

Editor's Note: Assessing *JPAM* after 20 Years

Peter Reuter
Jeri Smith-Ready

Abstract

JPAM aims to be the principal research journal for public policy scholars. A citation analysis of JPAM and competitor journals for the period 1986–1995 shows that JPAM's most frequently cited articles are cited more often than those of other broad policy journals, about as often as those in journals on specific policy areas, except for health policy, and less often than principally methodological journals. JPAM does meet its goal of serving as an outlet primarily for public policy scholars and it covers a wide range of policy topics. A survey of subscribers shows correspondingly broad interests and that members rated the journal among their most valued. However, few articles are frequently cited, very few of the citations appear in major journals, and the range of disciplines represented is narrow. Some suggestions are offered for strengthening the journal. © 2002 by the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

INTRODUCTION

This journal was created by the newly formed Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management in 1981 through the merger of two university-based journals, *Policy Analysis* and *Public Policy*. The aim was to strengthen research on public policy and public management and to make it a distinct field. As the journal completes its 20th year, it seems useful to assess how well it has met its founders' goals. To what extent does it serve as an outlet for scholars in public policy schools, and do *JPAM* research articles have an impact in the scholarly literature? Is it meeting the needs of the APPAM membership? What might be done to strengthen the journal?

The first section analyzes the frequency with which *JPAM* articles have been cited in journals indexed by the *Social Science Citation Index* as compared with articles in competing journals. It also identifies the kinds of *JPAM* articles most frequently cited and where citations occur. The second section more briefly analyzes some characteristics of *JPAM* authors, institutional and disciplinary affiliation as well as reputation of university. The third section reports the results of a survey of reader satisfaction and utilization of the journal. The final section discusses the implications of the findings for the journal's future.

BENCHMARKING THROUGH CITATIONS

Twenty years is a long enough period to allow assessment of the journal as a scholarly endeavor. Citations, for all their flaws and limitations, are the currency of the realm for these purposes. Citations are routinely used to evaluate individual scholars (e.g., Cohn and Farrington, 1994), academic departments (e.g., Davis and Papanek, 1984), and journals (Laband and Piette, 1994).

MacRae and Feller (1998) analyzed citation patterns for *JPAM*, making comparisons with two basic social science journals and three competing general policy studies journals. The data were for citations from 1989 and 1990. Utilizing a measure of interconnectedness they found that the four policy journals constitute a weakly connected cluster, separate from the foundation disciplines, economics and political science. The clustering appears to be weaker than in the disciplinary fields themselves. That is, the probability that an economics journal cites another economics journal is substantially higher than the probability that a policy journal cites another policy journal.

All these studies use the "impact factor," a measure of the average number of citations per article, the standard measure in the citation analysis field. This measure turns out to have important limitations, since the base for the calculation includes all separate items that appear in a journal. For *JPAM* that includes book reviews, Curriculum and Case Notes, Insights, and perhaps even editors' notes. Research articles constitute fewer than one-third of *JPAM*'s citable items. Since the share of all citable items that are research articles varies among journals, the impact factor may not be a valid measure of research impact.

With the *Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)*¹ and *Journal Citation Reports* on-line, it is now easy to do a variety of comparative citation analyses. The limitations of the SSCI for this purpose are substantial. The database includes citations only in social science and law journals. Excluded are books as citing documents² and, more importantly, government documents either from the executive branch (e.g., the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Evaluation, Inspectors General) or Congress (e.g., the General Accounting Office, congressional committees). Searchable databases of these organizations do not allow for citation analysis; the same is true of policy research organizations such as Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and the Urban Institute. Our analysis is then strictly an analysis of the stature of *JPAM* in the academic world. Given that APPAM is still very much an association of academic institutions, this seems useful, if partial.

We examined the SSCI database through the year 2000, for articles published in *JPAM* between 1986 and 1995; 1986 is 5 years after the founding of the journal, long enough to allow for teething, while 1995 is the latest year for an article to have attained any substantial number of citations. The counts for 1995 articles are very partial because, as will be seen, most citations come after the fourth year.³ We include the citation frequencies of more successful articles as well as the median citation frequencies because the scholarly impact of a journal may derive more from the leading than from the average articles, and because there may be an optimism bias on the part of authors; each aspires to produce a highly cited article and would like to know the potential of the journal in attaining that.

¹ Discrepancies between the on-line and paper versions of SSCI have been reported for some years. We checked a sample of articles for recent years and found no differences.

² Books can be citation sources. I.e., one can count the number of times a book has been cited in SSCI journals.

³ Citation half-lives vary by field, shorter in the natural sciences and longer in the social sciences.

