

GENERATING THE PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE BASE: ANALYZING METHOD AND DIRECTION AS A SUB-DISCIPLINE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Howard A. Frank, Philip C. Christian, and Gina Scutelnicu*

ABSTRACT. This article analyzes the content of 584 articles published in the *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting, and Financial Management* and *Public Budgeting and Finance* with principal focus on how the public financial management knowledge base is generated. We find remarkable diversity of authorship and academic domicile. However, we note an absence of simulations and experiments and that much of the survey research does not comport with "best" practice. Practitioners were five times more likely to contribute than graduate students, and content continues a disciplinary tendency to neglect linkages between the macro-economy and public financial management. Our findings may reflect a public administration research ethos detailed by Frank Thompson and colleagues (1998) that is negatively impacted by lack of extramural funding.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, there have been at least seven efforts to define "public financial management" (PFM) in a substantive sense (Grizzle, 1985; Rabin, 1989; Grizzle & Yu, 1990; Jones, 1991; McCaffery, 1992; Kattelus, Cheng, & Engstrom, 2005; Frank, 2006). These works have focused on the establishment of intellectual

* Howard A. Frank, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Florida International University. His primary interests are in local government financial management and public productivity improvement. Philip C. Christian, a Ph.D. student, Department of Public Administration, Florida International University, is a senior investigator and computer forensic specialist, Florida Department of Revenue's Criminal Enforcement Division. His research interest is in debt finance and taxation. Gina Scutelnicu is a doctoral candidate, Department of Public Administration, Florida International University. Her research interest is in economic development and urban revitalization.

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boundaries in the field with principal attention paid to the proportions of instruction and research devoted to topics such as “debt management,” “forecasting,” “budgetary politics,” bond rating,” and other subjects typically treated in advanced undergraduate or graduate instruction. Grizzle (1985) and Grizzle and Yu (1990) centered their work on content analysis of syllabi used in MPA instruction; Jones (1991) discusses the efforts by the American Society for Public Administration-appointed National Task Force on PFM and its recommended curricular changes needed to redress shortcomings in typical MPA instruction, an approach echoed by McCaffery (1992), and Kattelus, Cheng, and Engstrom (2005).¹

Rabin (1989) and Frank (2006) speak to the fact that despite its seemingly pre-paradigmatic² (Ritzer, 1975) intellectual boundaries, PFM has matured to the point in which it has dedicated journals, its own professional “sub-association” within the American Society of Public Administration (with its own annual conference), and a significant number of texts devoted to the subject. From their vantage, PFM has become an academic sub-discipline within Public Administration, one with at least a modicum of substantive and methodological definition.

This article takes a different tack. Deploying a framework fashioned after Perry and Kraemer (1986), we focus on content analysis of 584 articles from the two leading journals in the discipline, *Public Budgeting and Finance (PBF)* and the *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management (JPBAFM)*, covering the years 1995 through 2005. Our objective is not primarily that of substantive intellectual boundary setting. Instead, we focus on issues such as methodology (with focus on survey research), authorship, unit of analysis, and other issues that relate to research paradigm and the generation of knowledge within the sub-discipline.

THE NATURE OF THE JOURNALS: A COMPARISON ON KEY CONTENT

The authors believed it would be useful to examine where *PF&F* and *JABPFM* are similar and different in methodology. Table 1 sets forth the difference of proportions on key variables.

For the purposes of analysis, we divided our universe of articles into five categories: survey, thought-opinion, general linear model

derivation (i.e., non-survey driven use of secondary data analysis in a quantitative model such as the estimation of tax delinquency, etc.) simulation-experiment, and historical case study³. Our overall breakdown by category was 16.4% survey, 19.6% thought-opinion, 18.0% general linear model, 1.4% experimental-simulation, 27.4% historical-case study and 17.2% other. Crosstabulation of data did not reveal significant differences between the journals in terms of these proportions. Statistical significance aside, however, *PBF* and *JPBAFM* appear to have one fairly sizable difference in article type: the former has only 12.3% of its articles derived from survey results, whereas 20.7% of the latter are surveys. The survey content absent in *PBF* is added almost exclusively to its proportion of historical-case study pieces—31.0% in *PBF* as opposed to 23.6% *JPBAFM*. Proportions of the other three categories are virtually identical across the journals.

