

Conceptual and theoretical underpinnings in the research of corporate political activity: a bibliometric analysis

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Abstract

In this study, we focus on existing research of corporate political activity (CPA) in management and organization science. We systematically explore the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the research field by utilizing bibliometric analysis. The results identify several gaps in the extant research on CPA, implying that the field is incomplete and inadequate. Hence, we argue that the field needs an application of a wider array of theories and methodological approaches in order to increase and complement the prevailing knowledge. This study is an example of how meta-analytical research can assist research problematization and theory building in organization studies.

Recent literature has requested the extending of the knowledge of management scholars by synthesizing existing research findings and clarifying new direction for future research efforts through meta-analytical studies (Eden, 2002). The benefits of meta-analytical research, i.e. research about research, are two-fold. First, it can improve the error and bias of research findings across a large set of replication studies (Glass, McGaw, & Smith, 1981; Hunter & Schmidt, 1990; Hunter, Schmidt, & Jackson, 1982). Secondly, it has the ability to unveil grand theoretical constructs as well as detailed theoretical relationships prevailing in a fragmented field of study, where the intellectual bases are neither self-evident nor uncontroversial (Oliver & Ebers, 1998).

Bibliometric analysis provides a tool for systematically analyzing detailed conceptual relationships prevailing between published research articles. Rigorous bibliometric methodologies are needed for constructing a understanding about the *de facto* structuring of a given research field, identifying coherent clusters of research that can be used as reference points and identifying knowledge gaps in existing literature. This ‘homework’ is necessary in order to position research problematizations, which is a key process in formulating research agendas aiming at theory building in organization studies (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997).

Our study employs bibliometric analysis, specifically citation analysis, network centrality analysis and co-occurrence analysis (for methodology, see e.g.,)(Oliver et al., 1998; Parvinen, 2003), in order to make sense of the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the scientific discussion generated in the field of corporate political activity (CPA)¹. Corporate political activity is especially interesting for bibliometric analysis, since it is a niche that is, as a research field, a) well demarcated, b) dominated and governed by living authors and c) characterized by research convergence and consensus. The systematic nature of bibliometric studies renders it a useful tool for partitioning such seemingly uniform research fields. Our aim is to identify institutionalized streams of CPA research and to develop a clearer and more analytical picture of the research domain. Our main

¹ In this study, our focus is on the business management-oriented CPA research that explicitly examines the actions and decisions of firms intended to have an influence on government decision-making.

contribution is to indicate potential research avenues and provide information for future research problematization processes in this field.

Overview of the study of corporate political activity

Corporate political activity (CPA) has been generally considered as a way to monitor, control, and manage the regulative pressures prevailing in business organization's external environment. During the last two decades, the study of CPA has established itself as a distinctive sub-area of inquiry in management and organization research (Baron, 1995; Baysinger, 1984; Boddewyn, 1988; Epstein, 1980; Hillman & Hitt, 1999a; Hillman, Zarkhoodi, & Bierman, 1999b; Keim & Baysinger, 1988; Keim & Zeithaml, 1986; Mahon, 1983; Mahon & Murray, 1981; Rehbein & Schuler, 1999; Schuler, Rehbein, & Cramer, 2002), having close intellectual connections to other sub-areas, such as corporate public affairs, issues management, and business ethics. Moreover, the study of CPA has inspired a vast body of research conducted in other scientific disciplines, namely political science, economics and sociology (Boies, 1989; Buchanan, 1980; Clawson, Neustadtl, & Scott, 1992; Krueger, 1974; Lenway, Morck, & Yeung, 1996; Mitchell, Hansen, & Jepsen, 1997; Mizruchi, 1992; Mizruchi, 1989; Munger, 1988; Neustadtl & Clawson, 1988; Pittman, 1977) implying the inter-disciplinary nature of the phenomenon.

