



Editors' Analysis: A Status Report of the *Policy Studies Journal*, 2004–09

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As the outlet for the Public Policy Section of the American Political Science Association and for the Policy Studies Organization, the *Policy Studies Journal* (*PSJ*) is the premier channel for the publication of public policy research. Following the vision of the previous editor Hank Jenkins-Smith and managing editor Warren Eller, *PSJ* is best described as an outlet for theoretically and empirically grounded research on policy process and policy analysis.

As new editors of *PSJ*, we are regularly asked a range of questions from members of the public policy research community: What percentage of authors are from outside the United States? How many of the articles address implementation versus agenda setting? To what extent does *PSJ* publish outside of the major theories of the policy process (e.g., punctuated equilibrium and multiple streams theories)? To what extent is *PSJ* publishing articles dealing with environment and energy issues versus other substantive topics?

Like many members of the public policy community, we can provide answers to these questions based on casual observations of *PSJ*'s content. This essay accomplishes a great deal more by summarizing the results of a systematic review of every peer-reviewed article published in *PSJ* from 2004 through 2009. The objectives are twofold: (i) to provide a common understanding of the recent history of the public policy literature as printed in *PSJ*; and (ii) to identify areas for future growth in *PSJ*. Ultimately, the rationale for conducting this systematic review is best expressed by Dave Grusin, an award-winning composer and musician, who said: "I've found that 'thinking outside the box' works better if I know what's 'inside the box'."¹ This editors' analysis seeks to provide the public policy community a glance inside the *PSJ* box with the hope of stimulating innovations and advancements in public policy scholarship.

Methods

From 2004 through 2009, there were 203 articles published in *PSJ*. For each article, we coded the author's rank and affiliation, case study location, substantive

topic, analytical approach, policy process stage(s), and number of citations per article. The inter-coder reliability was 100 percent for items easily coded (e.g., author rank and location), and at least 80 percent for more difficult items (e.g., policy process stage or theory applied).

Analysis of Authors

Figure 1 presents the distribution of authors by position per year. The five position types are professor, associate professor, assistant professor, graduate student, and other. Figure 1 was calculated by summing the number of author positions for each year by articles. For example, in 2009, 31 percent of 45 authors are professors, whereas only 7 percent of 45 authors fall in the “other” category. Examples of the “other” category include a contribution from Richard G. Schuldt of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois Springfield (Mooney & Schuldt, 2008), or the contribution from Allan Blackman from Resources for the Future (Blackman, 2008).

From Figure 1, at least 50 percent of the authors per year are professors and assistant professors. Associate professors are relatively underrepresented from academic ranks with their contributions at about the same rate as graduate students and

