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2008

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The Inter-University Case Program Challenging Orthodoxy, Training Public Servants, Creating Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

The list of individuals who participated in the Inter-University Case Program (ICP) reads like a who's who list of public administration titans. In one form or another, scholar-practitioners like Dwight Waldo, Paul Appleby, Harold Stein, and Frederick C. Mosher played a part in the success of the program. This article examines the ICP with an epistemological eye. The era of the ICP was a period when scholars thought that the complexity of government prevented the development of general administrative principles and also prevented the use of conventional scientific methods to generate knowledge in the field. They believed instead that the strength of the ICP case studies was in their detail. Instead of presenting an idealized world of public organizations, the cases left the blemishes intact and presented a more realistic view of government: a government that was heavily political and, at times, even irrational. The goal of the cases was to teach decision-making skills, though generalization and theory development were important but subordinate objectives. Generalization of knowledge from the case studies was a difficult, but not impossible, task. The development of general principles was not possible, but, without disregarding context, the case studies allowed scholars to observe general tendencies at work in public organizations. Today, as public administration has once again found its theories to be challenged by a changing world, the case study remains an important tool for linking theory in the sphere of academia and practice in the real world of administration.

Because of its relatively modern development and because of Americans' long-held antipathy to government, the field of public administration has sought to define and legitimize itself. In its earliest days, it sought to achieve these goals through association and analogy to more developed fields and an almost unwavering dedication to scientism and scientific methods. However, once the field was

more firmly established, it quickly became obvious that public administration in practice and in theory was much more complicated than initially thought.

Dwight Waldo, Herbert Simon, and Paul Appleby, among others, were some of the critics of this “orthodox approach.” They saw the public policy process as far more complex than described by their predecessors. Politics permeated the entire process. This new world required a new literature, one that was less prescriptive and more descriptive. This literature took the form of the Inter-University Case Program (ICP).

This article examines the Inter-University Case Program and the use of the case method in public administration with an epistemological eye. The case studies reflect the fact that public administration in this period was less interested in the development of general principles that governed administration (science) and more interested in process and decision-making. Creating knowledge in the field through research was possible, but very difficult, and certainly did not take the form of general principles.

WHAT IS A CASE STUDY?

Intuitively, most academics, and most practitioners as well, know what a case study is, but a formal definition of the term is elusive. Perhaps cognizant of this difficulty, Yin (2003, 1) does not present an explicit definition for the case study, and instead describes case studies as “the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.” The emphasis is on the context. As opposed to more conventional quantitative methods, there is an understanding that institutional and environmental factors can often play decisive roles in the policy process.

Another definition is presented by Jensen and Rodgers (2001, 237). They define a case study “as any study where generalization to a larger population is called into question because the study focuses on a single entity.” Under this definition, even quantitative analyses can be considered case studies. In the context of the Inter-University Case Program and public administration, however, this definition is somewhat too expansive. A more appropriate definition is provided by Stein (1952), who defines a public administration case as

a narrative of the events that constitute or lead to a decision or group of related decisions by a public administrator or group of public administrators. Some account is given of the personal, legal, institutional, political, economic, and other factors that surrounded the process of decision, but there is no attempt to assert absolute causal relationships. Psychological speculation is avoided, though repetitive patterns of behavior are cited, and interpretations of personality by other participants in the action are quoted or summarized. The studies contain

much detail and an effort is made in the composition, by a variety of rhetorical devices, to give the reader a feeling of actual participation in the action. While background and aftermath may be briefly summarized, the main detailed account is confined to a restricted time period. Emphasis throughout is on decision, whether taken as act or process, and exploration is made of rejected and hypothetical alternatives. The decision problems selected for treatment involve policy rather than technical issues. (Stein 1952, xxvii)

As described by Stein, the case study as it is usually used within public administration is qualitative, and is considered as much art as science. As with the Jensen and Rodgers definition, detail remains an identifying characteristic of the case study.

A typology of case studies is helpful to providing some perspective on this device. In general, case studies fall within two categories: teaching and research. The teaching case was and is the dominant form of case study and the primary application of the ICP. Teaching cases are written for a more general audience and tend to be more descriptive. Their main area of interest is on process, and they serve to recreate for the reader the circumstances that led to a certain decision. Most of the cases produced by the ICP and discussed in this paper are considered teaching cases.

