

Public Administration in China— Evolution and Current Challenge

Wei Liu and Wenzhao Li

Taking an ecological approach, this article examines the resumption, formation, and development of public administration (PA) as a discipline in China. Through content analysis and process tracing, we argue that the social contexts during China's transition period and existing knowledge, both endogenous and exogenous, are major forces shaping the nature of the discipline and pushing its development. We also point out that Chinese PA now is facing challenges, calling for deeper localization and closer integration into global scholarship.

Keywords: Chinese Public Administration; Ecological Approach; Content Analysis

Introduction

This article examines the evolution of public administration (PA) in China. Although the root of Chinese PA can be traced back thousands of years (Holzer and Zhang, 2009), it is necessary to acknowledge that modern PA, as a newly emerged field of study, was first imported from the West in the 1930s. Zhang Jinjian, who is later called the 'Father of Chinese PA', was trained at the Department of Political Science of Stanford University, with a focus on PA. When he came back to China with the Master's degree, he also brought back his knowledge gained from Western countries. First serving in the Nationalist central government, and later working as a faculty member in Henan and Nankai University respectively, Zhang carried out the American ideas of public administration in both practical and academic areas. Academically, he offered courses in public administration and published books such as *Theories and Practice of Public Administration*, *Classic of Public Administration*, etc. Zhang opened PA teaching and research in China.

Wei Liu, PhD, is Assistant Professor at the School of Public Administration and Policy, Renmin University of China. Wenzhao Li, PhD, is Associate Professor at the School of Public Administration and Policy, Renmin University of China. Correspondence to: Wei Liu, Assistant Professor, Institute of Public Policy and Public Safety, School of Public Administration and Policy, Renmin University of China Beijing, China 100871. E-mail: liuwei@mparuc.edu.cn

However, this tradition was interrupted later. In 1952, China's higher education system was reshuffled, with universities closed or merged, academic fields adjusted and reconciled. Under this large-scale reforming wave, the courses of PA were eliminated from the curriculum list. The PA scholars, not many anyway, shifted their teaching and research interests to some fields like Marxism and Leninism, ideological building, and history.

PA was not resumed until the mid-1980s. After China started its reform and open policy, the requirements for PA as a discipline accordingly rose. Xia Shuzhang, a Harvard MPA graduate in the 1940s, wrote articles and called for a systematic research of PA. Xia's article was published in 1982 in the *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party. Such a high-profile treatment means that Xia's proposition was recognized and responded to by the authorities. Since then, PA as a field of inquiry starts to develop again in China.

The development in any study or discipline is gained through constant review and critique (Raadschelders and Lee, 2011). Such practices have been done by various scholars in the field of PA (Althaus, 1997; Bingham and Bowen, 1994; Dunsire, 1999; Forrester, 1996; Gulrajani and Moloney, 2012; Lan and Anders, 2000; Lee *et al.*, 2012; Raadschelders, 2011a; Raadschelders, 2011b; Stallings and Ferris, 1988). So is PA in China. Scholars have never stopped self-reflection. This trend became more prevalent after the new millennium when Chinese PA has developed for a while and gathered continuous theory-building efforts and achievements. Senior scholars experienced the whole process of the resumption and development. Some of them are playing key roles as discipline-framers, either serving as the board member of a professional association, or leading a research or teaching institute. They, from their professional experience, review the development of Chinese PA. Zhang (1993) reviews the very initial development of Chinese PA and argues that it is in need of developing local PA theories. Zhang and Holzer (2001) argue that the causes of the failure to develop Chinese PA theories lie in scholars' inability to use sophisticated methods and thereby call for an emphasis on methodological training.

Taking a different approach, other scholars present review and critique with findings of content analysis on scholarly publications. Drawing conclusion from content analysis of published articles, Lu and Chow (2008) claim that theory-building and knowledge advancement in Chinese PA are still problematic. The field has been characterized by traditionalism, conservatism, and reductionism, leading to 'mediocrity in scholarship' (Lu and Chow, 2008). Cheng and Lu (2009) claim that the incapacity of the Chinese PA community to conduct sophisticated research and generate indigenous theories will lead to malfunction of Chinese PA practices. After examining the quality of PA dissertations produced in China between 2002 and 2006, Jing (2008) presents a similar pessimistic view, arguing that the results are unsatisfactory.

Joining these scholarly efforts, this article reviews the evolution and development of Chinese PA as a discipline. Two elements making this research distinctive to others. First, this is by not merely examining the developmental path of Chinese PA, we also,

through positing the field of PA in a larger context of China's transition, try to find the driving forces of Chinese PA. We take the ecological approach and put our analysis under a dynamic perspective. Second, by reviewing the academic development of Chinese PA and China's experience of social transition, we try to find the relationship between PA as a discipline and PA as a practice. In this article we have two tasks: (1) we trace the developmental path of Chinese PA over time, arguing that China's social and economic context and existing knowledge are the most important driving force. (2) we argue that Chinese PA now is facing a challenge, calling for deeper localization and closer integration into the international scholarly community.

The rest of the article is displayed as follows. The analytical framework and definitional preparation are presented in the second section. The third section presents a comprehensive review of Chinese PA's development under the driving forces. In the fourth section, we take a critical position and argue that Chinese PA is facing a challenge. This article ends with brief remarks and expectations.

Chinese PA and its Sources

To define the field of study of PA, we follow Cooper's criterion that a field of study should include a group of scholars, a consistent flow of published materials, and academic courses (Cooper, 1994). Thus we mainly use scholarly community, publications, and training and teaching programs as indicators to describe disciplinary Chinese PA.

To examine the developmental path of Chinese PA, one critical question is what the major forces are? In other words, we try to understand how Chinese PA as a discipline is shaped and developed over time and what factors influence the future of it. After retracing the decades of development since its resumption, this research proposes that there are two major forces shaping Chinese PA and pushing its development: PA practice of China, which is influenced by the socio-economic context of China's transition, and existing knowledge.

