

THE STUDY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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The study of public administration in the United States is large in terms of the number of academic programmes, the range of journal publications, and the number of scholars. Its scholarship attracts attention from all over the globe. At the same time it is a public administration that is clearly embedded in a specific national culture, just as anywhere else. Three of the main challenges include the strong increase of quantitative-statistical methods, the decline of practitioner authors, and substantive specialization to the extent that generalists' perspectives are losing ground.

What you can't calculate, you believe cannot be true
What you can't weigh, has no weight for you
What you can't cost, has no value for you.

(J. Goethe 1955 [1832], *Faust: Der Tragödie zweiter Teil in fünf Akten*. Boston: DC Heath, p. 12; transl. E. Samier 2005, p. 20)

The study of public administration as we know it today has its roots in late 19th century Europe and the United States, when it emerged in response to societal demand for more governmental intervention so that collective problems caused by, among others, rapid industrialization, urbanization, and population growth, could be addressed. Practitioners took the lead in the revival of the study, especially those who worked in local government. After decades of steady development, the study became recognizable as a well-established and active area of research between the 1930s and 1960s as evidenced by, *inter alia*, the establishment of national associations of public administration in the mid-20th century (for example, in the USA, the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) in 1939; in The Netherlands, the *Vereeniging voor Bestuurskunde* (the Association for Public Administration) in 1947 and by increased consulting activities of scholars in newly independent countries – see Raadschelders 2009, pp. 15–16). In response to the postwar growth of government services and regulations, the demand for professionally trained public servants increased. As a consequence, public administration programmes proliferated exponentially from the 1960s onwards, because of increasing numbers of full-time MPA-students and of mid-career professionals – with initial degrees in other areas – enrolled in MPA and MPP programmes (something predicted by Mosher 1968, p. 219) to further their careers.

Today, countries all over the world have academically based programmes in public administration and have national associations for practitioners (both generic associations such as ASPA, as well as profession-specific associations of, for example, teachers, firefighters, police officers, prison guards, auditors, accountants, and so on). As is to be expected, there is much contact between scholars across borders, especially at conferences, and they have one thing in common: their study will always have to balance the needs of a local (that is, national) epistemic community of scholars, citizens, political officeholders and career civil servants for social problem solving, and of an international epistemic community

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Public Administration Vol. 89, No. 1, 2011 (140–155)

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of (mainly) scholars to advance knowledge. In many countries the national public administration thrives and evidence of that is found in the literature (see, for example, Candler 2006, 2008, 2010; Raadschelders 2008a). Of all national public administration traditions, the American is referenced most across the globe and this leads to the intriguing paradox that American public administration scholarship is hugely influential, but at the same time is just one among the many (nationally anchored) centres of the study. It is because of this worldwide presence of American knowledge sources that attention to characteristics, trends and challenges in the American study of public administration is useful.

This contribution to the special issue of *Public Administration* in appreciation of Rod Rhodes' tenure as Editor of this journal is not just written to inform non-American scholars of recent developments (any active scholar will know what's going on in American journals), and certainly not to implicitly suggest that these ought to be emulated. It is motivated by the effort to go beyond information about substantive and methodological developments and place American scholarship in its societal, political, and academic context. To do so requires attention for the nature of the study and of scholarship in general and how American scholars perceive these, specifically for:

- the characteristics of the societal and political-administrative environment in which American scholars operate;
- how that environment influences the approach to and the substance of scholarship;
- substantive developments (waning, reigning, and emerging topics);
- problems with, challenges of, and barriers within American research.

We will start, though, with some data about the size of American public administration.

THE 'SIZE' OF AMERICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

American public administration scholarship is alive and kicking by any measure. First, in terms of academic programmes, some count the programmes as about 260 (Henry *et al.* 2008, p. 2) and 267 (Clark and Menifield 2003; Gold and Candler 2006) respectively. Of these, 161 are accredited by the National Association for Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. One study mentions that there are about 230 public administration programmes of which 90 are independent, 52 are combined with another area (such as international relations, urban studies, environmental affairs), 45 are embedded in political science, 30 are linked with a particular policy area (for example, health), and 13 can be found in departments or schools of public administration and political science (Khodr 2005, p. 186). Meier reports that of the top 25 programmes listed in the 2005 *US News and World Report*, none is embedded in a political science department, while of the top 50 programmes only two are embedded within political science (2007, p. 3). It does seem that many regard organizational positioning important, given the trend of public administration to move out of political science in the USA, and – though to lesser extent – out of law in Europe. The number of PA programmes mentioned above only represent the tip of an iceberg, for there are numerous programmes that concern public issues, problems, and challenges (for example, schools of social work, criminal justice, urban and regional planning, public transportation, and so on). Add these to the listing above and the number of programmes, students, and scholars is just huge.

