2019 JPART Community Survey

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Executive Summary

With the transition to the new editorial team in January 2019, the Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (JPART) welcomed a new editor, Mary K. Feeney, and seven Associate Editors:

Deneen Hatmaker, University of Connecticut
George A. Krause, University of Georgia
Stephanie Moulton, The Ohio State University
Michael Siciliano, University of Illinois at Chicago
David Suárez, University of Washington
René Torenvlied, University of Twente
Anders Ryom Villadsen, Aarhus University

The team's primary goal for 2019 was to manage a smooth transition. The second goal was to consider mechanisms for moving JPART forward. While the team had some general ideas drawing from best practices at top management and political science journals, we wanted to get a better understanding of the community's perceptions of JPART and any changes the community would like to see going forward. We also wanted to determine whether the ideas we propose would be perceived differently by varying groups in the PMRA community. Thus, we sought input from JPART authors, JPART reviewers, JPART editorial board members, and PMRA community members. Overall, we did not find significantly different views across these four groups and thus report most of the survey results in the aggregate.

This report presents results from the 2019 community survey for JPART. First, we describe the sample, survey administration, and respondent characteristics. We then present the survey data in four sections: perceptions of JPART, mechanisms for improvement, subfields and sections, and reviewer experiences. Each section presents the descriptive data from the survey items and a discussion of how the editorial team is responding to the information.

Survey Sample, Administration, and Respondents

Survey sample and administration

The population for this survey included PMRA members as of February 2019, JPART reviewers from 2015 to 2019, JPART editorial board members, and those that have submitted to JPART from 2015 to 2019. We gathered information for all individuals in these four groups, deleted duplicates, and updated and verified contact information through an e-mail verification system. The resulting list included 746 individuals who were invited to participate in the survey. We sent an initial email invitation and two reminders to encourage participation. Prior to each reminder, an email verification test was conducted. The survey was administered online using Sawtooth Software® from April 4, 2019 to May 6, 2019. Table 1 outlines the timeline for the JPART Community Survey.

Table 1 2019 JPART Community Survey Timeline

Survey Administration	Date	Number contacted
Email Invitation	April 4, 2019	746
First Reminder	April 16, 2019	632
Final Reminder	April 27, 2019	542
Survey Closed	May 6, 2019	

Instrument development

The instrument was developed by the 2019 JPART editorial team with numerous iterations and tests. The JPART editorial assistant, Leonor Camarena, conducted interviews with six individuals regarding thoughts on what JPART was doing well and could do better. These individuals included editors of other public administration journals, JPART readers, and individuals that have submitted to JPART. Input from the interviews was used to revise the initial instrument. The JPART editor, associate editors, the editorial assistant, and a set of faculty members not affiliated with JPART tested the final instrument.

Respondent description

We received a total of 293 responses (39%) from the final list of 746 contacts (we removed e-mails with bouncebacks, bad addresses, and duplicates). Of the 293 respondents, 213 (73%) have reviewed for JPART, 233 (80%) have submitted to JPART, and 169 (58%) have published in JPART. Additionally, more than half of the respondents have served on the editorial board, PMRA board, or held an editorial position at JPART. Of the 293 respondents, 22 (8%) have previously served as an associate editor/coeditor/editor, 81 (28%) have served as an editorial board member,

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and 28 (10%) have served as PMRA board member. Respondents included 64 assistant professors, 90 associate professors and 91 full professors. Table 2 reports the position of all respondents. Among the respondents, 195 (70%) have tenure, 174 (61%) are men, and 109 (38%) are women. 206 (73%) of survey respondents work in the United States. 75 respondents indicated they work outside of the US. Table 3 lists the frequency of respondents based on country of work.

Table 2 Respondent rank

Full professor	91
Associate professor	90
Assistant professor	64
Emeritus or retired	13
Student	11
Lecturer	5
Postdoctoral Scholar	3
Instructor	2
Research professor	2
Associate research professor	2
Assistant research professor	1
Assistant clinical professor	0
Associate clinical professor	0
Clinical professor	0
Other	9
Total	**293**

Table 3 Respondent Country of Work

Argentina	1	India	1
Brazil	1	Italy	6
Chile	1	Japan	3
China	1	South Korea	6
Colombia	1	Mexico	3
Germany	1	Nigeria	1
Denmark	17	Netherlands	13
Spain	4	Norway	1
Finland	1	Portugal	1
France	1	Singapore	1
UK	6	Thailand	1
Hong Kong	2	United States	206
Israel	1		
		Total	**281**

Section I. Perceptions of JPART

This section outlines perceptions of JPART from respondents that have submitted to the journal, authors, and reviewers from 2015 to 2019. Respondent perceptions of the journal provide insight for the editorial team on how the JPART audience views the journal, current research topics, and ways the community believes the journal can improve.

