



Central government agencies in China: toward a research agenda

Liang Ma

To cite this article: Liang Ma (2017) Central government agencies in China: toward a research agenda, *Economic and Political Studies*, 5:2, 195-214, DOI: [10.1080/20954816.2017.1310793](https://doi.org/10.1080/20954816.2017.1310793)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20954816.2017.1310793>



Published online: 24 Apr 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 7



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Central government agencies in China: toward a research agenda

Liang Ma

School of Public Administration and Policy, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China

ABSTRACT

Central government agencies play key roles in making and implementing public policies in China, but the empirical studies on these organisations are disproportionately scarce. Scholars in political science and public administration predominantly focus their researches on local governments at various levels, while paying little, if any, attention to the central counterparts. This article discusses the phenomenon of strong local but weak central government research pattern (the so called ‘central–local research divide’), and identifies the driving forces behind this research gap. It also introduces the lessons and implications from the US and European research projects for developing, replicating, and extending central agency databases. The research further elaborates the existing variables and data sources on central agencies and develops the China Central Agency Database (CCAD) to advance the quantitative research of central agencies in China. Finally, a conclusion is drawn with a research agenda to encourage researchers to coproduce the CCAD and embrace the study of central agencies.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 6 March 2015
Accepted 5 June 2015

KEYWORDS

Central government agency;
ministry; central–local
relations; China

Introduction

China as a huge and unitary state is hierarchically structured, with the central government playing a pivotal role in shaping and orienting nationwide public policies (Huang 1996). Although much administrative and fiscal power has been delegated to local governments over the past two decades (Landry 2008), the control of the central government over local authorities has not been weakened but rather been substantially strengthened. For instance, the central government has increasingly centralised regulatory agencies via ‘centralised management’ (*chuizhi guanli*) to address alarming local protectionism and rampant corruption (Mertha 2005). The tax-sharing reform introduced in 1994 has substantially strengthened the resource redistribution and bargaining power of the central government, since local governments largely rely on central fiscal transfer to cover their alarming budgetary deficits (Wang and Ma 2014). Local governments fall over each other to please central ministries to strive for scarce fiscal

resources and preferential policies. Many local governments establish liaison offices in Beijing to lobby ministries and ‘seek money from ministries’ (*paobu qianjin*) (He 2000). In other words, the pivotal role of central agencies in China’s political landscape should not be underestimated.

The spectacular importance and extensive influences of central agencies (i.e. ministries, commissions and offices) in policy making and implementation might have attracted numerous academic studies in political and administrative sciences. The reality is, however, that much less studies have been devoted to central agencies than their local counterparts at various levels. Although central agencies are crucial in political and administrative decision-making in China, we find scarce literature devoted to their operations and behaviours. Scholars pay almost all of their energies and intelligence in local government studies, whereas few of them seriously examine the central counterparts. If we cannot fully understand the characteristics and processes of central agencies, our modelling of central–local interaction would be largely distorted and far away from the reality (Blanchard and Shleifer 2001). It seems that many scholars take the absence of central agencies in the literature as granted, and the central–local divide in political and administrative researches has not yet been seriously examined. In the study of central–local relations, scholars predominantly focus on the local side, while the central side is usually presumed without any empirical verification. Why scholars do not study central agencies in China? What can we do to fill the void in the extant literature?

Scholars are not uninterested in the central government. However, their explorations are largely impeded by the institutional constraints to access empirical materials and the lack of usable data at their disposal. The grapevines about central government decision-making and leadership succession are lively exchanged and discussed among political and administrative scientists, but they are often frustrated by the mountainous challenges encountered in unmasking the secrecies and mysteries of these superior organisations. The advancement of open government initiatives and the enlargement of third-party evaluations, however, have remarkably transformed this situation, with increasingly richer data available at hand. It is the time to bring back and rediscover the central government in our studies.

In this article, I discuss the importance of central agencies in explaining political and administrative operations in China, and identify key avenues in central agency research. I first map the representation of China’s central agencies in the literature, and compare it with that of the international community, particularly the cases of the US and European countries. I then interpret the absence of central agencies in China’s political and administrative sciences. The research further elaborates the existing variables and data sources on central agencies, and presents a proposal to develop the China Central Agency Database (CCAD). The recommendations to fill the research gap are elaborated in the discussion of open government initiatives. Finally a conclusion with suggestions on the future direction in China’s central agency research is drawn.

The central–local divide in political and administrative sciences

It is not an easy task to position the relative proportion of central agency in political and administrative sciences. Federal or central government is counted as a topic or

theme in contrast to state and local government in some reviews (Terry 2005; Raadschelders and Lee 2011; Perry and Kraemer 1986), while it is considered as a unit of analysis or data source in other review articles (Walker, Brewer, and Choi 2014; Wu, He, and Sun 2013; Pitts 2007). This research relies on the previous methodological review to identify the studies of central agency relative to state and local governments. We also run a preliminary literature search to help us understand the central–local divide in government research.

Central agency research in the international community

The narrow attention scholars pay on each level of government in the political and administrative sciences can be found in the review articles published in *Public Administration Review* (PAR), the flagship journal in the field of Public Administration.¹ Perry and Kraemer's (1986) review of 287 PAR articles published from 1975 to 1984 finds four federal government studies, accounting for roughly 0.7%. This proportion is comparable to the number of the articles on urban and regional governments (four articles accounting for 1.4%) and state government (two articles accounting for 0.7%) (Perry and Kraemer 1986). An analysis of 350 articles published in PAR from 2000 to 2005 reveals that there are eight articles on federal government and eleven on local government among over 30 topics, accounting for 2.3 and 3.1%, respectively (Terry 2005). These results imply that researchers pay equivalent attention on federal, state and local government agencies in their studies.

The presence of each government tier may be underestimated in the above analyses, because other themes or topics (e.g. human resource management or budget) may draw on data from various levels and types of governments. It is much more pertinent to compare the proportion of each level of government in terms of research focus or data source. A content analysis of 188 empirical researches presented in three Public Management Research Conferences (2001, 2003 and 2005) finds that 54 articles (29.7%) examined local government organisations (counties, cities and towns), followed by 50 articles on federal government (27.5%) and 41 pieces on state government (22.5%) (Pitts 2007).² In other words, Pitts' (2007) analysis suggests that approximately one third of researches focusses on or collects data from federal government organisations.

