are often "focusing events" or "critical junctures" (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2013). They matter when they delegitimize ideas used to justify or make sense of administrative or policy settings, instruments or regimes—thus generating perceived crises of ideas themselves (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, p. 27). Hence, the onset of crisis may give new ideas space or help old ideas re-gain relevance, giving rise to real changes or innovations. At the same time, crises hardly guarantee important ideational changes. For instance, the Global Financial Crisis arguably left neoliberalism intact as a dominant driver of economic policy in many jurisdictions (Mirowski, 2013). The permanence of some ideas and not others, has also led to a deeper appreciation of the importance of actors' discursive management of crisis in engendering radical or incremental policy change (Boin et al., 2009). Further, a key recent concern of some literature has been the adaptability and malleability of ideas in the face of challenges, questioning whether coherence or consistency are necessary qualities of ideational forces, and empirically discovering processes of mixing and matching such as bricolage or layering (Carstensen, 2011; Kay, 2007). That is, careful attention to how actual crises affect uses of ideas in policy and administrative cases has generated new theory of ways that ideas affect public sector activity.

In crisis and disaster management studies, ideas are often important but implicit. If one person's crisis may be another's opportunity, crises are not merely objective combinations of threat, uncertainty, and urgency; they also include unevenly distributed consequences (Marsh & McConnell, 2010). Hence, political leaders, policymakers, and public agencies that declare a crisis depend on political settlements to define specific conditions as a crisis worthy of government effort. In turn, this means that policy actors make use of concepts and instrumentation to detect crisis conditions. Crisis management studies often chart operational tasks related to preserving life and protecting property. That is, they privilege specific ideas about social values (life and property), and depend on conceptualizing and operationalizing these. The field explicitly focuses on ideas and their roles in studies of how to shape public awareness and beliefs, and longer-term legitimacy of crisis management efforts ("symbolic" crisis management, e.g., 't Hart [1993]). This is not far away from roles of framing and shared ideas (or constructivism) theorized in broader policy and political studies (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Buzan et al., 1998; Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994; Wendt, 1999). Finally, crisis managers use ideas to respond to uncertainty. Ideas are critical during circumstances where action is urgently needed but uncertainty prevails (i.e., for acute crisis responses): theories, models, heuristics, and conjectures offer paths to action. Yet risk management, prevention, and preparedness activities also involve uncertain circumstances (unknown futures) calling for action (e.g., building dams, mounting vaccination campaigns, training emergency responders). Here, imagined scenarios, predictions, models, and simulations play crucial roles.

Careful attention to how ideas insert themselves into and shape crisis management enables us to see that theories of ideas in public management and policy decision-making can speak directly to crisis management theory and practice.

Nevertheless, while we do see scholars of policy ideas engaging with the role of crisis, and vice versa, there remain several important gaps, potential points of engagement and unanswered questions among and between these literatures. The aim of this Symposium is to identify key ways that ideas and crisis management scholars can learn from each other. In this introductory article, we begin by laying out the distinct contributions of these literatures to understanding the role of crises for policy ideas and the role of ideas in crisis management. Here, we identify how the two areas of study can be of more use to each other, using the papers in this Symposium to illustrate the utility of dialogue. Finally, we conclude by highlighting directions for future research, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 | A CRITICAL REVIEW OF IDEAS-CRISIS RESEARCH

2.1 | Crisis in the "ideas school"