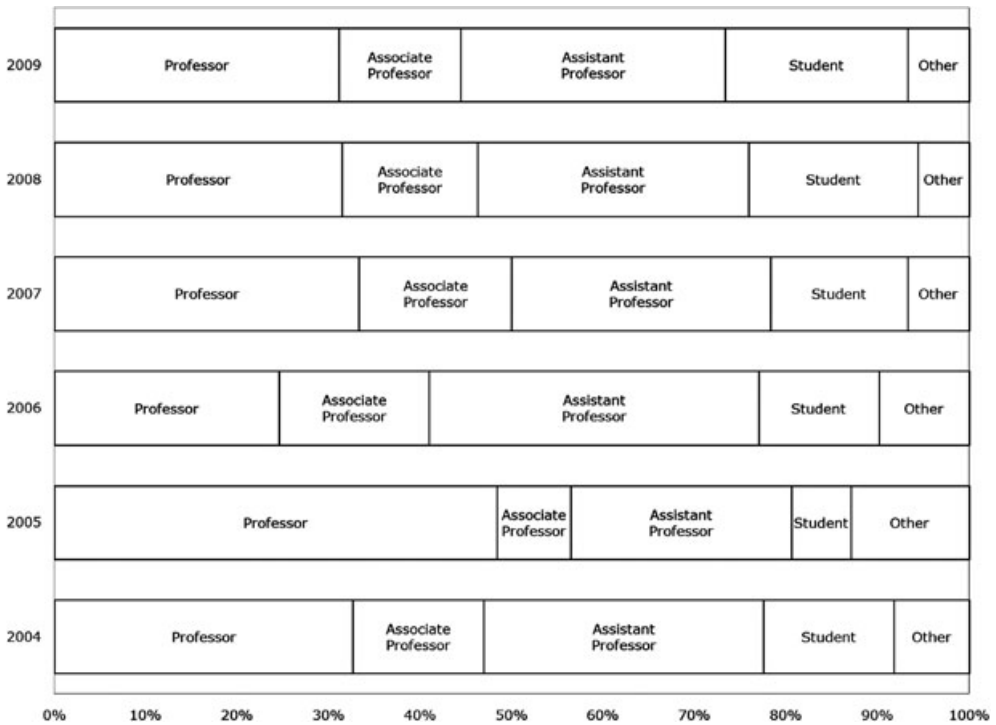


Figure 1. Percent of Authors by Position Type per Year Publishing in *Policy Studies Journal* from 2004–09.

Table 1. Percent of Author Types as Single Authors or as Other Co-Author Arrangements

	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Graduate Student	Other
<i>n</i>	101	43	88	38	30
Single author (%)	28	35	43	13	23
Co-author with professor(s) only (%)	10	21	25	34	37
Co-author with associate(s) only (%)	9	5	9	11	3
Co-author with assistant(s) only (%)	22	19	7	11	13
Co-author with student(s) only (%)	13	9	5	3	7
Co-author with other(s) only (%)	11	2	5	5	7
Mix of co-author ranks including students (%)	8	7	6	24	7
Mix of co-author ranks without students (%)	0	2	1	0	3
	100	100	100	100	100

slightly more than the “other” category. There is also a slight increase in the percentage of student authors over time.

Table 1 summarizes the extent of single authorship and various forms of co-authorship across author types from 2004 to 2009 aggregated. These percents were calculated by counting the number of articles with a certain author mix (single author, professor with assistant professor co-author, etc.), and dividing by the total number of articles per author type. For example, a professor was at least one of the authors on 101 articles, of which 28 (or approximately 28 percent) were single author.

The most common author types to publish as sole authors in *PSJ* are assistant professors (43 percent), associate professors (35 percent), and then professors (28 percent). The least likely to be sole author are graduate students (13 percent). Graduate students, in turn, are most likely to co-author with at least one professor (34 percent), or possibly a mix of co-author types, including with other students (24 percent). Likewise, a large percentage of articles authored by professors or associate professors are co-authored with assistant professors, 22 and 19 percent respectively.

Analysis of Articles

Figure 2 lists the number of articles by the location site based on the continent or country. Case studies were coded as “Cross-Continental or Multiple Countries” if they included multiple countries in one continent, e.g., Stone’s (2008) analysis of transnational policy communities or Reichert and Jungblut’s (2007) analysis of multiple countries in Europe. Articles were coded as “Not Applicable” when dealing with theoretical topics with no research site, such as Meier’s (2009) contribution, among others, to the 2009 symposium on policy process theories. From Figure 2, we find a vast majority of articles are located in the United States ($n = 139$ or 69 percent of 203). Cross-continental/multiple country studies or studies in Europe are the next most likely location and account for 13 percent of the 203 articles. The least likely location for research printed in *PSJ* is South America, with the only contribution coming from Escobar-Lemmon’s (2006) work on sovereign authorization of decentralization in Columbia.