Second, with respect to publications, at least three indicators of size can be mentioned. The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) publishes one of the largest (that is, in terms of submissions) public administration journals in the world, the *Public*

Administration Review. Linked to ASPA's various sections are another 15, mostly specialized, journals concerning topics such as criminal justice, public works, ethics, public management, budgeting and finance, state and local government, and personnel management among others. The United States also has journals such as the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, related to the Public Management Research Association (PMRA), *Administrative Theory & Praxis* which is linked to the Public Administration Theory Network, and *Administration & Society*. It is reasonable to expect that journal density in American public administration is higher than anywhere else in the world, simply because of the number of scholars and academic programmes.

One could also consider article output. In PAR alone (six issues per annum), 617 articles were published in the decade from 2000 to 2009. How article output in the USA compares to that of, for example, Europe has not yet been investigated, but in political science Americans account for a little more than 50 per cent of total productivity, while Europe as a whole is responsible for more than 40 per cent (Schneider 2007, pp. 156–7). Of course, it helps that the *lingua franca* of academe today is English. Yet, another indicator of publication size is the number of textbooks. Currently there are about 50 textbooks in print, several of which have enjoyed multiple editions. Several of these handbooks have been translated into other languages. The extent to which they are relevant and useful in political-administrative cultures different from the United States is unclear and generally – as well as understandably – not questioned by American scholars (see, for example, Raadschelders 2009, p. 14; see also Fry and Raadschelders 2008, p. 358).

Third, programme and publication size are a function of the size of student body and career civil service. While America's public sector employment is comparable to several other countries (in percentage of total workforce, about 15–17 per cent) (Abstract 2006, tables 451 and 1340; Light 2008, p. 197), its career civil service of 21 million-plus is a sizeable employer and assures enormous demand for programmes that attract high school graduates as well as mid-career professionals. Annually, there are about 25,000 students enrolled in MPA-type programmes, of which about 7,000 graduate per annum. Many career civil servants are members of a professional association (for police officers, firefighters, public school teachers, university professors, health care professionals, public accountants, public works employees, social workers, and so on). Each of these usually support and/or publish a practitioner oriented journal (for example, *The Public Manager* of the International City and County Managers Association).

The numbers above have to be considered against the background of the size of American higher education at large. Of the 8,444 universities in the world, 2,014 (23.9 per cent) are situated in the USA (Förster 2010). In the USA, there are some 4,300 institutions of higher education, including community colleges, colleges, research universities, and higher vocational schools (for example, nursing, music, drama, theatre, ballet, art). Of these, about 600 have Master level programmes, and 260 (or 6 per cent) are regarded as major research universities (Cole 2009, pp. 3–6) where faculty are expected to be highly productive in terms of publications, grant research, and PhD supervision.

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY: ART, CRAFT, SCIENCE, AND (INTER-) DISCIPLINARITY

What exactly the nature of the study of public administration is, can only be determined when looking at the different ways in which it has been characterized. First, there is the fact that the study has been described as an art (that is, philosophizing about), as a

craft (that is, practical use), and as a science (that is, systematic investigation of reality for theory development) (Lynn 1996; Raadschelders 2004). This suggests that its nature is multifaceted, to say the least. Each of these three, art, craft, science, seek to gauge the role, position, and – perhaps above all – the meaning of government in society as well as capture the nature of the various and complex relationships between those who govern and the governed. However, craft and science have specific standards of quality that are less definable in art. The study has also been characterized in terms of its scientificness, and this has created even more controversy, at least in the USA.

As an art, the study hopes to contribute to understanding the ‘art of governing’ that is expressed in attention for intuition (Barnard 1968, p. xxvii), tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1966, pp. 14, 17) and experiential knowledge (Van Braam 1987, p. 15). However, intuition, tacit knowledge, and experience can be studied, but they cannot be transmitted via the usual pedagogical means. We can even wonder whether these can be made somewhat accessible through research. For instance, as much as research on leadership styles and leadership characteristics has created expectations, it has not resulted in anything remotely resembling a generally accepted list of leadership characteristics and styles. While there is some attention for the art of public administration as a study and as a practice in the United States, it is especially Europe where one can really find attention brought to bear on this.