The research case study is less interested in description and more interested in explaining the factors that led to the formation of a certain outcome. A famous example of a research case study is Allison's (1971) study of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In this case study, Allison applied three theories from the social sciences—the rational actor model, the organizational process model, and the government politics model—to explain the causes and outcomes of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Allison's goal in this study was to create theory and to generalize beyond the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Generalization beyond the individual case is not usually a top objective of the teaching case.

The line between teaching and research cases is often blurred. As Waldo (1968) points out, most teaching cases require data to be collected under a research design that is in turn related to existing theory. In addition, most research case studies are also interested in the context of a decision-making process, and hence provide the student of public administration a taste of the inner workings of government.

Jensen and Rodgers offer another typology of case studies. The authors categorize a case study into one of five categories: the snapshot case study, the longitudinal case study, the pre-post case study, the patchwork case study, and the comparative study of cases. The ICP was dominated by the use of snapshot case studies. These case studies were intended to describe a single decision-making entity at a single point in time. In the longitudinal case study, a single observation is followed across time and the factors that led up to a certain event or

outcome are described. The pre-post case study is more sophisticated than the longitudinal case study in that it includes an assessment before and after the implementation of a policy or program. The patchwork case study incorporates some or all of the case study methods described previously into a single case, thereby allowing a researcher to study a single observation at different points in time. Similar to the patchwork study, the comparative study focuses on generalizing across different observational units at different times. The variance is between and within units. Allison's study is an example of a comparative study.

BACKGROUND

Stein argues that the seeds of the case method can be traced to ancient Greece, noting that “[t]here is nothing new in this device: the recounting of incidents to point a moral was a living method of instruction in the days when recorded literature made its first appearance. Aesop’s *Fables* and Plutarch’s *Lives* had a pedagogical end in view” (Stein, 1952, xxxviii). In the early twentieth century, the case study became synonymous with the University of Chicago Department of Sociology. Sociology remained the discipline most associated with the case method until the mid-1930s (Tellis, 1997). In the same period, the case method became the key pedagogical technology in legal thought. Rosenbloom (1995) cites the legal realism movement, the development of administrative law, and the Roosevelt court as the main catalysts behind the growth of case studies within legal education.

Public administration research during this period was dominated by the Committee on Public Administration of the Social Science Research Council. Among the projects sponsored by the Committee were a series of publications called the Case Reports. According to Stein, the Reports had three characteristic qualities: (1) they were almost all written by practitioners and hence tended to be “in the nature of success stories; (2) “they dealt with rather narrow and simple decision-problems”; and (3) they were primarily interested in problems in organization and management, personnel, and finance; there were no cases that focused on program decisions (Stein 1952, xi).

The direct precursor of the ICP was cases produced, used, and compiled by the Graduate School of Business at Harvard University. Stein states these cases were “descriptive of the behavior of individuals in business organizations when faced with problems” (Stein 1952, xli). As early as 1919, the Business School cases provided students a look at decision-making in private organizations. Professor Pendleton Herring of the Littauer School for Public Administration at Harvard University and also of the Social Science Research Council Committee on Public Administration learned of the Business School cases, and with the help of colleagues he produced a number of case studies about subject matter similar to that of the Business School cases but applied to the public sector.

News of the cases spread beyond Harvard, and soon Cornell, Princeton, and Syracuse Universities joined with Harvard in an application to the Carnegie Corporation of New York to finance the creation of additional cases. After the application was approved, the four universities formed the Committee on Public Administration Cases (CPAC) in 1948. With the financial assistance of Carnegie once again, in 1951, CPAC expanded and became the Inter-University Case Program. The ICP was tasked with developing cases with a broader reach than those of its predecessor. Cases in state and local government and even in international administration were common (Stein, 1952).

The publication of Stein's *Public Administration and Policy Development: A Case Book* in 1952 represented a seminal moment in the history of the Inter-University Case Program. Rosenbloom calls the book "a standard text for at least a decade," and "a classic contributor to public administration's intellectual history" (Rosenbloom, 1995, 41). In 1963, ICP moved its offices from New York City to Syracuse, New York, where it was based at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs after funding from the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation ended. The ICP published at least five more casebooks in the 1960s, but by the early 1970s it was clear that ICP had begun to languish, and it disappeared completely in 1991.

