

## **The 2019 *Public Policy Yearbook*: Tracking a Decade of Trends in Public Policy Research**

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The articles presented in this supplemental issue mark the eleventh edition of the *Policy Studies Journal's Public Policy Yearbook*. This issue includes six retrospective review articles summarizing recent developments in public policy research concerning social policy, environmental policy, and policy theory. Also included is an empirical study of academic public policy networks, accompanied by an exchange about how to measure and understand such networks. We provide a brief description of these articles below. You can also find the main content of the 2019 *Yearbook* online at: [www.psjyearbook.com](http://www.psjyearbook.com).

In addition to the annual publication of retrospective review articles in various policy subfields, a significant portion of our efforts with the *PSJ Yearbook* is providing avenues for readers to make connections with public policy scholars from around the world. The *Public Policy Yearbook* is an international listing of experts in various public policy domains, working on public policy problems all over the globe. Over the last decade, we have collected information from public policy scholars about their fields of study, research focus areas, published works, and contact information.<sup>1</sup> This information is then published as part of a directory of individual profiles on the *Yearbook's* website. The multidisciplinary nature of public policy research can make it challenging to identify the experts studying various policy problems, and the *Yearbook* provides users with an easier way to do so. Our intent is to provide a convenient tool for policy scholars to increase and broaden the visibility of their work, as well as to provide a means to network (and collaborate) with other scholars. By using the website, readers can search for a scholar through a range of search criteria options (a scholar's first or last name, geographic location, institution, or primary research interests). By visiting the *Yearbook's* website, [www.psjyearbook.com](http://www.psjyearbook.com), users can utilize a free web-based interface to easily search for various policy scholars' contact information, as well as up-to-date summaries describing the listed scholars' self-reported descriptions of current and future research ideas and projects.

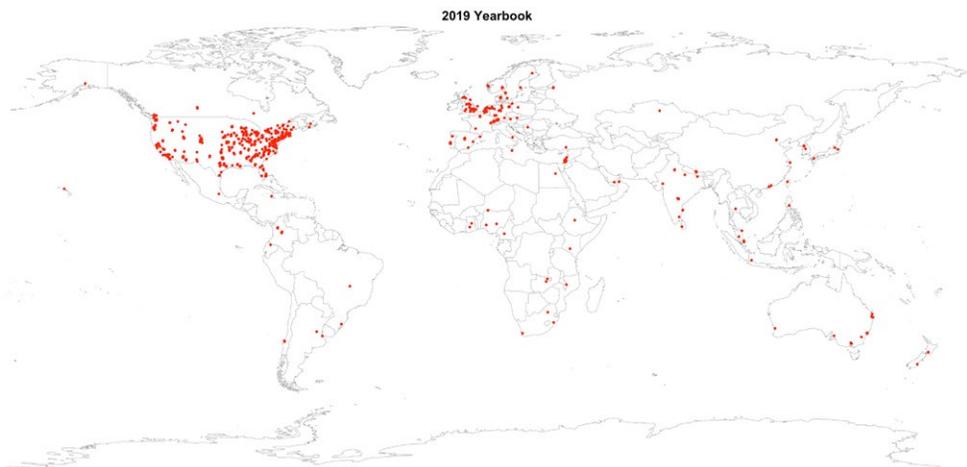
In this introduction, we provide a snapshot of current developments in public policy research. We also briefly introduce the analytical review articles included

in this supplemental issue. For more detailed information on the *Yearbook* website, which now includes over 30 retrospective review and special topic articles, we welcome readers to visit and explore the site. Each year, we also present information on the demographics and research interests of *Yearbook* members and detailed information on the functionality of the *Yearbook* website. An updated version of those discussions is presented below, but we invite readers to look back at previous articles for more detail at how developments identified within the *Yearbook* have evolved over time.