Public administration as craft and as science, however, have both expectations as well as accepted standards of quality, in contrast, as has been said, to public administration as art. With respect to the study as a craft, the standard of quality and the expectation is that the study should generate knowledge that helps in solving societal problems and in improving structure and functioning of government. Around the 1900s, scholars enthusiastically pursued ‘usable knowledge’ (for example, scientific management, administrative management) (Lindblom and Cohen 1979), but some of its outcomes would later be labelled as ‘proverbs’ (see Simon) and as suffering from lack of attention for the political theory that underlies any administrative action and decision (see Waldo). This did not deter further development of public administration, which clearly has a strong basis in the United States, as a craft. In a variety of curricula, case studies are used and specific administrative skills taught, befitting a pragmatist societal and political-administrative culture. Meanwhile its accomplishments (*inter alia* case studies) were overshadowed by a growing number of scholars who desired to develop the study as a science based on quantitative empiricism and logical positivism (Simon 1957; McCurdy and Cleary 1984; Perry and Kraemer 1986; Houston and Delevan 1994).

Finally, the question if, and to what extent, public administration is a science, has been an issue in the United States since the 1950s. The first, and quite acerbic, broadsides in that debate were fired by Waldo (1952a, b) and Simon (1952) (see also Harmon 1989). By the 1960s, the disagreements had become so strong, and the positions of positivists (or scientists, Simonians) and holists (or interpretivists, Waldonians) so entrenched, in public administration and in the social sciences at large, that Whitley labelled the atmosphere as positively (no pun intended) vitriolic (1976, pp. 476–85). In the 1980s and 1990s, both sides of the debate in public administration continued to attract supporters (see, for example, Rutgers 1998; Raadschelders 2008a, pp. 926–7). Has it abated since then? We can answer that question in two ways.

On the one hand, Vigoda believes that this issue has only intensified (2002, p. 5), and this is borne out by the exchanges between Farmer (1999) and De Zwart (2002) and between Luton (2007) and Meier and O’Toole (2007). The latter exchange actually generated a variety of responses by others in 2008. Now, whether during the 1950s and 1960s, or the

2000s, or anywhere in-between, American scholars will find that the European debate on this issue is much less pronounced, and certainly not regarded as important (see Bogason 2008).

On the other hand, we have no empirical evidence as to how widespread concerns about public administration's identity are. Furthermore, positivists did not initiate the debate with postmodernists, critical theorists, and so on. Rather, critics of positivism stir up debate and positivists respond that they are stereotyped rather than understood. If anything, positivists, postmodernists, critical theorists, process theorists, and so forth, should explore what they can learn from one another. It is important to consider the nature of a study or discipline and this is not as easy for public administration as it is for other studies. For one thing, as discussed above, public administration is considered to be an art, a craft, and a science. Few will contest the 'art' and 'craft' designations, but what exactly public administration is as a science is less clear than the two main groups of contestants in the American identity crisis debate claim (that is, Simonians versus Waldonians, see Raadschelders 1999, 2008a).

The question whether public administration is a science is central to the determination of its academic status. Scholars such as Simon implicitly sought to develop a disciplinary study, that is, one whose boundaries are clearly demarcated from other studies and where the quality of scholarship is, in Kuhnian fashion, judged by its scholars only. These two conditions, clear boundaries, and scholars as the main stakeholders, are easier to meet in those sciences that are purely logical in content and generally also for those that have experimental components. This approach to science is rooted in the distinction that David Hume made between fact and value and has become fundamental to the positivist or empiricist tradition. At the same time, this approach is incompatible with the idea that empirical and normative perspectives and assessments cannot be severed, and it is this conflict between empiricists, on the one hand, and critical theorists (see Habermas 1975, p. x), postmodernists, and political theorists, on the other hand, that challenges the determination of what the nature of public administration as a study is.