Several attempts adopting various perspectives have been conducted to make sense of this complex research field. Among the early contributors, Epstein (1980) (Epstein, 1980) noted that the CPA research was primarily descriptive and atheoretical during the 1960s and 1970s. Preston (1986) (Preston, 1986) identified the critical areas of conflict, controversy, and challenge of the 1980s in the study of business and public policy. Shaffer (1995) (Shaffer, 1995) reviewed the empirical studies concerning corporate responses to government regulation by introducing different perspectives, research methods and levels of analysis used in earlier research. Vogel (1996) (Vogel, 1996) compared the accumulation of CPA research in political science and management

science, concluding that the perspectives developed in these fields should be more fully integrated. More recently, Getz (1997, 2002) has clarified the theoretical basis used in the CPA studies (Getz, 1997, 2002). In these articles Getz extends the scholars' knowledge by integrating and assessing the existing body of research and indicates some fundamental gaps in the prevailing field of study. Schuler (2002), on the other hand, has reviewed the primary quantitative methods used in the earlier studies. Moreover, Griffin et al. (2001) has offered an extensive chronological review on the research of corporate political affairs (Griffin, Fleisher, Brenner, & Boddewyn, 2001a, b). All these reviews share one distinctive character in that they emphasize – explicitly or implicitly – that the research on business and politics has developed into a fragmented field of study.

All these earlier contributions have clarified the content and progress of the field. However, they are not fully systematic accounts of the earlier research in the sense that they represent traditional narrative-based literature reviews that are typically qualitative and judgment-based accounts of the earlier literature. In this study, our aim is to extend and complement these earlier reviews by using the bibliometric methodology in order to introduce a systematic and quantitative account of the existing CPA research in management and organization science. Compared to traditional literature reviews, our approach provides a more objective measure and thus enables to investigate the structuring of the CPA research.² In this respect, the extant literature is considered to construct a conceptual and theoretical network that can be analyzed in order to present a systematic and comprehensive view of the contents, structure and segmentation of the field of study.

Mapping the foundations of a scientific field by bibliometric analysis

² Note, however, that bibliometric analysis is not fully insulated from the subjective bias, since e.g. the selection of articles incorporates some subjective judgment and the network analysis is entirely based on a subjective selection method, despite it being proven robust. For more on this subject, see Parvinen 2003, 13-14.

Bibliometric analysis is a generally recognized and widely applied method for identifying common research interests and theoretical foundations within a particular research domain (see, e.g., (Lievrouw, 1990; Paisley, 1989; Pritchard, 1969). The basic idea of the analysis is to “count and analyze various facets of written communication” (Pritchard 1969, 348). Thus, it is “a quantitative study of physical published units, or of bibliographic units, or of the surrogates for either” (Broadus, 1987). The bibliometric methodology has been employed to “screen” several social science disciplines, e.g. inter-organizational relationships (Oliver et al., 1998; Parvinen, 2003; Sobrero & Schrader, 1998), organization studies (Usdiken & Pasadeos, 1995), small enterprise research (Ratnatunga & Romano, 1997), entrepreneurship research (Dery & Toulouse, 1996), communication studies (So, 1988), advertising studies (Pasadeos, Phelps, & Kim, 1998), public administration research (Toonen, 1998), management information systems studies (Culnan, 1986), and research and development literature (Tijssen & van Raan, 1994). Adjacent to CPA research, Pasadeos & Renfro (1992) has used bibliometric analysis to map the dominant features in public relations research during the 1970s and the 1980s (Pasadeos & Renfro, 1992). However, bibliometric analysis has not yet been used to systematically analyze and evaluate the prevailing state of CPA research.

The request for systematic literature review typically arises from the fact that research on a specific topic is considered as fragmented, characterized by divergent theoretical definitions, procedures, and research methods. Accordingly, scholars tend to approach a focal topic from different perspectives, and they may have different cognitive interpretations of the nature of an issue. Thus, researchers emphasize various predictive variables affecting a phenomenon at hand, and consequently the results of the studies might be conflicting (Yang, 2002).

