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### Public Administration Research in East and Southeast Asia A Review of the English Language Evidence, 1999-2009

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**Public administration research in East and Southeast Asia: A review of the English language evidence, 1999-2009**

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**Public administration research in East and Southeast Asia: A Review of the English language evidence, 1999-2009**

**Abstract**

In this article we describe and explore the topics, methods and author arrangements of the English language literature on public administration in East and Southeast Asia. Articles in the review are for the period 1999-2009 and were identified in the Web of Science. Searches identified 309 articles in the disciplinary area of public administration. The study is largely focused on China, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. Four major characteristics of this literature are noted. First, it is comparative in nature. Second, it focuses upon system and regime change, as well as policies, as the major topics and units of analysis. Thirdly, it is primarily based upon normative argumentation, and where it is empirical, it typically relies upon secondary data. Fourth, it is largely interdisciplinary in nature, drawing upon many disciplines and scholars from around the globe, but it is dominated by scholars based in English language speaking countries. In conclusion, we discuss the implications of these findings for the public administration discipline and research in the region.

Seeking to understand the nature of the discipline is a key endeavor in all academic fields. In public administration attention has focused on the nature of the discipline and questions of productivity and methods (see for example Corley & Sabharwal, 2010; Ferlie et al., 2005; Kellough & Pitts, 2005; Perry & Kraemer, 1986; Schroeder et al., 2004). The balance of this effort is North American. However, processes of globalization now clearly affects public administration, leading to new wider vistas of enquiry and resulting in challenges and exceptions to the dominant trend (Candler, Azevêdo, & Albernaz 2010; Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012; Hou et al., 2011; Kickert, 2005; Vogel, 2010; Walker, 2011). The impact of globalization is also reflected in the internationalization agenda of many public administration associations including *American Society for Public Administration*, *International Research Society for Public Management* and *Public Management Research Association*, while many universities strive towards international diversification.

Scholars have increasingly turned their eye to understanding the nature of public administration in a range of places around the world. This is undertaken to gain knowledge about practice elsewhere, to test the robustness of theoretical frameworks and to understand processes of change. One region that has seen increasing numbers of academics turn their attention to is East and Southeast Asia. This is an important world region in the twenty-first century for many reasons including its cultural diversity and status as economic powerhouse, and processes of decolonialization, together with political transformation and major social change, that have lead to sea changes in the politics and administration of these countries (Ba, 2009; Berman, 2010; Berman et al., 2009). Some of the more noticeable and widely written about changes have been in China where the state has largely withdrawn from the education, health, and housing sectors raising important questions about marketisation processes and policy outcomes, particularly on

questions of efficiency and equity (Mok & Ku, 2010). Similar pressures have been documented across Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world (Haque, 2004; Sheema, 2005).

The research we have uncovered on this region largely focuses upon specific questions and does not provide an overview of the nature of the research conducted or address questions about what is studied, how it is studied and who studies (for recent exceptions in English see Berman et al. [2009] and Berman [2010]). Given this, this *American Review of Public Administration* symposium seeks to make a contribution by providing an overview of public administration research, and reach conclusions on the nature of the research endeavor in East and Southeast Asia. The contribution is made in two ways. First, the majority of the knowledge that many scholars have of public administration in East and Southeast Asia is based upon studies written in English—the dominant language of academia—and we provide a first time review of this material. The second, and perhaps more important contribution is to address the deficiencies associated with the English language literature and to undertake a systematic review of the material written in the mother tongue in Hong Kong and Macau, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. This approach will bring national debates about the topics and methods of research and authors to the wider world. Such an approach will also permit comparisons to be made between the agendas pursued by those who have sought to publish their work in English with those who write about their discipline in their mother tongue in these countries.

This first article in the symposium seeks tackle the first contribution and describes and explores the topics, methods and author arrangements of the English language literature on public administration in East and Southeastern Asia. Within this article, we add one further objective; that is to make explicit comparisons to the wider public administration literature that is typically published in the Western English language journals (typically in Australia, Europe,

New Zealand, the UK and the USA, though we emphasize the latter). We do this because the literature we draw upon is taken from the West. As such one hypothesis we explore is that this English language literature may reflect the orientations of the editors of these journals and their manuscript reviewers rather than the culturally specific experiences of the countries under review (see Candler, Azevêdo, & Albernaz, 2010; Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012). If this is the case we might expect to see the topics and methods of these journals replicated in the studies published on East and Southeast Asia.

The balance of this article is laid out thus. First the particulars of the coding scheme are discussed. These are implemented here and adopted in the other articles in this symposium. We then outline the way in which articles were identified for inclusion in the review. We then move on to look at the journals and countries included. Next we report on the topics, methods, and author arrangements that were found in the sample. We finish by examining the institutional arrangements of scholars publishing in the English language public administration journals. Our main findings are that public administration scholarship in East and Southeast Asia is a comparative field that broadly focuses upon system and regime change, as well as policies, as the major topics and units of analysis. Published studies typically use argumentation but rely upon secondary data when undertaking empirical analyses. Finally, the published literature is largely an interdisciplinary affair, drawing upon many disciplines and scholars from around the globe, but it is dominated by scholars based in English language speaking countries.

