RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Epistemic Community or Tower of Babel? Theoretical Diffusion in Public Administration

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This article takes a comparative look at the development of the public administration discipline in three countries: Australia, Brazil and Canada. The nature of the international public administration academic community is assessed through content analysis of articles in the Australian Journal of Public Administration (AJPA), Revista de Administração Pública (RAP), and Canadian Public Administration (CPA). The method is based on that used by existing United States (US) research, allowing for comparison with that national context. The focus is on the diffusion of theoretical approaches between these national contexts, assessing whether the international public administration discipline better approximates an epistemic community, in which theoretical approaches move seamlessly between the national contexts; or a ‘Tower of Babel’, in which the different national contexts remain largely isolated.

Key words: public administration discipline, content analysis, international comparison

The concept of epistemic communities was initially coined by Ruggie (1975:569–570) but popularised by Haas (1989). As applied to international relations, epistemic communities referred to ‘a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain of issue area’ (Haas 1992:3). Though epistemic communities could be domestic (see O’Brien 2003), the special interest of the concept lies in transnational epistemic communities. Interacting through ‘conferences, journals, research collaboration, and a variety of informal communications and contacts’ (Haas 1992:17), these epistemic communities act to develop international consensus regarding technical issues within their professional ambit, then take this consensus back to their national contexts, so ‘increasing the likelihood of convergent state behavior and international policy coordination’ (Haas 1992:4).

The focus in the epistemic community literature within international relations has been on the policy involvement and so impact of these groups. Yet note first that communities sharing an episteme can exist without this goal of policy influence, despite Thomas’s (1997:223) emphasis on ‘the role of advocacy’. Indeed, Ornstein discusses the existence of epistemic communities in the form of early scientific societies:

The societies concentrated groups of scientists at one place, performed experiments and investigations impossible to individual effort, encouraged individual scientists and gave them both opportunity and leisure, often through financial support, for scientific work. They became centers of scientific information...published and translated scientific books, promulgated periodically scientific discoveries, and thus coordinated the scientific efforts of the various progressive European countries (Ornstein 1928:260).

Note, too, that though Haas’ focus is on the ‘universal truths’ of natural science, he acknowledges that

Epistemic communities need not be made up of natural scientists; they can consist of social scientists or individuals from any discipline or profession who have a sufficiently strong claim to
a body of knowledge that is valued by society (Haas 1992:16).

In contrast to the epistemic community model of a seamless interaction across borders, there is good reason to suspect that a ‘Tower of Babel’ mentality exists in terms of the diffusion of ideas. Indeed, critics of the epistemic community concept note that these communities can be malign as well as benign (Miller and Fox 2001; Jacobsen 1995:300–305), establishing ‘dominating or hegemonic discourse’ (Keely 1990:91) squashing dissenting voices (see, for instance Frank 2003 and *Economist* 2003). Other barriers to the diffusion of ideas might take the form both of passive hurdles to transmission (language barriers, different contexts, ready access to journals) and more active ones: a reasoned view that some aspects of the national context are unique, and so not amenable to lessons from elsewhere; as well as a less defensible administrative nationalism.

Within the countries studied in this research, there are strong tendencies that would lead one to suspect a ‘Tower of Babel’ hypothesis. Candler, for instance, highlights the monolingualism that characterises American public administration. A survey of 331 articles in five prestigious public administration and public policy journals found that 304 had no references in a language other than English. More worrying, even a majority of international and comparative research of non-English speaking countries had no (19 of 42) or less than 5% (26 of 42) of references in a language other than English. Indeed, an analysis of articles published in *RAP* and of *Revue Francaise d’Administration Publique* found that Brazilian and French scholars, even when writing about Brazil and France, cite articles in a language other than their own and English more than Americans cite a second language when doing comparative research (2006b).

Other reasons to suspect a ‘Tower of Babel’ include the ‘French fact’ in Canada, which has been an enormous area of scholarly interest. An early article on ‘public administration in a bilingual and bicultural country’ (Gosselin 1963) was followed by some 20 other articles on either Québec autonomy or bilingualism. Distinctions between public administration in English Canada (Hodgetts 1997) and French Canada (Parenteau 1997) have also long been recognised in the Canadian literature.