To further illuminate the equivalence of federal, state and local governments in the international community, this research runs a preliminary literature search in the Web of Science. I narrow the coverage to journals indexed by the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and the publication period from 2000 to 2013. I select the topic-search approach, and only journal articles are included (excluding reviews and other document types). The results show that ~44% of articles are about federal and central governments, slightly lower than that of local governments at ~48% (see Table 1). Subnational governments (e.g. states and provinces) are relatively less examined, with only 8% of articles published. The share of articles at the three government levels has been very stable over the research period, although the total amount of articles grew rapidly and was roughly tripled from 385 in 2000 to 944 in 2013.

The above discussions suggest that federal and central government agencies receive equal scholarly attention with agencies at lower levels (e.g. state and local

Table 1. Central–local divide in other countries.

Year	Federal/central government		State/subnational government		Local government		Total
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
2000	174	45.19	36	9.35	175	45.45	385
2001	172	45.38	23	6.07	184	48.55	379
2002	171	45.00	39	10.26	170	44.74	380
2003	206	46.50	36	8.13	201	45.37	443
2004	203	44.32	43	9.39	212	46.29	458
2005	198	47.14	30	7.14	192	45.71	420
2006	219	43.45	36	7.14	249	49.40	504
2007	229	43.79	39	7.46	255	48.76	523
2008	256	41.63	57	9.27	302	49.11	615
2009	332	41.87	72	9.08	389	49.05	793
2010	346	41.29	64	7.64	428	51.07	838
2011	372	41.99	67	7.56	447	50.45	886
2012	383	42.56	82	9.11	435	48.33	900
2013	422	44.70	76	8.05	446	47.25	944
Total	3,683	43.49	700	8.27	4,085	48.24	8,468

Note: The search results are obtained based on the search of Web of Science (<http://apps.webofknowledge.com>) in December 2014. The journal coverage is defined by the SSCI, a collection of top-tier journals in each social science discipline, with the publication period between 2000 and 2013. The search phases include ‘federal government or central government’, ‘state government’, and ‘local government’.

governments) from political and administrative researchers in the international community. There are tremendous data and literature on central and federal agencies generated for scholars to explore, and the publications indeed dig deeply to depict the dynamics and processes of these agencies at the apex of hierarchy.

The study of central agencies in China

Using Perry and Kraemer’s (1986) codebook, a review on 2,210 articles published in five mainstream Chinese public administration journals from 2002 to 2006 notes that only five (or 0.2%) are central government studies, while much more articles are about urban and regional government (96 articles accounting for 4.3%) and provincial government (six articles accounting for 0.3%) (Cheng and Lu 2009). If we use Terry’s (2005) protocol, then in the case of Chinese journal articles, 76 articles (or 3.4%) are about local government, while only two articles (or 0.1%) are related to central government (Cheng and Lu 2009). The share of studies drawing data from each government level is very small, especially because the articles on other themes and topics are not taken into account. Another important reason is that most studies are normative and non-empirical with generic and blurred application to the theme. For instance, a recent review on Chinese journal articles does not analyse the variations of data sources from each government level (Wu, He, and Sun 2013).

We conduct a literature search to illuminate the central–local divide in China’s political and administrative studies. We use the variants of central government (State Council, ministries and commissions, and central government) and local government (*difang zhengfu*) as the keywords or title phases to search articles in the Chinese journals. As illuminated in Table 2, the majority of political and administrative articles in Chinese journals from 2000 to 2013 are devoted to local governments rather than

Table 2. Central–local divide in Chinese studies.

Year	By abstracts				By titles			
	Central government			Local government	Central government			Local government
	(1)	(2)	(3)		(1)	(2)	(3)	
2000	161	16	74	116	19	3	5	60
2001	113	8	82	162	11	0	13	60
2002	208	19	88	196	15	3	4	56
2003	284	16	125	240	19	0	6	65
2004	268	19	166	361	22	2	4	100
2005	345	41	152	442	15	1	11	148
2006	358	23	169	507	32	0	14	178
2007	470	35	224	651	16	1	11	221
2008	512	41	246	719	19	9	8	206
2009	551	94	263	795	21	6	9	252
2010	581	53	222	807	16	5	8	236
2011	568	52	281	958	14	2	9	266
2012	667	59	307	982	15	3	12	247
2013	541	59	249	960	17	1	12	248
Total	5,627	535	2,648	7,896	251	36	126	2,343

Note: The search results were gleaned in the Academic Journal Platform of National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) (<http://epub.cnki.net/kns/brief/result.aspx?dbPrefix=CJFQ>) in December 2014. The journal coverage is defined by the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI), a collection of top-tier journals in each discipline of social sciences. The research period is from 2000 to 2013. The search phases are: (1) State Council (*guowuyuan*), (2) ministries and commissions (*buwei*), (3) central government (*zhongyang zhengfu*), and local government (*difang zhengfu*).

central government agencies. The title-search approach generates less than 300 articles related to central government, while more than 2,000 articles pertain to local government (see the right columns). If we use the abstract-search approach, we can find much more articles on the central government (see the left columns). However, the amount of central government publications is still incomparable to that focussing on local government. A significant number of researches are actually not on central government, but rather taking the gazettes of State Council or the documentations of ministries and commissions as the background. The number of articles with ‘ministries and commissions’ in their abstracts or titles are evidently fewer than that with ‘central government’ or ‘State Council’, suggesting researches concentrating on central agencies rather than the central government as a whole are disproportionally under-represented. In other words, the analysis of the central–local research divide is by and large conservative and underestimated.

A temporary analysis of these journal articles demonstrates the stagnancy in researches of central government but a steady growth in publications on local government. For instance, the abstract-search approach reveals that the amount of local government studies has grown from 116 in 2000 to 960 in 2013. The title-search approach illuminates the similar momentum, with the number of the researches in local government rising from 60 in 2000 to 248 in 2013. Central government studies have also increased, but its growth rate is much more volatile and relatively lower. A review of 119 articles on China in the SSCI-indexed public administration journals from 1999 to 2009 reveals a handful of studies on China’s central government (Walker, Brewer, and Choi 2014), reconfirming the above findings.

The sources of data and focusses of discussion in the international community are very diverse, without any tiers of government organisations being disproportionally

represented and examined (Pitts 2007). The studies of local government in China, however, are substantially more than that of central government, suggesting a clear preponderance of local government researches over central government analyses. Although some publications depict the phenomena of decision-making and organisational operation in central agencies (Lai and Kang 2013; Cabestan 2009), the study of central agencies in China is generally fragmented and scarce in comparison with that of local ones. An exception is the agency reform (*jigou gaige*), which has been extensively examined over the past two decades (Christensen, Dong, and Painter 2008). The multiple waves of agency reform since the reform and opening-up in the late 1980s have attracted many scholarships, but most of them are descriptive and normative in nature.