### **Methods adopted for the reviews**

A common coding protocol was agreed amongst the authors, however variations were permitted to capture the distinct flavor of different countries. (The appendix outlines the topics of the coding protocol and variances to this are discussed in the articles). The data for these reviews are

journal articles, and given the range of countries and different historical traditions the choice of journals to review was determined by each author, and is explained in each article. We, nonetheless, sought to include the best journals that would be publishing the highest quality research.<sup>1</sup> All studies cover the time period 1999-2009, and included all types of articles with the exception of commentaries.

The reviews focus upon three questions: what, how and who. As such the articles examine the substantive issues in the literature, the methods adopted and the author arrangements and builds upon existing comparative studies of public administration (Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012; Sigelman, 1976; Van Wart & Cayer, 1990). For the substantive topics examined in each article we reviewed a grounded approach was adopted (see Appendix). We did this because it was important that categories were not imposed on the research in each country and that we could build up a picture of the topics of importance inductively, and from this make comparisons between each country studied and the English language material published in SSCI journals.<sup>2</sup> If more than one topic area applied to an article we coded the dominant theme. We were also interested to know if the research was a single country study or comparative, and if comparative how many and which countries were examined.

A more deductive approach was adopted to examine the methods used in each study. This was necessary to permit comparison across the dominant styles of research in each of the articles.

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<sup>1</sup> The focus is upon journal articles because these are the major outlets for research among academics. Clearly this decision omits a range of research published in books, edited book chapters and by reports from international agencies. The selection of journals does however provide a common scope to the reviews and thereby ensures that the various contributions to this symposium concentrate on similar outputs.

<sup>2</sup> Gulrajani and Moloney (2012) drew upon the American Society for Public Administration research areas in this review of public administration in the South and were not able to classify three in ten of the articles they examined.



Therefore, included in the coding protocol was first the unit of analysis: individuals (e.g. citizens or civil servants), groups of people (e.g. work teams), organizations, programs or policies, and systems (e.g. systems of government, budget) and artifacts (e.g. government policies, ordinances and laws). The purpose of the study was also isolated in our reviews. Standard social science categories were adopted to identify if the work under review was based on systematic analysis: descriptive—presenting a profile or classification or answering questions such as who, when, where or how—exploratory—examining a little understood issue or phenomena to develop new ideas and move towards more refined research questions—or explanatory—that is seeking to explain why events occur and to build, elaborate or to test theory.

We also sought to classify the style of the articles reviewed and the methods that they adopted. In terms of the style of the review we initially asked if the articles were empirical or an essay (also see Sigleman, 1976; Van Wart & Cayer, 1990; Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012). Essays referred to articles that adopt argumentation as their dominant mode of analysis and do not directly engage in the dissemination of new empirical evidence or include secondary data. Having made this broad distinction each author team then drilled down to ask some more detailed questions about the methods adopted. First, the methods adopted were noted as being qualitative, quantitative or a review of secondary sources. In keeping with current reviews of public administration research we sought to discern the dominant method adopted (Pitts & Frenandez, 2009). Second, we asked if there was a clear statement of the time period in the study or not. Third, and related, we delved more deeply to see if the articles were cross-sectional, longitudinal (which we broke down into short [2-5 years], and long [5 plus years]) or if the authors had adopted a time series design. Fourth, where studies were quantitative we went one stage further and noted the sample size reported and nature of the statistical analysis

performed—was the analysis univariate and reliant upon descriptive data or were more complex multivariate techniques implemented. Prior studies have referred to studies using descriptive data as “low level” and those with tests of significance as “high level” (Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012). In doing this, we were seeking to examine the extent to which deductive methods are used in this literature. In relation to qualitative articles we also took note of whether they included a formal technique to analysis the data collected, as a measure of the rigor of the methodology implemented.<sup>3</sup>

Alongside the substantive content of the articles and the methods authors use to explore their questions we also examined institutional configurations. This included collecting data about the country base of authors and arrangement for the articles. We also recorded the department or academic unit that the authors were based in.

### **Data sources**

Our focus is upon the topics, methods and author arrangements of the English language literature on public administration in Eastern and Southeast Asian countries. The countries of Eastern Asia are China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Macau Administrative Region of China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and we include Taiwan here.<sup>4</sup> Southeastern Asia includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-

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<sup>3</sup> The area of research methodology, and the associated questions about epistemology, is strongly debated in all social science disciplines. In the preliminary searches we undertook to develop the coding protocol we included the option for full mixed method type studies that combine data collection methods and logics of inference. However, the studies in the samples reviewed here did not include such studies. It is recommended that future research return to this important question.

<sup>4</sup> The nationhood of Taiwan is contested, and it is not separately listed by the United Nations. However, there is a distinct body of public administration scholarship and knowledge and we therefore include it as a separate territory.

Leste and Vietnam (United Nations, 2010). We searched articles with these country names in the title or abstract, and also included Asia and derivatives thereof. The search was undertaken on the Thompson-Reuters Web of Science Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) over the period 1999-2009. These searches initially led to the identification of 61,671 items. We then used the search engine's tools to refine these data to include only articles (therefore excluding book reviews etc.) in journals associated with the discipline of public administration, as defined by the Web of Science.<sup>5</sup> These search decision rules identified 309 articles for this study, representing .005 percent of social science scholarship during the time period in question.

There are a number of strengths and weaknesses of using the SSCI. It excludes books, book chapters and reports by influential national and international organizations such as the World Bank, and therefore may exclude some important scholarship. Further, it focuses upon a relatively small number of journals, 32 in total. However, these weaknesses are offset by the editorial standards of peer-reviewed papers that were, first, judged to be of suitable quality for publication by editors following blind peer review and had, therefore, met the basic requirements of theoretical and methodological rigor and thus met the expectations of the highest impact journals. This approach may lead to bias; for example, only articles that contain statistically significant results are normally published in a journal. However, estimates from other fields suggest that the magnitude of the bias is small (Rosenthal, 1991).

