

MPA vs. MPP: A Distinction Without a Difference?

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ABSTRACT

Despite several scholarly inquiries, the question of whether there are critical differences between Masters of Public Administration (MPA) and Masters of Public Policy (MPP) programs continues in the minds of prospective students, potential employers, and university officials. Building on previous inquiries into this issue, we compare the core course content of selected MPA and MPP programs, and expand the study by investigating whether there is a correlation between the academic backgrounds of program faculty and the emphases in core curricula. We also surveyed departments or schools that have *both* MPA and MPP programs in order to determine the reasons for offering both programs and related issues — it was assumed that schools and departments offering both programs would have vetted program goals and content issues. Our study suggests that MPA and MPP program curricula differ. However, such differences seem more likely to be associated with faculty discipline differences than with a focus on providing graduates the core competencies required for job and career options/opportunities in these fields.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND STUDY PURPOSES

Outwardly, public affairs education programs have had one of two orientations — traditional public administration or public policy. Although the curriculum differences of the two programs — Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Master of Public Policy (MPP) — may be less pronounced than they were two decades ago, it is assumed that these differences, among other factors, are what distinguish policy-focused programs from administration-oriented programs (Lowery & Whitaker, 1994, pp. 25-26). According to Elmore (1986), “analysis and economic theory are still the hallmark of public policy programs” (p. 70). To the founders of public policy schools, public

administration “wore the blinders of a single discipline (political science) and lacked in interdisciplinary vision,” and “the content and personnel of public administration were thought to be low in quality and academic prestige” (Stokes, 1986, p. 45). In fact, some researchers note that most public policy programs have been developed at elite universities (De Soto, Opheim, & Tajalli, 1999; Ventriss, 1991).

Regarding this division of public affairs education, Lowery and Whitaker (1994) raised a question, saying “If there are no differences, or only very minor differences in emphasis, then we must ask whether separate programs and professional associations¹ are warranted or whether differences should be restored” (p. 26). Among four categories² that Lowery and Whitaker suggested as possible difference areas to explore, De Soto et al. (1999) investigated (a) if the psychological dispositions of students entering public administration and public policy programs were different, and (b) if the socializing effects of each program’s respective curriculum were different. They did this by surveying members of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). Based on results that showed no difference in the psychological dispositions of students and the socializing effects of curricula between APPAM and NASPAA members, De Soto et al. (1999, pp. 88-89) suggested that the integration of the two orientations for public affairs education may become more complete as public administration programs adopt elements of policy evaluation and analysis, and public policy programs offer training in management and organizational behavior.

The question of curriculum differences between public administration and policy analysis programs has been explored, and the general findings support Lowery and Whitaker’s (1994) argument that “the stark differences between public administration and public policy programs seem to have eroded with time” (p. 25). For example, in comparing the curriculum requirements of 35 randomly selected NASPAA members and 16 randomly selected APPAM members, research by Averch and Dluhy (1992) indicated that curriculum differences between NASPAA and APPAM members were not substantial. Roeder and Whitaker (1993) analyzed curriculum components³ of NASPAA-accredited MPA programs, and identified two distinct curriculum emphases — institutional-management orientations and analytical orientations.⁴ Although Roeder and Whitaker (1993, p. 535) did not compare the curricula of NASPAA and APPAM members, they concluded that both analytical and public management approaches already were blended in NASPAA-accredited MPA programs, and therefore they expected no major differences between the curricula of NASPAA and APPAM members.

The principal purpose of this study is to investigate, from core-curriculum content and other viewpoints, whether the distinction between MPA and MPP

programs represents a fundamental difference, or whether these programs just have different titles. To do this, a comprehensive investigation was conducted. That is, based on information collected through Web site visits and a survey, we compared anticipated job areas and positions, the desired competencies of graduates, and so on, in addition to performing a curriculum comparison. We then extended our inquiry to examine the association between core courses of MPA and MPP programs, and core faculty academic disciplines, in order to determine whether the faculty's academic disciplinary backgrounds were correlated with the curriculum content of various MPA and MPP programs.

This inquiry followed Denhardt's (2001, p. 531) indication that the distinction of theory and practice in public affairs education might largely be determined by the experiences and interests of individual faculty, rather than by different students' needs. In the same vein, Roeder and Whitaker (1993) explored the reasons why programs vary in their emphasis on curriculum components, with an expectation that the key factor for differences in program curricula might be the program faculty's disciplinary backgrounds and specializations.

However, due to data unavailability in their investigation, Roeder and Whitaker (1993) only examined MPA programs, and used surrogate variables such as minimum hours of degree requirements, percentage of full-time nucleus faculty, and percentage of full-time students. In our study, we obtained information from university Web sites in the U.S. about program faculty's academic disciplines, and the curriculum structure of their MPA and MPP programs. This information was used to investigate program similarities and differences, as well as possible associations between faculty backgrounds and curriculum emphasis. By providing a more comprehensive assessment of the possible relationships between MPA and MPP curricula, faculty compositions, and other motivations for offering these programs, this study helps answer Lowery and Whitaker's (1994) questions of whether program distinctions are real, and whether they should be sustained.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature as follows. First, we investigated similarities and differences between policy-oriented schools and administration-oriented schools, in a more direct and comprehensive manner than previous studies. Unlike extant studies that focus on only curriculum differences (Averch & Dluhy, 1992; Roeder & Whitaker, 1993), we compared job areas and positions expected to be filled by graduates, competencies desired for graduates, and curricula. We surveyed directors of schools or departments that offer both MPA and MPP programs, and asked them how the programs are different in terms of (a) curriculum content, (b) expected career areas and job positions, (c) the desired competencies that each program aims to achieve for its graduates, and (d) major reasons for offering MPP programs. Given that they offer both degrees, these institutions also might offer unique insights into the

similarities and differences in MPA and MPP programs. Second, we compared curricula of MPA programs with those of MPP programs in order to make a direct curriculum comparison between policy-oriented and administration-oriented schools. In previous studies that compared program curricula, researchers ignored a group of schools that offered different degrees⁵ or both MPA and MPP degrees because they randomly selected NASPAA members and APPAM members. Although APPAM and NASPAA members are public policy- and public administration-oriented, respectively, merely comparing randomly selected curricula of their members can be arbitrary.⁶ Third, we investigated the association between curriculum contents and the faculty's disciplinary backgrounds in these programs.