Selecting the journals for comparison presents challenges. The journals should compete for the same authors and/or the same readership as *JPAM*. In some way they should be policy relevant. They should not be journals with very much larger subscriber/readership bases, such as the *American Economic Review* or the *American Political Science Review*. Since *JPAM* has both policy and methodological ambitions, the range of journals that are candidates for inclusion is fairly broad. The list used here is:

Education and Human Resources
Journal of Human Resources (JHR)
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (EEPA)

Environmental and Urban
Journal of Environmental Economics and Management (JEEM)
Journal of Urban Economics
Housing Policy Debate

Health
Journal of Health Policy, Politics and Law (JHPPL)
Inquiry

Methodology
Risk Analysis
Evaluation Review
American Economic Review (AER)

General
Public Administration Review (PAR)
Policy Sciences
Policy Studies Journal (PSJ)
Applied Economics

This list covers policy areas in which *JPAM* has been prominent. We have included the *AER* to provide a sense of what is possible in the social sciences. Certain journals that might appear to be competitors were not included because they were cited so infrequently. This group included the *Journal of Public Policy* and *Policy Studies Review*. The *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* was, surprisingly, not included in the SSCI database.

The comparisons are of articles published in the same year, since time-to-citation is a major determinant of citation frequency. In each journal in each year, Table 1 presents data on the total number of citations received by the end of 2000 by: the most cited article, the fifth most cited article, and the median article. *JPAM* publishes between 20 and 25 research articles most years, fewer than almost any of the competing journals. Therefore, the comparison of the fifth most cited articles may be seen as biased against *JPAM* but appropriately measuring salience.

JPAM's most frequently cited article each year falls in the middle of this pack of journals. It is cited substantially more often than those in journals that most directly compete for the broad policy research audience, such as *Policy Sciences* and *Policy Studies Journal* or, even more surprisingly, *PAR*. For example, the leading article in *JPAM* is cited more often than its counterpart in *PAR* in 7 years; for *Policy Sciences* all 10 years (except for one tie) and for *Policy Studies Journal* all 10 years. The leading article is cited less frequently than those in the health journals and much less than in the *AER* and *Risk Analysis*; a possible explanation of the *Risk Analysis* figure is that methodological articles have higher citation potential.

Weakness emerges when one examines articles further down in the distribution of citation frequency. For example, consider the *JHR*, which publishes many articles on

Table 1A. Citations by journal, 1986–1995.

| | JPAM | J Hum Resource | Educ Eval Pol Anal | Amer Econ Rev | J Environ Econ Mgt | J Urban Econ | Housing Pol Debate | Pub Admin Rev |
|-----------------|------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1986 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 32 | 26 | 33 | 159 | 27 | 46 | | 75 |
| Most cited | 45 | 59 | 9 | 650 | 42 | 53 | | 35 |
| 5th most cited | 16 | 25 | 3 | 159 | 15 | 18 | | 28 |
| Median | 6 | 15 | 0 | 15 | 9 | 7 | | 5 |
| 1987 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 43 | 21 | 27 | 112 | 29 | 47 | | 52 |
| Most cited | 53 | 57 | 81 | 266 | 92 | 37 | | 47 |
| 5th most cited | 16 | 31 | 8 | 139 | 26 | 29 | | 21 |
| Median | 6 | 18 | 2 | 22 | 7 | 7 | | 4 |
| 1988 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 22 | 24 | 150 | 36 | 44 | | 51 |
| Most cited | 119 | 77 | 38 | 129 | 143 | 57 | | 27 |
| 5th most cited | 14 | 20 | 11 | 101 | 24 | 22 | | 19 |
| Median | 7 | 17 | 2 | 14 | 9 | 6 | | 5 |
| 1989 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 28 | 30 | 146 | 44 | 53 | | 71 |
| Most cited | 79 | 59 | 10 | 290 | 52 | 50 | | 34 |
| 5th most cited | 9 | 32 | 2 | 130 | 24 | 29 | | 11 |
| Median | 7 | 18 | 4 | 15 | 5 | 7 | | 3 |
| 1990 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 24 | 29 | 138 | 48 | 48 | | 58 |
| Most cited | 19 | 88 | 14 | 167 | 51 | 39 | | 32 |
| 5th most cited | 13 | 35 | 10 | 93 | 32 | 14 | | 18 |
| Median | 5 | 19 | 11 | 16 | 8 | 6 | | 6 |
| 1991 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 25 | 25 | 33 | 135 | 34 | 52 | | 43 |
| Most cited | 40 | 78 | 18 | 200 | 50 | 37 | | 27 |
| 5th most cited | 14 | 25 | 6 | 73 | 29 | 25 | | 16 |
| Median | 7 | 13 | 2 | 18 | 10 | 5 | | 6 |
| <=1 citations | 3 | 1 | 5 | | 5 | | | 8 |
| % <=1 citations | 12% | 4% | 15% | | 15% | | | 19% |
| 1992 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 24 | 25 | 15 | 179 | 41 | 48 | 31 | 65 |
| Most cited | 27 | 51 | 30 | 408 | 192 | 24 | | 36 |
| 5th most cited | 15 | 29 | 18 | 98 | 17 | 12 | | 13 |
| Median | 9 | 12 | 14 | 11 | 5 | 4 | | 3 |
| <=1 citations | 8 | 2 | 1 | | 6 | | | 15 |
| % <=1 citations | 33% | 8% | 7% | | 15% | | | 23% |
| 1993 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 26 | 27 | 26 | 142 | 45 | 42 | 24 | 50 |
| Most cited | 30 | 37 | 76 | 90 | 34 | 35 | | 19 |
| 5th most cited | 11 | 19 | 15 | 57 | 28 | 11 | | 15 |
| Median | 6 | 13 | 5 | 13 | 10 | 4 | | 5 |
| <=1 citations | 4 | 0 | 6 | | 6 | | | 15 |
| % <=1 citations | 15% | 0% | 23% | | 13% | | | 30% |

