23. Constructive ending: how to finalize the conclusion and discussion of a research project and a journal article

Alexey G. Barabashev

INTRODUCTION

Research projects are mostly resolved within their publication texts, in other words, the specific type of research project is reflected in the structure of texts, and every author that seeks to be published and recognized by peers and global audiences has to follow standardized technical/structural patterns as applicable to the publication type/category such as research articles, and research books (including independent book chapters).

The textbooks and guides in public administration and public policy describe how to make research projects in general (Bell and Waters, 2018), how to arrange the methods of research (Yang and Miller, 2008), how to organize research papers (Winkler and McCuen-Metherell, 2011; Nair and Nair, 2014), and how to produce research articles for academic journals (Day, 2013; Murray, 2013). Leading journals in the area of public administration[1] have also produced guidelines for authors, which contain not only general submission requirements and legal requirements but also the structural requirements for research articles.[2]

Some of the leading journals just inform prospective authors about prevailing directions of the journal's research scope, and term it as part of the structural requirements in a 'soft form'. This is done by informing potential authors about the mission of the journal, or about its priorities. An example is the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* (JPART) which announces the journal's scope on its website: "JPART serves as a bridge between public administration and public management scholarship on the one hand and public policy studies on the other. Its multidisciplinary aim is to advance the organizational, administrative, and policy sciences as they apply to government and governance. The journal is committed to diverse and rigorous scholarship and serves as an outlet for the best conceptual and theory-based empirical work in the field" (JPART, announcements, 2019). Naturally, every potential contributor for the JPART recognizes this information as an invitation to shape the structure of the article around theoretic issues founded on evidence and to show implications of theoretically valuable results in the practice of governance.

But some of the journals go much further and make strict recommendations about the structural elements of articles. Such structural recommendations can be provided by journals as specified, in an 'instructive form'. An example is the journal *Public Administration Review* (PAR), which states that the "research syntheses should apply a rigorous and critical assessment of a body of theory and empirical research, articulating what is known about a phenomenon and ways to advance research about the topic under review. Research syntheses should identify significant variables and effect sizes, a systematic and reproducible search strategy, and a clear framework for studies included in the larger analysis. Meta-analyses that statisti-

cally combine studies to determine an overall effect or effect size are encouraged" (PAR, For authors, 2019). It means for potential contributors, that the essential structural elements of the articles should be concentrated on reviewing the theory applied and on the description of research strategy and methods, especially on meta-analysis using statistical instruments.

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

The final segment of the research article is the *conclusion and discussion* sections. I discuss the problem, and proffer suggestions on how to shape these sections better, in a more constructive way, i.e., how to present these sections of the article, and of the research project accordingly.

The practice with most of the leading journals in Public Administration is to give authors special recommendations on how to shape the final segment of their articles. An example of detailed recommendations for the final segment of a research article is provided by *The NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* (NISPAcee Journal hereafter), published by The Networks of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe. The requirements for the discussion/conclusion sections of the article are presented here as follows: "This section presents the researcher's findings and suggestions, if applicable. It should not restate information present in the core section, but may (depending on the type of paper): (i) point out any exceptions or lack of correlation; (ii) define unresolved issues; (iii) show how the results and interpretations agree (or contrast) with previously published work; (iv) discuss the theoretical implications of the work, and any possible practical applications; and (v) summarize the evidence for each conclusion. The discussion section should end with a short summary or conclusion regarding the significance of the work" (The NISPAcee Journal, 2016, p. 172). Also, general recommendations for arranging the conclusion and discussion sections are presented in some research methods textbooks relating to research projects implementation (REPESEA,[3] 2019, pp. 29–32; Barabashev and Klimova, 2018, pp. 30–31, 80–85; Staronova, 2010; Bailey, 2011, pp. 88–89; etc.). According to these recommendations, certain elements could be included in the final segment of the research article. The following points below outline these elements:

- A statement showing how the aims of the article were achieved (Bailey, 2011). Connect the results with the problem that was described at the beginning of the article (Barabashev and Klimova, 2018). Relate the results to questions that were set out in the introduction (REPESEA, 2019). To use the "Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion (IMRaD)" model for a better division of the discussion from other segments of the research article (Staronova, 2010).
- A quotation that appears to sum up the work (Bailey, 2011). Support each conclusion with adequate evidence (REPESEA, 2019).
- A short review of the main points of the study (Bailey, 2011). The style of the conclusion should be lapidary (Barabashev and Klimova, 2018) and not repeat what has already been said (REPESEA, 2019). It should not repeat an already proven hypothesis, but should describe its meaning using other words (Barabashev and Klimova, 2018). Deal with only the results reported in the study (REPESEA, 2019).
- The limitations of the study (Bailey, 2011). The weakest points of the study, including data (REPESEA, 2019).