This effort will help determine whether these programs have different curriculum emphases, which is believed to be a way of distinguishing policy-focused programs from administration-oriented programs (Lowery & Whitaker, 1994).

METHODOLOGY

In order comprehensively to investigate whether the MPA vs. MPP distinction is fundamental or merely a difference in title, we conducted three assessments:

- A comparison of MPA and MPP core curricula that were similar to the comparisons of previous studies;
- An analysis of faculty academic-discipline backgrounds, in order to determine whether the curriculum emphasis bears a relationship to faculty backgrounds; and
- A survey of program directors at the schools and departments that offer both degrees, in order to determine differential program goals, program structural design themes, and desired competencies for program graduates, as well as any possible recruitment and placement pattern distinctions.

We conducted an Analysis of Variance⁷ (ANOVA) when we investigated curriculum differences (i.e., the first assessment), and the relationships between curriculum composition and the faculty's disciplinary backgrounds (i.e., the second assessment).

To acquire program curriculum and faculty background information, in November and December 2005, we researched the Web sites of all 60 schools with both NASPAA and APPAM memberships (dual-membership schools),⁸ and we also randomly selected 30 schools that only had NASPAA memberships, and that offered only NASPAA-accredited MPA programs. During this Web-site research process, we collected data on the schools' core curricula of MPA and MPP programs, and their core faculty members' academic backgrounds. To follow up on earlier empirical studies (Averch & Dluhy, 1992; De Soto et al.,

1999; Roeder & Whitaker, 1993) — ones that conducted limited comparisons and indicated no substantial differences between public policy and public administration schools — this review examined the same question across more various categories of schools and departments (i.e., NASPAA members only, APPAM members only, and dual-membership schools), and in a more comprehensive manner. Like other curriculum-comparison studies, we assumed that a curriculum-content analysis would reveal the core competencies that MPA and MPP program faculty and directors believe are important for students' success, and therefore would assist in answering the key question of this inquiry — are these programs truly different?

In addition to Web-site visits, surveys were sent in May 2006 to the program directors of 12 dual-membership schools that offered both MPA and MPP programs. The surveys asked respondents to provide detailed information about the motivation for offering both MPA and MPP programs, including the main reasons for establishing each program, the desired competencies of students completing each program, and the targeted career and job opportunities for MPA and MPP degree recipients.

In the first assessment — analyzing curriculum composition — we ignored elective courses and focused on required core courses. Nor did the analysis include capstone seminars and internship courses, although either one or both are included in most MPA and MPP programs. As noted previously, in order to make a comprehensive comparison, we researched the curricula of MPA and MPP programs in various categories — schools offering both MPA and MPP programs, schools offering only MPA programs, and schools offering only MPP programs. As seen in Table 1, in order to facilitate a curriculum comparison between the programs, we grouped courses into six areas, including, for example, (a) economics & policy analysis, (b) finance & budgeting, and (c) organization & human resource management. Core courses that did not fit into one of the six specific categories shown in Table 1 were put into the “others” category. The percentage of each core course area was calculated by dividing each core area's credit hours by the total credit hours of core courses required for the various degree programs.

While we investigated school Web sites for MPA and MPP programs, we observed that program faculty members usually had academic backgrounds in such disciplines as political science, public administration, economics, and others (e.g., management, sociology, and psychology). In the second assessment, therefore, we examined the association between these three major disciplines — political science, public administration, and economics — and six common core course areas, as seen in Table 2. When collecting information about faculty-members' academic backgrounds, we limited our research to core faculty⁹ with doctoral degrees, because we assumed that other faculty¹⁰ were less involved in making decisions about department curriculum composition and structure than the core faculty with doctoral degrees. We categorized all other academic

disciplines — management, sociology, and psychology — as “other” (See *Appendix D*), and when academic backgrounds were not clear on the Web sites, we also included these faculty in the “other” discipline category. We identified core faculty academic backgrounds based on Web-site information¹¹ and did not request additional information from the schools when their faculty’s academic disciplinary backgrounds were not available online.

School/department Web sites typically did not provide enough information regarding such program design issues as the reasons for establishing each program (MPA and/or MPP), desired competences to be achieved by program completion, and expected job opportunities upon graduation. Therefore, in May 2006, we sent a questionnaire requesting insights and observations on these issues to the directors of all 12 schools¹² that offered both MPA and MPP programs (See *Appendix B for the list*). We assumed that schools or departments with both MPA and MPP degree programs were the most capable of responding to survey questions that focused on obtaining insights about program design and goals, as well as the differences and similarities between the two programs. Seven schools responded to the survey.

RESULTS

Assessment 1: Curriculum Comparison

As mentioned previously, although different curriculum emphasis has been believed to distinguish policy-focused (MPP) programs from administration-oriented (MPA) programs (Elmore, 1986; Lowery & Whitaker, 1994), empirical studies (e.g., Averch & Dluhy, 1992; De Soto et al., 1999; Roeder & Whitaker, 1993) have reported limited differences of curriculum, and suggested that an integration of the two orientations for public affairs education may be emerging. In this study, we investigated the same question with the following hypothesis, based on the findings of previous studies:

Hypothesis 1: The curriculum composition of MPP programs is not different from that of MPA programs.