Crisis has long been central to what is known as the "ideas school" in public policy (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2022). Several of the more prominent early accounts of ideas in policy-making saw crises as generating the conditions for ideational change. For example, John Kingdon's (1984) Multiple Streams Framework relied upon "focusing events" as a stimulus to bring new issues to the political agenda, Baumgartner and Jones' (1993) theory of punctuated equilibrium relied on crises to create new political opportunity structures for actors to destabilize policy monopolies and introduce new policy ideas, while Peter Hall's (1993) paradigm shifts saw crises as a means of delegitimizing the existing policy status quo. In general, scholars working in this literature take as a starting point the observation that, as Mark Blyth (2002, p. 9) argues, crises are not "self-apparent." Rather, they require convincing diagnoses and narratives (Hay, 1996). Thus, the opportunities offered by crises to disrupt policy status quo are realized through actors' strategic framing or discursive action. In this way, scholars of ideas are interested in the "dialectic between ideational and material forces" (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2022, p. 849). Hence, crises of are interest to the extent that their material impacts (or the threat of) stretch existing orthodoxies to breaking point, forcing actors to adapt their ideas or presenting opportunities for alternative coalitions to form around new or re-emerging ideas.

In such times, ideas can play a variety of specific roles. According to Swinkels (2020), three have emerged as most prominent in the literature. First, ideas may take the form of "heuristics" that guide the interpretations and actions of individual policymakers. Second, they can be "strategic tools" used by coalitions to discursively shape meaning and as "weapons" (Blyth, 2002) in political struggles over what is to be done—ideas here can be used as a source of power alongside or in conjunction with institutional and coercive power to determine crisis responses (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Finally, ideas may be embedded as broader "institutional frameworks" or paradigms that govern policy-making writ large in certain domains. However, despite these initially clear links, theorization of the "crisis" side of the relationship has not kept up with understanding of what ideas themselves do in public administration or policy-making.

This is for several reasons. First, the literature has to some extent moved away from the initial focus on the opportunities for large and sudden ideational (e.g., paradigm) shifts that crises may create, following the recognition in historical institutionalism that much important change occurs through gradual or incremental processes (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). Examining more gradual forms of change is attractive for scholars of ideas, because one major task of the literature was to demonstrate that they were important independent forces, rather than epiphenomenal dressings for "real" material factors (Béland, 2005; Campbell, 1998; Schmidt, 2010).

Second, the focus has often been on economic crises, especially as these pertain to macroeconomic policy or to the welfare state (e.g., Starke et al., 2013). For scholars in these areas, the most obvious development in public policy

over the last several decades has been the diffusion neoliberalism and associated ideas and practices regarding public management and governance (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). Again, as such ideas mainly originate in economic thinking, scholars understandably focus on economic crisis as a potential point of delegitimization and renewal.[1] To a large extent, this branch of political science literature has now transcended its economic origins. Discursive institutionalism, for example, is now commonly used in relation to environmental policy (den Besten et al., 2014; Gillard, 2016) and ideational approaches are increasingly applied to understanding migration governance (Boswell et al., 2011; Maricut, 2017; Ripoll Servent, 2020). However, for ideas scholars this has not led to meaningful retheorizing of the role that crisis may play, especially recognition of the ways in which crises themselves may vary or the varied political and policy impacts of crisis depending on contextual and situational factors (both of which are common themes in crisis management literature).

Key approaches to theorizing public policy processes have also placed ideas at their center, though often in parallel to political economy discourses. Shared ideas among powerful actors are the key ingredient in advocacy coalitions that dominate policy subsystems in the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Narrative policy theories fully embrace the constructivist enterprise of creating and maintaining shared ideas as the driving force in policy-making (Jones & McBeth, 2010), akin to approaches found in some international relations scholarship (Wendt, 1999). Ideational concepts like framing and problem definition play important roles in how the aforementioned Punctuated Equilibrium and Multiple Streams frameworks explain policy continuity and change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Kingdon, 1984). Yet as with the political economy-focused accounts reviewed above, the policy process theoretical approaches primarily treat crises as exogenous shocks that may shatter shared ideas. Crises do this by moving supporters away from ideas (e.g., splitting the advocacy coalition, Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018) moving public attention to other problems (Downs, 1972), or by invalidating the ideas themselves, and triggering a process of policy learning which may result in the abandonment of previously upheld policy ideas (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2018).