The aggregated article-type category does not show a statistically significant difference between journals. However, “drilling down” to other variables shown in Table 1 does reveal significant differences. *PBF* shows a lower proportion of primary data (12.1%) versus *JPBAFM*'s 21.8%, which we would attribute to the former journal's lower utilization of surveys. *PBF* has a higher proportion of single-authored pieces (60.9%) vs. *JPBAFM*'s 47.6%. As anyone who has

TABLE 1
Areas of Similarity and Difference between the Journals

Variable	Chi-square	df	p	N
Article Type	8.8	5	.116	555
Secondary Data	14.2	2	.001	546
Single vs. Multiple Author	10.3	1	.001	583
Authorship (Student/ Practitioner/Professor)	24.7	2	.000	580
Editorial Board Involvement	7.4	1	.007	582
Jurisdiction	21.1	5	.001	545
External Funding	10.3	1	.001	584
Symposia	111.9	1	.000	584
OLS/Econometrics	11.1	4	.026	217

served on a promotion and tenure committee can attest, the merits and demerits of single- versus multiple-authorship can be hotly debated with single-authorship devotees believing in reward of the self-standing “lone rangers,” and others who believe that multiple authorship encourages important intellectual cross-fertilization; our data suggest that this split may be a factor in determining journal content.

Another area where there is a significant difference of proportions is that of the mix between professors, practitioners, and students as lead or co-authors. *PBF* has a far higher proportion of practitioners as lead or co-authors (24.9%) versus 9.2% for its counterpart. *PBF*'s affiliation with the American Society of Public Administration, whose mission is to bridge theory and practice, may play a role in this difference. Student contributions as single or co-authors to both journals are paltry: 2.9% in *PBF* and 3.0% in *JPBAFM*. This dearth of student contributions is particularly noteworthy in our judgment, one to which we will return below.

JPBAFM has nearly twice as many articles authored or co-authored by members of its editorial board (16.0%) versus 8.6% for *PBF*. In the aggregate, 12.0% of the articles have editorial authorship, a proportion that does not seem excessive, particularly in light of the broadly-diverse authorship patterns we noted in both journals, another topic we revisit below. Turning to jurisdiction, proportions of federal- and county-related articles are almost identical for the two journals, but it appears that *PBF* devotes more articles to state government (31.4%) than does *JPBAFM* (18.1%), but the latter has a higher proportion of local government articles (25.5% vs. 17.9%) and foreign articles (20.3% vs. 11.3%). If there is any surprise, it is that so few articles in both journals (4.8%, n=26) were county-based, at a time when that level of government is becoming increasingly important to regional service delivery, particularly in the post-9/11 era (Benton, 2005).

Another significant difference between the journals was in the area of extramural funding: 11.8% of *PBF*'s articles received support versus 4.4% for *JPBAFM* (37 funded pieces in the former, 12 in the latter). Some might argue that this is an example of a “distinction looking for a difference;” the more serious issue is that only 8.4% (n=49) of our articles received outside support, and as we note below, almost no federal or foundation grants. This is likely to

militate against longitudinal research regardless of method. And one suspects that limited extramural funding drives the limited comparative or cross-jurisdictional: only 3.5% (n=19) of our articles fell into that category.

The percentage difference in proportion of articles generated by symposium is particularly large: 57.6% in *JPBAFM* and only 15.7% in *PB&F*. This difference raises a question as to the pros and cons of each approach. In a positive vein, one could argue that symposia represent “mini-texts” that cumulate knowledge within a particular subject matter. This may be particularly important in Public Administration or its sub-disciplines, where prior observers (Yeager, 1992; Thompson et al., 1998) have noted a lack of cumulative knowledge due to a number of factors (i.e., limited longitudinal research, failure to share small data sets, limited indexing or meta-analysis of prior work). Symposia could in theory present different or contrasting views, thus giving the reader a balanced perspective on the state-of-the-art on a given subject. On the downside, absent active editorial control, symposia may represent issues that are “esoteric” from the vantage of many readers. Moreover, the review process with symposia may not be as stringent as that deployed in non-symposia submissions.

The authors are not attempting to attribute “rightness” or “wrongness” to either approach. But the proportion difference found in the two journals certainly raises questions about their respective approaches, particularly if one factors the difficulties noted in cumulating research within Public Administration as a discipline, given limited funding and the small-sample, one-jurisdiction nature of our work.