Journal articles and authors in the SSCI have increasingly received attention in public administration scholarship. For example, Corley and Sabharwal (2010) recently reviewed productivity patterns in public administration using this resource. However, concerns about the

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<sup>5</sup> Public administration scholarship is published in different disciplinary outlets, notably area studies. However, our review focuses on journals where authors have explicitly chosen to publish their work as public administration.

dominance of English language literature has led Candler, Azevêdo and Albernaz (2010) to argue that the field suffers from epistemic colonialism, nationalism and parochialism, or a major bias towards the theories and methods of North American scholarship (also see Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012).

### Journals

Table 1 lists the twenty-nine public administration journals that published articles on countries in East and Southeast Asia during the period 1999-2009.<sup>6</sup> Four journals published over thirty articles each during this time period: *Public Administration and Development*, *Contemporary Economic Policy*, *Public Administration Review* and *Social Policy and Administration*. Special issues or symposia inflated the total number of articles in three of these journals. In 2009 *Public Administration Review* published a comparative special issue on China-USA that included 20 articles, *Social Policy and Administration* published three symposia in 2001, 2003 and 2006 with six articles each, and *Public Administration and Development* published a symposium on China in 2009. Figure 1 shows the distribution of papers by year and notes the inclusion of special issues. Removal of the special issues and symposia suggests that *Contemporary Economic Policy* published the most papers on the region, followed by *Public Administration and Development*. However, it should be noted that the editors of these journals may consolidate articles into upcoming symposia which they would otherwise publish separately.

[Position of table 1 and figure 1 about here]

Figure 1 also shows a slow increase in the number of journal articles published during the time period under consideration, rising from 17 in 1999 to 34 in 2009 (excluding special issues).

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<sup>6</sup> Three journals in the Web of Science classification of public administration did not publish any articles on the region, namely: *Amme Idaresi Dergisi*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, and *Public Money and Management*.

Until 2004 less than twenty articles were published each year. Since then, more than twenty articles have been published each year and more than thirty articles per year since 2007. While the time period under consideration is relatively short, these data imply a growing interest among public administration scholars in publishing articles on Eastern and Southeastern Asia.<sup>7</sup> It is also possible that the recent spike in symposia reflects a growing interest in this region—at the time of writing at least five new symposia were planned.<sup>8</sup>

The journals in this review were selected from the SSCI. The majority of these journals are edited in the UK or USA. Indeed all but three of the journals included in our review are edited in these two countries, the exceptions being *International Review of Administrative Sciences* (Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium), *Canadian Public Policy* (University of Calgary), and *Australian Journal of Public Administration* (Australian National University), with one jointly edited in the UK and in Denmark (Roskilde University), *Social Policy and Administration*.<sup>9</sup> The material we deal with in this review may therefore reflect the mainstream views of UK and US editors, and their institutions and journal reviewers, along with the broader Western literature in general.

### Country coverage

Nineteen East and Southeast Asia countries are included in our study. Articles have been written on thirteen of these countries, meaning that no attention has been focused on Brunei, Lao,

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<sup>7</sup> It is of course possible that there are now more scholars working in the field, and more journals available for publication. For example, *Public Management Review* is new to the SSCI.

<sup>8</sup> These include the current one together with *International Public Management Journal* (publication date 2012), *Public Administration* (2012 and 2014) and *Public Management Review* (2013).

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that intellectual origins of these journals can essentially be traced to the UK and USA. For example, the editor of *International Review of Administrative Sciences* is a UK national (Christopher Pollitt).

Macau, Myanmar, North Korea or Timor-Leste (see table 2). The greatest attention has been focused on China, followed by Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. These countries have been studied in 282 articles, and they account for 55 per cent of all the countries studied in the sample. Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand are represented in more than ten but less than twenty articles, while Cambodia, Mongolia and Vietnam have been researched in less than ten articles. Focusing upon the 358 papers studying the countries in East and Southeast Asia, China accounts for 33 percent of all papers, followed by Japan (16 percent) and Hong Kong (13 percent).

[Position of table 2 about here]

One striking finding from table 2 is the large number of non-East and Southeast Asian countries examined along with the targeted countries in these studies—some 43 in total. The USA was the most frequently studied non-Asian country, although as we noted earlier, a comparative China-USA special issue in *Public Administration Review* boosted the number. Otherwise, 26 countries were studied only once or twice. This large number of countries from outside the region under investigation leads us to a noteworthy finding: that a large number of studies of public administration in Eastern and Southeastern Asia are comparative in nature and global in scope, often comparing countries inside the region with more distant countries.

A more detailed investigation of the data confirms the comparative nature of research in this arena and indicates that three in ten of the articles are multiple country studies (30.4 percent,  $n = 94$ ). Similarly Gulrajani and Moloney (2012) note that just over a quarter of the articles from the Southern Asia that they review were multiple case studies. Of the multi-country studies in our sample the predominant tendency is for comparisons between countries within the East and Southeast Asian region and elsewhere in the world (68.4 percent), with the remaining studies

making comparisons within the region (31.6 percent). By way of contrast Terry (2005) identified comparative or international article topics accounting for 24 out of 350 articles published in *Public Administration Review* for the period 2000-2005.

