Research Methodology in Public Administration: Issues and Patterns

JAMES L. PERRY AND KENNETH L. KRAEMER

Public administration was in an early stage of development when Luther Gulick (1937) called for a science of administration. His exhortation became a source of heated and continuing controversy (Dahl 1947; Simon 1947) that centered on positivist versus alternative views of appropriate research methodology. That debate, which continues today, has derailed public administration from attention to the real issue. That issue is not positivist versus other research methods, but the quality, continuity, and usefulness of research, whatever the methods. Traditional social science methods are valuable as a means of advancing the field. Indeed, the most valued research in the field comes from the social sciences and is based in its methods. Alternative methods may be equally valuable, although we do not espouse them. The test of methodology is whether it produces useful knowledge over time. Therefore, the current status of public administration research methodology is assessed, and changes for its future development are suggested.

Our assessment was conducted by examining research articles in Public Administration Review (PAR) and Administration and Society (A&S) published from 1975 through 1984. We conclude that public administration research is primarily applied rather than basic, lacks cumulativeness, and lacks the institutional supports required to change either of the first two conditions. Therefore, we concentrate our suggestions on institutional supports while giving attention to fostering basic research and cumulativeness of research.

As Lynton Caldwell (1968) noted in an earlier essay on methodology in public administration: “Method is not solely, or even most importantly, a matter of technique. It is first and foremost a way of thinking” (pp. 219–20). In search of a working understanding of methodology, we rely on Kaplan’s discussion of this concept in The Conduct of Inquiry (1964). He distinguishes several senses of methodology: techniques, the specific procedures used in a given science; honorifics, a ritual
invocation attesting to concern with meeting standards of scientific acceptability; and epistemology, involving the most basic philosophical questions about the pursuit of truth. The first and third of these senses have the greatest bearing on this inquiry.

In addition, our primary concern is methodology used in academic research; that is, the conscious effort to advance knowledge about public administration. Thus, methods generally used in the social sciences are included, whether qualitative or quantitative in nature. We excluded methodologies for administrative research, such as program evaluation, client surveys, and productivity measurement. These methods focus on generating knowledge about the problems of particular organizations or programs, and are excluded from the scope of this study. They are oriented to the practice of administration rather than the study of administration.

As the foregoing suggests, methodology and research are closely linked. Methodology exists to guide the conduct of research; methodology is reflected in research. As a practical matter, therefore, our assessment of methodology is necessarily an assessment of public administration research.

**Historical Issues in Public Administration**

**Research Methodology**

Public administration research methodology has been assessed infrequently, but five themes consistently emerge from the literature: (1) The eclectic nature of public administration makes it difficult to identify methodologies that define or are associated exclusively with the field; (2) research reflects too little interdisciplinary communication; (3) public administration research has not been cumulative; (4) the bridge between research and practice is an important consideration in the selection of research methodology; and (5) institutional support for research is inadequate for remedying knowledge deficiencies in public administration.

**Public Administration: Academic Discipline or Profession?**

The question “Is there a discipline of public administration?” has occupied a good deal of attention in the history of public administration thought (see, among others, Dahl 1947; Honey 1957; Mosher 1956). The practical import of this question is twofold. First, identification of the “stuff” of the field, as Dwight Waldo has often termed it, would help identify the phenomena and problems requiring investigation by its practitioners and, in turn, may help them to design appropriate methods for inquiry. Second, locating public administration in the larger constellation of social and natural sciences would have a direct bearing on identifying acceptable, common, or perhaps even paradigmatic research methodologies.

Writing in 1957, John Honey concluded that “a common pool of under-
standing was lacking with regard to (a) what public administration is and whether it is a separate field or discipline from other social sciences, and (b) the nature of research that has meaning for public administration" (p. 238). In the intervening years, the intellectual core has sometimes been the topic of intense debate, and assertions about an identity crisis have been common (Marini 1971), but public administration seems to have arrived at an operative, if not a consensual, solution to the field question. Among the components of this operative solution are that public administration is centrally concerned with the operation and social role of public enterprises and therefore is a practical or professional field; while the scope of public administration practice is broad, the study of public administration is rooted in the social sciences and therefore in the methods of social science; and the problems associated with administering public enterprises demand research of both an applied and basic orientation.