It is not new to argue that the socio-economic context of a particular nation influences its PA practice and discipline. Scholars of comparative public administration have justified this ecological approach and conducted various research (Heady, 1979; Riggs, 1980, 1991, 1994). Compared with other approaches like historical or structural ones, the ecological approach has two advantages. The first is that the ecological approach closely links the development of PA with its changing social context. From the very beginning, PA is an applied social science and pays most, if not all, its attention to practice (Duncan, 1975). It focuses on addressing social issues, solving public problems and responding to social or public needs. All of these happen within certain social surroundings. The bureaucracies, exactly what PA centres on, are thus subsystems within such surroundings. The changing social surroundings play key roles in shaping different social systems and practices within them (Peng, 2008). PA as a discipline is naturally connected with PA practice (Ostrom, 1989). Therefore, one should examine the social surroundings like historical background, ideologies,

value systems, economic structure, social structure, etc. to examine the discipline of PA of a certain country (McCurdy, 2006). The second advantage of the ecological approach is that it forms a dynamic analytical framework. In the past decades, China's PA, both as a discipline and as a practice, has been under constant change. The reason for change can be found through the changes happening within social context. With the ecological approach, the causal mechanism for Chinese PA's change can be found. That is, when China's socio-historical context changes, it brings challenges and opportunities. The PA practice in China then becomes a reaction against these changes, either responding to the challenges or grasping the opportunity. The change of PA practice then further pushes the change of PA as a discipline.

In China, the changing social surroundings lead every step of PA's development, both practically and academically. As in any other country, PA practice in China is an endless search for a workable balance between politics and administration (Morgan, 1981) and undoubtedly integrated in China's larger context (Burns, 2001; Lan, 2000; Ma and Zhang, 2009; Ngok and Zhu, 2007). Such a practice concern is directly reflected in PA studies. Zhu claims that 'every progress of the discipline (of Chinese PA) reflects the progress of the nation'. By examining China's historical changes, Denigan (Denigan, 2001) suggests that the definition of PA, which is the core concept of PA study, is changing along with the changes of political institutions.

Therefore, we argue that the socio-economic context is the major force driving PA's practice, while the latter shapes the discipline of PA in China. To make our argument parsimonious, we examine the change of practical PA through administrative reforms. Since the end of 1970s, China started its transition from a traditional agricultural society to an industrial one. It not only affects the economic conditions of Chinese people, but also reshapes the parameters of political and administrative governance in China (Burell, 2001). From 1982 onwards, six rounds of administrative reforms have been launched. These reforms are important marks in China's history of reform and draw much scholarly attention (Burns, 2001; Huque and Yep, 2003; Lan, 1999, 2000; Yang, 2004). They discover the problems appearing in the process of transition, deploy strategies to deal with them, and set up a basic developmental pace for the next step. It is a tool for the state to respond to the transitional context, to enhance the governance capacity, and overall to, reshape the administrative practice. Scholars define the administrative reform as 'reactive approach', through which the pressure of changing context is responded and reacted, and 'institutional approach', through which the administrative system is further clarified and re-oriented (Ngok and Zhu, 2007). Therefore, the administrative reform is a knotting point which expresses both the features of socio-economic context and the emergence and changing of practical PA.

We gathered all the reports and acts of six rounds of administrative reforms and examine the background under which the reforms were carried out. We focus on three questions: (1) what is the main problem and what are the requirements and challenges the state faces? (2) What factors are mostly involved? (3) What is the

relationship between government and market/society? Further, we go through the reform and summarize the basic policies to understand how the changing social surroundings are responded to by making revision within PA practice. With these steps, the influence of practical PA can be understood in an operationalizable fashion.

The second forces driving PA's development is the existing knowledge. What we discuss here is PA as a discipline. Although closely linked with practice, PA as a discipline shows unique characteristics, which is, Chinese PA is built upon knowledge cumulation. Two kinds of existing knowledge project their influence on the formation, growth and maturation of Chinese PA. One is exogenous knowledge. As we mention earlier, Chinese PA was imported from Western countries. The influence of international scholarship has never stopped since its resumption. In the field of social science, theory-building naturally include the efforts of academic learning. While for Chinese PA, there are several other reasons worth mentioning. First, the essential element of reform and open policy is to learn from the West (Child, 1994; Lan, 2000). As Deng Xiaoping once claimed, 'we will learn all possible advanced outcomes worldwide'. The process of reform and open is also the process of learning from the West. We learn advanced technologies, methods, policies, and Western-imported PA theories. Second, Chinese PA, due to its interrupted academic tradition, lacks theoretical legacies. When a sudden and huge need for PA theories, education, and research emerges, there is little time for completely independent and mature theory-building. Learning from the West is a realistic approach to echo back.

While the lack of long-term academic tradition leads Chinese PA to borrow from other countries, it also makes Chinese PA borrow from other disciplines, which are endogenous knowledge. The first generation of PA scholars actually have various educational backgrounds other than PA. They learned, for example, economics, sociology, law, or political science, and later, when PA as a discipline started to develop in China, switched their foci to this new field. In this situation, Chinese PA could be influenced through these other-areas-trained scholars. In the meantime, other disciplines can also naturally influence the development of PA because PA, by its nature, is an interdisciplinary area. When forming its own theory system, PA cannot avoid learning from other disciplines of social sciences. This trend was especially obvious during the early stage of PA development. Therefore, our analytical scheme is shown below in Figure 1.

It should be acknowledged that all those driving forces are not one-way pressure. PA always has the counter-force to alter PA practice and to increase knowledge cumulation. However, after examining the developmental path of Chinese PA, we argue that the incapability to project such counter-forces is a challenge Chinese PA faces. In the future, Chinese PA is expected (1) to proactively influence, or even direct development of the local socio-economic context; and (2) to integrate into the international scholarly community and present theoretical contributions. These arguments will be deployed in the fourth section.

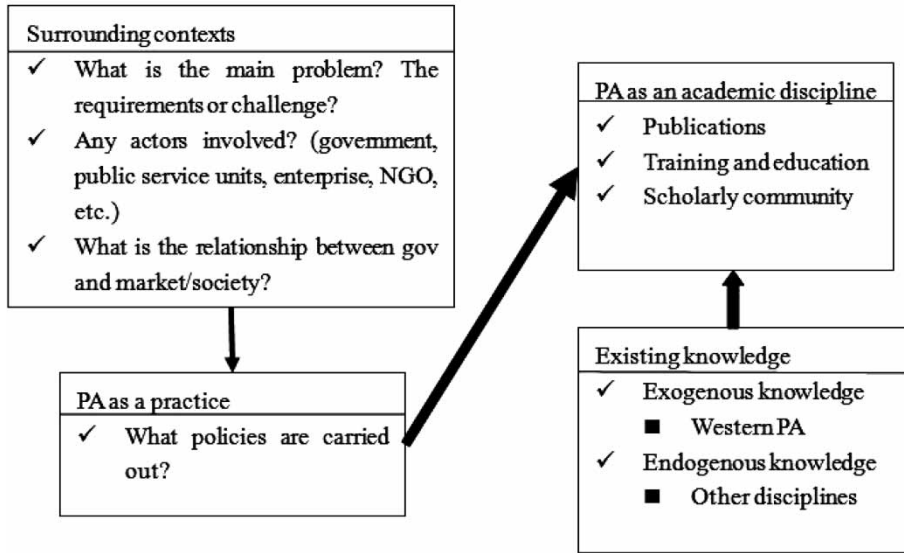


Figure 1. Analytical scheme of driving forces of Chinese PA

Development of Chinese PA

Emergence of Chinese PA (1982–1988)