In this study, we employ three distinctive techniques of bibliometric methodology, i.e., citation analysis (Cole & Cole, 1973), network centrality analysis (Oliver et al., 1998) and co-occurrence analysis (Parvinen 2003). Following the rationale of bibliometric analysis, the empirical focus of our meta-analytic approach is not on the research findings, but on the research itself. Citation analysis, which is considered as “the best

known and most widely used bibliometric technique” (Üsdiken & Pasadeos, 1995), is capable of revealing focal interaction networks and research fronts among scholars, and thus to provide information concerning the structure (types of dominant works) and boundaries (connections to other disciplines) of the discipline (Pasadeos & Renfro 1992; Üsdiken & Pasadeos 1995). Typically, citation analysis has been utilized to investigate journal articles and topics, authors and their affiliations, citation counts, and publication patterns (see, e.g., (Kerr, Tolliver, & Petree, 1977; Pasadeos et al., 1992; Podsakoff & Dalton, 1987). Thus, the citation analysis represents “a useful tool in studying various networks of relationship among authors, journals, and fields in an objective and quantitative manner” (So, 1988, 237).

Compared to basic citation analysis, the network centrality analysis, being a more recent and more sophisticated technique, allows exploring the theoretical and phenomenon-oriented conceptual roots that underlie a particular field of study. The aim of the analysis is to distinguish the key attributes of the earlier research by measuring their frequency of appearance and position within the research network. As distinct from co-citation analysis (Pasadeos et al. 1998; Üsdiken & Pasadeos 1995; Culnan 1986) that examines the structuring of a discipline according to citation patterns, the network centrality analysis concentrates on exploring the content of actual studies in the field. Accordingly, the focus of the analysis is on “the forest of research rather than its individual trees” (Oliver & Ebers, 1998, 550). Co-occurrence analysis, being a complement to network centrality analysis, reveals the interconnections between disparate constructs of the research field. In this sense, the network centrality analysis and co-occurrence analysis augment the empirical evidence of the structuring of the field provided by the citation analysis.

Methodology

Database

The database for examining the current state of CPA research consists of empirical and theoretical articles published in 11 major scientific management journals between 1986 and 2002³. Our intention was to select a representative sample that would cover the leading and established North American and European academic journals in organization science, management science, and strategic management. In addition, we included one special journal (Business and Society) that is dedicated to publishing articles related to CPA. As a basis for journal evaluation, we relied on several studies that have measured the relative significance of management journals (Extejt & Smith, 1990; Johnson & Podsakoff, 1994; Sharplin & Mabry, 1985; Tahai & Meyer, 1999) and the rankings of Social Science Citation Index, which annually ranks the most influential journals in organization and management science. Thus, we intended to include a wide range of influential journals from several sub-disciplines of management and organization science that are potential in the publication of CPA research.

In the initial phase of the literature search, we selected a set of key words relating to the study of CPA in order to conduct an electronic search of the databases⁴. We employed a relatively wide array of key words in order to secure that all relevant articles would be detected. Consequently, we found 684 articles that matched our initial query. Then, we carefully checked the abstracts of all these articles and were able to identify 71 potentially relevant articles. In the final stage of the filtering process, we intensively read through the remaining 71 articles and ended up with 43 articles that explicitly examined some aspect of CPA. The relatively small amount of articles implies that the scientific

³ The journal sample includes Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, Business and Society, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Management, Journal of Management Studies, Management Science, Organization Science, Organization Studies, and Strategic Management Journal. Note that we have intentionally excluded all managerial-oriented journals, such as California Management Review, Sloan Management Review and Harvard Business Review, although they are generally recognized influential in the field.

⁴ The key words were: antidumping, antitrust, business government relations, business-government relations, campaign contributions, corporate political, influence, lobbying, nonmarket, PAC, political action committees, political behavior, political imperative, political strategy, politics, protection, public policy, regulation, rent seeking, rent-seeking, subsidies, trade barriers, trade policy. We used the Abi Inform and Ebsco Business Source Elite -electronic databases for searching the relevant articles. We limited the search to concern abstracts and titles of scientific articles, thus book reviews and editorial comments were excluded.

discussion of CPA has not been flourishing in the most influential organization and management science journals. However, we argue that an in-depth examination of these journal articles can reveal the conceptual patterns of the most influential scientific discussion in the CPA domain, and thus offer a coherent and representative picture of the prevailing research on CPA in management and organization science.