From a research methodology perspective, this solution describes a field characterized by methodological diversity and a mixture of basic and applied research. This state of affairs is a wholly predictable outgrowth of directions identified by Dahl (1947) and Simon (1947) forty years ago (see also Waldo 1984). At mid-century, the controversy about excluding normative considerations from public administration was perhaps the dominant concern of the field. Dahl (1947) considered it perhaps the greatest stumbling block to creating a science of public administration. Simon (1947) argued that Dahl's concern was misplaced, contending it was the result of seeing the problem as characteristic of social versus natural science. He asserted that normative considerations are characteristic of applied as distinguished from basic science because the applied scientist's role involves reaching decisions grounded only partially in scientific knowledge. In Simon's terms, public administration has evolved as a basic and an applied science, the former concerned with establishing empirical propositions independent of the value system of the inquirer and the latter devoted to assisting with application of the empirical propositions for a specified set of values.

Interdisciplinary Communication
The breadth of public administration and its methodological diversity create unusual problems in spanning several boundaries—to academic disciplines, to others within public administration, and to the real world. When Mosher (1956) wrote about these problems in the 1950s, he lamented the absence of systematic ways for those in public administration to keep abreast of relevant developments in other fields and the ignorance about research from public administration within other fields.

Both the stock of knowledge and its rate of growth have increased significantly in the past thirty years, so it would hardly be persuasive to argue that the cause of this problem has abated. Nevertheless, the boundary-spanning problem has been partially resolved by the evolution of new organizational arrangements among
and within academic disciplines. One of the trends identified by Mosher in 1956, that the other social sciences are converging with public administration with respect to interests and purposes, is partially responsible for generating these changes.

Among the manifestations of these new organizational arrangements are the creation of groups within or spinoffs from traditional academic disciplines, such as political science and economics, with central interests in public issues. Examples include the sections on Public Administration and Public Policy within the American Political Science Association. These groups have generated theory relevant to public administration and have provided opportunities for public administration scholars to keep abreast of developments in the traditional disciplines.

A new generation of interdisciplinary organizations has also sprung up to accommodate heightened interest in public problems. The Public Choice Society and the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) are prime examples of this new generation of organizations. Still another development has been the evolution of public-sector groups within a wide range of professional organizations, such as the College of Public Programs in the Operations Research Society of America—The Institute of Management Science (ORSA-TIMS) and the Public Sector Division of the Academy of Management.

These changes in the organization of academic and professional interests have not been an unqualified blessing; nor have they eliminated all boundary-spanning problems. Scholars interested in public administration are now confronted with an overload problem of a new sort: how to select from among all the organizational options available for their professional development.

Perhaps a potentially more serious consequence of the multiplication of locations for public administration activity is the decline of agreement among scholars and practitioners about the basic terms of their field (Garson and Overman 1983). The community of scholars that existed in public administration until the 1960s have been supplanted by minicomunities. Although some public administration scholars view this as desirable because it improves the manageability of developments within accepted specialties (Golembiewski, Welsh, and Crotty 1969), other scholars are concerned because it portends that the values used to assess the worth of new knowledge are no longer widely shared (Newland 1984).

**Cumulative Knowledge**

While interdisciplinary communication problems have perhaps diminished as new communities of scholars have organized to address new issues, another integrative problem has increased in importance: the cumulativeness of relevant knowledge. This criticism has been raised several times in the past (Kronenberg 1971; Mosher 1956). It is important to point out that the process of knowledge accumulation is not linear; the acquisition of new understanding is more probably a step function or an upward-sloping cyclical function. Our diagnosis of this problem is not predicated
on the current level of achievement, but on processes and efforts to systematize empirical theory about public administration.

Impediments to cumulation arise from many sources, including disagreements among competing scholarly interests, changing public problems, and lack of a fixed-core content for the field. The vast scope of the field is a bar to any rapid accumulation of knowledge given the limited human and institutional resources focused on investigating relevant phenomena. The lack of cumulative knowledge also may result from some specific problems associated with incentives for research or investigator preferences for certain research methodologies. Whatever the causes, inadequacies of methodology for cumulating knowledge are reflected in certain characteristics of public administration research. For example, meta-analysis, the critical review and reanalysis of prior research and a popular method for synthesizing research in other fields, is little used in public administration. It is also our belief that a preponderance of public administration research focuses on early stages of theory development (i.e., problem delineation and variable identification), with only minimal attention to more advanced research reflecting the maturation of prevailing theories.