The upshot of these initial findings is that in the aggregate, both journals deploy similar balances of surveys, thought pieces, quantitative analyzes, simulation-experiments, and historical-case studies. But further analysis reveals significant differences in implementation within these broad categories, particularly in regard to geographical unit of analysis, nature of authorship, and use of symposia. These factors may reflect editorial preferences which may in turn impact submission patterns.

AN ASSESSMENT OF SURVEY ANALYSIS

Surveys constituted 15.9% of our sample total (n=91), but were nearly half (41.9%) of the quantitative pieces studied. Thus survey research was the most frequently deployed quantitative method, utilized as a stand-alone tool or in concert with other methods, either quantitative (econometric, other multivariate) or idiographic methods. Therefore, it appeared to warrant special attention insofar as its primacy as a quantitative method and how its implementation speaks to our research conduct as a sub-discipline within public administration (Rabin, 1989; Frank, 2006).

A useful point of departure is the typical response rate found in our survey-based articles. Our mean response rate was 49.1%; the median was 47.9%. As Garson (2006) notes, the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) expects a 75.0% response rate and requires a waiver for research with less than 50.0% under the assumption that lower response may negatively impact statistical inference. While it may be argued that the “missing 25.0%” is a benchmark developed in an era in which there was less concern for privacy, there should be no doubt that our typical response rate does raise questions about the representativeness of our survey results. Indeed, almost half (43.4%) of our survey-driven articles contained no indication, either verbal or mathematical, speaking to the representativeness of their sample. Of note in this regard is that more than 2/3rd (61) of our survey-based articles were based on either a random or non-random sample drawn from the population, rather than the population as a whole. Thus the reader may be left with an impression of generalizability when in fact this may be stretched or lacking altogether.

There are two possible explanations for this low response rate. One is that of the 36.5% (n= 31) of articles which actually specified the number of waves, we can infer that most survey efforts stopped at two. If the research were being conducted face-to-face, this might result in 60.0% plus response rates. But as noted in Table 2, the overwhelming mode of survey undertaken in articles studied was mail, and achieving response rates greater than 50.0% with two mail waves would be quite extraordinary (Judd, Smith, & Kidder, 1991), particularly in the United States, where there is increased evidence of a “hard core” (Neuman, 2004, p. 179) refusal rate of surveys at 30.0% or more.

TABLE 2
Type of Survey Deployed (N= 86)

Mode	Frequency	Percent
Mail	65	75.6
Phone	3	3.5
e-Mail	1	1.2
In-person	1	1.2
Other	1	1.2
NR	15	17.3
Total	86	100

Data in Table 2 make clear that the modes of survey most typically associated with high response rates, phone and in-person, are atypical in the public budgeting literature. Perhaps more importantly, researchers seem to be unaware of recent evidence (Schreckhise, 2005) which suggests that a mix of mail, fax, and e-mail administration can significantly improve response rate at relatively little cost and limited introduction of response bias. The upshot is that the survey mode and wave combination we found portend of response rates which are likely to be considerably below the 75.0% OMB benchmark.

Only about one in five of our survey studies mentions any sort of pilot effort and how that might have led to changes in the instrument. From a research vantage, commenting on how such changes came about—if indeed the instruments were piloted in the first place—might provide useful insight on survey construction. This is particularly the case given the prevalence of surveys as a quantitative method in our universe.

Only 12 of our survey-based articles received external funding. And the overwhelming majority, 90.1% (n = 82) were primary data-based. The fact that so few of our survey-based findings were drawn from secondary data could have two explanations. One is that the topics did not lend themselves to the use of such data (i.e., the subject matter is not covered by extant surveys). The other is that the absence of external funding leads to utilization of “one-shot” surveys. As noted earlier, limited external funding is a distinguishing attribute of our discipline (Thompson et al, 1998) and the evidence from our article base strongly suggests an impact on survey administration,

with likely effect on representativeness or inter-temporal stability of findings.

One could argue that expecting “best practice” in all survey work (i.e., discussion of pilot survey efforts, deployment of multiple methods to increase response rate) might not be practicable given time and financial constraints. Nonetheless it seems that “good practice” such as comparing respondent attributes relative to sample drawn or reporting the number of waves undertaken, should be present in the lion’s share of articles. This was not the case in our universe, a shortcoming that may undermine the validity of survey work in the eyes of at least some readers.