Recently, useful advances have emerged from questioning the assumption that "many crises have a 'paradigm-shattering' quality to them" (Boin et al., 2016, p. 128), and instead investigate more piecemeal and gradual forms of change. This has been particularly the case in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis. Despite the widespread nature and acknowledgement of the crisis, it has largely not led to a fundamental rethinking of economic policy in line with what Hall (1993) observed in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s—per Blyth (2013, p. 205), "we were all Keynesians for about 12 months." While summarizing all developments in public administration, policy, or political economy literature is beyond the scope of this introduction, we identify three that are clearly salient to the analysis of crisis.

First, focusing on the broad institutional frameworks or paradigms that may govern policy domains, scholars have identified ways in which ideas are malleable and adaptable when challenged. For example, in Carstensen and Matthijs's (2018) analysis of British economic policy, they describe "inter-paradigm" shifts, where actors utilize more pragmatic strategies to adapt their own priorities into existing policy regimes, without resulting in wholesale replacement of neoliberalism as a guiding paradigm. This finding is broadly in line with Schmidt and Thatcher's (2013) argument regarding neoliberalism's capacity for shape-shifting in response to challenges, as well as observations made by scholars of the welfare state, who have observed the use of markets and privatization by both left and right parties in the wake of a general perception of crisis in mature welfare systems (Gingrich, 2011; Hannah, 2018). Evidence casting doubt on whether coherent and stable paradigms exist in some policy areas has led to descriptions of various more gradual mechanisms of ideational change, such as through layering (Kay, 2007), conversion (Chwieroth & Walter, this issue), and bricolage (Carstensen, 2011; Hannah, 2020)—each involving the recombination of ideas, instruments, and policy goals.

Second, a related focus of inquiry has been to link the malleability of ideas and the formation of coalitions. As described, how ideas become and remain widely shared is a critical issue for ideational scholarship. The basic insight in several theoretical approaches is that communities and networks generate and *are generated by* shared ideas. In addition, relaxing assumptions about ideational coherence and coordination, ideas that people share do not have to be all-encompassing or systematic. Rather, enterprising actors can pick and choose ideas for the sake of constructing

shared views. For example, much recent work has examined what are referred to variously as "vehicular" (McLennan, 2004), "chameleonic" (Smith, 2013), "polysemic" (Béland & Cox, 2016; Hannah & Baekkeskov, 2020) or "multidimensional" (Skogstad & Wilder, 2019) ideas. Here, ideas such as "sustainability" or "the Europe of Knowledge" are said to be "coalition magnets," as their capacity for varied interpretation by diverse interests and stakeholders enables formation of multi-sectoral coalitions (Béland & Cox, 2016; Cino Pagliarello, 2022). These more loosely formed coalitions may help to understand the resilience or adaptability of policy in the face of crisis.

Third, scholars have sought to better identify relationships between ideas and power. Carstensen and Schmidt (2016, 2021) remind us that the ability to shape crisis management, reform dynamics and policy learning stem from multiple forms of power (see also Dunlop & Radaelli, 2013): asymmetric material resources and positions of authority (power *over* ideas); ideational powers of persuasion, leadership and innovation in the face of uncertainty (power *through* ideas; see also Stiller, 2010); the institutionalization of certain ideas through lasting organizations, rules, plans or norms (power *in* ideas), which may also privilege certain actors or types of responses over others (Andersen & Breidahl, 2021).

Therefore, we can see that within the scholarship, despite early disappointment over the limited path breaking effects of crisis, there has been further theorization of the interaction between crisis and ideas. Here, scholars have focused primarily on the nature and characteristics of ideas themselves. However, we posit that much more can be learned by engaging with crisis and disaster management studies.