Why do China studies miss central agencies?

The review of extant literature suggests that the unit of analysis or government level in the international research community, particularly in the US, is very diverse, with federal or central government organisations accounting for an approximately equal proportion with state and local governments. In the case of China studies, however, central agencies are disproportionately under-represented in both Chinese and English publications. If we take the central–local ratio of fiscal revenue and expenditure, manpower and influences, the disproportional under-representation of central agencies in political and administrative researches is indeed notable. Why central government agencies as the indispensable players of political and administrative operations in China miss the attention of scholars? The contrasting landscapes of central–local government research can also be examined from the experiences of other countries, especially that of the US. Why can scholars embrace federal government studies in the US, Europe, and other countries?

The obstacles of researching into central government agencies in China

The central–local research divide in China can be attributed to a number of factors—epistemological, realistic or pragmatic. Researchers may mistakenly underestimate the importance of central government agency research due to ideological prejudices or epistemological biases, while realistic considerations may also hamper them from digging into central government agencies. The difficulties facing scholars in examining central government agencies in China can be discussed in three aspects: the presumption on central–local isomorphism and researchers’ pro-local bias, the difficulty in access to data, and the lack of agency comparability and the decreased number of observations.

First, researchers often mistakenly presume that what they have learned from local level could be freely inferred to that of central agencies. The unitary system adopted in China’s administrative architecture is characterised by the ‘isomorphism of government functions’ (*zhize tonggou*) across the five tiers in the hierarchy (Yang and Wu 2015).³ Government agencies at each level usually have rather similar functions and responsibilities with their superior and subordinate agencies if any. The analyses of county-level agencies could help us to better understand the operations of

bureaucracies at the prefectural level, and vice versa. The studies of local governments, however, could ‘inform’, but cannot ‘replace’, the exploration of central government agencies.

Central government agencies without upper-tier authorities act very differently from their local counterparts. They are more concerned about policy decision-making than policy implementation, and their behavioural patterns in turn fundamentally differ from local agencies.⁴ For instance, central government agencies may have more autonomy and discretion in internal operations and configurational arrangement, which may substantially expand their spectrum of behavioural choice. Different from many local governments struggling with lingering upper-tier policy mandates and financial strain, central agencies are much more financially affluent and functionally autonomous. Without appropriate metrics and benchmarks, the performance of central agencies is more difficult to gauge and compare. In contrast, there are often sufficient comparative agencies in other jurisdictions to take local governments accountable for their performance. We may misunderstand central government agencies without taking account of these environmental, structural and behavioural differentiations, although local government analyses indeed benefit scholarly understanding of central government agencies.

Second, it is difficult to get in touch with senior executives in central government agencies, and it is not easy to gather data necessary for empirical research on central government agencies either. It is widely agreed that CEO and other high-ranking officials are difficult, if not possible, to reach, and thus that researchers into top management usually rely on managerial demographics and second-hand data (Finkelstein, Hambrick, and Cannella 2009). In the case of central government agencies, officials are highly ranked and extremely difficult to contact with. Without strong personal ties (*guanxi*), it is a big challenge to interview these officials (Robertson, Lo, and Tang 2007; Christensen et al. 2012). This can partially explain the predominant surveys used in the extant literature targeting bureaucrats at grassroots level (e.g. counties, towns and villages) (Manion 2010). China ranks much higher in the dimension of power distance in cross-cultural research (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010), and the paternalistic leadership ubiquitous in Chinese organisations further enlarges the distance between upper-tier superiors and ordinary employees. Scholars will be frustrated in accessing to central agency employees, which by and large contributes to the scarcity of research opportunities pertaining to central agencies.

The data about central agencies are scarce and dispersed, and it costs a lot to glean, clean and put them together in a consistent dataset form. Before the implementation of ‘Open Government Regulation’ by the State Council in 2008 and the sunshine budget initiatives since 2010, the data on central agencies have been kept just like national secrecy. There are no central data hubs or information centres specifically targeting central agencies, and these data are fragmented and dispersed if available. Although many ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Environmental Protection) publish their yearbooks and statistics periodically, aggregating and standardising them is an arduous task.

Lastly, low comparability among and high volatility of central agencies make it fruitless to concentrate scarce research efforts on their operations. Local governments are relatively diverse and comparable, and it is very easy to amplify your sample at

the prefectural and the county level. Central government agencies, in contrast, vary substantially in their policy domains and functions, which largely depresses their comparability. In comparison with the abundance of observations at local levels, the number of central government agencies is relatively stable and even shrinks due to recent rounds of agency reform (e.g. the super-ministry reform in 2008 and 2012). Different from the relative stability of jurisdictional segmentation or administrative division at various local levels, central agencies have been restructured frequently over the past two decades, making their longitudinal analyses very difficult, if not impossible. In a nutshell, a simple cost-benefit analysis may hinder conscious researchers to tap into examination of central government agency.

The case of the US federal agency research

As early as 1980, multiple sources and forms of data pertaining to federal agencies in the US have been ubiquitous and publicly available (Meier 1980). Scholars can straightforwardly navigate and merge budgetary, personnel, regulatory, legal and procedural data at federal agency and sub-agency levels. The benign research environment of the US federal agency research could be explained by three measures, namely government openness and transparency, performance measurement practices and accountability advocacy, and employee survey tradition and culture.

Openness and transparency are advocated as key mechanism to pursue public accountability and responsiveness, and the US federal agencies are all required to publicise information (Piotrowski 2007). Many decisions and engagement of federal agencies are publicly reported and documented, which contribute to rich gold for research in political and administrative organisations (Fernandez, Malatesta, and Smith 2013). In other words, data availability and abundance are the results of government transparency practiced at the federal level.

Performance measurement is actually a process of collecting performance information, and the promotion of performance measurement practices can largely advance the accessibility of agency performance data. The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) enacted in 1993 requires federal agencies to measure and report their performance, which helps to generate numerous agency performance information and relevant data (Ellig, McTigue, and Wray 2012). The Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) introduced by the George W. Bush administration in 2001 further strengthens federal agency performance measurement capacity by deepening performance tracking from agency level to programme level. As elaborated by Moynihan (2013), PART has established a rich dataset on the US federal programme performance. PART was used to track the performance of tens of thousands of federal programmes, and the abundant performance information was very helpful in keeping federal agencies transparent and accountable. The PART dataset, combined with other agency- and programme-level datasets, has contributed to knowledge accumulation of performance management, goal ambiguity, political ideology and other research themes (Moynihan 2013). These initiatives strongly advocated by Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Government Accountability Office (GAO) and other watchdogs have helped to foster an healthy agency climate to release and report performance and relevant data.