Another interesting facet of our surveys is the lack of questions regarding the individual attributes of the respondents. Initially we were interested in exploring questions such as individual attitudes towards risk, disclosure, or innovation, or perhaps psychological attributes; finding so few questions along these lines, we broadened our “net” to include more prosaic questions such as party affiliation or length of service. As it stands, choice of operationalization did not alter our findings. Only 21 of our surveys (47.7%) used individual attributes as independent variables to any extent, and 18 (40.0%) explored such attributes as a dependent variable, with the remaining 60% being economic behaviors or outcomes. Only 22.3% of all quantitative studies considered individual attributes.

The lack of individual attribute variables raises two research issues. First, this absence precludes an important lever for ascertaining representativeness of respondent. In lieu of this we are frequently obligated to use community characteristics (e.g., size, income, and region) as our “handles” for judging inferential strength, belying the very real possibility of significant differences at the “micro” or individual level.

The second and directly related issue is possible mismatch between the intended unit of analysis (the organization or some behavior thereof) and information garnered through surveys of individuals. This mismatch is a serious problem with surveys and their frequent use in social research (Ritzer, 1975). Researchers frequently tap individuals to garner information about “social facts” (i.e., organizations and their norms) without filtering the influence of “micro” (i.e., individual) beliefs or attitudes. Holding in abeyance

problems of internal validity (e.g., is the intended respondent **really** answering the questionnaire?) and social desirability of response (Eveland & McLeod, 1999; Krosnick, 1999) this mismatch is a serious issue that authors or editors do not seem to acknowledge.

AUTHORSHIP DIVERSITY

In this section we examine the authorship diversity of the two journals. In a best-of-all-possible world, one would hope for a de-concentrated array of authors and academic domiciles on the assumption that no one voice, method, or intellectual mindset would predominate. On the other hand, we recognize that every discipline has leading scholars and “hotbeds” of intellectual development. We further acknowledge that “de-concentration” as a desired end means little if quality is not held constant. In other words, the authors hoped for a high degree of diversity with the recognition that there would be at least some concentration of authors and domicile. We had no a priori distributional breakdowns that could be construed as optimal; rather our intent was to obtain a read on the intellectual production in the two journals to discern possible trends or patterns.

Table 3 presents finding by authorship, using a somewhat arbitrary “Top 10” approach as a cutoff point.

TABLE 3
Top 10 Lead Authors: *PBF* and *JPBAFM*: 1995-2005

PB&F	Articles	JPBAFM	Articles
Joyce, P	6	French, P.	4
Bunch, B	4	Giroux, G	3
Mikesell, J	4	Wong, J.	3
Lee, R.	4	Rubin, M.	3
Lauth, T.	4	Brooks, R.	3
Robbins. M	4	Fisher, M	3
Amnar, S	4	Rivenbark, W.	3
Mullins, D.	3	Three tied @ 2 each	6
Harris, J.	3	Note: There were 16 authors tied at 2 each. Three authors at 2 each used to round out the top 10.	
LeLoup, L.	3		
Willoughby, K.	3		
Fisher, L.	3		
Jones, L.	3		

In the case of *PB&F*, our Top 10 represented 48 of 313 articles considered, or a collective 15.3% of authorship. With respect to *JPBAFM*, this proportion was 28 of 271 or 10.3%. On the face of it, *PB&F* has greater concentration of authorship among its top ten, and particularly among the top seven authors.

While authorship concentration was substantially different between the two journals, the same could not be said for concentration of affiliation. For *PBF*, 89 articles of 313 came from the top ten, whereas 67 of 271 articles were in the institutional top ten of *JPBAFM*, constituting very similar proportions of 28.4% and 24.7%, respectively.

What is striking about these two tables is the apparent lack of intersection between the two journals in terms of authorship and affiliation. The top ten authorship rosters show no overlap between the two journals; Naval Postgraduate and Indiana are the only two institutions in the top ten of both outlets (Table 4). One possible explanation of this limited intellectual overlap is temporal. *PBF* is eight years older (founded in 1981) than its counterpart and its institutional founders may have formed an intellectual network and comfort zone that makes it their first choice for publication. The fact

TABLE 4
Top 10 Institutional Affiliations of Lead Author and Articles in *PBF* and *JPBAFM*: 1995-2005