The table in Appendix C summarizes the percentages of each core course area for different categories of schools. In the table, we observe that MPA programs in any school category have lower percentages of “economics & policy analysis” and higher percentages of “finance & budgeting” and “organization & human resource management” in their curricula than MPP programs do. Research method courses, however, seem to be similarly emphasized for both MPA and MPP programs. Although research course content (econometrics, basic regression, survey research, etc.) might differ, we assumed that research course content was generally equivalent across programs. (See *Appendix C*.)

To test Hypothesis 1, we ran an ANOVA, using various school categories, in order to determine if the mean proportion of each course among core curriculum

courses is different, depending on whether they are for MPA or MPP programs. As seen in Table 1, overall comparison shows that the curriculum emphasis of MPP programs was significantly different from that of MPA programs, except in policy process and research method courses. Further analysis reveals that MPA programs put more emphasis on “finance & budgeting,” public management, and “organization & human resource management,” while MPP programs placed more stress on “economics & policy analysis.” However, no curriculum composition differences were found when we compared MPA and MPP programs within schools that offer both MPA and MPP programs (N = 12). In sum, the results do not support Hypothesis 1, which was based on extant empirical results, but support theoretical arguments that curricula are different between policy-focused and administration-oriented programs. (See Table 1.)

Assessment 2: The Impact of Faculty Academic Disciplines

As seen in Appendix D, schools offering only MPA programs appear to have more core faculty members with doctorates in public administration, and fewer core faculty members with doctorates in economics, than schools offering only MPP programs, or those offering both MPA and MPP programs. However, we did not observe any obvious differences between MPA and MPP programs in the share of the faculty that hold Ph.D.s in political science. (See Appendix D.) Following Roeder and Whitaker’s (1993, p. 524) and Denhardt’s (2001, p. 531) arguments about faculty’s influence on course structure in their programs, we posited a hypothesis about the association between core faculty’s academic backgrounds, and course composition in their core curriculum:

Hypothesis 2: Core courses of MPA and MPP programs are associated with their core faculty members’ academic backgrounds.

To test this hypothesis in a comprehensive manner, we ran an ANOVA in different school categories — such as schools overall, schools offering MPAs, and schools offering MPPs. We also checked for any correlations between core courses and core faculty disciplines, in order to understand how faculty disciplines could be associated with core course emphases (correlation results not shown). For example, positive correlations would indicate more emphasis on the core courses when an ANOVA shows significant results. In the overall comparison of Table 2, programs with more faculty members who have doctorates in economics are likely to put more emphasis on “economics & policy analysis” and less emphasis on “organization & human resource management.” However, we found that, in the overall comparison, programs with more faculty members with doctorates in public administration are more likely to stress “organization & human resource management.” When we examined schools offering only the MPA compared to dual-membership schools, we observe that programs with more doctorates in political science or

Table 1. ANOVA Results for Core Courses in MPA and MPP Programs

Comparison		Core Course Areas (F-Statistics)						
		Economics & Policy Analysis	Finance & Budgeting	Policy Process	Public Mngt	Organization & HRM ^b	Research Methods	
Overall Comparison	MPA (74) ^a vs. MPP (21)	30.60***	12.02***	2.79	8.02**	15.85***	0.06	
Among Dual-Membership Schools	MPA-Only (32) vs. MPP-Only (9)	19.21***	5.24*	0.26	12.79**	3.06	0.96	
	MPA of Both MPA- & MPP-Offered (12) vs. MPP of Both MPA- & MPP-Offered (12)	0.33	0.41	1.64	0.27	0.00	0.08	
NASPAA-Only Members vs. Dual-Membership Schools	MPA-Only of NASPAA-Only Members (30) vs. MPP of Dual Members (21)	62.63***	13.08***	12.32**	6.57*	34.03***	0.00	
	MPA-Only of NASPAA-Only Members (30) vs. MPP of Both MPA- & MPP-Offered of Dual Members (12)	41.36***	10.57**	9.40**	1.98	34.59***	0.40	

Note. *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001

a. Number of schools analyzed

b. "HRM" is Human Resources Management

public administration are more likely to emphasize “finance & budgeting” and “organization & human resource management.” Although these associations are observed, the basis of the association is not clear. That is, curriculum composition may influence hires or faculty composition may influence curriculum content.

Our analysis revealed that programs with higher percentages of faculty members with economics doctoral degrees are associated with more emphasis on “economic & policy analysis” and less emphasis on “organization & human resource management.” In addition, “organization & human resource management” courses are stressed more when the programs have relatively more faculty members with doctorates in public administration. When the programs have more faculty members with doctorates in political science, “finance & budgeting” is emphasized more. In sum, the core courses such as “economics & policy analysis,” “finance & budgeting,” and “organization & human resource management” are associated with faculty academic disciplines, while the other core courses such as policy process, public management, and research methods are not. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported. It should be noted that only the core courses that are differently emphasized by MPA and MPP programs have significant relationships with faculty academic disciplines. This analysis suggests an association rather than causality between core curriculum content and faculty members’ academic disciplines. Given the association we found, schools that have more faculty members with doctorates in a specific academic discipline appear to be more likely to have core curricula that contain more courses associated with that discipline. At the same time, the association of faculty background and core curriculum content may suggest that programs with an emphasis in certain academic content may attract faculty with similar academic backgrounds. Therefore, if there is any causal relationship between a faculty’s academic background and the core curriculum content, it remains ambiguous and indeterminate. (See *Table 2*.)

Since more emphasis is placed on “economics & policy analysis” in MPP programs (contrary to Hypothesis 1) and core faculty academic disciplines have a partial impact on core courses (partially supporting Hypothesis 2), we examined the impact of core faculty disciplines on offering MPP programs and being APPAM members. In fact, all MPP programs are offered by APPAM-member schools, regardless of whether they belong only to APPAM or are dual-membership schools. According to ANOVA results in *Table 3*, among three major core faculty disciplines, economics and public administration are associated with offering MPP programs and being APPAM members. Further analysis (not shown) revealed that, in these programs, more faculty with doctorates in economics or fewer faculty with doctorates in public administration were significantly associated with offering MPP programs and being APPAM members. (See *Table 3*.)