The Inter-University Case Program was a product of its time, as was its demise. The historical context that motivated the development and success of ICP is discussed in the next section.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Between 1880 and 1945, public administration was synonymous with the Orthodox School. These scholars sought to identify public administration as a science. Science meant rationalization and the adoption of general rules and procedures to govern human and organizational behavior. Politics had no role in this system. Goodnow (2004, 35) echoed the sentiments of the period when he declared that there were two distinct functions to government: "Politics has to do with policies or expressions of the state will. Administration has to do with the execution of these policies."

In this pursuit of scientific legitimacy, public administration drew heavily from the work of Frederick Taylor (1911) and research in the field of scientific management. In one of public administration's earliest textbooks, White (2004, 62) declared that "[t]here can be no doubt that the achievements of scientific management have aroused a vast amount of dissatisfaction with the antiquated methods which have characterized many public offices." The Taylorist approach relied heavily on experimentation and the use of time and motion studies to create knowledge in the field.

The Orthodox school came under attack in the 1930s and 1940s by leading figures like Dwight Waldo and Robert A. Dahl. In *The Administrative State*, Waldo

(1948, 123) declared that “[o]nly in purely mechanical operations is discretion absent. What is one to say, then, about the idea that government consists of two actions, decision and execution; and particularly what can be said for the idea that ‘politics’ can be taken out of ‘administration’ by devising separate organs for ‘politics’ and ‘administration?’” To this new breed of scholars, public administrators were more than automatons. The ways in which they decided to exercise the discretion offered to them affected how policy was formed and implemented. Individuals in the public service were not managers but governors, and governing was a political process (McCurdy, 1986).

The methods used to study the field of public administration also came under attack. In “The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems,” Dahl (1947, 11) suggested that it was impossible to study public administration with the same techniques used in the hard sciences, noting that “[n]o science of public administration is possible unless: (1) the place of normative values is made clear; (2) the nature of man in the area of public administration is better understood and his conduct is more predictable; and (3) there is a body of comparative studies from which it may be possible to discover principles and generalities that transcend national boundaries and peculiar historical experiences” (Dahl, 1947, 11). Dahl’s essay was an explicit critique of the use of scientific methods in the Taylorist mode in the field of public administration.

This rebellion within the discipline of public administration was driven in large part by the growth in the size of the federal bureaucracy during the New Deal and World War II (Shafritz, Hyde, and Parkes, 2004). The expansion necessitated the need to expand the civil service. Among the individuals who served in the civil service during the Roosevelt Administration was Paul Appleby, who served as an under secretary of Agriculture, a presidential advisor and international negotiator, and assistant director of the U.S. Bureau of the Budget (Bailey, 1963). After the war, Appleby (who later became Dean of the Maxwell School) and other former practitioners, including Harold Seidman and Frederick C. Mosher, joined the ranks of academia, where they brought real-world experience to the discipline of public administration. They also brought a view of government that was very different from the prevailing mindset, very different from the private sector, and inherently political. “Government is different because it must take into account of all the desires, needs actions, thoughts, and sentiments of 140,000,000 people,” wrote Appleby (2004, 135). “Government is different because government is politics.”

Public administration adopted the case method at about the same point that it fell out of favor in sociology in this period of upheaval. The increasing fragility of the politics-public administration dichotomy meant that much of the literature and standard textbooks in public administration were no longer viable. According to Rosenbloom, “Like administrative law, general public administration tried to fill an intellectual void with case studies” (1994, 41). They allowed

public administration training to continue despite the destruction of a long-held paradigm. But case studies, especially in the case of the Inter-University Case Program, were more than a pedagogical device; they represented an approach that scholars felt was most appropriate to training future public servants and to collecting, producing, and retaining knowledge about public administration.