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Table 1A. (Continued.)

| | JPAM | J Hum Resource | Educ Eval Pol Anal | Amer Econ Rev | J Environ Econ Mgt | J Urban Econ | Housing Pol Debate | Pub Admin Rev |
|-----------------|------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1994 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 32 | 47 | 19 | 140 | 38 | 38 | 25 | 61 |
| Most cited | 39 | 29 | 22 | 144 | 64 | 27 | | 48 |
| 5th most cited | 13 | 21 | 8 | 69 | 40 | 15 | | 10 |
| Median | 5 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 5 | | 4 |
| <=1 citations | 8 | 7 | 4 | | 1 | | | 15 |
| % <=1 citations | 23% | 15% | 21% | | 3% | | | 25% |
| 1995 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 43 | 28 | 165 | 59 | 37 | 26 | 48 |
| Most cited | 44 | 26 | 14 | 97 | 37 | 10 | 36 | 22 |
| 5th most cited | 8 | 17 | 7 | 42 | 25 | 7 | 16 | 9 |
| Median | 5 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| <=1 citations | 5 | 13 | 11 | | 7 | | | 18 |
| % <=1 citations | 24% | 30% | 39% | | 12% | | | 38% |

poverty, education, job training, etc., and *JEEMA*, which overlaps on the environmental side. Over the 10 years of comparison, the most cited article in *JHR* and in *JEEMA* is more cited than its counterpart in *JPAM* in 6 of the 10 years; in the other 4 years *JPAM* leads. On the other hand, the fifth most cited article in *JHR* and in *JEEMA* is more often cited than its counterpart in *JPAM* in all 10 years.

The median article analysis is more favorable to *JPAM*. Note first that even for the *AER* only for one year, 1987, was the median citation count more than 20. Indeed, only the *AER* and *JHR* consistently had median article citation numbers that were substantially and consistently larger than those for *JPAM*. A few of the major specialized journals had approximately the same number but most were substantially lower.

For no one year did the article with the median number of citations in *JPAM* receive more than 11 citations by the end of 2000. The uncomfortable truth, in this field as in others, is that most articles are infrequently cited. No doubt each researcher has a list of uncited classics (quite apart from the ones each has written herself or himself), i.e., articles that ought to be widely cited but somehow do not make it into the literature. *JPAM* appears to be producing comparatively few articles with great citation frequency in the academic literature.

Finally we examined failure rates, the number of articles that have been cited no more than once in any other SSCI journal. Table 1 shows those numbers for *JPAM* and six other journals⁴ in the years 1991–1995. The statistic turns out to be quite unstable; over the 5-year period it ranges from 12 percent to 33 percent for *JPAM*. Other journals show similar variability for this measure and there is no clear pattern across journals.

⁴ We did not examine all journals and years because this was almost manual work.

Table 1B. Citations by journal, 1986–1995.