Table 23.1 Presence of 'conclusion and discussion' in JPART articles, 2017–2018

Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	**Total number of research articles**	**Number of research articles with conclusion and/or discussion**	**Number of research articles only with conclusion**	**Number of research articles only with discussion**	**Number of research articles with conclusion and discussion (combined, or separate)**
2017 – Issue 1	13	13	1	1	11
2017 – Issue 2	9	9	1	4	4
2017 – Issue 3	9	9	3	2	4
2017 – Issue 4	10	10	0	1	9
2018 – Issue 1	9	9	2	4	3
2018 – Issue 2	8	8	3	0	5
2018 – Issue 3	7	7	3	2	2
2018 – Issue 4	10	10	4	2	4

Source: Data collected by author.

- Comparison with results of other similar studies (Bailey, 2011). Show how the results and interpretations agree, or contrast, with the current knowledge on the subject, i.e., compare with previously published work (REPESEA, 2019). To mark the difference in methods from those used in other sources (Barabashev and Klimova, 2018).
- Indicate the significance of the results (REPESEA, 2019).
- Explain the theoretical background of the observed results (REPESEA, 2019).
- A discussion should state well-articulated outcomes of the study and be based on the findings reported in the paper briefly suggesting future lines of research in the area (REPESEA, 2019). A discussion of the implications of the research is welcomed (Bailey, 2011). One should pay attention to external (social and cultural conditions) outcomes, and evaluate their influence on the research outcomes (Barabashev and Klimova, 2018).
- Some suggestions for future research should be presented (Bailey, 2011). Suggest future research that is planned or needs to be conducted following this research (REPESEA, 2019). Raise new questions and use some specific methods for the generation of new ideas for future research based on already achieved results (Barabashev and Klimova, 2018).

It is possible to say that the requirement for authors to prepare the *conclusion and discussion* sections in the final segment of their research article is an 'ultimate, though sometimes unwritten, rule' that is outlined in methodic texts and supported by leading journals in the area of Public Administration. The majority of authors are following this rule, for instance based on the specifications of the JPART journal, the structural recommendations for research articles is provided by JPART in a 'soft form', however almost all authors prefer to write the conclusions and the discussions as separate sections (or elements) in their articles.

Table 23.1 shows that the presence of a *discussion and conclusion* is 'common ground' for authors of JPART. The explanation of this phenomenon is quite simple: to highlight the essence of results, to outline the future research and to mark new ideas and implications is significant for attracting the interest of readers and for recruiting new colleagues into the area of research. The success or failure of a research project, and its recognition by the reader(s), depends on the audience's clear understanding of the results and prospects for future research. That is why, despite the presence (or absence) of journal guidelines/instructions for authors

on how to shape the conclusion or format discussions, it is vital for researchers to know the set of appropriate tools and to be aware of how to use these tools in the preparation of the final segment of the article. Therefore authors working towards publishing articles in academic research journals, which are more demanding and rigorous compared to monographs or collective books, should know *what kind of methods, procedures and styles of writing can be used for description of results and, moreover, how to discuss the results and the modus of their future use*.[4]

Explanations for some fundamental characteristics of the final segment of research articles, based on examples, are presented below. Frequently asked questions are explained, such as: (1) What is the difference between *conclusion* and *discussion* in the final segment of an article? (2) What types of new ideas and hypotheses for future research can be presented and how can this be presented in the *discussion* section? Finally, recommendations (variants) of shaping the final segment of a research article are proposed.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'CONCLUSION' AND 'DISCUSSION' IN THE FINAL SEGMENT OF A RESEARCH ARTICLE

The focal point of the conclusion and discussion in research articles is to formulate the outcomes of the research/study and to build on such outcomes possible avenues for future research. More broadly, the conclusion and discussion as sections of the final segment of a research article give readers a better understanding of the real achievements and provide insight to the author's views and postulations. Without the conclusion and discussion about the results the articles (and research projects) are not complete.

But what is the difference between the conclusion and discussion sections of research articles? Let us take as an example the research articles with different combinations of conclusion and discussion.[5]

The articles with a conclusion but without a discussion are concentrated mostly on general description, such as what was done in the article, including a representation of the focus of research in broad retrospective, a summary of the findings and their meaning, and the general outlines of the article. Some methodological textbooks propose that the "Conclusions section should state well-articulated outcomes of the study and based on the findings reported in the paper briefly suggest *future lines* [italics added] of research in the area" (REPESEA, 2019, p. 28), but it is quite a rare strategy: mostly the prospects for future research are concentrated in the discussion section. As an example of the content of a conclusion, let's look at the work by Pierre, Røiseland, Peters, and Gustavsen (2017) titled "Comparing Local Politicians' and Bureaucrats' Assessment of Democratic Participation". In the conclusion section the authors highlight that the analysis of public management reform from the positions of interactions between public service and its clients is focused on changes in these interactions influenced by internal markets and customer choice models (Pierre et al., 2017, p. 669). The goal of their research is "to investigate how elected officials and civil servants assess conventional and emergent channels of citizens' influence on their formal roles as decision-makers and service providers" (Pierre et al., 2017, p. 670). The findings show that local politicians and bureaucrats diverge in their attitudes: "bureaucrats do submit to the role as targets for citizen participation, while politicians place more significance in elections" (Pierre et al., 2017, p. 670). Also, the highly regulated policy sectors offer fewer opportunities for citizens' input compared to less