Bridging Theory and Practice
The need for utilitarian research within public administration was recognized in the earliest days of the field. The bureaus of municipal research, credited by Mosher (1956) as a parent of public administration, practiced strictly applied research. This tradition survives today in a wide array of governmental research bureaus and institutes. The practical orientation of these bureaus frequently drives out investments in basic research. Historical tradition, expectations of core funders, and bureau staff tend to work for applied research and against the advancement of basic public administration research. Thus academic public administration is simultaneously provided with and robbed of the means for advancement of knowledge by some of its own institutionalized values.

The perpetuation of the theory-practice distinction is primarily attributable to the limited scientific authority of public administration theory—and not to the value of theory se. Public administration would benefit from strong basic and applied research institutes, responsible to their constituencies, but free to pursue their separate objectives.

Institutional Support
Previous reviews of public administration research have found considerable fault with the adequacy of institutionalized support. Publication outlets (Mosher 1956) and funded support (Garson and Overman 1983; Honey 1957) were among the areas most heavily faulted. The availability of financial support continues to be a problem, but, as suggested above, academic public administration's own values also fail to support research adequately.
Indeed, public administration does not lack historical models, publication outlets, or governmental support for basic research. The Committee on Public Administration of the Social Science Research Council was a major force in the publication, support, and sponsorship of research from 1935 until 1945. The problem of publication outlets has abated significantly. At least a dozen journals, many of them founded since 1970, now complement Public Administration Review (Morgan, Meier, Kearney, Hays, and Birch 1981; Vocino and Elliott 1984). And governmental support for basic research in public administration has been steady, with occasional exhibitions of largess such as the National Science Foundation’s Research Applied to National Needs (RANN) Program and the Office of Personnel Management’s Organizational Assessments of the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978.

While increases in the level of these institutional supports could make a difference for public administration research, they are not enough by themselves. What public administration lacks, in addition, and what is a central problem for advancing research, are values supportive of basic research. The low priority given to research is reflected in faculty recruitment and promotion, training of new Ph.D.s, and program goals and design. Universities are producing an abundance of nonresearch Ph.D.s and a dearth of research-oriented Ph.D.s in public administration (McCurdy and Cleary 1984).

University support for research does not automatically accompany support for teaching programs. Moreover, public administration programs tend to be viewed by university administrators as service rather than academic components (Dunn, Gibson, and Whorton 1985). Thus, when research bureaus are provided to support public administration programs, they tend to be viewed as service extensions of the university and oriented toward applied research and technical assistance rather than toward basic research.

Recent Critiques of Public Administration Research
Recent assessments of public administration research methodology reflect concern with two primary issues. The first is the degree to which research is adding to a verifiable knowledge base. The second issue is epistemological, involving the kinds of research questions that we can pierce with our methodologies, and whether our methodologies produce usable knowledge.

Several recent studies have looked at different bodies of research in public administration from the standpoint of their contributions to knowledge. Garson and Overman (1983) reviewed public management research, a subset of public administration research, for the years 1981–82. They concluded that the research was fragmented, noncumulative, and underfunded. A more recent study by McCurdy and Cleary (1984) analyzed abstracts from public administration doctoral disserta-
tions published in *Dissertation Abstracts International* for 1981. They found that the vast majority of dissertations neither dealt with significant issues nor were conducted in a way that would produce findings in which one could have much confidence. They concluded that the lack of methodological progress, as evidenced by the low quality of dissertations, results from inadequate standards among leading public administration programs as well as the nature of the field itself. Jay White's (1986a) replication of McCurdy and Cleary's study found that dissertation research is not published and therefore not communicated beyond the dissertation committee. Whatever reasons explain the lack of publication (e.g., poor quality, lack of interest in publishing the dissertation), White concluded that dissertation research does not appear to be a major source of knowledge in the field.