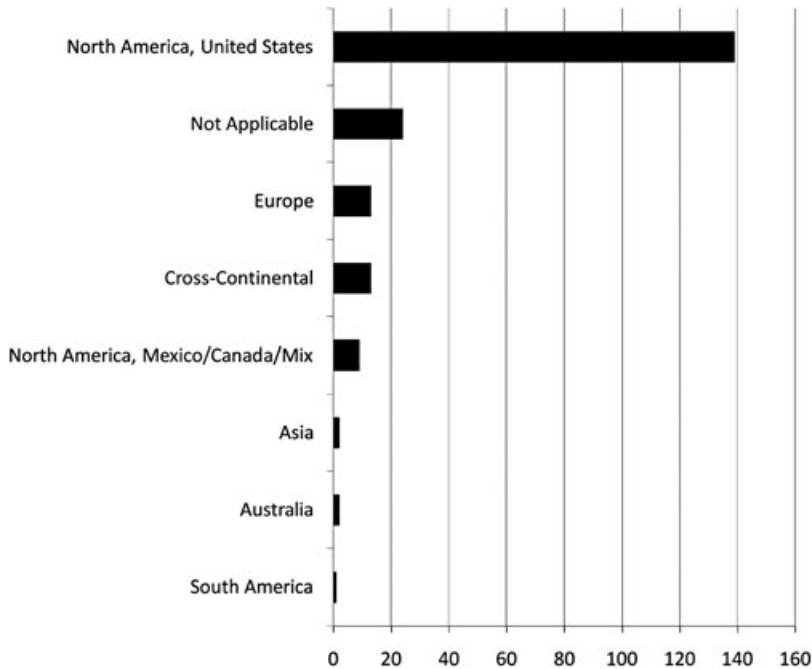


Figure 2. Number of Articles by Study Location (2004–09 Combined).

While Figure 2 shows a majority of articles from U.S. study locations, over time, the number of sites outside of the United States is actually increasing. For example, and not including articles coded as “Not Applicable,” the percentage of U.S. research sites has decreased from 93 percent in 2004 to 72 percent in 2009. Similarly, the percentage of authors from the United States has decreased from 100 percent in 2004 to 82 percent in 2009.

Figure 3 provides the number of articles by substantive topic from 2004 to 2009. The 203 articles were grouped into 14 topical categories, plus categories for “Miscellaneous,” “Public Policy Theory/No Substantive Topic,” and “Not Applicable.” The miscellaneous category consists of articles on gambling (Freund & Morris, 2006), human rights (Bobara, Mitchell, Nepal, & Raheem, 2008), immigration (Givens & Luedtke, 2004), neutral competence (Weimer, 2005), and public deliberation (Gastil & Weiser, 2006). The “Public Policy Theory/No Substantive Topic” category was added for theory-based articles without a substantive topic (e.g., Steinberg, 2007). Introductory pieces (Hill, Lynn, Proeller, & Schelder, 2005) and rebuttals (deLeon, 2005) were categorized as “Not Applicable.” This provided us with a total of 17 possible codes for substantive domain.

“Environmental/Energy” is the modal substantive topic, with a total number of articles at 53, nearly twice the total of any other substantive topic. Articles focusing on the “Public Policy Theory/No Substantive Topic” are the second most common category with 27 articles. Other domains that have relatively high amounts of applied articles are “Social Welfare” with 27, “Education” with 16, and “Health/

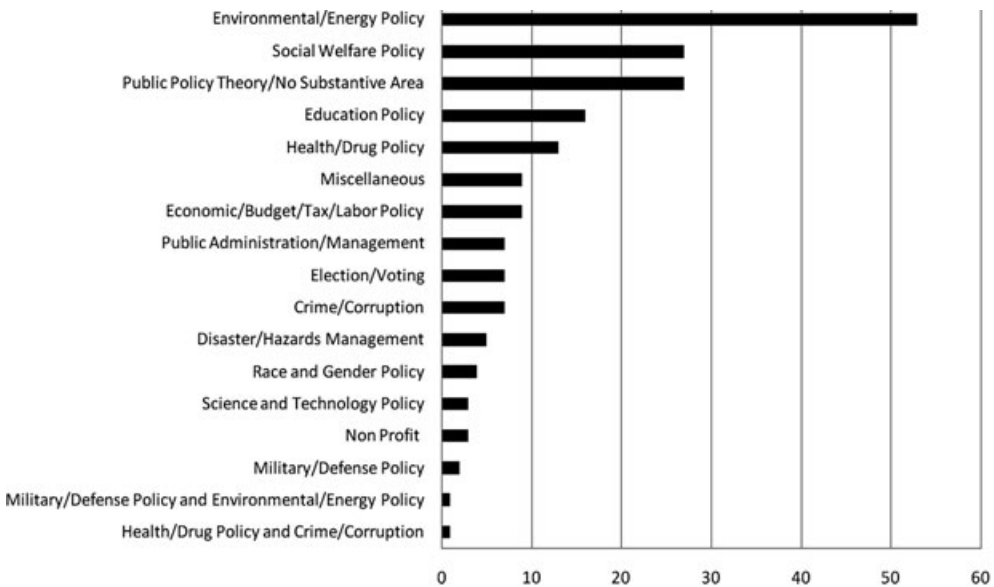


Figure 3. Number of Articles by Substantive Topics (2004–09 Combined).