PB&F	Articles	JPBAFM	Articles
Indiana	14	Rutgers-Newark	8
Syracuse	12	Wichita State	7
Georgia State	10	Florida Atlantic	7
Georgia	8	Florida State	7
Naval Postgraduate	7	Akron	5
Penn State	7	Texas A&M	5
Congressional Budget Office	6	Western Michigan	4
U Conn	5	Central Florida	4
NYU	4	Nebraska-Omaha	4
Arizona	4	Illinois State	4
Colorado-Denver	4	Naval Postgraduate	4
Willamette	4	Tennessee State	4
Texas-San Antonio	4	Indiana	4

that the Association of Budgeting and Financial Management's leadership is frequently comprised of *PBF* editorial board staff may have bolstered these ties. Time may also play a factor in terms of perceived prestige, with *PBF* being the older and more established outlet, a factor that may play a role in the submission patterns of prospective contributors. And lastly, self-selection may play a role in terms of perceived appropriateness of outlets. As our analysis suggested earlier, authors of survey-driven analysis at the local level, or of international pieces, may perceive a more favorable review in *JPBAFM*, whereas descriptive or historical pieces at the national and state levels are more likely to be published in *PBF*. Regardless of cause, this limited authorship-institutional affiliation overlap can be viewed as a positive factor in that it would appear to foster diversity of the intellectual enterprise in the sub-discipline. It will be interesting to see how and in what ways this intellectual Venn diagram changes over time.

LIMITED EXTERNAL FUNDING AND ITS PROBABLE IMPACT ON THE SUB-DISCIPLINE

In 1998, Frank Thompson et al. delivered a paper at the annual NASPAA Conference which detailed the state of research in Public Administration. Three points are of note for the purposes of this discussion:

- The need for greater financial support, particularly, a federal "pipeline" such as the NSF;
- The need to develop more longitudinal data sets with "community-wide access to these data and to shared discussion of findings" (Thompson et al, 1998, p. 5); and
- Work on methodological discussion on how to aggregate "small scale, local, and time-limited data sets for large-scale research." (Thompson et al, 1998, p. 5).

One could argue that these three points are interrelated. It is difficult to contemplate longitudinal research or extensive use of secondary data without significant external funding needed for both the day-to-day conduct of research and its institutionalization over time. Further, it is highly probable that the absence of funding is so embedded in our research ethos that researchers fail to consider Thompson et al.'s (1998) suggestion to aggregate small data sets

across time and venue, even if this could be done at relatively low cost.

Only 49 (8.4%) of our articles had external funding, and only five of these had either federal or national foundation sources. The other 44 were from the author's academic institution or lesser-known regional entities. This has two connotations: the first is that the typical grant is probably rather small (e.g., a summer research supplement or a course buyout) and it is probably accompanied by little or no overhead that can be used to seed future research.⁴

We suspect that the absence of funding has a significant impact on the nature of the analytics undertaken in the universe of articles considered. It is undoubtedly a driver behind the preponderance of our surveys being "one-shot" and mail-administered. It may also be a factor in the absence of simulations or experiments. Putting aside the fact that Public Administration has generally not deployed these approaches due to their perceived external validity shortcomings (Bozeman, 1992), the truth of the matter is that they require time and designs that entail costs beyond mailing. And last but certainly not least, even our historical case-studies studies are overwhelmingly one-jurisdiction, one-time studies.

The upshot is that limited funding appears to be a driving force behind the research undertaken in the public financial sub-discipline, reflecting an issue that impacts Public Administration research as a whole. Given the low likelihood of developing a federal funding pipeline and our traditionally low level of foundation funding, this driver of PFM research is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

A BRIEF COMMENT ON CONTENT: THE ABSENCE OF LINKAGES TO THE MACRO-ECONOMY

In the context of social science research, "paradigm" speaks to the content of research, as well as its epistemological and etiological underpinnings. As noted at the onset, our principal interests in this paper were on the assumptions and methods behind the generation of the public financial management knowledge base. Nonetheless, a brief comment on substance seemed in order to complement our treatment of method and research assumption.

What intrigued us with our assessment is not what we found, but rather, what we did not find. There was significant coverage of

traditional topics such as performance measurement, budget theory, Government Accounting Standards Board promulgation and implementation, debt management, and forecasting—the staples we would expect in PFM. What caught our attention is the absence of certain topics that relate to the intersection of the macro-economy and public administration and policy.