The second issue, which is epistemological, has been addressed by a number of public administration theorists, most notably Catron and Harmon (1981), Denhardt (1984), Hummel (1977), and White (1986b). White argues that most critiques of public administration research have been grounded in positivist models, indicative of the natural and mainstream social sciences. He argues, however, that public administration research has not been viewed in the light of two other modes of research: interpretive and critical. He suggests that growth of public administration knowledge be interpreted in the light of all three modes of research.

Following White, we believe that methodological diversity in public administration is both appropriate and acceptable. Nevertheless, debates among the advocates of alternative modes are no substitute for research on substantive theoretical issues. The ultimate test of the value of these modes is whether they contribute to the development of a stock of knowledge and illuminate understanding of the field.

**Contemporary Research Methodology**

**Methods and Data**

Research articles published in *Public Administration Review (PAR)* and *Administration and Society (A&S)* from 1975 through 1984 were chosen as the population for assessing contemporary research methodology within public administration. *PAR* is the journal of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), a professional society whose mission is “to advance the science, processes, and art of public administration.” It has a dual set of objectives aimed simultaneously at communicating with practitioners and advancing the science of the field. *A&S* is an unaffiliated journal published by Sage Publications. Its editorial policy “seeks to further the understanding of public and human service organizations, their administrative processes, and their effect on society.”

In addition to considerations of manageability and convenience, several fac-
tors led us to choose research published in these two journals. First, PAR and A&S are among the premier journals in the field and, therefore, should be representative of current research methodology in the field. Second, research articles in these journals are peer reviewed to assure that they meet broad professional standards.

Symposia articles, professional stream essays, review essays, and special issues were excluded from the domain of PAR articles analyzed. Included in the analysis were 289 PAR and 194 A&S articles.

Analytic Categories
Each article was coded on eleven variables, about half reflecting purely descriptive information and the others requiring some interpretation of the contents of the article. The complete variable code book is presented in the Appendix. Seven variables provided primarily descriptive information, some of it purely for identification purposes, about each of the cases: year of publication, volume, issue number, author(s), author’s organization, general subject area, sources of research support.

Four other categories were used to record information about the methodology used in the study. Research Stage is a taxonomic variable derived from earlier work by Gordon, MacEachron, and Fisher (1974). It represents the stage of social science research, reflecting the purpose for which the study was conducted. These research stages and purposes are summarized in table 15.1 (page 355). Research Methodology was adapted from an earlier taxonomy by Caldwell (1968). The categories of this taxonomic variable reflect general methods of inquiry used in the social sciences. Methods of Empirical Analysis was based on Gordon, MacEachron, and Fisher (1974), Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976), and Vogel and Wetherbe (1984). This variable applied only to studies that used empirical observation. The categories of this variable range from case study to controlled field experiments. Each category of the taxonomy represents increasing internal validity (Campbell and Stanley 1963). Focus is a dichotomous variable that distinguishes whether the study was oriented toward theory building or problem resolution.

Research Results
Decriptive Characteristics of Public Administration Research. Figures 15.1 through 15.6 present research by primary subject matter, focus, source of research support, stage, general methodology, and methods of empirical analysis. These data are useful for two purposes: (1) characterizing public administration research in general and (2) identifying journal-specific variations. Our primary interest is with the former of these purposes.

The distribution of research by primary subject matter, reported in figure 15.1 (page 356), confirms the broad distribution of research in the field. Although the subject matters addressed in PAR are more evenly distributed than those in A&S, the journals share the four most frequent subject matters: administrative the-
### Table 15.1
Classification of Research Strategies

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<tr>
<th>Research state</th>
<th>Research purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Problem delineation</td>
<td>To define what we are looking for, and the extent to which it constitutes a social problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Variable identification</td>
<td>To identify variables that might be linked to the problem, and to describe possible relationships among these variables</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Determination of relationships among the variables</td>
<td>To determine the clusters of relevant variables required for prediction, and to analyze their patterns of relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Establishment of causality among the variables</td>
<td>To determine which factors are critical in promoting or inhibiting the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Manipulation of causal variables for policy formation purposes</td>
<td>To determine the correspondence between a theoretical problem solution and the manipulable factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Experimental evaluation of alternative policies and programs</td>
<td>To assess the expected, as well as the unanticipated, consequences of various programs and policies before and after they are applied on a large scale, and to determine the effectiveness of such programs in overall problem solution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 15.1
Distribution of Articles by Primary Subject Matter

The figure shows the distribution of articles by primary subject matter for the journals *PAR* and *AS* (*A&O*). The figure is a bar chart with categories on the y-axis and the number of articles on the x-axis. The categories include administrative theory, public management, citizen participation, public policy, planning, accountability, personnel, finance, intergovernmental relations, urban and regional government, state government, federal government, and other. The percentages of articles in each category are displayed.