### **Topics studied**

In the review we identified twenty-four primary topics of investigation by scholars in their articles (see table 3). The list was dominated by the topics of management reform, social policy, environmental policy, economic policy, and health policy, with these subjects accounting for more than 67 percent (n =208) of all articles in the sample.<sup>10</sup> These studies can be roughly divided into two camps: studies focusing upon management reform and social policy which are seeking to understand broad processes of change, and those from the environmental and economic policy fields that tend to address narrowly focused research questions. Health studies straddle both camps. For example, scholars working on social policy topics typically define their research questions as seeking to understand the development of social policy systems (e.g., Holliday & Wong, 2003), understanding social policy change in East Asian countries (e.g., Joo, 1999), or welfare restructuring in newly industrialized countries (e.g., Lee, 2006). Those examining management reform are predominantly interested in broad systems of reform and change. Examples of research questions include Chan and Chow (2007) who explore the outcomes from management innovations or reforms in China, Bowornwathana (2006) who focuses on autonomization of the Thai state and related topics, and Mok (2002) who sought to explain changing nationalization, marketization, and transitional governance in higher education in Taiwan. One of these papers touches on the topic at the heart of this article—the Western

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<sup>10</sup> Analysis of topics for articles that only examined the countries of East and Southeast Asia reflect a very similar pattern to that of all articles with 69 percent of the studies focusing upon questions of policy (51.3 percent) or management reform (17.7 percent).

influence on Asian Scholarship—and seeks to examine whether management reform in China is driven by a model of ‘Chinese characteristics’ or the global reform movement, concluding that Western influences are high (Christensen, Dong, & Painter, 2008). These debates are not unique to the region; for example there is a longstanding discussion in the new public management (NPM) literature on whether the reform agenda is the same everywhere or more characterized by the local adaptations.

[Position of table 3 about here]

Environmental policy papers have examined energy supply, demand and emissions in China (Ren & Zhou, 2005), a comparative study of carbon sinks in Japan, Canada and Sweden (Pohjola, Kerkela, & Mäkipää, 2003), and the effectiveness of policies to tackle greenhouse gases (Suwa, 2009). Research questions and topics amongst the economic policy articles included: exploring the effectiveness of financial policy changes on the financial sector in Malaysia (Ang, 2008), examining the effectiveness of minimum wage legislation on women in Japan (Kawaguchi & Yamada, 2007), and cigarette consumption and mechanisms for health advice and promotion in South Korea (Kim & Seldon, 2004).

These findings imply that scholars writing in English on East and Southeast Asia are focused on larger questions about systems and regimes and with detailed policy questions that may have Western parallels or implications. This is a somewhat different emphasis than that of the wider public administration literature which traditionally examines questions of bureaucracy, performance, accountability, and organizational and individual behavior. If we contrast these topics with those identified by Terry (2005) in *Public Administration Review* and Pitts and Fernandez’s (2009) review of public management research presented at the sixth, seventh and eighth *Public Management Research Association* meetings in the USA, the distinct nature of



public administration research in East and Southeast Asia becomes apparent.<sup>11</sup> Terry (2005) identifies 30 topics, of which public management is the most frequently discussed topic, while questions of policy account for 6.9 percent of articles (n = 24). The first noticeable difference from the Pitts and Fernandez (2009) review is that the largest category of papers in the mainstream literature examined networking and various forms of privatization (20.2 percent). These two topics account for only around 3 percent of our sample. Second, in the Pitts and Fernandez (2009) study, networking was followed by organizational change and innovation (8 percent), public management reform (7.4 percent), and a range of issues including diversity management, employee motivation, strategic management, leadership, human resource management (HRM) and budgeting. The most frequently written about organizational practice in the East and Southeast Asian articles we reviewed was human resource management or HRM (4.2 percent) with all other practices around 2 percent. One final observation of differences is that while there have been major natural disasters in the region over recent years, this is not fully reflected in the topics studied (only 2 studies or 0.7 percent of the articles published) in comparison to the volumes of literature dedicated to this topic in the USA. This suggests that public administration research in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Asia is somewhat different from its mainstream US counterpart, even though both literatures appear in many of the same journals and are written in English.

This finding might be expected given that the study and practice of public administration are contingent on the context within which they take place. Indeed the growing public administration literature on the Asian region is keen to point out the importance of history,

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<sup>11</sup> Gulrajani and Moloney (2012) classify topics in their review of research from Southern Asia using the American Society for Public Administration research classifications and are unable to categorize 31 percent of their articles using this rubric.

culture and context in shaping the practice of public administration (Berman, 2009, 2010). In Europe, Kickert (2005) has also argued that there are distinctive approaches to the study and practice of public administration in France, Germany and Italy that reflect their legalistic state traditions. while Kuhlmann (2010) notes that these characteristics have led to differences in the adoption of NPM reforms.

### **Approaches and methods**

As was noted in the introduction, the preferred method of research is a long debated topic in public administration (Perry & Kraemer, 1986; White & Adams, 1994). In this section we investigate this topic and review the purpose and style of the papers, the units of analysis, the treatment of time in studies, and the type of methods implemented. Study purposes move from the exploration of a new topic, to a description of a phenomenon that is more clearly understood, to the explanation of a field or topic that is clearly described. While studies can both describe and explore, it is usually possible to identify one major purpose, and we sought to do this here. The majority of the studies were exploratory (42.2 percent, n = 130) seeking to examine relatively new terrain; this was followed by explanatory studies (34.7 percent, n = 107), and lastly descriptive ones (23.0 percent, n = 72). Given that nearly two-thirds of the articles seek to explore and describe public administration topics and questions in the region, this suggests that we are dealing with a new literature – or sub-literature – that has yet to fully establish itself and its identity.