TRAINING PUBLIC SERVANTS

Before the arrival of former practitioners like Appleby, Waldo, and Mosher into the field of public administration, students of public administration received an education that was very rational and scientific in nature. In White's textbook of public administration, students were trained to become managers; management in public administration was no different from management in private administration. According to White, "In every direction good administration seeks the elimination of waste, the conservation of material and energy, and the most rapid and complete achievement of public purposes consistent with economy and the welfare of the workers" (White, 2004, 57). Efficiency—producing outcomes at the lowest possible cost—was the ultimate aim of public administration.

Borrowing from the scientific management literature, students of public administration learned there was a science of management. Management could be learned and it could be studied. General principles—such as White's "Public administration is the management of men and materials in the accomplishment of the purposes of the state"—could be developed. One can imagine students memorizing these principles and repeating them to themselves in class or even in the workplace.

When the practitioners arrived in the field of public administration, they found the rote learning of principles to be both inadequate and impractical. Enter the case study, a teaching tool that could bridge the divide between theory and practice. The leaders of public administration in the 1930s through the 1960s believed that the way to learn public administration was to do public administration. An editing guide composed by the Inter-University Case Program in 1967 declared that "the primary purpose of case writing is to cause the reader to understand, sympathetically, how and why the actors in the case saw things and did things at the time. The purpose of case writing is definitely not to score off the actors or to show how clever a case writer can be after the event, when he stands on the built-up heels of historical hindsight."

The case study offered the public administration student a chance to vicariously live the life of an actual public administrator. The detail in this research method was essential for understanding and absorbing the work of government. In the case of "The Office of Education Library," readers were immersed in both the politics and process behind the reorganization of the Office of Education Library. They saw that beliefs and values shaped the implementation of policy and that efficiency often took a back seat.

In the case of the Office of Education Library, efficiency stood at odds with values. Under the orders of Congress to eliminate duplication and create economies of scale, Oscar Ewing, Federal Security Administrator in 1947, sought to merge the previously separate agency libraries under his authority into a single unit. However, this plan was not without controversy, and the Office of Education in particular was vehement in its opposition. Philosophy, power, and personal integrity were at stake for both sides, but more so for the Office of Education. Dr. Studebaker, the Commissioner of Education, “considered education, its programs, its services, its organization, as a professional and unique function, and could not agree with the tendency to regard education as merely one aspect of welfare activities,” wrote Silverman (1952, 49). “Standing behind this theory, he was bound to resist the attempt to draw out of the Office of Education any services or activities which were common to other ‘welfare functions.’” Even so, reorganization eventually occurred but not without resignations and bruised egos.

Instead of the rationalized, bureaucratic world that students previously were exposed to in textbooks such as White’s, the cases presented to students of public administration a world that was highly politicized, where human relations were often as important a consideration for a public servant as efficiency. The decisions that a public administrator had to make were complicated, had major consequences, and were moral in nature.

Ethics played an even larger role in “The Little Rock Story.” In this well-known case, Silverman (1962) described the positions held by both the state and federal governments on the issue of school integration. “The Governor’s main weapon had been executive power, and his major argument his responsibility to maintain the peace,” wrote Silverman (1962, 21). “The weight of the case for federal power had been carried by the federal judiciary relying on the ‘supreme law of the land’ clause of the United States Constitution. At the height of the conflict the ability of the President to neutralize the National Guard and to invoke federal force tipped the balance.”

Based on issues of federalism, legitimacy, and individual rights, both sides in this case had defensible arguments. Silverman leaves up to the reader the question of who was right. This type of dilemma in government is characteristic of most of the ICP cases. They were intentionally left ambiguous in order to encourage debate and discussion. In essence, students were expected to conduct policy analysis: putting themselves into the situation, they were expected to define a problem, offer solutions, and compare alternatives. Unlike the public administration of old, however, policy analysis could and should include a discussion of values. In his discussion of the case method, Waldo declared that “the customary teaching objective has been not merely to examine ‘what happens,’ but to raise and probe questions of what *ought* to happen: questions of policy and ethics” (Waldo, 1968, 468).

The goal of schools of public administration during this period was not to teach general principles about management or administration. Rather, they

sought to first provide a taste of life in the public sector for individuals with limited experience in government. Second, they hoped to develop better decision-makers. At the end of a case exercise, the best students were expected to have developed “useful new alertnesses, overviews and sensitivities,” and/or “maxims or tentative tactics or strategies about how they will deal with characteristic obstacles or conflicts that attend real governmental policy activities” (Bock, 1980). Although no student would face the exact circumstances of each particular case, the hope was that exposure and experience with challenging situations would result in the development of important decision-making skills.