Table 2.
ANOVA Results for Core Courses and Faculty's Academic Disciplines

	Core Faculty's Disciplines	Core Courses (F-Statistics)						
		Economics & Policy Analysis	Finance & Budgeting	Policy Process	Public Mngt	Organization & Human Resource Mngt	Research Methods	
Overall ^a (70) ^b	Economics	2.04* (2.14*) ^f	1.02 (1.73*)	1.43 (1.70)	1.38 (1.07)	2.63** (5.73***)	1.06 (1.39)	
	Political Science	1.48 (1.70)	1.08 (1.69*)	0.93 (1.68)	1.14 (1.41)	0.84 (1.40)	0.58 (1.35)	
	Public Administration	1.29 (1.04)	0.79 (0.85)	0.75 (1.42)	1.35 (1.51)	2.86*** (2.62**)	0.89 (1.15)	
MPA-Only ^c (19)	Economics	0.63 (.084)	1.05 (0.93)	1.93 (1.40)	0.26 (0.35)	1.71 (1.23)	0.96 (0.68)	
	Political Science	1.13 (0.87)	7.32** (2.26)	1.27 (1.33)	0.66 (0.74)	0.22 (0.41)	1.77 (1.27)	
	Public Administration	1.08 (0.47)	0.89 (26.00**)	1.31 (4.11)	0.67 (6.44*)	2.54 (10.16**)	1.00 (2.74)	
MPP-Only ^d & MPA/MPP ^d (20)	Economics	1.06 (4.60)	1.25 (1.85)	0.54 (1.64)	0.92 (6.29)	0.50 (342.47***)	0.44 (1.48)	
	Political Science	.040 (0.94)	1.43 (1.24)	0.85 (2.55)	1.05 (2.72)	0.91 (0.56)	1.29 (1.52)	
	Public Administration	2.33 (0.47)	0.65 (0.77)	0.62 (1.07)	1.73 (1.00)	1.03 (0.86)	0.70 (1.11)	
MPA-Only ^e (24)	Economics	0.66 (0.66)	1.21 (1.21)	0.49 (0.49)	0.21 (0.21)	10.64*** (10.64***)	2.20 (2.20)	
	Political Science	2.86* (2.86*)	1.42 (1.42)	1.66 (1.66)	1.29 (1.29)	2.62 (2.62)	0.89 (0.89)	
	Public Administration	2.96* (2.96*)	0.87 (0.87)	1.63 (1.63)	1.10 (1.10)	1.32 (1.32)	1.09 (1.09)	

Note. *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001

Significant ANOVA results may indicate positive or negative relationships. Further analyses were conducted to determine the direction of the relationships, by adding the Bonferroni option to ANOVA (see Statacorp 2003, pp. 108-109)

a. All schools with Web sites that provided information about their core faculty's disciplines

b. Number of schools

c. MPA-only-offering schools among dual-membership schools (i.e., NASPAA and APPAM)

d. MPP-only-offering schools and both MPA/MPP-offering schools among dual-membership schools

e. MPA-only-offering schools among dual-membership schools, among NASPAA-only members

f. When joint-appointment faculty were included

Table 3.
ANOVA Results for the Association Between Core Faculty Academic Disciplines
and MPP Program Offering or APPAM Membership

	Comparison	Core Faculty Academic Disciplines		
		Economics	Political Science	Public Administration
MPP-Offering	MPA-Only-Offering Among Dual-Membership Schools (19) vs. MPP-Offering Among Dual-Membership Schools (20) ^a	3.62 (4.57*) ^b	0.00 (0.97)	5.16* (7.06*)
	Accredited MPA-Only-Offering Among NASPAA-Only Members (24) vs. MPP-Offering Among Dual-Membership Schools (20)	25.39*** (45.70***)	0.53 (0.06)	12.25*** (22.16***)
Becoming APPAM Members	NASPAA-Only Members (24) vs. APPAM Members ^c (40)	14.10*** (26.62***)	1.26 (0.07)	4.49* (11.47**)

Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$
 Significant ANOVA results may indicate positive or negative relationships. Further analyses were conducted to determine the direction of the relationships,
 by adding Bonferroni option to ANOVA (see Statcorp 2003, pp. 108-109)
 a. MPP-only-offering schools and both MPP/MPA-offering schools
 b. When joint-appointment faculty were included
 c. APPAM-only members were excluded from the analysis

Assessment 3: Surveying Directors of Schools Offering Both the MPP and MPA

As indicated, surveys were sent to the 12 schools identified as offering both MPA and MPP degrees. The surveys were designed to ascertain different program goals, desired graduate competencies, and recruitment and placement differences for the two programs. Although the response rate was relatively high (seven out of 12 schools), the small number of respondents limits the observations that can be drawn from the returned surveys. The survey results are reported in the following sections.

1. **Differences between MPA and MPP Programs.**

As seen in Appendix E, program directors responding to the survey generally agreed that (a) MPP programs focus more on policy analysis and MPA programs focus more on administrating public organizations, (b) MPP programs have more economics courses, but MPA programs have more administration-related courses, (c) MPP programs attract more analytically oriented students, but MPA programs attract more students interested in nonprofit management careers. (See Appendix E.)

2. **Desired Competencies of MPA and MPP Program Graduates.**

The ability to apply statistical models to evaluate policy outcomes, the ability to develop innovative approaches to solve policy issues, and the ability to evaluate performance of public or nonprofit organizations are among the competencies that both MPA and MPP programs identify as high priorities for their graduates, as seen in Appendix F. However, MPA programs put more emphasis on the ability efficiently to manage groups and organizations and the ability to motivate organizations than MPP programs do. (See Appendix F.)