Examination of the purpose of a study and the topic studied suggests some interesting findings. Policy studies account for nearly half our sample of articles and tend towards exploratory studies (51.1 percent, n = 151), followed by explanation (29.8 percent, n = 45), and lastly descriptive studies (19.2 percent, n = 29). Within this group of articles, 76.5 percent (n =

26) of economic policy studies were exploratory. For management reform, the other main area of inquiry, the distribution of studies reflected the whole sample. While the number of studies is small for the other topics, it is notable that HRM studies tended to be explanatory (53.9 percent, n = 7), as did ones examining collaboration (57.1 percent, n = 4), while accountability studies were typically descriptive (66.7 percent, n = 4).

The style of the article was also considered; whether it is empirical (including quantitative or qualitative data) or an essay. The majority of the studies (57.1 percent, n = 176) tended towards an empirical orientation, though a large proportion (42.9 percent, n = 133) were essays that discussed a topic and were based upon normative argumentation rather than new empirical evidence. While there is a bias towards empirical studies, exploratory and explanatory studies were more likely to be empirical (63.1 percent, n = 82 and 66.1 percent, n = 65 respectively) and descriptive studies essay-based (59.2 percent, n = 42). These findings reinforce our prior suggestion that English-language public administration research on East and Southeast Asia is still emerging as an area of scholarship.

The dominant units of analysis selected for examination by scholars are systems of government, policies and programs (see table 4). This reflects the topics of interest in two-thirds of the cases reviewed that were concerned with management reform and various policy arenas. Organizations are the unit of analysis in 14 percent of the cases and cover a wide range of topics. Groups of people and government-related artifacts (such as laws, regulations and ordinances) were least likely to be investigated. Studies of individuals were typically from the policy studies literature, with the exception of a few studies that were modeled after Western studies of public sector employees (Bangcheng, 2009; Kim, 2009; Lee, 2008; Song & Olshfski, 2008; Yang, 2009). Another distinguishing feature of these studies is that they typically (65.78 percent)

employed original data sets and bi- or multivariate statistical analysis.

[Position of table 4 about here]

Next we focus on the issue of how ‘time’ is treated in the studies to better understand if the authors were estimating correlations or examining change over time and trying to tease out causality. Just over half of the studies were cross-sectional (see table 5). Yet a large proportion of the studies looked at phenomena over time, many over five plus years, and undertook a longitudinal analysis of their topics of investigation. For example Ngok and Zhu’s (2007) exploratory essay on privatization, marketisation, decentralization and a shrinking state in China from the 1980s to the mid-2000s, or the Liu et al. (2003) study of the impact of urbanization on rural health and insurance amongst 16,000 individuals in 3,800 households in China.

Longitudinal studies were a mixture of empirical work and essays or argumentation pieces, with the exception of the time series studies which were predominantly empirical. In the majority of cases the authors of articles in the review explicitly explained the time frames that they were dealing with, while just under a third did not. Table 5 indicates that as authors dealt with longer time scales, they were more likely to report the treatment of time in their studies. However, this did not exceed half of the articles reviewed.

[Position of table 5 about here]

Among our sample of articles, 176 tended towards an empirical orientation. Examination of these papers indicates that the large majority drew their evidence from existing secondary sources (62.5 percent, n = 110), and the balance was split evenly between primary qualitative (19.3 percent, n = 34) and quantitative (18.2 percent n = 32) data. Studies usually adopted a single method (82.3 percent, n = 145). Multi-method studies were more likely to be found in articles that adopted qualitative methods (29.4 percent, n = 10). In terms of analysis, a quarter of

the qualitative studies adopted specific qualitative analytical techniques while 56.8 percent (n = 92) of the quantitative orientated approaches adopted bi- or multivariate analysis, leaving nearly one in four articles to rely upon descriptive statistics (38.3 percent, n = 62).

We have noted that most of the articles reviewed were classified as empirical in style and tended to work with existing data sources. Given that these articles are published in the English language literature, we again contrast these findings to that literature. Pitts and Fernandez's (2009, p. 405) review of the predominately North American public administration literature notes that "quantitative methods and hypotheses are becoming the norm for public management researchers". In our database, a quarter of all studies, and a third of those analyzing data, adopted multivariate techniques. This would suggest that research in Eastern and Southeastern Asia is not typified by multivariate analysis. This point can be further emphasized if we examine where studies that adopt multivariate analysis are published. Of the 78 article using multivariate statistical techniques, 49 are found in two journals: *Climate Policy* and *Contemporary Economic Policy*. As we noted above, articles on environmental and economic policy typically populate these journals.<sup>12</sup> If we remove these articles from our sample, studies adopting multivariate techniques account for 9.4 percent of all studies or 12.4 percent of those using data. Given that 7.7 percent of articles use bivariate statistical techniques and 3.9 per cent used qualitative analytical techniques, we conclude that public administration research in East and Southeast Asia is based heavily upon argumentation and seldom uses statistical techniques that extend beyond descriptive statistics. It is, however, important to note that our point of reference here has been the North American literature, where Brewer et al. (1998) estimate that over half of all doctoral

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<sup>12</sup> These two journals are also cross-listed in SSCI (*Climate Policy* in Environmental Studies and *Contemporary Economic Policy* in Economics) where quantitative methods are the methodological norm.

students use multivariate analysis in their PhD theses. If we contrast studies in US and UK edited journals, we find a greater tendency towards essays and qualitative techniques in the latter. These methods are also more prevalent in the social sciences in continental Europe, where the tradition of public administration is firmly grounded in law and bureaucracy (see Kickert, 2005).