2.2 | Ideas in crisis and disaster management studies

Crisis and disaster management scholars have sometimes engaged closely with major policy theories that deal with ideas. For example, Nohrstedt (2010) is a key contributor to the Advocacy Coalition Framework and has used it to examine crisis management, such as the interaction of strategic concerns with party beliefs regarding nuclear energy in Swedish nuclear energy policy after the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl disasters. Similarly, Dolan (2019) takes a Multiple Streams approach to the analysis of water policy in Australia, focusing on issue linkages between water management and climate change. Such studies offer sophisticated accounts of crisis management. But they pay less attention to defining where key ideas fall on the spectrum between stable systems of thought and conceptual fragments that drift. Moreover, crisis management studies often prescribe ideational coherence (coordinated planning, pooled information, meaning-making, consistent messaging, real learning from past mistakes, and so forth) as the general path to better outcomes (e.g., Donahue & Tuohy, 2006; Incident Command System Tutorial, n.d.). This tendency offers little reflection about unintended consequences of such integration, such as the empowerment of bad ideas, crowding out other social values, or politics. For example, crucial ideas may be ignored, or opposed, by powerful actors or key constituencies.

Crisis studies are most explicit about the role of ideas in discussions of how to define crises, and public communication about crises. Crises are "in the eye of the beholder" (Boin et al., 2009, p. 83; McConnell, 2020), making crisis management critically dependent on framing before, during, and after crises. Yet as Drennan et al. (2014) describe, crises are often not just subjective. Some impose themselves on societies and governance, through objective events such as earthquakes, epidemics, financial collapse, and more. Ideas come into play when leaders (or their opponents) try to define the character and consequences of events or circumstances. Such ideational construction matters inside government to rally attention and resources, and in public communication to persuade citizens to take appropriate actions. For example, a choice to frame an event such as bushfire as either an emergency management issue or a sustainability issue can have important consequences for the development of responses (Bosomworth, 2015). Ideas also matter in accountability processes for assigning credit or blame for crisis management successes or failures, respectively. For instance, frequently observed "post-crisis blame games" are contests between different narratives about crisis management processes and outcomes (Boin et al., 2009).

The act of declaring a crisis has also gained significant attention in crisis studies. Recognition or acknowledgement of a crisis sets up pathways forward. Crucially, political leaders' very "speech act" of declaring a crisis may create a new political situation in itself, with possibilities for extraordinary action and policy (Buzan et al., 1998). The political consequences of crisis declarations are even more evident in situations where the distribution of decision-making authority is not definitive. For example, in the European Union context, the declaration of crisis can affect the balance of power among the institutions, expanding the space for political actors such as the European Council to participate in policy processes "normally" the preserve of legislative actors such as the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers (Maricut, 2016). Some crisis scholars also give attention to recognizing crisis termination, that is, deciding when a crisis is over (Boin & 't Hart, 2007). In this space, however, interests and ideas interact. Mere re-framing by leaders of current circumstances is not enough to return policy and action to "normalcy" when multiple, and at times newly empowered, actors and constituencies are involved as victims or stakeholders.

Next, crisis studies often privilege particular social value systems. First, as the previous discussion suggests, crisis is associated with overriding policy priority, placing crisis response above business-as-usual and alternative policy processes. An axiom of crisis studies is that ignoring crises or treating them as just another public problem creates serious and preventable harms or risks.

Second, normative crisis management theories and guidelines rely on particular value systems, typically privileging saving lives and property in affected areas or domains above other social values (cf. Drennan et al., 2014). Such clear and simple values enable focused and clear objectives for crisis management operations, which no doubt aids their efficiency and perhaps ability to achieve their objectives. Yet, such focus also means that governance actors responding to crises may make little effort to preserve social values that are placed at risk in crisis responses but are outside of their objectives. This was richly illustrated by adverse and sometimes unmitigated effects of COVID-19 responses starting in 2020, in many countries, on human rights, mental well-being, jobs, gender roles, democratic institutions, and more.