Central Banking Behavior

In the inaugural issue of what was then called *Public Budgeting and Financial Management*, Editor Jack Rabin's (1989) foreword called for papers that dealt with a number of topics, among which was central banking behavior. The Federal Reserve and its Chair are among Washington's most powerful actors. As McDonald (2006) notes, their decisions set the tone and tenor for economic development at all levels of government. *JPBAFM* published a special issue on Federal Reserve policy in 1990. However, our analysis during the 1995-2005 period did not reveal a single article devoted to "The Fed" and its behavior in either *PBF* or *JPBAFM*, an absence that seems quite surprising given its influence on public budgeting. The fact that the stock market bubble of 2001 and the housing bubble 2007 were in part attributable to "easy money" on the part of the Federal Reserve (Krugman, 2009) underscores the need to assess central banking policy here and abroad.

Widespread Financial Illiteracy

It may be tempting to dismiss this as material best suited for Suze Orman and other personal financial management "gurus" but that would run contrary to recent pronouncements from Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke (Aversa, 2006) that financial illiteracy is not only an individual problem but one with negative spillovers for efficiency within our own borders and competitiveness in the global economy. Sound regulation cannot protect individuals from signing contracts they fail to understand. People who are unable to estimate their own balance sheets are unlikely to comprehend the rudiments of retirement planning, a serious problem in the context of Social Security's long-term prospects and the increased presence of defined contribution retirement plans. Viewed in this light, financial illiteracy becomes an indirect or even direct contributor to increased burdens on the administrative state. PFM research on how we might instill

greater literacy in Americans at an earlier age could have positive spillovers for them and the economy as a whole.

Declining Real Income for Sizable Segments of the Labor Force

Both the academic (Peterson, 1994; McMurrer & Sawhill, 1997; Mishel, Bernstein, & Allegretto, 2006) and popular literature (Draut, 2006; Ulrich, 2006) detail the impact of declining real income for many Americans over the past three decades. This “silent depression,” coupled with the high cost of housing, health insurance, and higher education, has resulted in millions of Americans suffering a significant decline in living standard relative to their parents at similar points of the life cycle. While part of this dilemma may be the result of personal choices that put consumption over investment, broader socioeconomic factors (globalization, low savings, immigration policy, tax policy) play a role. Actions government can take to address this dilemma, (i.e., the critical role of infrastructure investment, education, job training), would be relevant for discussion within the context of public budgeting and financial management.

While these topics would seem logical for PFM inclusion, their absence from discussion squares with a broader intellectual indifference that public administration shows for the macro economy. Over the past quarter century, public administration scholars (Klay, 1981, Carroll, 1992; Frank, 1992; Premchand, 2006) have noted that our discipline has not integrated macro-economic conditions such as the “Stagflation,” of the late Seventies and early Eighties, our personal and governmental consumption-savings imbalances, or stagnating personal income, despite the fact that they are likely drivers of the strong anti-government sentiment that has arisen over the past 30 years. (Kirlin, 1982; Premchand, 2006). This void is even stranger given academic public administration’s longstanding concern for social equity. As Gianakis and Snow (2008) note, it is hard to conduct a serious discussion of social equity without considering the trade-offs of differing fiscal and monetary policies. Viewed in this light, PFM would be the appropriate “domicile” for research on the intersection of the macro-economy and the broader discipline.

CONCLUSION: WHAT SEEMS SALIENT?

Content analysis of nearly 600 articles may not provide an entirely accurate read of the state of PFM but this work provides some fairly strong inferences about our research ethos. Further, we believe that our efforts also provide a read on our parent discipline, Public Administration.

A positive interpretation of our content analysis is that there is a mix of qualitative and quantitative pieces, with a good distribution of methodological formats ranging from descriptive statistics to more sophisticated models on the quantitative side, to historically-oriented case study work on the idiographic side. Nobody can accuse the authors—or editors and reviewers—of Emersonian “foolish consistency” while adhering to only one methodology. In theory, this suggests authors can mix the right method to a given problem to obtain answers to the questions posed. Nonetheless, we observe some shortcomings that warrant further attention.

The Absence of Individual Attribute Variables in Quantitative Analysis

As noted earlier, our quantitative analysis, particularly surveys, is generally absent dependent or independent (particularly the latter) variables related to individual characteristics such as party affiliation, risk preference, moral-ethical stance, or the like. This absence could be considered unsurprising in some regards, surprising in others. It could be argued that limited treatment of individual level variables is part and parcel of traditional sociologism, practiced by all the social sciences, wherein individuals are studied to infer the status of the larger social structures in which they operate. On this score, PA would be no different than its cognate social sciences (Ritzer, 1975). On the other hand, while public administration takes its roots from one of the principal architects of sociologism, Max Weber (Coser, 1971), our discipline also has its “action research” adherents such as Frank Sherwood, or more recently, Denhardt and Denhardt (2005), who view individuals as much more than passive vessels of the social framework in which they operate. Moreover, contemporary psychology, much like Public Administration, recognizes a bounded rationality through the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1998; Brown, 1999), which recognizes that individual behavior is often influenced by perception of critical “others” behavior in the environment.