Drug” with 14. The four substantive domains of Environment/Energy, Social Welfare, Education, and Health/Drug combine to make up 56 percent of the total articles printed in *PSJ*.

Foreign policy (Reichert & Jungblut, 2007), the economy (Hahm & Heo, 2008), national security (Prante & Bohara, 2008), and terrorism (May, Sapotichne, & Workman, 2009) have gained relatively little attention from policy scholars publishing in *PSJ*.

Figure 4 breaks down the number of articles by stages of the policy cycle. The results from Figure 4 show a wide, uneven study of the various stages of the policy cycle. Evaluation and agenda setting are the top two stages found in *PSJ*. The stage receiving the least amount of attention is termination (Graddy & Ye, 2008; Wallner, 2008). More than 50 articles focus on more than one policy stage or frame their analysis via an approach unrelated to any policy stage.

Figure 5 presents the analytical approach (such as a theory, framework, or model). Theories that did not have an aggregate total of more than five applications among all *PSJ* publications were categorized together as an “other” category. There were over 70 different articles in the “other” category, examples including multiple streams (Marschall & Shah, 2005), principal–agent theory (Alvarez & Hall, 2006), fiscal federalism (Hall, 2008), and social capital (John, 2005).

Policy analysis is the most common analytical approach found printed in *PSJ*, with a total of 46 articles. This reflects the finding in the stages coding that the majority of articles focus on evaluation/analysis. The most common comprehensive single theory of the policy process is the punctuated equilibrium theory, with 16. The remaining analytical approaches range between 5 and 11 applications, with public management at 11, and advocacy coalition framework at 10.

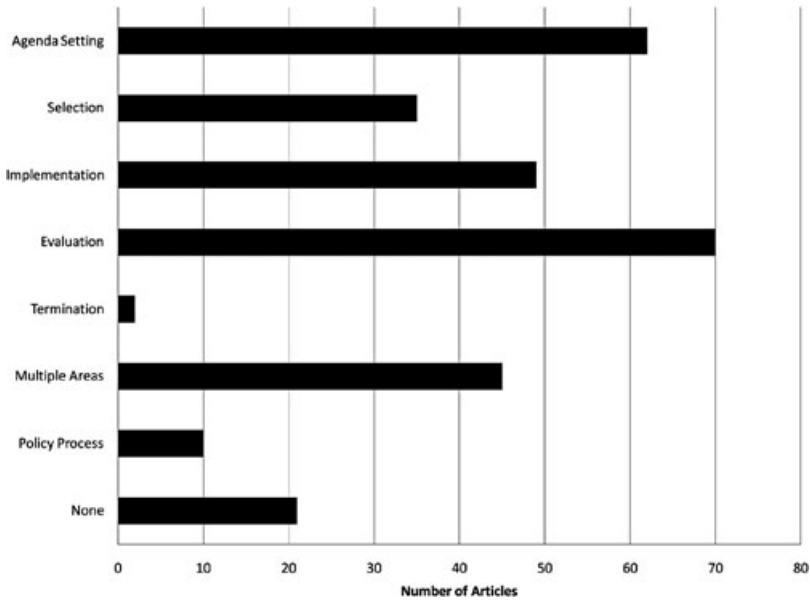


Figure 4. Number of Articles by Policy Stage (2004–09 Combined).