3. **Expected Job Areas and Positions for MPA and MPP Graduates.**

According to the survey, there are minimal employment opportunity differences for MPA and MPP degree recipients. That is, 57 percent of participating directors said they have observed different employment opportunities for MPA and MPP graduates, whereas 43 percent of participating directors said they have not observed any difference in employment opportunities. In fact, as seen in Appendix G, there are limited distinctions between MPA and MPP graduates regarding expected job areas. Federal, state, and local governments plus nonprofit sectors are the career areas where the most jobs are expected to be obtained by both MPA and MPP graduates. Appendix H shows job positions expected to be obtained by graduates of each program, but we do not observe distinctions between MPA and MPP graduates in jobs expected to be obtained. For example, nonprofit organization management, program/agency management, or staff positions are among the most likely jobs for both MPA and MPP graduates. Personnel specialists, city managers, lobbyists, and performance

auditors are among the least likely jobs for both MPA and MPP graduates to take. (See *Appendix G and H.*)

4. Major Reasons for Offering MPP Programs.

Directors' responses to the question of why they offer an MPP program are shown in Appendix I. Most directors indicated that they offer an MPP program to (a) be responsive to student career objectives, (b) attract students who are not interested in MPA programs, (c) respond to national trends, and (d) be responsive to faculty interests. It is noteworthy that they do not offer an MPP program to (a) attract specific undergraduate majors, (b) create a more research-oriented degree, (c) provide a steppingstone to a Ph.D., or (d) respond to university demands. (See *Appendix I.*)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this study, we investigated in a comprehensive manner whether policy-oriented programs are different from administration-oriented programs; we followed up on previous studies — most of which argued that these two orientations were becoming more integrated by adopting each other's elements into their separate programs, and therefore creating an effect where there might be no difference between them (Lowery & Whitaker, 1994; De Soto et al., 1999). Previous empirical studies had compared NASPAA members with APPAM members in terms of curricula or the psychological dispositions of entering students, without considering dual-membership schools and that some schools have different master's degrees. In this study, however, Assessments 1 and 3 directly compared MPA programs with MPP programs from various school categories, in terms of (a) curricula, (b) desired competencies and jobs expected to be obtained by program graduates, and (c) major reasons for offering different programs. In Assessment 2, we examined the impact of core faculty's academic disciplinary backgrounds on (a) the programs' core curriculum emphases, (b) offering MPP programs, and (c) becoming APPAM members. Therefore, we could establish a more proper conclusion about whether or not policy-oriented and administration-oriented programs are truly different.

Above all, the findings of the curriculum comparison did not support the arguments of previous empirical studies, but instead confirmed theoretical arguments (Elmore, 1986; Lowry & Whitaker, 1994) that policy-oriented and administration-oriented schools are different in terms of their curricula. Although previous empirical studies indicated that differences between MPA and MPP programs were evaporating, this finding suggests that MPPs and MPAs are still different. Perhaps our analysis was conducted in a more comprehensive and direct manner than those studies and, as a result, program differences might have become more apparent. Also, unlike previous studies —

which based their analyses on whether or not a certain course simply was included in the curriculum — we compared curricula, based on the proportion of each disciplinary core. Therefore, we believe our approach to the question of whether MPA and MPP programs differ is more comprehensive than previous approaches, and that it provides additional insights regarding the actual differences between these two programs.

Our study also suggests that the curriculum differences between MPA and MPP programs may not result from differences in the desired competencies and expected placements of program graduates. Rather, the core faculty's academic backgrounds may play an important role in a university's decision to offer an MPP program when it already has an MPA program, or to add an MPA program alongside an existing MPP program.

The findings of this study can be useful for universities, particularly when they consider whether or not to establish supplemental MPP or MPA programs. It might be appropriate for a university contemplating an additional program offering to determine whether the motivation for the initiative is to (a) serve different students, (b) provide the educational background for additional career opportunities or (c) simply is the result of the faculty's desire to offer a program more aligned with its dominant academic backgrounds and interests. If the latter consideration seems to be the case, a name change or distinction adjustment to the existing degree program may be more appropriate than adding a new one.

In conclusion, does the distinction between MPA and MPP programs represent a real difference? The answer is both yes and no. Overall curriculum comparisons of MPA and MPP programs indicate modest differences in academic content. However, the distinction between the two programs appears to fade when both are offered by the same school or department. To insure a justifiable distinction, it seems that the respective programs should possess differences in goals and desired student outcomes, rather than simply reflect differences that are associated with their core faculty's academic disciplinary backgrounds. Otherwise, there may be justification for the criticism that MPP programs are not really distinct from MPA programs except in their names.¹³

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹The Association for Public Policy and Management (APPAM) represents the policy analysis movement. The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) is broader-based, and includes many APPAM members, but it generally is more representative of public administration (Lowery & Whitaker, 1994, p. 25).
- ²Two other areas of possible differences that De Soto et al. (1999) did not investigate were the differences in job placements for graduates of each program, and the differences in self-evaluations by those in the workplace.
- ³The seven components were techniques of analysis, organization/management, political institutions, financial administration, economic institutions, legal institutions, and social institutions.
- ⁴Institutional-management programs allocate more time to political, social, and legal institutions and processes, as well as organization and management concepts. Analytical programs are characterized by larger allocations of curriculum time to quantitative methods and statistics, financial administration, and economic institutions and processes (Roeder & Whitaker, 1993, p. 535).
- ⁵It should be noted that, while NASPAA and APPAM member schools and departments principally offer MPA or MPP degrees, they may offer other master's degrees, as in Master of Economic Policy Management, Master of Science in Urban Policy, or combination-type degrees, such as Master of Public Policy and Management.
- ⁶As seen in Appendix A, ANOVA results for programs offered by NASPAA members are either similar or different, depending on which sample is chosen. For example, only "economics and policy analysis" core courses were significantly different in comparison B of Appendix A, which matched MPA programs offered by NASPAA-only members to MPA programs offered by dual-membership schools. In comparison C, which matched curricula of MPA programs offered by NASPAA-only members to MPP programs offered by dual-membership schools, most courses were significantly different.
- ⁷We used Stata statistical software to run an ANOVA. As the Stata manual (StataCorp, 2003) indicates, either a one-way ANOVA or t-test can be used to determine if the mean value of one variable (e.g., the proportion of core courses in this study) is different, depending on another variable (e.g., MPA or MPP programs in this study).
- ⁸The number of dual-membership schools was 60, as of November 1, 2005. Among these, seven were excluded due to having different master's degrees, such as a Master's of Public Policy and Management, or an MS in Urban Policy Analysis and Management, etc. (See Appendix B). Among the remaining 53 dual-membership schools, 32 offered MPA programs only, nine offered MPP programs only, and 12 offered both MPA and MPP programs.