The debate about the most appropriate methods for questions of public administration is unlikely to go away. However, argument for clear and crisp discussion of how data are collected is undeniable. In the 176 articles we defined as empirical, clear information on sample size is only reported in 36.4 percent ( $n = 64$ ) of studies. This rises to 71.9 percent ( $n = 23$ ) of the primary quantitative studies but falls to one in five ( $n = 22$ ) of those that adopt secondary sources. This, alongside the strong propensity not to report time periods for studies or data collection techniques, suggests that public administration research that focuses upon this region, but perhaps also more generally, is not paying careful enough attention to documenting its research techniques. This is perhaps indicative of the use of secondary data to marshal support for argumentation rather than leading enquiry. Such documentation is an important element of rigorous research and it enables second-generation researchers to interpret and replicate earlier studies. In our opinion, this item requires urgent attention and authors, journal editors and manuscript reviewers should be more vigilant in enforcing it.

### **Institutional arrangements**

Finally we turn our attention to the institutional arrangements of the authors of the articles in this review. We look at the country base of the authors, how they teamed up when co-authoring publications, and the academic department(s) they were based in. One area of interest is the extent to which the study of public administration in East and Southeast Asia is an interdisciplinary effort. Longstanding attention has been placed upon the theory-practice

interface in public administration, building on Simon's classic (1996) argument that public administration is a design science (Andrews and Boyne 2010; Pitts and Fernandez 2009; Walker 2011). Design sciences must take into account the complexity of public administration practice and public policy implementation. One way to tackle these complex issues is through interdisciplinary work that draws together scholars from different departments and regions of the world to ensure that disciplinary skills and contextual knowledge are combined in appropriate ways (on the wider question of academics and practitioners see Vogel, 2010).

Our database included some 501 authors. We make four points about them. First, table 6 clearly indicates that these authors have institutional homes in a wide range of countries around the world; indeed every continent is represented except for South America. However, authors come from only ten of the 18 countries in East and Southeast Asia with no representation from Brunei, Cambodia, Lao, Macau, Mongolia, Myanmar, North Korea or Timor-Leste. Perhaps this should be expected since no studies focused on these countries, save for a comparative study of Mongolia (Schelzig, 2001).

[Position of table 6 about here]

Second, around 30 percent of the authors of these studies were based in one of the countries in our sample. The largest numbers were in China, followed by Taiwan and Japan. Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam had low numbers of contributing authors. This suggests that scholarship on East and Southeast Asia is heavily concentrated in a few countries.

Third, nearly 60 percent of the authors come from native English language speaking countries. This reinforces our suspicion that Western influence is playing a major role in scholarship on the region. As we have suggested, this raises questions about the extent to which

such scholarship is sensitive to Asian culture and context. Future research in this area could probe the characteristics of the authors in more detail and identify where they were trained, as it is possible that many were trained in the USA and have not returned to their native homes. Conversely, of the 30 percent of authors based in the region, is possible that many were trained in the USA or other Western countries and returned to their institutional bases in China, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea having familiarized themselves with the English language and the associated process and expectations of publishing in SSCI peer-reviewed journals. This is consistent with our understanding, drawn from conversations with scholars in the region, that English language publications in SSCI journals is considered the gold standard for scholarly achievement in East and Southeast Asian universities.

Fourth, the majority of articles were sole authored (53.7 percent, n = 166). Of interest here is that sole authorship was more likely to be found amongst academics drawn from the primary disciplinary department of public administration or public affairs (38.8 percent, n = 57 of the sole authored papers) followed by political scientists (13.6 percent, n = 20). A large percentage of the articles in this review were joint-authored (46.3 percent, n = 143). Joint-authorship most often involved two scholars (33.7 percent, n = 103), with three authors on 29 papers (9.4 per cent) and four on 10 (3.2 percent). The articles with joint authorship are more likely to be collaborations between scholars based in the region than with those from outside (37.1 percent, n = 53). Nearly thirty percent of co-authored articles were written by academics writing together in non-Asian countries (27.3 percent, n = 39), while a quarter of co-authored pieces were written by Asian-based authors from the same country.

Finally we turned to the departmental base of the authors (table 7). The field of authors submitting manuscripts for publication is quite diverse. As might be expected, the majority of



scholars are based in public administration, public affairs or public policy departments and schools of political science. A large number are also from economics departments, though these authors typically confined their publications to the journal of *Contemporary Economic Policy*. There is, however, strong representation from many social science disciplines. One interesting observation is the relatively low numbers of political scientists. (We assume these scholars are publishing studies on the region in political science journals rather than the sources we tapped, and future reviews should examine these articles.)