CREATING KNOWLEDGE

As a pedagogical tool, the Inter-University Case Program was not interested in inculcating students with “scientific principles” of public administration. However, as a tool of research, the use of the case study to create knowledge in the field was seen as a more attainable and more worthwhile goal. Nevertheless, as with many issues in public administration, this sentiment was not shared universally.

In the original application to the Carnegie Corporation for a grant to form the Committee on Public Administration Cases (CPAC), CPAC listed as its first objective “To provide the basis for realistic concepts, hypotheses, and generalizations about administrative organization, behavior, and policy-making by utilizing a clinical approach and drawing on case studies of administrators in action” (Stein, 1952, xlii). From the outset, one of the goals—though perhaps not the primary goal—of the Inter-University Case Program had been to generate knowledge about the field of public administration. The individuals involved with the ICP were not necessarily dismissive of science or scientific methods, but dismissive of science done badly.

Science done badly in public administration was the subject of an essay by Simon (2004). Simon declared that, “Most of the propositions that make up the body of administrative theory today share, unfortunately, this defect of proverbs. For almost every principle one can find an equally plausible and acceptable contradictory principle” (2004, 136). To Simon and contemporaries, the general principles encountered in textbooks in both public and private administration could not be applied to all situations, though they were not without their own value: “The difficulty has arisen from treating as ‘principles of administration’ what are really only criteria for describing and diagnosing situations. Closet space is certainly an important item in the design of a successful house; yet a house designed entirely with a view to securing a maximum closet space—all other considerations being forgotten—would be considered, to say the least, somewhat unbalanced” (Simon, 2004, 144).

For administration to develop as a true science, argued the major figures of public administration, it needed to begin anew, it needed to generate new princi-

ples based on observed phenomena and sophisticated research and not commonly held beliefs, it needed to be humble in its assertions, and it needed to pay attention to detail and context and the role that values and beliefs played in decision-making. The case study was a potential tool to achieve each of these goals—goals that with the destruction of the orthodoxy required a new literature.

A case study by itself was not very generalizable, though it could serve to define the questions asked and suggest the factors at work. The lessons learned from the Office of Education Library case were not necessarily applicable to other agencies or other administrative decisions. It would be impossible to hold all of the variables at work constant. However, collectively with other case studies about the same general topic, it would be possible for researchers to put forth some generalizations. These were not generalizations in the scientific principle mold, but generalizations that were in the words of Stein, “much less absolute in character,” “tentative and complex,” and dealt with “tendencies and values” (1952, xxiv).

One such effort at generalization by the Inter-University Case Program involved governmental reorganizations. Responding to criticism that the cases had no relationship with each other or were not “scientific” enough, the ICP decided to sponsor a set of cases on the sole issue of governmental reorganization. According to Mosher (1967, xii), “The Research Committee of ICP met on a number of occasions in later 1959 and in 1960. Its discussions were principally to the finding and selection of a suitable problem area and process that would provide basically comparable foci for cases in various places, and to the determination of a hypothesis that would be meaningful and significant in all those places, as well as transferable elsewhere.” The result was a book, edited by Mosher, that collected 12 cases, all of which dealt with the issue of governmental reorganization, and with subjects that included the California Division of Architecture, the Philadelphia Department of Health, and the United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service. The goal of soliciting these studies was to test the hypothesis of participation. To paraphrase, the participation hypothesis stated that government reorganizations are more effective if the individuals affected by the reorganization take part in the decision-making process.

At the end of the book, Mosher presented the results of a review somewhat similar to a meta-analysis. In this section, titled “Analytical Commentary,” Mosher systematically teased out the features and sequences that he saw as common to public administrative agency reorganizations, with a particular interest in the role of participation in successful reorganizations.