China's reform started in the end of the 1970s. With several years' development, a consensus emphasizing the importance of economic revitalization has been gradually formed among political elites. The question remained was 'how'. It was obvious that the large and low-efficient government could not take the responsibility of revitalizing economy. In the early 1980s, the grievances of many cadres during the Cultural Revolution were redressed and they went back to their previous job positions. The policy of economic reform further encouraged the expansion of the governmental organs (Burns, 1993). Both of them directly led to a bloated organizational structure. In 1981 the number of State Council organs reached 100, the highest record ever. The large and rigid bureaucracy brought more problems than it solved. Information could not be communicated smoothly; administrative powers were scattered in various agencies; some responsibilities were overlapped while others were left unconcerned; public servants lost motivation. Facing this situation, the decision-makers believed that the restructure of over-staffed and overlapping Party and state organs was necessary.

Although the market-oriented reform started already, the government was still omnipotent. Under such a situation, major actors involved are central government. Specifically, the challenges and problems required an efficient and professional government to govern or even intervene in economic sectors.

The 1982 Reform aimed at addressing such questions and its policies included downsizing the central government, streamlining the cumbersome bureaucracy,

terminating life-tenures of old cadres, and improving professionalism of public servants. Under the influence of the 1982 Reform on central government, more related reform policies were implemented during this reform cycle, especially the reform of the civil service system. In 1987, the first round of civil service reform started. The plan included dividing the cadre stratum into two categories: professional civil servants, recruited through open examinations and promoted based on job performance, and political civil servants, who were senior officials recommended by the Party to supervise the civil service.

Although some of the policies experienced difficulties in implementation (Burns, 1987; Tsao, 1993), the 1982 Administrative Reform and its follow-up reform policies have special meaning for PA practice. Superficially, they aimed at reducing the staff and improving administrative efficiency. Essentially, they delivered the information, just as some scholars predicted decades ago (Zald and Ash, 1966), that the professionalization of the leadership core and rationalization of the administrative structure were in need for China to fit its changing surroundings. The civil service system was still about to be established though, the reform policies literally recognized the profession of PA and this undoubtedly laid out the foundation of Chinese PA as a discipline.

In addition the practical PA, existing knowledge plays different roles in this very initiation of Chinese PA. At this time, Western PA theories, although promoted abroad, had limited influence on Chinese PA. Chinese PA held a cautious view toward Western theories. When China just opened its door and started to learn from the outside world, the ideology of Mao's time still haunted. Although PA as a discipline need ed to learn from others, scholars were highly prudent in what was learned. They purposely selected the technical part of PA while avoiding some controversial issues. Through an t examination of the National Library's catalogue, only five books were translated, one from Romania, one from USSR and three from America. It is understandable that Goodnow's *Politics and Administration* was one of them. Contrary to exogenous knowledge, endogenous knowledge imposed much influence via the first group of major-transferred PA scholars. They were trained as historians, political scientists, sociologists, economists, etc. When they were brought to the new field of PA, they still held their original academic views. Thus China's PA until now is a highly inter-disciplinary field.

As the profession of PA emerged, the scholarly activities like training and research followed. Existing knowledge and the needs of PA practice supplied the very basic knowledge of Chinese PA. In 1982, a workshop on PA was organized by the Chinese Association of Political Science. In 1984, a joint seminar on PA was held by the General Office of the State Council and the Ministry of Labour, discussing the importance and necessity of PA research and training. Also at the seminar, the proposal for a professional PA association was approved and the Chinese Association of PA was formally under preparation. Political Science Studies and China Public Administration (CPA) published their first issues in the next year. These two journals, especially the latter one, later became the most important academic publications in

Chinese PA. In 1986, the Ministry of Education revised the catalogue of academic field and included PA as a subject under political science. This made PA formally an academic discipline in China. In the coming autumn, Renmin University of China established the first research institute of PA, which attracted scholars from fields like law, political science, labour relations and international relations. During this period, around 20 textbooks were published. Although these publications, training programmes, or even a professional association can barely be regarded academic by current criteria, they did resume the scholarly tradition of PA in China.

Examining several textbooks during this time, two conclusions can be summarized. First, the ontology of PA was not well-defined and a basic sense of what PA is was missing. During this time, PA was interchangeable with ‘management’. This was largely due to the fact that China had no well-defined public domain in the 1980s. Second, PA was regarded, to a large extent, as merely a set of training programmes focusing on ‘how-to’, rather than an academic field focusing on theory-building.

In sum, during this time period, Chinese PA, as a discipline, started to echo the requirements coming along with PA profession and practice. At this initial stage of development, there was little knowledge contribution.

Formation of Chinese PA (1988–1998)

Through an approach of incrementalism, China’s reform entered into a key stage during this time. In the 13th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a strategy of ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’ was proposed, calling for boosting economic reform and launching political reform. Even though the 4 June Incident brought a short period of political stagnation and economic deceleration, Deng’s southern tour and talks further pushed the implementation of reform. The 14th Congress of CCP officially legitimated the market economy and this became a critical point in China’s reform history. Since then, the process of marketization was accelerated and pushed to a new stage. At this time, the challenge China faced was what role the government should play and how to play well. It was gradually realized that government needed to alter its functions to suit the development of a market economy. Furthermore, a large amount of increasingly complicated problems required the government to further refine its decision-making process and implementing mechanism.

Actors involved in this period included government and many state-owned-enterprises (SOEs). For government, the jurisdiction would be clarified during its function reorientation and the civil service system should be further rationalized and professionalized. For SOEs, they should be separated from government and find their positions in the market. Under the trend of marketization, the relationship between government and the economy changed and it thus required ‘the overhaul of the administrative system in order to provide a set of institutions compatible with a market economy’ (Ma and Zhang, 2009).