Thus, much of our quantitative analysis seems predicated on a rather passive view of human behavior, one that implicitly view actors as having little latitude within their organizational structure. We rely on the usual suspects of community size, government structure (city manager vs. strong mayor, etc.), with limited understanding of the incentives or restraints that might induce change in individuals within the organization. This may be a serious shortcoming if our intent is to not only explain organizational behavior, but to improve it.

Little Simulation or Gaming

As noted at the onset, only eight (1.4%) of our articles deployed simulation or gaming. One would expect that discussion of budgeting and taxation would bring about the use of simulation or gaming as a means of exploring n^{th} stage behavioral outcomes. The typical survey- or regression-based results in our analysis suggest emphasis on statics as opposed to dynamics, with the latter being of greater interest to many decision-makers.

The absence of simulations or small group experimentations is also noteworthy given Public Administration's interest in decision making (Simon, 1997, Allison & Zelikow, 1999) as one of its principal concerns. As Barry Bozeman (1992) has noted, simulations can provide invaluable insight on how organizations utilize information. In the current context, one would find numerous articles surveying individuals about their attitudes about performance measurement, but one would not find any studies that show how decision makers actually utilize such data in a given context, or how they process it over time. No simulation is likely to capture all relevant aspects of decision making. Nonetheless, the seemingly unwritten law that precludes simulation and experimentation in public administration research may deny our discipline valuable insights on intra-organizational behavior.

This admonition is critical when viewed against the backdrop of survey research as a primary quantitative method. In 1998, Gianakis and Frank compared survey results of forecasting knowledge among Ohio local government finance officers with their subsequent forecast accuracy in a simulated forecast exercise. This comparison yielded significant differences in stated and actual forecasting expertise. At the time, the authors cautioned readers that persistent over-reliance on surveys was dangerous in a discipline which aims for both

description and prescription. Given the heavy reliance on survey work as a quantitative method in the articles studied, this warning is worth repeating, particularly in light of the relatively low response rates and possible lack of representativeness noted in our findings. These issues are even more acute when one factors the social desirability bias that is found in most contemporary survey research (Krosnick, 1999; Eveland & McLeod, 1999).

Very Few Graduate Students Involved in the “Cultural Transmission Belt”

In *Culture and Commitment*, Margaret Mead (1975) uses the term “cultural transmission belt” to describe the passing of information and wisdom from generation to generation, with the keen observation that in modern times, it is often the younger generation that passes on to its elders, in stark contrast to earlier eras in which the transmission generally went from the old to the young. Regardless of direction, one of the more disturbing findings in this analysis was that only 17 of 584 articles (2.9%) were either authored or co-authored with a student. On the other hand, practitioners authored or co-authored 102 (17.6%) of the articles studied.

One could argue that the addition of practitioners adds relevance to the articles in terms of subject matter and treatment. And, as we noted earlier, the American Society for Public Administration’s stated goal of melding theory and practice is certainly an inducement to practitioner authorship. However, this involvement may result in a lower level of methodological advancement and over-reliance on descriptive case studies to which practitioners can relate (Hummel, 1990) but are lacking in generalizability.

Given that the MPA is a terminal degree typically earned without a thesis, one can surmise that our observations in this regard are more likely than not in the purview of doctoral matriculation. In the past, authors such as Stallings (1986), White (1986), or McCurdy and Cleary (1984) have raised significant questions regarding dissertations in PA in terms of research quality and relation to a broader, coherent body of knowledge. Our findings raise more fundamental questions. Are faculty members so enamored of single authored pieces that they prefer not to have students’ involvement? Are dissertations in the sub-discipline so distant from faculty research interests that co-authorship seems irrelevant? Has the desire to link

theory with practice in our field militated against graduate student involvement in authoring articles? Are public administration students interested in publishing in the first place, or is the dissertation experience so painful that they are too burned out to publish (White, 1986)? Dissertations aside—aren't there topics of mutual interest to faculty and students that should lead to publications earlier in the matriculation? We can only raise these questions, not answer them. Nonetheless, the absence of graduate student involvement in publications noted here may not speak favorably to patterns of academic socialization or to long-term viability of PFM or its parent discipline.⁵