regulated and more decentralized policy sectors (Pierre et al., 2017, p. 670). The "institutional factors matter a great deal in shaping the goals and means of local public management reform" (Pierre et al., 2017, p. 671). The opposition of citizens and customers is the source of divergent opinions by politicians and bureaucrats regarding their role and authority in influencing the local population in governance. Similarly, in the conclusion of this article just a few words mention any future research and nothing is said about possible new research questions and hypotheses. To summarize, the authors in the conclusion section have solved the task by providing outlines of the results and do not repeat what has already been covered in the previous sections of the research paper.

One more example of an article with a concise and extremely 'energetic' conclusion is the study by Hammershmid, Van de Walle, Andrews, and Mostafa (2018) titled "New Public Management Reforms in Europe and Their Effects" which provides insight to the relationship between New Public Management (NPM) reforms and public service performance in the EU. In the conclusion section of the article, the authors point out that the managerial administrative reforms are more effective in the improvement of public service delivery than structural reforms of governments (Hammershmid et al., 2018, p. 414).

The articles with a conclusion concentrated on implications are different from the articles with just conclusions. Here the accent is more on questions for future research, but not on positive ideas of what to do. An example is the article by Brandsen, Trommel, and Verschuere (2017) titled "The State and the Reconstruction of Civil Society", which looks at the interaction of state and civil society (civil society tries to take part in governance, or the state would like civil society to take part). In this paper, the questions in the conclusion that are concentrated on the implications section of the article are focused on the prospects of exploring the complex relationship between governmental and civil society organizations as it currently unfolds, and "whether new socio-political communities are emerging that connect the institutional traditions of the national and local welfare systems to newly developing initiatives at the local level" (Brandsen et al., 2017, p. 689). However, these look more like general questions than clearly shaped points for future research within the context of the study.

The articles with a discussion without a conclusion also often start with a description of the results in a broad socio-cultural and theoretic context. The next step is usually focused on future research and may include comparisons with research strategies presented in 'competing' research projects/articles, either as a niche area of research specialization (within the subject of the current research), or as a broad topic for future implications. Finally, this style is quite similar to the articles with a conclusion concentrated on implications, and may function as the bridge between the articles with conclusions in the form of implications and articles with discussions about future research.

The article by Yang and Rutgers (2017) titled "Against the Rule of Man" provides a good example of the conclusion aimed at possible future external implications. The main purpose of the article is to highlight the difference between Western and Confucian traditions of good administration. The authors found that the difference between both traditions lies in the orientation on the "rule of law" tradition in Western culture of governance vs. orientation on "rule of morality" in the Chinese Confucian administrative tradition. This, as the authors specially accent, contests the common belief that the traditional "rule of law" contradicts the traditional "rule of man". Both traditions oppose the rule of man (Yang and Rutgers, 2017, p. 789). The discussion section of this article starts from the findings It questions the opposition of the traditions "rule of law" and "rule of man". This is not the case for the Western and Confucian

traditions of good governance, but it fits the differences between "rule of law" vs. "rule of morality' (difference in rule *of* law and rule *by* law). Subsequently, the authors move to the consequences of this result, or discussion, formulating a set of ideas and questions for future research: to clarify the notion of "rule of law" that "lacks adequate reflection" as "embedded in culture and tradition", to understand in this context the China anomaly, why it has a growing economy despite traditions of governance different from Western countries (Yang and Rutgers, 2017, p. 800), and how both traditions can be joined as complementary (Yang and Rutgers, 2017, p. 801) in the creation of responsive and trusted governance.

The articles with an internally oriented discussion section, focused on future perspectives of the same research topic, are comparatively few, because the discussion about results proliferation is complicated and less regulated by editorial boards. To illustrate this issue, let us review an article with strong research potential for future exploration such as "What Makes Public Sector Innovations Survive?" by Van Acker and Bouckaert (2018). The article ends with a compounded conclusion and discussion section, but actually accents the discussion on how to continue research in the subject area. The paper internalizes the target subject area for future research. I would like to note that blending the conclusion and discussion shows that the principles of compounding discussion based on proposals for internal exploration of the research subject is not yet properly fixed. At the end of this article, the authors propose that future studies use "longitudinal research design and with regards to qualitative research designs the focus could be put on developing narratives surrounding the 'lives' of innovations, from crib to casket" (Van Acker and Bouckaert, 2018, p. 265). The authors describe a sequence of questions about "what happens to public sector innovations after their initiation, complexity and radicalness of the innovation, combined with the idea of sunk costs". Do national public sector innovation cultures exist? Are they linked to administrative traditions? (Van Acker and Bouckaert, 2018, p. 265). The combination of future questions for exploration and of proposed methods of research can be recognized as one of the key features of internally oriented discussion sections.