Apart from archival data on agency operations and outcomes, it is much more pertinent and relevant to tap into agencies to gauge the perceptions and opinions of officials and employees who actually run these agencies. Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) organised by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is a case in point. Held every other year (2004–2010) or every year (2011–present), OPM’s survey covers all federal agencies and usually more than 20,000 employees are interviewed.⁵ Currently the survey is done online every year, and employees are asked to rate their perceptions of work conditions and organisational environments. The FEVS dataset largely facilitates the progress of research in many fields, e.g. human resource management, organisational change management, innovation implementation, and so forth. Another relevant survey series are Federal Merit Systems Surveys endorsed by the US Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB).⁶ The MSPB surveys are used to see whether and how federal agencies adhere to the merit systems. Meanwhile, their coverage is very broad and many topics have been surveyed, including employees’ attitudes towards supervisors, engagement in decision-making, and their perceptions of organisational and management practices. The MSPB surveys usually select a random sample of 50,000 employees to participate in the online surveys every year, and the data generated are available upon request to facilitate their usage in academic cycles. Together with other programme- and agency-level variables, these large-scale surveys have increasingly generated high-quality empirical studies spanning a variety of research areas (Jung 2014).

Lessons from the research in Europe⁷

Political scientists and public administration scholars in European countries also actively engage in comparative research on central government agencies, in a manner slightly different from their peers in the US. The Comparative Public Organisation Data Base for Research and Analysis (COBRA) and the Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS) projects, among others, are two typical endeavours in this direction.

The COBRA, initiated by Geert Bouckaert and Guy Peters at the Public Management Institute of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium in 2001, is a cross-country public management research network. It aims to bring together international scholars to jointly collect research data for comparative and quantitative analyses on public sector organisation. Its main contribution is a creation of a cross-country database by circulating a common survey instrument to interview senior managers about their perceptions on the autonomy, steering and control, culture, and performance and results of public sector organisations. The COBRA network has been expanded gradually by soliciting new member institutions and replicating its survey in other countries and regions (e.g. Norway, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK, and the Netherlands). The COBRA survey has been replicated in 16 countries and regions by April 2010, and 1,567 public sector organisations out of 2,972 surveyed have responded to the common questionnaire (with a response rate of 52.7%).⁸ The COBRA project contributes to our understanding of organisational autonomy and control and its variations in different contexts, and the rich data generated from this project have also produced abundant high-quality

publications. The COBRA researchers are considering replicating its survey in its existing member countries and regions, as well as expanding its database in other contexts.

The COCOPS project is one of the largest comparative public management research consortiums in Europe.⁹ Funded under the European Commission's (EU) 7th Framework Programme from 2011 to 2015, the COCOPS project is coordinated by Erasmus University Rotterdam and participated by 10 universities in 10 countries. It aims to assess the impact of New Public Management (NPM)-style reforms in public management and public services in European countries from a comparative and quantitative perspective. The COCOPS project is supported by eight related research projects or work packages (e.g. NPM meta-analysis, NPM and the size of government, survey of public managers, coordinating social cohesion, NPM and social cohesion, and coordination after the crisis), and the Executive Survey on Public Sector Reform in Europe is the cornerstone to support COCOPS's other work packages. It is the largest survey of public sector senior executives in 20 European countries, and has received 9,638 respondents (with a response rate of 29%) from 10 countries (e.g. the UK, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, and Spain). The survey gathers quantitative data on senior executives' perceptions on the form, implementation and impact of NPM-style reforms across European countries, generating a rich database to comparatively and quantitatively study the NPM-style reforms.

The European scholars have a good tradition to work together to pursue common research topics and collect cross-country data in the domain of political science and public administration. The EU generously supports such collaborative initiative to facilitate regional integration and societal cohesion. Member institutions and scholars benefit significantly from these collaborative projects by gradually using the same research language. The circulation of research results also advances member countries to learn from each other to improve public services and public management. Apart from archiving what central government agencies in member countries act, European researchers are also keener in eliciting senior executives' perceptions about what works in organisational operation and management. These perceptual data, together with the data on agency-level demographics and other attributes, map a complicated albeit realistic profile of central government agencies in European countries. Different from the US emphasis on ordinary employees' viewpoints in federal agency surveys, European scholars are more concerned about senior executives' judgments, partially because the latter are more interested in using executives to represent public agencies in member countries.

CCAD: a research proposal

The difficulties in accessing high-profile officials and collecting high-quality data have largely hindered the growth of central government agency research in China. The above discussions suggest that the US and European experiences in advancing federal government research can benefit China's central government research. Thanks to the open government campaign over the past decade, increasing data on central agencies in China have been made available to researchers. We believe

that it is the time to reconsider the possibilities and benefits of central agency research. To advance the research on central agencies, we propose to develop the CCAD.

The coverage of the CCAD

As a research dataset on central government agencies in China, the CCAD covers key variables concerning the political and administrative aspects of central agencies. In the CCAD, I focus on ministry-level and equivalent agencies directly administrated by the State Council. Although subunits under the ministry-level agencies (e.g. departments, bureaus, offices and divisions) could also be analysed, their data are almost unavailable and excluded from the CCAD. As an exception, less than 20 administrations and bureaus under the ministries and commissions (e.g. State Bureau for Letters and Calls) are also included, since they are vice-ministry level organs jointly supervised by the State Council. For the same reason, the agencies under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (e.g. State Archive Bureau) are not covered in the CCAD.

The central agencies constituting the State Council include the General Affairs Office, less than 30 cabinet-level ministries and commissions (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, and National Development and Reform Commission), one special organisation directly under the State Council (State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission), less than 20 organisations directly under the State Council (e.g. General Administration of Customs), a handful of administrative offices under the State Council (e.g. Overseas Chinese Affairs Office), and less than 20 public service institutions directly under the State Council (e.g. Xinhua News Agency).¹⁰ The administrative levels of the central agencies vary, with the majority at the ministry level and others at vice-ministry level (Qian 2012). In sum, there are totally about 80 agencies in the CCAD, varying across rounds of institutional reform and data accessibilities (see Table 3). When these agencies are appended by year or other time units (e.g. month or tenure in office), the number of observations can be significantly amplified to support more sophisticated statistical analyses, such as panel data modelling and time-series cross-sectional analyses.