Table 1 is taken directly from the *Governmental Reorganizations* text. It summarizes the results from each of the case studies presented in the book. Treating each case as a single data point, Mosher found little evidence to support the hypothesis that participation was associated with reorganizational effectiveness: “If the cases were to support the hypothesis fully, we would expect the cases to fall, roughly

at least, into a diagonal line from the upper left to the lower right” (1967, 526). Digging deeper into the cases, Mosher found a relationship between participation and the degree of employee resistance in the implementation stage. As shown in Table 2, the greatest level of employee resistance was seen in the Children’s Bureau, Ballistics, and La Loma case studies. These were all cases where the degree of participation in implementation was described as slight to zero.

Table 1

Degree of Participation	Degree of Substantive Effectiveness		
	Generally effective	Moderately or partially effective	Relatively little effectiveness
Overall			
Moderate or Substantial	Personnel Board	U.S. Public Health Philadelphia Health	
Slight	Automation Agricultural Research Highway Patrol Langley Porter	Architecture	Fish and Game
Zero	Ballistics	Children’s Bureau	La Loma

Source: Mosher (1967, 526).

Table 2

Degree of Participation	Degree of Employee Resistance		
	Slight or zero resistance	Moderate or partial resistance	Great resistance
In implementation			
Substantial	Personnel Board	U.S. Public Health	
Moderate	Automation Agricultural Research Highway Patrol Philadelphia Health	Langley Porter	
Slight	Architecture		Children’s Bureau
Zero			Ballistics La Loma

Source: Mosher (1967, 526).

Clearly, the results of Mosher's analysis are somewhat contradictory. Herein laid the strength of the case study approach, at least according to Mosher. The detail in the case study allowed researchers without the benefit of a randomized experiment to untangle the effects of other variables that may have moderated the effect of one variable on another. The following excerpt from *Governmental Reorganizations* expressed this attitude:

This nearly universal problem in social science has, in the past, been bypassed by insight and generalization through the device of declaring that, *other things being about equal*, this or that variable—viewed both as dependent and independent—contributes to such and such result. Indeed such an approach, whether or not stated, has probably been the premise of many of the great understandings about social behavior. Thus, one might in the present case state that, other things being equal, participation contributes to success in bringing about organizational change. But, in governmental organizations as well as in other social organisms, other things are never equal, as does comparison of the same organization at different times. Thus, in governmental organizations as well as in other social organizations, the 'other things being equal' criterion may well be meaningless. (Mosher 1967, 527)

A further categorization by Mosher elucidates other factors that may condition the effectiveness of participation, including categorization by purpose, agency autonomy-subordination, accustomed internal compliance system and leadership style, the kinds of personnel involved, and personnel systems.

This exercise reflects how the leading scholars of public administration in the thirties, forties, fifties, and to a lesser extent the sixties, saw the process of generalization of research in public administration. Politics was an indelible part of public administration, and research that attempted to separate the two was fraught with problems of legitimacy. Rather than wrestle with the forces of environment, institutions, and context that shaped policy and administration, it was simpler, more feasible, and more accurate to embrace the factors that differentiated government from other organizations. The strength of the case study was in its ability to capture all of these nuances endemic in the public sector.

THE ORTHODOXY STRIKES BACK

The Inter-University Case Program began falling out of favor as the case study fell out of favor in the field of public administration. The 1960s saw the emergence of the field of policy analysis, which was founded by economists who began to take an interest in societal problems and programs to address these problems. In one of the first articles on policy analysis, Dror (2004, 250) stated that

The main contemporary reform movement in the federal administration of the United States (and in some other countries as well) is based

on an economic approach to public decision-making. The roots of this approach are in economic theory, especially microeconomics and welfare economics, and quantitative decision-theory; the main tools of this approach are operations research, cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis, and program budgeting and systems analysis; and the new professions of this approach are the systems analysts.

As indicated by the excerpt, the economic approach was deeply rooted in rationality and science.

Public administration was not immune to the theories and principles of policy analysis. The late 1960s and 1970s were a period of resource scarcity and cutback management. The language of management was used to justify existing programs within a tight federal budget. Performance budgeting, a private sector innovation that emphasized managerial efficiency, became the industry standard (Shafritz, Hyde, and Parkes, 2004). The ghost of efficiency was back in full force.

