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Please send manuscripts via e-mail to both
Editor-in-Chief Marc Holzer, e-mail: mholzer@andromeda.rutgers.edu
Managing Editor Mengzhong Zhang, e-mail: mengzhong@yahoo.com

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CPAR
School of Public Affairs and Administration/NCPP
701 Hill Hall
360 Martin Luther King Blvd.
Newark, NJ 07102-1801
email: pubadmin@andromeda.rutgers.edu
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Assessing the State of Public Administration Research in Mainland China: Prospects and Challenges*

Evan Berman, Louisiana State University

Yijia Jing, Fudan University

Symposium Introduction

The rapid modernization and globalization of mainland China has resulted in impressive new practices and expectations for public administration (PA), including public administration research and education. Chinese universities have created new master in public administration (MPA) degree programs that already rival U.S. MPA programs in enrollment, with about 15,000 to 20,000 students annually. In 1999, PhD programs in public administration were first established at Fudan University, Renmin University, and Sun Yat-Sen University. Since then, Chinese ministries and universities have ratcheted up quality expectations for university-based public administration research. At the top universities, faculty are increasingly expected to publish in journals that are part of the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) to keeping pace with similar expectations for quality in neighboring Asian countries and, indeed, around the world. Beyond this, public administration researchers are also expected to contribute to empowering a new generation of public managers and guiding modernization efforts in Chinese public service.

There are high expectations for sure. In September 2007, the School of International Relations and Public Affairs at Fudan University in Shanghai hosted a two-day, international conference entitled, “Public Administration Research and Education in China Today.” Conference attendees discussed accomplishments, challenges, and new pathways at this historic juncture. Forty-four scholars from 13 countries and regions (including Hong Kong and Taiwan) attended, and 25 papers were presented. The discussions were open, candid, and vibrant. The conference focused on public administration research, though some sessions also addressed education.

While conference attendees are apt to vary in their assessment, the following is ours, grounded in the papers, presentations and discussions of the conference.

There is no doubt that public administration research in China has made many strides in recent years. Many young Chinese scholars have received PhD training at some of the best universities in the world. Some of these scholars have found productive “homes” at foreign universities, including institutions in the US, and they publish their work in leading journals. Some foreign-trained Chinese PhDs are returning to mainland China and, like those who have been trained in China, are seeking publication in SSCI journals. Since 2001, the Ministry of Education has granted 24 universities permission to launch new MPA programs, which have grown strongly. Chinese Public Administration a China-based journal, launched in 1985, and the China Administration Society, created in 1988, further support public administration research efforts in China.

While this is a fertile time for Chinese public administration research, it is also a period of transition. Well-established philosophical and ideological research traditions in mainland China are seldom favored or accepted in international and Western journals, which favor empirical research grounded in theory, and theoretical research inspired by new facts. Scholars seeking to have their work accepted in SSCI journals face the same challenges of developing and executing research that follows Western practices. Also, due to their very recent creation, many Chinese MPA programs continue to draw heavily on existing economics and political science faculty, only a minority of whom have public administration degrees. Some of the challenges we discuss here are not unique to Chinese scholars and public administration, of course, but they are developmental matters of human capital and research practice that raise question which scholars need to
consider assessing the current state of Chinese public administration research.

First, what is the contribution of Chinese public administration research to the international literature? The ongoing globalization of public administration research implies that scholars from around the world now contribute to the conceptual and theoretical development of public administration knowledge. This is indeed the focus of many SSCI journals, and therefore Chinese scholarship must also connect with the international discourse. It must be grounded in it, inspired by it, and contribute to it in creative and excellent ways. The conference’s articles and discussions suggest that public administration in China is still in an emergent stage, and that only a few young scholars are focused on making such contributions, with varying degrees of success.

The need to instill knowledge and respect for quality scholarship is an urgent one. While the richness of Chinese public administration practice has aroused much intellectual curiosity, thereby creating potential opportunities for Chinese scholars to publish in international journals, in the long term such enthusiasm has to be sustained by quality work. Moreover, Western-based scholars also have advantages in being able to do scholarship on the use and diffusion of practices that often first emerge in their countries. Those living in countries that do not tend to lead in public administration practices must either carefully look for what is new, or focus on the discourse and use it to advance themselves as bona fide, global citizens. Learning is the best strategy toward innovation.

Second, what research tools do Chinese public administration scholars have at their disposal? Young scholars in the West often employ survey-based tools because these allow them to gather voluminous datasets that can be used to test theory-based hypotheses. However, the subjects of these surveys are public managers, who, in mainland China, are often inaccessible and unwilling to participate in questionnaires. Because this seems to be the present reality, Chinese scholars must engage in more qualitative-based empirical research, making use of case studies and interview data. While these methods also have limitations in China, public managers can be interviewed, one-on-one, rather than surveyed, such as through a mail survey. This type of case-based scholarship is, however, somewhat more time-consuming than survey-based research and requires solid grounding in the international discourse and its theories. The purpose of such research is to push the frontiers of knowledge, thereby introducing new concepts; case studies and interviews can produce relevant data for that purpose.

These methods need to be further developed in Chinese public administration scholarship.

In this regard, Lu and Chow’s “Monitoring the Growth of Chinese Public Administration Knowledge: Evidence from Chinese Public Administration Journals” shows that only 23 of 615 “basic research” articles in Chinese public administration research collected any firsthand data, and only 92 of 615 articles used secondhand data. Similarly, Jing’s “Dissertation Research in Public Administration in China” shows that only seven of 132 dissertations have datasets, and none used any form of inferential statistics. Thirty-four dissertations used case studies, but we do not know whether these advanced theory in any innovative way. While these data are not definitive, certainly they strongly imply that the empirical research tradition is still in development.

Third, which resources and conditions do universities and other institutions provide for public administration research? The institutional context of Chinese public administration research is not very favorable. Scholars often have high teaching loads, numerous administrative burdens, and low salaries, which all detract from an investment in scholarship. Although increasing, there are still few journals devoted to public administration in China, and few academic conferences to bring emergent public administration faculty together. Also, government funding for public administration scholarship is limited. These conditions are not unique to China, and faculty in other countries often face similar circumstances. For example, research funding for public administration is nearly absent in the US and many faculty in developed countries also face high teaching loads and financial pressures, especially those who live in expensive cities or are young and raising a family.

A very special constraint is the lack of a sizeable cadre of senior faculty in public administration who have a strong record of publications in SSCI journals. Existing senior faculty were trained in a different style. Yet, because research is an art that requires years of dedication and honing to perfect it—there is reason for the minimum 14 years required for becoming a full professor in the US, for example—the lack of opportunities for new PhDs to co-author with and be mentored by senior faculty in their departments is no doubt a challenge.

Fourth, what is the significance of the English language barrier? According to conference attendees, English is still problematic for Chinese-based scholars. Yet, it is the language of the discipline and formal and informal discourse. Consequently, the important and sad effect of this barrier is a reduction of the potential pool of top
Chinese faculty for international scholarship. While this barrier may disappear in time, for now, it is very much still present.

Despite the above challenges, the scene is also pregnant with significant opportunities. First, there is a rising demand for quality scholarship by many top journals in public administration. This demand reflects an imminent demographic shortfall caused by the retirement of many well-established senior scholars in the US. Many productive authors and top journals are US-based (with some also in the UK). These retirements are part of the larger US “boomer” retirement cycle that has begun. Simply, many of the best-known and well-published US scholars are retiring or ceasing to be as productive as they once were. Further, there are relatively few scholars in the 40–55 age group, which also reflects US demographic patterns, as well as the boomer generation bottleneck of the 1970s and 1980s. In short, there is an increasing demand for quality scholarship in public administration that will likely last for at least another ten years as the newer generation “gets up to speed” and masters the requisite skills.

Second, the ongoing internationalization of public administration research and education creates further opportunities for publishing and collaboration. Internationalization has led to many new English-language journals in the field, for example, in Australia, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Turkey, to name a few. Even though these journals are not always SSCI-indexed, they do provide additional outlets for scholarship. These journals offer further publication opportunities because of the common Western-style research methods they often seek; there is not yet much “Balkanization” of the field.

Third, international travel is increasingly commonplace, and many governments and institutions offer scholars travel stipends. Attending annual conferences is key to knowing the international discourse of the field (several years before it is reflected in the journals), networking, and building productive scholarly relationships. While public administration research is likely to be US dominated for some time to come, it is also becoming increasingly internationalized.

Fourth, recent advances in global communications further collaboration among public administration scholars in ways that transcend barriers. Skype and other VOIP systems make global voice communication cheaper than domestic cell phone rates, and existing tools like email continue to support collaboration. Like their U.S. counterparts, junior faculty in China often do not have senior faculty with whom to collaborate at their universities; hence, mentoring-by-distance is increasingly the norm. Also, senior U.S. faculty may well be willing to assist new faculty in other countries when approached.

The technical possibilities of international collaboration do not mitigate the time-honored challenge of producing quality academic research, but rather add to it. Methods of comparative research are underdeveloped in public administration, creating a need for new scholars to develop meaningful, theory-grounded ways of doing it. Merely having comparative cases in two or more countries does not do much to further the international discourse of the field, of course. Some conference participants noted this challenge, but it has yet to be resolved.

A variety of pathways are naturally suggested from the above opportunities. It is obvious that Chinese public administration scholars would do well to develop projects that are designed to add value to the international literature. The best approach is to develop research with specific journals in mind, as different journals vary in their theory and empirical research methods, yet few Chinese scholars seem aware of or follow this practice. Also, Chinese scholars should resolve the empirical data problem by developing methodologies that are acceptable to international journals. Indeed, resolving this is a contribution in its own right that could lead to a competitive advantage. Finally, it is obvious that new Chinese scholars must collaborate internationally in order to gain the experience they need. Hence, language and project management skills are requisite.

Yet, perhaps the overarching theme here is that new mentalities must be adopted. A key conclusion is that, despite their cultural interests or identity, Chinese scholars will also need to be citizens of the world; the discourse is international, the contribution is international, the journals have an international readership, and the standards are international. Paradoxically, becoming internationally oriented produces benefits that further national Chinese interests. While some research projects are designed to serve local or national needs without having much, if any, international relevance, the most important and prestigious studies that need to be developed will target a global readership and contribute to knowledge and practice of public administration throughout the world. The question among some conference participants was whether, and in what ways, Chinese institutions will help Chinese scholars make global contributions, which are the hallmark of the elite journals’ discourse.

Overview of Symposium Articles
We present five articles in this CPAR symposium. All of them focus on the public administration research...
issues in mainland China. In “Monitoring the Growth of Chinese Public Administration Knowledge: Evidence from Chinese Public Administration Journals,” Lu and Chow provide a content analysis of articles that appeared in the journal Chinese Public Administration, and they compare their findings with other content analysis studies. While bibliometric studies do vary considerably in how they analyze and categorize studies, the authors state that Chinese public administration is “still in an early stage of development, and its coming of age is more a mirage than reality.”

Lu and Chow additionally note that traditional public administration studies tend to be “descriptive, normative, non-analytical,” resulting in “reductionist narrowness and superficial knowledge accumulation, contributing to mediocrity in scholarship.” Their analysis finds that 89% of the 615 “basic research” articles are non-empirical, and 23% of the 489 “applied research” articles show concern for enriching theoretical knowledge. The latter may suggest the relevance of empirical research for modern theory development, which is furthered and enriched by new facts. Overall, their findings support the idea that Chinese scholarship in public administration is only now beginning to take form.

In “Dissertation Research in Public Administration in China,” Jing finds that dissertations produced in China between 2002 and 2006 can be considered unsatisfactory based on research question, validity, theory relevance, causality, importance, and innovativeness criteria. A comparison between 132 Chinese dissertations and those produced in the US in 1981, 1990 and 1998 shows that the Chinese dissertations were most similar to the U.S. dissertations from 1981. Jing notes major problems in Chinese public administration doctoral programs, including the lack of the orientation toward research, inadequate or inappropriate institutions of PhD advising, and distorted adaptation to internationalization.

Jing concludes that doctoral research in China is still new and experiencing a process of transition toward modern scholarship. Indeed, he points out the need for institutional adjustments and reforms to better meet new objectives. For example, a PhD advisor in China is a formal position that an applicant generally receives one or two years after becoming a full professor. Yet, Jing finds that 132 Chinese PhDs shared a total of 18 PhD advisors, three of whom got their final degrees from abroad and only five of whom had a PhD degree themselves. Younger faculty members, who are at the pinnacle of academic creativeness and productivity and are more aligned with international literature and publications standards, find it hard to involve doctoral students in their research. It is clear that the modernization of PhD research requires some structural changes in the Chinese system if it is to produce scholars with a potential for making globally competitive contributions to knowledge.

In “Public Science and Technology Policy Research in China,” Sun and Zhang provide a bibliographic study of science and technology (S&T) policy research, which has been of burgeoning interest in China since the 1980s and has received much financial support. Their analysis of 1,410 articles, which appeared in the 13 relevant journals between 2004 and 2006, shows that 66% of first authors’ affiliations were schools of administration, though only about 8% were from public administration. Most were from schools of economic administration and administration that is not specifically public or business oriented, which undoubtedly reflects the nascent development of public administration in China.

Sun and Zhang find about 66% of articles used a qualitative methodology, which they classify as “thinking and debate analysis.” Case studies and comparative studies are few, and only six studies were classified as concerning S&T policy processes. Only 24% of articles used any quantitative analysis. About 28% of references were from English-source journals, with the remainder came mostly from Chinese sources. They also note that while 65% of articles were co-authored, very few young scholars were listed as first authors. Sun and Zhang characterize S&T policy studies as “an immature field” that should be viewed from “a transitional perspective.” Their findings from this specialized field echo those of Lu and Chow for the broader discipline.

In “Three Waves of Public Administration Education in China: The Human Resource Development Perspective,” Zhao discusses the development of public administration in China. Theoretically, the first wave of public administration reached from the Qing dynasty to the Communist party’s reshuffling of the higher educational system in the 1950s. Public administration then experienced “a glacier period” of about three decades in which the development of political science and social sciences were suspended. The second wave started in the late 1970s and peaked in 2001 when new MPA programs were established, introducing modern notions of managerial and administrative values, skills, and knowledge.

However, the lack of professionally trained faculty in Chinese public administration schools is problematic. There is a 30-year development gap between scholars of the old approaches and the new. Very few instructors have received formal training in
public administration; many young professors teach PA core courses after completing short exchange programs in the West. While new public administration schools are being created, the problems of staffing them with well-trained scholars will take longer to resolve as such faculty come up through the ranks and are drawn from those who have studied abroad. The coming third wave may or may not bring solutions to these problems.

In “Empowered Autonomy: The Politics of Community Governance Innovations in Shanghai,” Liu provides a case study of neighborhood governance. Liu discusses the new efforts of the Chinese state to strengthen itself at the grassroots level and their consequences. He looks at the practice in Shanghai, an area with the most advanced practices in urban community building, and applies a combined perspective of social capital creation and democratic engagement. Liu discloses new opportunities and incentives for building a civil society at the community level, such as direct election of urban residents’ committees and three-meeting institutions.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is attempting to provide infrastructure for community decision-making to meet the growing demand for community-oriented social services no longer covered by the work unit (dan wei) system. Liu shows that new governing arrangements help residents to articulate their interests in an autonomous manner. For example, in March 2001, 20 Shanghai residents attended a sub-committee meeting to propose an outdoor gym for their neighborhood. After further meetings, they submitted a report to the street office for financial support. Within two months, the construction of the gym was completed and opened for public use with applause from many residents.

From the perspective of this symposium, Liu’s study may well be representative of case study research methods that are available to public administration scholars in China. It provides ample evidence of the potential for contributing to international discourse (citizen relations, direct participation, etc) using existing theoretical concepts (accountability, etc.) and empirical methods like case interviews and surveys of participants. At the same time, it also highlights the need for careful attention to the rigorous standards of top journals in the field. Reviewers are apt to ask such advanced questions as: How does the article advance the international discourse and what new concepts or practices does it offer to do so? Also, the survey and interviewing methods require advanced justifications of possible response sets and interviewing biases. Future researchers will want to design their projects with these and similar considerations in mind in order to increase their success in the international publishing arena.

In sum, the conference and this symposium are most helpful for understanding the challenges and state of public administration in China today. While public administration research is in an emergent state, this situation is not entirely unique relative to other developing countries, and it is filled with significant opportunities for a rich development. The burgeoning internationalization of public administration, both as a practice and a discipline, has created numerous possibilities for Chinese scholars. We express the sincere hope they will grasp these opportunities by actively participating in the global dialogue of the discipline, forging productive research partnerships with their international colleagues, and shifting to evidence-based research using state-of-art research methods found in the top journals.

Notes

* This introduction and the following symposium papers only discuss public administration issues of mainland China, leaving Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao aside.

Authors

Evan M. Berman is the Huey McElveen Distinguished Professor at Louisiana State University’s Public Administration Institute in Baton Rouge. He is editor-in-chief of the ASPA book series Public Administration and Public Policy and managing editor of Public Performance & Management Review. He has over 100 publications, including eight books, and his work has received numerous. He is co-author of Human Resources Management in Public Service (published in Chinese by Peking University Press, 2008). He is currently editing the book Public Administration in East Asia: Mainland China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan (Taylor & Francis, forthcoming).

Yijia Jing, PhD, is an associate professor and assistant dean of the School of International Relations and Public Affairs at Fudan University. He researches privatization, governance, organizational theory, and comparative public administration, and is the director of the Center for Collaborative Governance Research. He has published work in the journals Management World (in Chinese) and Public Administration and Development (SSCI-indexed) and sits on the editorial board of International Review of Public Administration. He is currently editing the fall 2008 issue of Fudan Public Administration Review.
Monitoring the Growth of Chinese Public Administration Knowledge: Evidence from Chinese Public Administration Journals

Lucia Q. Lu, Sichuan University

King W. Chow, Sichuan University

Abstract: Empirical research involving content analysis of Chinese journal articles has been conducted in the last few years, but the focus has been on the issues and problems of Chinese public administration as a basic social science rather than an applied field. This narrow focus can be misleading. The need to reassess the quality of Chinese PA research is based on three presumptions: that it is a basic science, an applied science, and both. This study attempts to complete the monitoring of progress in knowledge advancement by assessing quality based on an analysis framework that includes an assessment of applied research reports published in Chinese PA journals. The population of articles analyzed comprises 1,123 papers published in *Chinese Public Administration* (CPA) from 2002 to 2006; further, 300 articles published in 16 journals from 1998 to 2006 were analyzed in the pilot study (but not included here). Specific findings are presented here, in addition to the two principal conclusions: Theory-building and knowledge advancement in Chinese PA have been rather problematic, but many studies reported in *CPA*, when classified as applied research, are valuable, in spite of the defects and shortcomings identified. This article also discusses implications for future research and the development of Chinese PA as a field of study.

There are various types of public administrative systems (König, 2004). In the case of China, a Marxist-Leninist state caught in the development stream (Chan & Chow, 2007), administrative systems play a more critical role in state strategic development and governance, in comparison to counterparts in Western democratic-constitutional states and the military regimes of some developing countries. As such, the value and significance of China’s public administration theories generally, and administrative practices in particular, are obvious. The progress of theory building and knowledge advancement, however, was not monitored after Chow (1991) discussed the various development issues of PA as an academic discipline in mainland China. Until the late 1990s, some Chinese scholars began to pay attention to this issue. For example, Bao (1998) identified ten major development problems of Chinese PA as a field of study; Zhang and Holzer (2001) reviewed the causes of the underdevelopment of research methodology; and Yuan (2002) discussed six pitfalls in research. Then, Ma (2006) presented the latest critiques, focusing on four major research problems to be remedied: the field’s research foci are primarily non-Chinese as most articles reviewed Western elements for importation; research methodological rigor is absent; researchers lack understanding of how the real PA world works; and research findings lack relevance and thus cannot inform practices. These monitorings and critiques were based on the scholars’ observations and/or literature review. Empirical verification, however, was absent. Dong, Bai, and Liang (2005) and He (2007) attempted to fill the gap.

The Empirical Studies

Dong et al. (2005) reviewed the articles published between January 2000 and June 2004 in five academic journals, namely, *Chinese Public Administration*, *Peking University Journal, Fudan University Journal, Wuhan University Journal, and Zhongshan University Journal*. Their objective was to review the progress of methodological application in recent years. A total of 855 PA articles were analyzed. Dong et al. found that 479 articles (56.02%) focused on concept clarification and 335 (39.2%) on problem delineation, and, of the 41 articles (4.78%) that dealt with research problems, only 5 (0.58%) used quantitative methods while 35 (4.2%) employed qualitative methods. Dong et al. reasoned that since PA is a basic science and Chinese PA as a field of study has a rather short history, it is
understandable that most scholarly attention has been devoted to clarifying concepts and delineating problems.

He (2007) analyzed PA articles published (1) from 1995 to 2005 in CPA, CASS Journal of Political Science (Zheng Zhi Xue Yan Ji), Chinese Journal of Management Science (Zhong Guo Guan Li Ke Xue), and Journal of Management Sciences in China (Guan Li Ke Xue Xue Bao); (2) from 2004 to 2005 in Journal of Public Management (Gong Gong Guan Li Xue Bao) and Public Management Review (Gong Gong Guan Li Ping Lun); and (3) from 1995 to 2005 in the Public Administration Section of the Renmin University Archive (hereafter, Renda Fuyin), which in theory selects journal articles for compilation and storage based on their significance and value. She analyzed a total of 2,729 articles, with 1,608 articles from CPA (58.9%), and 765 from Renda Fuyin (28%). She adopted a broader scope than Dong et al. (2005), using ten indicators in her examination of the issues and problems of Chinese PA articles. The key indicators included themes and types of research, epistemic requirements in the neopositivist tradition, and data collection and analysis methods.

He’s (2007) principal findings include the following. First, 55.8% of the articles were written by scholars with university affiliations and 12.5% by those affiliated with Party schools and/or institutes of administration: That is, 68.3% of the 2,729 articles were written by academics. The third major group of contributors came from the government (7.7%). He’s detailed analysis suggests that only 44.3% of contributors to CPA were university faculty members, while the percentages rise to 57.4% for contributors to CASS Journal of Political Science and 93.9% for Chinese Journal of Management Science. In contrast, authors with government affiliations published 169 articles in CPA (10.5%), but comprised the small minority in such publications as Journal of Management Sciences in China (2.4%) and CASS Journal of Political Science (4.3%).

Second, the percentage of articles by theme broke down as follows: 28.5% on administrative reform; 13.2% on administrative philosophy (inclusive of administrative culture and ethics); 9.8% on budgeting; 8.8% on organization and management; 8.6% on public policy; and 1% (27 articles) on methodology.