The lowest stages in the taxonomy. *A&O* published a moderately higher proportion of articles addressing determination of relationships among variables than did *PAR*. But only about 5 percent of articles published in both journals reported research that had been conducted at one of the three most advanced stages.

Figure 15.5 (page 360) indicates that the general research methodologies in
PAR and A&S clustered in three categories: logical argumentation, legal briefs, and empirical analysis. Methodologies often associated with interpretive or critical theory, that is, historical or descriptive approaches (White 1986b), were infrequently represented. Mathematical models or comprehensive literature reviews were used in very small proportions, less than 3 percent of PAR articles and less than 8 percent of A&S articles. About half of all articles (52.2 percent for PAR and 49.5 percent for A&S) employed some type of empirical analysis. Figure 15.6 (page 361) indicates, however, that most empirical research consisted of either case studies or cross-sectional analysis. Very little empirical analysis involved field experiments, structural equations, or longitudinal studies.

Changes in Research Methodology over Time. As a means for identifying changes in public administration research methodology, the data were categorized into two five-year periods 1975–79 and 1980–84. The A&S distribution of research by primary subject topic was quite stable during these two periods, but there were significant shifts in the subject areas covered in PAR (table 15.2, page 362). Administrative theory, citizen participation, planning, and personnel all declined in significance as a proportion of total research. Finance, intergovernmental relations, and public policy increased significantly as focal areas for research. Few differences for the two periods were found for research sponsorship or research stage. In contrast, general methodologies changed significantly, with much greater emphasis on empirical analysis in both the PAR and A&S samples from 1980 to 1984 (table 15.3, page 363). The increased use of empirical analysis was distributed among three methods: case studies, cross-sectional analysis, and longitudinal analysis.
Figure 15.3
Sources of Research Support

Discussion

The analysis identified several differences between PAR and A&S. Among the differences were the distributions of subject matter and the greater emphasis of A&S on theory development. The editorial goals and objectives of the journals obviously influenced these variables. The similarities in results far outweigh journal idiosyncracies, however. Moreover, replication and extension of our analysis by Stallings and Ferris (1988), covering forty years of Public Administration Review, produced similar results. Given the consistency of findings over time and across journals, three general evaluative statements about public administration research can be drawn.

First, public administration research is primarily applied rather than basic. Nearly three-fourths of the articles dealt with either problem delineation or variable
identification; less than one-fourth dealt with theoretical relationships among variables. Moreover, the research lacks detachment from immediate and instrumental concerns. Most of the articles reporting empirical research were of either the case-study or cross-sectional-survey variety; few articles involved field experiments, structural equations, or longitudinal studies. Finally, the underlying purposes of conducting research tend to be problem oriented, which limits development and testing of empirical theory. Problem-oriented research tends to reduce the chances
**Figure 15.5**
Distribution of Articles by General Research Approach
that propositions about the field will be adequate statements of explanation and will be linked together in a system of explanation (Kronenberg 1971, 193).

Second, public administration research lacks cumulativeness. Both the methodology and the stage reflected in public administration literature indicate that research is not cumulative. Less than 4 percent of the articles in PAR and A&S combined were literature reviews of empirical research, a methodology indicative of a general concern with cumulation. Moreover, our personal reading indicates that much of the literature provided only citation reference to previous research and did not seriously engage the linkages between the current article and prior or contemporary research.
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Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
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<td>Case study</td>
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<tr>
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<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<th>1980–84</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
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<td>7.3</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross sectional, correlational analysis</td>
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<td>28.1</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Third, public administration research lacks adequate institutional support such as university and extramural funding, organized research institutes, collaborative groups and external rewards. The primary indicator of support for research was financial. Eighty percent of the articles failed to identify any sources of financial or other institutional support. This omission is not caused by poor reporting, journal
policy, or faculty ingratitude. Instead, it is indicative of the low level of such support.