From the descriptions of the conclusion and discussion sections above, it is essential to point out that the conclusion section of research articles is more or less standardized, and there is no strong division of systemic content in the conclusion. The conclusion aimed at implications is a bridge to discussion, and implications can be recognized both as already discovered input and as the subject for future investigations (aimed at externals).

The situation with 'discussion' is quite different. It provides much more room for creative extension of the research and its future continuation. In some cases, future directions of research are converted into new research questions and proposals of how to re-evaluate the comparative significance of already well-known phenomena within the framework of socio-cultural and economic externals.

In summary, it is unclear how to methodically structure the discussion section of research articles oriented on internal issues (new questions, ideas, methods, and hypotheses about the subject of research) (see Figure 23.1).

Regarding acceptable styles of conclusion and discussion writing, I would like to note that the style of conclusion is mostly a concise paraphrase. The description of the results is usually concentrated on more precise formulations and/or implications of the study results. The author(s') goal therefore is to highlight the essence of the results, show the difference between the study results and the initial hypothesis, and to highlight the practical and theoretic

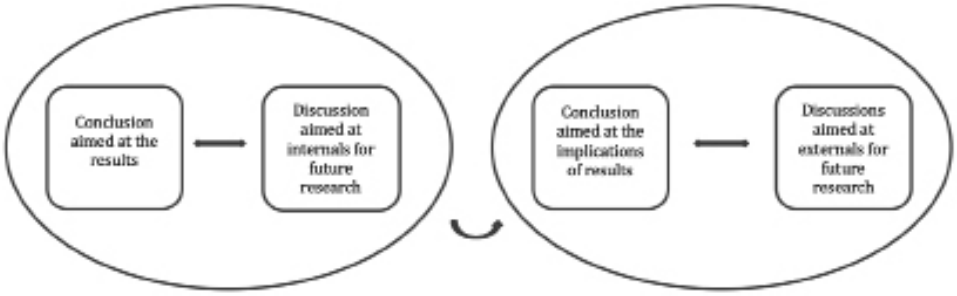

Figure 23.1 From conclusion to discussion section of research article

components of the results. Unlike conclusions, the style of discussions tends to be great in text length and the reasoning in the discussion section of the articles is very detailed.

TYPES OF NEWLY GENERATED IDEAS AND HYPOTHESES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH WITHIN THE DISCUSSION SECTION OF RESEARCH ARTICLES

The discussion section of research articles is often a complicated and challenging enterprise for authors. It should be concentrated essentially on highlighting future research perspectives and ideas. Despite the widespread form of the discussion that concentrates on the comparison of the study results with previous research,[6] the most creative aspect of the discussion is the generation of new ideas, hypotheses, methods of data testing and analysis, etc. The discussion about the results should lead the audience towards a new level of understanding, how to move ahead and to continue the path that was traced and explored in the already produced research. If there are no future points of interest (and research curiosity) for future endeavours, then the results achieved would be perceived as a dead-end, and will not be attractive intellectually.

The presentation of new ideas for future research consideration within the discussion section of article requires broad thinking and imagination. For 'concluding' ideas, as a rule, it is impossible to just make a straight generalization of what was previously achieved. New promising ideas should be put forward, but they are not yet justified, i.e., are not fully compatible with the preceding results. Moreover, the specificity of public administration should take into account that not every possible new idea, even if logically clear and attractive by its simplicity and persuasiveness, is suitable to be mentioned in the discussion section. Ideas should be practically meaningful, 'appropriated' for implication, because the public administration is a practice-oriented research area that provides the analytics for practitioners.

To generate new ideas on the basis of previously valid ones, it is entirely possible to apply the *technology of proliferation* (the maximum increase in the variety of hypotheses and theories). In the context of the philosophy and methodology of science, this technology was formulated by philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend (2010). In a broad sense, proliferation is the principle or the methodology of 'counter-inductive hypotheses generation' (not straight generalization) and it promotes an increase in the variety of ideas and theories. Indeed, new ideas do not result directly from previously substantiated ones, they are in complex com-

plementary relations with them, thereby limiting or denying the applicability of previously obtained results in certain circumstances. It is not necessary to follow Feyerabend's concept of 'epistemological anarchism' in full, including recognizing the principle of 'anything goes' calling to multiply the increasingly different theories incompatible with existing and recognized theories, as well as the requirements for generating ideas directly contradicting previously confirmed theories. For our purposes, it suffices to assume that the new ideas *do not* directly (inductively) *follow* from the preceding results. New concepts, data, sources, and methods are required to justify each of the following new ideas.

To describe the technology of proliferation broadly, its principles can be assumed as advice that new proliferated ideas should be essentially related (but not following formally) with already confirmed ideas (results). How the technology of proliferation by counter-induction works in the area of public administration research is an open question; just some fragmentary examples of its usage exist. Counter-induction technologically (in its procedural aspects) is not elaborated properly for public administration research. Ideas proliferation in the discussion section of research articles in the area of public administration should be fixed, based on the methodological foundations.