Public administration's boundaries are more difficult to define for several reasons. First, government deals not only with clearly defined or 'tame' problems, but often with 'wicked problems' (see Ritter and Webber 1973) that require the input of many stakeholders and uses knowledge from various disciplines. Few, if any, social problems can be solved on the basis of one perspective and/or one disciplinary angle. Most social challenges must be met through interdisciplinary effort. Since public administration is the only study that studies government in all its aspects (and not just from disciplinary defined angles), it is fundamentally an umbrella discipline (see Whitley 1976), a multidiscipline like law, business, and medicine (see Henry *et al.* 2008, p. 2), and an interdiscipline (Raadschelders 2010a). Second, and related to the above, is that public administration's object of study, government, is also of interest to scholars in other social sciences, to political officeholders, to career civil servants, to corporate executives, and to citizens. This means that understanding what public administration as a study is, requires attention for the societal and political-administrative environment and culture.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIETAL AND POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

Several features stand out when characterizing the American societal environment. The following is obviously not a complete listing, but focuses on elements that have

consequences for the study (but see the section that follows). First, Americans are inherently, at least since Independence, distrustful of government (Wills 1999; Kamarck 2009). Thus, they are divided on the question as to whether government should be strong (read: large, the Hamiltonian position) or small (read: weak, the Jeffersonian preference). In the spirit of Jefferson, O'Sullivan remarked that 'All government is evil, and the parent of evil . . . The best government is that which governs least' (1837). Going a little further, Thoreau wrote: 'I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which I also believe, - "That government is best which governs not at all."' (1849). To date, whether government should be strong or weak still divides Americans even though in practice government at all levels has become far larger and far more interventionist than the founding fathers could have imagined (Raadschelders 2008b). Thus, the notion of 'weak state' reflects myth rather than reality (see, for example, Novak 2008).

Second, this inherent distrust of government, combined with a romantic and stereotypical image of the 19th century frontier spirit, is also evident in the fact that the US is one of the most individualist countries in the world (Hofstede 2005, p. 78) where people cling to the notion of self-sufficiency even though in practice they would not want to do without a variety of public services and while strongly believing in market mechanisms.

Third, despite its pragmatist tradition that emphasizes participatory democracy (see, for example, Shields 2008), Americans hold to a rather instrumental and technocratic view of government, favouring practical solutions to collective problems on the basis of (scientific) expertise. Public administration is regarded as a technical enterprise that requires managerial skills (Samier 2005a, p. 6). Obviously, this is quite different from the legalistic origins of (continental) European studies. This American belief in the virtues of management is bolstered by the global wave of New Public Management (NPM) that has been especially strong in the Anglo-Saxon world and penetrated the public sector and academe alike (Samier 2005b, p. 81).

Fourth, American society is more fragmented than its European counterparts, and this is reflected in its 'weak state' tradition. Related to this, fifth, is that the country is not homogenous in terms of political culture. While the distinction made between moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalist regions (Elazar 1966) has lost some of its accuracy with regard to the regional differences in range and scope of public service delivery, these political cultures continue to define citizen attitudes.

These features of society influence the judgement in the political-administrative system. Societal distrust of government transfers into an ambivalent – sometimes outright hostile – attitude of elected officeholders to bureaucracy and its unelected bureaucrats. This has resulted in continuous efforts, throughout the 20th century, to reform the civil service and in a rapidly increasing number of political appointees between the top executive and the career civil service (Light's notion of the 'thickening of government') (2008, pp. 52–77) (for historical perspective on this, see Lee and Raadschelders 2005). In addition, distrust of society (that is, the population) and lack of trust in society (on the part of the elites in the late 18th century) resulted in a highly fragmented political system, fragmented both in terms of the sovereignty shared between the union and the states and in terms of the fragmented legislatures at federal and state levels where legislators do not represent the nation or the state as a whole, but a much smaller constituency, something which does not make it easy to develop nationwide policies.

Befitting a society that embraces market mechanisms, various efforts have been made in the 1990s and 2000s to reinforce market principles (economy, efficiency, and effectiveness) in the public sector based on a belief that business or corporate management is superior to public management. This has its origins in the late 19th century, and has been reinforced time and again (for example, the scientific management movement in the 1910s and 1920s, the planning programming budgeting system in the 1960s, zero-base budgeting in the 1970s, the reinventing government movement in the 1990s). However, the claim that business practices are superior has not been systematically investigated.