Third, 2,579 articles (94.5%) adopted a normative approach to discussing issues and prescribing solutions, while only 149 articles (5.5%) were empirical studies. Moreover, 43.6% of the articles did not contain literature reviews, and only 41.8% had references. This left only 14.9% containing literature review and discourse. He (2007) found these substandard scholarly practices reinforced “reinventing the wheel” and did not contribute to the growth of PA knowledge (p. 103). Furthermore, 2,638 of the articles (96.7%) used non-emirical methods. This deficiency might be a natural outcome since 91.7% of the research was not funded by grants or contracts, but it undoubtedly adversely affects theory building. There is only one question He does not address: Why would Chinese PA journals publish these substandard articles?

Finally, 2.6% (72) of the articles examined dealt with concept clarification and 93.4% (2,550) with problem delineation, leaving 3.9% (107) focused on causal analysis. These figures are generally in line with those presented by Dong et al. (2005), but only in aggregate: Dong et al. found that 56.02% of the articles they had analyzed focused on concept clarification and 39.2% on problem delineation. This incongruence between the two sets of findings reflects the possibility of a serious problem of inter-rater reliability. Indeed, these two studies did not give detailed information about inter-rater reliability, nor did they clearly indicate who performed the content analysis of the articles.

Incomplete Analysis

These two empirical studies correspond to the aforementioned scholars’ impressionistic critiques, documenting, as Chow (1991) had highlighted, that Chinese PA as an academic discipline is still in an early stage of development, and its coming of age is more a mirage than reality, in spite of the efforts expended over the past three decades. Further, comparing He’s (2007) findings to those of Xiao and Zheng (2005), who had analyzed the content of journal articles in the field of Chinese political science and reported similar findings, may lead one to suspect that there are some underlying forces in China that (1) negatively affect the study of political science and PA, which invariably focus on public authority and power, (2) indicate that the development of social sciences in China may have a long way to go, and (3) suggest the underdevelopment of Chinese PA as an academic discipline may be inevitable until the overall political milieu has improved. But if PA theories are indeed indispensable in the course of developing China and its governance, passivity is undesirable. Scholars need to work out their strategies to speed up the growth of PA knowledge and the building of theories.

A critical question then remains: Is Chinese PA research merely problematic from a scholarly view of the mainstream? That is, given that critical scholars assess the development of the field based on Western knowledge of social scientific research, could it be just another incidence of incorrectly
importing Western ideas, which are incomplete or idiosyncratic? There are grounds to be cautious. Take Perry and Kramers (1984) as a classic example. In their study, applied research oriented articles were excluded from their analysis even though they themselves had repeatedly stressed that PA has a strong applied orientation (p. 215 & 219). Additionally, when analyzing the articles, Perry and Kramers used the neopositivist approach to assess the quality of the works, forgetting that neopositivism is not the only available method (White, 1986, p. 15), and that research geared towards problem-solving might be guided by a different set of expectations (Furlong & Oancea, 2005, p. 9). In other words, if PA is or is not more than a basic science, it would be erroneous to apply the neopositivist standard to assess the values and quality of PA research reports, as Perry and Kramers (1984) did. If we reject the presumption that PA is a basic science, as Dong et al. (2005) have suggested, we might have to take at fresh look at Chinese PA research. In contrast, a recent study (Zhou, 2005) has argued that PA is an applied science, with problem solving as its primary mission. This corresponds to Shangraw and Crow’s (1989) thesis that, based on Hebert Simon’s (1969) understanding of human efforts to create, PA could be considered a design science that prescribes PA systems, institutions, and processes. This means that the adoption of prescriptive approach in Chinese PA research, though criticized by the aforementioned scholars, is in fact desirable from the design science perspective. In other words, the quality of Chinese PA research needs to be reassessed based on three presumptions: that it is a basic science, an applied science, and both. This is the objective of this study.¹

The Content Analysis Study
This study began with the presumption that PA research can be basic, applied, or both. Its purpose was to find out whether or not basic and applied studies in Chinese PA were up to standard. After all, being sub-standard in either category has different implications and, inevitably, different remedies. Further, the related goals were to (1) analyze journal articles in order to map out the profile of theory building and knowledge advancement in Chinese PA, (2) identify some patterns of knowledge advancement using a comparative perspective, and (3) underscore the current deficiencies and issues for upgrading the quality of basic and applied research and their value for developing China.

Sample Selection
In-depth analysis indicated that Dong et al.’s (2005) and He’s (2007) research designs had defects. For example, Dong et al. had misleadingly suggested that empirical analysis is the antithesis of a theoretical study (2007, p. 98). Their inclusion of articles in university journals for content analysis created a biased sample, as those university journals primarily publish the works of their respective faculty, thus reducing representativeness of scholarship. Then, He selected Renda Fuyin articles for analysis. Knowledgeable scholars would be quick to point out that Renda Fuyin could not include articles on a merit basis as its selectors lack the substantive expertise to make such a selection. In view of the issues and problems of these two empirical studies, this study eliminated from the sample articles published in Renda Fuyin and other journals, and focused on articles published in CPA from 2002 to 2006. The rationale for this is twofold. First, as the official publication of the Chinese Public Administration Society, CPA is considered a leading journal in the Chinese PA community, one that serves as a forum for scholars and practitioners, thus making it more representative as an outlet for basic and applied research. Second, by focusing on one journal, we expected the analysis would not only yield comparable data but also specific recommendations based on data analysis for quality improvement specific to the targeted journal.

In view of CPA’s pivotal role, we concluded that the purpose of assessing quality could be the one best served. In order to devote more time to quality content analysis and implication pondering, we intentionally focused on articles published over five years (2002–2006), rather than selecting a large pool, which would be time-consuming and create unreliability. It should be noted that, in order to compare and contrast the quality of CPA articles with other PA articles, we, at the pilot study stage, analyzed more than 300 articles from various journals, including those Dong et al. (2005) and He (2007) used in their studies, as well as mainstream sources, such as the Chinese social sciences citation indexed (CSSCI) Journal of National Administrative Sciences Institute and the Journal of Beijing Administrative Sciences Institute. The purpose was to determine if there was a large discrepancy between the two sets. The general finding was negative: All the articles were remarkably similar in terms of the approaches adopted, methods used, and literature reviewed. The noticeable differences were that the length of articles in CPA tended to be shorter and more of them had fewer or no references. The literature cited in those journals, however, revealed that almost all references were made not for literature critique or integration but for documenting sources of information only. This kind of citation could not be used as an indication that the articles were more
scholarly in substance than those that provided few or no references.

**Codebook Development**

Using previous research (Adams & White, 1994; Cleary, 1992; Douglas, 1996; Furlong & Oancea, 2005; Lan & Anders, 2000; McCurdy & Cleary, 1984; Perry & Kramers, 1984; Terry, 2005; White, 1986; White, Adams, & Forrest, 1996; Wright, Manigault, & Black, 2004) as a basis, we developed a codebook for content analysis tailored-made to Chinese PA’s context peculiarities (see Table 1). The codebook contains three sections, with Section A on common data, Section B on indicators of basic research, and Section C on applied research, for a total of 54 items. To ensure the validity of the indicators and the reliability of the assessment, we arranged for six graduate PA students to conduct a pilot study, involving the analysis of approximately 1,800 CPA articles, by using the original version of the codebook. Careful analysis of the students’ findings revealed various validity and reliability problems. The inter-rater reliability was very low—in the neighbor of 0.16. Based on the pilot study, we revised the codebook by precisely rewording the valid indicators and deleting the items that invited subjective assessment. Our application of the revised codebook in the analysis thus became straightforward, and inter-rater reliability was established at 0.80.

The revised codebook contains three sections, with Section A on descriptive data, Section B on indicators of basic research, and Section C on applied research, for a total of 54 items (see Table 1). Section A includes descriptive data about the articles, focusing on authorship, affiliation, funding, themes, scope of analysis, and types of research, and contains a total of 37 items. While most of the items are self-explanatory, the “themes of the articles” and “types of research” deserve explanation. The themes of the articles, repeated three times in the codebook (see items A32–A34), were supposed to yield a basis for comparison with Perry and Kramers’ (1984), Terry’s (2005), and He’s (2007) classifications and findings. Regarding the “types of research,” instead of using only the basic and applied research distinction (i.e., theoretical analysis and problem-solving oriented studies), three additional categories were included, making a total of five types of research for classifying the CPA articles: (1) a combination of theoretical analysis and problem-solving studies, based on the insights of Cheney, Wilhelmsen, and Zorn (2002); (2) exemplary cases, which were reports about the administrative practices in government agencies; and (3) research on administration history or reports of Western theories or experiences.

Regarding the last two additional categories, in the preliminary analysis of this study, some journal articles Dong et al. (2005) and He included in their studies were found to be classified as articles that clarified concepts, delineated problems, or took a prescriptive approach. Others were classified as descriptive reports for disseminating information about exemplary practices in different agencies or about theories and practices in the West. These articles were historically relevant at different developmental stages of Chinese PA, and thus it would be unjust to classify them as basic or applied research reports, and then criticize them as atheoretical for taking a normative stance or being irrelevant to specific problem solving.

Section B contains indicators of basic research: research methodology employed; methods of empirical analysis used; data sources; research approach employed; and qualitative and quantitative methods used. It should be noted that the typical trio of analysis—theoretical, interpretive, and critical (White, 1984)—was not used in the codebook as a classification scheme. The sole reason for this was that the preliminary analysis had suggested that very few articles could be considered critique oriented, while almost all articles could be classified as interpretive since there were not many that examined or verified causal relationships. Therefore, it would have been meaningless to make the attempt to use the trio as a classification scheme. Also deserving attention were research methodology and specific methods of empirical analysis employed (see B1. and B2. in Table 1) and qualitative and quantitative methods used (see B5. and B6.). Regarding the former, the indicators were extracted from Perry and Kramers’ (1984, p. 225) journal article content analysis so that there would be a basis for comparison. Regarding the latter, the specific qualitative and quantitative methods listed were extracted from Adams and White’s codebook (1994, p. 570), with the intention of comparing the current research in China with the population of dissertations they reviewed to shed light on the methodological rigor of Chinese scholars, most of whom are not doctoral holders.

Section C contains items that reflect expectations in applied science. Originally, the selection of the items was based on our review of various applied studies journals’ peer review guidelines in the fields of engineering and education. Indicators were also selected from Furlong and Oancea’s (2005) applied and performance-based research quality assessment framework. A total of 30 indicators were chosen. As previously mentioned, we had six PA graduate students participate in the pilot study, which analyzed around 1,800 articles from
The inter-rater reliability was very low, as many of the items in Section C were vague or open to subjective interpretation. As a result, 20 items with defects were deleted, leaving 10 that focused on research approaches employed and relevance to the advancement of theoretical knowledge, as well as practicality, specificity, operationalization, broader application, and practitioner reflection.

**Table 1.** Codebook for Analyzing Chinese Public Administration Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Common Data</th>
<th>A22. Degree Held by the 2nd Author:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Title of the Journal:</td>
<td>1. Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. Year:</td>
<td>2. Doctoral Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3. Volume No.:</td>
<td>3. None of the Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4. Issue No.:</td>
<td>4. Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5. Title of the Article:</td>
<td>A23. Professional Status of the 2nd Author:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual</td>
<td>2. Education Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Research Team</td>
<td>3. Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Organization</td>
<td>4. Full-time Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7. No. of Authors:</td>
<td>5. Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8. Name of Authors:</td>
<td>6. Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9. Name of the Research Team/Organization:</td>
<td>A24. Job Title of the 2nd Author:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A10. Name of Institution of the Sole Author:</td>
<td>1. Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11. Gender of the Sole Author:</td>
<td>2. Associate Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Male</td>
<td>3. Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Female</td>
<td>4. Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unknown</td>
<td>5. Associate Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A12. Degree held by the Sole Author:</td>
<td>6. Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Doctorate</td>
<td>7. Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Doctoral Students</td>
<td>A25. Institution Name of the 3rd Author:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. None of the Above</td>
<td>A26. Gender of the 3rd Author:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Unknown</td>
<td>1. Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A13. Professional Status of the Sole Author:</td>
<td>2. Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Government Employee</td>
<td>3. Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Education Professional</td>
<td>A27. Degree Held by the 3rd Author:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Researcher</td>
<td>1. Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Full-time Student</td>
<td>2. Doctoral Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other</td>
<td>3. None of the Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unknown</td>
<td>4. Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A14. Job Title of the Sole Author:</td>
<td>A28. Professional Status of the 3rd Author:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Professor</td>
<td>1. Government Employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Associate Professor</td>
<td>2. Education Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A33. Theme of the Article for Comparing with PAR in 2004:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Public Management/Management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Comparative/International</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. PAR Report, Special Reports</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Governance/Democracy/Legal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Performance Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Reflective Practitioner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Citizen/Public Participation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Public Policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Budgeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Privatization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Representative Bureaucracy/Race/Gender</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. Accountability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Local Government</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Big Questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Bureaucracy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. Reinventing Government</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. PA Theory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. Research Methodology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20. Environmental Policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21. Federal Government</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22. Nonprofit Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23. Technology/E-Government</td>
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<td></td>
<td>24. Homeland Security/Terrorism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>25. Organizational Theory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>26. Public Service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>27. Ethics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28. PA as an Academic Field</td>
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<td></td>
<td>29. Public and Private Sectors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30. Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31. Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A34. Theme of the Article for Comparison with He’s (2007):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Administrative Organization and Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Administrative Decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Public Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Public Budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Civil Service System and Human Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Performance Assessment</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Associate Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A15. Institution Name of the 1st Author:

A16. Gender the 1st Author:

1. Male
2. Female
3. Unknown

A17. Degree Held by the 1st Author:

1. Doctorate
2. Doctoral Students
3. None of the Above
4. Unknown

A18. Professional Status of the 1st Author:

1. Government Employee
2. Education Professional
3. Researcher
4. Full-time Student
5. Other
6. Unknown

A19. Job Title of the 1st Author:

1. Professor
2. Associate Professor
3. Lecturer
4. Researcher
5. Associate Researcher
6. Other
7. Unknown

A20. Institution Name of the 2nd Author:

A21. Gender of the 2nd Author:

1. Male
2. Female
3. Unknown

A29. Job Title of the 3rd Author:

1. Professor
2. Associate Professor
3. Lecturer
4. Researcher
5. Associate Researcher
6. Other
7. Unknown

A30. Funding:

1. Unfunded (go to A32)
2. Funded

A31. Source of Funding:

1. State Council Ministry, Commission, or Bureau
2. Provincial
3. Municipal
4. Enterprise
5. Foundation
6. Association
7. Other

A32. Theme of the Article for Comparing with Public Administration Review (PAR) in the 1980s:

1. Administrative Theory
2. Public Management
3. Citizen Participation
4. Public Policy
5. Planning
6. Accountability
7. Personnel
8. Finance
9. Intergovernmental Relations
10. Urban and Regional Government
11. State/Provincial Government
12. Federal/Central Government
13. Other

(Administrative Efficiency)

7. (Specific) Administrative Reform
8. Intergovernmental Relations
9. Administrative Philosophy and Ethics
10. NGO
11. Development of PA as a Field of Study
12. Research Methods
13. Administrative Law
14. Anti-corruption
15. Other

A35. Scope of Analysis:

1. Mainland China
2. Other Countries and Special Administration Regions of China
3. Cross-countries Analysis
4. No Specific Country Focused

A36. The Country of Focus

__________.

A37. Types of Research:

1. Theory-related Analysis (go to Section B)
2. Problem-solving Oriented Studies (go to Section C)
3. Theory-building and Problem-solving Oriented Studies
4. Exemplary Cases
5. Reporting of History of Administration or Western Theories/Experiences
## B. Basic Research

### B1. Research Methodology:
1. Recollected Experience: Anthropology
2. Recollected Experience: Historical
3. Recollected Experience: Descriptive
4. Deductive Reasoning: Mathematical
5. Deductive Reasoning: Logical Argument
6. Deductive Reasoning: Legal Brief
7. Empirical Analysis (inductive)
8. Heuristic Analogy such as Simulation
9. Literature Review
10. Other

### B2. Methods of Empirical Analysis:
1. Non-empirical Analysis
2. Case Study
3. Cross-sectional, Correlation Analysis
4. Structural Equations
5. Longitudinal Analysis
6. Controlled Field or Laboratory Analysis
7. Other

### B3. Sources of Data:
1. First-hand
2. Second-hand
3. None of the Above

### B4. Research Approach:
1. Qualitative Approach
2. Quantitative Approach
3. In Combination

### B5. Qualitative Methods Used:
1. Qualitative Logic of Inquiry
2. Interview
3. Participation Observation
4. Action Research
5. Literature Review
6. Other

### B6. Quantitative Methods Used:
1. Survey Research
2. Experimental Design
3. Statistics
4. Mathematical Modeling
5. Economic/Financial Analysis
6. Simulation
7. Forecasting
8. Meta-analysis
9. Secondary Data
10. Content Analysis
11. Q Sort
12. Other

### B7. Is it a Critical Approach:
1. Yes
2. No

## C. Applied Research

### C1. Research Approach Used:
1. Strategic Research
2. Reflection Study
3. Constructivist Study
4. Logical Analysis
5. Action Research
6. Practice-based Research/Performance as Research
7. Theory Application
8. Method Importation
9. Other

### C2. Does the Study Contribute to Theoretical Knowledge?
1. Yes
2. No

### C3. Does the Study Focus Specifically on a Specific Problem?
1. Yes
2. No

### C4. Is the Study Promising in Solving the Targeted Problem?
1. Yes
2. No

### C5. Is the Study Timely?
1. Yes
2. No

### C6. Is the Proposed Solution(s) Operational?
1. Yes
2. No

### C7. Is the Study Relevant to Issues in Other Areas?
1. Yes
2. No

### C8. Is the Study Accessible to Users?
1. Yes
2. No

### C9. Does the Study Help Practitioners Reflect on their Current Thinking in Coping with the Respective Problem?
1. Yes
2. No

### C10. Does the Study Help Practitioners Critically Examine their Current Measures Used to Solving the Respective Problem?
1. Yes
2. No
Principal Findings and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

A population of 1,123 articles were analyzed, with 510 (45.4%) related to basic research, 384 (34.2%) related to applied research, 105 (9.3%) combining basic and applied research, 50 (4.5%) being exemplary cases, and 74 (6.6%) related to history or Western theories or experiences.

These 1,123 articles were prepared by five organizations (0.4%), 25 research teams (2.2%), and the rest by individuals (97.3%)—among these 1,093 articles, 755 (67.2%) had one author; 286 (25.5%) had two, 40 (3.6%) had three, 9 (0.8%) had four, 2 (0.2%) had five, and 1 (.01%) had six. The mean therefore is 1.33 authors per article. Compared to the mean of 1.14 in the period of 1997–2001, there are signs that, since the start of the new century, Chinese scholars have been more likely to work in teams. The mean, however, is low compared, for example, that of 2.19 for Strategic Management Journal, the fifth ranked management journal (Phelan, Ferreira, & Salvador, 2002, p. 1163); this implies that Chinese PA scholars are less likely to team up for synergy. When the high percentage of individual authorship is compared to funding, which is acknowledged in only 152 articles (13.5%), one may hypothesize that individuals are less likely to get research funding even though they have the capacity to publish in a premier journal like CPA.

Of the 2,729 articles He (2007) analyzed, 91.7% did not acknowledge research funding. Our findings indicate that, of the 1,123 articles published 2002–2006 in CPA, 86.5% did not acknowledge funding, while 152 (13.5%) did. In comparison, our data show that, out of the 736 articles published in 1997–2001 in the same journal, 98.5% were unfunded. The changes in the funding percentages are therefore quite impressive. The 12% increase from 1997–2001 to 2002–2006 might have to do with the fact that the government has substantively increased its funding to social sciences projects in recent years. Indeed, analysis of the sources of funding reveals that the percentages of funding acknowledgement from central, provincial, and municipal governments were 62.5%, 17.1%, and 5.9%, respectively. When analyzing these funded studies, we paid special attention to their quality in comparison to other articles. Our general impression was that, overall, funded projects tended to produce more quality articles. This may have to do with the availability of resources to researchers which enhances quality assurance or with the initial screening effect of funding that helps researchers to begin their work at a higher quality level.

In the sample, only some female scholars indicated their gender. Of the 559 single-author articles that had gender identified in the author column, 72 authors were female (12.88%). Of the 245 gender-obvious jointly authored articles, females comprised 14.69% of first authors and 24.56% of second authors. Given these percentages in the current ranking of the joint-authorship system, in which the first author claims major credit, the implication is obvious: While the sample size is small, speculation can still be made that gender inequality may be an issue to be explored in the Chinese PA community.

He’s (2007) study shows that 62.2% of the articles did not indicate affiliation and job status. In this study, only 25.3% of the articles did not do so, a reflection that CPA has adopted more a standardized practice. Further, of the 816 articles that show affiliation and job status, 68.9% of the authors were affiliated with universities and colleges. These figures substantiate the proposition that academics are the main contributors to professional knowledge advancement in the field, be it in China (He, 2007) or in the US (Lan & Anders, 2000).

Themes of the Compared Articles

When the themes of the CPA articles are compared to those of the Public Administration Review articles published 1975–1984 that Perry and Kramers (1984) analyzed (see Table 2), it is notable that many themes received similar attention from Chinese and American researchers in terms of the percentage of coverage. A few, however, differ substantially. For example, the percentages of Administrative Theory and Public Management are 22.7% and 29.1%, respectively, in CPA, as compared to 11.8% and 12.5% in PAR. These differences may have to do with the fact that China entered the age of administrative reform in the late 1990s, and thus more articles in CPA were devoted to the topic. Whereas the PAR sample accorded 17.8%, 12.5%, and 10.5% for Public Policy, Planning, and Finance, respectively, the CPA sample records only 4.8%, 0.9%, and 1.2%. This may be due to the specialization tradition in China, modeled after the former Soviet Union in the 1950s: That is, many substantive policy studies are often reported in specific policy journals, while articles on public budgeting and finance are published in economic and finance journals.

When the themes of the articles are compared to Terry’s (2005) editorial report on the distribution of PAR articles according to different themes, (see Table 3), it is obvious that many themes received similar attention from PAR and CPA authors, as the percentages of coverage highlight. Nevertheless,
there are differences. First, the themes of Citizen/Public Participation and Representative Bureaucracy/Race/Gender are revealing: PAR recorded 4.6% and 3.4%, respectively, while CPA recorded 2.1% and 0.2%, respectively. These differences may suggest that Chinese researchers are less concerned with the basic values of citizenship and equality in contemporary PA. Also, Chinese researchers are more interested in Public Management/Management (17%), Human Resource Management (7.4%), and PA Theory (15.3%), and less attentive to, for example, Research Methodology (0.5%), in comparison to their American counterparts (7.7%, 3.7%, 2.6%, and 2.6%, respectively).