The technology of proliferation of new ideas in the discussion section can be observed from different angles. The simplest way of proliferation is to look for a new phenomenon in some public administration subject field which is 'similar' to an initial phenomenon related to the formulation of the author's results. In another form of proliferation, when the studied phenomenon remains the same, the new idea (for a new phenomenon or on the basis of the previous results) can be repeated, modified, or presented as differing from the original research results proven by the current subject of research. For example, if it is shown that some mechanisms of state regulation in crisis conditions have an unstable character, then it is possible to assume that some other related process (i.e., the same, or opposite) will exist for mechanisms of the control of government procurement, for estimates of efficiency of public authorities, for mechanisms of non-material motivation of public servants, for mechanisms of the investment attractiveness of regions, for mechanisms of the decentralization of financial security of public institutions, etc.

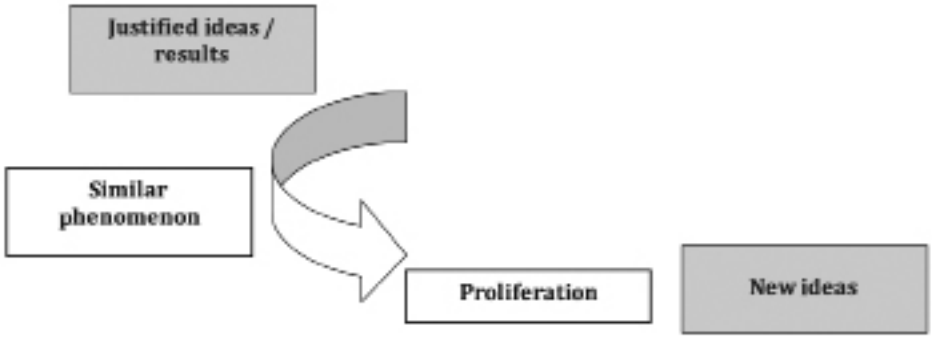

Figure 23.2 Proliferation of ideas in the discussion section of a research article

It is also possible to proliferate the chosen method of justification (testing) of already proven results (i.e., instead of the initial method the opposite is presented), with a natural restriction on a sufficient volume of data (or based on the availability), of existing good cases, of the level of the theoretical comprehension of a new phenomenon (what is the level of development of the theory, whether its principles are developed and whether the volume of research carrying out a theoretical discourse is considerable).

Graphically, it is possible to present the transition from already proven ideas to newly proliferated ideas as shown in Figure 23.2.

I would like to present here the variety of counter-inductive procedures that are capable of closing this gap. The types of new ideas can be classified by their subject, by analogy of the ideas despite their subjects, by the level of practical needs for idea implication, by the attribution of the ideas to authors, etc. Also, despite the types of ideas, at least four kinds of procedures for idea proliferation can be identified within the public administration sphere:

1. Conceptual proliferation, to change the concepts of research, to replace the used notions.
2 Subject proliferation, to change the subjects of research, related to their procedural nature (administrative procedures as subjects).
3. Proliferation of hypotheses of research, proposals to add new data and to extend, or to organize different, testing for hypotheses.
4. Visual graphics proliferation, based on the technology of source mapping (it is, I guess, the most challenging kind of proliferation).

Below all four kinds of procedures will be described.

1. How to Carry Out Conceptual Proliferation in The Research Field of Public Administration

Conceptual proliferation is based on a search for combinations of concepts/words that alternatively describe the author's results. Any researcher has an intuition that 'tells' which combinations of concepts make sense, and maybe are even true, which are meaningless, and which make sense, but are highly likely to be false.

I will show how it is possible to produce the conceptual proliferation of results, based on examples. Two articles, published in the journal *Review of Public Personnel Administration* that is ranked Q1 in Scopus (3.12 in CiteScore), will be analysed. The selection of the journal and articles is done taking into account that this journal has a wide audience and impact on researchers in the field of public administration. Also, the popularity of its subjects (public service motivation, and ethical leadership) and the possibility to replace the results with alternate notions/concepts is essential for the purposes of realizing conceptual proliferation.

The article by Jensen, Andersen, and Holten (2019), "Explaining a Dark Side", discusses the intermediate effects of public service motivation (PSM) on presenteeism as the intention of public employees to go to work despite their illness. The main result of their research is that PSM (a Danish case was explored) has a positive mediation effect for high-PSM employers on their absenteeism because of more stress, burnouts, and finally leads to sickness and absenteeism. It is one of the "dark sides" of PSM (Jensen et al., 2019, p. 501). "PSM as determinant of over-commitment and self-sacrifice can reduce individual health for employees with demanding job profiles, and it is no variations in national context despite the differences of the organ-

izations that still show similar patterns" (Jensen et al., 2019, p. 502). The authors propose that future research "will add to this aspect of the external validity" (Jensen et al., 2019, p. 502).

We can see that the proliferation that is based on the extension of the thesaurus involves future research into the notions of professional burnout and stress, of organizational behaviour, of long-term sickness and absence. Therefore, some new counter-inductive research questions can be formulated by using these notions. Some examples are: how to measure the differences between public sector organizations in their management willingness to 'exploit' the employees with high level of PSM and the readiness of employees to go to work despite their illness? How is employee burnout affected by length of PSM in the public sector?