A final point about crisis studies to appreciate is that ideas play crucial roles in overcoming uncertainty. First, uncertainty is a key part of crisis response, particularly in its early and most acute phase. That is, too little may be known about the character of the threat or what to do to mitigate it for effective action to be guaranteed; yet action is urgent, for the sake of heading off catastrophe. So, what are bases for action in these circumstances? Through sense-making processes, responders combine scarce and scattered data with coherent assumptions and other theory (or "preconceptions"), to gain an actionable picture of the situation (Boin & 't Hart, 2007; Keller et al., 2012; Weick, 1988). Trained emergency responders rely on ingrained heuristics to act fast and often effectively, based on repeated experiences or scenario and simulation exercises (Klein et al., 2010; Marewski & Gigerenzer, 2012). That is, uncertainty forces crisis response to choose between acting from ideas and theories, acting at random, or paralysis.

Second, pre-crisis management depends heavily on ideas to overcome fundamental uncertainty about what the future holds. Prevention, risk management, preparedness, and detection all rely on ideas about what will happen, that is, anticipation (Beck, 1992; Drennan et al., 2014; Wildavsky, 1988). Sometimes, anticipation can escalate to wild fantasy, creating illusions of manageability (Clarke, 1999). Such imagined futures have real-world consequences inside and outside government. Models of likely futures support monitoring for particular kinds of threats (such as through meteorology, seismology, macroeconomics, epidemiology, and intelligence services), generating a variety of knowledge and ideational inputs to government decision-making. Imagined futures also support prevention, planning, and preparedness activities, such as scenario and simulation exercises for responders, work routines in high-risk sectors, actuarial modeling and insurance markets for likely victims, prepared crisis response processes, and, indeed, crisis studies (Baekkeskov, 2016; Collier & Lakoff, 2015; LaPorte & Consolini, 1991). Of course, ideas can only go so far. Anticipation relies on recalled past experiences and limits of imagination, making surprises practically inevitable when crises emerge and mature (Wildavsky, 1988). Yet foresight, by way of theories, models, projections, extrapolations, and scenarios, is nevertheless critical for early warning and response in the face of the unknown.

To reiterate, there are several key points already shared between the "ideas school" and crisis studies. While significant material impacts are common in many forms of crisis, labeling an event as a crisis is an interpretive and

discursive act. Ideas provide frameworks for diagnosing the causes of crisis, developing responses, and persuading coalitions or building legitimacy for action. Nevertheless, this Symposium argues for closer attention to crisis-ideas interactions and the potential for further cross-pollinations between these two literatures. The utility of this dialogue is clearly illustrated in the contributions to this Symposium outlined in this section. The next and final part of this introductory chapter seeks to outline an agenda for future research on the cross-pollination between the two bodies of scholarship.

3 | WHAT CAN IDEAS AND CRISIS SCHOLARS LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?

When considering relationships between crises and ideas, language offers many possibilities. Crisis of ideas, crisis through ideas. Ideas for crisis, ideas in crisis. This Symposium is not concerned with all possible relationships. Rather, it seeks ways to tie together two strands of scholarship that both speak to public policy and administration, but in our view could do more to address and make explicit use of each other's studies. As the previous sections show, this is not because ideas scholarship has no use for crises, or crisis scholarship has no use for ideas (summarized in Table 1).

This section focuses on the substance of our pursuit of cross-pollination, highlighting important cross-insights from the two literatures, outlining key contributions made by the three articles in this Symposium, and making suggestions for future research at the crisis-ideas intersection (summarized in Table 2).

Crisis management emphasizes consistent public messaging, coherent narratives (meaning-making), and shared situation awareness (sense-making and pooled information). This makes good sense because confusion on the part of crisis victims, lack of public support for crisis management, and response teams working at cross-purposes all increase the risk of catastrophic outcomes in crisis situations. In complex political systems, this at least partly depends on "developing ideas that are broadly shared across the polity and enable communication about common concerns that can lead to collective action for the public good." (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2021, p. 927).