In comparison with He’s (2007) record, which indicated that 28.5% of the articles were concerned with administrative reform and 13.2% with administrative philosophy (inclusive of administrative culture and ethics), the data here shows a somewhat different profile. In short, only 128 articles (11.4%) were about administrative reform. This was expected, as He used an umbrella term, and, inevitably, articles on reform in various management function areas would be classified under this general theme. Indeed, He found that there were only 8.8% articles on organization and management, as opposed to this study, which shows a high 21.9%. This suggests that there need to be more specific theme definitions for classifications in future studies monitoring the growth of PA knowledge.

Table 2. Themes of 2002–2006 CPA Articles Compared to 1975–1984 PAR Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Theory</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Management</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernment Relations</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban and Regional Government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Provincial Government</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal/Central Government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The PAR data are adopted from Perry and Kramers (1984, p. 217).*
Other Descriptive Findings
As far as the Scope of Analysis, 886 articles (79%) focused on PA in mainland China; 70 (6.2%) on other countries and China’s Special Administration Regions (SAR) (i.e., Hong Kong and Macau); 14 (3%) on cross-countries analysis; and 132 (11.8%) on no specific country (content analysis showed that these 132 discussed, for example, administrative ethics without giving context specifics). Among the 70 articles that examine development, issues, and implications in other countries, the US (22.1%), Japan (8.7%), Korea (5.8%), and Hong Kong (SAR) (4.8%) received the most attention.

Table 3. Themes of the 2002–2006 CPA Articles Compared to 2000–2005 PAR Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>2000-2005 PAR Articles</th>
<th>2002-2006 CPA Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency  Percent</td>
<td>Frequency  Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Management/Management</td>
<td>27 7.7</td>
<td>191 17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative/International</td>
<td>24 6.9</td>
<td>10 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR Report, Special Reports</td>
<td>20 5.7</td>
<td>22 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance/Democracy/Legal</td>
<td>17 4.9</td>
<td>56 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Management</td>
<td>17 4.9</td>
<td>58 5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practitioner</td>
<td>17 4.9</td>
<td>8 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen/Public Participation</td>
<td>16 4.6</td>
<td>24 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy</td>
<td>16 4.6</td>
<td>54 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>14 4.0</td>
<td>11 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
<td>13 3.7</td>
<td>83 7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatization</td>
<td>12 3.4</td>
<td>5 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative Bureaucracy/Race/Gender</td>
<td>12 3.4</td>
<td>2 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>11 3.1</td>
<td>13 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>11 3.1</td>
<td>54 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Questions</td>
<td>10 2.9</td>
<td>13 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>10 2.9</td>
<td>19 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinventing Government</td>
<td>10 2.9</td>
<td>17 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Theory</td>
<td>9 2.6</td>
<td>172 15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>9 2.6</td>
<td>6 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Policy</td>
<td>8 2.3</td>
<td>4 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>8 2.3</td>
<td>2 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit Management</td>
<td>8 2.3</td>
<td>39 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology/E-Government</td>
<td>8 2.3</td>
<td>52 4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland Security/Terrorism</td>
<td>7 0.2</td>
<td>8 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Theory</td>
<td>7 0.2</td>
<td>12 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>6 1.7</td>
<td>27 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>5 1.4</td>
<td>45 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA as an Academic Field</td>
<td>5 1.4</td>
<td>21 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public and Private Sectors</td>
<td>5 1.4</td>
<td>12 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>4 1.1</td>
<td>14 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4 1.1</td>
<td>69 6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103 100.0</td>
<td>1123 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The PAR data are adopted from Terry (2005, p. 644).
Content analysis indicated that almost half of the articles were theory related—not because CPA authors focused on causality or theory testing in their studies, but because they tended to include at least one or two theories to guide their discussion. These CPA articles are, at best, pre-theoretical works (see the key findings section below for details). With 34.2% of the articles oriented to problem solving, it is obvious that Chinese PA research does have an applied bias. When combined basic and applied research is taken into consideration, the actual figure is 487 articles (43.5%). Content analysis indicated that the combination of articles did not live up to the Western standard as Adam, Carrier, and Wilholt (2006) have suggested—that is, while theory informs practice, practice could in turn shed light on theory building. Nonetheless, the authors of these 105 articles did note or explicitly discuss implications for advancing theoretical knowledge. Without these implications, the articles could have been classified as applied research.

Regarding types of authorship, we found that individual authors tended to write theory-related articles, while research teams and organizations tended to publish applied research reports, as Table 4 shows. Solving public problems may itself be an incentive for researchers to join teams and create needed synergy, as these problems are complex and thus demand various kinds of expertise.

Table 4. Types of Research and Authorship Cross-Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Research</th>
<th>Types of Authorship</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Research Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Theoretical Analysis&quot;</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within &quot;Type of Authorship&quot;</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Problem-solving Oriented Studies&quot;</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within &quot;Type of Authorship&quot;</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Theory-Building and Problem-solving Oriented Studies&quot;</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within &quot;Type of Authorship&quot;</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Exemplary Cases&quot;</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within &quot;Type of Authorship&quot;</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Research on Administration History or Reporting of Western Theories/Experiences&quot;</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within &quot;Type of Authorship&quot;</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Subtotal</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within &quot;Type of Authorship&quot;</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding funding, as Table 5 shows, the distribution of funded or unfunded research according to type is remarkably similar, with the exception that 17.1% of the funded studies combined basic and applied research. This, again, might be due to the availability of resources or the initial funding screening, which potentially helped researchers add value to their studies.

Table 5. Types of Research and Funding Cross-Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Research</th>
<th>Funding Total</th>
<th>Unfunded</th>
<th>Funded</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Theoretical Analysis”</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within “No. of Funding”</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Problem-solving Oriented Studies”</td>
<td></td>
<td>336</td>
<td>384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within “No. of Funding”</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Theory-Building and Problem-solving Oriented Studies”</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within “No. of Funding”</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Exemplary Cases”</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within “No. of Funding”</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Research on Administration History or Reporting of Western Theories/Experiences”</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within “No. of Funding”</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>971</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within “No. of Funding”</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Descriptive Data Comparison

Using a five-category framework, this research was able to yield more specific descriptions of the 1,123 articles, as well as grounds to question the validity of both Dong et al.’s (2005) and He’s (2007) key findings. As mentioned, Dong et al. found that 479 articles (56.02%) focused on concept clarification, 335 (39.2%) on problem delineation, and 41 (4.78%) on research problems. For the population of articles devoted to concept clarification and problem delineation, 95.22% is too high. This study’s finding that up to 43.5% of these can be classified as applied research focused on problem solving casts doubt on Don et al.’s result. Indeed, their research may have inter-rater reliability defects.

He (2007) found that 2,579 articles (94.5%) adopted a normative approach to discussing issues and prescribing solutions, while only 149 articles (5.5%) were empirical studies. That up to 43.5% can be classified as applied research suggests that He may have either mistakenly assumed solutions derived from analysis as one form of prescription, thus making applied research into studies using a normative approach, or broadly considered all of “what is to be done and undone” as prescriptions, thus treating all applied studies as normative. In addition, content analysis indicated that the 510 articles (45.4%) classified as theory-related in this study did not adopt a normative approach as He suggested. Again, He’s erroneous conclusion may have resulted from the quantity (2,729 articles) of her content analysis.

As mentioned, 510 articles were classified as theory-related analysis and 105 as combined basic and applied research. In this population, the number of articles using a particular approach broke down as follows: 5 (0.8%)—anthropology, 31 (5%)—historical, 13 (2.1%)—mathematical, 17 (2.8%)—legal brief, 7 (1.1%)—empirical analysis, 1 (0.2%)—heuristic analogy, 22 (3.6%)—literature review, 316 (51.4%)—descriptive, and 202 (32.8%)—logical argument, with the last two research approaches comprising the bulk (84.2%). In comparison, according to Perry and Kramers (1984), the most popular general research approaches used in 1975–1984 P4R articles were empirical analysis (151 articles/52.25%), logical argument (55 articles/19%), and legal brief (54 articles/18.6%). That American scholars’ main approach in 1975–1984 was empirical analysis while Chinese PA researchers currently still rely on the descriptive approach suggests that Chinese researchers have lagged behind for more than two decades. Empirical analysis, of course, is not and should not be the sole indicator of research sophistication. In the early 1980s, C. K. Prahalad, the Harvard management guru, wrote a paper on dominant logic. Strategic Management Journal rejected it for one simple reason: It was not an empirical study. Prahalad insisted and the editor relented. It was eventually commended as the best paper published by the journal in the 1980s (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995; Wooten, Parmigiani, & Lahiri, 2005). Indeed, sometimes conceptual papers are too valuable to be marginalized, even though currently many leading journals are placing a premium on empirical research, with empirical outnumbering non-empirical papers—7:1 in the case of Strategic Management Journal (Phelan, Ferreira, & Salvador, 2002, p. 1167).

Key Findings and Important Implications

Regarding the methods of empirical analysis, of the 615 articles, 548 articles (89.1%) were non-empirical, while 31 articles (5%) used the case study method, 15 (2.4%) used cross-sectional or correlation analysis, 9 (1.5%) used structural equations, 2 (0.3%) employed longitudinal analysis, and 6 (1%) used controlled field or laboratory analysis, with 4 (0.7%) in the Other category. In comparison, 48% of Perry and Kramers’ (1984) population were non-empirical, while 27% conducted cross-sectional or correlation analysis and 19% used case study analysis. From these figures, one would find it difficult to suggest that Chinese researchers are well prepared to build elegant theories when 89.1% of their research was non-empirical. While the case study method can yield findings that confirm or disconfirm theories, it has not been popularly used in the Chinese PA research community. This may have to do with the fact that data collection in government agencies has always been difficult; insiders have been unwilling to talk and confidential information holders have been unwilling to write.

Regarding sources of data, the analysis indicates that only 23 articles (3.7%) used firsthand data and 92 (15%) used secondhand information, leaving the rest (81.3%) as primarily non-empirical research. (It should be noted, however, that some articles in the non-empirical category did present secondhand data, which was not analyzed; thus these articles were classified accordingly.) Regarding sources of data in relation to funding (see Table 6), while only 86 articles (14%) were funded, 34.8% of this group used firsthand data for analysis and 15.2% used secondhand data. These provide grounds for believing that funding is a major factor in influencing researchers’ use of firsthand data for analysis. As such, sufficiency of research funding may be crucial to the quality improvement of Chinese PA research.
Table 6. Sources of Data and Funding Cross-Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
<th>Funding Total</th>
<th>Unfunded</th>
<th>Funded</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“First-hand”</td>
<td></td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sources of Data”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Second-hand”</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within</td>
<td></td>
<td>84.8%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sources of Data”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“None of the</td>
<td></td>
<td>436</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above”</td>
<td></td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sources of Data”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Subtotal</td>
<td></td>
<td>529</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count % within</td>
<td></td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sources of Data”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding research approach employed, 547 articles (88.9%) used the qualitative approach, 6 (1%) used the quantitative approach, and 62 (10.1%) blended the two approaches. Regarding qualitative methods used in the 609 articles, 503 (82.6%) used qualitative logic of inquiry, 2 (0.3%) used interviews, 12 (2%) employed participation observation, 3 (0.5%) used action research, and 40 (6.6%) used literature review, with 49 articles (8%) in the Other category. Content analysis indicated that, overall, Chinese PA researchers have sound reasoning abilities; thus, their logical analysis (based on propositions derived from the literature, which is largely imported) for drawing implications or hypotheses was rather impressive. However, theoretical propositions must be adequately tested against empirical data to become building blocks of theories. The empirical data need not be quantitative. For example, the use of elite interviews can shed light on the validity of the utility maximization proposition of public choice theory, while action research can generate data about how tacit knowledge is formed and shared, and influences bureaucratic behavior. Researchers need to consider the value of variety in research methods for their future research.

Analysis of the Applied Research Papers

As mentioned, 384 articles (34.2%) fall into the applied research category, and 105 articles (9.3%) can be classified as combined basic and applied research. These 489 articles are the population for analysis here.

Regarding research approach employed, we found that most researchers used logical analysis (290 articles/59.1%), while fewer used reflection study (88 studies/18%). Notably, only 17 articles (3.5%) dealt with theory application when social engineering supposedly calls for application of theory. Content analysis indicated that when researchers used logical analysis, they tended to focus on the logical relationships between problems’ causes and solutions by making reference to specific theories that account for the causal relations between problems and solutions. They also tended to overlook the fundamental regularities of the formation of policy and administrative problems. These practices are problematic; they resulted in many of the applied research articles providing only narrowly focused, superficial solutions rather than wholesale reform measures that address the issues’ root causes.

Applied research yields solutions that can potentially generate information about the validity and applicability of theories that inform practice. Thus, in assessing the quality of applied research, we need to ask: Does the study contribute to theoretical knowledge? Content analysis of the 489 articles revealed that only 116 articles (23.7%)—the overwhelming majority from the combined basic and applied research category—were explicitly concerned with enriching theoretical knowledge, while 373 (76.3%) made no efforts to shed light on theoretical understanding. Often, many researchers gave suggestions about changing macro-level factors—for example, changing laws that prescribe the articulation of agency rules and regulations (meso-level factors). They also took into account how individual government officials (micro-level factors) might be motivated to sabotage the proposed amendment of the respective laws. Understanding these interactive relationships among the factors of various levels is crucial to developing a complex model of law enforcement in a politicized environment. The wisdom of these researchers, however, was unharnessed.

Applied research carries with it the good intention of solving a specific problem. Yet, in reality, many public and administrative problems are multi-dimensional. Others are merely the tip of the iceberg. Thus, whether or not an applied research study focuses on a specific problem is a prime concern in the field. Content analysis revealed that 289 articles (59.1%) had such specificity, while 200 (40.9%) did not. One problem was that some CPA authors tried to address too many problems simultaneously, such as administrative capacity building and governance at the local government level (without also specifying the locality or region). Another problem was that some confused organizational level concepts with individual level concepts, such as performance management of an agency and performance assessment and reinforcement of individual government officials.
Due attention to these problems will help raise the overall quality of applied research.

A related issue is that of effectiveness. In applied research, some researchers may fail to rationally design the needed solutions for the considered problems. Therefore, quality applied research needs to satisfy this question: Is the study a promising attempt at solving the targeted problem? This study’s content analysis showed that, whereas 213 articles (43.6%) were promising, the majority, 276 (56.4%), was not. Interestingly, it was rather common for CPA authors to give prescriptions based on some successful experiences without paying due attention to the necessary and sufficient conditions that made the experiences successful. Researchers need to recognize the difficulties in the transfer of innovation or exemplary practices.

The timeliness of applied research is significant for obvious reasons. General analysis revealed that 366 articles (74.8%) could be considered timely. In-depth analysis, focusing on the socio-economic, political, and administrative developments in the given period, in relation to problem identification and solution formulation, indicated that some of these applied research reports were published within just the first year after central leadership showed concerns for the problems in question. Being too timely in response to a leadership agenda could be more of a curse than a blessing. After all, if researchers are inclined to focus on what leadership is concerned with, they might overlook many real and potential problems that have more of a pronounced impact on society.

Applied research needs to generate not only promising but also practical solutions. Thus, the operationality of a proposed solution is essential. Only 21.1% (103 articles) of the CPA articles issued solutions that could be operationalized, while the rest, 386, (78.9%) did not. Significantly, many CPA authors considered implementation of policy principles as a solution. For example, one study suggested that faithful implementation of the person-centered principle could solve civil servants’ de-motivation problems. This kind of solution is hardly operational.

In the age of reductionism, specific problems call for specific solutions derived from specific theory applications (also within a specific field of study), and the proposed solutions put into practice should, in turn, yield evidence that enrich the specific theory. Trans-disciplinary study, however, demands cross-fertilization. Thus, these days, to assess the value of applied research, one needs to ask: Is the study relevant to issues in other areas? Our analysis revealed that only 73 articles (14%) had such merit, while the remaining 416 (85.1%) did not. These figures point to the problem of conceptual narrowness in Chinese PA, in which researchers focus on the specific issues at hand without considering the complex relationships among them and the causal effects of those relationships on solving particular problems. How to encourage the adoption of a holistic approach is a pending question with practical significance.

Elsewhere, efforts have been made to ensure the optimal sharing of the benefits of applied research. Accessibility to the details of applied research is therefore a crucial indicator of their value. Accordingly, for the articles we examined, we asked: Is the study accessible to users? We found that, while 216 articles (44.2%) were not accessible, 273 (55.8%) basically were, as authors provided contact information, even though none of the accessible articles indicated that details were made available on specific website. While journal policy can help ensure accessibility, it is odd that CPA was inconsistent in requiring authors to provide biographical data and correspondence addresses. Consistency in policy implementation would facilitate communication and sharing among authors and users.

Problems in society are often context specific in that the peculiar forces of a particular milieu shape and reshape the essence of specific problems even when the problems are epidemic. Good quality applied research generates not only specific context-valid solutions but also the logic of inquiry in understanding the nature, causes, and consequences of the problem at hand, as well as the reasoning behind the selection and application of theories to inform problem-solving. This logic of inquiry and reasoning are as valuable as the formulation of specific solutions, as they, though tacit, are the essence of professional knowledge. Thus, we asked: Does the study help practitioners reflect on their current thinking in coping with the respective problem? The analysis indicated that 253 articles (51.7%) had such merit while the remaining 236 (48.3%) did not. These figures point to the fact that Chinese PA researchers are, as mentioned earlier, skilled in logical analysis; therefore, they can easily clarify their modes of thinking and specific patterns of reasoning in articulating solutions to readers. This may be due to the fact that, as Bao (1998) noted, many Chinese PA scholars received their training in philosophy or legal studies before claiming PA as their field of expertise.

Related to the above is another important question: Does the study help practitioners critically examine the current measures they use to solve the respective problem? Proposed solutions from applied research always compete with other items to get onto
policymakers’ reform agendas. Some fail to make it—not for quality reasons. Indeed, quality research, for various reasons, might not generate impact until years later (Furlong & Oancea, 2005). The value that applied research can currently add to the enterprise of public problem solving therefore depends on, among other things, its subtle influences on practitioners. Helping them critically assess the usage of current measures is part of this present value, particularly when such a critical assessment may eventually trigger drastic reform. This study found that only 34.2% (167) of the articles had such a potential value, while the remaining 65.8% (322) did not. In-depth analysis revealed that most of these applied research studies were not explicitly critical in examining practitioners’ reasoning in coping with specific problems, or in highlighting the fundamental pitfalls of the problem-solving measures already in place. Thus, practitioners did not have a basis from the research reports to critically reflect and assess. This problem may stem from a deep need among CPA authors not to be critical, or from an editorial preference to avoid confrontation and retaliation. Regardless, this does not serve practitioners’ and, in turn, public interests well.

Conclusion
The empirical findings reported above form a basis from which to draw two principal conclusions: Theory building and knowledge advancement in Chinese PA have been rather problematic; however, many studies reported in CPA, when classified as applied research, have value, in spite of the defects and shortcomings identified here. In the main, Chinese PA research has numerous, serious problems needing attention. Content analysis of the CPA articles revealed that they are not publishable for refereed journals, particularly those in the West, as found in the Social Science Citation Index. These Chinese PA authors are not alone. Their counterparts in Chinese strategic management are in the same situation. An article published in Management World (Guanli Shijie) by Xu and Zhou (2004) reports their content analysis of articles on Chinese strategic management published in 2003 in the same journal. Xu and Zhou, using their experiences in reviewing the Academy of Management’s conference papers, observed that not one of those articles could be considered publishable in the West. This raises questions about why Chinese PA and strategic management research have not identified significant problems to address, used appropriate and sophisticated methods to collect and analyze data, and presented findings with theoretical and practical significance. The Chinese academic community’s inability to pursue rigorous, significant research could deter Chinese scholars from generating and sharing meaningful research findings with the international academic community.

Having said that, it should be noted that this study suffers from the fact that detailed content analysis was limited to the 1,123 articles published in CPA from 2002 to 2006. Future research that involves the analysis of articles published since the late 1990s in the same journal, as well as those published in related journals, will yield more specific and conclusive findings. Nonetheless, the findings here highlight some critical issues that negatively affect the development of Chinese public administration as a genuine field of study.

First, the field is trapped in an “information-rich but interpretation-poor paradox”—that is, the more we know, the less we understand. This is undesirable. In the West, the knowledge-based economy is already evolving into a learning economy (Ferguson-Amores, Garcia-Rodriguez, & Ruiz-Navarro, 2005), emphasizing the acquisition of knowledge and skill through understanding and wisdomizing. Thus, knowledge has a place but must be kept in place. Yet, in Chinese PA, as knowledge is accumulated, scholars have often gotten buried in the rich mine of descriptive data and locally developed or imported normative theories and models, and forgotten the differences between knowing and understanding. Chinese PA scholars must appreciate the significance of understanding and, in turn, wisdomization: that is, to learn to grasp of the nature, significance, and explanation of PA phenomena, to comprehend what is obscure and changing, and to form and evaluate unsubstantiated opinions and futuristic propositions so that they can pursue both post-institutional analysis (in the current administrative world) and pre-institutional analysis (to create a new administrative world).

Second, in the age of reductionism, scholars have been so busy enhancing specialized knowledge that they have overlooked the fact that many issues and problems can only be comprehended through a holistic perspective. While reductionism diminishes the value of Chinese scholarly pursuit, it also conditions the scholars’ mindset, limiting their cognitive capacity, circumscribing their scope of analysis, ossifying their thought, blinding their perception, reinforcing selective memory, and suffocating imagination. Chinese PA scholars must change their narrow paradigmatic outlook.

Finally, the field of Chinese PA has been characterized by traditionalism and conservatism. Chinese PA scholars pursue descriptive, normative, non-analytical, and/or insignificant research and strive to accumulate knowledge by using the same or similar approaches, conceptual frameworks, and
research methods adopted by their teachers, who viewed Chinese PA from the conventional Newtonian perspective—that is, considering PA phenomena static, objectively existing, and beyond manipulation. Traditionalism and conservatism have interactively reinforced paradigmatic reductionist narrowness and superficial knowledge accumulation, together contributing to mediocrity in scholarship. Elsewhere (Chow, 2007), we have argued that Chinese PA needs to develop a genuine discipline that bears the characteristics of quantumization, strategization, synergization, capacitization, and marketization, and that strives to realize the vision of constructing a social reality characterized by justice, equity, equality, loving, and caring through balanced, responsible, and sustainable co-development for enhancing human growth and through mutually beneficial co-creation of wealth and gratification. While Chinese scholars are in the best position to help develop such a genuine Chinese PA, they are handcuffed by various inherent problems in the field. They must recognize these deficiencies and pitfalls in knowledge advancement to avoid being trapped in a vicious cycle. They need to eliminate traditionalism, conservatism, reductionism, and mediocrity, to cherish understanding and wisdomization, and to strive to develop Chinese PA into a field that specializes in theorizing. In the process, quality applied research will be essential to both problem solving and theorizing.