The second article from the same journal by Belle and Cantarelli (2019), "Do Ethical Leadership, Visibility, External Regulation, and Prosocial Impact Affect Unethical Behavior?", discusses the issue of the influence of ethical leadership in public organizations, visibility, external regulation and prosocial impact on the dishonest behaviour of public sector workers. Using a laboratory experiment with students and a field experiment with public sector workers (Italian case), the authors concluded that ethical leadership and visibility did not affect ethical preferences (Belle and Cantarelli, 2019, pp. 364–365). On the contrary, "the chance to make a positive difference rather than no difference in the lives of other affected public sector workers' preferences by increasing the likelihood that they would engage in unethical conduct on the job" (Belle and Cantarelli, 2019, p. 366). The authors call for the continuation of the research of the causal mechanisms that drive dishonesty in public organizations (Belle and Cantarelli, 2019, p. 366) by using the experimental tools presented in their methodology (Belle and Cantarelli, 2019, p. 365).

Proliferation by using new thesaurus/notions here can be formulated as the generation of new research questions; to give just a few examples: Is the unethical behaviour of public sector workers influencing ethical leadership of management? Does leadership visibility have an impact on the ethical behaviour of leaders in public organizations? How is the initial PSM of new employees transformed by unethical leadership in the process of their adaptation in organizations (behavioural changes)?

Supposedly, stronger conceptual proliferation requires one not to construct new research questions using additional notions/thesaurus, but to conduct new hypotheses based on usage of the additional thesaurus.

2. How to Realize the Subject Proliferation in the Field of Public Administration

The technology of subject proliferation of research results/ideas is based on replacing the subject of research, while maintaining the content of the results. A new phenomenon is sought in some (not necessarily the original) subject field of public administration, which 'looks like' the subject field for the original phenomenon, with respect to which the author's research result was formulated. The constructed idea for the new phenomenon can repeat or completely deny the research result for the original phenomenon. Thus, in the discussion section it is possible to propose (as a future direction of research) an extension of the result on new subjects in another field of public administration.

Two examples are taken from the 2019 issue of NIISPAcee Journal which is the leading journal in the area of public administration in Central and Eastern Europe, published by the Network of Schools and Institutes of Public Administration in this region. Both examples/

articles have a 'regional flavour' and deal with subjects that are specifically shaped in NISPA countries.

In an article by Špaček (2019), "Social Media Use in Public Administration", devoted to the usage of Facebook by Czech regions, the author shows that the regions used Facebook (all regions except one have official pages) "mostly for distribution of ex-post information … in a traditional, rather than a more innovative way", while calls for participation are rare (Špaček, 2019, p. 214). For future research, the author proposes to extend its subject and to explore social uses of Facebook regional pages, stakeholder perspectives, and its perception by citizens, politicians, and administrators. This is a classic example of research subject proliferation.

Another article by Suleimenova, Kapoguzov, Kabizhan, and Kadyrova (2019), "Performance Evaluation of the Government Agencies of Kazakhstan", explores the impact of the performance evaluation of government agencies in Kazakhstan on the effectiveness of their work. The surveys and in-depth interviews with civil servants (insiders) and with representatives of NGOs (outsiders) are used as the data for analysis. The results of research indicate "that the changes of the government agencies activities are tracked by both insiders and outsiders" (Suleimenova et al., 2019, p. 189), but it starts from "a short-term 'shock' in government agencies. The essence of the shock was that the introduction of new rules led to a change in the tasks and responsibilities of civil servants" (Suleimenova et al., 2019, p. 190). After that, the passive adaptation of employees towards the changes commences. The evaluation results are discussed in a "cascading way": from top management to middle, from middle managers to low level, from line managers to the staff (Suleimenova et al., 2019, p. 189). This sort of adaptation shows the limits of "embedding NPM tools into the administrative reforms through a 'top down approach' in emerging economies" (Suleimenova et al., 2019, p. 191). For future research, the authors recommend subject proliferation: "to explore organizational and managerial culture" and "parameters of organizational changes caused by the use of tools of new paradigms", "special mechanisms of evaluation usage, shaping the motivation of civil servants … which depends on patterns of organizational culture of concrete state bodies", "introduction of an evaluation system for self-learning organizations", "existing design of the assessment system" for the purposes of evaluation outcomes distribution among employees (Suleimenova et al., 2019, pp. 191–192).

3. How to Use Proliferation of Methods in the Field of Public Administration

It is possible to proliferate the chosen method of research (testing hypothesis by data, by cases, by systemic reasoning, etc.). To do this, it is necessary to 'replace' the initial method with another method, leaving the content of the hypothesis unchanged. Of course, one should take into account the natural limitations within the area of research and use some potentially 'attractive' research method, as there could be insufficient data (or the possibilities of obtaining them), or situations where study cases are unavailable (information is closed), or there is insufficient theoretic ground for systemic reasoning, etc.