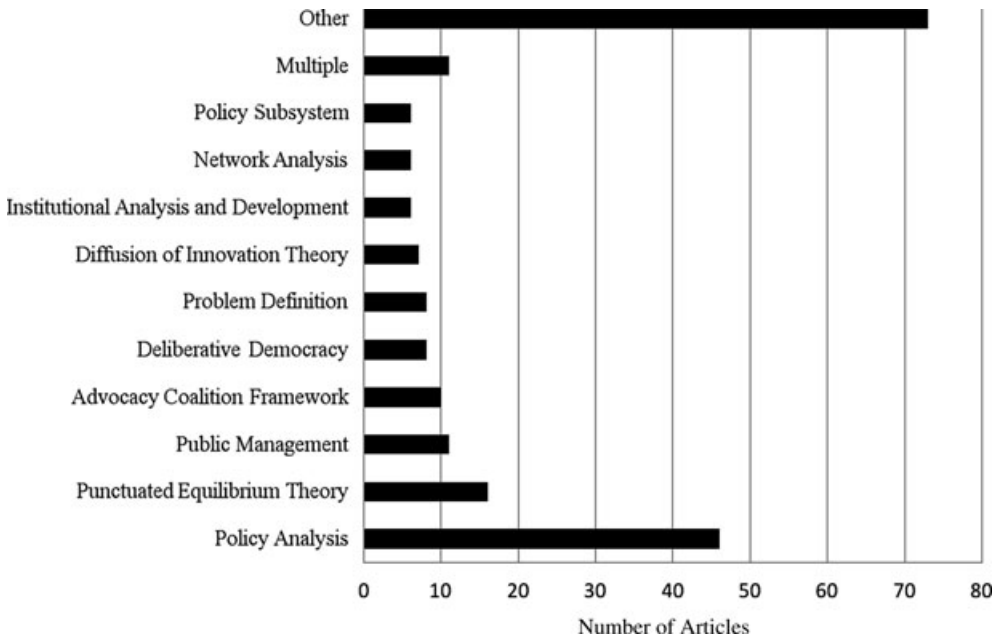


Figure 5. Number of Articles by Analytical Approach (2004–09 Combined).

Summary

The analysis of *PSJ*'s recent history of published articles shows a few trends and suggests areas for growth.

First, at least half of the authors are full professors and assistant professors, who are publishing as single authors or as co-author teams. Associate professors are underrepresented. One interpretation is that *PSJ* currently serves as an outlet for mentoring assistant professors and graduate students and an outlet for assistant professors to earn a single authored publication. We welcome the use of *PSJ* for mentoring, but also encourage authors to consider *PSJ* for their best work, particularly by those from associate professors.

Second, the modal substantive topic is environmental and energy policy. The emphasis on environmental and energy policy could simply signal the substantive focus of policy process scholars who regularly seek out *PSJ* as an outlet for their work, especially those who apply the advocacy coalition framework, punctuated equilibrium theory, and institutional analysis and development. It may also reflect the two symposiums on voluntary environmental programs in 2007 and 2008. Finally, the emphasis on environmental and energy policy may echo, to a smaller degree, the specialty area of the former editor, his preferences for articles, and his ability to solicit submissions from his professional network. Given the obvious that public policy is more than just about environmental and energy policy, we encourage submission on other topical areas, such as education, social welfare, and foreign policy.

Third, a majority of articles have research sites or authors within the United States. Reflecting the global circulation of the journal, there is a strong trend of increasing internationalization of *PSJ*'s content. As globalization continues to interconnect our world making local issues global, we encourage submissions from authors outside of the United States and submissions from U.S. authors writing about international issues.

Fourth, as noted, *PSJ* has had numerous articles dealing with specific stages of the policy process (e.g., policy implementation or program evaluation). We would encourage potential authors to contribute their best work on the various components of the policy cycle as one means to clarify the characteristics of the individual policy stages or on developing the key interactions between the stages (e.g., implementation and evaluation). Additionally, this review shows great breadth in the types of frameworks, theories, and models used in the analysis with no single approach, outside of policy analysis/evaluation, dominating—a trend that we hope continues.

This essay began with the purpose of answering questions about the content of *PSJ*; this essay now, at its end, raises a host of new questions about the journal and its management. Are the editors somehow biased in their approaches? Of course, we acknowledge that we favor clear and logical and oft-times-but-not-invariably empirical manuscripts. We also consciously accept manuscripts that we think will be of interest to public policy readership. Are we oversubscribed on particular topics or approaches? Possibly; this analysis shows, for example, that *PSJ* has published

articles more in the environmental/energy fields than other fields, and has published more scholarship completed in the United States than in other parts of the world. What is the future of *PSJ*? From this review, our message to *PSJ*'s readers and authors is simple—we welcome submissions that continue to build on *PSJ*'s past strengths (e.g., environment/energy), as well as encourage submissions that broaden the reach of *PSJ* so that it embodies the diverse scholarship of the public policy community.

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Note

1. Quote read on a Starbucks coffee cup, circa 2007.

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