Within the field of public administration in Brazil, Alberto Guerreiro Ramos probably made the case first and most strongly, if certainly not for an administrative nationalism (see Ventriss and Candler 2005), then certainly for the ‘sociological reduction’, or ‘critical assimilation of the foreign sociological patrimony’ (Guerreiro Ramos 1965:14–15). Other Brazilian scholars have put the case for ‘a Brazilian organisational theory’ (Serva 1990:10) more strongly (see Candler 2002:299–300). Similarly in Australia, Holmes notes that prominent Australian public administrationist Francis Bland advocated study of ‘the peculiar characteristics of public administration in Australia’ in the 1940s (Holmes 1989:329).

**Method**

As a most-similar research design (Candler 2006a; Mercier 1985:39–40; Ragin 1987:47–48), the cases reflect certain similarities especially interesting for Australians interested in the lever offered by comparative analysis. In Louis Hartz’s terms, the four cases in this study are European ‘settler societies’, ‘fragments of the larger whole of Europe struck off in the course of the revolution which brought the West into the modern world’ (Hartz 1964:3). As a result, unique insights can be gleaned through comparison with these ‘other societies with a similar fate’ (1964:69).

Content analysis of major journals occupies a small but valuable niche in public administration research. Of recently published work^1^, Douglas (1996) and Forrester (1996) look at faculty and program research productivity; Wright, Manigault and Black (2004) study the use of quantitative methods; while Stallings and Ferris (1988), Houston and Develan (1990, 1994), Bingham and Bowen (1994), Mezzomo and Laporta (1994), Lan and Anders (2000), and Streib, Slotkin and Rivera (2001), provide general surveys, typically with more specific central themes. The scope of this
previous research has also varied considerably. Most focus wholly or predominantly on US journals, with notable exceptions including Mezzomo and Laporta’s (1994) survey of *Revista de Administração Pública*, Bowman and Hajjar’s (1978) analysis of nine English language journals (from Canada, England, India, France and the United States), and Althaus’ short report (1997) and Scott and Wanna’s (2005) more qualitative approach in *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. The temporal scope has varied from very short, with seven of the articles covering less than 10 years, to Stallings and Ferris (1988), Mezzomo and Laporta (1994), and Bingham and Bowen (1994) each covering at least a quarter century. Some have been comprehensive, resulting in a sample size of 3606 in Forrester’s (1996) survey of 10 journals from 1989–1993; and some have used sampling, so Bingham and Bowen’s (1994) analysis of 52 years of *Public Administration Review* included only 240 articles.

This article seeks to build on this earlier research, but take the analysis beyond the English language context. Given that the purpose of the research was, in part, to splice the results of analysis of the Canadian, Brazilian and Australian contexts onto existing research on the US, the method used followed that adopted by a number of the articles cited above.

The research draws on a dataset of 4206 articles developed by the author. The dataset includes content analysis of all articles published through 2002 in *Australian Journal of Public Administration* (*AJPA* – 1708 articles), *Revista de Administração Pública* (*RAP* – 1314 articles), and *Canadian Public Administration* (*CPA* – 1184 articles). *AJPA* was first published (as *Public Administration*, not to be confused with the British journal of the same name) in 1939. *CPA* began publishing in 1958, while *RAP* began publishing in 1967. To extend the scope of the analysis through to 1960 in Brazil, *Revista de Serviço Público* was also analysed from 1960–70. The articles were analysed for the ‘locus of research’ (47 categories, derived from Lan and Anders 2000:155; and Mezzomo and Laporta 1994:8).

As indicated below, the paradigmatic focus of the article is derived from the locus of the research. Locus areas selected for analysis favoured the more omnibus approach used by Lan and Anders (2000:155), with their 45 issues, and especially Mezzomo and Laporta’s (1994:8) 39 loci – ‘empirical phenomena that constitute the object of research, delimit the territory to be explored’ (Mezzomo and Laporta 1994:6) – rather than the narrower approach of Bingham and Bowen (1994:205) and Bowman and Hajjar (1978:224). Through this broader approach it is also hoped to unpack one of the more interesting findings of Bowman and Hajjar’s previous research which, again, is the only other content analysis research using a comparative focus. In their Table 8, on the distribution of subject matter by journal, over 90% of the American academic papers are coded for one of the eight categories used. Yet 40% of American practitioner and 60% of articles in non-US journals were classified as ‘other’.