Moreover, American public officeholders express much faith in expertise, firmly believing that most problems are technical by nature (thus solvable through the sustained use of expert advice and scientific data) with a social dimension. They have a strong policy preference for a natural science model in the social sciences (Donovan 2005, p. 611). In fact, John F. Kennedy even argued that social problems are so complex, that solution should be left to experts only:

The fact of the matter is that most of the problems . . . that we now face are technical problems, are administrative problems. They are very sophisticated judgements, which do not lend themselves to the great sort of passionate movements which have stirred this country so often in the past. [They] *deal with questions which are now beyond the comprehension of most men.* (quoted in Lasch 1978, p. 77; emphasis added)

One can only guess whether Kennedy included elected officials among those who should leave solutions to experts only. Kennedy was no longer troubled by the doubts that were expressed in the early 20th century about the role of expertise. Consider Woodrow Wilson who, in a speech delivered on 26 July 1893, described the trained specialist who lacks a liberal education as follows: 'The empiric is the natural enemy of society, and it is imperative that everything should be done – everything risked – to get rid of him' (see Wilson 1970, vol. 8, pp. 291–2). Consider also the pragmatist philosopher William James: 'Never were as many men of a decidedly empiricist proclivity in existence as there are at the present day' (1979 [1907], p. 14).

INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CULTURE UPON THE APPROACH TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SCHOLARSHIP

The most important influence of national culture upon public administration scholarship seems to be the belief in expertise and this carries the study simultaneously to three interrelated directions. First, the belief that scientific research will provide for usable knowledge, thus underlining the American pragmatist tradition. Second, the belief that science is best served by specialization. Third, there is the idea that the academy can be managed as if it were a business.

With respect to the first issue, research and teaching in American public administration has a strong practical orientation. This is visible in the numerous case studies published in the literature, and the use of case studies in textbooks. It is also visible in the emphasis of curricula across the nation on practical skills (for example, budgeting and finance, personnel management, programme evaluation, performance management, and so on) and on knowledge about the organizational environment for which students are preparing (for example, organizational theory and behaviour, intergovernmental relations, urban and regional government, state and local government, administrative law). There is much less attention given to philosophy, political theory, and history. In Europe, training for

practical skills (including public management courses; see Rouban 2008, p. 139) is usually considered the charge of higher vocational schools that are not part of the university or academy, and are, in fact, considered as requiring lesser intellectual prowess. In addition, European curricula generally have much more attention for philosophy, political theory, and history. By contrast, in the 1950s, William Siffin noted that American public administration '... is characterized by the absence of any fully comprehensive intellectual framework' (Siffin 1956, p. 367). This has not changed. When looking at textbooks, the study is still defined in terms of its specializations, as is illustrated by chapters on organization theory, human resource management, policy-making, intergovernmental relations, budgeting and finance, ethics, and so forth, without an overarching framework that connects these various specializations.

There is another aspect to this practical orientation. It was noted in the introduction that American public administration emerged under the leadership of academics and local government officials. Indeed, practitioners were active contributors to the few journals that existed at that time. However, since the 1970s, practitioner authorship has been declining significantly (Candler 2006, p. 336; Raadschelders 2009, p. 13; Raadschelders and Lee 2011), thus contributing to the impression that the gap between practice and academe is growing.

The belief that science is best served through specialization is perhaps stronger in the US than anywhere else. Very few American scholars reflect upon the intellectual development and heritage of the study beyond the obligatory and rather stereotypical overviews found in most textbooks. The Minnowbrook conferences are an exception (1968, 1988, 2008). Judged by article publications, the study is very much focused on present and future, befitting a nation and a public officialdom that is interested in usable knowledge. At the same time, as noted above, American scholars are quite divided about the nature of science, and whether public administration should develop as a science in the narrow, 18th century, sense. Those who advocate that the study should develop a body of knowledge with appropriate methods distinguishable from other studies, are much in favour of using quantitative-statistical methods to analyse primary (that is, self-collected) or, more often, secondary (collected by others) datasets in the conviction that this produces 'harder', more objective, and evidence-based knowledge that, in turn, can serve evidence-based policy-making defined as policies and practices based on scientifically rigorous evidence (Sanderson 2003). It does appear that American public administration scholarship is more enamoured with quantitative-statistical methods than their colleagues elsewhere (see, for example, Candler 2006, p. 340; on how social scientists most often mention method as defining originality, see also Guetzkow *et al.* 2004, pp. 192, 200–1) and this is evidenced both in the content of journal articles as well as in the prominence of methods courses (and the glaring absence of epistemology courses) in MPA and PhD curricula.