Notes

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Authors

Lucia Q. Lu is pursuing graduate training in public administration at the School of Public Administration, Sichuan University, China. She has researched and published several journal articles on public management, public administration education and reform, and NGOs, and has an article on Chinese quantum administrators forthcoming in Public Organization Review. Her current research interests include local government reform and public management paradoxes. She can be contacted at luciaqlu@yahoo.com.cn.

King W. Chow holds a doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin. He is the principal expert of the Sino-US University Design Institute, Sichuan University, China, professor of public administration, Sichuan University, and adjunct faculty at Arizona State University. Previously, he taught at Texas Tech University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the University of Hong Kong. Specialized in public policy and administration, he has published 15 books as well as edited volumes and 35 manuscripts in international refereed journals and books, inclusive of his recent article published by the American Review of Public Administration in December 2007, and 20-plus Chinese journal articles. His current research interests include public strategic management, education policy and reform, and anti-poverty policy. He can be contacted at kingwchow@scu.edu.cn.

References


Abstract: Using the evaluation framework originally developed by McCurdy and Cleary, this article examines the quality of 132 public administration dissertations produced in mainland China between 2002 and 2006. In general, the quality of these PA dissertations can be considered unsatisfactory in all six criteria: research question, validity, theory relevance, causality, importance, and innovativeness. A comparison between these dissertations and their counterparts produced in the US in 1981, 1990 and 1998 shows that they are similar to the US dissertations from 1981. Major institutional problems that have led to inadequate PA doctoral research, including the lack of a research orientation, rigid PhD advisor institutions, and maladjustment to internationalization, are identified and discussed. While there is a prevailing consensus in China of building PA research on contemporary social science standards, real efforts and institutional reforms are urgently needed.

Public administration education in mainland China started late, but has developed quite rapidly since the 1980s (Xue & Peng, 2003). PA doctoral education started in 1999, and there are now 17 universities that can award PhD degree in the field. As a rule, doctoral education is the quintessence of PA education, with a mission to set the foundation of sustaining scholarly production. Of course, there exists a natural curiosity to know to what extent this young form of education in China has fulfilled such a mission.

Since the principal direct outcome of doctoral education is the PhD dissertation, this paper evaluates dissertations produced between 2002 and 2006, with the purpose of measuring their quality, finding major pros and cons, and identifying underlying problems. This research builds on the contributions of a series of papers published in Public Administration Review since the 1980s (McCurdy & Cleary, 1984; Cleary, 1992, 2000; White, 1986a, 1986b; Adams & White, 1994). Specifically, McCurdy and Cleary’s foundation-laying work in 1984 sets the basic framework of analysis. Similarly, this research also explores the extent to which PA research in China has built up its disciplinary identity, established a community of basic consensus and communication, spurred independent research, and created new and high-quality knowledge.

This research, like its Western counterparts, is crisis-driven. Although there is a lack of literature that directly evaluates PhD research in China, many Chinese scholars have nonetheless noticed serious drawbacks in the country’s PA research. Ma (2006) generalized four major problems: the non-China focus, problematic methodology, distance from reality, and inability to empower practitioners. Yuan (2002) noticed, from a technical perspective, that qualitative research dominates quantitative research, deductive analysis dominates inductive analysis, macro-analysis dominates middle- and micro-analysis, and policy design dominates problem explanation. A legitimacy crisis seems to afflict this very new discipline. Many scholars deny that the cause of this crisis is the lack of the consensus on the scope of research, but rather to the lack of sensitivity and adaptation to the emerging methodological revolution in China (Liu, 2006). Due to the fact that PA research in China is relatively new, the theoretical status of PA in China’s academic community is hardly prominent. One illustration is that since 1999 China’s Ministry of Education has held an annual competition for the “100 Excellent Dissertations.” No PA dissertation has received this honor up to 2007. Compared to the tremendous reforms in China’s public sector, PA research seems poised to miss out on a golden age whose opportunities it cannot afford to lose.

This research analyzed PA doctoral dissertations in China in response to the above concerns. First, the study established its measuring framework, then, accordingly, evaluated the quality of PA dissertations. Based on the empirical results, several issues relevant to the institutions of PA doctoral education in China are further discussed. The paper concludes with a discussion of some general trends that may shape the long-term development of PA research in China.

The Study
In 2002, China welcomed its first 11 PhDs in PA. They graduated from four highly prestigious universities: Sun Yatsen University, Renmin
University, Fudan University, and Peking University. Although since then another 13 universities have established doctoral programs in PA, none of them produced a single PhD before 2007. This research analyzes all the PA dissertations produced in the above four universities from 2002 to 2006.

The dissertations produced in these four universities’ PA programs do not represent the complete population of PA dissertations. There are a few other PhD programs in China that also focus on governmental and public issues. For example, the School of Public Management of Tsinghua University awards PhD degree in public management. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of PA, dissertations in other disciplines, like political science or economics, may also focus on PA issues. This study assumes the representativeness of the dissertations produced by the PA doctoral programs. A total of 132 PA dissertations passed the doctoral defense during the five years in these four programs. Table 1 shows the distribution of dissertations across the five years and the four universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peking University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renmin University</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudan University</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Yatsen University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To get the data, I solicited personnel from these four universities to copy the covers, abstracts, tables of contents, and bibliographies of all 132 dissertations and mail them to me. In general, abstracts were about one to two pages long, with one university producing abstracts that averaged four pages and that actually included a dissertation outline. While major information was extracted from the abstracts, a review of the table of contents, cover, and bibliography provided much complementary information. A coding book was created to extract the data. A crosscheck was done by applying the data to a couple of dissertations available online and there was hardly any serious miscoding. Other channels, including the websites of the four universities, were also used to get supplementary information.

The Framework for Dissertation Quality Analysis
The criteria for dissertation quality are directly related to the ontology and epistemology of the evaluators and are determined by the basic values internal to the research paradigms. Regarding the nature, application and usefulness of research, there is hardly a widely accepted consensus, especially between the positivist and the post-positivists perspectives. Should policy analysis be value-neutral or value-relevant, positive or interpretive, truth-oriented or action-oriented? In this regard, policy scholars have raised hot and constructive debates (Deleon, 1998). Despite the debates, there is little doubt about the de facto dominant role of positivists (Lynn, 1994, 1999; Chalip, 1985) over post-positivists (Majone, 1989; Miller & Fox, 2001; Durning, 1999; Amy, 1984) in occupying major positions within research institutes and schools, academic journals, and professional associations. This situation is consistent across social science disciplines. In the debate between “science” and “art,” modern social sciences have long achieved the dominant role of standard setting. Comparatively, the rethinking on modernity and modernism in social sciences is growing but has only limited influence. Research in public administration is hardly an exception.

Since the economic reform begun in late 1970s, academic research in China has also experienced a rapid process of modernization and internationalization, which are essentially intertwined. The overwhelming trend has been the acceptance of the basic paradigms of contemporary Western social sciences. Basic principles of contemporary social science research have penetrated into the evaluation of dissertations in China. Currently, to pass the dissertation defense in China, a blind peer review and an oral defense are required. The criteria used by these two successive procedures largely overlap, and they are mostly consistent across disciplines and universities. According to the peer-review forms of the four universities, four quality criteria are emphasized: (1) the theoretical and practical significance of the research results; (2) the sufficiency and credibility of the evidence; (3) the skillfulness in utilizing theories, professional expertise, and research methods; and (4) normative, logical, and graceful style of writing.

While these criteria in principle comply with modern contemporary science standards, much flexibility exists in applying them, and this creates the danger of relaxing the rigor necessary in academic evaluation. This paper reevaluates these dissertations according to the six criteria below. The study borrowed indicators from McCurdy and Cleary (1984) to measure dissertation quality, with
adaptation to China’s peculiar context. The six criteria used and their descriptions are:

(1) **Research question**
Does the dissertation have a clearly defined research question whose answer necessitates purposeful scholarly exploration, organization, and production of knowledge? “Purpose,” used by both McCurdy and Cleary (1984) and White (1986a), is not adopted due to its vagueness. Specifically, claims like “I will conduct research on performance management systems” or “I will research western bureaucracy from three perspectives” are not deemed as having legitimate research questions due to their lack of focus or issue consciousness. Questions basically based on values or ideologies are not qualified. While dissertations that address a “what,” a “how to” or a “why” question are generally accepted as question-driven, I exercised discretion in making a final judgment. Pseudo-questions that lack empirical or theoretical foundations are also excluded.

(2) **Validity:**
Are the results of the dissertation derived from a process of inquiry prescribed by the principles of modern social science? The logic of inquiry, the research design, the collection and manipulation of the data all have significant consequences for the validity and credibility of the findings. Mainstream social science research designs like experiments, quasi-experiments, and cross-sectional analysis are deemed as having strong validity. Case study and filed observation have limited validity. Descriptive, narrative, and purely deductive analyses have no validity according to this criterion.

(3) **Theory relevance:**
Did the researcher intend to apply, examine, develop or challenge some existing theory or produce a new theory? Despite the practice-centered orientation of PA, contribution to useful knowledge has to do with theory building and upgrading. Doctoral research should facilitate the creation and cumulation of theories.

(4) **Causality:**
Is there any conclusion that identifies the causal relation between two or more phenomena? Causality makes explanation and policy design possible and lies at the high end of the spectrum of knowledge. A valid research question may not necessarily lead to the exploration of causality. For example, one dissertation may explore how to enhance trust of the people on governments, yet fail to first research conditions that lead to trust or distrust.

(5) **Importance:**
Does the research focus on issues of central importance to China's PA? While the practical importance of the dissertations is not really measurable, the practical and theoretical importance of the research questions can be examined. Although current discussion of what constitutes the core areas of PA research is not enough, and the definition and operationalization of importance can vary across scholars and over time, a focus on Chinese governments and their reforms cannot be denied. Responding to China’s general transformation from a centrally planed economy to a market economy, three themes of central theoretical importance are identified: functional differentiation and role re-identification of the governments; functional integration of the governments toward collaborative governance; and new trends of PA modernization like e-government, citizen participation, and performance management. It should be noted that research on important issues may not be the most susceptible to theoretical advancement.

(6) **Innovativeness:**
Does the dissertation provide any kind of meaningful inspiration regarding analytical perspective, research issue, theoretical exploration, and methodological development? Does it help set up a new area or avenue of research, or produce a hot topic of debate? Innovation is especially important since lack of creativity has largely made Chinese PA research a barren field of scholarship production.

The above quality criteria are in principle consistent with those proposed by McCurdy and Cleary (1984). Despite a generous re-specifying of these criteria to make them applicable to this study, they allow a rough comparison between China and the US. These criteria were operationalized as dichotomous variables with a value of 1 (yes) and 0 (no). This paper assigns equal weight to these criteria.

**Results: An Empirical Evaluation of PA Dissertations in China**

As Table 2 shows, PA dissertations in China performed quite unsatisfactorily. Only four (3%) dissertations met all six criteria and 29 (22%) met no less than four criteria. Seventy-two (54.5%) dissertations meet no more than two of them, and 23 (17.4%) dissertations meet none. Regarding the individual criteria, none of the dissertations passed the 50% threshold; they ranged from 49.2% for research question to 21.2% for causality. If the criteria and the coding are credible, then the positively skewed distribution of the total
performance of these dissertations shows that PhD research in China hardly meets its mission of knowledge creation.

Table 2. Performance of the Dissertations According to the Six Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>49.2 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>31.1 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory Relevance</td>
<td>45.5 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causality</td>
<td>21.2 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>42.4 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovativeness</td>
<td>37.9 (50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six Criteria: 3 (4)
Five Criteria: 7.6 (10)
Four Criteria: 11.4 (15)
Three Criteria: 23.5 (31)
Two Criteria: 18.2 (24)
One Criterion: 18.9 (25)
No Criteria: 17.4 (23)

n = 132

Research Question
Sixty-five (49.2%) of the dissertations had a clearly defined question. Most dissertations did identify a subject matter, like the regulation of investment funds, but many of them fail to raise a directly relevant question based on a review of the issue history and the literature. There was obviously a “textbook-writing” mentality that sought to make the dissertation as comprehensive as possible. Theory-driven comprehensiveness is certainly welcome, but widespread subject-centered comprehensiveness is potentially detrimental to concentrated theoretical exploration because it attempts to cover all the relevant aspects of a social phenomenon: social background, history and status quo, relevant theories, classification, characteristics, pros and cons, foreign experience, current policies and potential solutions, etc.

There were three further traps. The first was the “big question” syndrome, which made the question vague, too basic, and hard to examine empirically. One dissertation applied game theory to establish a general framework that measured the institutional capacity of a transitional country. Another dissertation researched the transition of China from a perspective of statism and post-statism.

The second trap was the lack of issue consciousness. A big portion of the dissertation questions were derived from general descriptive analysis or the pragmatic demands of the governments. While the authors made every effort to articulate the importance of their research, readers may still wonder, “What is wrong?”. Not a few of the papers simply look directionless.

The third trap was imbalanced concentration on the “how to” rather than the “why” question, despite the fact that they are essentially connected, with the solution to the latter as the precondition for the solution to the former.

An analysis of the nature of the research questions identified the major issue areas (see Table 3). Policy analysis and administrative theory and practice took overwhelming priority and accounted for 61.3% of all dissertations. New PA practices—governance and civil society evolvement, management innovations, and other topics—came in second. Finance and budgeting and organizational theory had the lowest likelihood of being chosen as research subjects. Such an inverted pyramid is similar to that of PA dissertations in the US in 1981 (Cleary, 1992). While the volume of research issues in these areas is certainly a good explanation, this may also reflect various research difficulties. New areas of practice (like performance budgeting) and theory-intense phenomenon (like organizational networking) may lack established ways of data collection, mature logic of inquiry, and a clear line of theory cumulation in China. This creates higher entry barriers.

Table 3. Issue Areas of PA Dissertations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Area</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis</td>
<td>33.3 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Theory and Practice</td>
<td>28 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance and Civil Society</td>
<td>10.6 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Innovations</td>
<td>9.8 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Topics</td>
<td>9.8 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Budgeting</td>
<td>5.3 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Theory</td>
<td>3 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 132

Another aspect of the nature of a research question is its disciplinary orientation. While most of the research had a multi- or interdisciplinary inclination, a prevailing disciplinary foundation of every dissertation was identified. As Table 4 shows, two disciplinary fields stood out: general management theory (including administrative theory and management theory) and economics, which accounted for 107 (81.1%) of the dissertations. It is quite unexpected that the managerial perspective, with a focus on efficiency, economy, and effectiveness, simply dominates, considering the historical path of the institutional development of PA
in these four universities. That table also show that political and legal perspectives are almost fully marginalized. This situation contrast sharply with that of the US, where PA research is fundamentally shaped by three equally important approaches: managerial, political and legal (Rosenbloom, 1992). Only utilitarianism (the managerial perspective) manages to break through the veil of ignorance, leaving other concerns in the dark.

Table 4. The Disciplinary Foundations of the Dissertations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>36.4 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Theory</td>
<td>35.6 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>10.6 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Theory</td>
<td>9.1 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7.6 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>0.8 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 132</td>
<td>100 (132)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity

Only 41 (31.1%) of the dissertations had some validity in conducting their research. Most studies simply failed to apply any kind of contemporary social science method. Of these 41 dissertations, six used questionnaire surveys, one conducted an interview, and 34 were case studies. There was no experimental or quasi-experimental research, and no sophisticated statistical analysis, like linear regression. Among the 132 dissertations, only seven had datasets, with six of them based on questionnaire surveys and one based on second-hand data. Based on the tables of contents, none of the studies appeared to have a chapter devoted to data or to the analysis of the empirical results. Additionally, none reported a sampling method or a result of any kind of inferential statistics.

Performance in validity may have been exaggerated since 34 (83%) of the 41 studies with some validity were case studies. In this study, a dissertation was accepted as using the case study method if a full chapter or a section was about a special case. Most of the 34 dissertations used second-hand information. It was rare for authors to dirty their hands doing field observation or interviews. Further, the choice of a case and the real power of that case in reaching or examining an argument were quite problematic in these 34 dissertations. Very few followed the classic case study style of Selznick’s (1949) *TVA and the Grass Roots*. A good case is a study that analyzes the decision-making and policy evolution of the Democratic Progressive Party Government of Taiwan on the Nuclear Power Plant No.4. Most of the 34 studies, averaging 159 pages, assigned only several pages to the case. The cases’ presence or absence apparently did not affect the power of the dissertations’ conclusions; if they had been excluded, only 7 (5%) of the dissertations would have fulfilled validity, as specified by McCurdy and Cleary (1984).

Theory Relevance

Sixty (45.5%) dissertations demonstrated some awareness of applying existing theories. Of these 60 dissertations, most used existing theories, such as the principal-agent model, or theoretical frameworks, such as the policy stages view, to analyze certain phenomenon in China. Neo-institutionalism was the most popular perspective the dissertations adopted. In fact “institution” appears in the title of 27 dissertations, exhibiting an increasing emphasis on the rules of the game and their consequences in China’s PA research. Unfortunately, the few papers that attempted to extend or establish an analytical framework, such as the paradigm evolvement of PA theories or the conceptual and research framework of the learning of public organizations, generally had insufficient theoretical depth and consistently lacked the support of empirical evidence. Special attention should be paid to the pseudo theoretical orientation in the PA dissertations: most actually mentioned at least one theory or theoretical framework, without really applying it in the subsequent analysis.

Two problems dampened the relatively good performance under this criterion. First is the dominance of “imported” theory. PA dissertations, like general PA research in China, are now a colony of foreign theories. This creates a fundamental problem of contextual conflicts; namely, theoretical discussion in dissertations may not have much real connection with the reality of China. This certainly vitiates the explanatory power of theories and makes the empirical test difficult. While learning can be a second-best choice when indigenous theories are weak, a further problem is the lack of efforts to examine, develop, and challenge imported theories. This, ironically, creates the very barrier to these theories’ entrenchment in China.

Causality

Twenty-eight (21.2%) dissertations offered basic conclusions of causal judgment, the lowest performance among the six criteria. This dilemma seems an inevitable result of the nature of the questions raised in these studies and coincides with the theory relevance problems. Foreign theories, with their generalized form of causality, are easily accepted, yet their logic of inquiry is not. They are
hard to operationalize, test, and improve in the Chinese context. The overwhelming trend in these dissertations is to use existing theories, as the maxim, to describe or explain the real world without going back to examine the theories.

Importance
Fifty-six (42.4%) dissertations complied with importance. To meet this criterion, a dissertation needed first to address an issue related to Chinese government. This precluded many foreign-focused and purely theoretical dissertations. For example, one dissertation that researched the relationship between NGOs and governments in China was classified as important, while another researching such a relationship in the US was not. Performance under this criterion generally shows that PA PhD candidates shared some consensus on the issues of central importance in this area.

Of these 56 dissertations, 16 (29%) addressed the theme of functional differentiation—for example, the transformation toward a service-oriented government and reconstruction of the public finance system in post-agricultural rural areas. Twenty-one (37%) dissertations addressed issues arising from the boundary between public and private sectors, such as the reconciliation between local governments and urban homeowners’ associations, and market mechanisms in the production of public services. Nineteen (34%) dissertations were devoted to the new practices that empower Chinese government through the promotion of values like efficiency, democracy and justice.

Innovativeness
Fifty (37.9%) dissertations were creative in some aspect. Despite the unsatisfactory performance under theory building, these dissertations demonstrated authors’ sensitivity to cutting-edge practices in theory or in reality. For example, one dissertation researched the management reform of China’s national defense industry, drawing attention to the transformation of the last fortress of the state-owned economy and the so-called governmental core functions. Analysis of new policy instruments, like government procurement in support of small-scale enterprises, was also deemed innovative. Innovativeness is time-relevant. A dissertation that researched e-government in 2003 was recognized as innovative in setting some basic discussion frameworks for e-government, while a study from 2006 with the same subject was not considered so due to the absence of further contributions.

Other Findings
The four PhD programs had almost the same performance, with the average aggregate scores in the six criteria ranging from 2.17 to 2.4. Gender did appear to have a significant impact. There were 30 (23%) female students and their average aggregate score was 2.43, 0.2 above that of the male students (t=0.61).

Whether the performance evaluation results can be extended to other social science disciplines in China, like economics, sociology, and political science, is a question to be considered. Adams and White (1994) compared dissertation research in PA and cognate fields like management, planning, criminology, social work and gender study and found no serious differences. Despite the lack of systematic evidence, considering the close institutional relation between PA and other social science disciplines in China, the performance of these PA dissertations may be quite representative.

This study examined the relationship between the six quality criteria and found that all the 15 correlation coefficients were positive, with 60% (9) of them being significant at the 0.05 level. This may indicate that these criteria have a mutually beneficial relation. Information overlap did not exist since the maximum level of correlation was 0.35.

A comparison to the US PA dissertations produced in 1981, 1990, and 1998 (McCurdy and Cleary 1984, Cleary 1992, 2000) provided some interesting findings. Such a comparison is meaningful not only because of the popular emulation of US PA practice, but also the Americanization of PA scholarship in China. There is still a long way to go toward the effective sincisization of foreign practice and scholarship in China, like the situation Wilson (1887) worried about more than 100 years ago. Since this study adapted the criteria developed by McCurdy and Cleary (1984), they are in principle consistent and the results are comparable.

Table 5 compares the performance of Chinese and American dissertations under every criterion and in aggregate. In general, PA dissertations produced in China between 2002 and 2006 were similar to those produced in the US in 1981.

Using the six criteria, a one-by-one comparison between the Chinese dissertations and the 1981 US dissertations shows that Chinese dissertations performed better in validity, theory relevance, importance and innovativeness, while the US dissertations did better in research question and causality. This result should be adjusted since this study’s criteria are not so rigorous as McCurdy and Cleary’s. As mentioned, this analysis validity included dissertations of case studies and personal
interviews. Without counting them, the performance in this criterion decreases from 31.1% to 5%, far lower than that of US counterparts. The Chinese dissertations’ performance in theory relevance may also be seriously discounted since this study only required that the dissertations apply at least an existing theory, while McCurdy and Cleary required them to “test a theory or answer a question embodying a causal proposition” (1984, p. 51). Chinese dissertations’ high performance in innovativeness perhaps reflects the newness of PA research in China, which may make it increasingly hard for dissertations to be innovative in the future. The 55.8% growth—from 16.9% to 72.7%—in this criterion in the US between 1981 and 1990 looks very impossible for China, though such growth is quite suspect.