Locus areas were identified in accordance with Lan and Anders’ broader method of determining this from article titles, abstracts (when available), section headings, and such, and reading the entire article if these did not provide adequate indication of the locus of the research (Lan and Anders 2000:144; see also Bowman and Hajjar 1978:204; Stallings and Ferris 1988:580–581). Streib, Slotkin and Rivera’s (2001:517) multiple coding was practiced, so that ‘an article dealing with financial analysis, which falls under the practice of organisational planning and management, might also address budgeting or strategic planning’ and so is coded as each of the three.

While Stallings and Ferris (1988:581) excluded symposia and special issues, this analysis included otherwise normal length articles in these formats, as indicative of topic areas felt to be of special importance by the editorial boards of the period. Letters to the editor, research notes, news, and such were not included.

Streib, Slotkin and Rivera (2001:516–517) and Stallings and Ferris (1988:580–581) make the case for using the premier journal as a window on the field even in the US, where a number of highly regarded public administration journals exist, because of the breadth, depth, and unquestioned prominence of *Public Administration Review* (*PAR*) (Forrester and
Watson 1994; PA Times 2003). In the three countries that are the focus of this research, a concentration on the premier journal is even less problematic, as these countries lack the competition for prominence within the discipline that characterises the US context.4

No attempt was made to identify and track all paradigms in public administration, but rather to track a number of readily identifiable approaches, identified especially in Henry (2001:27–52) and Dunsire (1999:371–377). The original intent was to use Lan and Anders’ theory building v. problem solving v. information provision distinction (2000:156), then to code ‘theory building’ articles for the approach used. A further distinction was then planned between the more specific subject areas of the paper. Lan and Anders’ method proved too fine, however, for an analysis drawing on three languages (about 13% of articles in CPA are written in French), in three national contexts5 over as many as six decades. Useful distinctions were hard to draw between papers providing information about theoretical approaches without ‘building’ theory, ‘problem solving’ articles that have passing references to theory, or ‘information provision’ articles that have problem solving implications. As a result, the paradigmatic approach of the paper was derived from the locus area. In this way the broader impact of a paradigm is measured, rather than simply ‘theory building’ work.

For example, from the locus areas included in the content analysis, the following paradigms (and topical indicators associated with these) were developed:

- Politics/administration dichotomy;
- Administrative Science6 (planning, human resources, finance/budgeting);
- Public policy (evaluation/formulation, implementation);
- New Public Administration (ethics, citizenship);
- New Public Management (privatisation, performance measurement, total quality management, devolution, etc.);
- Critical approaches (postmodernism, Marxism); and
- Network theory (networks).

Note that the method adopted in this article does not indicate solely explicit references to a paradigm, but rather more broadly to evidence of the impact of these paradigms. A further deviation from previous research involves not presenting the data by decade. In addition to change across space, this research was also interested in change over time within the national contexts. This shared Bingham and Bowen’s (1994:204) assumption that focus areas within public administration would be related to policy initiatives, with these closely related to changes in government. As a result, the data are presented in different time spans in each country, with these determined by changes in government. While this periodisation sacrifices a bit of comparative leverage in not having identical periods in each country, it gains in analytical clarity (see Pierson 2004; Lieberman 2001). The periods analysed are shown in Table 1.

The Australian periods include the Liberal/National (conservative coalition) government of John Howard, the consecutive Labor governments of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, Malcolm Fraser’s Liberal/National coalition, and the last half of Liberal Robert Menzies long term. The years 1967–74 saw five prime ministers (Liberals Holt, McEwen, Gorton and McMahon, and Gough Whitlam’s Labor government of late 1972 to 1975), and so are treated as a ‘Post-Menzies’ transitional period.