[Position of table 7 about here]

On balance, the evidence on institutional arrangements indicates that public administration scholarship on East and Southeast Asia is a multi-disciplinary pursuit. The set of single authored articles we reviewed come from a set of scholars working in a wide variety of disciplines, and even among the multi-authored articles in our sample, there is evidence of much multidisciplinary collaboration – even though it is largely Balkanized either within or outside of the region but not across regions. Future studies need to assess the extent to which these authors are regular contributors to the public administration knowledge base. It could be that the field is spread across a variety of institutional homes but the scholars themselves are intently focused on public administration. On the other hand, many of these authors may be one-time or occasional contributors to the discipline who see public administration topics and journals as targets of opportunity, but who are otherwise more focused on research in their mother disciplines and who normally publish in their discipline’s journals. Patterns of cross-disciplinary collaboration may help to corroborate some of these points: for example, non-public administration scholars may bring fresh ideas and approaches to the table, but being unfamiliar with the context, they may tend to team up with old hands—public administration scholars who are familiar with the

disciplinary terrain and the region and its problems. The implications are straightforward: if the field does not have a durable set of scholars who are inching the knowledge base of public administration forward, research progress will likely lag behind other disciplines. If, however, there is a dedicated set of scholars investigating public administration issues, more attention needs to be focused on the research shortcomings mentioned above (e.g., failure to collect original data, use sophisticated methods, and provide satisfactory documentation).

### **Discussion**

This article has explored recent English language scholarship on public administration in East and Southeast Asia. We have looked at the frequency of scholarly contributions, and their content and sources. Our findings indicate that there are some shortcomings in the research enterprise, particularly in over reliance on exploratory and descriptive studies and not utilizing more advanced statistical methods or documenting the details of research that is reported in the literature. On a more optimistic note, we find that a diverse group of scholars from various parts of the world are contributing to this literature on public administration in East and Southeast Asia. Our review only covered English language publications so there is a possibility that research in native Asian languages is substantively different. We suspect that such research would have even more glaring shortcomings since many of the gaps in the present literature were identified through comparisons with the mainstream Western literature. The suggestion is that scholars trained in the Western tradition would likely be more diligent in following Western research practices than would non-Western scholars. Of course there are a number of unresolved questions about which research techniques and methods are the most appropriate in our field. These questions are beyond the scope of our inquiry.

East and Southeast Asia is fast becoming a political and economic powerhouse in the

world. Many practices of modern public administration—such as civil service examinations and university training for careers in public service—were first introduced in China and other Asian countries many years ago. The region has much to teach the world, and it desperately needs to learn more about itself, particularly regarding governance, public administration, and public policy.

### **Concluding remarks on the symposium**

Reviews that seek to provide an overview of a broad topic, such as public administration research, by its very nature suffers from a number of limitations. In this symposium limitations have included variations in the depth and variety of research articles published by study. The range of research per study to review varied, and was sometimes limited. Further, given our aim of reviewing and contrasting English language and native tongue material the basis for our searches had to vary by study. As the field of public administration develops in East and Southeast Asia, and additional material becomes available for review, it will become possible to mount more systematic studies that can address in more depth the nature of knowledge in the region, how research effects the world of policy and practice and how public administration scholarship has evolved and changed over time. Similar endeavors, to build a more comprehensive picture could also be directed at public administration education.

The reviews undertaken lead to the following tentative conclusions. First, public administration research is clearly alive and well in the countries under review if not thriving—indeed the extent and scope of research in South Korea and Taiwan is substantial, and the authors note rapid expansion in the public administration academic community. Second, the differences between the English language articles found in the SSCI and those written in the mother tongue are most starkly different in Macau reflecting the European style legal public

administration tradition. While Japan is also dominated by the legal tradition, the topics of research increasingly reflect those found in the international literature. On differences, the English language journals were more likely to be comparative, though this was clearly a theme in all the countries examined. However, across all the articles reviewed in this symposium there is a dominant focus on seeking to understand system-wide change in response to global processes associated with the new public management, decolonialization, and democratization. Third, and linked to this, the academic institutional context is important in driving the nature of the research of scholars—this is noticeable for producing research more akin to that of the North American mainstream in South Korea where articles seek to be explanatory whereas in Macau this context results in a more legal focus, which perhaps reflects the city-state’s European continental colonialism in addition to its reunification with China. The final conclusion reached about work in the region is a somewhat negative one: that more systematic and rigorous methods are required in the study of public administration in the region, and that they are comprehensively documented in the articles written. These findings reflect those of others who have examined the comparative nature of public administration research in different parts of the world from an English language perspective (Gulrajani & Moloney, 2012; Van Wart & Cayer, 1990). The conclusions of the studies presented here is a little more robust in the articles in this symposium have also examined studies in languages other than English. The challenge to the scholarly public administration community is to move away from descriptive research towards systematic theory testing.

### **Appendix: Coding Protocol.**

1. What are the topics studied (developed in a ground fashion) and included the following:

Accountability	Collaboration/coordination/networking	Corruption
Development	Disaster management	E-government
Environmental Policy	Foreign policy	Governance
Human resource management	Management reform/new public management	Performance management and state capacity
Privatization	Public finance/budgeting	Regulation
Social Policy	Political systems development	Legal affairs
Media	Identity	Public administration theory and concept
City/local government	Leadership	E-government
Methodology	Policy	Policy tools
Government structure	Trust	Korean public administration
Public policy theory and concept	Public affairs	Public organization management
Intergovernmental relations	Globalization	Law and accountability
Non-profit organizations	Political environment	

2. What is the unit of analysis?

Individuals

Groups of people

Organizations

Programs or policies

Systems of government or artifacts

3. What is the purpose of the study?

Descriptive

Exploratory

Explanatory

4. What is the style?

Empirical

Argumentation/essay

5. What is the treatment of time?

Cross-sectional

Longitudinal

Up to two years

More than two years

Time series

6. What are the methods?

Qualitative

What analytical techniques are used?