Table 5. Comparison Between Mainland China and U.S. Dissertations under Each Criterion and in Aggregate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>(65)</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>(91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>(41)</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory Relevance</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causality</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>(43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>(55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovativeness</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>(24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Criteria</td>
<td>3 (4)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1.8 (3)</td>
<td>0.6 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Criteria</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Criteria</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Criteria</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Criteria</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>(34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Criterion</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Criteria</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the adjustments to the validity and theory relevance criteria, the aggregate performance of the Chinese dissertations in Table 6 should be reduced, making it largely similar to that of the US dissertations in 1981. Both have a clearly positively-skewed distribution. While the US dissertations in 1990 and 1998 demonstrated much improvement under most individual criteria, and both years had an aggregate performance with roughly normal distribution, we need to wait many years to know how or if Chinese PA dissertations will change.

Other Issues and Problems of Chinese PA Dissertations

The causes of the status of PA dissertation research in China are multiple and complex, making it difficult to use any single analytical perspective or framework to form a complete explanation. Judging by the developmental stage of China’s social governance and social sciences, this status reflects, to large extent, the dilemma faced by the doctoral educational and academic institutions, a situation exacerbated by the unbalanced advancement of modernity and the persistence of conventionality in both the practical and the academic spheres. Such a dilemma is not unique for China; it is universal byproduct of development. However, the fast process of modernization and internationalization has aggrandized the difficulty of adaptation in China.

In other words, underlying the six criteria of quality measurement are those requirements of modernity that focus on instrumental rationality. Corresponding formal institutions, in the Weberian sense, should be established to maximize its realization. These formal educational and academic institutions are not endogenous to China, making instrumental rationality’s introduction to China a process of conflict of interests, power struggles, context displacement, and misunderstanding. This creates the very condition for the replacement of substantive legitimacy by formal legitimacy, as analyzed by neoinstitutional theorists (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Tolbert and Zucker, 1999). When changes are too fast to adapt, or when the expected results of changes are unfavorable, socially legitimate institutions will still be adopted with acclamation into the formal structure of existing organizations or social systems. Yet old channels through which social actors gain power and resources will remain, at least temporarily and informally, and they may disable or even paralyze the adopted institutions, restricting them to a ritual or a visible symbol of appropriateness.

The neoinstitutional perspective provides a vantage point from which to analyze PA doctoral education and research in China. Accordingly, major
problems lie in the lack of a research culture, rigid PhD advisor institutions, and maladjustment to internationalization.

The first problem is PA’s lack of identity as a research-centered discipline, which seriously degrades the formal standards of selection, training, and evaluation of PhD students. There are many anecdotes about student recruitment based on Guanxi or on the quota reserved for high-ranking officials in local governments or the university itself. There is also systematic bias in student recruitment. In one of these four universities, 25 (58%) PhDs were full-time professional and part-time students, yet they graduated on average in 3.8 years. It is hard for a working PhD student with many job and family responsibilities to produce a qualified dissertation within four years that complies with the formal requirements. This is actually common among the 17 universities in China with a PA doctoral program. While I hesitate to state that working students pull down the average quality of doctoral research, the mean aggregate scores of the dissertations done by full-time and part-time students show an insignificant difference of 0.65 between 2.61 and 1.96 (t=1.26) in that particular university. Many Chinese PA programs have managed to increase the proportion of full-time students. Using the above university as an example, its 2002 and 2003 graduates were part-time students while in 2004 and 2005 only 50% were of its graduates had been part-time students. In 2006, the portion of part-time students decreased to one quarter.

Consequently, it is inexplicable that there is not a single piece of practitioner research that focuses on the very agency in which the student worked. This phenomenon further demonstrates the “distance” between PA research and reality in China (Ma, 2006). Even practitioners will not dirty their hands by responding directly to problems their agencies may face and thereby collect firsthand data. While insufficient transparency in government operations and backward governmental statistics make it hard to get data or good data, lack of initiatives further leads to the evasion of evidence-based research.

Lack of research interest and capacity has restrained students from developing ongoing academic creativity. During and after their doctoral studies (up to 2007), students in two of the four universities published an average of 0.42 books, most of which were adapted from their dissertations. Due to the absence of quality control in publishing in China, such high rate of publication may not be a credible indicator of sustainable creativity. The number of published articles is 5.6, with only a small portion appearing in influential journals in PA or other disciplines. By checking every author’s article title, I could identify only a few cases with systematic research interest.

PhD advisor institutions in China act more or less as barriers to encouraging students’ capacity for independent research. The original purpose of advising was to offer students intellectual direction and academic resources. Yet currently, to be qualified as a PhD advisor, which is in fact a formal position in China, requires a university assessment, generally done one or two years after the applicant receives his or her full professorship. Guild-like institutional restrictions hardly make the relationships between certified faculty and students research focused. This study’s data show that the 132 PhDs shared a total of 18 advisors, all of whom were full professors with an average age of 58 (ranging from 44 to 88) in 2007. Three (17%) of the advisors got their final degrees from abroad and five (28%) had PhDs, with one crossover between them.

As a result of these conventions, two systematic problems loom large. First is the mismatch of academic interests between students and advisors. For instance, this study’s coding shows that 52 (39.4%) of the dissertations mainly used economic analysis, yet none of the 18 PhD advisors had a final degree in economics. Students may also find it obligatory to align their research with that of their advisors. Five of the nine students of one advisor wrote about “governmental interests” and “publicness,” issues for which the advisor enjoyed a high reputation. It is not rare that students adopted or produced wrong or suspect arguments, which their advisors failed to notice.

The second problem is that, in contrast to the difficulties doctoral students’ have accessing their advisors and obtaining sufficient or applicable advice, other faculty members who are, in general, at the pinnacle of their academic creativity and productivity find it hard to involve doctoral students in their research. It is even rare for a junior faculty member to stay on the dissertation committee. It is highly recommended that, in the future, associate professors be given the qualifications to advise doctoral students, and assistant professors be allowed to co-advice students with a senior faculty member.

The internationalization of PA doctoral research is also half blessing and half curse. As mentioned, under the pressure of exotic theories’ orthodoxy, students’ affiliation to foreign theories, literature, and scholars became a symbol of quality. Table 6 shows the composition of the dissertation bibliographies. On average, the odds of Chinese literature and foreign language literature being referenced was 2.5:1; yet, considering the vast volume of translated works, the odds of literature from Chinese sources and foreign sources being
referred to the availability and the theoretical comparability between them (Lan, 2006). Besides in so many research areas, despite some nice that the US is the country best comparable to China dissertations analyzed the US. It is hardly believable underdeveloped countries. Half of these 62 paid attention to PA practice in developing or countries. Only five of the 62 dissertations focus remains at a very preliminary stage of introduction rather than theory-driven comparison.

Another problem is research bias towards certain countries. Only five of the 62 dissertations paid attention to PA practice in developing or underdeveloped countries. Half of these 62 dissertations analyzed the US. It is hardly believable that the US is the country best comparable to China in so many research areas, despite some nice comparability between them (Lan, 2006). Besides factors of data availability and the theoretical ascendancy of advanced countries, the lack of a real international perspective contributes to this parochialism in internationalization.

### Table 6. Dissertation Bibliography Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No. of Chinese literature</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Chinese journal articles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of translated works</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of foreign literature</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of foreign journal articles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=89 (The information of Sun Yat-Sun University is unavailable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the internationalization momentum certainly helps push forward the modernization of Chinese PA research, its full benefits are not easily captured. For example, are PhD advisors prepared for this trend? Are students capable of finding, reading, and manipulating foreign literature? Can meaningful connection between foreign theories and domestic problems be established? Can the application of foreign theories to Chinese contexts lead to new theorizing? While the answers to these questions remain problematic, it is important to avoid turning internationalization into a ritual.

There are two further pitfalls in the internationalization trend. First, though half of the dissertations (62) can be roughly labeled as “international,” 17 (27%) of them almost entirely focus on the introduction and analysis of foreign PA practice; 41 (66%) include one chapter or one section on foreign PA practice as an illustration; only 4 (7%) make systematic comparisons between China and other countries. It is obvious that the international focus remains at a very preliminary stage of introduction rather than theory-driven comparison.

Conclusions and Prospects

This paper examined the quality of 132 PA dissertations produced in China between 2002 and 2006. The empirical results show that these doctoral studies were not very satisfactory in all six criteria used to gauge quality: research question, validity, theory relevance, causality, importance, and innovativeness. These findings indicate that PA doctoral education in China does not fulfill the mission of knowledge creation and theory building. Some serious defects exist in the research and educational environment of PA doctoral programs.

The results of this study are subject to some limitations. First is the non-randomness of the data. This study only collected dissertations created in PA’s infant stage, and only in four elite Chinese universities. This may indicate systematic bias in the data. This problem may be addressed in the future through follow-up research that has broader samples in time and scope. The analysis in this paper was also limited by focusing mainly on texts. When analyzing the factors influencing the quality of PA dissertations, a better way is to survey the authors. These are directions future research should consider. Finally, while this paper concentrated on empirical analysis and generalization of the status quo, it did not solve the problem of how to understand and handle the contradictions and incompatibility between externally developed social science standards and the Chinese social science research context. This fundamentally determines the applicability of the six quality criteria used here. In this respect, profound, concrete, and evidence-based exploration research should be very important for China’s social science development.

Considering the newness of doctoral research in China, ascribing serious blame to any particular entity may look captious. Applying modern standards to either doctoral education or research in a developing country like China will certainly create some astonishing results. This is so even in the US, according to McCurdy and Cleary (1984). Essentially, to understand the status quo of China’s PA doctoral research requires viewing it from a transitional perspective. China’s PA research is transitioning toward contemporary social science standards, a process which is as chaotic as it is full of hope and opportunities.

There are some identifiable changes that provide clues to predicting the future trends of PA doctoral research in particular and PA research in general. One good sign is an increasing identification with “research.” Currently, almost all PA faculty members without full professorship in these four universities have PhD degrees. While recruitment of PhDs educated in Western countries is still new, most young faculty have participated in some kind of
international campus for different periods of time. The upgrade in PA programs’ human and social capital favors the long-term change toward “scientific research,” even though, in the short run, consensus on knowledge and its vehicle is far from certain. No wonder vast differences in research logic and methodology can coexist in most PA conferences in today’s China. Both specialization and standardization are urgently needed in this area. In this regard, community-building services, like the editing of Dissertation Abstracts International in the US, will be very useful in China.

An analysis of the dissertation bibliographies of Peking University, Renmin University and Fudan University reveals an increasing emphasis on journal articles rather than books, a sign favoring research. Although the quality of journal articles in China needs to be improved through further changes to editorial and, especially, blind peer-review systems, journal articles are more prone to cutting-edge and rigorous research. From 2002 to 2006, the average number of referenced journal articles increased from 30 to 57. During the same time, the odds of referencing non-journal sources versus journal articles reduced from 4.3 to 2.7. The long-term trend of the bibliography is to combine a few classic books and many journal articles.

As far as which kind of research matters most, there is a weak, but nonetheless promising, inclination toward research based on modern standards. Almost all dissertations that are not purely deductive describe themselves as doing “positive research,” though this term is commonly misunderstood or wrongly used. Among the 132 dissertations, 10 (7.6%) were classified as empirical, 32 (24.2%) as deductive, and 90 (68.2%) as based on anecdotal events or narratives. According to White’s (1986b) classification of PA research, few of the studies complied with the basic prescriptions of positive, interpretive, or critical modes of research. It is probably true that today’s stage of descriptive analysis and framework setting is the groundwork for future empirical and causal explorations, but this is certainly not guaranteed and needs a rethinking of the discipline and impetus from outside.

Deficiencies in methodological training, among other things, directly limit doctoral students’ capacity for doing mainstream social science research. In China, the discussion on PA research methodology began in 1997. Between 1997 and 2005, 27 papers on methodology were published in major PA journals, with almost half of them (13) appearing in Chinese Public Administration, which had a column for methodological discussion in 2001 (He, 2007).

Professional associations, like the Chinese Administrative Society, are also eager to sponsor short-term methodological seminars (Guo, 2004). These efforts need to be further institutionalized and internalized in the doctoral educational system. Currently, quantitative and qualitative courses in methods, such as econometrics and linear programming, are still very rare in PA doctoral programs, to say nothing of masters and undergraduate programs. Most new students are recruited without being required to have minimum training in methodology. Such situations can only be changed through general consensus and a firm will. Among the 132 dissertations, there was one on the contingency plans of large and middle cities that proposed two hypotheses and set out to test them. This is a very promising starting point.

The modernization of Chinese PA doctoral research needs systematic improvements in its environment and of its major domain actors. In the long run, the success of its transition depends on an endogenous process of gradual adaptation of the huge PA community to modern standards, on its capacity of rethinking and self-adjustment, and on its efforts to serve PA practice in China through knowledge production. As with other disciplines, this process has to be slow and occasionally even misaligned.

Notes

1 Public administration, political science and international politics programs were abolished in 1952 in Chinese universities. In the early 1960s, the Department of International Politics was re-established at Peking University, Renmin University, and Fudan University. In the 1980s, the Department of Political Science grew from the Department of International Politics, and the Department of Public Administration followed suit. In most universities in China, political science and public administration are bound together in one school.

2 Refer to Note 1. Additionally, a considerable proportion of PA faculty in these four universities has a final degree in political science.

3 The average length of the 132 dissertations, including the bibliography, was 165 pages (ranging from 75 to 348).

4 McCurdy and Cleary (1992) expressed their astonishment at this change, without offering an explanation.

5 It is 3.5 years for the full-time students for that university. In general full-time doctoral students in China are expected to graduate in three years; working students are expected to graduate in 4 years. Failure to graduate after a one-year extension is very rare.
A potential explanation is that the working students came mainly from academic institutions like universities.

Doctoral students in social sciences disciplines in China are required to publish at least two articles in core CSSCI journals as a precondition of graduation.

The PhD degrees of these five persons were in political science, jurisprudence, philosophy, PA and engineering.

For example, one dissertation classified governmental personnel systems as aristocracies, bureaucracies, and meritocracies, the latter as the one compatible with modern constitutionalism.

Between 2002 and 2006, the 18 PhD advisors had produced an average of seven PhDs (ranging from one to 20).

Literature appeared in both the footnote and the bibliography at the end of the dissertation. I consulted some PhDs and was told that referenced literature was placed in both the footnote and the bibliography, yet the latter may also contain some literature that the dissertation does not reference. This literature may be highly relevant to the dissertation and is provided by the authors as complementary reading.

An analysis of the publications by the PA PhDs in two of these four universities during and after their graduation shows that between 2001 and 2007, they published an average of 0.42 books and 5.6 articles.

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Author

Yijia Jing, PhD, is an associate professor and assistant dean of the School of International Relations and Public Affairs at Fudan University. He researches privatization, governance, organizational theory, and comparative public administration, and is the director of the Center for Collaborative Governance Research. He publishes in venues such as Management World (a Chinese journal) and Public Administration and Development (an SSCI journal) and sits on the editorial board of International Review of Public Administration. He is now editing the fall 2008 issue of Fudan Public Administration Review, with a theme of “Governance: A Comparative Perspective,” and a Chinese book, Chinese Public Administration Research and Education in Transition. He can be contacted at jingyj@fudan.edu.cn.

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Lan, Z. (2006). Mei guo gong gong guan li xue ke de fa zhan gui ji ji qi dui zhong guo de qi di (The development path of public management in the


Public Science and Technology Policy Research in China

Ping Sun, Northeastern University, PRC

Xiaojie Zhang, Northeastern University, PRC

Abstract: This article offers an empirical study of contemporary public science and technology (S&T) policy research in mainland China by analyzing 1,410 articles published in four core academic journals during the three-year period from 2004 to 2006. Based on the data, we found that the main subjects of the research were the national innovation system, S&T policy tools, and S&T industrial policy, and that the predominant research method was qualitative. The S&T research received significant financial support. We also argue that there is an enduring group of scholars devoting themselves to S&T research and they attach much importance to literature review. Although there were various problems with the research, this is a transitional phenomenon which should improve in the future.

In the last 20 years, a number of overseas scholars have studied the quality and nature of research in public administration. Some of them have examined dissertation abstracts and article contents (Cleary, 1992; McCurdy & Cleary, 1984; White, 1986; White, Adams & Forrester, 1996). Some of them studied the articles published in the premier journal, Public Administration Review (Stallings & Ferris, 1988; Streib, Slotkin & Rivera, 2001). Others have analyzed the articles in some professional journals, such as Public Budgeting and Finance, Review of Public Personnel Administration, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management and Policy Studies Review (Houston & Delevan, 1990; Lan & Anders, 2000). A few Chinese scholars (Guo, 2007; Ma, 2006; Xu, 2004; Zhan, 2005) have also studied the status quo of public administration research in China since the beginning of 21st century. All of the above studies, except for Houston’s and Lan’s, are analyses of general public administration journals. They do not reflect the all the facets of public administration research. More studies need to be done on specialized publications. Accordingly, since S&T policy is a specialized area of public policy, which is a specialized area of public administration, this article examines the characteristics and nature of public S&T policy research in four scholarly journals in order to supplement existing research.

Although S&T policy research began very late in mainland China, with more systematic studies beginning in the middle and late 1980s, there have been numerous academic books and articles published on it. A few authors have already studied the status quo of the research (Du & Sun, 2006; Hu, 2006; Lou, 2002; Sheng & Cheng, 2002; Xu & Nie, 2005). However, their studies were mainly based on their personal knowledge and experience. They never did statistical analyses. This paper is an initial attempt to study the status quo of public S&T policy research in mainland China using bibliometrics.

Through analysis, we tried to answer the following research questions: (a) What type of subjects do public S&T policy researchers regularly study? (b) What are the primary methods of analysis researchers use in their studies? (c) Who is engaging in the research? Is there an enduring group of scholars conducting research in the field (Lan & Anders, 2000)? (d) What are the main sources authors use to acquire information? Do they ignore the previous literature? (e) Is research significantly funded?

Methodology
Applying for Degrees” at Tsinghua University, Peking University, Xiamen University, Nanjing University, Nankai University, and Northeastern University, which all offer doctoral degrees, we selected four core journals—Forum on Science and Technology in China (FSTC), Science of Science and Management of S&T (SSMST), Science & Technology Progress and Policy (STPP), and Studies in Science of Science (SSS)—from the three-year period of 2004 through 2006 as our statistical objects.

There were 4,838 total articles published in the four journals during this three-year period. However, notices, editorial commentaries, book reviews, conference summaries and articles irrelevant to S&T policy were excluded from this study. The remaining 1,410 articles relevant to S&T were all then downloaded from CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), which is the largest worldwide Chinese academic database, and Microsoft Office Excel 2003 was the statistical software used to analyze them. Table 1 shows the breakdown of S&T articles in the four periodicals over the three years.

Table 1. The Number of Articles in the Four Journals and Yearly Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FSTC</th>
<th>STPP</th>
<th>SSMST</th>
<th>SSS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>1410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because S&T policy research is a rising field and not yet a mature discipline, there have not been consonantious views in academia about research issues. However, the large amount of statistical objects available calls for a normative classification of contents. Therefore, all the articles here were classified according to three S&T policy-related books (Fan, 2005; Feng, 2000; Luo, 2007) and columns in the four periodicals. Although we tried to fit the titles and research questions into the defined categories, we did not let the prescribed categories restrict our classification. If a topic or theme could not comfortably fit into the existing categories, we added new categories. All the articles that could not be classified into the established topics were combined into “others.” With regard to authors, only first authors were investigated; nonetheless, all the authors were counted to get a total number of contributors. We also did a statistical analysis of research funds. Only the higher or the highest level of funding was analyzed for articles with two or more funding sources.

Research Topics

The first set of findings tabulates the topics and the substance of the articles. Table 2 shows that nearly 90% of the articles were about domestic S&T policy. Of the 1,255 articles on domestic topics (see Table 3), 37.85% discussed issues related to the national innovation system; 26.37% to S&T policy tools (including the S&T legal system, S&T planning, S&T investment and tax revenue, S&T talents and intellectual property); 14.82% to industrial S&T policy; and 11.71% to the theory building of S&T policy. The number of articles addressing issues related to the S&T policy process is six and ranks last. The research topic of “others” consists of S&T appraisal, S&T foresight, S&T index, S&T project management, S&T collaboration, and so on.

Table 2: Research Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Area</th>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Average Number per Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>10.99%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>1255</td>
<td>89.01%</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from these articles that the main topics of public S&T policy research in mainland China are the national innovation system, S&T policy tools, and industrial S&T policy. Other topics, such as the S&T policy process, have been largely ignored. In addition, most of the articles on theory building are about domestic or foreign concepts, explanations and theories. Researchers have turned a blind eye to exploring domestic theoretical literatures and building theories with Chinese characteristics.

Research Methods

Our second set of analysis examined the methods of study used in these publications. We studied the methods from the perspective of research ways and analytical approaches. According to Xu (1995), ‘research ways’ refers to ways of information collection and processing. They can be divided into empirical research (including survey, field research, and laboratory experimentation) and non-empirical research (including literature research and fundamental research). We only performed a comparative statistical analysis of empirical and non-empirical studies and did not go into the sub-classifications. Xu (1995) noted that analytical methods refer to research angles of view and ways of analysis. Generally, they can be divided into quantitative and qualitative analyses.
Table 3. Research Topics (Domestic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Topic</th>
<th>Total Number of Articles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Average Number per Year</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory building of S&amp;T policy</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>11.71%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;T policy process</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial S&amp;T policy</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>14.82%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;T policy tools</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>26.37%</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National innovation system</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>37.85%</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>8.76%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>418</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 indicates that more than 60% of all the articles used non-empirical research ways. Table 5 shows that qualitative analysis methods comprised

Table 4. Research Ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research ways</th>
<th>Number of articles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empirical research</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>36.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-empirical research</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1410</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

76.45% of all the methods used, with 66.17% using thinking and debating analysis. Methods of comparative analysis, case analysis, and historical analysis were much fewer. Only a little more than 20% of all the articles used quantitative analysis. Most of the articles using the quantitative method also used a simple statistical method. More advanced statistical approaches, such as regression analysis, logarithm analysis, time series analysis, and structural equations, were seldom employed. Evidently, that the qualitative method predominates public S&T policy research.

Authors
The third set of analysis involved the identification of the people who conducted research in public S&T policy to see whether the field has an enduring group of researchers. Tables 6, 7, 8 and Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 are organized to this effect.

As Table 6 shows, there are 1,150 first authors in the statistical sample: 970 published only one article and 130 published two articles in the four journals in the three-year period. Few published more than two articles.