Yet in the high uncertainty of crises, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances is crucial (Boin & Lodge, 2016). Moreover, despite the noted importance of shared understandings, group think or ignorance to

TABLE 1 Summary of crisis-ideas interactions

	Crisis and disaster management studies	Ideas school in political and public policy sciences
The role of ideas	Frames help define and communicate crises. Values help prioritize crisis management. Anticipations help overcome uncertainties.	Ideas come in varieties from specific to general, including solutions and problem definitions, policy programs, paradigms, philosophies, and systems of belief. Ideas can be independent forces in public policy and administration processes. Ideas gain force when shared between key elites or populations. Ideas can be embedded in institutions.
The role of crisis	Crisis is an overriding priority in public policy, governance, administration, and management, and hence, requires special attention and resourcing. While each crisis is unique, crisis management shares important characteristics between crises.	Crises are (usually) exogenous shocks that can disrupt settled ideas, and hence, politics and policy.

TABLE 2 Cross-pollination highlights

	From idea studies to crisis studies	From crisis studies to idea studies
Useful literature insights	Malleability of ideas can be politically useful (and perhaps even essential for mitigating thorny public problems).	Adherence to knowledge has good consequences (and non-adherence can lead to catastrophe). Crisis management includes different processes and objectives, which may juxtapose or align crisis managers and reform entrepreneurs (e.g., response or recovery).
Key additions in this Symposium	Even some major crises can be settled by using flexible and malleable elements within systems of thought (Chwieroth and Walter).	Policy framing may need to align with public expectations to make public communication legitimate and effective (Ball et al) Leaders' attachment to preferences and willful ignorance can derail policy efficacy (Parker and Stern).
Research frontiers	When does insistence on coherence—consistent messages, articulated meaning, shared awareness—hinder solutions? What are important tensions between coherence and malleability? Where does the art of ideational construction derail effective policy? At what stages can crisis management help—or hurt—reform efforts?	

alternatives are genuine risks (Strassheim & Kettunen, 2014). Actors, such as policy entrepreneurs, who can build alignment between ideas and interests among political leaders and, for example, scientifically or experientially established knowledge, are crucial, assuming the aim of crisis management is efficacy (Miles & Petridou, 2015).

As previously described, ideational scholars see that flexibility and fragmentation of ideas (e.g., layering, conversion, bricolage, polysemic ideas) offer prospects for drawing together coalitions of diverse actors to tackle complex, or "wicked problems," and overcome the logics of path dependency (Béland & Cox, 2016; Hannah & Baekkeskov, 2020; Smith, 2013). Such flexibility may also be useful for successful crisis management, particularly to facilitate collaboration among what are often multiorganizational, trans-jurisdictional, polycentric response networks (Boin & Lodge, 2016).

Indeed, Jeffrey Chwieroth and Andrew Walter's contribution to this Symposium illustrates how ideas' malleability can enable crisis settlements. The analysis shows how, in the context of the Global Financial Crisis, neoliberal economic policy norms were malleable enough to adapt to the demands of an emergent coalition—middle-class home owners. Despite crisis bailouts being at odds with accepted policy norms, domestic policymakers were willing to engage in "intra-crisis conversion" to ensure their political survival. Per Chwieroth and Walter, the supra-national imposition of austerity further satisfied the demands of domestic audiences, while moving existing elite policy goals forward in a way that was not previously possible. At the same time, adaptation to the demands of homeowners during the global financial crisis was in large part done to protect the interests of powerful policymakers and their macro-level goals. For Chwieroth and Walter, the incoherent synthesis between domestic bailouts and foreign austerity has the potential to sow the seeds of future crisis. It follows that an important area for new insights for crisis studies is further exploration of uses of malleability, and tensions between malleability and coherence.