MPA vs. MPP: A Distinction Without a Difference?

⁹They are faculty members who mainly are assigned to the department (or school). Roeder and Whitaker (1993) call them full-time nucleus faculty.

¹⁰They are research faculty, adjunct faculty, affiliated faculty, faculty of practice, visiting faculty, lecturers, and faculty emeriti.

¹¹We could identify core faculty's academic backgrounds for all nine dual-membership schools that provided only MPP programs, and all 12 dual-membership schools that provided both MPA and MPP programs. However, among 33 dual-membership schools that offered only MPA programs (See Appendix B), only 18 schools provided information on their Web sites about the core faculty's academic backgrounds. For 30 NASPAA-only members that offered only MPA programs, we checked the core faculty's academic backgrounds, as well as the composition of their curricula. These 30 schools were randomly selected from 147 MPA programs accredited by NASPAA (as of September 1, 2005).

¹²Questions in the survey mainly were focused on similarities and differences between MPA and MPP programs, so we chose the schools that offered both programs, and that were most capable of answering the questions. For example, in the survey, we asked, "Which of the following describes the distinguishing difference between your MPA and MPP programs?" Out of the 12 schools that offered both programs, the University of Delaware offered MPA and MA programs in urban affairs and public policy, and the University of Pittsburgh offered MPA and MA programs in public policy and management.

¹³Brewer, Facer, and O'Toole (1999) argued that Ph.D. and Doctor of Public Administration (D.P.A.) programs are merely distinctions without a difference.

AUTHORS' NOTE

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Appendix A.
 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results for Curriculum Comparisons Between MPA and MPP Programs Offered by NASPAA, APPAM, or Dual-Membership Schools^a

VARIOUS COMPARISONS	Economics & Policy Analysis	Finance & Budgeting	Policy Process	Public Management	Organization & HRM ^b	Research Method
A MPA Program Offered by NASPAA-only Members vs. Both MPA & MPP Programs Offered by Dual Members	36.22***	6.26*	2.11	0.53	18.86***	0.16
B MPA Program Offered by NASPAA-only Members vs. MPA Program Offered by Dual Members	18.98***	0.75	0.61	0.43	3.38	0.59
C MPA Program Offered by NASPAA-only Members vs. MPP Program Offered by Dual Members	62.63***	13.08***	5.19*	6.57*	34.03***	0.00

Note. *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001

a. Dual-membership schools belong to both NASPAA and APPAM

b. "HRM" is Human Resources Management

Appendix B.
Programs Offered by Dual-Membership Schools^a

Schools with Dual Membership (APPAM & NASPAA)	MPA/MPP Offered	MPA Only	MPP Only	Other Program Offered	Remarks
American University	•				
Arizona State University		•			
Baruch College City University of NY		•			
Brown University	•				
Carnegie Mellon University				Master of Public Policy & Mgmt	
College of William & Mary			•		
Columbia University		•		Master of Economic Policy Management	
Cornell University		•			
Duke University			•		
Florida Int'l University		•			
George Mason University		•			
George Washington Univ.	•				
Georgetown University			•	Master of Policy Management	
Georgia Institute of Technology			•		MS in Public Policy
Georgia State University		•			
Harvard University	•				

Note. a = Dual-membership schools belong to both NASPAA and APPAM
Sources: APPAM; <http://www.appam.org>; NASPAA; <http://www.naspaa.org>, and each school's Web site as of Oct. 15, 2005.
"Remarks" column provides supplemental information regarding MPA & MPP Programs

Continued

Appendix B.
Programs Offered by Dual-Membership Schools^a

Schools with Dual Membership (APPAM & NASPAA)	MPA/MPP Offered	MPA Only	MPP Only	Other Program Offered	Remarks
Indiana University		•			Master of Public Affairs
Indiana University-Perdue University, Indianapolis		•			Master of Public Affairs
Iowa State University		•			
Johns Hopkins University			•		MA in Public Policy
Kent State University		•			
New School University				MS in Urban Policy Analysis & Management	
New York University		•			
Ohio State University		•			
Pennsylvania State Univ.		•			
Princeton University	•				
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey		•			
Syracuse University		•			
Texas A&M University		•			
Univ. at Albany - SUNY	•				
University of Arkansas		•			

Note. a = Dual-membership schools belong to both NASPAA and APPAM
Sources: APPAM; <http://www.appam.org>; NASPAA; <http://www.naspaa.org>, and each school's Web site as of Oct. 15, 2005
"Remarks" column provides supplemental information regarding MPA & MPP Programs

Continued

Appendix B.
Programs Offered by Dual-Membership Schools^a

Schools with Dual Membership (APPAM & NASPAA)	MPA/MPP Offered	MPA Only	MPP Only	Other Program Offered	Remarks
University of Arizona		•			
University of California-LA			•		Dept. of Public Policy
University of Chicago			•		
University of Cincinnati		•			MA in Political Science
Univ. of Colorado-Denver		•			MA in Political Science
University of Delaware	•				MA in Urban Affairs & Public Policy
University of Georgia		•			
University of Illinois		•			
University of Kentucky	•				
University of Maryland-Baltimore County			•		
U. of Md.-College Park			•		
University of Mass.-Amherst				Master of Public Policy & Admin	
University of Mass.-Boston				MS in Public Affairs	
University of Michigan	•				
University of Minnesota	•				
U. of Missouri-Columbia		•			