American scholarship, as mentioned above, is very productive in terms of publications. A former student of Alan Newell and Herbert Simon, and former editor of *Administrative Science Quarterly*, wrote that it seems that research productivity is measured more in terms of quantity than quality, and that social scientists are driven to produce publications rather than knowledge. He feels that this massive torrent of publications is facilitated by the extensive use of quantitative-statistical methods (Starbuck 2006, p. 84). We may suspect that it is also prompted by the quantified expectations (for example, number of articles in top-tier journals) that are considered when an assistant professor comes up for tenure and promotion to associate professor. Milking a dataset for all it's worth, that is, getting as many publications out of it as possible, seems to guarantee a good career start. At

the same time, though, and for the sake of argument, probing a dataset and reporting about various aspects in multiple publications can be very constructive when in search of models and theories.

Meanwhile, has the use of quantitative-statistical methods enabled American scholars increasingly to be as it were calculating citizens? Knowing that they will be judged by quantity of publication (after all, who is really competent to judge the quality and substance of publications in a wide range of specializations?) means that wide-ranging and generalist studies that seek to connect different bodies of knowledge, and that may require years to complete, are not pursued.

Scholars who wish to develop public administration as a 'natural-science' style study, lament that critique upon their methods and objectives usually comes from those who have little training in and/or experience with it. Scholars who feel more at home with an interpretative public administration emphasize that the values underlying policy decisions as well as research (methods) choices require more attention. Hence, on both sides, scholars seem critical of the quality of each other's (not their own) research. All this is not meant to convey the impression that American public administration scholarship lacks quality. Works published are usually of good to excellent quality, but whether one type of research, that is, hypothesis-testing of datasets through quantitative methods, dominates the top journals needs to be further investigated.

In terms of the US, the national hobby of ranking just about anything also makes academic programmes eager to stand out. This is no different in public administration. Since the 1960s, its programmes have not only proliferated, they have also fragmented into 'traditional' public administration, traditional public policy, and traditional public management departments and schools. In addition, American programmes are quite inward looking: that is, they are not inclined to compare themselves to programmes outside the United States. Another indication of the extent to which American scholarship is inward looking is the lack of references to foreign literatures. Whether it is too much to suggest that Americans believe that research elsewhere is not relevant, and possibly even inferior, to American scholarship, as Candler *et al.* tentatively suggest (2010, p. 840), requires further investigation.

We should consider the possibility that scholars generally know their own country and literature best, and feel less qualified using literature from other countries without understanding the cultural context from which it sprang. This does not mean, however, that scholars are not curious about what is going on elsewhere, but this international inquisitiveness does not necessarily translate into use of and reference to knowledge sources outside one's own country.

The Anglophone literature stands out for its parochialism, with 90 per cent or more of citations to English-language publications. As Candler reports, this stands in stark contrast to references in, by way of example, Brazilian, Dutch, French, German, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and Philippino journals. There is some regional bias (for instance, Brazilians will cite more Portuguese and Latin American sources, Australians will cite more New Zealand sources, South-East Asian scholars will cite more sources from their region) (see Candler *et al.* 2010). Scholars across the globe all reference American literature extensively and several American textbooks have been translated into a variety of languages. However, perhaps the Anglophone literature can be described as parochial, but this is partly a function of the fact that English has become the *lingua franca* of international academe and scholars of other countries speak and write in English.

Why has American public administration attracted such attention? In the postwar world, many governments turned to American government (the field) and public administration (the study) for advice about and guidance in how to rebuild a country, how to reform, and how to organize a public administration curriculum. American civil servants, practitioners and academics from various types of (non-)governmental organizations, and university professors were actively involved in rebuilding Europe, in constituting a new Germany and a new Japan, in helping African states after decolonization, helping Asian countries (especially India, the Philippines, and South Korea), and in helping Eastern European states after 1989. Often these efforts included setting up public administration programmes. It could be that as various countries (re)discover their own traditions in governing, they will also seek to formulate a study of public administration that befits the history and values of their own country. Over the past two decades, it appears that this is happening, and might reduce the 'overrepresentation' of American public administration (see, for example, calls for an indigenous study of public administration in South Korea in Jung 2001, p. 32; Chung 2007; see also Raadschelders 2009, pp. 13, 17).