Table 7 shows the authors who published four or more articles in the four journals during the three years. Yi Tan, a post-doctoral student at Tsinghua University, released the most articles. Professor Fengzhaos Liu and Xu Fan published the second most articles, with seven apiece. Among the 15 most productive authors, 12 reported their titles. There were eight professors, three associate professors and one lecturer. Fourteen authors had clearly identified university affiliations and only one had a research institute affiliation.

We also studied first authors’ affiliations. Of the 1,410 first authors, four did not report their affiliations. As Figure 1 shows, most of the first authors were from universities and research institutes, with 1,111 from the former and 220 from the latter. A few authors identified Party and government departmental affiliations, with 27 authors in central governments and 43 in regional governments.

Figure 2 indicates that 66.14% of the 759 first authors who recorded their departmental affiliations were affiliated with administration schools or departments (20.55% from economic administration, 31.62% from administration, 7.91% from public administration, 4.22% from business administration, and 1.84% from information administration schools or departments). Another 14.10% were from schools of economics. Researchers from other schools or departments of social science, philosophy, history, education, mechanics, information technology, and so on also took part in public S&T policy research. Table 8 lists the 23 organizations that published 15 or more articles in the four journals during the three years. Tsinghua University ranks first and Huazhong University of Science and Technology comes in a close second. We can also see that 20 of the organizations are universities and only three are research institutes. This coincides with the previous statistical result of first authors’ organizational affiliations.
Table 5. Analytical Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Methods</th>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking and debating analysis</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>66.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative analysis</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case analysis</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical analysis</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1078</td>
<td>76.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative analysis</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>23.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Number of Articles Published by S&T Policy Researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Authors</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>84.35%</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
<td>3.04%</td>
<td>0.61%</td>
<td>0.43%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. First Authors’ Organizational Affiliations

Figure 2. First Authors’ Departmental Affiliations
Table 7. Productive Authors in S&T Policy Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yi Tan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tsinghua University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fengzhao Liu</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Daling University of Technology</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Xu Fan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>South China University of Technology</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Li Xiao</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kexin Bi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Harbin University of Science and Technology</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shuhua Hu</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wuhan University of Technology</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lucheng Huang</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beijing University of Technology</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tao Huang</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wuhan University of Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chunkui Zhu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fudan University</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wenfan Zheng</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Northeastern University</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lijuan Yang</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Northeastern University</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wei Zhang</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Northwest University</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hua Cheng</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zhejiang University</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Guoqing Dai</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wuhan University of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Renyong Hou</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wuhan University of Technology</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of first authors’ academic positions and degrees, we divided positions into senior (including professor, researcher and research librarian); deputy (including associate professor, associate researcher and associate research librarian); secondary (including lecturer, assistant researcher and librarian); and junior (including assistant). Academic degrees were divided into post doctor, doctor (PhD students included), master and bachelor. Authors who did not report their positions and degrees were not included. The same author could be analyzed repeatedly if he or she published two or more articles.

Of the 684 first authors who reported their positions, 252 had senior positions and 253 had deputy positions, which together account for 73.83% of the positions. Authors possessing secondary and junior positions represented 25.15% and 1.02%, respectively (see Figure 3). Figure 4 indicates that, of the 740 first authors who reported their degrees, 463 were doctors, 218 were masters and 52 were post doctors.

Together, these three tables and four figures indicate that there are a large number of scholars engaging in public S&T policy research. A few are productive authors. Almost all the productive authors are professors or associate professors working in universities, most of which are productive organizations. Therefore, public S&T policy research is conducted predominantly by those who work in administration-related fields in universities. The fact that 73.83% of authors in this study held senior or deputy positions and 62.57% were doctors supports the position that public S&T policy research, as an area of study, has an enduring group of scholars conducting research in the field.
Table 8. Productive Organizations of S&T Policy Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tsinghua University</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Huazhong University of Science and Technology</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wuhan University of Technology</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Sciences</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Zhejiang University</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Xi’an Jiaotong University</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>National Research Center for Science and Technology for Development</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Shanghai Jiaotong University</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Daling University of Technology</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Wuhan University</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Northeastern University</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>University of Science and Technology of China</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>South China University of Technology</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Beijing University of Technology</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hefei University of Technology</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tianjin University</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fuzhou University</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>China University of Agriculture</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Chongqing University</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Institute of Scientific &amp; Technical Information of China</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nanjing University</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>643</td>
<td>45.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. First Authors’ Positions
References

The reference analysis looked at the sources available for public S&T policy researchers to get information. Table 9 shows that the reference rate (i.e., the ratio of the number of articles with references to the number of all articles) was 93.97%, much higher than the reference rate of 400 kinds of Chinese social science core journals which is 36.64% and that of Social Sciences in China journal which is 63.25% (Cui, 1999). It is also higher than the average reference rate of Chinese S&T journals, 88% (Guo, 2007). The maximum number of references per article was 47 and the average number of references per article was 7.3, higher than that of Chinese social sciences (5.01) (Fan, 1999). This indicates that researchers in public S&T policy, either by choice or necessity, have attached much importance to the existing body of literature and theories.

Table 9. Number of References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
<th>Number of Articles with References</th>
<th>Rate of Reference</th>
<th>Number of References</th>
<th>Average Number of References per Article</th>
<th>Maximum References per Article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>89.96%</td>
<td>2,674</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>94.48%</td>
<td>3,098</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>97.15%</td>
<td>3,904</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1410</td>
<td>1325</td>
<td>93.97%</td>
<td>9,676</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows the types of references. All the references were classified according to National Literature Standards into five categories: monograph (M), journal (J), newspaper (N), online database (OB) and others, which included conferences proceedings, reports, dissertations, and so on. It is clear in Table 10 that, among the 9,676 items of references, there were 2,589 monographs and 5,128 journals. The two types comprise 79.76% of all references, with the former at 26.76% and the latter at 53%. It is obvious that monographs and journals were the main sources from which S&T policy researchers acquired information.

Table 11 shows the distribution of language categories in references. More than 70% of all the references were in Chinese. English references occupied 27.51% and other foreign references were hard to find. This is an underestimate of English and other foreign references because some of them were translated into Chinese and scholars usually used the Chinese editions for references. Even so, this does not change the overall distribution of languages, as only a few of the references are Chinese editions translated from foreign languages. Therefore, we can easily conclude that S&T policy researchers mostly used domestic literature. They also paid much attention to English sources, for several reasons: English-speaking countries are predominant scientific information exporting countries; English is a language used worldwide; and Chinese academia provides much less literature in other foreign languages.

Table 10. Types of References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>OB</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>2,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>1679</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>3,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>2,127</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>3,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,589</td>
<td>5,128</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>1,332</td>
<td>9,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>26.76%</td>
<td>53.00%</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
<td>2.54%</td>
<td>13.77%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Funds
The last set of findings is about financial support for public S&T policy research. Statistical analysis indicated that the frequency of funded articles was quite high at 42.27%, much higher than that (5%) (Guo, 2007) of public administration. This suggests that the articles in the present sample were largely funded.

As Figure 5 shows, research funding sources paid the most attention to the national innovational system, S&T policy tools, and industrial S&T policy. The three topics accounted for 32.72%, 24.66% and 14.77%, respectively, of all funded articles. S&T policy process research attracted the least funding. This agrees with the earlier findings on the topics of S&T policy. Therefore, we can conclude that external funding plays an important role in influencing the direction of S&T policy research.

Figure 5. Topics of Funded Articles

Table 11. Languages of References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,986</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2,335</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2,665</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,986</td>
<td>2,662</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>72.20%</td>
<td>27.51%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions
Based on the data discussed above, several general conclusions can be drawn.

The Imbalanced Distribution of Research Topics
Researchers have addressed issues of almost every topic in the S&T policy field: from basic theory building to policy practice study, domestic policy research to overseas policy investigation, and macrocosmical national innovation system study to microcosmical enterprise innovation research. Nevertheless, the distribution of these topics is imbalanced. Too much research is done on the national innovation system, S&T policy tools, and industrial S&T policy, all of which belong to static policy studies. The S&T policy process, which belongs to dynamic policy study, is neglected. Although researchers have done some studies on theory building, their research generally focuses on the conceptual development of issues for future consideration and is nonempirical. Little research has been done on empirical theory testing and building.

The maturing of public S&T policy as a discipline in mainland China requires a change, as the field must engage in more empirical theory development than is currently the case (Houstan & Delevan, 1990).

The Imbalanced Distribution of Research Methods
The qualitative method is the predominant research method in public S&T policy study, which results in the divorce of public S&T policy research from practice. This is incommensurate with S&T policy as a practice-related discipline. We do not want to be involved in the arguments over which research method is more legitimate. However, the predominance of any one method is not good for the overall development of the field. Each subject and discipline needs different kinds of research methods to guarantee its growth and success.

The Imbalanced Distribution of Authors
A great many scholars, most of whom are in senior or deputy positions, in different kinds of organizations and departments, are devoting themselves to public S&T policy research, which leads to an enduring group of researchers in the field. They can bring multidisciplinary knowledge and methods to the field, which will make their research more comprehensive. However, this also makes it difficult to form a systematic body of theories for public S&T policy as a discipline. In addition, most of the researchers are from universities or research institutes. Few are from the Party, governments, or enterprises. Indeed, researchers from universities or institutes have a better understanding of basic theories and professional knowledge. However, they cannot always obtain the
actual in-house information of governments and enterprises, which makes their research superficial and hard to put into practice. Government and enterprise researchers can supplement their academic counterparts’ limitations, as they are familiar with the in-house information. Public S&T policy as a practice-related discipline needs to attract more of those working in governments and enterprises to participate in the research.

The Continuity and Openness of the Research
Researchers in S&T policy pay much regard to the existing body of literature and theories. This makes research work continuous and academic knowledge successive. Researchers also pay much attention to current issues and knowledge, which can be inferred from the findings about the rate of journal references (53%). According to an international authoritative statistic, 60% of up-to-the-minute scientific information is spread by journals (Zhang, 2005). Furthermore, researchers also read and consult many of the English language sources. On the one hand, this facilitates their communication with international scholars; on the other, it keeps researchers well informed about the latest developments in the field.

The Abundance of Research Funds
Public S&T policy research receives a high level of financial support, most of which is from central or regional government departments. The funds can guarantee S&T policy research is successfully conducted, while also strongly impacting the direction of the research, as Table 3 and Figure 5 show. Funding is an invisible hand guiding researchers to the areas that government officials like. Individual research interests are subordinate to the requirements of the funds. This situation is bad for S&T policy research and its development. For any discipline to mature, its research subjects must be directed by researchers’ interests and not by government grant programs, journal editors’ interests, university promotion and tenure standards, etc.

While there are many problems in contemporary public S&T policy research, there are also many opportunities and reasons to remain hopeful, as is usually the case with any emerging discipline. S&T policy is a young discipline in mainland China, and we cannot expect it to mature in one day. Consequently, we should not be pessimistic and blame the status quo, but rather view it from a transitional perspective. Such understanding will help the development of the field. A fuller picture of the nature of public S&T policy research requires further studies and professional publication. In this way, we can address these problems more effectively. It is through such scholarly efforts that S&T policy research in mainland China will mature in the near future.

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Authors

Ping Sun is a full professor of public administration at Northeastern University. She specializes in public S&T policy, administrative law and public administration theory. She can be contacted at sunping626@126.com.

Xiaojie Zhang is a PhD student of public administration at Northeastern University. Her research interests are in public S&T policy and the public policy process. She can be contacted at neuzhangxiaojie@126.com.

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Three Waves of Public Administration Education in China: The Human Resource Development Perspective

Yongfei Zhao, Zhejiang University and University of Pittsburgh

Abstract: Based on changing social and political trends, the history of the evolvement of public administration education in China is divided into two waves: the initial western-style practice in the first half of the 20th century and the socialist alteration after the Cultural Revolution in the PRC. This study, examines the two waves, focusing on the changes in structures and backgrounds of university faculty in the second wave. A series of in-depth interviews with leading professors at top Chinese public administration schools are used to explore the answer to the question: What is the current situation of human resource development in China’s public administration education? Furthermore, future development strategies are proposed and projected, as the third wave, from the perspective of students studying abroad. The findings of this study indicate that the current development of Chinese public administration schools is healthy and promising. However, further efforts are still needed for future development.

In 2001, the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China granted permission to 24 universities to launch a new professional degree—the master of public administration. Since then, public administration education has been the focus of tremendous attention and experienced a “cooling down” phase. With the introduction of this “new” concept of managerial and administrative values, skills, and knowledge, Chinese scholars, politicians, and practitioners have started to realize the importance of public administration education.

However, prior to this wave of flourishing in public administration education’s development, the early days of the discipline’s evolvement experienced a glacial period due to political and historic reasons. The development of political science in specific and social sciences in general was almost completely suspended for about three decades after the founding of the PRC.

Historical developments left many problems for the revitalization of public administration education in China after the 1980s. One of the crucial results of these developments was the lack of professionally trained educators on the faculties of Chinese public administration schools. In this study, I divided the human resource development of Chinese public administration education into three waves: the first wave starts with the first Western-style political science class ever taught in a Chinese university and ends with the early years of the founding of the PRC; the second wave spans the end of the Cultural Revolution to the dawn of the new millennium; and the third wave represents PA’s future development from a unique perspective. The reasons for these categorizations are the changing social and political tides within all these waves, which will be further explained in detail.

Using large quantitative data collected from many universities’ official websites, I reviewed the first two waves of the evolvement of public administration education human resources in China. After conducting several in-depth interviews with renowned professors at Chinese public administration schools, I able to explore the answers to questions such as: What is the current status of human resource development in China’s public administration education? How will the current situation influence the third wave of evolvement? This study’s findings indicate that the current development of Chinese public administration schools is healthy and promising. However, further efforts are still needed for future development.

Historic Overview: The First Wave

Although the MPA has only formally existed as a professional degree in China for less than a decade, the introduction of Western-style political science and political theory began in the era of the nationalist movement in the first half of the 20th century. Theoretically, the period beginning with the first group of Chinese students who went abroad to study Western social sciences in the late Qing Dynasty to the early 1950s, when the Communist regime decided to reshuffle the higher educational system, can be called the first wave of the evolvement of China’s modern social science disciplines.

During this period, the first group of young Chinese scholars to receive their graduate training in
countries in the Western and developed world, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan, brought back Western political and democratic theories and became the main force offering social sciences courses to Chinese students. Those early scholars include the first Dean of the School of Law at Peking University, Dr. Ruisheng Qian, who received his education at Harvard University; Tsinghua University Professor Gongquan Xiao, PhD, who studied political science at Cornell University; former President of Wuhan University Dr. Gengsheng Zhou, who studied International Law at the University of Paris; Dr. Xiaotong Fei, who studied sociology and anthropology at the University of London and was a disciple of Bronislaw Malinowski; former President of Shanxi University Dr. Chumin Deng, who studied political science at Hosei University, Japan (Zhao, 2000). These scholars helped establish the foundation for Western style political and other social sciences in Chinese academia. From the establishment of the first department of political science at Imperial Capital University, the predecessor of the current Peking University, in 1903 to the founding of the PRC in 1949, more than 50 universities—about one fourth of all universities at that time—established political science program (Chen, 2003). At the same time, the discipline of public administration was also introduced to Chinese universities (Tong and Straussman, 2003). Senior Sun Yat-Sen University Professor Xia Shuzhang, who was recognized as the “father of Chinese MPA,” also received his master of public administration degree from the Littauer School of Public Administration (now the John F. Kennedy School of Government) at Harvard University in 1946. During the first wave, Western books and academic works on political science and public administration theories were also translated into Chinese.

Unfortunately, the development of social sciences encountered difficulties and had to be stopped after the founding of the PRC due to ideological disparities and political pressure. In 1952, the Central Government of the PRC started a reshuffle of the entire higher education system following the Soviet model (Chen, 2003). The Soviet model of higher education predominantly stressed hard sciences and engineering, giving little attention to social sciences. By the end of this reorganization of Chinese universities, most social sciences programs were severely weakened. The discipline of Western political science was totally eliminated from all Chinese universities. According to Chen (2003), in 1947 the number of college students in political science and law programs in China was about 24% of the total of all college students, but the number decreased to 2% in 1952 and 0.46% in 1962. Only after the Communist Party of China (CPC) had a political dispute with the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, were the Political Science programs with concentration in Marxist political theories allowed to resume at Peking University, Fudan University, and Renmin (People’s) University of China. In 1964, these three political science programs shifted their focuses to the area of international relations (Zhao, 2000). This intervention in the evolvement of the social sciences suspended political development in China and, as some scholars claim, led to the monstrous political and social crisis of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 (Zhao, 2000; Chen, 2003).

The Second Wave: Renaissance of Public Administration Education

After the Cultural Revolution, the CPC leadership realized that ignorance of political theoretical development would be detrimental to the practice of public affairs and political decision-making. China’s “architect” of opening up and economic reform policies—Deng Xiaoping (1984)—made a public statement about the principles for the CPC’s theories in a March 1979 forum:

I am not saying, of course, that there are no more questions to be studied in the political field. For many years we have neglected the study of political science, law, sociology and world politics, and now we must hurry to make up our deficiencies in these subjects...We have admitted that we lag behind many countries in our study of the natural sciences. Now we should admit that we also lag behind in our study of the social sciences, insofar as they are comparable in China and abroad. (pp. 180-181)

Deng’s principles reopened the door to the development of long-suspended social sciences, especially the disciplines of political science, law, sociology, and public affairs. In December 1980, the Chinese Association of Political Science was reestablished, followed by the reopening of political science programs in major universities in the mid 1980s (Zhao, 2000).

The second wave of systematic reorganization of public administration education in China was initiated by the establishment of the Chinese Public Administration Society (CPAS) in October 1988 (Guo, 2000). Tong and Straussman (2003) described the evolvement of the CPAS:

The series of efforts began with an administrative management conference in 1984, jointly hosted by the Office of the State Council and the Ministry of Labor; the
creation of the Administrative Science Institute under the Ministry of Personnel in 1984, signaling official commitment from the government to the field. This was followed by the launching of the *China Administration Journal [Chinese Public Administration]* in 1985 and the establishment of the Chinese Society of Administrative Management in 1988, a national academic and professional association with the mission to promote the development of public administration, conduct research and provide consultancy on government management issues, publish public administration journals, books and promote exchanges with foreign institutions and associations. (p. 107)

Before long, the first academic public administration programs were founded in several key universities (Guo, 2000). In the mid 1990s, the system of national schools of administration was created to provide professional training to political cadres, public employees, and civil servants. The formation of CPAS, the *Journal of China Public Administration*, academic programs in universities, and the National Schools of Administration created the theoretical and empirical foundation for the later establishment of the professional master’s degree in public administration. Before launching the MPA degree, three universities—Renmin University, Fudan University, and Sun Yat-Sen University—were first authorized in 1999 to grant doctoral degrees in public administration (Yang, 2005). This development indicated that the preparation for China’s MPA degree had entered into the final stage. Soon after the doctoral programs began to enroll students, the Academic Committee of the State Council, the official agency responsible for the supervision of academic degrees, approved the establishment of an MPA degree. The first national MPA entrance examination was carried out in the fall of 2001 and more than 2,400 students were enrolled in the first 24 universities approved for MPA programs (NMPAEAC, 2004).

The development of MPA education in China has experienced a process of “enthusiasm to cooling down and to rational growth” (Wang, 2006, p. 14). Figure 1 shows the change in the numbers of applicants and enrollments from 2001 to 2005. The U-shape indicates that there was a surge in nominal numbers in both categories in 2004 and 2005 after a sharp decline in 2003. However, as Figure 2 demonstrates, since the number of universities that permitted to admit MPA students in 2005 increased from 47 to 83, the average number of applications and enrollments actually decreased in 2005 compared to the previous year.

Previous analyses clearly demonstrate a unique problem in current public administration education in China. On the one hand, some among the first generation of political science gurus and public administration experts have already passed away, some went to Taiwan with the Kuomintang Regime in 1949, and some who stayed in China experienced the “ice-age” and are already elderly. Moreover, the second generation of public administration faculty only started to acquire modern concepts and theories in the field in the past decade or so. Consequently, there exists a 30-year developmental gap between the two generations. On the other hand, China is experiencing a massive expansion of public administration programs. The scale of the expansion is enormous. In only five years, the number of public administration schools increased almost five times. Therefore, the problem becomes: one of who is going to fill the gap between the two generations of scholars. Do current Chinese public administration faculty have the capacity to sustain this massive expansion?
Bearing in these questions in mind, I reviewed more than 160 articles published in Chinese journals and related to the theme of public administration education in China. In all these articles, scholars highlighted several significant problems of current public administration education, among them:

(1) There is a serious shortage of professionally trained public administration educators, scholars, and researchers in universities. Chinese MPA programs are based on traditional socialist political science, public administration, sociology, public economics, and other relevant disciplines. Very few instructors in China’s MPA schools have actually received formal education in PA before. Most young professors begin to teach core courses in PA right after they finish a short-term (normally, a half- to one-year) exchange program in American or European public administration schools (Jiang & Chen, 2005; Zhang & Chen, 2006).

(2) There exists a gap between knowledge obtained in class and real practice. Since MPA education is relatively new in China, traditional ideology and philosophy about the relationship between politicians, government, citizens, and civil society are still rooted deeply in many people’s minds. It has been hard for them to accept and digest Western-style management skills in public services in such a short period of time. The traditional teaching and learning styles focusing primarily on remembering terms and reciting books also exist in some schools, which is not very suitable for professional degree like the MPA (Pan & Shao, 2000; Zhou & Xu, 2005; Ding & Duan, 2006a; Zhang & Chen, 2006).

(3) One unique problem in public administration education in China is that there are still political barriers hindering efficient educational efforts. According to the relevant regulations, because the MPA is a professional degree, students are not able to receive a certificate of formal study, which is issued by Chinese universities to those who successfully complete their higher education as full-time students. Most Chinese employers also require this formal certificate as a proof of study before accepting an employee, especially for government positions. This political barrier creates a problem of inconsistency between supply and demand in the market of MPA education (Mi & Ding, 2005; Wang, 2006; Ding & Duan, 2006b).

It is obvious that Chinese scholars are aware of the shortage of faculty members with public administration expertise. Unfortunately, the previous literature provides no empirical evidence to support their normative arguments. Thus, it is important to conduct a more detailed analysis of the current status of the faculty in China’s public administration schools. The following section is an attempt to examine the academic background and other attributes of instructors in the field using information available online.