A series of policies were carried out during this stage. The 1988 Administrative Reform switched its concern from organizational restructure to functional reorientation. Party apparatus and SOEs were separated from the government. Two new ministerial level organs, Ministry of Supervision and Ministry of Personnel were set up, pushing the reform of civil service. In 1993, a formal civil servant system was established through the enactment of 'Regulations on State Functionaries'. The Party cadres were finally replaced by professional bureaucrats. These policies made the reform of PA practice switch from merely 'institutional reform' to administrative system reform in 1997. This implied that the scope of reform was beyond simple institutional restructure, but to transform the essential functions of governments (Ngok and Zhu, 2007).

PA research and studies changed accordingly. As in the first stage, training was the first to respond. To fulfill the need of PA practice, a National Administrative College was proposed in 1988 and formally established in 1994. Its function was to provide continued education to civil servants. This was the first professional training institute of PA in China. Since then, this trend proliferated to provinces and municipals nation-wide. The China Association of PA, consisting of PA practitioners and scholars, was founded in 1988. In 1997, Public Management was recognized by the Ministry of Education as an independent category under the officially-issued catalogue of academic fields. The next year, three universities were given the authority to grant PhD degrees of PA. The publication of PA steadily increased as well and this trend is shown in Figure 2 below, which marked the number of published

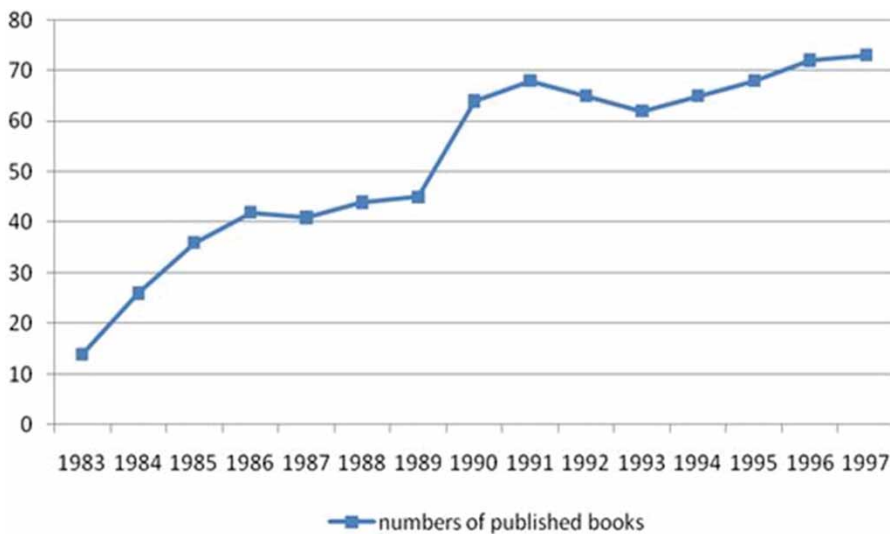


Figure 2. Numbers of published books under the topic of PA

Source: The number is from the authors' check through the catalog of National Library. This may be an incomplete number. But the National Library is the largest library in China and collects all important publications in mainland China,

books under the topic of PA each year from 1982 to 1997. By then, as a study of inquiry, the complete formality of PA, including different levels of training programmes, a professional association of practitioners and scholars, and academic publications, was officially formed.

With a complete academic structure though, the tradition of PA was still too weak to develop China's own theories. During this time period, the content of PA research and training was strongly influenced by exogenous knowledge. In the 1990s, new public management, along with the practical reforms of 'Reinventing Government' in America and the next steps initiative in Britain, became the dominant paradigm in PA, while the traditional approach characterized by bureaucratic theory was under criticism. However, both paradigms were regarded as valuable and 'advanced' to China's young PA scholarship. Under the changing context of reform, Western theories were eagerly borrowed for two reasons. First, China was experiencing an unprecedented reform and it needed theoretical assistance. Put simply, some Western PA theories can help China solve problems and implement reform smoothly. For example, to build an effective and professional civil service system, theories like formal control of political leadership, instruction follow-up, and division of labour from the traditional approach were learned. Second, once framers are determined to carry out some reform policies, they still need scientific theories to justify their choices. For example, to adjust the relationship between government and SEOs and to rationalize the corporatization strategies, the notions of New Public Management, like downsizing the government, privatization, and objective-oriented management were affirmed. During this stage, the influence of endogenous knowledge diminished a lot. Although few scholars really majored in 'PA' for their PhD degrees, they started to work under the umbrella of PA.

Development of Chinese PA (1998—Now)

After two decades of reform, the socio-economic context changed significantly and China faced new internal and external problems. Internally, the market-oriented economic reform brought not only economic prosperity, but also prices of development. This seemed like an inevitable outcome. As Polanyi pointed decades ago, a market without enough regulation will 'have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness' (Polanyi, [1944] 1957). When the marketization reached a certain level, it ruined the original order of society. The latter would respond by a set of counter-movements of self-protection, requiring the government to satisfy social needs and preserve social values. Putting this theory to China's case, it matched the reality perfectly (Ma and Zhang, 2009). Since the mid- 1990s, many problems of marketization appeared, including official corruption, unaffordable housing and healthcare, increased inequality, poisoned drugs and food, environmental deterioration. Although the Chinese government never released any statistical data on Gini coefficient, scholars estimate that it might have been over 45 per cent in 2005.

The widened income inequality, plus various other social problems, lead to intensified popular unrest all over China. As many scholars have pointed out, while different groups may have their unique reasons for protest (Cai, 2007; Ma and Zhang, 2009; Perry and Selden, 2000; Weston, 2004), the rising discontent imposes pressure on government to change its GDP-oriented marketization policies.

Externally, the challenge of globalization is another change which the Chinese government, as all other states in the world, has to respond to. China's entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 increased its involvement in the global economy. Although China at this time has transferred its central-planned economy to a market economy, the heavy intervention of government in the economy is still present and this will no longer be suitable for global economic competition. In order to keep attracting foreign investment, to maintain comparative advantages in global competition, and to better join in the integrated world economy, the administrative system needs adjustment and transformation.