### Characteristics of *Yearbook* Participants and New Developments in Policy Scholarship

As we do each year, in fall 2018, we reached out to the *Yearbook's* current listing of policy scholars, asking each member to update the information published on his or her profile.<sup>2</sup> This annual updating process allows us to verify the accuracy of the listed scholars' contact information and to encourage members to list recently published articles and/or their research in progress. As is evident in Figure 1, our most recent update shows that the *Yearbook* continues to represent a broad cross section of policy scholars from around the world; the 2019 *Yearbook* has 920 members who reside in 52 different countries. Approximately 71 percent of the *Yearbook* members reside in the United States and the remaining 29 percent live in 51 countries around the globe.

The *Yearbook* is inclusive of scholars at a wide variety of institutions globally. Figure 2 shows the distribution of *Yearbook* members working across six continents. While the largest concentrations of *Yearbook* scholars are in North America and Europe, growing numbers are located in Asia, Latin America, Australia and New Zealand, and Africa.



**Figure 1.** The *Yearbook's* Geographic Representation Spans 52 Different Countries.

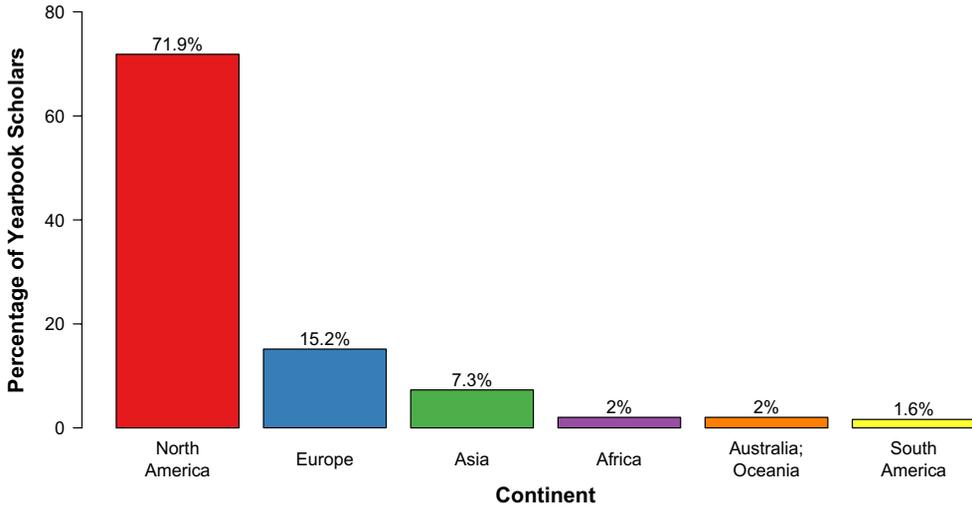


Figure 2. The *Yearbook's* Geographic Representation Spans Six Continents.

For those unfamiliar with the *Yearbook*, each year we use the self-reported content of *Yearbook* scholars' profiles to develop indicators for public policy scholars' evolving research agendas. The following discussion shows recent developments and patterns in the research foci of the 920 scholars included in the 2019 *Yearbook*. We use several descriptive indicators that summarize and characterize scholars' evolving research agendas, including scholars' self-reported descriptions of their "current and future research expectations" and scholars' self-placement within 18 theoretical and substantive focus subfields of public policy.<sup>3</sup>

First, *Yearbook* scholars are asked to provide a paragraph describing their current and ongoing research agendas. When writing this paragraph, scholars may be as brief or as detailed as they choose. By scanning the content in the 2019 current research summary paragraphs, we can illustrate current trends among scholars' work by creating a word cloud populated by frequently used terms (see Figure 3). The word cloud provides a graphical representation of the aggregate foci of scholars' substantive and theoretical work, and provides us with a comparative perspective of the evolution of research agendas. Figure 3 presents the 100 terms that appeared most frequently in the "Current and Future Research Expectations" section of the scholars' profiles and any additional keyword tags that the scholars supplied to describe their research agendas. In 2019, the prominent research interests, characterized by the 10 most frequently appearing terms, include the following: political; environmental; social; governance; management; science; policies; analysis; health; and development. When comparing this word cloud with those from recent years (Jenkins-Smith, Krutz, Carlson, & Weible, 2017, 2018; Jenkins-Smith & Trouset, 2010, 2011; Jenkins-Smith, Trouset, & Weible, 2012, 2013; Trouset, Jenkins-Smith, Carlson, & Weible, 2015, 2016; Trouset, Jenkins-Smith, & Weible, 2014), it appears