Another feature of American public administration scholarship, and, according to Samier (2005b, p. 85), of higher education in the English-speaking world at large, is that the university is increasingly regarded as if it were a business. This is not only visible in the quantification of research productivity (that is, annual output) and research impact (as measured in terms of citations) that invites disregard of quality and of longer term impact, but also visible in the fact that senior academic positions are more and more regarded as managerial by nature, requiring the applicant and incumbent to have experience with, for example, fund-raising, grant acquisition, managing large research projects (that is, these have been common in the natural sciences, but are becoming more important in the social sciences as well), reforming a department, enrolment management, budgeting, developing and implementing strategic plans, and community outreach (that is, to the local community, but also to the public sector, to industry, and so forth). Is the modern professor a 'corporate professor' who works in 'a profit-maximizing enterprise' (Samier 2005b, p. 88)? In all fairness, managerialization not only permeates higher education but also other (policy) areas, and is not limited to the United States. As far as I know, universities in the Western world are increasingly judged by their endowments; their faculty by their output. In fact, output is annually reported, and departments, schools and colleges use benchmarks to determine whether a researcher has made a mark (by differentiating publications according quality of outlet, that is, first-tier, second-tier, third-tier; quality of publisher, and so on).

WANING, REIGNING, AND EMERGING TOPICS

It is always a risky business to capture developments in a study by categorizing publications according to subject matter. One could focus on selecting 'timeless' concepts and topical interests such as organization theory, policy analysis, personnel management, public management, budgeting and finance, intergovernmental relations, ethics, citizen participation, and so forth. While these rather general categories may travel well over time – one should look at American textbooks from the late 1920s up to the present and marvel at the consistency of chapter topics – they do not reflect changes in topical interest very well. A good example of this is the literature in public management that up to the 1970s, and possibly even later, was usually conceptualized as functions of public management (for example, Gulick's acronym POSDCORB). From the 1980s onwards, public

management has been approached as 'new public management' and – since the 2000s – as collaborative management, network management, and so on. One might conclude that the traditional labels do not capture current development in substantive interest very well. The alternative, to categorize developments in the study by looking at the article titles in journals, such as nowadays, for instance, emergency and risk management, e-government, homeland security, administrative capacity, and so on, is equally dissatisfying for the risk of displaying the current fashions. To make things even more complicated, if a category such as e-government is considered too fashionable, and an attempt is made to 'fit' it in one of the more traditional categories, the question obviously is which category is most fitting? With regard to e-government, that determination does not only depend upon the title but also upon the content of the article. For instance, an e-government article may focus on consequences of electronic filing for organizational structure and/or functioning. In that case, one should ask: is organization theory an appropriate label? But, if an e-government piece probes the extent to which it improves government-citizen interaction, the more appropriate label would be 'citizen participation'. In other words, what follows in the discussion below about waning, reigning, and emerging topics can only be an impressionistic exercise, and is informed by looking back at the past 20 years and by publications such as *Public Administration Review* in the past decade.

Among the waning topics at the moment it seems that two stand out: new public management and public sector reform. To be sure, these topics, very popular in the 1990s, still attract scholars but in the past five years or so the number of submissions in these areas has been declining. Obviously, attention for management issues and challenges has not disappeared, and has emerged in the 2000s in increasing attention for such reigning topics as collaborative management and/or government, network management, 'whole-of-government' approaches (Christensen and Lægreid 2007), post-NPM, and 'joined-up government'. All these aim at restoring and improving coordination between individual and institutional agents. Among the more specific topics within the management label, and in response to 9/11 and the hurricanes Katrina and Rita, one can think of emergency management. Characteristic for the current public management literature is attention to the idea that public servants manage networks rather than hierarchies, and that management takes place at multiple levels (that is, multi-level governance). Other reigning topics include public sector motivation, information technology, and e-government.

What is emerging (or re-emerging) appears to be research in local self-government capacity, in judicialization, public sector values, and non-profit management. With regard to local government, attention for local self-governance capacities may well be increasing, inspired by the works of Vincent and Elinor Ostrom (for an overview, see Toonen 2010) and Henri Lefebvre (on autogestion, see Lefebvre 2009, p. 16). Attention for judicialization is important since the role of the judiciary in policy-making and the civil service has been growing in various Western countries (see, for example, Christensen and Wise 2007).