Citation analysis

The aim of the citation analysis in this study is to examine the intellectual foundations of the CPA research by analyzing three independent factors, i.e., the most cited first authors, the most cited texts (articles and books), and the outlet pattern of the published and cited articles. The fundamental logic of the analysis stems from the assumption that the most frequently cited authors and publications must be considered important by a large number of scholars in the field.

The outlet pattern of the published and cited articles provides a general picture of where and from which angles the CPA research has been built. Identification of the distribution of articles and references per journal can be used to complement the discussion of the development of the discipline and the relative importance of different research traditions in it. Furthermore, the outlet profiles are being used as a part of the explanation for the relative dominance of certain paradigms over others and to establish linkages between the paradigms, the authors, and the development of the field.

There are, however, some deficiencies in the citation analysis that have to be considered. First, due to the characteristics of the bibliometric data gathered from electronic databases, only the first authors appear in the data and thus the analysis focuses on the frequencies with which the first authors are quoted in the selected body of articles. This implies that authors with significant numbers of second- and third-authored articles are relatively under-represented. Despite the fact that the first-authors are often considered the main contributors to scientific articles, this raises some questions about the validity of the author citation data, especially since it is sometimes customary to list the authors not in the order of their contribution, but in alphabetical order. However, the simultaneous

examination of the most-cited first author and the most-cited text analysis partly alleviates this deficiency. Whereas the most-cited first author analysis potentially downplays some of the findings, the analysis of most-cited texts accounts for all of the contributors. On the other hand, the most-cited first author analysis highlights the authors who have been productive in publishing for a long time and are not simply picked out because of a single seminal article. Thus, by combining the different analyses we are able to outline more accurate and comprehensive picture of the structure of the CPA discussion (See also, Parvinen 2003).

Another deficiency of citation analysis is related to social dimension of referencing. In contemporary social science research referencing is not only a way to indicate which sources have been used in the study, but it is also a social signal. For example, authors in organization studies are found to use citing as a tool to construct intertextual coherence and demonstrate incompleteness, inadequacy or incommensurability of earlier research (Locke & Golden-Biddle 1997). Thus, the citation counts tend to ignore the context in which a particular citation is made. Despite the deficiencies, citation analysis has proved to be able to display valid views of a particular field of study (Gordon, 1982; Summers, 1984) see also Üsdiken & Pasadeos 1995).

Network centrality analysis

The second part of the bibliometric analysis constructs of the network centrality analysis, by which we attempt to capture the conceptual dimensions and inter-relations of the prevailing research in the field of CPA. Thus, the target of the analysis is the intellectual content of network comprised of the 43 selected articles. Accordingly, each article is treated as an empirical evidence of the existing body of literature. In this way, our aim is to explore the theoretical, methodological, and phenomenon-oriented patterns that underlie the current CPA research by measuring their frequency of appearance and position within the research network.

For the analysis of the selected body of literature, we first decided on six facets (theories used in an article, antecedents explaining CPA research, level of analysis, research

design, focus of the study, and political activity measured) that describe the various dimensions of the CPA-related articles (for the use of facet theory, see Oliver & Ebers 1998). Accordingly, we selected a number of variables to describe each of these facets with the intention to include all potential and essential dimensions of the facets in the analysis (e.g. we selected, to the best of our knowledge, all established and major theories applied in the field of management and organization science). Then, each article were coded according to 7 facets and 97 related variables in a binary matrix, in which the presence or absence of a particular facet in each article was denoted by giving it a value of 1 or 0, respectively (See the full list of facets and variables in Appendix 1). Similar to Oliver & Ebers (1998) we assumed a non-mutual exclusivity of the variables in each facet; in other words, any combination of variables in each facet was allowed. To establish inter-rater reliability two authors of this paper coded separately a random selection of the sample articles. For these 11 articles, out of 1067 codings, the inter-coder agreement was 89.4 percent for all variables, which we consider acceptable (cf. (Collin, Johansson, Svensson, & Ulvenblad, 1996; Oliver et al., 1998; Pasadeos et al., 1992)

The generated binary matrix displays the inter-linkages between the different facets and the articles. A linkage between two facets is created by their presence in the same article, and articles are linked to each other by a facet they share in common. In order to analyze the contents and dimensions of the CPA research network, we employ four measures: frequencies of facets, Bonacich eigenvector centrality (Bonacich, 1972, 1987), betweenness centrality (Freeman, 1979), and co-occurrence analysis⁵.