history; policy process theory; and public opinion. The 13 substantive focus areas include: comparative public policy; defense and security policy; economic policy; education policy; energy and natural resource policy; environmental policy; governance; health policy; international relations and policy; law and policy; science and technology policy; social policy; and urban public policy.

Figures 4 and 5 show the proportion of scholars indicating one of the theoretical and substantive specializations as their *primary* focus area. As shown in Figure 4, the most prominent theoretical focus area for 2019 *Yearbook* members was policy analysis and evaluation. The second and third most common areas were policy process theory and agenda-setting, adoption, and implementation. As shown in Figure 5, across the substantive focus areas, the largest proportions of 2019 *Yearbook* scholars

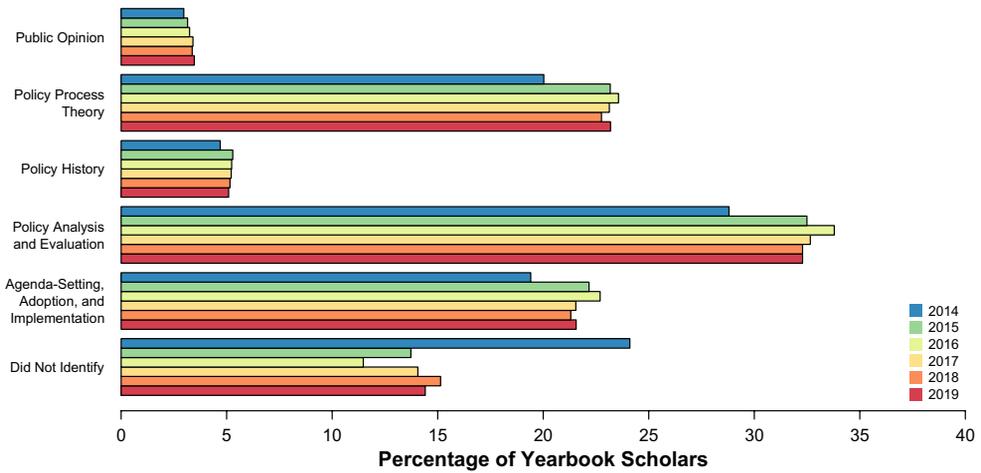


Figure 4. Scholars' Primary Theoretical Focus Area.