Note. a = Dual-membership schools belong to both NASPAA and APPAM
Sources: APPAM, <http://www.appam.org>; NASPAA, <http://www.naspaa.org>; and each school's Web site as of Oct. 15, 2005.
"Remarks" column provides supplemental information regarding MPA & MPP Programs

Continued

Appendix B.
Programs Offered by Dual-Membership Schools^a

Schools with Dual Membership (APPAM & NASPAA)	MPA/MPP Offered	MPA Only	MPP Only	Other Program Offered	Remarks
U. of Missouri-St. Louis				Master of Public Policy & Admin	
Univ. of Nebraska-Omaha		•			
Univ. of NC-Chapel Hill		•			
Univ. of NC-Charlotte		•			
Univ. of Pennsylvania		•			Master of Gov't Administration
University of Pittsburgh	•				Master of Public Policy & Mgmt
Univ. of Southern California	•				
Univ. of Southern Maine				Master of Public Policy & Mgmt	
University of Texas-Austin		•			Master of Public Affairs
University of Texas-Dallas		•			Master of Public Affairs
University of Washington		•			
U. of Wisconsin-Madison		•			Master of Public Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University		•			
Total (60 Schools)	12	33	9	6	

Note: a = Dual-membership schools belong to both NASPAA and APPAM
Sources: APPAM, <http://www.appam.org>; NASPAA, <http://www.naspaa.org>, and each school's Web site as of Oct. 15, 2005.
"Remarks" column provides supplemental information regarding MPA & MPP Programs

Appendix C.
Curriculum Composition of Core Courses

Membership	Program Offered (No. of Schools Analyzed)	Core Course Areas (%) ^a						
		Economics & Policy Analysis	Finance & Budgeting	Policy Process	Public Mgmt	Organization & HRM ^b	Research Methods	Others
Dual- Membership Schools (NASPAA & APPAM)	MPA Only (32)	14.9	11.7	12.5	14.9	12.7	18.1	15.2
	MPP Only (9)	30.0	4.5	19.4	4.5	7.5	23.9	10.4
	MPA of MPA & MPP Offered (12)	21.6	10.8	9.6	9.6	3.6	21.6	23.4
Non-Dual- Membership Schools (NASPAA Only)	MPP of MPA & MPP Offered (12)	27.6	6.6	14.5	7.9	2.6	20.2	20.6
	MPA Only (30)	5.6	14.5	8.9	13.5	15.6	20.5	21.8

Note. a. Percentage of each category = (credit hours of each category/credit hours of all categories) * 100
 b. "HRM" is Human Resources Management

Appendix D.
Academic Backgrounds of Core Faculty

Membership	Program Offered (No. of Schools)	Faculty Members' Doctoral Degrees (%) ^a			
		Economics ^b	Political Science	Public Administration ^c	Others
Dual-Membership Schools (NASPAA & APPAM)	MPA-Only (19)	13.5 ^d (18.0) ^e	21.3 (22.2)	36.7 (26.8)	28.5 (34.0)
	MPP-Only (9)	32.2 (26.8)	16.7 (21.2)	18.9 (7.2)	32.2 (44.8)
Non-Dual Membership Schools (NASPAA-Accredited Only)	MPA & MPP (12)	23.3 (26.3)	20.3 (23.8)	10.9 (6.2)	45.5 (43.7)
	MPA-Only (30)	2.7 ^f	15.6	17.2	64.5

Note. a. Percentage = (No. of each discipline/total number of all core faculty with a doctorate) * 100

b. Public finance is included

c. Public policy is included

d. Percentage before including faculty of joint appointment

e. Percentage after including faculty of joint appointment

f. Percentage after including faculty of joint appointment

Appendix E.
Differences Between MPA and MPP Programs

Which of the following describes the distinguishing difference between your MPA and MPP programs?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
The MPP program focuses more on policy analysis than the MPA program.	14% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	57% (4)	29% (2)
The MPA program focuses more on the administration of public organizations than the MPP program.	29% (2)	14% (1)	0% (0)	43% (3)	14% (1)
The MPP program has a greater emphasis on research coursework than the MPA program.	0% (0)	43% (3)	0% (0)	29% (2)	29% (2)
The MPP program has more economics coursework than the MPA Program.	29% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	29% (2)	43% (3)
The MPA curriculum includes more administration-related courses (personnel mgmt, financial mgmt, etc.) than the MPP program.	14% (1)	14% (1)	0% (0)	43% (3)	29% (2)
The MPP degree has fewer course requirements than the MPA program.	29% (2)	29% (2)	0% (0)	29% (2)	14% (1)
The MPP program attracts more analytically oriented students than the MPA program.	0% (0)	14% (1)	29% (2)	57% (4)	0% (0)
The MPP program attracts more students who majored in economics than the MPA program.	14% (1)	14% (1)	43% (3)	14% (1)	0% (0)
The MPP program attracts more students who majored in political science than the MPA program.	14% (1)	29% (2)	57% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)
The MPA program attracts more students from diverse undergraduate majors (arts, sciences, health, etc.) than the MPP program.	43% (3)	0% (0)	57% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)
The MPA program attracts more students interested in nonprofit management careers than the MPP program.	14% (1)	14% (1)	29% (2)	43% (3)	0% (0)

Note. Respondent numbers are in parentheses.
The highest percentage of responses for each question is marked in boldface.