Two similar transitional periods are analysed in Brazil: the ‘pre/post coup’ period of the early years of the military government (1964–67) and the leftist government of João Goulart (and Jânio Quadros) that it overthrew; and the post-dictatorship period of democratic consolidation, which saw troubled governments led by José Sarney (a Vice-President-elect who assumed the presidency when President-elect Tancredo Neves died before taking office), Fernando Collor (forced out of office under impeachment threats) and Itamar Franco (who assumed office on Collor’s resignation). On the other periods: the military regime took a hard turn to the right during the rule of a linha dura (hard line) faction, then experienced a period of abertura (opening). The final period was that of
Table 1. Time Periods Analysed – Australia, Brazil and Canada

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Canada</th>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 248)</td>
<td>(n = 379)</td>
<td>(n = 197)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 519)</td>
<td>(n = 306)</td>
<td>(n = 255)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975–83 Fraser</td>
<td>1979–85 Abertura</td>
<td>1975–84 Trudeau II</td>
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<td>(n = 210)</td>
<td>(n = 170)</td>
<td>(n = 267)</td>
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<td>(n = 196)</td>
<td>(n = 275)</td>
<td>(n = 307)</td>
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<td>(n = 223)</td>
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reformist social democrat Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Canada presented fewer difficulties: the Chrétien, Mulroney and Diefenbaker periods in Canada were readily identified. The long, almost unbroken Liberal governments from 1963 to 1984 are split more or less in half.

The data is presented in Table 2. Note again that the data (in Table 2 and in Table 3 which follows) presents only the percentage of articles that fit the identified criteria. The cells do not add up to 100, both because the analysis does not include the universe of paradigms used by public administration scholars in the three countries, and because despite whatever difficulties were encountered in distinctions between Lan and Anders’ theory building v. problem solving v. information provision distinction, a large number of articles had these prosaic, problem solving and information provision purposes (see Candler 2006a).

General Trends

General trends in Table 2 present mixed results with regards to the ‘Tower of Babel’ and ‘epistemic community’ hypotheses. In many ways the paradigmatic influences evident in these three literatures map closely the classic presentations of the development of the field of public administration. Most striking perhaps is the slow slide in the influence of Administrative Science, POSDCORB\footnote{1} -like techniques. These influences have been evident in Brazil at least since Rodrigues’ (1943) discussion of ‘Taylorism and unity of command’. From over a quarter to nearly half of all articles in the three countries in the early 1960s, the share of articles dealing with planning, human resources and finance/budgeting collapsed from one-quarter to one-sixth. Given the focus of this article, though, it is worth noting that each of the three countries have retained a strong commitment to this pragmatic emphasis in a discipline that one Brazilian scholar early referred to as a ‘tool and instrument that can be used in the organisation of society’ (Guerreiro Ramos 1946:129; see also 1966:243). The US record is mixed, as Bingham and Bowen’s data (1994:207) shows little change over time in the influence of topics like human resources and budgeting and finance from the 1940s through to 1991 (see also Lan and Anders 2000:151), though Streib, Slotkin and Rivera’s data (2001:520) may confirm a general decline in these topics in PA\textit{R} from 1984 through 1998. However, their data does confirm the continued strong interest in these topics among US public administrationists. In other words, the consistent focus, among public administration scholars in the three countries and in the US, on these pragmatic themes tends to reinforce the ‘epistemic community’ hypothesis.

Similarly public policy, as identified in this analysis by papers with a focus on the processes of policy formulation, evaluation and implementation, has been a research interest throughout the period in question, from shortly after Lasswell’s initially ‘largely ignored’ (Kelly and Wettenhall 1973:405) advocacy for the
Table 2. Paradigmatic Influences – Australia, Brazil and Canada

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<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
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<td>P/A dichotomy</td>
<td>Menzies</td>
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<td>Fraser</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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| **Development of policy sciences in the 1950s (1973:405–409). Research on these topics has been evident in AJPA and in CPA throughout the period in question, though it has taken a bit longer for Brazilian scholars to take up this approach. The US evidence, again, is less clear. Bingham and Bowen (1994:207) show little interest in either public policy analysis or in implementation by PAR, with less than 2% of articles on these topics in the 1980s though Lan and Anders (2000:151) do identify 7% of articles on these topics in their multi-journal analysis in the mid 1990s.**

On the other hand, divergences (the ‘Tower of Babel’ hypothesis) are evident. Classic Westminster system concerns about the relationship between politics and administration (Aucoin 1995:3–8) are evident in Australia and Canada, but all but absent in Brazil’s presidential system, with this no doubt exacerbated by 21 years of dictatorship.