| | JPAM | Policy Sci | Risk Anal | Policy Stud J | Applied Econ | Eval Rev | J Hlth Polit Policy & Law | Inquiry |
|-----------------|------|------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|----------|---------------------------|---------|
| 1986 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 32 | 16 | 35 | 52 | 115 | 42 | 42 | 34 |
| Most cited | 45 | 39 | 77 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 74 | 70 |
| 5th most cited | 16 | 7 | 27 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 25 | 19 |
| Median | 6 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 7 |
| 1987 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 43 | 16 | 42 | 26 | 125 | 40 | 29 | 28 |
| Most cited | 53 | 16 | 65 | 14 | 31 | 29 | 84 | 49 |
| 5th most cited | 16 | 5 | 47 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 18 | 22 |
| Median | 6 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| 1988 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 12 | 51 | 44 | 117 | 28 | 30 | 41 |
| Most cited | 119 | 114 | 146 | 11 | 70 | 55 | 32 | 216 |
| 5th most cited | 14 | 6 | 65 | 6 | 14 | 11 | 17 | 34 |
| Median | 7 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 1989 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 15 | 49 | 48 | 132 | 31 | 32 | 40 |
| Most cited | 79 | 32 | 50 | 16 | 31 | 28 | 45 | 45 |
| 5th most cited | 9 | 7 | 21 | 6 | 12 | 10 | 21 | 24 |
| Median | 7 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 7 |
| 1990 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 14 | 52 | 56 | 138 | 38 | 32 | 35 |
| Most cited | 19 | 14 | 90 | 14 | 25 | 32 | 30 | 37 |
| 5th most cited | 13 | 8 | 36 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 20 | 25 |
| Median | 5 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 6 |
| 1991 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 25 | 13 | 52 | 25 | 204 | 32 | 32 | 37 |
| Most cited | 40 | 24 | 45 | 22 | 15 | 25 | 44 | 77 |
| 5th most cited | 14 | 12 | 24 | 4 | 10 | 9 | 19 | 27 |
| Median | 7 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 11 |
| <=1 citations | 3 | 6 | | | | | 4 | |
| % <=1 citations | 12% | 46% | | | | | 13% | |
| 1992 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 24 | 16 | 56 | 31 | 146 | 46 | 29 | 41 |
| Most cited | 27 | 27 | 67 | 16 | 16 | 20 | 25 | 63 |
| 5th most cited | 15 | 10 | 32 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 13 | 26 |
| Median | 9 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 6 |
| <=1 citations | 8 | 4 | | | | | 7 | |
| % <=1 citations | 33% | 25% | | | | | 24% | |
| 1993 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 26 | 9 | 64 | 35 | 173 | 33 | 36 | 35 |
| Most cited | 30 | 23 | 93 | 15 | 13 | 32 | 47 | 54 |
| 5th most cited | 11 | 6 | 36 | 6 | 9 | 20 | 20 | 18 |
| Median | 6 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| <=1 citations | 4 | 5 | | | | | 5 | |
| % <=1 citations | 15% | 56% | | | | | 14% | |

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Table 1B. (Continued.)

| | JPAM | Policy Sci | Risk Anal | Policy Stud J | Applied Econ | Eval Rev | J Hlth Polit Policy & Law | Inquiry |
|-----------------|------|------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|----------|---------------------------|---------|
| 1994 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 32 | 20 | 91 | 51 | 127 | 37 | 45 | 39 |
| Most cited | 39 | 16 | 74 | 7 | 12 | 43 | 28 | 38 |
| 5th most cited | 13 | 5 | 37 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 10 | 19 |
| Median | 5 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| <=1 citations | 8 | 4 | | | | | 12 | |
| % <=1 citations | 23% | 20% | | | | | 27% | |
| 1995 | | | | | | | | |
| # articles | 21 | 29 | 82 | 41 | 144 | 27 | 34 | 37 |
| Most cited | 44 | 10 | 205 | 11 | 10 | 16 | 31 | 43 |
| 5th most cited | 8 | 4 | 19 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| Median | 5 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 8 |
| <=1 citations | 5 | 6 | | | | | 9 | |
| % <=1 citations | 24% | 21% | | | | | 26% | |

Characteristics of the Most Frequently Cited Articles

Table 2 lists the 20 most frequently cited *JPAM* articles, along with the author, year of publication, number of citations through 1999, and a categorization of the article (by broad policy area or methodology).

The most cited article, by Erroll Ricketts and Isabell Sawhill, has been cited 119 times.⁵ The article implements a more sophisticated methodology for measuring the size of the underclass. The second most cited article, from the very first issue of the journal and cited 85 times, is on educational finance. The fifth most cited had 53 citations, the 20th most cited, 24. Seven of the articles were published post-1990.

These numbers are by no means final counts, in the sense that most articles are likely to be cited frequently in the coming years. The trajectory of citations for policy articles by year is surprisingly flat over a 10-year period. For example, in 1997, 8 years after it first appeared, the Ricketts and Sawhill article was cited 17 times, the highest annual figure. The fourth most cited article (Camerer and Kunreuther) was cited more frequently in each of years 8 to 10 than in any previous year.⁶ Thus the fact that the most cited articles were published in the 1980s probably only represents time available for citation. We do not have a model that will allow, for example, making 20-year projections based on the first 5 years of citations.

These articles are distributed over many policy areas: education, environmental protection, poverty, and risk analysis all have multiple entries on the list but none has more than four entries. Some are primarily methodological (i.e., appear to be cited for their approach rather than substantive results); in particular, three of the top six are concerned with risk analysis. Strikingly, health policy is represented by only one

⁵ These include multiple citations within a single article; pulling out individual articles is still manual labor. But most articles that cite specific *JPAM* articles cited them only once. These counts attempt to take account of mis-specification of the cite. Approximately 20 percent of citations include some error (wrong page number, non-standard abbreviation of journal name, etc.); it is only moderately difficult to track these down.

⁶ The total number of SSCI citations (of all journals in all journals) rises each year with the continuing increase in total journal and article numbers. However, so does the volume of citable articles; the effect on the probability of an earlier article being cited is ambiguous.