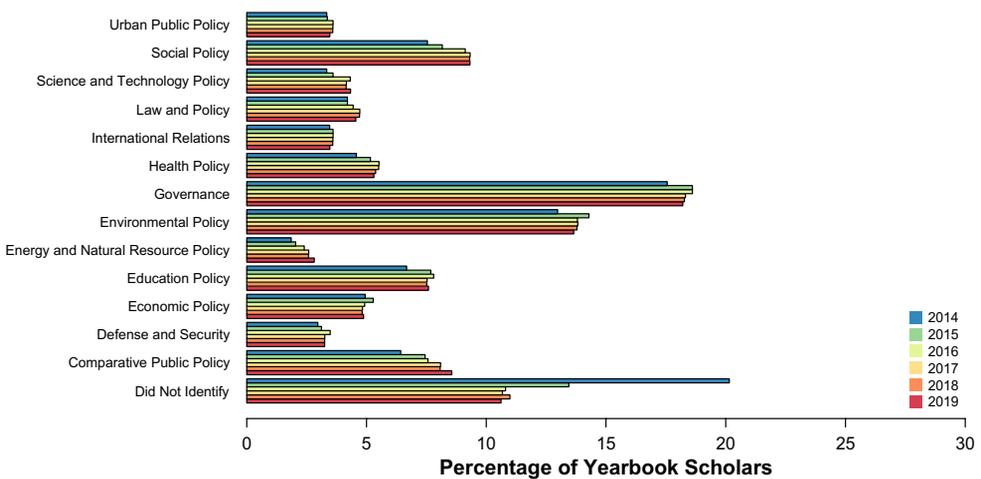


Figure 5. Scholars' Primary Substantive Focus Area.

study issues in governance, environmental policy, and social policy. These have consistently been the most prominent focus areas over the past six years.

### Public Policy Research Retrospective Review Articles

In addition to the *Yearbook's* listing of experts in various public policy domains, each year we also publish a set of peer-reviewed analytical review articles that summarize recent developments in public policy research. We have included six new retrospective review articles in this issue. These review articles offer readers quick access to recent developments in various policy subfields because they can provide both a basic introduction and a coherent current perspective on the field to emerging scholars interested in understanding various policy problems. To write these review articles, each year we solicit recommendations for advanced graduate students working under the guidance of leading public policy scholars. This year, as part of this supplemental issue of the *Policy Studies Journal*, we take a deeper dive into two policy topics. We include three distinctive review articles on central aspects of environmental policy, and two on key themes in social policy. This issue also includes a review of policy subsystems, a central ingredient for several of the leading flavors of public policy theories. To cap the issue off, we included an article—with a rejoinder—that provides an empirical analysis of the nature of the topics and networks that characterize the field of public affairs.

#### *Environmental Policy*

Our first environmental policy review article, authored by Michelle Graff, Dr. Sanya Carley, and Dr. Maureen Pirog (2019), documents and analyzes trends within the environmental policy literature published from 2014 to 2017. The topical focus in the literature is shifting from watershed and ecosystem management to climate change and energy, and it has an increasingly interdisciplinary focus. In addition, the methodological approaches used in recent research have become increasingly diverse, with a trend toward greater reliance on statistical and modeling approaches. The authors point to critical gaps in the environmental policy literature and encourage scholars to address them in future work.

The second environmental policy article, by John Armstrong and Dr. Sheldon Kamieniecki (2019), reviews influential journal articles and books on sustainability policy that were published over the last 10 years (2007 through 2017). They focus on three areas regarding sustainability research: climate change, urban development, and agroecology and food systems. The authors summarize how the literature on sustainability has been shaped by evolving theoretical and empirical issues as well as changes in methodological approaches. They conclude by discussing the implications of these trends for future research and for sustainability policies.

Our third environmental policy paper, co-authored by Dr. Tatyana Ruseva, Megan Foster, Dr. Gwen Arnold, Dr. Saba Siddiki, Dr. Abigail York, Riley Pudney, and Ziqiao Chen (2019), provides an analytical review of the ways environmental

policy scholars have sought to leverage policy process models, theories, and frameworks to address important questions regarding agenda-setting, change factors, and institutional design. They provide a summary of applications of these models, theories, and frameworks to environmental policy issues, along with insightful discussion of the kinds of methodological choices policy scholars have made in conducting their research. They conclude by considering implications of these developments for future research within the environmental governance domain.

### *Social Policy*

Our first social policy article, by Leanne Giordano, Dr. Michael Jones, and Dr. David Rothwell (2019), reviews the public policy literature on economic inequality in wealthy countries, focusing on research published from 2008 to 2018. The authors demonstrate that interest in inequality grew over this time frame. They summarize the change in the focus of the literature and describe the variations in research traditions used. They conclude by describing the implications and the opportunities for future researchers who focus on redistributive social policy.