At least three kinds of methods, differing from each other (verification, falsification, and systemic), can be used to obtain results. Strictly speaking, the result that is already proved/tested by some method can be transformed into at least three new results that use 'unoccupied' methods, since the method of testing is part of the result.

For example, take the journal *Public Administration Issues* (Scopus, Q3) which represents a broad spectrum of public administration research with accents on specific findings and approaches that differ from internationally prevailing approaches and theories. In the article by Costa, Ramos, and Moro (2019), "Anticipating Next Public Administration Employee's Absence Duration", the result, including the method of its testing, based on data analysis from 17,600 public administration employees which was collected from seven Portuguese public databases concerning employee absences occurring in 2016, was justified. Public administration employee absenteeism (taking into account the previous period of national economic stagnation and recession) distributed according to absence characteristics, as: illness, no vacations for a long time, ambulatory care, fewer working hours per day, higher disability, no absences for a long period, absent regularly, older workers, etc. The findings show in some moments contradicting results from sources representing countries with other economic and social conditions and from existing stereotypes. Among them: that "employees who do not go on vacation for an extended period tend to be absent less than others" (Costa et al., 2019, p. 33), and that the absence duration of workers with disabilities is shorter than the period of a non-disabled worker's absence (Costa et al., 2019, p. 33).

For future research, the authors propose method proliferation which involves new research to "obtain a dataset with wider variety of absence records … add more years to the dataset in order to update the data and refine the model … cross these findings with similar from other countries to understand the national differences in terms of absenteeism … cross absenteeism in the private sector with the results obtained in this article" (Costa et al., 2019, p. 35).

4. How to Apply the Source Mapping Technology to Proliferate Results in the Field of Public Administration

Using the system of source mapping against research results (Novak and Cañas, 2006), some authors explore the visual (graphical) technology that distributes the sources in Descartes' system of coordinates, first quadrant. The vertical axis of the first quadrant in *the source mapping scheme* presents the level of proximity or remoteness of the results to the sources from the author's hypothesis. The horizontal axis shows the distribution of methods used for hypothesis testing in the sources according to clusters of methods: verification (statistics, correlations based on statistics, mathematical models based on correlations), falsification (cases, chains of cases), systemic (testing of hypothesis as followed from already tested results, deductive approach), and programmatic (drift of the initial author's hypothesis using the channels of positive and negative heuristics). Some areas are empty: there are no sources in them (they do not use methods from the areas for hypothesis testing, and/or do not defend the hypothesis that potentially can be located in the empty areas).

During a practical course for master's degree students in public administration (class of 2017–2018) a task was assigned which concentrated on the preparation of correctly structured research articles,[7] and the results of conducting source mapping proliferation was modelled by the students. An example of research done on such kind of source mapping proliferation is presented in the work by Lituchii (2017) where the author produced the distribution of the sources using the source mapping scheme. The hypothesis for testing was: HR managers in public organizations mostly actively interfere in conflict between managers and employees, but do not just fulfil the technical assistance functions. Sources (20 sources in the list of research references) were indicated by numbers from 1 to 20 (see Figure 23.3).

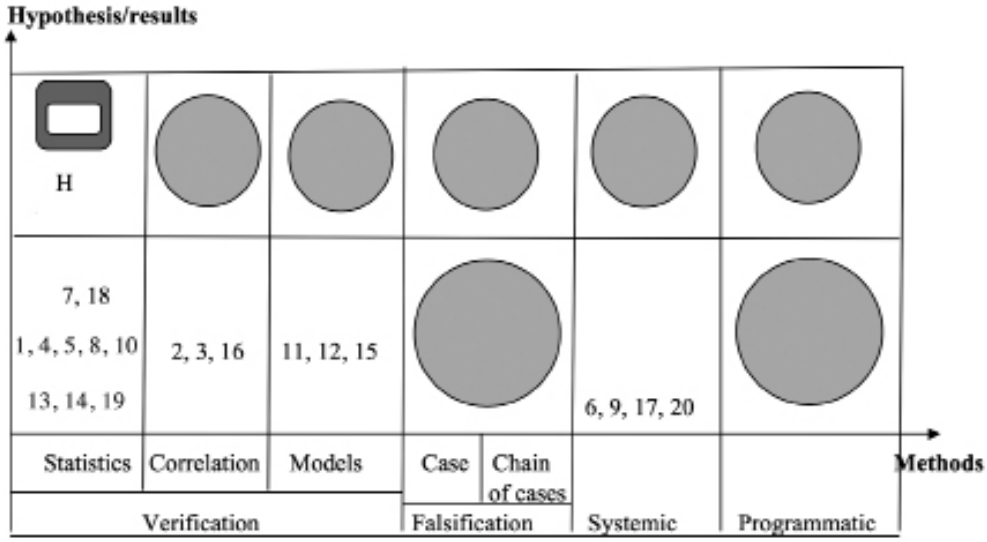

Figure 23.3 Mapping technology based on distribution of sources

The 'unoccupied' areas of the hypothesis of research (and the author's result) are marked by empty circles. It is possible, as one can see, to formulate new hypotheses that may fill out these empty spaces. For example: "To test by chain of cases, if HR specialists in state organizations have a limited influence on the conflict between the leader and the subordinate" (circle on the bottom centre), or: "A systemic approach based on the theory of conflict resolutions would show that personnel management specialists in state organizations have a decisive influence on conflicts between the leader and the subordinate" (upper second from right circle). Filling in visual lacunae is a good way of generating new ideas for further research, with a correction for the features of public administration, which require the applicability of the results.