Research in public administration also took on a more rational character. Within public administration, there was significant concern that research in the field had not progressed with the rest of the social sciences, particularly economics, and was not “scientific” enough. McCurdy and Cleary (1984) were particularly concerned with the state of doctoral research in public administration. Based on a set of somewhat subjective criteria, the authors found that, “Of the 142 projects we studied, less than half tested a theory or a causal statement, the criteria for impact. Of those that had impact, only 21 were designed in a way that would allow the reader to have much confidence in the findings” (McCurdy and Cleary, 1984, 50). A similar analysis of dissertation research by White (1986) shared the same gloomy sentiments of McCurdy and Cleary. The lack of quality research in public administration was also apparently evident in the *Public Administration Review* (PAR). Perry and Kraemer (1986) concluded that the research in the PAR was primarily applied and not cumulative, conclusions supported by Stallings and Ferris (1988). The state of public administration research had apparently improved somewhat by 1990 in terms of dissertation research, though Cleary (1992) still had concerns about subject selection.

Without a doubt, the critics of public administration research associated quality research with quantitative methods, science, economics, and policy analysis. In defining their concept of validity, McCurdy and Cleary declared that “[a] study that was carefully designed—it might use experimental or quasi-experimental methods or statistical techniques—generally met this test. Case studies generally did not” (1984, 50). Perry and Kraemer (1986, 215–226) were concerned that “the underlying purposes of doing research tend to be problem-oriented, which limits development and testing of empirical theory” and argued that “public administration scholars need to make more substantial use of causal analysis, structural equation models, and longitudinal statistical methods and to develop

working competence with new statistical methodologies sooner after they become available to social scientists than they do currently.”

In the type of methodologies presented in the previous paragraph, the key to modeling a causal relationship was to reduce the background noise that distorted the variable of interest's effects. The term “holding all else constant” was often used to describe this process. Quite clearly, this strategy was almost the polar opposite of the strategy of the case study, and especially the case studies of the Inter-University Case Program. “Holding all else constant” meant holding constant what was special about government and public service.

Rather than removing the background noise, the ICP cases saw value in including it and even exploring it. The Waldos, Applebys, and Simons of the world saw the field of public administration primarily as applied in nature. Its goal was to train individuals to make thoughtful decisions in the service of the public. Not only was stripping theory of context, environment, and ethics virtually impossible, the exercise also divorced theory from reality and only served to detract from the training of public servants.

CONCLUSION

In part because of the development and increasing sophistication of qualitative data methods as meta-analysis, the case study has made a comeback in the last decade, though there remains much prejudice against it. For example, every other issue of the *Public Administration Review* now includes a section titled “Administrative Cases,” which promise to “analyze a recent public-sector innovation, a new procedure, a complicated governmental decision, or an institutional development of interest to a broad cross-section of public and nonprofit administrators” (Stillman II and Raadschelders, 2006, 5). Additionally, the Evans School of Public Affairs of the University of Washington has established an online repository called the “Electronic Hallway” for teaching cases and other curriculum materials in the field of public administration and other related subject areas (<https://hallway.org/>).

There is perhaps explanation for the resurgence of the case study within public administration. In the last decade, the world has become much more interconnected, technology has progressed at an astonishing rate of growth, the United States has become more politically polarized than possibly ever before, and terrorism has become an everyday concern. Public administration scholars have not yet fully absorbed the implications of all of these changes. As a result, there is a role for the case study in capturing, describing, and preserving all of the complex processes that are now involved in the policy process, important information that would be lost with other empirical techniques, important information that can be used at the appropriate time and place and with appropriate methodologies to create knowledge in public administration. As in the 1930s and 1940s, the standard texts in public administration today have not kept up with the changing ideas and environment of the new millennium, providing a role for the case study.

More so than ever before, there are no proverbs of public administration. Theories formed 20 years ago may no longer hold in this rapidly changing world. Public administration education needs to be comprehensive and holistic and to embrace qualitative and quantitative methods. It must, however, remain grounded in its history as an applied field. Knowledge created and imparted must be relevant and drawn from examples taken from the real world of public organizations. While the Inter-University Case Program may be long gone, this lesson may be its most important legacy.

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The author wishes to thank Alasdair Roberts for his helpful comments.

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