Most striking, the two Anglo-phone countries have resolutely failed to take notice of post-modernist or Marxist theoretical approaches, a trait that they share with the US (see Ventriss 1998a, 1998b). In Brazil, on the other hand, RAP has long welcomed the perspectives of scholars like Maurício Serva, Fernando Tenório and Wilson Pizza Junior. Pizza Junior has, for instance, written on issues as diverse as the importance of the temporal context in organisational studies (1997), on the effect of instrumental rationality acting through market mechanisms on human society (1994), and on the environment (1991), as well as an earlier article (1984) that might have been titled ‘the case for bureaucracy’, echoing Goodsell’s (1983) American classic of the same period.

Tenório, similarly, has written a series of articles on the conflict between instrumental rationality and the attainment of substantive social goals, fearing that the former limits the potential for human emancipation inherent in modernity (1989, 1990, 1993), as well as an article looking at the impact of marketisation on the nonprofit sector (1999). Perhaps more...
A Loud Triumph

The Anglophone absence of critical approaches is especially striking given the recent growth of the New Public Management. Indeed, McSwite (2003) links the two, arguing in an ‘autopsy’ that whatever slender hold post-modernism had in American public administration, it was vanquished by the young upstart New Public Management. Along with the steady decline in importance of Administrative Science, albeit still constituting the most influential conceptual focus analysed in this research; the second most dramatic trend evident in Table 2 has been this rise in the importance of discussions of privatisation, marketisation, devolution, performance measurement, and similar themes. In short, the public sector planning of Administrative Science has given way to the private sector markets of the New Public Management. New Public Management themes entered Canada with four articles in 1986, Brazil with three in 1984, and Australia with two articles in 1987 (then exploding with eleven in 1990).
It is also worth noting in passing that the New Public Management reforms confirm Spann’s ‘‘jokey’, ‘mild discontent’’ with the public administration literature, as featuring too much ‘rediscovery or resurrection of old ideas under new guises and new names’ (Spann 1981:13). In Canada, for instance, Mackenzie (1959) and Johnson (1963) early suggested the adoption of private sector management practices in the public sector; while Dunsire notes the introduction of ‘‘more “business-like” methods with the 1961 Plowden Committee in the UK’’ (Dunsire 1999:366). Similarly, Wengert’s 1942 discussion of ‘‘the study of public administration’’ presages many New Public Administration themes, in cautioning against privatisation, urging ‘‘greater concern in the study of administration with its potential meaning for the achievement of a fuller democracy’’ (Wengert 1942:316), and view of hierarchy not as ‘relations of command and obedience [but as] a channel for communication – a mechanism through which intelligence moves from top to bottom and bottom to top’’ (Wengert 1942:320); and of course Wilson’s seminal 1887 essay sought to make public administration’s ‘‘business less unbusinesslike’’ (Wilson 1887:201).

On an unambiguously positive note, it is also worth noting that the discipline has long engaged in what might be called ‘‘old public management’’ reforms. In the Brazilian context, Mello e Souza (1994) refers to the ‘‘interminable debate’’ over administrative reform; and Castor and José (1998:99), dating administrative reform in Brazil from at least the 1930s note:

The history of Brazilian administration is a monotonous repetition of a fight between two forces: on one side, a formalistic, ritualistic, centralised, inefficient bureaucracy resistant to periodic attempts at modernisation of the State apparatus, allied to the most retrograde and conservative, though politically influential, economic interests; on the other, the modernising currents of the bureaucracy and their own political and business allies (Castor and José 1998:98).

More generic (non-New Public Management) articles on administrative reform are evident throughout the early years of the 1930s and 1940s of both the Brazilian and Australian literatures (as well as CPA, from its later, 1958 start).

Returning to New Public Management reforms, Table 2 also confirms Bingham and Bowen’s hypothesis that the public administration academic discipline is heavily influenced by political trends. The exceptional influence of New Public Management topics in AJP, especially relative to CPA, is no doubt related to the vigorous reform agenda of the Hawke/Keating governments in Australia, relative to Canadian efforts which ‘appeared to fall short of the mark’ (Aucoin 1995:13).