Analysis of the Human Resources in Public Administration Schools

By the end of the summer 2007, of the 83 public administration schools in Chinese universities, 43 had published their faculty information on the Internet, which was retrievable in the United States. Altogether, 733 public administration educators in the 43 schools were selected to be the samples for this analysis, which, unavoidably, contains biases against programs that do not have accessible online information. However, more than 50% of Chinese public administration schools were involved in this research, including 16 programs established in 2001 (66.7% of the programs established in that year); 12 in 2003 (52.2%); and 14 in 2005 (38.9%). Geographically, Northeast China had 3 programs selected in this research (37.5% of the programs in the region); Central North China had 10 (55.6%); East China had 15 (57.7%); North China had 9 (45%); the Northwest had 3 (50%); and the Southwest had 2 (40%). Therefore, though the sample selection in this research was not randomized, the samples generally represent the current human resource situation in Chinese public administration education.

More than 65 years ago, Princeton University Professor George A. Graham (1941) wrote in his book, Education for Public Administration: “In training for public administration responsibility for instruction falls heavily upon social scientists, especially those in economics and politics” (p. 90). The situation in China is similar to that of the early development stage of public administration education in the US. Figure 3 shows the comparison of public administration faculty’s final degree majors and undergraduate degree majors. Since this is a table of comparison, incomplete data were excluded. Consequently, 304 out of 733 data were selected. This table shows that while many public administration faculties hold final degrees in economics and political science (31.6%), Chinese public administration schools have faculties from almost all disciplines arts, sciences, engineering, and even medicine.
Figure 3. Comparison of Final Degree to Undergraduate Degree Disciplines and Majors of 304 Faculty in Chinese PA Schools

Source: 43 universities’ official websites.

More interestingly, the largest number of faculty received their undergraduate degrees in general sciences (56 out of 304) and political science (55 out of 304). This phenomenon explicitly reveals the gap between the two waves, because most students had to go to the science areas due to the limited social science degrees available during the early period of the PRC’s history. Moreover, statistically, public administration educators’ final degree are significantly associated with their undergraduate degrees, even with the control of age variable (F(2, 257)=22.578, p<.001), which indicates there are still large numbers of public administration faculty holding master’s or doctorate degrees in general arts and sciences and other non-social science majors. China’s educational policy prior to the 1980s did have an impact on current public administration schools’ faculty structures.

Figures 4, 5, and 6 indicate that faculty teams in major public administration schools are relatively strong and well structured in terms of final degree levels, professional positions and titles, and age range. This is largely due to growing political and financial support and concern from both the Chinese government and citizens in recent years. In short, faculties in Chinese public administration schools consist of highly educated and younger faculty members, who specialize in various academic disciplines. The second wave of human resource development in public administration schools in China has been successful and healthy.

However, there are still problems behind these cheering statistics and figures. China’s public administration schools have been organized and established in various forms. Some universities have combined their public administration programs, originally listed under the political science department, with business administration and more science and technology oriented management programs to form a new school of management. Some universities simply expand their traditional political science programs and expand it to school level with public administration and public policy related programs. Other universities created public administration programs in colleges of arts and humanities or even schools of laws (Zhou & Xu, 2005).

Figure 4. Final Degrees of Faculty in Chinese PA Schools

Figure 5. Professional Positions of Faculty in Chinese PA Schools

Figure 6. Age Range of Faculty in Chinese PA Schools

One unique example of this reforming and reorganizing style is the School of Public Administration at Sichuan University. According to the introduction published on its website, the school started with the Department of Philosophy. In the 1980s, it opened the archivistics (or archival information) program, the library science program, and a social science research center; later it began to admit students in administration. Now, the school offers eight bachelor’s and 15 master’s degree programs, and one doctorate degree program, which include fields such as philosophy, management, law, and education. Among
the 56 professors and associate professors in the school, 34% (or 19) have research and teaching foci in religious studies; 23% (or 13) are in archivistics and library science; another 23% are in other social sciences, such as economics or sociology; and only 20% (or 11) are in public administration. Apparently, the combination or reorganization of social science disciplines in public administration schools in China blurs the boundaries of the field. Will this kind of restructuring benefit China’s public administration education? What should PA school administrators do to improve future human resource development or what should they do to avoid problems? These are questions worth examining at this particular moment because they can be used to evaluate existing public administration programs and guide future development or perhaps even lay a theoretical ground for establishing a novel discipline of public administration with Chinese characteristics.

Inside Perspectives on Human Resource Development in PA Schools

Due to the inaccessibility of the data needed to answer the above research questions quantitatively, the perspectives and personal opinions of experts inside Chinese public administration schools appear to be a more reliable methodology to disclose the state of human resource development in Chinese public administration programs. In this study, four university professors from China’s top public administration university programs schools were interviewed. All of these informants were either founders or leading professors in their respective programs in three different regions. Although the information they provided represents the future development trend, to a certain degree, of China’s public administration education, admittedly, there was also possible bias against less sophisticated public administration programs at second tier universities.

According to the informants, one of the possible criticisms of the PA reorganization is that many schools literally just change their names or some professors simply switch the titles of their original research foci to public administration and management without receiving further training in administrative theories and public management skills.

Although admitting the problems in human resource development, the informants remained confident about the process of creating public administration schools. One of them, a dean at one of China’s first-class universities, confirmed the problems:

We are also worrying about human resource development. Since we want to make our program stronger, we are in urgent need of well-trained faculty members. However, since this is a new discipline in China, we do not have any [faculty in] reserve for the exact field. So what we can do now is to try our best to attract more qualified professionals and reconcile and agglomerate their strengths to establish a stronger program (Zhao interview, March 6, 2007).

Instead of blaming school-wide structural limitations, another informant believed that the structure of the university itself is actually the fundamental barrier to the quality of public administration programs. As he observed, it is easier for universities with more comprehensive majors and programs to consolidate a stronger public administration program with faculty members from many related fields:

Just like Sun Yat-Sen University and Renmin University, they have very strong faculty teams in social sciences, such as political science. Faculties in traditional political science programs will definitely their public administration schools. However, as for a university with strengths only in sciences and engineering programs, our program obviously contains faculty members specializing in managerial knowledge and quantitative analytical skills. Our school is very strong in quantitative analysis, but weak in social science theories (Zhao interview, March 6, 2007).

Analysis of the qualitative data from these interviews showed that the informants expressed both their concerns about human resource development and a certain degree of satisfaction with the current structure—something also apparent in the previous descriptive analysis. Positively, public administration faculty members have all been all very well trained in their respective disciplines, such as political science, economics, scientific management, and laws. Negatively, very few have received comprehensive training in public administration specifically. Consequently, the problem becomes one of how to reconcile and agglomerate these dispersive academic strengths and methodological disparities in the short run and how to create a healthy human resource development mechanism in the long run.

One of the interviewed professors offered four steps that his school was using to address these problems: (1) fully utilizing current faculty to conform to the needs of the emergent rapid expansion of the field; (2) attracting and recruiting elite scholars in the discipline both domestically and internationally; (3)
cooperating with public agencies in joint programs and projects and inviting government officials to teach or lecture; and (4) developing and enhancing domestic doctoral education to establish a long-term educational capability. At the end of the interview, he expressed his wishes for the future development of public administration education: “In the long-run, we need a healthy educational system, a fair reward system, a practical merit-based selection system, and an honest academic evaluation system, so that everybody can be placed [in]to the best position he or she belongs.”

Another professor also suggested a more flexible recruitment plan for elite scholars because of the geographical barrier that many Chinese universities located in the interior may encounter. He said,

Actually, in the recruitment issue I have an idea: It is not important to ‘own’ an elite professor as a member of our faculty, but to have him serving us is essential. It means that you might not list [you] as our formal faculty, but we invite you to teach courses or even give lectures. I call it [faculty] ‘with mobility.’ This is good enough. I understand my city is a place not very attractive to outside elites. The physical condition and environment are not very comfortable. The reason I am still there is because my parents are living there. For example, we invite one famous American Chinese professor to be our contracted faculty member, who comes to our school to teach one month every year. His knowledge and experience are greatly helpful [for] improving our educational capability. I believe in the future our recruitment mechanism should be more flexible and diversifiable (Zhao interview, March 7, 2007).

Besides the personnel problem in public administration schools, there were many other issues the informants considered important and which needed to be evaluated. One of these is the overall Chinese educational system, which provides a basic environment for the healthy development of quality faculty members in universities. Most informants believed the system needs improvement. One of the professors further explained his suggestions and ideas about the enhancement and institutionalization of the reward system, the research and teaching environment, and academic evaluation procedures and processes within the system. Other issues of concern included, but were not restrict to, theory and practice, the doctoral educational system, and program evaluation.

The Third Wave: The Future from the Perspective of Students Studying Abroad

In the interviews most professors expressed their longing for “new blood” to invigorate Chinese PA education, specifically, the knowledge of students studying in public administration schools abroad. One professor said directly,

Of course, students trained in foreign public administration schools are more preferable than the ones who received their education domestically. One reason for this is because students studying abroad need to take more courses than domestic students. They receive more theoretical training than the domestic students. They are definitely more philosophical. Another reason is that we do not have enough qualified PhD advisors in our schools (Zhao interview, March 6, 2007).

Another professor used his personal experience to explain the importance of foreign educated scholars:

In 1996… [w]e hired a PhD from a German university. You know at that time, very few students who studied abroad wanted to come back. He is now the Vice Dean of the School of Economics at our university. Let me draw a graph to explain this phenomenon. When you first go back to China, the starting point is low. However, your promotion and benefit growth rate is very elastic [in relation] to the time you spend in a Chinese university. The curve will shoot upward sharply. [In comparison to] a career in an US institution, although the starting point is much higher, your professional growth and development is much slower. I also had my PhD study in a foreign country. My former classmates who chose to stay there all envy my achievement now (Zhao interview, March 2007).

This preference for attracting students studying abroad back to China to teach is a current trend in higher education. Take the Chang Jiang Scholars Program for example. From 1998 to 2006, over 1,220 scholars teaching abroad were invited back to China (People’s Daily, May 17, 2007). On the other hand, Chinese students who received their education in foreign countries also began to seek job opportunities on their own back home. According to the Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2006, about 35,000 students finished their studies abroad and went back to China in 2005 (China Statistical Bureau, 2006). Because there exists a huge market for students studying abroad to
work in China, especially in Chinese public administration schools, these students’ responses to the demand becomes an intriguing question. If students in foreign countries answer the call from Chinese public administration schools, the third wave of development in China’s public administration education will very likely be led by this group of young scholars. It is important to understand their perspectives and reactions to the changes in the current Chinese educational system.

Taking into account all these questions and ideas, this study also includes interviews with five Chinese students enrolled in American public administration or public policy schools. In contrast to the previous interviews with professors from China, the student informants expressed deep concerns about bureaucratic problems in the Chinese educational system. Almost no student informant was willing to immediately return to China after their graduate studies in the US. Interestingly enough, however, the greatest hindrance to their return was not due to material benefits, but China’s research environment and facilities. Most of the informants worried that since China’s social science research has lagged behind, the advanced statistical knowledge and research methodologies they obtained in the US may never be efficiently practiced in China. Some interviewees boldly questioned China’s environment for academic research, especially on the technical-side of policy analysis, whose tools they believed would be more useful for conducting research in the US.

One of the informants has just found a teaching and research position in a first tier American university. When asked about her job-hunting experience and preferences for school locations, she responded, “I visited several key research universities in China and Hong Kong...But compared to the university that I am going to work with, I think those Chinese universities are still [at] a lower research level for me to choose.” Nevertheless, she admitted that if she went back, Chinese universities would more likely treat her preferentially in terms of salary increases and promotion opportunities. However, she still preferred the higher salary and standard of living in the US. She said, cynically, “[The] Chinese educational system itself is problematic. For those who choose to teach in China it is only because they could not find a better university [in which] to teach in the US. Say, if you find a job at MIT or Harvard, do you still want to go back?” (Zhao, May 2007).

Besides China’s lagged research capabilities, these students were also cautious about its bureaucratic educational system. One of them complained, “Since I have been out of the Chinese educational system for so many years, I am not so familiar [with] their rules and regulations. I am also afraid of those hidden rules in Chinese universities and the educational system. I have not prepared myself to adjust to them.” Moreover, social problems are also major concerns for students who are already used to the more comfortable living environment in Western developed countries. One of the informants recounted her experiences when she was in China:

You know in China employers discriminate against job applicants on the basis of gender and health condition. This is so normal that I have a lot of sad personal experiences. When I was looking for a job after my undergraduate and graduate studies, it was so hard for me as a female with visible physical problems. People would ask me, ‘Can you work with this problem?’ I think this is just so stupid. I am afraid I will encounter similar problems when I go back (Zhao interview, April 2, 2007).

Based on the informants’ responses to this research, it is not very easy to attract students back to China to teach. All of the informants set research capability and working environment as their highest future career priorities, areas in which it is very hard for Chinese universities to compete with American counterparts, especially in the social sciences. Benefits and rewards, though also important, were not their primary interests. However, it is very likely that the informants did not want to express their true feelings about these issues, because doing so may have labeled them negatively as “money-oriented.” Nevertheless, the broad range of social and institutional problems in China largely scares away elite PhD students studying in the more developed world.

Even so, it is not hopeless for Chinese public administration schools to compete with foreign universities for advanced human resources, if Chinese schools understand these problems and do their best to change their environments and make them more attractive to students. Moreover, Chinese universities should not consider themselves less competitive than Western schools. They should recruit students from abroad more aggressively. After all, the informants all expressed a certain degree of interest in working back home as long as Chinese universities provided them with comfortable research environments and minimized other social difficulties.

Policy Implications and Conclusions
Although the development of Chinese public administration education has been suspended for nearly thirty years, the recent rapid growth in the number of faculties, schools, and enrollment rates illustrates that this field has tremendous political and social needs. Short-term and long-term strategies, if implemented,
should create sustaining mechanisms for the healthy development of faculty teams, and the discipline as a whole. However, such systematic revitalization needs a unified approach and an explicit goal that is acknowledged from both top-down and bottom-up administration.

Now is the perfect time for the further enhancement of public administration education in China, not only because Chinese citizens and students are showing great interest in the discipline, but also because the central government has begun to realize its importance. In 2005, nearly 42,000 students were admitted to graduate studies in management, which accounted for 11% of all graduate enrollments (China Statistical Bureau, 2006). More than one-fourth of these students started their MPA studies that year (The Directory Board for the MPA Degree, 2006). Nevertheless, Chinese central government decision-makers emphasized human resource and personnel development in the Eleventh Five-Year Plan—China’s top national strategic development plan. Such a social and political environment provides fertile ground for public administration education to grow.

Improving and strengthening domestic doctoral programs and aggressively attracting scholars and researchers trained in foreign countries is also essential for developing domestic public administration education. Although academic environment, benefits and rewards, and geographical barriers may still prohibit many young scholars from starting their professional careers in China, more and more students will choose to return for greater career opportunities and to contribute to the field if these steps are taken.

It is time for Chinese universities to change their institutional and political environments to stimulate their potential and facilitate the development of high quality faculty, student, and research capabilities. Although in the near future Chinese universities may still not be able to compete with major universities in the Western developed world in terms of research and education, more and more young scholars studying abroad may still prefer to return back to China to help push forward the third wave of public administration education to a higher standard, giving the fact that China’s economic, political, and social status is improving greatly in the new century.

Notes

1 In this study, ‘public administration schools’ refer to the academic schools at universities that offer MPA degree education, no matter what their names are.
2 ‘Social science disciplines’ here refers to the academic fields that have evolved since the 17th century, and which, according to Thompson and Comte’s 1824 article, “An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive to Human Happiness; Applied to the Newly Proposed System of Voluntary Equality of Wealth,” involve three developmental phases: theological, philosophical, and scientific. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the development of Darwinism, pragmatism, industrialism, and behaviorism finally set the ground for the recognition and combination of fields such as anthropology, economics, education, geography, law, linguistics, political science, psychology, and sociology under the umbrella term of social sciences.
3 Source: Sun Yat-Sen University website at http://pinggu.sysu.edu.cn/content/view/66/31/.
4 Some of the other schools appeared to have Internet webpages, but for some reason they were inaccessible in the US at that time.
5 For some of the schools, the faculty included in this research were restricted to those associated with MPA programs. For other schools that did not differentiate faculty affiliation, only those with specializations in public administration or public policy were selected.
6 Final degree means the last degree received at the end of a person’s entire formal educational experience.
7 According to The categories of doctoral and master’s degree and graduate study disciplines and majors issued by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council of PRC (ADCSC), Chinese doctoral and master’s degrees can be granted in one of 12 degree disciplines (ADCSC, 1997). Within the 12 disciplines, there are 88 first level majors (general) and 381 second level majors (specific).
8 I translated this interview and added emphases based on the original.
9 Chang Jiang Scholars Program is an incentive program to attract prominent scholars back to China to teach. According to the People’s Daily (March 30, 2006), “‘Chang Jiang’ scholars will receive specific financial support for research and development from a foundation jointly launched by the Ministry of Education and the Foundation of Li Ka-sing, one of the most renowned entrepreneurs in Hong Kong.”

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Author

Yongfei Zhao is an assistant researcher at the Center for Research of Labor Economics and Public Policy at Zhejiang University. He is currently a PhD student in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. His research interests include Chinese public administration, governance, education, and social and cultural studies. He can be contacted at yoz9@pitt.edu.

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Empowered Autonomy: The Politics of Community Governance Innovations in Shanghai

Chunrong Liu, Fudan University

Abstract: This paper examines the nature, process, and implication of recent community governance reforms in Shanghai with a focus on the potential role of these institutional innovations in generating social solidarity as heralded by social capital and civil society theories. Case analysis demonstrates that the practice of democratic governance creates institutional space and organizational resources for informal, public, and day-to-day engagement among residents. The elected residents’ committee system has become an extraordinary source of community sociability and solidarity. This is summarized and explained by the notion of “empowered autonomy,” in which state-led governance reforms stimulate and thicken horizontal networks and norms of reciprocity within a society.

In response to the various power vacuums created by rapid social and economic reforms, the Chinese government has become very active in building new institutions at the grassroots of society. One of the most noteworthy of these efforts is the “urban community building project,” which was originally implemented as a pilot project by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the late 1980s. It was envisioned to meet the growing demand of community-oriented social service no longer covered by the danwei (work unit) system. This policy package soon expanded nationwide and led to a variety of community governance innovations. In Shanghai, for example, a new administrative framework called “two levels of governments, three levels of administration” was developed in 1996 to organize community-based public service delivery and maintain social stability (Xu, 2000; Shi & Pan 1998). More recently, residents’ committee elections and “deliberative assembly” have been promoted to engage local residents in the neighborhood political process (Liu, 2006).

These state-led community governance reforms have triggered growing scholarly interest in the study of neighborhood politics in China (Lin & Ma, 2000; Lin, 2002; Yang, 2002; Pan, 2002; Zhu, 2002; Read, 1999, 2003a, 2003b; Benewick et al., 2004; Derleth & Koldyk, 2004; Liu, 2006). Conventional wisdom would argue that such state-led reforms aim to bind local residents to state patronage and consolidate state power in grassroots society (Schurmann, 1968; Vogel, 1971; Whyte & Parish, 1984; Walder 1986; Henderson & Cohen, 1984; Lieberthal, 1989; Lewis, 1971; Sidel, 1974). However, recent studies have recognized that these reforms afford specific institutional resources which may be positive to some forms of civic participation and neighborhood activism. State-led institution building in the neighborhood context also provides opportunities for the development of civil associations and community movements, which are in turn conducive to the enlargement of horizontal networks, trust relationships, and norms of general reciprocity (Liu, 2005a; Zhu, 2002; Yang, 2002).

This paper examines the nature, process and implication of recent community governance reforms in Shanghai with a focus on the potential role of these institutional innovations in generating social solidarity and autonomy as heralded by social capital and civil society theories. At its simplest, solidarity refers to the bonds between all individuals within a society and reflects the degree of social integration. Social solidarity is closely associated with the concept of social capital, which is widely defined as network of civic engagement, norms of reciprocity, and attitudes of trust (Putnam, 1993). Assuming the importance of social solidarity, scholars have argued that formal and informal associations are the creators of social capital and networks because of their socialization effects on democratic and cooperative value and norms. Putnam’s seminal work in Italy contended that dynamic “civic communities” are associated with the predominance of horizontal solidarities and that in “uncivic” regions participation is stunted by the persistence of vertical dependences. Such a stance was also exemplified by Fukuyama (1995), who believed cultural values are the key to understanding the evolution of social solidarity: One needs the right kind of society-wide normative values to build and sustain social relations that can produce...
the “public goods” with which civil society is associated (e.g., encouraging cooperation, bounded conflict, respect for others, accountability and the rule of law, etc).

Recent studies on civic engagement and civil society have begun to depart from this perspective and emphasize the institutional factors in shaping social solidarity. They argue that the degree of solidarity exhibited by a community depends on the formal political and legal environment in which they are embedded (Berman, 1997; Levi, 1998; Rothstein & Stolle, 2003; Fox, 1996; Tarrow, 1996). Social solidarity is created, channeled and influenced by government policies and political institutions. Institutions may exert an independent effect on trustworthiness, and thus on how social actors trust or distrust each other. Furthermore, the evolution of institutions may be expected to have an impact on trustworthiness, and thus on trust, and thus on community solidarities.

By examining the impact of community governance innovations on neighborhood-level social solidarity in Shanghai, this study argues for a pattern of “empowered autonomy” in which top-down state intervention enables local residents to reconfigure their relationship with governmental extensions on better terms. Empowered autonomy indicates a distinctive role of state intervention in creating institutional space for local solidarity and framing local residents’ social networking behavior in indigenous agendas.

In the first section of this paper, I examine how rapid social and economic changes combined to shape the initial agenda of community building, which emphasized localized bureaucratic integration. Then I demonstrate why and how empowerment strategies reconfigure this pattern of administrative community in the second stage of community governance reforms. The policy shift from integration to empowerment is ultimately caused by the lack of residents’ participation in community engineering, which in turn undermines the efficiency of political control. In the third section, I use a case study to show how local residents accumulate a form of interpersonal social network through involvement within these empowerment settings. I found that while community empowerment in Shanghai involves enormous political control, it nevertheless provides vibrant institutional spaces and resources for local residents to broaden their horizontal-level interactions. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications and limitations of these findings.

Governing the Grassroots: From Integration to Empowerment
The manner in which local communities are organized and governed is crucial to China’s sociopolitical control system. In Mao’s China, an urban governing arrangement was established with two basic principles: the first is functional in the form of the danwei (work unit) system and based on employment; the second is geographical and based on the place of residence (Salaff, 1967, 1971). The danweis were workplace units (typically state-owned enterprises) that guaranteed employees secure jobs, affordable housing, medical care, pensions, and subsidies for everything from food to transportation. The danwei also had a political role as it closely monitored its employee’s public and personal activities, wielding an assortment of rewards and sanctions to encourage politically acceptable behavior. Paralleling the danwei system, the urban government system was divided into municipalities and districts and these in turn sub-divided into street offices, residents’ committees. At the bottom of this framework, the residents’ committee was organized with an appointed leadership and affiliated activists’ networks, and functioned as a gatekeeper for the overarching political system.

