Introduction

An Overview of CPAR Publications 2002-2019
Elaine Yi Lu, Huafang Li, and Hanjin Mao

Since the initial launch of CPAR in 2002, the journal has published 113 original articles and 8 book reviews. Figure 1 indicates the wide range of topics in public affairs covered in the journal. Performance management registers the greatest number of publications, followed by administrative reform and public policy. Given that one of the most significant reforms since the 1990s is the emphasis of tracking performance in the public sector, it is not surprising to see the concentration of administrative reform and performance management publications.

An in-depth study reveals that while the earlier articles were focused more generally on administrative reform, articles from the last decade drill down in specific areas, such as disaster management, non-profits, corruption, citizen participation and trust, public finance, and others. Furthermore, the research within these articles covers many regions, including but not limited to: mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, US, Canada, Australia, Singapore, India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Belgium, Sri Lanka, and Greece. If we look at the geographic locations of authors, the majority, not surprisingly, come from mainland China and the United States. A recent development is the increased engagement of Taiwanese scholars with CPAR (Figure 2). In addition, aligning with the field of public affairs broadly, the methods used in articles in the past decade have shown a significant shift to more quantitative analysis.

Trajectory of Public Administration Research
Foremost, studies published in CPAR have mirrored the development of the comparative public administration field, reflecting some of the era-specific developments. Earlier CPAR articles on administrative reform mainly documented the history of reform, including reducing the size of government agencies and provincial and local governments enjoying greater autonomy in making discretionary decisions. The main purpose of administrative reforms is to increase government performance, which is in line with the New Public Management (NPM) movement (Brudney, Herbert, & Wright, 2007; Osborne, 1993), a feature of more recent CPAR articles.

However, most studies in CPAR remained isolated from the mainstream public administration literature and dialogue; instead, most provided comparisons with other Chinese cases. For example, in the United States, the NPM focused on running government like business. However, the U.S. NPM did not only emphasize reducing the size of government agencies and decentralization; it also included privatization and outsourcing, features not commonly witnessed in China in the 1980s and 1990s. Clearly, the administrative reforms in China differ from such reforms in the U.S. Further studies could contribute to this important, yet under-researched question and shed lights on comparative studies between China and the US.

The second lesson that we learned from the CPAR articles is the heterogeneity in public administration research areas. Public administration theories and activities, or more broadly, public affairs, are complex and vary across different areas and over time. We compared the topics that appeared in different stages of CPAR articles and showed the results in Table 1.

When CPAR began its journey, Holzer and Zhang (2002) called for submissions on topics of contemporary and emerging significance. CPAR publications covered most of the proposed topics, with the exception of Chinese social security. Holzer and Lu (2016) reviewed the topics actually appearing in CPAR and expanded upon Holzer and Zhang (2002)’s list. In particular, Holzer and Lu noticed that CPAR articles have studied dissertation research in public administration in China, citizen participation and community governance, and public servant ethics.
The study looked at the overall picture of CPAR publications and found that more and detailed topics have been presented between 2016 and 2019. In addition to the topics mentioned by Holzer and colleagues (Holzer & Lu, 2016; Holzer & Zhang, 2002), institutional relations, public-private partnership, innovation and entrepreneurship in the public sector, and nonprofit management emerged as new topics discussed in CPAR publications. In particular, nonprofit management, an emergent topic in the public administration field, has only been captured by CPAR recently (Li & Chen, 2018). With China’s economic growth slowing down, aside from developing a more effective and accountable budgeting plan, governments will need to partner with nonprofit organizations to provide public goods and services to satisfy citizens’ needs. CPAR will continue presenting important works in public finance and nonprofit research to contribute to the public administration field in both theoretical and practical ways.

The third lesson we learned from CPAR publications is that methodological pluralism is important for public administration research. Earlier CPAR publications used more qualitative methods, such as historical analysis, reflection on intellectual thoughts in public administration, and single and comparative case studies. As mentioned earlier, CPAR studies have recently shifted significantly to more quantitative research. Why are more statistical analyses, which are prevalent in recent articles, absent from earlier publications? A lack of expertise or unavailability of data could be the main reasons why authors did not use statistical analysis in earlier articles. For example, if data and proper training were provided, there are plenty of opportunities to improve public administration research in China (Li & Chen, 2018; Ma, Wang, Dong, & Li, 2017). A diverse field