Perceptions

To better understand how the PMRA community views the journal, the survey asked respondents about their perceptions of the type of research that JPART publishes. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of statements about types of research and methods published in JPART. Figure 1 illustrates the level of agreement and disagreement to these statements from all survey respondents. There are no significant differences in perceptions between authors, reviewers, and PMRA members, thus we report them in the aggregate.
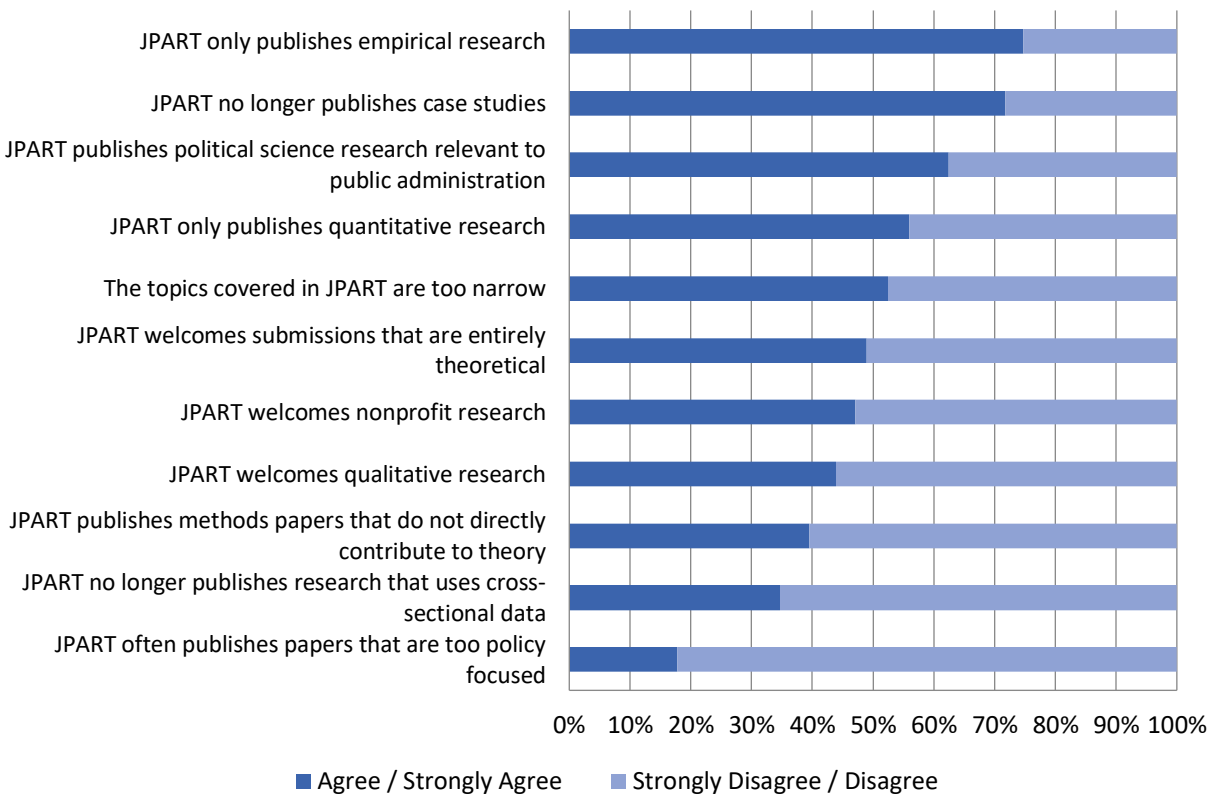
Figure 1 Perceptions of JPART

Figure 1 indicates survey respondents generally agree that JPART publishes articles that seek to answer public administration and public policy questions using data-driven methodologies. For

example, over 70% of respondents agreed that JPART only publishes empirical research while slightly less than half of respondents agreed that JPART welcomes submissions that are entirely theoretical. More than half of respondents agree that JPART publishes relevant political science research and more than 80% disagree that JPART is too focused on policy. However, over 50% of respondents disagree that JPART welcomes nonprofit research. JPART welcomes submissions from political science, nonprofit studies, and policy that advances public administration research and theory and speaks to a general public administration audience.