Our second social policy article, by Cory Maks-Solomon and Dr. Robert Stoker (2019), discusses challenges to the welfare state arising from the recent economic crisis dubbed “the Great Recession.” The review takes the perspective that the Recession affords an opportunity to assess how well—or poorly—social welfare policies served to buffer the least well-off from the effects of the economic hardships and improve macroeconomic trends. After a summary of the array of policy responses, the authors assess whether social programs worked. They give the “social safety net” mixed reviews, identifying some programs that were counter-cyclical and effective in providing transfers to vulnerable groups. They also identify state-level policies (fiscal austerity) that were pro-cyclical, prolonging the effects of the recession and increasing policy fragmentation. Also notable was that social programs failed to meet the needs of immigrant households, with repercussions for the meaning of social citizenship.

Both environmental and social policy involve interactions within and between distinctive policy “subsystems.” Indeed, the papers noted above make clear the increasingly complex ways in which problems span different subsystems, and actions in one problem area affect those in others. Zachary McGee and Dr. Bryan D. Jones (2019) discuss the concept of the policy subsystem as an essential building block for several leading theories of the policy process. They trace the development of the concept and show how the emergence of the modern conception of policy subsystems has shaped much of the current research focus in policy process theory. McGee and Jones then describe how the policymaking environment of recent decades has involved increasing entanglements within and across subsystems. They argue that, in order to bring subsystem theory up to date with these changes, it must be informed by complexity theory. In doing so, McGee and Jones provide a deeper understanding of the subsystems and point to several promising avenues by which complexity theory can advance subsystem theory specifically and policy research more broadly.

We include a paper on the discipline of public affairs, written by Zhiya Zuo, Haifeng Qian, and Kang Zhao. In keeping with the *Yearbook* tradition of reviews,

Dr. Samuel Workman was invited to reflect on the article, and Zuo, Qian, and Kang to reply to Workman. Zuo, Qian, and Zhao (2019) use a text mining and network modeling approach to identify the clusters of related schools in the public affairs field, using as a basis data from the National Research Council's list of 46 PhD-granting public affairs schools. The data consist of the faculty biographies and publications from each listed school. The results of the analysis are intriguing, suggesting that while the "topics" of public affairs are quite diverse and multidisciplinary, networks of similar schools (in terms of hiring, topics, and citations) can readily be observed in the data. "Public policy" schools and "public administration" schools have distinct networks and hire from other schools in the same network. The authors caution that the tendency toward homogenous networks may conflict with the trend toward increasingly interdisciplinary research.

Samuel Workman (2019) expands upon Zuo, Qian, and Zhao's argument, pointing out that public affairs as a field depends—often critically—on politics. Workman argues that a full empirical characterization of public affairs should include policy-oriented political science departments and research institutes as these are essential contributors to understanding both social problems and the collective choice institutions by which these problems are "managed." Qian, Zhao, and Zuo (2019) reply that similar arguments could be made for other fields (e.g., economics or psychology), and that boundaries around "public affairs" will necessarily be somewhat arbitrary. We expect that these discussions will be ongoing.

We hope that scholars continue to utilize *Yearbook's* review articles as efficient and stimulating resources for updating themselves on the current state of public policy research. We invite you to read previously published review articles, which can be found on the *Yearbook's* website, or within previous volumes of the *PSJ*. We also encourage you to recommend outstanding graduate students to author future iterations of analytical reviews.

### Final Remarks

Our goal is to make the *Yearbook* a convenient and accessible tool for scholars, practitioners, students, or laypersons to find the right policy specialists, articles, and networks addressing the full range of public policy questions. The *Yearbook* is intended to be a continuously updated resource for networking and collaboration among scholars, as well an accessible and open platform for scholars to publicize their research accomplishments and active projects. The *Yearbook* is also a valuable resource for students of public policy and public management who need to dig deeper into policy questions and seek ready access to the current state of research in their policy domain of interest.