Rather than internally coherent sets of ideas, such new emphasis could be alignment between leaders, groups, and the public. In this Symposium, Ball, McConnell, and Stark build on the concept of audience, which has enjoyed significant and growing attention in public administration research (e.g., Busuioc, 2016; Carpenter, 2001; Maor, 2007; Rimkutė, 2018). The analysis considers how well frames used by crisis leaders match public expectations, and consequences of such (mis)alignments. It specifically refines the concept of "dramaturgy" by considering its interaction with "audiences" (e.g., the general public). It argues that crisis management actors' ability to align with audience expectations shapes "the extent to which they can generate legitimacy for their actions." Crisis

communication that deviates from audience expectations may undermine the legitimacy of crisis response, and hence, render it ineffectual. As such, crisis management is somewhat akin to "improvisational theater," with leaders having to adapt their ideas to new and unexpected scenarios.

Parker and Stern's contribution further illustrates the perils of disconnection, although in this case between pertinent knowledge and the ideas and goals of leaders. In their analysis, US President Trump understood the COVID-19 crisis as an unwanted and inconvenient distraction from issues he valued highly. The US administration consistently attempted to showcase optimistic scenarios, frame proposed solutions as worse than the pandemic itself, and undermine crisis managers even within the US government. In other words, rather than shared understanding enabling stability and action in the uncertainty of a crisis, the early US response was characterized by internal conflict among bureaucratic actors and evidence of denial, willful ignorance, and even the spreading of falsehoods.

The contributions to the Symposium, therefore, demonstrate that interrogating the tensions and details of coherence and malleability represent opportunities for cross-pollination in both directions between crisis and idea studies. Further research would create better understanding of tensions between these values, and the consequences of pursuing them, particularly for policy efficacy.

A second area for cross-pollination, particularly for ideas studies, is to make use of how crisis management works as a structure of opportunities and constraints. In the ideas literature, crises are commonly simplified as windows of opportunity for policy or institutional change. This conceptualization can suggest that to pioneer change, policy entrepreneurs benefit from framing an event as a crisis. Yet, crisis management scholars tend to be more skeptical of the possibilities for change. Managing crises entails multiple kinds of activity, and different objectives at different times or places that direct crisis managers and other actors. Crisis management is often theorized as having "stages," including response first and recovery next in the wake of a potentially catastrophic event (Drennan et al., 2014).

In crisis response, priorities among public sector organizations and other actors mobilized to take action typically include urgently saving lives and protecting property, in highly uncertain and tense circumstances with scarce resources. Such conditions are theorized to make larger or systemic shifts very difficult to resource or gain agreement for. From this view, it is not until the proverbial dust settles that societal and political leaders can turn to processes of recovering from the damage done, and calls to "build-back-better" or for policy innovation can have their opening. At the same time, recovery offers moments of immense risk because, for instance, political attention to the crisis and future crisis mitigation may be lost as the immediate threat dissipates and the agenda moves on (Boin & 't Hart, 2022). An overemphasis on short-term management and mitigation may therefore lead to the reproduction of "zombie" policy ideas (Peters & Nagel, 2020), and lost opportunities to improve on the status quo.

Hence, future scholarship could also address how opportunities for ideational change, learning and knowledge utilization vary for different types and stages of crisis. For example, crisis management scholars also compare "fast burning" versus "slow burning"—differentiated by intensity and tempo—and "creeping" and "acute" crises—differentiated by spatial dimensions and speed of arrival (Boin et al., 2020). So, what kinds of crisis provide stimulus for ideational change? Do the material conditions engendered by certain types of crises create favorable terrain for certain kinds of ideas? For example, particularly in its early stages, the COVID-19 pandemic empowered medical expert knowledge over other sources of ideas. In turn, at which crisis management stage are reformers most likely to meet with success? That is, which actors are likely to be granted institutional power or hold public legitimacy in a given crisis or at a given moment in a crisis?

For instance, reform leaders—often of interest to scholars of ideas—might wish to "exploit the crisis damage" and build support for radical reform. However, they are likely to be opposed by crisis managers or established experts who are driven by the imperative to "minimize damage, alleviate the pain and restore order" (Boin & 't Hart, 2003, p. 548), and can draw on institutional power or public legitimacy to do so (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Such tensions of legitimacy, and shifting authority in shifting circumstances, are the topography of crisis that crisis studies can help ideas scholars to chart.