---

**Table 1: A Comparison of CPAR Topics Over Time**

| Holzer and Zhang, 2002 | Holzer and Lu, 2016 | Current study |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Chinese Administrative Reform | Administrative and Local Government Reform | Administrative Reform |
| Chinese Public Policy | The Nature of Public Policy | Public Policy |
| | Policy Implementation Hindrances | |
| Chinese Administrative Law | | Administrative Law |
| Public Productivity Improvement and Performance Measurement | The Feasibility of Government Performance Management | Performance Management |
| | Performance-Informed Budgeting in China | |
| Chinese Civil Service | The Developing Civil Service System in China | Collaboration |
| | | Trust and Transparency |
| | | Civil Service |
| Chinese Social Security | | |
| Chinese Public Finance | Intergovernmental Fiscal Relationships | Public Finance |
| Chinese E-Government | E-Government and E-Governance, with particular attention to citizen participation | E-Governance |
| the Intellectual History of Public Administration and comparative administration | | Comparative Administration |
| | Dissertation Research in Public Administration in China | Public Administration Education |
| | New Community Building/Citizen Participation | Citizen Participation |
| | Community Governance Innovations | |
| | Ethics-Driven Self Discipline | Human Resources Management |
| | | Institutional Relationship |
| | | Public-Private Interaction |
| | | Innovation and Entrepreneurship |
| | | Nonprofit Management |

*Note: The order of topics in the first column follows Holzer and Zhang (2002)’s list. The orders of topics in the second and third columns were adjusted accordingly.*
like public administration demands various research methods (Riccucci, 2010). CPAR esteems the efforts of utilizing different methods to tackle important questions in public administration, comparative public administration in particular, as demonstrated by a variety of articles published in the journal. Noticeably, there is an increasing trend of using experimental methods in public administration research (Kim, Mason, & Li, 2017; Li & Van Ryzin, 2017). However, CPAR articles do not yet draw from the behavioral public administration movement, which also relies heavily on experimental methods (Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Olsen, & Tummers, 2016). To continue in the tradition of methodological pluralism, CPAR will be steadfast in encouraging studies using a diverse body of methods.

REFERENCES

Brudney, J., Herbert, F. T., & Wright, D. S. (2007). Reinventing Government in the American States: Measuring and Explaining Administrative Reform. Public Administration Review, 59(1), 19–30. https://doi.org/10.2307/977476

Grimmelikhuijsen, S., Jilke, S., Olsen, A. L., & Tummers, L. (2016). Behavioral Public Administration: Combining Insights from Public Administration and Psychology. Public Administration Review, (May). https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12609

Holzer, M., & Lu, Y. (2016). Chinese Public Administration Review: Relaunching a Necessary Dialogue. Chinese Public Administration Review, 7(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.22140/cpar.v7i1.116

Holzer, M., & Zhang, M. (2002). Chinese Public Administration Review: An introduction. Chinese Public Administration Review, 1(1), 5–8.

Kim, M., Mason, D. P., & Li, H. (2017). Experimental Research for Nonprofit Management: Charitable Giving and Fundraising. In O. James, S. Jilke, & G. G. Van Ryzin (Eds.), Experiments in Public Management Research: Challenges & Contributions (pp. 415–436). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Li, H., & Chen, B. (2018). Turning Challenges into Opportunities: Advancing Studies of Nonprofit Organizations in China. Chinese Public Administration Review, 9(1), 1–5. https://doi.org/10.22140/cpar.v9i1.172

Li, H., & Van Ryzin, G. G. (2017). A Systematic Review of Experimental Studies in Public Management Journals. In O. James, S. Jilke, & G.G. Van Ryzin (Eds.), Experiments in Public Management Research: Challenges & Contributions (pp. 20–36). https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316676912.003

Ma, J., Wang, Q., Dong, C., & Li, H. (2017). The Research Infrastructure of Chinese Foundations, a database for Chinese civil society studies. Scientific Data, 4, 170094. https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2017.94

Osborne, D. (1993). Reinventing Government. Public Productivity & Management Review, 16(4), 349–356.

Riccucci, N. M. (2010). Public administration: Traditions of inquiry and philosophies of knowledge. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Elaine Yi Lu is Professor and MPA-PPA Director at the Department of Public Management at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, The City University of New York, and Editor of Chinese Public Administration Review. Her primary research interests are performance budgeting and financial management. Her studies have been published in The Public Budgeting and Finance Journal, The Public Performance and Management Journal, State and Local Government Review, The Municipal Finance Journal, and The Public Service Performance. Yi Lu received her Ph.D from the University of Georgia-Athens.

Huafang Li, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the School of Public, Nonprofit, and Health Administration at Grand Valley State University. His research interests focus on research methods, nonprofit management, and comparative public administration. His research has appeared in Public Administration Review, Public Management Review, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.

Hanjin Mao is a Doctoral Student in the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University–Newark.
Figure 1: Number of CPAR Articles by Major Theme Area

Figure 2: Distribution of Countries Featured in CPAR Articles