If you are interested in updating your existing profile, or if you are not currently listed but are interested in becoming a member of the *Yearbook*, we have made several improvements to our system to ease the process of creating a profile. Scholars can access their profiles at any time and make direct changes to their listings. Users can select from two different updating options by visiting the *Yearbook* website at: <http://www.psjyearbook.com/person/update>.

The first option is for scholars who already have a listed profile. On the webpage listed above, under the tab “Current Members,” scholars can submit the email address they currently have on file with the *Yearbook*. Our system will then immediately send a personalized link via email that the scholar can use to access their current profile information. By visiting that personalized link, scholars can submit changes to their profile listings and these changes will be updated on the *Yearbook* website immediately.

The second option is for policy scholars who do not yet have a listed profile, but who would like to become a member of the *Yearbook*. Scholars can list their profile at no charge. By visiting the webpage listed above, scholars can click the tab labeled “Submit Your Information,” or can go directly to our easy-to-use form at: <http://psj-yearbook.com/entry/addme>. Once scholars submit their profile information, our system will await approval by an editor to list that profile on the website.<sup>4</sup> Once that initial profile has been approved, scholars can log in and edit their profiles immediately, as described in the previous paragraph. If you have any questions about this process, we welcome you to contact us at: [psjyearbook@gmail.com](mailto:psjyearbook@gmail.com).

Although scholars are able to access their profiles at any time and make direct changes to their listings, we will continue running an annual fall recruitment and updating campaign. In the annual fall campaign, we send invitations to both current and potential new policy scholars to update their entries in the *Yearbook*. We do this to ensure that the *Yearbook* content stays as up to date as possible. We will continue our efforts to include faculty from public policy and public management schools and departments around the globe, as well as to reach out to graduate students, post docs, and practitioners in public policy that make up the next generation of leaders in public policy research, analysis, and practice. We ask that current members assist in this effort by forwarding our invitations to affiliate policy scholars, practitioners, and graduate students.

Finally, the production and operation of the *Yearbook* could not have been accomplished without the help of many hands. We would like to recognize Matthew Henderson for the design and implementation of the online website, web tools, and data graphics. Additionally, we are thankful for the support and help we receive from the Policy Studies Organization and Wiley-Blackwell. Finally, we would like to thank Dr. Paul Rich, President of the Policy Studies Organization, for his financial support and encouragement for the *Yearbook*.

We hope that you will find the *Yearbook* to be a valuable resource in your work on public policy.

## Notes

1. *Yearbook* membership is free of charge and open to all policy scholars and practitioners worldwide. Since the *Yearbook's* inception in 2009, we have sought to broaden the participation of public policy scholars across disciplines, organizations, and nations. The challenge is that, given the nature of public policy research, the domain of public policy scholars and practitioners is highly varied. Public policy research is multidisciplinary in nature, and policy scholars and practitioners inhabit a wide range of institutional settings (universities, governmental agencies, research labs, nonprofit organizations,

think tanks, and many others). Initially, our invitations were sent to the listed members of the Public Policy Section of the American Political Science Association, as well as to the members of the Policy Studies Organization. We worked with editors of public policy journals to reach policy scholars globally. We have also sent electronic and printed invitations to public policy and public administration departments across the United States and Europe, asking each department to forward the invitation to their public policy faculty members, graduate students, and affiliates. Lastly, our online member updating system allows for current and new members to offer contact information for colleagues and graduate students who should be included. We will continue to undertake an active recruitment and update effort in the fall of each year to be sure our content is up to date and as broadly inclusive as possible.

2. Although we undertake a systematic recruitment effort once a year, it is important to note that scholars can update their profiles or join the *Yearbook* at any time. The website allows scholars to easily access their profiles by submitting their email address on the website profile management portal. The *Yearbook's* website also allows for new members to join, at no cost, through the use of a short online form.
3. When updating their profiles, scholars are asked to check off as many categories as are applicable to describe their research agendas.
4. This initial approval is necessary to avoid publishing "spam."

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