SUMMARIZING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHAPING THE FINAL SEGMENT OF RESEARCH ARTICLES

The examples discussed have shown that both final sections (conclusion and discussion) of research articles have a lot in common in their goals and are interrelated; they have differences that are reflective of their functions. That is why the conclusion and discussion can be combined in short articles and/or in the articles for journals that are not intentionally focused on achieving the highest quartile of international citation indexes. Otherwise, for the highest quartile journals it is useful to divide the conclusion and discussion sections for adequate representation of the research outcomes for readers.

In the conclusion, it is better to describe the results without repetition of the same formula, to outline the results in a broad context, highlighting the strongest and weakest points. To make the conclusion more attractive for practitioners and to produce a bridge from the con-

clusion to the discussion, it is useful to include in the conclusion already existing or possible practical implications or its policy outcomes.

In the case of a disjointed conclusion and discussion, it is more natural to place the conclusion before the discussion, because it provides room for the author to comment on the prospect of future research and this is more convenient following the presentation and evaluation of the results.

It is fruitful to include external outlines for future research in the discussion section, for instance: how and what to explore within the subject of research and proposed methods for exploration in other social and cultural conditions. Most inspiring for audiences is the use of proliferation instruments in the discussion section which helps in generating new ideas for further research, including counter-inductive hypotheses about the subject of research, alternative methods of justification/testing the same hypothesis, other thesaurus words for expressing the content of research, and visual proliferation schemes.

OUTLINES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH WHEN STRUCTURING THE FINAL SEGMENT OF A RESEARCH/PROJECT ARTICLE

Future perspectives for the exploration of the theme and how to better shape the final segment of a research or project article, in my opinion, could concentrate on the difference in approach within various proposals either related to the scope of study or within related proposals of other sources, especially in the exploration of technologies with the internal proliferation of the results (ideas, methods, thesaurus, visual constructions, etc.). Also, more data should be taken into consideration, such as: data that represents the construction of the final segment of research articles published within the past year in leading academic journals in the field of public administration (not just from JPART); data representing the final segment of articles published in other leading academic journals that provide inter-disciplinary research that may be applicable or related to the field of public administration, such as sociology, management, environmental science, political sciences, law; longitudinal quantitative trends in the structure of the final segment of research articles; etc. Also, the structural peculiarities of the final segment of chapters in research monographs that were out of the scope of this research can be traced. Finally, technologies of proliferation of the methods of research were touched here only schematically, and a variety of methods was reduced to a general distinction of verification – falsification – systemic – programmatic kinds of methods, without any exploration of their sub-divisions.

NOTES

1. Here by "the leading journals in public administration" I name the journals that are at the top of Web of Science and Scopus ranking lists in the public administration field, or/and representing the leading regional International Associations of Public Administration, or/and providing research of world regional administrations and the related theories relevant to peculiar regional cases (as American, European, Central and East European, Eurasian regions).
2. Another kind of structural requirement is attributed to research chapters of research books (collective research monography), because the requirements for the structure of separate parts (single chapters) is replaced here by specific requirements for a unified structure of all chapters, depending

on the goals of the book as a whole. I will concentrate on the analysis of research articles that are published in research journals.

3. Project "Assessing and Improving Research Performance at South East Asian Universities" (REPESEA hereafter), implemented in the framework of ERASMUS+ program, capacity-building projects in the field of higher education (E+CBHE), 2019.
4. Of course, sometimes the styles and methods of the final segment of research articles are presupposed by journals, but mostly it is up to authors themselves.
5. I have selected the articles that are located in close in time issues of the journal *International Review of Administrative Sciences* (Vol. 83, No. 4, 2017; Vol. 84, No. 2, 2018) for the purpose of finding the difference in approach by various authors toward the expression of their research outcomes. I selected articles based on publication dates and made sure they were all within a specific time period (less than one year between publication of the issues), because for closely dated publications, the requirements of the editorial board for research articles in most cases are the same. Additionally, I have also selected the articles with high ranking authors (Hirsh index), following the principle "read the masters", because their style of compounding the final segment of articles is well recognized/accepted by readers.
6. That is why some journals request that the discussion section be located *before* the conclusion section of the article. However, it is not correct for discussions proffering new ideas for future research. Such discussion is better placed *after* the conclusion.
7. National Research University – Higher School of Economics, Moscow, MD program "HR management in public sector".

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