Table 2. Most frequently cited *JPAM* articles.

| Author(s) | Title | Year | Cites | Category |
|--|--|------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Ricketts, E., & Sawhill, I. | Defining and measuring the underclass | 1988 | 119 | Poverty |
| Hanushek, E.A. | Throwing money at schools | 1981 | 85 | Education policy |
| Fisher, A., Chestnut, L.G., & Violette, D.M. | The value of reducing risks of death: A note on new evidence | 1989 | 79 | Risk analysis |
| Camerer, C.F., & Kunreuther, H. | Decision processes for low probability risks: Policy implications | 1989 | 61 | Risk analysis |
| Sappington, D.E.M., & Stiglitz, J.E. | Privatization, information and incentives | 1987 | 53 | Economic policy |
| Moore, M.J., & Viscusi, K.V. | Doubling the estimated value of life: Results using new occupational fatality data | 1988 | 48 | Risk analysis |
| Schlesinger, M., Dorwart, R.A., & Pulice R.T. | Competitive bidding and states purchase of services: The case of mental health care in Massachusetts | 1986 | 45 | Health care/economic regulation |
| Hamilton, J.T. | Testing for environmental racism—prejudice, profits, political power | 1995 | 44 | Environmental/social policy |
| Stern, P.C. | Blind spots in policy analysis: What economics doesn't say about energy regulation | 1986 | 42 | Environmental policy |
| Kagan, R.A. | Adversarial legalism and American government | 1991 | 40 | Judicial issues |
| Jargowsky, P.A. | Ghetto poverty among blacks in the 1980s | 1994 | 39 | Poverty |
| Corcoran, M., Duncan, G., Gurin, G., & Gurin, P. | Myth and reality: The causes and persistence of poverty | 1985 | 37 | Poverty |
| Asch, P., & Levy, D.T. | Does the minimum drinking age affect traffic fatalities? | 1987 | 35 | Transportation/safety policy |
| Graham, J.D., & Garber, S. | Evaluating the effects of automobile safety regulation | 1984 | 33 | Transportation/regulatory analysis |
| Kathlene, L., & Martin, J.A. | Enhancing citizen participation: Panel designs, perspectives, and policy formation | 1991 | 30 | Political process |
| Hird, J.A. | Environmental policy and equity: The case of Superfund | 1993 | 30 | Environmental policy |
| Rosenthal, D.H., & Nelson, R.H. | Why existence value should not be used in cost-benefit analysis | 1992 | 27 | Environmental policy/risk analysis |
| Behn, R.D. | Management by groping along | 1988 | 27 | Public management |
| Gramlich, E., Laren, D., & Sealand, N. | Moving into and out of poor areas | 1992 | 24 | Poverty |
| James, E. | How non-profits grow: A model | 1983 | 24 | Management |

article. Only one is clearly a management article, while a second one is on the margins of that category.

Which Journals Cite *JPAM* and Vice Versa?

It is helpful to try to identify where *JPAM* fits in the scholarly world. Where do its articles get cited and which journals are cited in *JPAM* itself?

The database *Journal Citation Reports* identifies each citation to a *JPAM* article by citing journal. Table 3 presents data on total citations to *JPAM* for the 3-year period 1997–1999 and all those journals in which at least 10 *JPAM* citations appeared. Unsurprisingly, *JPAM* cites itself more often than any other journal but accounts for only 8 percent of the 1018 citations. The 1018 citations occur in a total of 347 different journals. *JEEMA* and *Risk Analysis* cite *JPAM* fairly frequently, consistent with the coverage of the leading *JPAM* articles. Very few citations occur in major disciplinary journals; oddly enough there were 14 citations in the *AER*, but no more than one in any of the other leading economics journals⁷ and hardly any in the major political science journals. More surprisingly, *JPAM* is not much cited in the high-status specialized economics journals such as *JRH* and *JUE*, which appear to cover similar topic areas. Many citations appear in quite specialized journals such as *Non Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* which tied for 9th with, among others, *Publius—The Journal of Federalism*.

Another way of locating the journal in the context of the social sciences is to perform the opposite analysis: identify those journals most frequently cited by authors in *JPAM*. Table 4 shows that, apart from *JPAM* itself and newspapers (a sign of a journal that takes the real world seriously), three of the top seven journals are economics journals. Two are policy journals (*PAR* and *Policy Sciences*) and two are major specialized journals (*Health Affairs* and the *National Tax Journal*). It is notable that again no political science journal appears in the list.

Table 3. Journals citing *JPAM* articles more than 10 times in 1997–1999.

| Citing Journal | All Years |
|---|-----------|
| Journal of Policy Analysis and Management | 82 |
| Public Administration Review | 34 |
| Policy Studies Journal | 17 |
| Journal of Environmental Economics and Management | 15 |
| Policy Sciences | 15 |
| American Economic Review | 14 |
| Risk Analysis | 13 |
| Urban Affairs Review | 13 |
| Applied Economics | 10 |
| Contemporary Economic Policy | 10 |
| Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly | 10 |
| Publius—The Journal of Federalism | 10 |
| Total [all journals] | 1018 |

⁷ These are the *Journal of Political Economy*, *Economics Journal*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *Review of Economics and Statistics*.