Furthermore, crisis scholarship may also help ideas scholars understand when crises are more or less likely to prompt or hinder policy learning. Ideational scholars have tended to link conditions of uncertainty triggered by crises with processes of policy learning and the updating of beliefs and knowledge (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2013; Lesch &

Millar, 2022). Here, crisis scholars have illustrated a more complicated picture of crisis-induced learning, in which crisis management is also often a process of political survival. The aftermath of a crisis is characterized by learning, yes, but also accountability (Drennan et al., 2014, p. 191)—it is period of "intense politicization," often typified by the politics of blaming, and attempts to delegitimize incumbent leadership (Boin et al., 2010, p. 706). Within this context, leaders might be incentivized to avoid acknowledging failure or downplaying the need for reform. The adoption of new ideas might be conditional on the capacity for blame avoidance (Vis & van Kersbergen, 2013, p. 842).

Finally, there is a need for both crisis and ideas scholarship to pay closer attention to the "dark side" of public policy and administration (Howlett, 2020; McConnell, 2018). As Parker and Stern show, the uncertainty of crisis not only creates opportunities for ideational change, but also for fictions and willful ignorance to be sustained. Moreover, while most crisis management literature understandably focuses on the work of mainstream leaders and public managers, the COVID-19 experience demonstrates the impact of fringe (and some more mainstream) actors spreading falsehoods and misrepresentation. Again, how exactly this occurs will be shaped by types and stages of crisis. During COVID-19, such movements were aided by (a) well-established links between conspiracies or fringe politics and vaccination and (b) the ability to mobilize around widely accepted values such as freedom and in liberty in response to unprecedent government action, such as restricting freedom of movement. In addressing these issues, it will be necessary to take up Ball, McConnell and Stark's call to better understand the "audience." How do the expectations of audiences vary? How do they process crisis "performances"? How do actors interpret expectations and how much leeway do they have to reshape or manipulate them? In reckoning with the aftermath of global pandemic, addressing these questions will be critical for understanding which ideas and whose ideas mattered, and whether crisis management and post-crisis learning maintained cohesion or devolved into fragmentation and conflict.

4 | CONCLUSION

This Symposium introduction has aimed to aid cross-pollination between literatures on ideas and crises, respectively, within public administration and policy studies. Both strands of scholarship place crises and ideas in central roles. But we believe that they have much yet to learn from each other. To facilitate cross-pollination, this article has reviewed several key insights from the two literatures with relevance across the divide. The literatures sometimes operate at different levels of abstraction or aggregation. Yet, crisis studies offer important parameters that can help realize some of the ambitions expressed in ideational studies, such as how different crises and crisis stages affect opportunities for institutional and policy change. Similarly, idea studies show new ways for crisis studies to approach coherence in coordination among crisis actors, network information, and public communication.

In addition, we have highlighted how the articles that have been contributed to this Symposium add directly to such cross-pollination. All help to qualify assumptions in these literatures, including in crisis studies the need for and desirability of coherence, and in the ideas school the ability to recombine concepts without bad consequences.

The article has finally described resulting perspectives on ways forward for research on crisis and ideas. Exploring tensions between ideational malleability and coherence could benefit both strands of scholarship, and crisis studies would perhaps particularly benefit from incorporating theories of ideational recombination and malleability. In turn, incorporating established theories of crisis management and exploring how crises and crisis stages empower different actors could perhaps benefit idea studies. Finally, both should aim to address the role of fictions, falsehoods, and willful ignorance in shaping (and potentially derailing) both crisis management and post-crisis settlements.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

PATIENT CONSENT

Not applicable.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE MATERIAL FROM OTHER SOURCES

Not applicable.

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ENDNOTE

[1] This is not to mention the broader intellectual history of thinking about ideas and material forces, going back at least to Weber and Marx (see Giddens, 1970).

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