Frequency measures, together with citation analysis, provide us a preliminary understanding of the research field by indicating the relative dominance of different paradigms. Network centrality measures and co-occurrence analysis, on the other hand,

⁵ In the co-occurrence analysis, a 97 x 97 matrix F consisting of the 97 facets on both axes (article number i : a_i and dichotomous 0-1 variable number j : x_j) is built by firstly initializing all elements F_{ij} as zero. Subsequently, every article in matrix K is read for the presence of each facet. If variable x_j appears on the same row with variable x_k , the corresponding matrix element F_{jk} is increased by one. Variable j assumes values 1, 2, ..., N and variable k values $j+1, j+2, \dots, 97$. This procedure is repeated for all articles. The resulting matrix F displays the times that each facet appears together in the data consisting of the 43 analyzed articles. The help of Mr. Lauri Ora of Cambridge University, UK, is gratefully acknowledged in designing and constructing the co-occurrence analysis.

provide us more extensive and in-depth comprehension of the structuring of the CPA discussion (Oliver et al., 1998; Parvinen, 2003). The network centrality measures analyze the centrality and the bridging ability of the facets, thus deepening our understanding of the function, role and interplay of different facets in the formation of the CPA research. According to Bonacich eigenvector centrality measure, the centrality of a variable equals the sum of its connections to other variables, weighted by the centrality of each of these other variables (Bonacich, 1972, 1987). Therefore, we calculate the eigenvector of the largest positive eigenvalue as a measure of centrality. The Betweenness centrality, again, measures the degree to which a focal variable is located on the shortest connecting path between any other variables (Freeman, 1979). This is achieved by calculating the betweenness and normalized betweenness centrality of each vertex, arriving at the overall network betweenness centralization. The co-occurrence analysis reveals which facets co-occur most frequently with each other, and thus, it is possible to see whether facets actually appear in logical clusters or patterns (Parvinen 2003).

Analysis

Citation analysis

In this section, we employ the citation analysis to evaluate the most cited authors, books, and articles in the research domain, i.e. the intellectual basis on which the scientific discussion on the field of CPA is grounded. A total of 2367 references in the 43 selected CPA articles were included in the citation analysis. Majority of these references (51,7 %) were made to journal articles, and the five most frequently cited journals represented the field of business management (*Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of International Business Studies* and *California Management Review*). Although this implies that the intellectual basis of CPA discussion is heavily rooted in the field of business management, the journals of political science, economics, and sociology are also relatively well represented, thus indicating the inter-disciplinary nature of the CPA research.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the distribution of articles among the journals (Table 1) indicates a strong concentration of CPA discussion in *Business and Society*. In addition, the paucity of CPA research in European-based journals (*Journal of Management Studies* and *Organization Studies*) alludes to the dominance of North American studies in the field. Indeed, more than 90 percent of the studies are published in American-based journals. Similarly, all of the ten most published authors in the sample come from North America (see Table 2). These results are consistent with statements made in earlier studies (e.g. Schuler 2002; Meznar 2002) that the field as a whole is missing a distinctive and coherent non-American perspective.