Quantitative

What is the sample size?

Is the analysis univariate, bivariate, multivariate

What analytical techniques are used?

Review of secondary sources

What is the sample size?

Is the analysis univariate, bivariate, multivariate?

What analytical techniques are used?

7. Single country or comparative study

Yes

No

8. What is the country base of the authors?

9. What is the department of the authors?

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Table 1: Journals in the review

Journals	N
Administration & Society	6
Administration in Social Work	3
American Review of Public Administration	3
Australian Journal of Public Administration	11
Canadian Public Policy - Analyse De Politiques	2
Climate Policy	20
Contemporary Economic Policy	38
Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy	21
Governance	23
International Review of Administrative Sciences	14
Journal of European Public Policy	4
Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management	3
Journal of Policy Analysis and Management	1
Journal of Social Policy	16
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	2
Local Government Studies	2
Public Administration	1
Public Administration and Development	39
Public Administration Review	33
Public Management Review	5
Policy & Politics	8
Policy Sciences	13
Policy Studies Journal	4
Public Personnel Management	4
Social Policy & Administration	32
Social Security Bulletin	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>309</i>

Table 2: Countries studied in the articles reviewed

Country	N	%
China	119	23.2
Japan	59	11.5
Hong Kong	46	9.0
USA	40	7.8
Taiwan	32	6.2
South Korea	26	5.1
Singapore	18	3.5
Indonesia	12	2.3
Philippines	11	2.1
Malaysia	12	2.3
Thailand	12	2.3
India	9	1.8
Sweden	8	1.6
Canada	7	1.4
UK	7	1.4
Vietnam	7	1.4
Brazil	6	1.2
Europe	6	1.2
Mexico	6	1.2
Australia	5	1.0
Germany	5	1.0
<i>Total*</i>	<i>513</i>	<i>100%</i>

Note:

\* The following countries were excluded from the table because they were studied less than five times and represented less than 1percent of the total: Denmark, Ireland, Mongolia, Netherlands, South Africa, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Jordan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Turkey, and Venezuela

Table 3: Topic studied

Topic	N	%
Management reform	60	19.4
Social policy	53	17.2
Environmental policy	47	15.2
Economic policy	34	11.0
Health policy	14	4.5
HRM	13	4.2
Governance	10	3.2
Development	9	2.9
Decentralization	8	2.6
Collaboration/coordination/networking	7	2.3
Performance management/state capacity	7	2.3
Welfare regime	7	2.3
Accountability	6	1.9
Public finance	6	1.9
Organizational structure	5	1.6
Privatization	4	1.3
Corruption	4	1.3
E-government	4	1.3
Public policy	3	1.0
Foreign policy	2	0.7
Disaster management	2	0.7
Regulation	2	0.7
Education policy	1	0.3
Business/investment/management	1	0.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>309</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 4: Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis	N	%
Individual	38	12.7
Group of people	14	4.5
Organization	43	14.0
Programmes/policies	80	25.9
Subsystem: government, budgetary, etc.	118	38.2
Artifacts: Laws, rules etc.	16	5.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>309</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 5: Time span covered in empirical quantitative studies

	Time clearly defined		<i>Total</i>
	Yes	No	
Cross sectional	133 43.0%	24 8.0%	<i>157</i> <i>53.5%</i>
Longitudinal (2-5 years)	7 2.3%	8 2.6%	<i>15</i> <i>4.9%</i>
Longitudinal (5+ years)	52 16.8%	43 13.9%	<i>95</i> <i>30.7%</i>
Time series	23 7.4%	19 6.2%	<i>35</i> <i>13.6%</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>215</i> <i>68.1%</i>	<i>94</i> <i>31.9%</i>	<i>309</i> <i>100%</i>

Table 6: Country base of authors

Country	N	%
USA	123	24.55
Hong Kong	91	18.16
UK	49	9.78
China	46	9.18
Taiwan	34	6.79
Japan	32	6.39
Australia	19	3.79
South Korea	15	2.99
Canada	13	2.59
Germany	10	2.0
Singapore	10	2.0
Netherlands	10	2.0
Switzerland	5	1.0
Indonesia	4	0.8
Finland	4	0.8
South Africa	4	0.8
Norway	3	0.6
Thailand	3	0.6
Greece	3	0.6
Turkey	3	0.6
Spain	2	0.4
Sweden	2	0.4
U Arab Emirates	2	0.4
Vietnam	2	0.4
Malaysia	2	0.4
India	2	0.4
New Zealand	2	0.4
Hungary	1	0.2
Philippines	1	0.2
France	1	0.2
Austria	1	0.2
Ireland	1	0.2
Italy	1	0.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>501</i>	<i>100</i>



Table 7: Departmental base of authors

	N	%
Public administration/affairs/policy/government	133	29.0
Economics	74	16.2
Social policy/social work	49	10.9
Planning/development	37	8.1
Environment	34	7.4
Social Science	34	7.4
Political science	32	7.0
Business administration/management	30	6.6
Others (geography, manufacturing science, architecture, sociology, unknown)	30	6.6
Health	5	1.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>458</i>	<i>100</i>

Figure 1: Number of articles published by year and standard and special issue