Table 3. The classification of central agencies in China.

Agency type	N	Agency example	Level
1. General Affairs Office (<i>bangongting</i>)	1	General Affairs Office	Ministry
2. Ministries and commissions (<i>zucheng bumen</i>)	25	Ministry of Agriculture	Ministry and vice-ministry
3. Special organisations (<i>zhishu teshe jigou</i>)	1	State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission	Ministry
4. Organisations (<i>zhishu jigou</i>)	16	General Administration of Customs	Ministry and vice-ministry
5. Administrative offices (<i>banshi jigou</i>)	4	Overseas Chinese Affairs Office	Ministry
6. Institutions (<i>zhishu shiye danwei</i>)	13	Xinhua News Agency	Ministry and vice-ministry
7. State bureaus (<i>guojia ju</i>)	16	State Bureau for Letters and Calls	Vice-ministry
Total	76		

Date source: The data are from State Council (2013).

Table 4. A list of variables on central agencies in China.

Theme and variable	Period	<i>N</i>	Frequency	Method	Source and author
Government website performance	2002–	≈60	Annual	Daily monitoring and expert opinions	CSTC
Government transparency	2009–	≈50	Annual	Website content analysis	CASS
Administrative transparency	2009–2011	≈40	Biennial	Website content analysis and field check	CPPSS
Fiscal transparency	2009–	≈90	Annual	Mail survey	CPPS
Budgetary revenue and expenditure	2010–	≈50	Annual	Content analysis	The agencies
Power	2004–	≈90	Annual	Content analysis	General Affairs Office
Collaboration	2004–	≈90	Annual	Content analysis	General Affairs Office
Administrative approval	/	≈60	/	Content analysis	General Affairs Office
Leadership (e.g. tenure in office)	/	≈90	/	Content analysis	The agencies
Corruption	/	≈90	Monthly and annual	Content analysis	State Auditing Administration
Civil service examination	2005–	≈90	Annual	Content analysis	State Bureau of Civil Servants

Note: To meet the basic criteria of quantitative analysis, these variables are accessible and measurable at agency level. I try my best to gather central agency data in China. The list is, of course, not exhaustive and will be updated periodically. ‘/’ refers to not applicable.

A glance of key variables in the CCAD

Table 4 lists the key themes and variables on central agencies with available data. I search journal publications in several research databases (e.g. CNKI) and consult the experts to compile the datasets on central agencies in China. I record the definitions, units, periods, and methods and sources of these variables, and the structure and codebook of the database are user-friendly and easy to maintain and update.

More and more data on central agencies are available online, largely due to the development of their official web portals. China Software Testing Center (CSTC 2014), a non-profit institute based in Beijing, annually assesses the performance of government websites at various levels in China. It evaluates central agency websites by their effectiveness in online information disclosure, electronic service delivery, and online interaction with the public. The data on website performance and its dimensions can be tracked longitudinally since 2002, enabling interested scholars to study various questions on e-government development in the central government.

The openness and transparency of the central agencies have been substantially improved over the past decade, and several institutions release their assessments of agency transparency. The Center for Public Policy Studies at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (CPPS 2014) has ranked fiscal transparency of the central agencies annually since 2009. The research team sends information request forms with a list of fiscal items to the agencies and evaluates fiscal transparency by their responses and information completeness. In the same vein, the Center for Public Participation Studies and Supports (CPPSS 2013) at the Law School of Peking University assesses administrative transparency of central agencies, although this research team uses a different approach. A research team from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS Law Institute’s Innovation Project Team on the Rule of Law Index 2014) annually reports central agencies’ performance in the disclosure of information through government websites. These data together help us to measure central

agencies' extent of transparency, and interested researchers can further study why some agencies are more transparent and what consequences follow.

The disclosure of budgetary spreadsheets also helps us to gauge the expenditure and revenue of central agencies. Fiscal deficits and other forms are well documented in the literature to gauge fiscal health. The data on specific fiscal items may be used to identify other agency characteristics. The expenditure on fiscal transfer to local governments, for instance, can be a good indicator of central agencies' bargaining power. These figures (e.g. total budgetary expenditure) can be used to measure agency size, a key control variable in relevant quantitative analyses. Although personnel data (workforce size or *bianzhi*) are more suitable to measure organisational size, currently they are kept as state secrets and almost inaccessible.¹¹ A relevant dataset about agency budgets released since 2010 is the expenses on official banquets, overseas travels and government vehicles ('*san gong*' spending), which could be used as a proxy of government waste and corruption.

China is characterised by its heavy reliance on the target-based responsibility systems to control and manage local agents at various levels (O'Brien and Li 1999). The Premier of the State Council annually delivers the government work report to the National People's Congress, highlighting its key achievements of the previous year and developing national policy priorities for the coming year. The General Affairs Office decomposes the goals and tasks listed in the work report, along with required discretions and resources, into the domains of corresponding agencies. Such task arrangement creates a task-agency matrix, in which the centrality of agencies in the task network could be used to gauge their organisational power (Ma 2014). Political scientists (Meier 1980) and management and organisational scholars (Provan 1980) have developed two distinct research streams of organisational power, but they both use the acquisition and allocation of resources as one of the key indicators of organisational power. The agencies with more tasks and goals are expected to have more power, and we can use the number of tasks as a measure of agency power. Since many tasks have to be completed by multiple agencies, agency collaborations can also be examined by using this dataset. With the help of social network analysis tools, we can easily investigate the attributes and implications of interagency task collaboration network.

The power of government agencies is largely derived from the administrative approvals they own, because local governments and enterprises are subject to these procedural requirements. The central government is actively promoting the openness of 'power list', in which the administrative approvals of all agencies are disclosed online to strengthen public scrutiny.¹² Thanks to the release of these data, the number of administrative approval items is a good proxy of agency power.