These data point to the need to better articulate that JPART welcomes qualitative research. JPART also welcomes submissions that are entirely theoretical. More than 70% of respondents agree that JPART no longer publishes case studies. Again, we see a need to better articulate the type of research JPART seeks to publish. JPART is open to publishing case studies that apply multiple methods to ensure triangulation and rigor and case studies that move beyond description to develop or advance public administration theory.

Data Overlap Policy

Data overlap policies are being adopted across academic journals. Data overlap policies ask authors to note if their data have been published in another paper (or papers) and if so to report how the submitted manuscript is different from those previous papers. Data overlap reports typically ask the author to note papers using the same data and create a table reporting which independent and dependent variables overlap across papers. Data overlap reports enable editors to assess the novelty of the submission and can prevent publishing multiple papers with minor variations in data analysis.

The survey asked respondents to indicate if they believe JPART should develop data overlap policies for submissions. Table 4 shows the results from 290 respondents. 119 (41%) of respondents indicate that JPART should develop data overlap policies, while 28% had no opinion.

Table 4 Should JPART Develop Data Overlap Policies?

Adopt data overlap policies?	Number
Yes	119 (41%)
No	89 (31%)
No Opinion	82 (28%)
	N = 290

Section II. Mechanisms for Improvement

In this section, we present findings on what JPART reviewers (n=213) believe will help improve reviewer experiences at JPART. We drew from current best practices in management and political science journals to develop a set of questionnaire items focused on ways JPART might improve reviewer experiences. Examples include checklists for how to report research design, data collection, data flow, and analytical results. We also asked if reviewer access to data and the code used in the data analysis would improve manuscript review and assessment.

Improving Reviewer Experiences

The survey presented JPART reviewers (n=213) with a list of eight mechanisms to improve reviewer experiences. Respondents were asked to select up to four items that would be most helpful for conducting reviews. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Mechanisms that would be most helpful for reviewers

Mechanisms to improve reviewer experiences	Number (%)
Require authors to provide full descriptive statistics for study variables	116 (54%)
Author checklist for reporting analytical results	114 (54%)
Author checklist for reporting data collection	112 (53%)
Require authors to include interview protocols	100 (47%)
Requirements specifying to authors how to report regression results in tables	68 (32%)
Reviewer access to code used in the data analysis	35 (16%)
Reviewer access to data	28 (13%)
Require authors to include a researcher declaration of bias	19 (09%)
	N=213

Note: Number indicates count that selected option as a mechanism that would help reviewers

The most popular mechanism selected was to *require authors to provide full descriptive statistics of study variables*, which was selected by 116 (54%) respondents. The second most common mechanism was to *require an author checklist for reporting analytical results*, which was selected by 114 respondents. The third and fourth most popular items were: *require authors to have a checklist for reporting data collection* (112) and to *require authors to include interview protocols* (100). In contrast, the item identified as least popular for improving reviewer performance was *requiring authors to include a researcher declaration of bias* (19), which was only selected by 9% of the reviewers.

As a result of the responses to these proposals (none of which were selected by more than 60% of respondents) and discussions about author burden at time of submission versus reviewer burden to

assess the quality of research, the editorial team is adopting a two-stage process for improving author and reviewer experiences. The editorial team agrees that we only want to ask authors to engage checklists and formatting requirements that improve the submission and reviewer experience (e.g. clarity of data reporting or table development), rather than requiring formatting that increases author workload without clear improvement of the submission (e.g. reference formatting). (1) The first stage, which we are already implementing, is asking authors to follow clear data reporting standards at the conditional accept stage. This means asking authors to do important revisions for an accepted manuscript. These revisions will improve reader comprehension and the possibility for others to replicate the research or use the manuscript in a meta-analysis. Examples of these requirements include clear data collection reports, inclusion of interview protocols, data flow reports, correlation tables, reporting exact p-values in regression results, sample bias reports, original text for vignettes, and so on. (2) The second stage will be directing authors to well-established checklists at the submission stage. These checklists provide useful guides for ensuring manuscripts have all the appropriate information that reviewers require to evaluate theoretical and empirical submissions. These changes to the JPART submission page are forthcoming.

Section III. Subfields & New Sections

JPART seeks to publish manuscripts that advance public administration research and theory and speak to a general public administration audience. Public administration is an interdisciplinary field that uses a variety of theory and methods from traditional disciplines to investigate questions relevant to the study of government, administration, management, and governance. Some view public administration as a subfield of traditional disciplines (e.g. political science, management), an applied version of traditional disciplines, a standalone discipline, or a discipline that overlaps with policy, management, economics, political science, psychology, and so on. Additionally, public administration has specialized subfields and research communities that often publish in specialized journals (e.g. budget and finance, human resources, criminal justice, social work). JPART seeks to publish research that contributes to public administration theory and research, while speaking to a general audience. While aiming to achieve this goal, community members inevitably develop perceptions of the journal based on their own experiences, what they see in print, and based on trends in the field (e.g. what is being submitted, endorsed by reviewers, and accepted by editors).