Table 4. Ten journals most frequently cited in *JPAM*, 1997–1999.

| Cited Journal | Times Cited |
|---|-------------|
| Journal of Policy Analysis and Management | 82 |
| American Economic Review | 48 |
| Health Affairs | 38 |
| New York Times | 38 |
| Wall Street Journal | 35 |
| Journal of Political Economy | 32 |
| Public Administration Review | 28 |
| National Tax Journal | 25 |
| Policy Sciences | 21 |
| Journal of Economic Literature | 19 |

Characteristics of *JPAM* Authors

One goal in starting the journal was to provide a broad outlet for public policy school academics, not one confined to a specific discipline or policy area. We examined the institutional background of academic authors. Table 5 presents data on the institutional and disciplinary affiliation of the first author of articles published between 1996 and 2000, using the information provided in the journal itself. Three of eight were from public policy schools, another quarter from economics departments, and one-sixth from non-academic institutions. Political science departments contributed only 4 percent of the total; no other social science discipline was much represented.

We also examined the institutional affiliation of authors in three of the leading competitor journals in specific topical areas. The share of authors listing themselves as members of public policy schools was much lower: *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis* (3 percent), *Evaluation Review* (10 percent), and *JHR* (5 percent).

We also examined the status of universities represented in the journal, based on two sets of rankings,⁸ *JPAM* being nouveau enough to feel some status anxiety. Over

Table 5. Institutional affiliation of *JPAM* authors.

| Department/Sector | Number | Percentage of Total |
|----------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Public policy | 41 | 37% |
| Economics | 27 | 24% |
| Research institution | 8 | 7% |
| Private firm | 5 | 5% |
| Political science | 4 | 4% |
| Government agency | 4 | 4% |
| Other | 22 | 20% |
| Total | 111 | |

⁸ Universities were divided into three categories: Very Strong, Strong, and Other. Ratings were determined through two respected national ranking systems: the National Research Council's *Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity and Change* and *The Gourman Report: Rating of Graduate and Professional Programs in American and International Universities*. The rankings for individual departments were used when available; otherwise, the university's overall ranking was used. For some institutions, particularly smaller and foreign universities, no ranking was available; these entities were excluded from this part of the analysis.

the period 1995–1999, 57 percent of first authors were associated with institutions in the highest of the three levels; only 22 percent were from the weakest tier. These figures compared favorably with *JHR* but were weaker than those for *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

APPAM Members' Views of the Journal

The activities above give some measure of how the journal is performing in the broader world of scholarship. But *JPAM* is also the journal of a professional association. Members' views about how well the journal serves their interests and in what ways it might be changed is also an important consideration.

The journal currently allocates 65 to 70 percent of its space to research articles; book reviews account for another 15 to 20 percent; the remainder is split about 60/40 between Curriculum and Case Notes (CCN) and Insights. Insights has always struggled for a regular flow of material, generating two to three (intentionally) short contributions in most issues; in the 20 issues from 15(1) to 19 (4), four had no Insights section. CCN has also had chronic difficulties in finding contributions; it usually produces one longish article each issue. The journal emphasizes social policy and environmental and urban policy topics and has a modestly broad range of methodologies; the modal article is an empirical microeconomics analysis.

These are descriptions, not judgments. How well do the articles and sections serve the readership as teachers, scholars, and practitioners? In particular, how much are the different sections read? What changes would APPAM members like to see in the content and format of the journal?

A web-based survey was used to solicit responses from about 1000 non-student APPAM members,⁹ approximately two-thirds of total non-student membership. The survey was fielded by Market Strategies, a survey firm specializing in e-mail and web surveys. Approximately 45 percent of those initially approached responded, 95 percent of them completely. A detailed description of procedures, as well as results, can be found on the APPAM web site (www.appam.org).

Characteristics of Respondents

Little is known about the APPAM membership, making it difficult to compare the respondents to the larger population by work setting, education, or age. Excluding students, about two-thirds self-report to APPAM that they work in a university. Among respondents to the survey, 60 percent report working at universities (86 percent of them as faculty members), so predictably the vast majority have a Ph.D. (80 percent). Surprisingly almost 40 percent of all respondents had submitted an article for publication in *JPAM*; perhaps indeed that was one of the incentives to respond.

Non-response is certainly a problem with a response rate of less than 50 percent. Given the lack of information on respondents, little can be said about selection, but presumably those who responded are more likely to be actively interested in the journal. Our less than passionate defense is that for many associations, less than half the membership is interested in their journal.