Leadership matters. Although high-profile officials in central agencies are usually difficult to interview, which is very different from the two European cross-country research projects, their biographies and archival records are easy to navigate online. These demographics are very helpful for us to study the impacts of their characteristics on agency processes and outcomes. The career backgrounds and tracks of these officials are fully disclosed due to the requirements of the 'Open Government Regulation', and many interesting research questions can be examined by using these data. A research team led by Shu Keng, is working on central agency leadership ranks

to examine which agencies' heads are ranked higher in the Party hierarchy.¹³ The agencies led by high-ranked heads are expected to enjoy more power and resist institutional change and innovation (e.g. e-government development and transparency), and such propositions could be tested by using these data. A relevant research topic is to explore the success factors of cadre career changes, e.g. why some ministers are more likely to serve long and what affect the probability of ministers' promotion. The studies on local cadre careers are abundant (Li and Zhou 2005) and central cadre analyses will help us to better understand the central-local similarities and differences in cadre personnel management. Apart from focussing on the leading officials (*yibashou*), equipped with the rich data the research on top management team (e.g. ministers, vice-ministers and other members of the standing committee of the Party committee) could also be deepened.

Corruption as a subtle concept is very difficult to measure, and scholars often use the number of corrupt cases registered and corrupt officials arrested as its proxies (Zhou and Tao 2009). The corruption scandals of high-profile officials in central agencies are usually revealed by news reports and recorded by the Procuratorate, and these materials can be used to gauge central agency corruption. Public money wrongly used by central agencies are documented by the State Auditing Administration, and the data (e.g. the size of public money, the number of programmes and the amount of officials) can be employed to capture central agencies' anti-corruption measures (Wu and Zhu 2011).

The information on the total amount of employees in each central agency is unavailable, but the data on workforce renewal are well-documented. The State Bureau of Civil Servants organises civil service examination of central agencies, and the number of vacant positions in each agency is annually released to the public. The number of candidates eligible for these vacancies is also revealed, enabling us to gauge the attractiveness of central agencies by the ratio of vacancies to candidates. It is expected that the agencies with more power (and in turn more resources and benefits) are more likely to attract talents, and we can dig into these data to test this proposition.

Central agencies are responsible for differentiated missions and functions, but they are also subject to similar operational requirements, management challenges and environmental turbulences. Rule-making and policy enforcement are the fundamental architectures of the bureaucracy, and the data on the behaviours of central agencies can help to address many research questions pertinent to these topics. The gazettes and other documents promulgated by central agencies, for instance, can be used to depict the logic and characteristics of rule-making (Yackee 2006). Some agencies prefer releasing documents to other concert actions in implementing their policies, while others are just the opposite. These variations can be well-gauged by the number of documents issued by central agencies, the involvement of peer and subordinate agencies in rule-making, the tactics and strategies adopted in policy implementation, and so forth. The differences in the strategies utilised by different central agencies in policy enforcement can help us to better understand the forces shaping the central-local relations.

Apart from the aforementioned key variables, there are other variables included in the CCAD indispensable for further analyses. The age of each agency is recorded by the founding year, as well as the structural change (e.g. merging, abandoning, revision

and renaming) in each wave of institutional reforms. Agency types (e.g. ministries, organisations, institutions and bureaus) and administrative levels (e.g. ministry- and vice-ministry level) are also essential control variables in agency-level analyses, and they are included as categorical and ordinal variables, respectively. The policy domains of central agencies are classified according to their missions (e.g. regulatory, distributive, redistributive and constituent agencies) (Lowi 1972) and orientations (e.g. whether they work closely with businesses and citizens) (Berry 1994). These demographics of central agencies, together with the aforementioned key variables, can help us to empirically investigate the operations, management, and outcomes of central agencies in a scientifically rigorous way.

As one of the first steps to examine interesting research questions concerning central agencies, the construction, replication and extension of the CCAD can indeed push the research agenda forward. Taking together, the aforementioned data on central agencies in China can be gleaned and integrated to support many theory-based empirical studies, especially quantitative analyses. The incorporation of other variables and data sources will enable interested scholars to fully examine many interesting and meaningful agency-level research questions.

Taking the logic of governance model (Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill 2000), for instance, we can tap into the CCAD to understand 'how, why, and with what consequences public-sector activity is structured and managed' in central agencies. A reduced-form model of governance postulates that the outputs or outcomes at individual level and/or organisational level is a function of six categories of variables, including environmental factors (e.g. political structures and legal institutions), client characteristics (e.g. client attributes and behaviours), treatments (e.g. work processes and programme technology), structures (e.g. organisation type, centralisation of control, and budgetary allocations), and managerial roles and actions (e.g. leadership practices, monitoring mechanisms, and career concerns). The development and extension of the CCAD can enable researchers to empirically test the logic of governance model and its explanatory power in various contexts and tasks. Other theories and models of public governance and management can also be examined with the methodological support of the CCAD, suggesting its extensibility and generalisability in consolidating central agency research.

Conclusion

Central agencies in China play key roles in political and administrative affairs, but the research on them is disproportionately under-represented. It is the time to change our 'stereotyped' mindset or conceptualisation of central agencies. In this article, I discuss the central–local divide in political and administrative studies, and highlight the obstacles undermining the central agency research. In raising the imperative of central and federal government research, I do not intend to depreciate the value of subnational and local government studies. A healthy and sustainable research community should pay equivalent (if not much more) attention to central agencies with local ones. Our understanding of political and administrative processes will be incomplete if we pay disproportionately less attention to the central authority than subnational and local governments. The rise of central agency research may also contribute to

cross-country and comparative studies. For instance, we can compare the validity and generalisability of the existing theories on central agencies in various contexts.

I introduce the CCAD in this article and summarise the key variables that could be used in various central agency studies. I encourage the community to pay more attention to central agencies and to work together to develop and enrich central agency datasets and analyses. As mentioned above, the list of variables in the CCAD is not exhaustive and will be updated periodically. It is primarily used as a clue to illuminate the potentials of central agency research in China, and we encourage similar endeavours in future research. When it is ready, the CCAD will be put online to help other scholars to use these data in their studies. The releasing and sharing of the CCAD in the research community will lay a solid foundation for establishing and improving the central agency research field (King 2011).

The development of the CCAD will help researchers to analyse central agencies from various perspectives, but several methodological challenges deserve discussions before proceeding to speculate about its extension and generalisation. As mentioned above, central agencies vary in terms of function and size, and the relatively low comparability among them is one of the top concerns in empirical studies. These structural attributes should be taken into account in appropriate approaches to model central agency behaviours and outcomes, which may help to mitigate omitted variable bias. Another concern comes from the frequent restructuring of central agencies, and researchers should be cautious in treating the restructured agencies (e.g. merged or split ones) the same as their predecessors. It may be appropriate in some cases, but may be proven to be incorrect in other situations. Furthermore, it is helpful to consult multiple sources to gather reliable and in-time data concerning central agencies, since there are no existing consensus on the reliability and validity of these data. Finally, different from easy access to local cadres, researchers without direct touch of people working in central agencies may elaborate some phenomena inappropriately or even wrongly. What actually happens may differ from that written in the article, and complementary qualitative studies by interviewing key informants help.