In an increasingly diversified society, almost all actors are, no matter whether they are willing to or not, involved. Government faces new challenges; both foreign and domestic business need to re-position themselves in a changing environment; and the newly emerged civil societies, representing interests of various kinds of social forces, start to grow and to project their influence over governmental organs. During this stage, the relationship between government and the society becomes the crucial point. On the one hand, society gains independence and involves all kinds of social affairs. On the other hand, the government, through rule-making and boundary-drawing, regulates social affairs and avoids direct intervening. Put differently, the mission during this stage is not merely to promote economic development, but to improve people's livelihoods and enhance social management.

Since the end of 1990s, new rounds of administrative reforms have been carried out and deeply influenced PA practice. The mission is twofold: to withdraw from direct intervention in economic and social life so as to create room for society's growth; to build administrative capabilities to regulate the market economy appropriately and to support market-oriented reform. To reach the goal, three themes of policies are implemented. First, the government further withdraws from economic and social domains by streamlining, downsizing, merging, and corporatization. The number of administrative agencies was reduced from 99 to 82 in 1998. In the local level, many excessive administrative procedures were simplified and some functions were transferred to outsiders by privatization and contracting-out. Second, some agencies focusing on social management were established or reinforced. Policies of governmental capability-building are implemented through various levels of government. These policies included reinforcing the market regulatory system, strengthening the management system of state assets, improving the macro-economic control regime, and enhancing public service. Third, the super ministry reform was carried out in 2008 to avoid overlapping responsibilities and 'powers not being matched by responsibilities', to streamline government department functions and to strengthen macro-economic regulation.

These problems, missions, and practices are totally new to China's PA practitioners. At this time, decision-makers start to depend heavily on the scholarly community for policy advice and consultancy. These demands boost PA, keep developing and becoming a true 'study of inquiry'. Just as scholars find that experts play increasingly an important role in China's policy-making (Wang, 2006; Zhu, 2009), so is the field of PA.

In addition, after acquiring the stable and legitimate position as a study of inquiry, Chinese PA starts intensive external exchanges and actively builds relationships with international scholarship. Exogenous knowledge at this stage was proactively involved in China's PA research and teaching. With the growth of new generations of PA scholars in China, the influence of endogenous knowledge from other disciplines, on the contrary, diminishes to the minimum.

Once the training programmes are stably growing and the scholarly community is gradually forming, the status and variation of the discipline can be detected from its research. During this time, the CPA has published enough articles for a thorough and comprehensive review. We gathered all issues of CPA to conduct a content analysis with concerns on two elements: authorship and research theme. For the authorship, we code by the composition of authors, including 'scholar author', 'student author', and 'practitioner author'. Through this analysis, we can find the most active groups in the field. In terms of the research theme, we conduct an unstructured and open-ended coding. Each article is coded by at most two themes with equivalent weight. Later, both themes are taken into the frequency count. Our sample includes all research articles in CPA published from 2000 to 2011. It should be acknowledged that the CPA, although it published its first issue in 1985, did not become an academic journal until 2000. Even so, not all published articles are academic ones. The editorial chapters, news presses, short comments (whose lengths are usually less than two pages), and book reviews are eliminated from our sample. Finally our sample size is 3,469 academic articles. The overall intercoder reliability, according to the results on a randomly chosen 15 per cent of the total articles (i.e., 500), was good in terms of Krippendorff's alpha with the alpha value for authorship 1 and for themes 0.84 (Krippendorff, 1980).

To understand Chinese PA comprehensively, we gathered all issues of CPA and conducted a content analysis with emphasis on authorship and major research themes. The findings confirm our hypothesis.

Examining the authorship of CPA, we find significant change. The practitioners as authors decreased steadily, while the percentage of scholar-writers increased. More importantly, the number of student authors, although proportionally small, increases yearly. This confirmed the basic developmental trend of Chinese PA that the characteristics as a study of inquiry increase over time and a steady scholarly community is under formation. Figure 3 below indicates the changes of ratio for different authors.

More detailed examination into the research themes of published articles on CPA finds several significant trends, which confirm our hypothesis that the changing

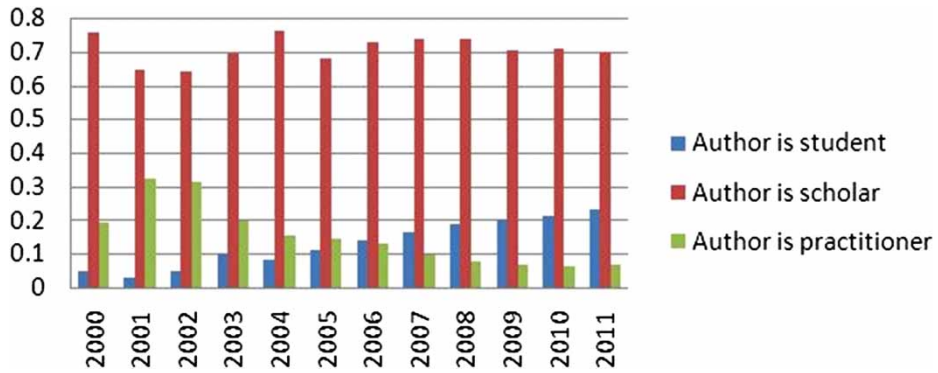


Figure 3. The distribution of authorship

socio-economic surroundings and Western PA theories and experiences project their influence over Chinese PA. The basic research themes change over time. When Chinese PA was first formed as a complete and comprehensive discipline, it was heavily influenced by other disciplines, especially political science. Most scholars originated from political science and naturally emphasized more in the political side of PA. With the growth of PA, this situation started to change. Domestically, Chinese PA started to train its own PhD students; internationally, some Chinese scholars earned PhDs in PA overseas and came back to work, supplementing the PA scholarship. Gradually, management and policy related research takes majority in CPA. This change can be detected from Figure 4 below. In addition to this change, there are several themes worth mentioning as well.

The researches of E-government, performance evaluation and NGOs show a significant increasing trend. These topics match the development of PA practice well.