To compare the level of support for public administration research with another professional field, we analyzed reported support from articles published in the Academy of Management's two publications, the *Review* and *Journal*, for calendar year 1984. From a total of 105 articles, 40 percent acknowledged some kind of support, 22 percent reported receiving extramural support and another 18 percent received assistance from their university. This is twice the proportion of articles in *PAR* and *AoS*.

Thus, given the assessments above, we conclude that there is a notable convergence between the past and the present. Public administration research continues to be eclectic, noncumulative, skewed toward problem solving, and poorly supported. Public administration research methodology has not matured to a point where it is capable of sustaining the knowledge creation needs of the field. We find ourselves in basic agreement with Fritz Mosher (1956) who, over thirty years ago in a review of research methodology in public administration, concluded:

> The field has not channeled its research efforts; its scope of interest seem unlimited; it has not developed a rigorous methodology; it has been pretty blase about definitions; it has not agreed on any paradigms or theorems or theoretical systems; it has not settled on any stylized jargon or symbols; with a very few experimental exceptions, the field has not been modeled or mathematized into an "adminetrics." (P. 176)

In order to advance the status of research methodology in public administration, we believe three general changes are necessary: (1) focus on core phenomena, (2) institutionalize research, and (3) improve specific methodologies.

Focus on Core Phenomena in Public Administration

As noted above, public administration is a remarkably diffuse field encompassing contributions from many disciplines. It is also a relatively small field, in terms of scholars pursuing its study, when compared with similar fields such as business administration. Public administration, therefore, needs to focus the scope of its scholarship if progress is to be made in understanding phenomena within its general domain. Golembiewski (1977) has suggested guidelines for achieving this goal. Among the guidelines is a "next bite" approach, that is, avoiding development of comprehensive theories and focusing instead on smaller pieces of appropriate reality. In addition to this strategy, two sets of core phenomena could provide a sharper focus for research within the field.

*The Study of Characteristics and Processes That Differentiate Public Administration from Other Administration.* This could be attacked as both an issue of
political theory and as an empirical issue. A political theory approach would concentrate, as suggested by Woodrow Wilson (1887, 197), on those public purposes that define public administration. Empirical research should be grounded in the premise that public administration is a subset of two generic social processes: administration and governance (Willbern 1968).

**Political-administrative System Interface.** The second anchor we propose for a redefined public administration core is the study of phenomena at the interface of the political-administrative system. Among the phenomena that would be the object of research given this definition of legitimate concerns are responsiveness or nonresponsive to the political system; legitimacy of the administrative system in carrying out its politically mandated functions; legislative oversight of administrative agencies; representativeness of administrative agencies; and administrative reform (e.g., civil service reform for increasing the responsiveness of administrators to both the executive and the public).

**Institutionalize Research**

It is apparent that public administration research is very much a product of institutionalized norms and incentives. Substantial advancements in research methodology will occur only if new norms and incentives are legitimated. These changes would need to include the following.

**Upgrade the Importance of Research in Faculty Roles.** At the micro level, considerable progress can be made by better developing the capacity and incentives for public administration faculty to do high caliber research. Where the capacity does not exist, we suggest bringing in first-rate scholars from other disciplines. For existing faculty, vehicles such as the Interuniversity Consortium on Political and Social Research (ICPSR) summer program could be used to upgrade faculty research skills. Faculty incentives can be influenced by institutionalizing research as a promotion and merit criterion. The faculty tenure and promotion policies of individual universities could be significantly reinforced by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration’s (NASPAA) adoption of standards that defined research as a faculty responsibility and required that public administration faculty be substantially engaged in teaching, service, and research. A recent study by Joseph A. Uveges, Jr., (1985) indicated that NASPAA standards have had a modest impact on M.P.A. curricula and program autonomy. Thus there is some evidence that the leverage of NASPAA standards might contribute to institutionalizing research.