Apart from hard data or secondary data mentioned above, more can and should be done to encourage senior executive and public employee survey of central agencies. It is the perceptions of executives and employees that matter, and it is meaningful to survey their viewpoints on organisational climate and environment, autonomy and control, and culture and performance. How do central agency employees perceive job security and work autonomy? Are they satisfied with supervisors, group climate and work environment? Does merit link with civil service pay and career advancement? Do senior executives support administrative reform and NPM-style instruments? These and other items can be incorporated into the surveys to answer important research questions concerning central agencies in China. We can learn from the practices of the COBRA and COCOPS projects in the EU, as well as the FEVS and MSPB projects in the US, and common instruments and items can be adopted to support comparative studies. Although senior executive survey is much more difficult to implement in China than in European countries, ordinary employee survey as in the case of the US can be feasible and fruitful. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, and specifically the State Bureau of Civil Servants, should periodically

organise or outsource central agency employee surveys to support public human resource management practices and studies, and the original data should be released to encourage more in-depth data-mining by researchers. Although many central agencies have conducted or outsourced numerous surveys, the National Bureau of Statistics should also strengthen its role in centralising and standardising central agency statistics and surveys.¹⁴ I believe the involvement of various central agencies, particularly those in charge of personnel, finance, information technology and statistics, in the development of the CCAD will significantly advance the central agency research, which can also substantially narrow the policy-research gap ubiquitously witnessed in political and administrative studies.

The advocacy of developing the CCAD to advance quantitative research on central agencies in China, however, does not depreciate the value and contribution of qualitative research on the same topics. Qualitative approaches (e.g. historical and case studies) can deepen our understanding of the operations and decision-making of central agencies, but they also require basic information and fundamental data with regard to specific central agencies. Without essential facts on organisational environments and attributes, qualitative studies cannot depict the full view of central agency operations. In other words, the development, replication and extension of the CCAD will not only support quantitative studies on central agencies, but also contribute to the elaboration of qualitative ones in the same vein.

Notes

1. The case in Political Science is rather complicated, partially due to the clear disciplinary split among state politics, comparative political studies and international relations. Public Administration may also be regarded as one sub-discipline of Political Science. To the best of our knowledge, however, there are few review articles in the field of Public Administration to illuminate the share of various government levels (e.g. federal and local) empirically examined in the literature.
2. Other data sources or focusses of discussion include public schools, utilities, special districts or types of government (17 articles accounting for 9.3%), non-profit organisations (16 articles accounting for 8.8%), and private organisations (four articles accounting for 2.2%).
3. I am indebted to one anonymous reviewer for his/her suggestion on discussing this point.
4. In the same vein, the study of town and township governments should also be cautiously designed, since they are at the bottom of the bureaucratic pyramid without formal subordinate agencies to give commands.
5. More information can be found at <http://www.fedview.opm.gov/>.
6. Please go to its website at <http://www.mspb.gov/studies/surveys.htm> to find further information.
7. I am grateful to one anonymous reviewer for his/her suggestion in including these two projects for reference.
8. More information about the COBRA project can be found at <http://soc.kuleuven.be/io/cost/about/cobra.htm>.
9. More information about the COCOPS project can be found at <http://www.cocops.eu/>.
10. See the full list of central agencies at http://english.gov.cn/state_council/2014/09/03/content_281474985533579.htm.
11. See http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/index/content/2014-02/24/content_5300940.htm.
12. See <http://spgk.scoprs.gov.cn/bmstp/allSpsxList>.
13. Personal communication with Shu Keng (17 November 2014).

14. See *The Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Departmental Statistical Work* released by the National Bureau of Statistics in December 2014. Available at http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-12/16/content_9300.htm.

Acknowledgements

Part of the article has been presented in the 2014 Annual Conference of Political Economy held at Peking University, Beijing, on 27 October. The author would like to thank the conference participants, the editor Xiyi Huang and two anonymous reviewers of the journal for helpful comments.

Disclosure statement

The author reports no conflicts of interest. The author alone is responsible for the content and writing of this article.

Funding

This work was supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities and the Research Funds of Renmin University of China [grant number: 16XNB005].

References

- Berry, Frances Stokes. 1994. "Innovation in Public Management: The Adoption of Strategic Planning." *Public Administration Review* 54 (4): 322–330.
- Blanchard, Olivier, and Andrei Shleifer. 2001. "Federalism With and Without Political Centralization: China Versus Russia." *IMF Staff Papers* 48: 171–179.
- Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. 2009. "China's Foreign-and Security-policy Decision-Making Processes Under Hu Jintao." *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38 (3): 63–97.
- CASS Law Institute's Innovation Project Team on the Rule of Law Index. 2014. "Zhongguo Zhengfu Toumingdu Niandu Baogao 2013" [Report on the Index of Government Transparency in China, 2013]. In *Zhongguo Fazhi Fazhan Baogao 2014 [Annual Report on China's Rule of Law (2014)]*, edited by Lin Li and He Tian, 191–204. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Cheng, Joseph Y. S., and Lucia Q. Lu. 2009. "Public Administration Research Issues in China: Evidence from Content Analysis of Leading Chinese Public Administration Journals." *Issues & Studies* 45 (1): 203–241.
- Christensen, Tom, Lisheng Dong, and Martin Painter. 2008. "Administrative Reform in China's Central Government: How Much "Learning from the West"?" *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 74 (3): 351–371.
- Christensen, Tom, Lisheng Dong, Martin Painter, and Richard M. Walker. 2012. "Imitating the West? Evidence on Administrative Reform from the Upper Echelons of Chinese Provincial Government." *Public Administration Review* 72 (6): 798–806.
- China Software Testing Center (CSTC). 2014. *2014 Zhongguo Zhengfu Wangzhan Jixiao Pinggu Zongbaogao [Performance Assessment of Government Websites in China 2014]*. Beijing: China Software Testing Center.
- Ellig, Jerry, Maurice McTigue, and Henry Wray. 2012. *Government Performance and Results: An Evaluation of GPRA's First Decade*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