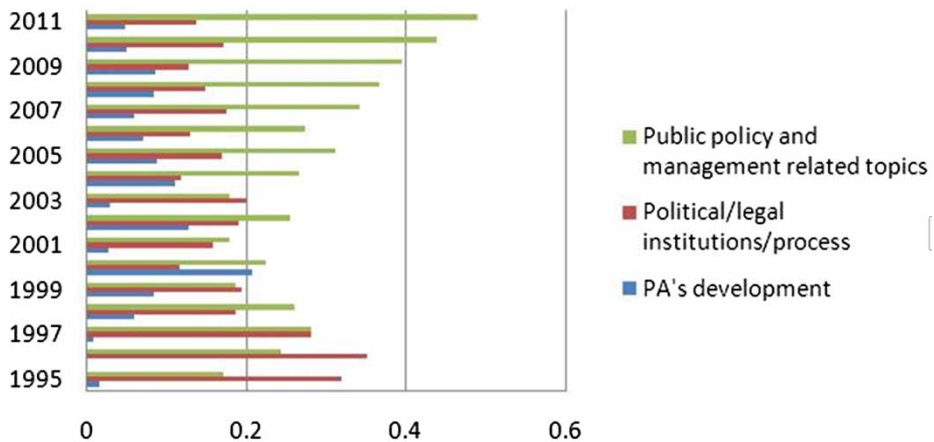


Figure 4. Basic research themes of Chinese PA

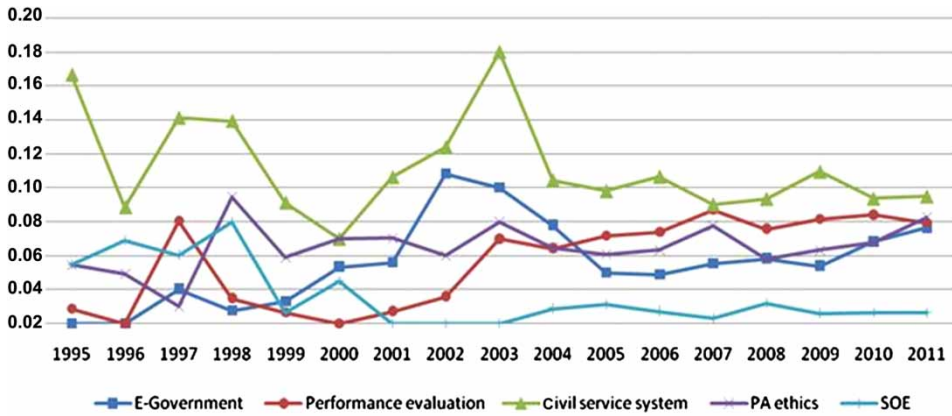


Figure 5. Relative frequencies of research on selected topics

The reform of the civil service system lasted the whole process of China's reform and emphasis on performance is one marked feature; e-government is an irresistible trend in this globalized and digitalized age, and a large scale of public participation undoubtedly is a requirement in nowadays China. When the frequencies of these researches increase, the frequency of research on SOEs decreases. This is also understandable because most SOEs, during the reform and transition, are now independent actors in the market. The government may still regulate the operation of them, but direct intervention does not happen.

Two research themes with constant academic focus are civil service reform and PA ethics. They are closely linked to China's PA practice and Western PA research interest. It has been argued earlier that China's economic and social transition makes demands on PA practice and the direct way to reform PA practice is to establish and refine the civil service system. Once the civil service becomes a constant focus of China's reform, it also gathers scholarly attention. The constant enthusiasm about PA ethics derives from a paradigm shift in PA. In the late 1990s, 'public value paradigm' emerged and took over new public management or NPM (O'Flynn, 2007). Similarly, 'new public service', in addition to calling for public participation, also stresses the importance of ethical value (Denhardt, 1999). Under such influence, China's PA knowledge, while focusing much on the tenets of NPM, delves deeply in research of PA ethics and value.

In sum, Chinese PA, during this stage, officially started discipline development and knowledge-building. As a relatively mature discipline, Chinese PA fostered its own scholarly community, diminishing the influence of other disciplines. The still changing social context and PA theories externally are two forces, shaping Chinese PA's research and study. New requirements of globalization and China's transition attract scholars to delve more in some areas like performance evaluation, civil service

system, e-government, etc. The paradigm shift in PA discipline also leads Chinese PA's stress on PA ethics and value.

Even though it is closely linked to PA practice and international scholarship, Chinese PA, during this stage, made limited progress in knowledge-building. Our content analysis indicates, as other research did, that the methodology of PA in China is least developed and this seriously hinders its growth.

Challenges and Opportunities of Chinese PA

All sciences share two important missions: first, to realize knowledge-growth through scientific research. The knowledge refers to certain generalized regularities, with which certain social/natural phenomena can be explained or predicted. Second, to direct practices and promote the welfare of human beings. An ideal science should be able to drive social change and better human practice. Knowledge has the capability to make better-off of whole human being. These two missions are not separated from each other. On the contrary, they are intertwined in a process of co-evolution. As an applied social science, PA is no exception.

The challenges Chinese PA faces are also twofold. Specifically, Chinese PA, in terms of knowledge-building, needs deeper localization and closer integration into the international scholarly community; in terms of application, it needs to strengthen its capability to project influence to PA practice.

Judging superficially, localization and globalization are two opposite directions. Based on an empirical context of a certain area, PA inherently carries the ethnocentric and parochial nature (Heady, 1979; Hood, 1989). But under the name of science, localization and globalization lead to one end: the use of generalized language to push scientific progress through knowledge-building (Dahl, 1947). To promote scientific progress, the biggest challenge for Chinese PA lies in the failure of PA scholars to adopt scientific research. Through our content analysis, we find that most publications on CPA are descriptive, normative, non-analytical and non-empirical, without even the simplest research design. This problem, on the one hand, makes Chinese PA lose its concern over China's reality; on the other hand, blocks it from holding a dialogue with the international community.

To save Chinese PA from this 'mediocrity in scholarship' (Lu and Chow, 2008), we propose that it should follow Ostrom's (Ostrom, 2007) and Simon's (Simon, 2000) traditions and go through the steps of 'ontological framework—diagnosis—suggestions.' To construct a generalized ontological framework of PA, both global knowledge and experiences and China's local variables are included. Then the Chinese context is diagnosed under the framework with scientific method. Only through this channel could useful suggestions be proposed. Specifically, the unique context of China may contribute to the international PA community through several areas. For example, China's ongoing reform is transferring China from a centric-economy to an open and modern industrial economy. This transitional context provides a unique 'quasi-social experiment.' By pre/post comparison, we could

advance our understanding to different models of PA under different settings. Another possible breakthrough is on the topic of policy innovation and diffusion. Although China's governance is highly centric, localities are granted much autonomy as incentives. This leaves localities the space to adopt innovations on technology, institutions, or organizational culture. How the policy innovation and diffusion under a unitary system differ from those under federal systems could be a potential contribution to global scholarship. Furthermore, China imports some PA theories or concepts, like administrative reform, organizational culture, transparency government, civic engagement, privatization, etc. For them, empirical examples in China's practice can all be found. China therefore is a test-bed to examine the applicability of these theories or concepts. The combination of PA theories and China's realities will greatly enrich comparative studies of PA generally.