Figure 1. The Governing System in Urban Shanghai

The predominantly bureaucratic nature of this governing arrangement forms the structural basis of social control and gives urban social life a distinctive quality: it is characterized by higher levels of stability than in comparable cities in the West (Whyte & Parish, 1984, pp. 236-237). However, with the crucial role of the danwei system in organizing urban society, both street office and residents’ committees are comparatively marginal in sociopolitical control. Under this governing framework, local residents were weakly attached to their neighborhoods because of the higher importance of the danwei system in their work experience and social interaction.
Community-based Administrative Integration

During the course of rapid urban changes in China, two structural factors have emerged to undermine the efficiency of existing governing arrangements: danwei reform or “de-danweilisation” and housing commercialization reforms. These two forces have combined to raise a particular demand for community-based administrative integration. First, “de-danweilisation” involves the processes and consequences of market-oriented danwei reforms, characterized by considerable weakening of organized political control over the workforce in a city (You, 1998, pp. 23-28). This dimension of reform shifts a tremendous number of social functions and responsibility for occupational welfare from danweis to the local community (Lee, 2000), thereby adding to the administrative burdens of local governments (Chan, 1993; Wong, 1998, pp. 72-74). The second structural context lies in housing privatization reforms. While state-distributed housing in the pre-reform era was inherent to organized urban control, housing commercialization in the post-reform age had led to the privatization of neighborhood space, thus further expanding the gap between the state and residents.

De-danweilization and housing privatization have coupled to bring many neighborhood power vacuums that become sources of political alienation from the Party-state. In response to this, the central government called upon the Ministry of Civil Affairs to revitalize street offices and residents’ committees to take over some previous social welfare responsibilities of danweis and to strengthen community control (Derleth & Koldyk, 2004). This opened a set of experimental community governance initiatives under the general rubric of “urban community building.” In Shanghai, the earlier mode of community governance was designed in the framework of “two layers of government, three layers of administration” in 1996. In policy discourse, “two layers of government” refers to the governments at the municipal and district levels that have independent financial and law enforcement powers. “Three layers of administration” explains the stratification of actual governing power in the city, with a special focus on the layer of the street office (Shi & Pan, 1998)

The rationale behind this governing framework innovation was obviously to integrate street office and residents’ committee into a territorially-based administrative network. According to the “Policy Paper on Strengthening Street Office, Residents Committee and Community Management in Shanghai” formulated by the municipal government, the street office was to convert from a “subordinated agency” of the district government to a community-rooted governing agency with regulatory functions. It stipulated that the administration area of each street office should be reconfigured and standardized to cover five square kilometers (or about 100,000 residents). Second, the standard quota of every street office’s “approved positions of public servants” was increased from approximately 55 to 60. Third, to change its previous marginal status in the urban government, the street office was to receive more autonomous financial resources via a new street-level fiscal system. The overarching district government would be responsible for funding the street office through fiscal transferring.

These arrangements were further incorporated into the “Code of Street Office in Shanghai” promulgated by the People’s Congress of Shanghai in 1997. As codified, the street office would take responsibility for a wide range of community administrative tasks: directing and assisting the residents committee in its organization- and institution-building, organizing community service, developing a street-level economy, and so on. In actuality, the structures of the street office were reconfigured according to these policy documents. For example, in the Wuliqiao sub-district of the Luwan district, various street agencies are networked on the street office level. These agencies include the legal assistance office, the business and commercial administration office, the streetscape maintenance team, and the real estate administration office. The street office is now responsible for the nomination and evaluation of officials in public security, housing management, business, and retail administration and directly appoints the head of the sanitation and hygiene office. To further strengthen its street-level administration, the Luwan district government delegated a number of regulatory powers to the street office, including approval of the residential plan, the housing development plan, the housing projects’ completion, site occupation licensing, outdoor advertisement management, the privately operated restaurant and catering service licensing, and illegal construction penalties (Wu, 2002; see also Zhu, 1999; Guo, 2003).

“Community” in this policy context is neither a natural human ecology with primary and communal ties nor a cultural social entity; it essentially becomes an administrative unit imposed by the street office and residents’ committee nested in the overarching urban government system. Administrative community as such is expected to be effective in top-down policy implementation and public service delivery. Ironically, the scarcity of institutional channels and incentives for ordinary residents to participate in the communitywide decision-making process eventually undermines the
effectiveness of such bureaucratic institutions. This has led to the second wave of community governance innovation to democratize residents’ committees and empower local residents.

Community-based Democratic Empowerment

To construct a democratic governing infrastructure in urban neighborhoods, two basic approaches have been explored to empower the residents’ committee and local residents: residents committee election and the design of deliberative institutions. Following its rural counterparts, the experiment of residents committee election was inaugurated in Shanghai in 1999. At its initial stage, a residents’ committee election is usually organized in an indirect mode, which evolves in several stages. First, a registration list is produced to ensure that only eligible residents are permitted to vote. Second, residents select their block-based representatives, from whom a community level representative assembly is organized. The assembly forms an electoral base for the new residents’ committee. Third, a pool of candidates is nominated or elected through sub-group meetings. The candidates are subject to political screening by the Party’s neighborhood branch and street officials. The list of formal candidates is posted a few days before the election and they are encouraged to deliver campaign speeches at the representative assembly. Finally, the representative assembly organizes a special election meeting to cast ballots for members of the committee. The ballots are counted by an independent work team, which will also publicize the election outcome. Although these procedures are far from a perfect system of direct democracy, they nonetheless give residents a voice in their local governance that they never had before. Indeed, even this very limited franchise represents a notable leap forward from the past when members of the residents committee were chosen exclusively by the government (Dugan, 2002).

The recent development of community democracy in Shanghai demonstrates two progressive features. First, the election is more procedurally democratic. This is indicated by several key procedures of the election: direct nomination of candidates by residents, increased competitiveness in the election of residents’ committee members, anonymous voting, and open count of votes. Second, the scope of the election is greatly expanded. The first community elections in 1999 were conducted experimentally in only two street offices. The second round in 2003 targeted nearly 3,400 residents’ committees across the city with 30% organized by direct election (Liu, 2005b). In 2006, more than half of the residents’ committees in the city were organized by direct election (Jing & Liu, 2007).

Residents’ committee elections are not the whole story of community democracy building. A complementary approach advocated by the government is to create deliberative institutions and foster a form of deliberative politics in the community. In many neighborhoods, the deliberative institution takes the shape of the “deliberative assembly” (yishi hui). For example, all the neighborhoods in the Jing’anxi street office have been installed with deliberative assembly since 1996. The assembly has four principal functions: raising suggestions for local public affairs, mobilizing residents and homeowner associations to engage in community problem solving, exploring residents’ attitudes towards the residents’ committee’s work, and cooperating with the Party’s neighborhood branch. The organization of deliberative assembly is based on volunteerism. In the Huashan neighborhood under the Jing’anxi street office, the assembly consists of 13 members, 10 of whom have college or university educations and high social reputations in the local community (Liu, 2003, p. 206). The assembly actually formed a government-led community elite network and has considerably shaped the relationship between government and residents as well as the structure of neighborhood governance.

Another typical deliberative institution is the “three-meeting institution” (sanhui zhida), namely meetings for coordination, hearing, and evaluation. The coordination meeting (xietiao hui) is an occasional mechanism officiated by the residents’ committee to address trivial social conflicts within the neighborhood. Through this mechanism, the conflicting parties are invited to negotiate a solution facilitated by the “mediation committee” comprised of the residents’ committee and the secretary of Chinese Communist Party’s neighborhood branch. Depending on the nature and scale of the conflicts, some functional departments in the street office may sit in on the coordination meeting. Public hearings (tingzheng hui) help residents articulate their interests and raise their voices on public policies that impact their neighborhood life. In practice, residents’ committees are invigorated by organizing such meetings and by relaying residents’ comments and complaints to the overarching government. The evaluation meeting (pingyi hui) is also organized by the residents committee to access the performance and service quality of the residents’ committee and street offices (Civil Affair Bureau of Luwan District Government, 2001).

Both residents’ committee elections and deliberative institutions have had notably empowering effects on the community. For example, in the Nanjing East street office in the Huangpu
In 2006, the street office determined to upgrade the buildings of the Weihai Road No. 20 neighborhoods, several rounds of public hearings were organized by the residents’ committee to collect different perspectives and build consensus. Coordination meetings were also held during the neighborhood regeneration implementation process. Finally, residents committees also invited project-impacted residents into the evaluation meeting to assess the quality of this regeneration effort (East Nanjing Road Street Office, 2007). With more democratic institutions, residents’ committees find that they become increasingly effective at local problem solving and residents’ behavior regulation.

Empowered Autonomy: A Prima Facie Study
What are the implications of these governance innovations for social solidarity? As mentioned earlier, the institution theory of social capital suggests that we can learn about the conditions under which trust and social capital will emerge and be maintained in a society by studying the ways in which its social institutions evolve. The following prima facie case study illustrates the implications of community governance innovation in Shanghai, and the institutional logic of community solidarity in Chinese urban society.

The Bamboo Garden Village is a gated community in Shanghai’s Central Pudong New District. In 1999, it had 1,319 households (over 3,500 residents), in 72 housing blocks covering 0.12 square kilometers. Bamboo Garden was selected in 1999 as one of the first round experimental cases of residents’ committee election. Although this study explores the election in the indirect mode, its historical accomplishment makes Bamboo Garden an exemplary site to research the practice of community democracy and its empowering effects on community solidarity.

The 1999 residents’ committee election in Bamboo Garden was implemented in several planned stages (see Figure 2). To frame a consensus, the existing residents’ committee conducted a survey on the options of the election mode. Based on a majority of the responses, the committee decided to adopt the housing blocks based on “indirect election”—that is, the new residents committee members would be elected by block-based resident representatives rather than by household or individual constituents. Some key stages would then follow the election: organizing the representative assembly, electing and selecting candidates, and casting ballots.

In post-election Bamboo Garden, the community’s power structure was significantly reconfigured (see Figure 3). The resident representative assembly became whole governing system’s power source. It was organized with all the eligible local residents over 18 years-old, or representatives recommended by resident sub-groups. The assembly is supposed to convene at least twice a year. It has three basic functions: making decisions over issues that are related to the residents’ collective interests, checking the annual working report of residents’ committee, and electing and organizing residents’ committee members. The supervision committee is more or less independent under the new system. Its panel is composed of seven residents recommended by the elected residents’ committee members and resident representatives, and works independently of the residents’ committee. The supervision committee has the authority to check the routine work of the residents’ committee.

Source: Adapted from the Bamboo Garden Residents’ Committee Office (1999a).

Figure 2. The Format of the 1999 Residents’ Committee Election in Bamboo Garden

Source: Adapted from the Bamboo Garden Residents’ Committee Office (1999a).

Figure 3. The Post-Election Residents’ Committee System

Source: Bamboo Garden Residents’ Committee Office (1999b).
Five sub-committees were set up under the elected residents’ committee to strengthen the capacity for community problem solving. Each sub-committee is composed of cross-sector actors, including residents’ committee members, social workers, resident representatives, and governmental officials. For example, the “housing property management” sub-committee includes the manager of the housing management company and a representative from street office who acts as its coordinator. As such, sub-committees are often more resourceful in their concerned community governance efforts.7

Bamboo Garden’s innovative governing arrangement has significantly impacted the relationship between the government and residents in three aspects. First, with its greater representation, the residents’ committee improved its responsiveness as well as its administrative capacity. For example, on August 16, 2000, a monthly coordination meeting was held by the housing property management sub-committee. Both the manager of the housing management company and street office delegates attended. Residents’ committee members took this opportunity to address 10 community problems, including “insufficient lighting in stair areas,” “lack of greenbelt in our community,” and “lack of community security.” Through constructive negotiations, the residents’ committee received positive responses from both the housing management company and the street office officials. At the same meeting, a schedule was formulated to solve these problems and the residents’ committee was invited to supervise the work of housing management afterwards. Mr. Wu, a representative from the housing management company, praised the residents’ committee’s role in coordinating housing service management:

Some homeowners are just too critical about our management quality and often we get unfair complaints. We trust the residents’ committee because it has a lot of connections with the residents. Most important of all, they are increasingly trusted by neighborhood residents. Thus, it is better to be organized by the residents’ committee to sit down and find a solution to housing managing problems (Bamboo Garden interview, August 2003).

Second, the new governing arrangement has enabled residents to articulate their interests in an autonomous manner. Apart from attending the quarterly residents’ representative meeting, residents can attend the monthly sub-committee meetings. To resident representatives and the elected residents’ committee members, the sub-committee monthly meetings provide one of the most effective channels for deliberating and negotiating the community’s public affairs. For example, in March 2001, 20 residents attended a sub-committee meeting to propose the construction of an outdoor gym. Residents’ committee members responded to this request with more than three sessions of consultations in the resident group meeting. After consulting on where and how to establish such a public sports area in the neighborhood, they submitted a report to the street office for financial support. Within two months, this project was completed and the gym was opened for public use with praise from many residents.

Residents’ comprehensive engagement in the community’s public affairs also provides new opportunities for them to develop community initiatives and a sense of trust in the residents’ committee. This study found that residents who participated in the residents committee system spoke up more actively at the residents’ committee’s group meetings. Table 1 shows the types and frequencies of residents’ engaging behavior in the Bamboo Garden community in 2002. The information collected is by no means complete, but it shows that residents were more likely to engage in activities that the residents’ committee organized. Furthermore, it indicates that, among the listed activities, people were willing to participate in those related to their neighborhood interests, such as crime prevention and neighbor conflict mediation. For example, 43.3% and 46.1% of respondents engaged “often” or “sometimes” in the respective activities of community patrols and intermediating neighbors’ interests.

Table 1. Community Engagement in Bamboo Garden, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activities</th>
<th>Frequency of Participation (Percentage of Respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holding a neighborhood post</td>
<td>Often: 12.1, Sometimes: 10.5, Rarely: 37.3, Never/No: 40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in RC patrols</td>
<td>Often: 20.5, Sometimes: 22.8, Rarely: 43.5, Never/No: 14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in RC administrative tasks</td>
<td>Often: 8.9, Sometimes: 13.9, Rarely: 25.8, Never/No: 42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a neighbor’s conflict resolution</td>
<td>Often: 19.3, Sometimes: 26.8, Rarely: 50.2, Never/No: 3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adopted from the results of a survey conducted by the Bamboo Garden Residents’ Committee on community participation (n=55). Bamboo Garden Residents Committee Office (2002).

Third, and perhaps most importantly, sub-groups in which residents horizontally interact have been stimulated by the new governing framework. In pre-election Bamboo Garden, there were some
sporadic “mass groups” affiliated with the residents committee. They were limited in constituents’ mobilization and organized very few cultural and community entertainment events. However, the number of these groups grew considerably after the election, and they became all the more energetic and self-regulating. Table 2 contains information about some major sub-groups in the neighborhood by 2003. After the election, residents were encouraged to engage with each other frequently based on common interests. The growing percentage of local residents engaged with each other through these informal groups further signifies the growing sense of community solidarity and autonomy.

Table 2. Sub-groups Formation in Bamboo Garden by 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Time and Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Silk hair” N ewspaper Reading Group</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Every Tuesday afternoon at the Bamboo Garden Elder Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader’s Club</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Every Tuesday afternoon at the Bamboo Garden Elder Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team of Mulanquan’</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Every morning at the Yuansen Sports Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team of Shibafa’</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Every morning in the neighborhood’s central garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team of Xianggong’</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Every morning, in the neighborhood’s central garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team of Drum Playing</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Every morning at the Yuansen Sports Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team of Fashion Show</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Every Wednesday afternoon at the Bamboo Garden Elder Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team of Fitness</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Every morning at the Yuansen Sports Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Mulanquan, Shibafa and Xianggong are all traditional Chinese Qi Gong, which is very popular among many local residents.

It is noteworthy that the mechanisms through which residents developed face-to-face interaction in the sub-groups were deliberately promoted by the residents’ committee. Mrs. Zhu, an elected deputy director of the residents committee claimed,

In fact, many residents responded to the committee’s sub-group promotions with cooperative attitudes and initiative. Many residents appreciated Mrs. Zhu’s entrepreneurial spirit because she could always facilitate the organization of these activities in their interests. Mrs. Yan, the leader of the team of Mulanquan, added,

We learn from each other and practice Mulanquan regularly. At the very beginning we had a very small number of participants, and it was not easy for us to find a proper venue to play our game. The elected residents’ committee members are very helpful. They have more organizational capacity and can help recruit more talent and committed members, and help to find a good place. They even invite some professional instructors to give training courses for us and help prepare our team for a public show (Bamboo Garden interview, July 2003).

Mrs. Zhu and Mrs. Yan’s testimonies demonstrate the importance of a state-led institution in the creation of vibrant neighborhood solidarity. While most leisure time and interpersonal interaction among residents were shaped by the danwei system before the systematic reforms of the 1990s (Wang, 1993), the state’s revitalization of the residents’ committee, through granting it more responsibility, if not accountability, has created an special institutional space through which societal engagement can be reproduced and sustained.

Overall, neighborhood activism in Bamboo Garden—from citizens’ willingness to contact the residents committee and create initiatives to solve neighborhood problems, to the formation of various sub-groups to deliberate different ways of addressing these problems—has had very important implications. These examples demonstrate that there is a gradual and meaningful increase of community solidarity due to democratic empowerment via the residents’ committee. The democratization of the residents’ committee provides a path for civic development in China by creating the necessary means for residents to engage with each other.

Concluding Remarks

It is crucial in a rapidly transitioning society for the overarching government to build new institutions into emerging social spaces, such as gated communities. In this paper I have briefly described the trajectory of community governance reforms in grassroots Shanghai, which have shifted from the pattern of administrative integration to democratic empowerment. While these innovations demonstrate...
an attempt to bolster the state’s organizational mechanism within residential neighborhoods, they also shape community solidarity by expanding various institutional spaces for social engagement.

Broadly defined, social solidarity and social capital indicate the potential readiness of citizens to cooperate with each other and to engage in civic endeavors. Recognizing its normative significance, scholars in the field of civic engagement have been curious about the strange disappearance of strong civic life in liberal democracies (Putnam, 1993). Along with the communitarians, these scholars have warned that the decline in communal bonds and the erosion of mutual obligations had created a domestic crisis; therefore, community organizations should be revitalized, as they are the backbone of a strong civil society. As Etzioni argued, “participating in the governance of one of the many institutions of the community…enables people to participate openly and directly in making the decisions that govern their lives” (1993, pp. 141-2).

In this theoretical milieu, we should consider the stories from Bamboo Garden in Shanghai very instructive about the institutional mechanisms through which social solidarity and civic life are cultivated. Indeed, in less democratic settings, state initiatives are especially important precisely because they may open the possibility of and create the necessary incentives and resources for local residents to learn and practice civic interactions. State-led democratic governance thus exerts an empowering effect on civic engagement and paves the way for the development of autonomous, self-governing communities. This version of the state-society relationship can be explained as “empowered autonomy,” which echoes what Fung and Wright (2000) found—that empowered state settings around such issues as community policing and school reform can effectively draw many participants who otherwise would have little community involvement, and that the participants in state-sponsored assemblies create open-ended and public-minded discussions even in poor socioeconomic settings (see also Baiocchi, 2003).

Indeed, there exist substantial empirical variations of such empowering effects, and the notion of “empowered autonomy” can by no means be taken for granted. There are many state initiatives that have undermined social solidarity. As James Coleman (1990) suggested, government involvement in the locality more often than not leads to the atrophying of informal networks, therefore diminishing social solidarity and trust. Which type of state intervention best empowers social actors and under what conditions remains to be explored. Drawing a preliminary case study from Shanghai, however, we can theorize a potentially positive cycle of interaction between democratic governing institutions and networks of engagement among ordinary citizens in a transitional context. This synergistic scheme may undoubtedly have far-reaching policy implications and deserves further sophisticated study.

Notes

1 Emile Durkheim (1933) dichotomized two classical ideal types of solidarity. Mechanical solidarity refers to social cohesion based upon the likeness and similarities among individuals in a society, and is largely dependent on common rituals and routines. Organic solidarity, which is more likely to exist in modern industrial societies, refers to social cohesion based upon the dependence of individuals. These two types of solidarity correspond respectively to bonding social capital and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000). In reality, these two forms of solidarity and social capital may coexist in neighborhood society and combine to shape the pattern of community autonomy.

2 Equally important in the making of Chinese urban order is the household registration (hukou) system, which was an integral part of the broader danwei system. The household registration system was established in cities in 1951 and extended to rural areas in 1955. It was formalized as a permanent system in 1958. For the origins and development of this system in urban control, see Cheng and Selden (1994).

3 De-danweiliation parallels de-collectivization in rural society since the 1980s. De-collectivization enormously weakened the state’s hold over village leaders and villagers’ dependence on those leaders, and, as a result, the power of the state to control peasants (Unger, 1989).

4 In pre-reform urban China, housing was guaranteed and managed by the state authority through the bureau of housing and the danwei system. This fostered “incorporated residential communities” based on relationships between workers who lived together in enclosed and restricted compounds (Lu & Perry, 1997, p. 11). Corresponding to housing privatization, homeowner associations have emerged and added to the complexity of community governance. For the development and implications of homeowner associations, see Read (2003b), Tang (2004) and Davis (2004).

5 Street office and residents’ committee staff was generally labeled “grassroots cadre,” which actually includes three types of positions: the “administrative position” constituted by a “public servant”; the “party management position” partly composed by a “public servant”; and the “service unit position.” Before
reform, residents’ committee staff were appointed by the street office and fell into the service unit position. Elected residents’ committee members, however, are no longer in this position system.

6 The name of the neighborhood and all the residents interviewed are pseudonyms.

7 The Bamboo Garden residents’ committee election in 1999 also turned out to be an opportunity for the ruling Party to invigorate its social support and strengthen its influence in the community. In fact, the voting turnout in Bamboo Garden reveals that 71.4% of the newly elected residents’ committee members were also Party members (Lin & Ma, 2001). They were organized into the Party’s neighborhood branch and played an important role in setting agendas in residents’ committee meetings and sub-committee gatherings. The fact that many Party members concurrently hold leading positions in urban communities indicates that the Party’s dominance over the grassroots has strengthened rather than weakened (Benewick et al., 2004).

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Author

Chunrong Liu is an assistant professor of political science at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Fudan University. His research field is political sociology, broadly defined, with special interests in governance, political participation and social capital. His recent research articles have appeared in Sociological Studies (a Chinese journal) and Policy and Society, and both addressed neighborhood-level sociopolitical changes in urban China. He can be contacted at crliu@fudan.edu.cn.

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