⁹ Students constitute approximately 25 percent of APPAM's membership. Not only is there rapid turnover in that membership, as students graduate, but many of the questions did not appear relevant to them. Only two respondents did indeed identify themselves as students.

Satisfaction

The journal is well read and valued by most respondents. Half say they read every issue and another 15 percent read roughly every second issue. Most of these read it only when they are looking for an article on a specific topic, rather than perusing the journal as a whole when it arrives. Almost 43 percent rate it as one of their three most valued journals; another 45 percent describe it as valued but not among their first three.

We also asked for information about which other journals they value. Those who valued it among their top three were asked to name the other two. Those who said they valued it highly, but not among their top three, were asked to name as many as five journals. Based on 378 respondents (of a possible 413) the leading four journals, were:

| | |
|---|------|
| <i>Public Administration Review</i> | (56) |
| <i>American Economic Review</i> | (56) |
| <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> | (45) |
| <i>Journal of Human Resources</i> | (37) |

Many other journals have a small number of entries.

Sections

The survey asked about which sections were read. Almost all respondents reported reading research articles. Just over half said they usually read book reviews. For Insights, the question was asked two different ways: 44 percent said they usually read Insights and when asked, later, how often they read it, 19 percent said regularly and 40 percent occasionally. The figures for Curriculum and Case Notes (CCN) were substantially lower. Just over one-quarter said they usually read CCN and when asked later how often, 13 percent said regularly and 26 percent said occasionally. Moreover, only 18 percent said they found CCN “specifically useful in [their] teaching or curriculum development.”

Topics

We asked which topics the respondent was most likely to read. A total of 27 categories were provided. The top 10 categories are given in Table 6. A notable omission from the top 10 is environment, which is well represented in the journal and among its most cited articles. Only 16 percent said they read environmental policy articles regularly, and only 7 percent thought the topic should receive more coverage.

Another 10 categories received endorsement from at least 20 percent of respondents. Surprisingly, only three topics received endorsement from less than 10 percent of respondents: defense (3.7 percent), rural (6.7 percent), and telecommunications (6.9 percent). Three topics barely made the 10 percent: aging (12.9 percent), crime (12.5 percent), and immigration (11.6 percent). On average, respondents identified about eight areas, reinforcing the sense that the readership has broad interests.¹⁰

Respondents were also asked about topics they wanted to read more of and which they wanted to read less of. Views about this were not strong. For no topic did more than 20 percent reply that they would like more, and the highest ranked ones were

¹⁰ The simulation of broad interests may be regarded as socially desirable in this population, biasing the figure upward.

Table 6. Ten most commonly read topics.

| Answer Option | Percentage of respondents |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Policy analysis | 65.7 |
| Social policy | 51.8 |
| Welfare | 47.6 |
| Policy implementation | 44.1 |
| Education | 39.5 |
| Housing | 36.6 |
| Economics | 36.4 |
| Public management | 33.3 |
| State/local | 33.1 |
| Public finance | 28.9 |

the three broadest categories (policy analysis, policy implementation, and public management). For no topic did even as many as 10 percent believe that fewer articles were appropriate; even welfare, which has recently seemed to occupy a very large share of the research pages, attracted only 9.6 percent negative. This suggests considerable satisfaction on the part of the readership, though it may be more difficult to identify one's preferences for change than to simply report behavior.

Other Matters

The single most heartening finding was that when asked, "Do you regard *JPAM* as a journal to which you would submit your best articles, if they fall within the areas covered by the journal," over three-quarters responded positively. For those who had submitted an article, so that the question was not entirely hypothetical, the figure was the same.

The most surprising response was to the question, "Would you read 'practitioner-oriented' articles, e.g., shorter contributions aimed at exemplifying analysis as used in the field, or current management practices?" To this, 72 percent responded positively. This contrasts sharply with our own prior perceptions based on comments at APPAM conferences.

DISCUSSION

The journal seems to have established a place for itself both in the literature and as a resource for APPAM members. Its most cited articles are cited more frequently than those of the most directly competing journals and about as frequently as those in the topical fields that it covers, outside of health policy.

Subject to the important qualification of a response rate of less than 50 percent, a survey shows that the journal is read; only Curriculum and Case Notes might not serve the interests of a large fraction of the readers.¹¹ It is a valued journal for most members, more as a reference when looking for a particular topic than as a general journal that they peruse out of curiosity. Their interests are diverse and they seem

¹¹ Though a large percentage of respondents said they were faculty members, unfortunately we did not ask them to identify whether they taught in a public policy program. Many APPAM members who teach may not teach public policy courses or courses to public policy students and hence they may not find Curriculum and Case Notes useful.

satisfied with the coverage; they would welcome some practice-oriented articles. The journal can attract good articles from the membership in the fields it covers.

In one important respect the citation analyses and survey results reinforce each other. As shown, both by citation patterns within the journal and by members' own reported reading preferences *JPAM* is categorized in two general fields: economics and policy studies. No topical area dominates.