**Improve the Quality of Ph.D. Programs.** A change related to upgrading faculty research roles involves increased emphasis on research-oriented Ph.D. pro-
grams. Public administration continues to debate the issue of whether the Ph.D. should be conferred exclusively for research competence or whether a doctorate for practitioners is not equally appropriate (Birkhead and Netzer, 1982). The M.P.A. should be the terminal professional degree, and doctoral study should be devoted to developing a candidate's research competence. Schools that offer the Ph.D. or D.P.A. (Doctor of Public Administration) should provide intensive training in research and adequate numbers of research-oriented faculty to sustain the programs.

Develop Research Unit—Public Administration Program Ties. An expanded emphasis on the value of research would be greatly facilitated by stronger ties between formal research units and public administration programs. Universities considering creation of public administration programs should give serious consideration to funding research units at high levels relative to the instructional programs, for example, one-half the program resources.

Increase Funding for Public Administration Research. Without financial resources, adequate research cannot occur. This is an issue that needs to be resolved collectively by the profession and leading public administrators. The National Academy for Public Administration might initiate a dialogue with Congress about the needs for, and benefits from, research on public administration. Given the scale of our modern administrative state and its centrality in our society, Congress might consider creation of a National Institute along the lines of the National Institutes of Health. Within the current fiscal climate, such proposals would appear to be inopportune, but the scale of problems of modern public administration could easily justify a moderate amount of earmarked funds likely to repay the initial investment in a few short years.

Specific Methodological Improvements

In addition to changing incentives and norms, there is need for specific improvements in research methods used by public administration scholars.

More Extensive Use of Meta-analysis. One of the most important of these changes involves steps to increase the cumulation of research. Kronenberg's (1971) earlier call for a public administration proposition inventory was one means for dealing with this problem, but it has not been implemented in the fifteen years since it was suggested, probably because it was dependent on a large-scale, collaborative effort. An alternative means for increasing cumulativeness of research is wider use of meta-analysis. Meta-analysis refers to the set of methods used to establish facts by cumulating results across studies. These methods include literature reviews (Salipante, Notz, and Bigelow 1982), counting statistically significant findings, and averaging results across studies (Hunter, Schmidt, and Jackson 1982). Also, the em-
Empirical analysis indicated that literature reviews were used infrequently and few studies advanced to mature stages of social science research. Both of these findings suggest the need for more attention to meta-analysis. An ancillary benefit of greater use of meta-analysis is that it can also be valuable for integrating results across different academic fields, a particularly important objective for an interdisciplinary enterprise such as public administration.

**Case Study Methodology.** Case studies have been stereotyped as a method of last resort, exploratory, and an attractive nuisance (Miles 1979; Yin 1981a). Given these critical views about case-study methodology, it would be appropriate to call for a significant reduction in the use of case studies in public administration research. Nevertheless, case studies will continue to be a popular method given the subject matter of the field and therefore a more realistic strategy is to focus on their improvement. Furthermore, abandonment of case studies fails to consider a revisionist view about their value that has developed in the past decade (Yin 1981b; Yin and Heald 1975). Recent refinements in the conduct of case studies have increased their potential validity (McCintock, Brannon, and Maynard-Moody 1979; Yin and Heald 1975). Considering their widespread use in the field, public administration scholars might undertake further refinements in case-study methods as a means for enhancing public administration research and contributing generally to development of social science methods.

**Qualitative Methodologies.** Another specific area for improvement is the use of qualitative methodologies within public administration. A grasp of qualitative methodologies is becoming increasingly important as interpretation and rhetoric regain prominence and respectability in the social sciences (Winkler, 1985). The empirical analysis confirmed public administration’s already strong preference for qualitative research, an albeit diminishing one, but also questioned the adequacy of researchers’ grasp of the tools and craft associated with qualitative methodology. There has been a small explosion of materials in recent years about qualitative research (Van Maanen 1979), and public administration scholars need to become both more proficient practitioners of this craft and contributors to the advancement of these methods.

**Advanced Quantitative Methodologies.** The call for better qualitative methodology is not a slap at its opposite number—more appropriately its complement—quantitative methodology. Although the empirical analysis indicated a significant increase in the amount of quantitative research in public administration, the techniques used were primarily confined to simple correlation and linear regression analysis. This represents an advance in the field’s application of quantitative techniques, but public administration still lags behind other social sciences in the ap-
plication of advanced statistical techniques. Thus public administration scholars need to make more substantial use of causal analysis, structural equation models, and longitudinal statistical methods, and to develop working competence with new statistical methodologies sooner after they become available to social scientists than they do currently.