Subfields

To better understand demand in the PMRA community, we asked respondents which subfields they would like to see more of in JPART. Respondents were presented with a list of eight areas of research and asked, "*which of the following fields and subfields do you think JPART should be publishing more work on…*" Respondents were allowed to check multiple options.

Figure 2 Topics JPART should publish more of
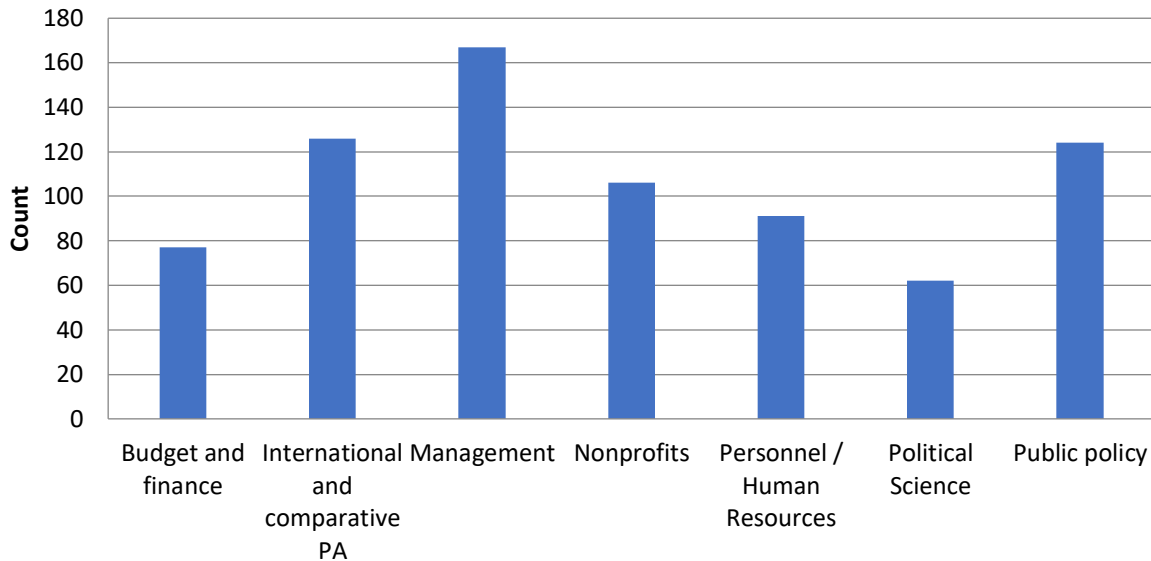
Management received the largest number of selections at 167, followed by International and comparative PA (126), Public policy (124), and Nonprofits (106). Other was selected 44 times – respondents entered the following comments: Governance (16), Organizational behavior / Behavioral Public Administration (8), Ethics / Ethical Leadership (4). These findings indicate the PMRA community's desire to keep JPART focused on public management. JPART is now highly ranked in the political science category for Clarivate's Journal Citation Report, which has resulted in an increasing number of submissions from political science. A few respondents offered comments on JPARTs relationship to political science:

> *"In the past five years, JPART has veered considerably towards Political Science (also listed as a political science journal). It would be good to strike a balance and publish more "management" papers (focusing on both public and nonprofit management). A good model to follow is AMJ where people from all disciplines and research traditions (quant., qual., and critical) feel welcome."*

> *"...increasingly, managing in the public sector even at the local level is about managing partisan differences. I would really like to see JPART/PMRA encourage more exploration of managing politics and hot button political issues."*

Respondents also indicated a need for more nonprofit research, and international and comparative PA:

> *"I strongly recommend that JPART open itself up much more explicitly to articles that deal with aspects of the nonprofit sector (in US and globally) that fit with its mission."*

"Try to be more international, cross-cultural, comparative."

In response to these comments, JPART welcomes submissions from researchers working in any field that speaks to a general public administration audience and seeks to advance public administration research and theory.