Appendix F.
Priority Competencies for MPA and MPP Programs

Please rate the following competencies that your MPA/MPP programs are likely to aim for:		Low Priority	Middle Priority	High Priority
Ability to efficiently manage groups and organizations	MPA	0% (0)	14% (1)	86% (6)
	MPP	57% (4)	29% (2)	14% (1)
Ability to motivate organizations	MPA	0% (0)	43% (3)	57% (4)
	MPP	43% (3)	43% (3)	14% (1)
Ability to apply statistical models to evaluate policy outcomes	MPA	14% (1)	43% (3)	43% (3)
	MPP	14% (1)	29% (2)	57% (4)
Ability to analyze financial statements	MPA	29% (2)	14% (1)	57% (4)
	MPP	29% (2)	57% (4)	14% (1)
Ability to develop innovative approaches to solve policy issues	MPA	14% (1)	43% (3)	43% (3)
	MPP	0% (0)	14% (1)	86% (6)
Ability to evaluate performance of public or nonprofit organizations	MPA	0% (0)	43% (3)	57% (4)
	MPP	14% (1)	29% (2)	57% (4)
Ability to communicate effectively with constituencies in the general public	MPA	0% (0)	29% (2)	71% (5)
	MPP	0% (0)	71% (5)	29% (2)
Ability to resolve disputes among individuals	MPA	14% (1)	71% (5)	14% (1)
	MPP	50% (3)	50% (3)	0% (0)

Note. Respondent numbers are in parentheses.
The highest percentage of responses for each question is marked in boldface.
Seven respondents did not answer all the questions.

Appendix G.
Expected Employment Areas for MPA and MPP Graduates

Please indicate the percent of your MPA/MPP graduates who find employment in the following areas (including further education):		Less than 10%	10–20%	20–30%	More than 30%
Federal Government	MPA	17% (1)	17% (1)	17% (1)	50% (3)
	MPP	20% (1)	0% (0)	40% (2)	40% (2)
State Government	MPA	0% (0)	40% (2)	60% (3)	0% (0)
	MPP	0% (0)	40% (2)	60% (3)	0% (0)
Local Government	MPA	17% (1)	33% (2)	50% (3)	0% (0)
	MPP	0% (0)	60% (3)	40% (2)	0% (0)
Nonprofit Sector	MPA	17% (1)	17% (1)	66% (4)	0% (0)
	MPP	0% (0)	20% (1)	60% (3)	20% (1)
Private Sector	MPA	67% (4)	33% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	MPP	20% (1)	60% (3)	20% (1)	0% (0)
Further Graduate Education (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)	MPA	80% (4)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	MPP	40% (2)	60% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Professional Education (e.g. Law)	MPA	100% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	MPP	100% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Other	MPA	50% (1)	0% (0)	50% (1)	0% (0)
	MPP	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Note. Respondent numbers are in parentheses. The highest percentage of responses for each question is marked in boldface. Seven respondents did not answer all the questions.

Appendix H.
Expected Job Positions for MPA and MPP Graduates

Please indicate (or estimate) the types of job position or further educational opportunities that your MPA/MPP degree-recipients are likely to take given placements in the past five years.		Less than 10%	10–20%	20–30%	More than 30%
Budget Analysts	MPA	0% (0)	40% (2)	60% (3)	0% (0)
	MPP	20% (1)	60% (3)	20% (1)	0% (0)
Personnel Specialists	MPA	40% (2)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
	MPP	80% (4)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
City Management	MPA	20% (1)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
	MPP	75% (3)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Nonprofit Organization Management	MPA	20% (1)	20% (1)	60% (3)	0% (0)
	MPP	20% (1)	20% (1)	40% (2)	20% (1)
Policy Analysts	MPA	20% (1)	20% (1)	40% (2)	0% (0)
	MPP	0% (0)	20% (1)	40% (2)	40% (2)
Lobbyists	MPA	20% (1)	0% (1)	20% (1)	0% (0)
	MPP	60% (3)	40% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Researchers	MPA	20% (1)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
	MPP	0% (0)	40% (2)	60% (3)	0% (0)
Performance Auditors (e.g. GAO)	MPA	20% (1)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
	MPP	40% (2)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
Program/Agency Management	MPA	17% (1)	33% (2)	50% (3)	0% (0)
	MPP	40% (2)	20% (1)	40% (2)	0% (0)
Program/Agency Staff	MPA	17% (1)	33% (2)	50% (3)	0% (0)
	MPP	20% (1)	40% (2)	40% (2)	0% (0)
Doctoral Students	MPA	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	MPP	40% (2)	60% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Law School	MPA	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	MPP	100% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Other	MPA	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	MPP	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Note. Respondent numbers are in parentheses.
The highest percentage of responses for each question is marked in boldface.
Seven respondents did not answer all the questions.

Appendix I.
Major Reasons for Establishing an MPP Program

What are the major reasons for establishing your MPP program?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I Am Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
To be responsive to student career objectives.	0% (0)	0% (0)	17% (1)	33% (2)	50% (3)
To attract students not interested in MPA.	14% (1)	14% (1)	14% (1)	0% (0)	57% (4)
To create a more research-oriented public policy degree.	0% (0)	43% (3)	0% (0)	29% (2)	29% (2)
To provide a stepping stone for doctoral studies.	43% (3)	29% (2)	0% (0)	14% (1)	14% (1)
To attract students with specific undergraduate majors.	86% (6)	14% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
To meet university demands.	57% (4)	14% (1)	0% (0)	14% (1)	14% (1)
To be responsive to alumni and employer suggestions.	29% (2)	29% (2)	0% (0)	43% (3)	0% (0)
To respond to national trends regarding degree offerings.	0% (0)	14% (1)	14% (1)	43% (3)	29% (2)
To be responsive to faculty interests and capabilities.	0% (0)	0% (0)	14% (1)	57% (4)	29% (2)

Note: Respondent numbers are in parentheses. The highest percentage of responses for each question is marked in boldface.