Examining the developmental path of Chinese PA, it is clear that PA practice leads the directions of PA research and studies. Although the discipline and practice are highly correlated, the discipline is severely lagged. This can be further confirmed with a brief time-series description below. On the side of PA practice, China has experienced six rounds of administrative reforms in 1982, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, and 2008. Correspondingly, these administrative reforms are important research topics and appear frequently on CPA. However, as shown in Figure 6 below, academic concerns on these administrative reforms fall around one year behind the schedule when the reforms were executed. After the reforms are carried out, they become a research concern. This indicates that Chinese PA, though responding to reality well, has little influence to lead PA practice in advance. This phenomenon is also attended by the discipline-framers in China. In the report of a key research project examining the key areas and topics of Chinese PA, the authors, Chen Zhenming and Xue Lan, who are also two leading authorities in Chinese PA, clearly pointed that Chinese PA is unable to play an initiative role in leading PA practice now (Chen and Xue, 2007).

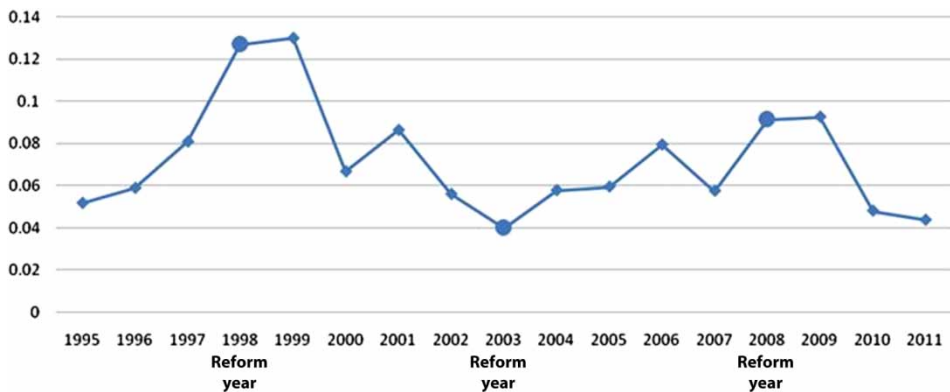


Figure 6. Relative frequencies of articles under the topic of Administrative Reforms

The inability of Chinese PA to influence practice partly results from its poor development and inadequate knowledge-building. So the premise of applicability is to enhance the discipline building and knowledge growth. PA scholars, instead of merely focusing on paper-based theories, should delve themselves deeper in reality. Only empirically supported research can influence and direct the reality. In addition to this, another approach for Chinese PA to influence practice is education and training programmes, especially the masters in public administration (MPA) programme. With a decade of development, the MPA programme, similar to Chinese PA, also experiences challenges. New teaching methods and philosophy are in urgent need. The third approach is through consultancy. As we argued earlier, PA scholars now play increasingly important roles in PA practice. In the process of consultancy, PA scholars, when satisfying the clients' requirements and needs, should also instill scientific PA theories and ideas into practitioners' minds. With these scholarly efforts, it is believable that in the long term, Chinese PA can project influence to PA practice.

Concluding Observations

Reviewing the evolution process of Chinese PA may help us better understand the core concepts and tasks of PA, the relationship between academia and practice, and the challenges we are facing. One reviews the past for the future's development. In order to gain further advancement, Chinese PA should still emphasize the following points.

First, it should be acknowledged that academic PA is an important part for a society and for a human being's wellness. Keeping this in mind may offer answers for questions like why PA is in need and why we shall promote the development of Chinese PA. Chinese PA, similar with American counterpart, is facing an 'identity crisis' (Waldo, 1965). The key for it at this stage is to develop its own unique paradigm, including concepts, theories, and methodologies, and contribute to the progress of the whole discipline.

Second, under challenges though, Chinese PA is facing great prospects. China's development, practice's requirements, and puzzles of PA theories all breed opportunities. The deepened process of globalization and new information technologies facilitate the interaction between Chinese PA and global scholarship and the theoretical foundations of China's PA could be stabilized through such interactions.

Lastly, through initiation, formation, and development, Chinese PA is entering a new stage. The future of it depends on whether it can form its own theoretical framework and dialogue with global scholarship. With this process, it is important to maintain an open, competitive, and cumulative environment. Therefore, in addition to devoting care to their academic careers, scholars also need to work for a favourable institutional environment for Chinese PA.

References

- Althaus, C. (1997). 'What do we talk about? Publications in AJPA 1970–95', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 56(1): 141–146.
- Bingham, R. D. and Bowen, W. (1994). "'Mainstream" public administration over time: a topical analysis of Public Administration Review', *Public Administration Review*, 54(2): 204–208.
- Burell, M. (2001). *The Rule-Governed State: China's Labor Market Policy, 1978–1998*. Uppsala University.
- Burns, J. P. (1987). 'Civil service reform in contemporary China', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* (18): 47–83.
- Burns, J. P. (1993). 'China's administrative reforms for a market economy', *Public Administration and Development*, 13(4): 345–360.
- Burns, J. P. (2001). 'Public sector reform and the state: the case of China', *Public Administration Quarterly*, 24(4): 419–436.
- Cai, Y. (2007). 'Civil resistance and rule of law in China', in E. Perry and M. Goldman (eds), *Grassroots Political Reform in Contemporary China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 175–195.
- Chen, Z. and Xue, L. (2007). 'Major fields and subjects for public administration theory in China', *Chinese Social Science*, 3: 140–152.
- Cheng, J. and Lu, L. Q. (2009). 'Public administration research issues in China: evidence from content analysis of leading Chinese public administration journals', *Issues and Studies*, 45(1): 203–241.
- Child, J. (1994). *Management in China During the Age of Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cooper, T. L. (1994). 'The emergence of administrative ethics as a field of study in the United States', in T. L. Cooper (ed.), *Handbook of Administrative Ethics*. New York: Marcel Dekker.
- Dahl, R. A. (1947). 'The science of public administration: three problems', *Public Administration Review*, 7(1): 1–11.
- Denhardt, R. B. (1999). 'The future of public administration', *Public Administration and Management*, 4(2): 279–292.
- Denigan, M. (2001). 'Defining public administration in the People's Republic of China: a platform for future discourse', *Public Performance and Management Review*, 24(3): 215–232.
- Duncan, M. J. (1975). 'Policy analysis as an applied social science discipline', *Administration and Society*, 6(4): 363–388.
- Dunsire, A. (1999). 'Then and now public administration, 1953–1999', *Political Studies*, 45(2): 360–378.
- Forrester, J. (1996). 'Public administration productivity: an assessment of faculty in PA programs', *Administration and Society*, 27(4): 537–566.
- Gulrajani, N. and Moloney, K. (2012). 'Globalizing public administration: today's research and tomorrow's agenda', *Public Administration Review*, 72(1): 78–86.
- Heady, F. (1979). *Public Administration: Comparative Perspective*, (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Holzer, M., and Zhang, M. (2009). 'Introduction to the special issue on comparative Chinese/American public administration', *Public Administration Review*, Special Issue: S5–S12.
- Hood, C. (1989). 'Public administration and public policy: intellectual challenges for the 1990s', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 48: 346–358.
- Huque, A. S. and Yep, R. (2003). 'Globalization and reunification: administrative reforms and the China-Hong Kong convergence challenge', *Public Administration Review*, 63(2): 141–152.
- Jing, Y. (2008). 'Dissertation research in public administration in China', *Chinese Public Administration Review*, 5(1/2): 27–38.

- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lan, Z. G. (1999). 'The 1998 administrative reform in China: issues, challenges and prospects', *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, 21(1): 29–54.
- Lan, Z. G. (2000). 'Understanding China's administrative reform', *Public Administration Quarterly*, 24(4): 437–468.
- Lan, Z. G. and Anders, K. K. (2000). 'A paradigmatic view of contemporary public administration research: an empirical test', *Administration and Society*, 32(2): 138–165.
- Lee, G., Benoit-Bryan, J. and Johnson, T. P. (2012). 'Survey research in public administration: assessing mainstream journals with a total survey error framework', *Public Administration Review*, 72(1): 87–97.
- Lu, L. Q. and Chow, K. W. (2008). 'Monitoring the growth of Chinese public administration knowledge: evidence from Chinese public administration journals', *Chinese Public Administration Review*, 5(1/2): 7–26.
- Ma, J. and Zhang, Z. (2009). 'Remaking the Chinese administrative state since 1978: the double-movements perspective', *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies*, 23(2): 225–252.
- McCurdy, H. E. (2006). 'The cultural and ideological background', in D. H. E. A. Rosenbloom (ed.), *Revisiting Waldon's Administrative State: Constancy and Change in Public Administration*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Morgan, M. C. (1981). 'Controlling the bureaucracy in post-Mao China', *Asian Survey*, 21(12): 1223–1236.
- Ngok, K. and Zhu, G. (2007). 'Marketization, globalization and administrative reform in China: a zigzag road to a promising future', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 73(2): 217–233.
- O'Flynn, J. (2007). 'From new public management to public value: paradigmatic change and managerial implications', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 66(3): 353–366.
- Ostrom, E. (2007). 'A diagnostic approach for going beyond panaceas', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 104: 15181–15187.
- Ostrom, V. (1989). *The Intellectual Crisis in American Public Administration*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Peng, W. S. (2008). 'A critique of Fred W. Riggs' ecology of public administration', *International Public Management Review*, 9: 213–225.
- Perry, E. and Selden, M. (eds) (2000). *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*. London: Routledge.
- Polanyi, K. [1944] (1957). *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston, MI: Beacon Press.
- Raadschelders, J. C. N. (2011a). 'The future of the study of public administration: embedding research object and methodology in epistemology and ontology', *Public Administration Review*, 71(6): 916–924.
- Raadschelders, J. C. N. (2011b). 'The study of public administration in the United States', *Public Administration*, 89(1): 140–155.
- Raadschelders, J. C. N. and Lee, K.-H. (2011). 'Trends in the study of public administration: empirical and qualitative observations from the *Public Administration Review*, 2000–2009', *Public Administration Review*, 71(1): 19–33.
- Riggs, F. W. (1980). 'The ecology and context of public administration: a comparative perspective', *Public Administration Review*, 40(2): 107–115.
- Riggs, F. W. (1991). 'Public administration: a comparative framework', *Public Administration Review*, 51(6): 473–477.
- Riggs, F. W. (1994). 'Global forces and the discipline of public administration', in J.-C. Garcia-Zamor and R. Khator (eds), *Public Administration in the Global Village*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

- Simon, H. (2000). 'Public administration in today's world of organizations and markets', *Political Science and Politics*, 33(4): 749–756.
- Stallings, R. and Ferris, J. (1988). 'Public administration research: work in PAR, 1940–1984', *Public Administration Review*, 48(1): 580–587.
- Tsao, K. K. (1993). 'Civil service reform', in J. Y. S. Cheng and M. Brosseau (eds), *China Review*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.
- Waldo, D. (1965). 'The administrative state revisited', *Public Administration Review*, 25: 5–30.
- Wang, S. (2006). 'The pattern of agenda setting in Chinese public policy', *Chinese Social Science*, 5: 86–123.
- Weston, T. B. (2004). 'The iron man weeps: jobless and political legitimacy in the Chinese rust belt', in P. Gries and S. Rosen (eds), *State and Society in 21st Century China: Crisis, Contention, and Legitimation*. New York: Routledge Curzon, pp. 67–86.
- Yang, K. (2004). 'China's 1998 administrative reform and new public management: applying a comparative framework', *International Journal of Public Administration*, 30(12): 1371–1392.
- Zald, M. and Ash, R. (1966). 'Revolutionary social movement organizations', *Social Forces*, 66(4): 327–341.
- Zhang, C. F. (1993). 'Public administration in China', in M. K. Mills and S. S. Nagel (eds), *Public Administration in China*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 3–20.
- Zhang, M. and Holzer, M. (2001). 'The construction and development of theory', *Chinese Public Administration*, 12: 48–52.
- Zhu, X. (2009). 'The influence of think tanks in the Chinese policy process: different ways and mechanisms', *Asian Survey*, 49(2): 333–357.

Copyright of Asian Journal of Political Science is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.