New Sections

The JPART editorial team has received a number of suggestions that we create a more formal policy about "other types" of manuscripts or develop a new section dedicated to methods papers, null findings, and research notes. To better understand community views on these proposals, the survey asked respondents the following question: "*JPART is considering a variety of different features. Which of the following features do you think JPART should definitely do, maybe do, or not do?*" Respondents selected yes, maybe, or no for each section types. Table 6 reports the responses.

Table 6 Support for new sections in JPART

	Yes	Maybe	No
Null findings	169 (60%)	88 (31%)	25 (9%)
Research notes	168 (60%)	81 (29%)	32 (11%)
Method pieces	138 (50%)	110 (40%)	30 (11%)
Current debates	104 (39%)	102 (38%)	60 (23%)
Data feature	93 (37%)	115 (43%)	55 (21%)
Commentary	84 (32%)	80 (30%)	102 (38%)
Book reviews	51 (20%)	109 (43%)	92 (37%)

Respondents generally agreed that JPART should feature articles on null findings, method pieces, and research notes. Null findings (60%) and research notes (60%) had the most support. Respondents were closely split between recommending book reviews as something JPART should maybe feature (43%) or not feature (37%). Commentary received the most votes as an article type that JPART should not feature (38%).

Methods Pieces

Respondents were asked to indicate their level support on the possibility of publishing high quality method pieces that include the application of new methods and novel methodological development in public administration, even if they do not advance theory development (the primary goal of JPART). The questionnaire stated, "*The leadership team at JPART is considering publishing high quality methods papers including the application of new methods and novel methodological development in public administration, even if they do not directly advance theory development. Please indicate your level of support for this initiative: 0 (no support) to 10 (strong support).*" Of

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the 275 respondents, 189 (69%) selected support levels of six or above. Table 7 displays the level of support of the respondents in the survey.

Table 7 Level of support for JPART publishing methods pieces that do not directly advance theory development

Level of Support	Responses
0 (no support)	14 (5%)
1	15 (5%)
2	23 (8%)
3	15 (5%)
4	9 (3%)
5	10 (4%)
6	34 (12%)
7	38 (14%)
8	37 (13%)
9	18 (7%)
10 (strong support)	62 (23%)

After much deliberation, the editorial team has not decided not to develop a new section now. We do not currently receive enough submissions or see sufficient demand to create a standalone section dedicated to null findings or methods pieces. We also discussed concerns that a new section would take away from the value of mainstream research submissions at JPART. Although we are not creating a new section at JPART, we continue to welcome null findings, research notes, or methods pieces that demonstrate a clear contribution to public administration theory.

Section IV. Reviewer Experiences

This section presents the experiences of JPART reviewers (n=213). The questionnaire asked reviewers about their experiences reviewing and how well the editorial decision aligns with their reviews. These questions were only asked of the 213 individuals who indicated they had reviewed for JPART.

Editorial Decision Making

We asked reviewers to indicate how well they think editorial decisions align with the reviews that they have provided. 190 of the 213 reviewers responded on how editorial decisions align with reviewer feedback. As noted in Table 8, of the 167 reviewers, 88% indicated that they felt that editorial decisions align with their feedback to the editors.

Table 8 Reviewers' Opinion of Editorial Decisions

Editorial decisions often…	Number
Align with reviewers' feedback	167 (88%)
Neutral	14 (7%)
Ignore reviewers' feedback	9 (5%)
	N=190

Reviewer Experiences

Table 9 presents the experiences of JPART reviewers. 96% of reviewers indicate that they agree or strongly agree that they enjoy reviewing for JPART. Nearly all of JPART reviewers (98%) disagreed that reviewing for JPART is a waste of their time.

Table 9 Experiences of JPART Reviewers

	Agree / Strongly agree
I enjoy reviewing for JPART	96%
Being a JPART reviewer is critical to developing scholarship in the field	92%
Reviewing for JPART gives me exposure to cutting edge research in the field	88%
Reviewing for JPART is a waste of my time	2%
	N=213

Reviewers are a critical part of JPART's success, providing important critique, assessment, and developmental feedback to manuscripts we process. It is the effort of thoughtful, timely reviewers that bring a manuscript to the audience – playing a key role in clarifying theoretical concepts, detailing methodological approaches, and guiding authors to a clear articulation of their contribution. We rely on more than 575 reviews each year, making reviewers a critical component of our ability to produce the excellent research you read in the pages of JPART. These results indicate that reviewers believe their input is playing a vital role in the editorial decision process with 92% of reviewer respondents indicating that, in their views, editorial decisions at JPART align with reviewers' feedback. We are committed to ensuring reviewers continue to have a positive experience at JPART, while expanding our reviewer pool.