Finally, a number of topics can be identified that are worthy of more attention. These include the role of power and politics in the formulation of government policies; the relation between bureaucracy and democracy; the position of the state (in its European sense) in society; philosophy and political theory (Spicer 2007, 2010); the history of the administrative state (see, for example, Raadschelders 2010b); the connection between policy and management (Meier 2009, p. 7); to lifecycles of public sector organizations; and to the long-term outcomes of public policies (simply to balance the focus on short-term outputs). American public administration would also benefit from a more systematic use of a comparative perspective. This should be pursued not only out of curiosity about

developments in other countries, but also from a genuine desire to learn more about the nature of the policy process and the context of policy-making in the United States itself through contrasts with other countries (Baker 1994). Yet another topic that has fallen off the radar screen, and is more investigated nowadays by cognitive psychologists, is decision making. Given its central importance in the policy-making process, this does deserve much more attention from public administration scholars.

There is perhaps one specific topic in the USA that has not suffered from an attention lifecycle and has continuously attracted scholarship since the 1930s, and that is performance measurement and management. A whole range of performance management reforms have been tried, targeting, separately or combined, the organizational objectives (Management by Objectives in the 1950s), the budgeting system (PPBS in the 1960s; Zero-Base Budgeting in the 1970s), the (strategic) planning system (through, for example, Total Quality Management in the 1980s, and development of strategic planning, the Government Performance and Results Act 1993, the Program Assessment Rating Tool of 2002), and the personnel system (see, for example, Civil Service Reform Act 1978). Several of these initiatives and laws found application at the state and local levels. There is abundant literature throughout the decades and it actually is, perhaps, the one topic where both the policy and public administration literatures show active interest (for recent overview of literature since the 1930s, see Moynihan 2009).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Perhaps several observations in the pages above strike the reader as highly critical of the state of and developments in the study of American public administration, but they are made from a fundamental respect and admiration for the vibrancy and vitality of the study and its scholars in the United States. This author need not add to the praise American public administration scholars have deservedly received in the past half century.

American public administration scholarship has both volume and relevance to the national environment. It is much referenced abroad, being regarded as an example of how public administration scholarship should be. At the same time, American scholars do not inform themselves of research development in foreign language literatures and thus are more insulated than their multilingual colleagues in other countries. There are two interrelated features where American public administration scholarship stands out. First, the question about the study's identity continues to whip up more emotions in the US than elsewhere. Those who identify as scientists and those who advocate other approaches (critical theory, postmodernism, hermeneutics, and so on) do not at all see eye to eye. At best, the question of whether public administration is and/or ought to be a science or a craft/art is unresolved, and is not any closer to satisfactory conclusion than it was 60 years ago. Perhaps one could argue that submissions to and publications in the top-tier journals are somewhat biased in favour of analyses based on the application of quantitative-statistical methods and, thus, that the 'science' side seems to be winning the day. However, that conclusion is as premature as it was when Box noticed that the superiority of quantitative-statistical methods over others had not yet been demonstrated (1992). While many scholars will agree with the notion that multi-method approaches capture reality's complexity best, and that we should see whether different methods and perspectives upon one research topic lead to different conclusions (see, for example, O'Toole 1995), there seems to be a dearth of studies that actually use a multi-method approach.

Finally, what makes American public administration so vibrant and vital is not just its productivity, but also its rich diversity in terms of topics, approaches, theories, and so forth. Certainly, the depth is there, but should not be privileged at the cost of breadth. Today's public administration scholar should employ expert knowledge of a particular topical area or set of topics, and of specialization in a specific set of methods in the service of contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of government. Admittedly, whether or not we are losing such a comprehensive understanding should be further investigated, and is in this paper assumed in light of the exponential growth of substantive and methodological specialization in the past 50 years. What is needed is that scholars reach across the 'boundaries' of their own specializations and not 'simplify' social problems to a researchable level, but take society's complexity as the cue for designing studies appropriate to the handling of that complexity.

Reaching across the aisles could go a long way toward shoring-up a generalist's perspective in the study. With *Public Administration Review*, it is the editorial policy of Richard Stillman and this author to assure such generalists' perspectives through the various features introduced in 2006 (theory to practice, international issues, administrative profile, administrative case, administrative document) and by inviting authors to think about big questions (the academic-practitioner exchanges, the senior-junior exchanges, the symposia, and the special issues). When this is not done, the generalist's perspective would tend to disappear, given the fact that article submissions are almost always about a specialized topic and written by academics. Thus, the final observation about American public administration is that it is healthy, but should keep an eye on balancing the specialist's and the generalist's perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank Patria de Lancer Julnes, Tina Nabatchi, Hal Rainey, and Richard Stillman for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

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Date received 22 April 2010. Date accepted 22 June 2010.

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