It is also clear that the journal could be strengthened. Too few of its articles are cited frequently enough to claim an important place in their field; being cited less than 10 times in a 10-year period signals that, whatever the quality of the analysis, it has had very modest effect on other researchers. In part this reflects the other troubling feature of the citation analysis; articles tend to be cited in highly specialized journals with narrower readership. For *JPAM* to influence the fields on which it draws, the articles must begin to be cited in journals of higher standing.¹²

There is also a surprising narrowness to the disciplinary orientation of journal articles, which is consistent with what APPAM members report as their principal journals. Economics dominates, with public administration/management a weak second. The absence of either psychology or sociology among article authors or APPAM members is quite remarkable. It appears to reflect the composition of public policy school faculty. We examined the web pages for six major public policy schools,¹³ all of which provided the discipline of faculty members' highest degrees. Two schools listed no faculty member from anthropology, psychology, or sociology; none had more than two such faculty members. Economics is perhaps the core discipline for policy analysis but increasingly sociology and political science have acquired the modeling richness and statistical skills to become competitor sources of useful policy-relevant research.

The trend in economics toward increasingly technical papers whose principal claim to citation is advancing methodology, rather than their substantive results has many consequences for *JPAM*. On the one hand, it reduces the citation potential for *JPAM* articles in economics journals; on the other, it increases the willingness of economists with substantive interests to use *JPAM* as an outlet.

It is possible that *JPAM's* breadth of topical coverage has served in the past as an obstacle to frequent citation. Not only does any one year include articles on topics as diverse as environmental regulation, assessment of job training contracting modes, the value of a statistical life, and the effects of welfare reform on teenage pregnancy, but the principal topics have shifted over the years. For most scholars in a policy field who are not members of APPAM, it may not have been worth the investment to keep track of this journal, given its relatively infrequent contributions. The few articles published each year exacerbated the problem; even if one-quarter of the 1990 *JPAM* articles were on environmental topics, that produced just six in the field. In that same year, *JEEMA* published 48 articles on environmental issues. Though *JPAM* is narrow methodologically by standards of what policy research might aspire to, it is diverse enough that this may also discourage citation by scholars with a narrower disciplinary focus.

The development over the last 5 years of broad academic reference databases (e.g., Econlit and PAIS), along with powerful search engines, ought to have changed this.

¹² Gene Bardach (personal communication) observes that policy research is not intended to influence social science but only to draw on it. Citation in the social sciences is irrelevant for the field. On the other hand, public policy academics are a small part of the larger academic enterprise; if limited to self-reference, its members may have difficulty obtaining tenure and may become isolated from the remainder of the university.

¹³ The six schools were: Ford (Michigan), Goldman (University of California–Berkeley), Harris (Chicago), Kennedy (Harvard), Maxwell (Syracuse), and Sanford (Duke).

Many scholars keep current not by reading familiar journals but by giving instructions to search engines to seek out articles whose abstracts include specific topics or phrases. David Weimer (personal communication) suggests that one factor hindering political science citation of *JPAM* is that its principal search engine, PAIS, has narrower coverage than EconLit. The infrequent citation in health policy journals may be a consequence of the fact that Medline does not include *JPAM*.

This assessment has dealt with *JPAM* only as an academic journal. It may well have substantial influence on policy debates; research on that requires a much more complicated design as Shulock (1999) suggests. The journal may also aspire to set best-practice standards for policy research; again, that is not readily susceptible to this kind of analysis.

Finally, we note that most *JPAM* articles are somewhat narrow and make little contribution to building policy research as a field. Articles are almost exclusively empirical; methodological contributions are extremely rare. Moreover, the empirical studies do not attempt to make connections across policy fields. For example, an article about the effects of welfare reform typically concludes with a summary of the findings as they fit into the evolving literature on welfare reform. Neither the journal editor nor the authors seem able to broaden these conclusions to show relevance to poverty alleviation policy generally or to other fields.

The result is that the journal has a somewhat disjointed feel. The connecting thread is too subtle or too implicit. All these articles contribute something to understanding of phenomena with which policymakers deal. There is little sense that they are part of an intellectually identifiable field with a defined frontier or even a series of connected frontiers. Perhaps *Policy Sciences* represents an effort to build something of that kind but, as seen in the citation analysis, its articles are rarely cited.

We conclude then with a challenge. The journal does well at meeting the needs of its readership and successfully providing a scholarly outlet for public policy school faculty and for scholars in other policy research institutions. What it needs to do next is establish a clearer identity for policy research.

Tom Schelling offered valuable comments at many stages, as did Gene Bardach. Helpful reviews were provided by Rebecca Blank, Irwin Feller, John Mendeloff, and David Weimer.

PETER REUTER is professor at the School of Public Affairs and Department of Criminology, University of Maryland; and Editor of the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.

JERI SMITH-READY holds a Master's in Public Management and currently works as a private consultant.

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