The influence of the New Public Management is also evident in its high profile as a paradigmatic approach explicitly cited by authors. While very few of the articles discussing planning, budgeting or staffing referred to POSDCORB, principles of administration, or to Administrative Science; the term ‘New Public Management’ has been ubiquitous in the three journals covered. For instance, in AJP a keyword driven search in Business Source Premier found specific use of the phrase in 82 articles since 1994.

A Quieter Impact?

The ‘‘loud’’ impact of the New Public Management is also evident in comparison to the New Public Administration. The same keyword search above in AJP yields only nine articles with references to ‘‘New Public Administration’’. Yet as Table 2 shows, even with the fairly limited set of indicators used in the content analysis above, New Public Administration themes have clearly made an impact on the field since the September 1968 Minnowbrook conference. This is also evident in a broader analysis, using a range of other research loci identified with the New Public Administration. This is presented in Table 3. Issues analysed include social equity, non-governmental organisations and social movements (Wilbern 1973; Kelly and Wettenhall 1973), and a number of broad social problems (Henry 2001:44).

Given that barely five years after Minnowbrook Wilbern (1973:373) had asked if ‘the
new public administration is still with us’, these results, coupled with those in Table 2, are striking. This is especially so despite the New Public Administration not having traveled well from Minnowbrook, US to these other three national contexts.\textsuperscript{9} As a coherent, visible perspective the approach is all but absent, indeed a recent Brazilian paper translated the New Public Management as nova administração pública – new public administration (Seabra 2001). Similar ambiguity exists in the other two cases. Hawker’s \textit{AJPA} discussion of ‘a new public administration’ in Australia takes great pains to distinguish this from the American version, as ‘the American experience of a new public administration had its roots in circumstances which are not to be found in Australia a decade and more later’ (Hawker 1980:508).\textsuperscript{10}

Yet the data in Table 3 suggests that the approach has had considerable impact on the discipline. One exception includes social equity. As is evident even in the aggregated data in Table 3, over a decade passed before the New Public Administration calls for greater attention to equity were reflected in public administration scholarship: Frederickson’s 1971 call for a New Public Administration concerned with greater social equity did not show up in scholarship in these journals until the mid 1980s. Oldfield, Candler, and Johnson (2006) further unpack and draw on the social equity data in Table 3 (as well as US data) to argue that public administration in Australia, Brazil, Canada and the US has been well behind the curve in addressing social equity issues. Even the apparent recent emphasis in Australia and Canada is spotty. While some long overdue attention has been focused on gender, indigenous peoples, and (in Canada) issues of race and ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation have yet to be seriously addressed by public administration in any of these four countries, at least as reflected in articles published in the discipline’s premier journals through 2003.

With this single exception, though, the discipline does appear to have responded to the calls of the New Public Administration for greater attention to the policy \textit{ends} of public administration, rather than the historical focus on POSDCORB \textit{means}. In each policy area in each country, greater attention was turned on these issues, whether addressing these policy issues specifically, in the ‘problem solving’ or ‘information provision’ sense analysed by Lan and Anders (2000:157); or basing more conceptual, theoretical work in these contexts.

This is consistent with American research on the topic. Streib, Slotkin and Rivera (2001:520) show an increase in research on issues such as citizen participation, democratic advocacy and diversity; and Lan and Anders (2000:155) identify a number of themes consistent with the New Public Administration that have featured strongly in research in \textit{PAR}.

Especially striking is the emphasis on contemporary policy issues in \textit{RAP}, with over 15\% of articles addressing health care from the 1980s, and greater emphasis on the environment, welfare, and education than in either \textit{AJPA}, \textit{CPA}, or in US journals. Coupled with the more diverse range of theoretical approaches evident in the country, as well as the attempts to ‘reduce’, modify and merge these as discussed in the previous section, the data suggests that Raymundo Faoro’s (1987) rhetorical question regarding whether a Brazilian political theory exists has been answered in the affirmative, at least for Brazilian public administration. This Brazilian approach to public administration draws on a rich mix of characteristics, including:

- a familiarity with the European literature drawn from an historical affinity with the Continent;
- the introduction of North American influences through development assistance (Wahrlich 1965:62; Sherwood 2002), and in the attractions of the empiricism of the social sciences in North America of the 1940s and 50s (Oliviera 1995:59–88);
- a desire for ‘less a pure theory of social reality than a knowledge of systematic regularities of strategy, that permit’ social transformation (Guerreiro Ramos 1966:243); and
- a long desire to apply Guerreiro Ramos’ reduction to develop Serva’s ‘Brazilian organisation theory’.