Two examples of advanced statistical techniques that would significantly enhance opportunities to investigate research questions characteristic of the field are Box-Jenkins time-series models and covariance structural modeling. Box-Jenkins is a technique for modeling changes in a time series of data to test the effects of specified interventions. Although it has not yet been applied widely, it has already been used to study such issues as the policy implications of economic change (Catalano, Dooley, and Jackson 1985) and the effects of the CSRA merit pay intervention on organizational performance (Pearce, Stevenson, and Perry 1985).

Covariance structural modeling, commonly known as LISREL (Joreskog and Sorbom 1981), is a causal data analysis technique that is much more powerful than path analysis, which became popular in the 1960s. LISREL permits simultaneous estimation of the relationship between observed measures of latent independent and dependent variables. LISREL has begun to appear with increasing frequency in sociology and management journals for research problems involving social and individual behavior.

Some attention needs to be given not only to specific techniques that might be integrated into the field but also to how those techniques are acquired by students and current scholars. An earlier study (Gazell 1973) of empirical research in public administration and political science found a high degree of methodological stability over time. Scholars kept using familiar, traditional approaches instead of learning new methods. Thus the field needs to develop support systems, for example, research workshops and doctoral consortia at professional conferences, to facilitate learning. Such support systems are equally applicable and necessary for public administration scholars interested in positive, interpretive, or critical research modes to develop and stay abreast of appropriate research methodologies. Clearly, such steps are only a partial answer. But they are necessary not only for moving the field to the forefront but also for improving the state of research practice.

**Conclusion**

Even if all the suggestions outlined above could be implemented instantly, it would take several years before their consequences would be noticeable. Although some of our suggestions require collective or institutional action, many can be implemented by individual scholars in the routine practice of their craft. For example, individual scholars can stay with research issues over the long term, improve the methodologies
associated with case studies, and increase the application of more advanced statistical methodologies appropriate to the problems of public administration. The acceptance of these suggestions by the public administration community could serve to advance both the science and the art of public administration.

Appendix: Codebook for Analysis of Articles

**VARIABLE 1:** Year (1975–84)
**VARIABLE 2:** Volume (35–44)
**VARIABLE 3:** Number (1–6)
**VARIABLE 4:** Title
**VARIABLE 5:** Author(s)
**VARIABLE 6:** Institutional Affiliation(s)
**VARIABLE 7:** Topic
   1. Administrative theory/bureaucracy/organizational theory
   2. Managerial roles/public management
   3. Citizen participation/representation
   4. Public policy making/policy analysis/policy evaluation
   5. Planning/administrative systems
   6. Accountability/responsiveness/public interest values
   7. Personnel
   8. Other
   9. Budgeting/finance
   10. Intergovernmental relations
   11. Urban and regional government
   12. State government
   13. Federal government

**VARIABLE 8:** Source of Research Support
   1. National Science Foundation
   2. Office of Naval Research
   3. National Institute of Justice
   4. National Institute of Mental Health
   5. Ford Foundation
   6. U.S. Department of Energy
   7. None indicated
   8. Other

**VARIABLE 9:** Research Stage/Purpose
   1. Problem delineation
2. Variable identification
3. Determination of relationships among variables
4. Establishing causality among variables
5. Manipulation of variables for policy making
6. Evaluation of alternative policies and programs
7. Other

**Variable 10:** Research Methodology
1. Recollected experience: anthropology
2. Recollected experience: historical
3. Recollected experience: descriptive
4. Deductive reasoning: mathematical
5. Deductive reasoning: logical argument
6. Deductive reasoning: legal brief
7. Empirical analysis (inductive inference)
8. Other
9. Heuristic analogy (e.g., simulation)
10. Literature review

**Variable 11:** Method of empirical analysis
1. Case study
2. Cross-sectional, correlational analysis
3. Structural equations (e.g., path analysis, LISREL)
4. Longitudinal analysis
5. Controlled field or laboratory analysis
6. Not applicable
7. Other

**Variable 12:** Focus
1. Theory building (theoretical)
2. Problem resolution (practical)

**References**


Social Behavior 26:141–52.