- Fernandez, Sergio, Deanna Malatesta, and Craig R. Smith. 2013. "Race, Gender, and Government Contracting: Different Explanations or New Prospects for Theory?" *Public Administration Review* 73 (1): 109–120.
- Finkelstein, Sydney, Donald C. Hambrick, and Albert A. Cannella Jr. 2009. *Strategic Leadership: Theory and Research on Executives, Top Management Teams, and Boards*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- He, Zengke. 2000. "Corruption and Anti-corruption in Reform China." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33 (2): 243–270.
- Hofstede, Geert, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov. 2010. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Huang, Yasheng. 1996. *Inflation and Investment Controls in China: The Political Economy of Central-Local Relations During Reform Era*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jung, Chan Su. 2014. "Organizational Goal Ambiguity and Job Satisfaction in the Public Sector." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 24 (4): 955–981.
- King, Gary. 2011. "Ensuring the Data-Rich Future of the Social Sciences." *Science* 331 (6018): 719–721.
- Lai, Hongyi, and Su-Jeong Kang. 2013. "Domestic Bureaucratic Politics and Chinese Foreign Policy." *Journal of Contemporary China* 23 (86): 294–313.
- Landry, Pierre F. 2008. *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, Hongbin, and Li-An Zhou. 2005. "Political Turnover and Economic Performance: The Incentive Role of Personnel Control in China." *Journal of Public Economics* 89 (9–10): 1743–1762.
- Lowi, Theodore J. 1972. "Four Systems of Policy, Politics, and Choice." *Public Administration Review* 32 (4): 298–310.
- Lynn, Laurence E. Jr, Carolyn J. Heinrich, and Carolyn J. Hill. 2000. "Studying Governance and Public Management: Challenges and Prospects." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 10 (2): 233–262.
- Ma, Liang. 2014. "The Power of Government Agencies: Evidence from the State Council in China." Proceedings for 2014 Annual Conference of Political Economy. Beijing: Peking University.
- Manion, Melanie. 2010. "A Survey of Survey Research on Chinese Politics: What Have We Learned?" In *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies*, edited by Allen Carlson, Mary E. Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal, and Melanie Manion, 181–199. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meier, Kenneth J. 1980. "Measuring Organizational Power." *Administration & Society* 12 (3): 357–375.
- Mertha, Andrew C. 2005. "China's Centralization: Shifting Tiao/Kuai Authority Relations." *The China Quarterly* 184 (1): 791–810.
- Moynihan, Donald P. 2013. "Advancing the Empirical Study of Performance Management: What We Learned From the Program Assessment Rating Tool." *The American Review of Public Administration* 43 (5): 499–517.
- O'Brien, Kevin J., and Lianjiang Li. 1999. "Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China." *Comparative Politics* 31 (2): 167–186.
- Perry, James L., and Kenneth L. Kraemer. 1986. "Research Methodology in the Public Administration Review, 1975–1984." *Public Administration Review* 46 (3): 215–226.
- Piotrowski, Suzanne J. 2007. *Governmental Transparency in the Path of Administrative Reform*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Pitts, David W. 2007. "How Effective Is Public Management Research? An Analysis of Scope and Methodology." The proceeding for the 9th Public Management Research Conference, Tucson, Arizona.
- Provan, Keith G. 1980. "Recognizing, Measuring, and Interpreting the Potential/Enacted Power Distinction in Organizational Research." *The Academy of Management Review* 5 (4): 549–559.

- Qian, Haoping. 2012. "How Many Ministry-Level Agencies in China?" [Zhongguo you Duoshao 'Buji' Danwei]. *Nanfang Zhoumo [Southern Weekend]*, February 19. Accessed October 11 2014. <http://www.infzm.com/content/70110/>.
- Raadschelders, Jos C. N., and Kwang-Hoon Lee. 2011. "Trends in the Study of Public Administration: Empirical and Qualitative Observations from Public Administration Review, 2000–2009." *Public Administration Review* 71 (1): 19–33.
- Robertson, Peter J., Carlos Wing-Hung Lo, and Shui-Yan Tang. 2007. "Money, Mission, or Match: Antecedents of Commitment Among Public Employees in China." *Administration Society* 39 (1): 3–24.
- State Council. 2013. "The Circular of the State Council Concerning Organizational Structure (2013/14) [Guowuyuan Guanyu Jigou Shezhi de Tongzhi]". Accessed March 21 2013, State Council [Guowu yuan]. http://www.gov.cn/zwqk/2013-03/21/content_2359435.htm
- Terry, Larry D. 2005. "Reflections and Assessment: Public Administration Review, 2000-05." *Public Administration Review* 65 (6): 643–645.
- The Center for Public Policy Studies at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (CPPS). 2014. *2014 Zhongguo Caizheng Toumingdu Baogao [2014 Annual Report on China's Fiscal Transparency]*. Shanghai: Shanghai University of Finance and Economics Press.
- The Center for Public Participation Studies and Supports (CPPSS). 2013. *Zhongguo Xingzheng Toumingdu Guancha Baogao 2011-2012 [China Administrative Transparency Annual Watch 2011-2012]*. Beijing: Law Press.
- Walker, Richard M., Gene A. Brewer, and Yujin Choi. 2014. 'Public Administration Research in East and Southeast Asia: A Review of the English Language Evidence, 1999-2009.' *The American Review of Public Administration* 44 (2): 131–150.
- Wang, Zhiguo, and Liang Ma. 2014. "Fiscal Decentralization in China: A Literature Review." *Annals of Economics and Finance* 15 (2): 751–770.
- Wu, Yiping, and Jiangnan Zhu. 2011. "Corruption, Anti-corruption, and Inter-county Income Disparity in China." *The Social Science Journal* 48 (3): 435–448.
- Wu, Xun, Yan-Ling He, and Milan Tung-Wen Sun. 2013. "Public Administration Research in Mainland China and Taiwan: An Assessment of Journal Publications, 1998-2008." *Public Administration* 91 (2): 261–280.
- Yackee, Susan Webb. 2006. "Sweet-talking the Fourth Branch: The Influence of Interest Group Comments on Federal Agency Rulemaking." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 16 (1): 103–124.
- Yang, Zhenjie, and Alfred M Wu. 2015. "The Dynamics of the City-Managing-County Model in China: Implications for Rural–Urban Interaction." *Environment and Urbanization* 27 (1): 327–342.
- Zhou, Li'an, and Jing Tao. 2009. "Government Size, Market-orientation and Regional Corruption: Evidence From the Provincial Level Panel Data." *Frontiers of Economics in China* 4 (3): 425–448.