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In Conclusion

As Kelly and Wettenhall (1973:412) argued three decades ago, the approach ‘carried too little weight to win spectacular short-run victories’, but the evidence presented in this analysis of articles in the premier public administration journals in Australia, Brazil and Canada suggests that the New Public Administration seems to have had a lasting impact on the field, despite its low profile. The more prominent New Public Management has also traveled well through the national literatures that are the focus of this article. This, as has been shown, has been equally true of the original, pragmatic focus of the public administration discipline. From this, one can safely conclude that a public administration epistemic community is evident in the international literature surveyed in this article.

Yet evidence of ‘Tower of Babel’ limits on the flow of theoretical perspectives within public administration have also been evident in at least two ways, one healthy and one probably less so. Unhealthily, Anglo-phones publishing in the premier journals in Australia and Canada have been loathe to at least engage Marxist or post-modernist theoretical approaches. Here again, the US discipline especially appears to be lagging behind the pace of social change, given a 2004 electoral campaign in which Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate John Edwards raised ‘two Americas’ as a salient theme, with this emphatically reinforced by Hurricane Katrina. On the positive side: the Brazilian literature, with its omnivorous theoretical approach, and efforts to apply these to the country’s contemporary realities, may provide a model for public administration scholarship in an increasingly inter-connected world.

Endnotes

1. See Forrester (1996:538) and Bowman and Hajjar (1978:218) for references to earlier works in this tradition.

2. See also Fleury et al. 2003.

3. The dataset also codes the articles for a number of other items, including author’s institutional affiliation, author’s institutional discipline, author’s discipline (all three are categories common in previous research), research method used (expanded from Lan and Anders 2000:152), level of analysis, and branch of government (derived from Lan and Anders 2000:149–150). These items are analysed in Candler (2006a).

4. CPA is published by the Institute of Public Administration, Canada. Canadian Public Policy publishes short, largely unreferenced commentaries. AJPA is published by the Institute for Public Administration, Australia. Though no rival to AJPA, as an anonymous reviewer of this article pointed out ‘Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration, which is now Public Administration Today, has been sufficiently important to gain some recognition’. RAP is published by the prestigious Getúlio Vargas Foundation, host of the Brazilian School of Public Administration. Revista de Administração Municipal, as its name suggests, focuses on local administration. Revista de Serviço Público had a hiatus from 1974–82, during which RAP emerged as the most influential public administration journal in Brazil.

5. Four national contexts if one accepts, as McRae does (1964:219–234; see also Cardoso de Oliveira 1999 and Perrone-Moisés 2001), that Québec is a ‘distinct society’.

6. Administrative Science is used to refer to all perspectives on public administration that emphasise techniques, including the ‘scientific management’, ‘machinery of government’, ‘principles of administration’ and ‘administrative science’ approaches to the discipline.

7. POSDCORB is an acronym for Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting.

8. The same comparison for PAR yielded 81 articles with references to the phrase ‘new public management’, 37 articles with reference to ‘new public administration’.
9. Though reporting in the 1970s, Bowman and Hajjar’s data suggests that the New Public Administration, when defined in the broader sense used in this article, was as prominent in foreign journals as in their two US journals, and was more prominent in US practitioner journals than in US academic journals (1978:223).

10. Hawker cites Kelly and Wettenhall (1973) in support of this. Kelly and Wettenhall, however, note that Australia, too, had experienced the ‘anti-Vietnam War campaign, the accentuated generation gap, ferment in the arts and letters, the revolt against science and technology, the “anti-organisational revolution”, the rise of the “new left”, and rising concern for environmental and other “quality-of-life issues”’ (1973:409). However, they suggest that the lack of ‘a New Public Administration’ in Australia ‘may [my emphasis] be that, while we experience some of the same discontents, their impact is softer than in the United States’ (1973:412). For those who agree with this implicit characterisation of America’s political culture as more radical than that of Australia, see the contributions in sections three and four of Walter (1989).

References