Editorial Staff and Reviewers May Need to Exercise Greater Stewardship in Survey-Based Articles

Absent greater extramural funding, *PFM's* survey work is unlikely to break the 50.0% response rate. Nonetheless, readers should have a better feel for the representativeness of the respondents analyzed than what we encountered in our assessment. Similarly, journal editors and reviewers should encourage submissions that cross jurisdictions and time periods as recommended by Thompson et al. (1998). And lastly, authors may wish to explore survey questions that tap individual-level psychological and political attributes to bolster their knowledge of respondents and to obviate the worst aspects of the above-referenced mismatch between individual-level survey responses that are geared to read institutional-level characteristics.

PFM Is Not Economics, But It Cannot Ignore the Macro-Economy

The intellectual blind eye we noted is of long standing. Our economy's performance in absolute terms and relative to competitors impacts citizens' ability to "purchase" collective provision in the form of government; financially illiterate citizens are a burden on an already overburdened administrative state. The "nuts-and-bolts" of PFM such as debt management, forecasting, budget execution, and pension management do not take place in a hermetically-sealed environment. Editorial boards and would-be contributors should pay closer attention to how macroeconomic trends impact daily operations and the average citizen's financial well-being in a global economy.

In the main, our assessment has revealed a remarkably broad base of knowledge. Editors, contributors, and reviewers of the journals studied can take pride in what they have collectively crafted. The diversity of the knowledge produced—and how it is produced—suggest creative know-how that is adept at matching problem to method, and that know-how is spread across a deep pool of authors. One hopes that a replication of this study in five or ten years will reveal the same diversity and at least some remediation of the concerns noted herein.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank Mr. Yong Zhuan and one anonymous reviewer for their assistance in crafting this article.

NOTES

1. The central conclusion of the works by Grizzle (1985), Grizzle and Yu (1990), and Jones (1991) is that MPA students are technically shortchanged relative to their MBA counterparts, particularly in the “harder” areas such as cost-accounting, financial management software, and forecasting, particularly if assessed within the typical MPA curriculum of on required financial management course. The recent assessment of Kattelus, Cheng, and Engstrom, (2005) reinforces this finding in the context of Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement 34 implementation and its private sector-based reporting model.
2. While there is no generally accepted operationalization of “paradigm” within the social sciences, three parameters are commonly noted (Ritzer, 1975). First is the so-called “metaparadigm” or view of human nature, conceived on an active-passive continuum with “active” representing humans as crafters of their social reality, and “passive” representing the traditional deterministic view in which human behavior is largely shaped by social background and institutions. The second factor is method, also viewed along a continuum with “soft” idiographic methods on one end, and “hard” methods on the other. In tandem, these two components often set the stage for subject matter, with the “active-soft” adherents tending to focus on individual and small-group processes, with adherents of the

“passive-hard” approaches focusing on macro-social phenomena. From Ritzer’s vantage, the social sciences are pre- or multi-paradigmatic, with widely divergent views on these three dimensions. This paper’s primary focus is the second component of the paradigmatic discussion, method, with some attention paid to substance and those responsible for its generation.

3. The five research categories the authors decided upon are described as follows: **survey category** refers to a work primarily based on survey execution, which employs primary data; **thought/opinion category** refers to a non-empirical work, which expresses the expert opinion of academicians and practitioners in the field; **general linear model category** refers primarily to a regression based-quantitative analysis employing secondary data; **simulation-experiment category** describes the studies which employed a simulation and/or experiment and last but not least, **case study/historical category** contains works that use a case study methodology and/or a historical approach when researching numerous public financial issues. It’s noteworthy to mention that we did not include book reviews in our analysis since our primary aim was to focus on scholarly articles which generated new knowledge.
4. Another impact of our discipline’s absence of significant federal or foundation funding is in the realm of academic budgeting. Central university administrations may not perceive much return on investment for faculty or graduate student funding in a discipline that is absent these grants and their substantial overhead.
5. In 1985, the American Society for Public Administration had more than 21,000 members. By 2005 that had fallen to well under 10,000. The Association for Budgeting and Financial Management has noted a nearly 40.0% drop in its membership in recent years. While both decreases have been attributed to anti-government sentiment and change in consumer preferences toward specialist organizations, one could argue that the absence of graduate student publications noted in this analysis may speak to a professional community that may not be nurturing its future leaders as well as it could or should.

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