Table 1 around here

Table 2 around here

A more in-depth view on the structuring and the intellectual origins of a discipline can be provided by analyzing the most-cited first authors (Budd & Raber, 1996). Table 3 reveals the dominance of CPA-related authors (11 out of the 15 most-cited authors are specialized on CPA research), *Gerald Keim* being as a clear leader of the group. The most occurring non-CPA author is *Michael Porter*, which indicates a strong intention to integrate the CPA discussion with general strategic management research. Moreover, several high-ranked CPA-authors are heavily oriented themselves to the research of corporate political strategy (e.g. Keim, Mahon, Baysinger, Baron). Another “cluster” can be detected among authors focusing mainly on managing international business and its government relations (e.g. Boddewyn, Lenway, Hillman, Rugman, Dunning). Besides the management approach, economics (by Olson and Williamson) and political science (by Stigler and Moe) are rather well represented on the list, whereas authors from sociology are non-existent. Another anomaly worth of mentioning is the absence of authors representing public choice theory, resource based view, and behavioral theory of firm,

although they all are among the most central theories applied in CPA literature (as will be indicated later in this paper).

Table 3 around here

A similar pattern compared to the most-cited first authors' analysis emerges as we explore listing of the most cited books and articles in the CPA literature (Table 3). However, a significant difference compared to the list of the most-cited first authors is that Mancur Olson's book "The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups" (1965) arises as the most cited reference. This implies that the concepts of collective action and free-rider problem hold a central position in the CPA discussion (cf. Schuler (Schuler, 1996), who argues that "any theory of corporate political strategy must have a foundation based upon collective action theory"), but also suggest that scholars tend to cite only to Olson's book when referencing to problems of collective action in CPA.

Network centrality analysis

In order to examine the content and construct of the CPA research, we begin with analyzing the frequencies of appearance of all the coded variables (Table 4). According to our results, the main question that the existing literature has been trying to answer is *how* CPA is conducted and is it effective. This implies to prescriptive and instrumental nature of the research. Consequently, our findings are in contrast to Getz's (1997) assessment according to which the foundation of current CPA theory has centered on the *why* question (i.e., what is the rationale and motivation for engaging in CPA?). An explanation for this divergence may be found in the different approaches of evaluation. Getz assessed the type of questions that different social science theories employed in the CPA research typically address, whereas we explored the typical questions addressed in the published articles.

The frequencies of research designs employed in CPA research seem to indicate that the mainstream approach is to conduct empirical research with cross-sectional quantitative data in order to offer prescriptive implications. This view supports the assessments of earlier CPA literature reviews (see, e.g. Getz 1997, Schuler 2002). On the other hand, studies grounding on illustrative cases or qualitative, dynamic and comparative research designs have been less attractive to scholars. In terms of the level of analysis and context, the existing research clearly concentrates on examining CPA on inter-organizational level in a country-specific environment. Moreover, earlier research has largely examined CPA as a general phenomenon without specifying any particular measure for CPA. This is quite surprising, since several scholars (e.g. (Hillman et al., 1999a; Mahon & McGowan, 1998; Rehbein et al., 1999) have advocated systemic model construction in which particular activities are measured as a proxy for CPA as an appropriate method for studying CPA.

Table 4 around here

In terms of theories and antecedents, the scholarly discussion in CPA research seems to have been built heavily on the concept of resource dependency, resource dependence theory being the most applied theory, and tangible and intangible resources being the key antecedents. Also, collective action and public choice theory are widely used theories, the former reflecting the abundant citations to Olson's (1965) book in the CPA research. In general, the theoretical approaches generated in organization science and economics seem to dominate the scholarly discussion of CPA. On the other hand, the public choice theorists are non-existent among the most cited first authors and references (the same pattern applies to resource based view theory), and moreover, the key concepts of the theory, i.e. rent seeking and social waste, display a peripheral role in CPA research. Similarly, industrial organization economics is a rarely applied theory in the CPA research although its main representative scholar, Michael Porter, ranks high among the most-cited first authors.

In addition to the frequency measures of appearance, the network positions of theories and antecedents were analyzed in order to determine their centrality within the CPA research network and the nature of their relations to each other. Table 5 indicates that resource dependence theory and collective action theory outperform all the other theories, except theory of regulation, in terms of both their centrality in the network and their bridging capability. In fact, the theory of regulation has the second best measure in betweenness centrality although it is not very widely used and it is not central in CPA discussion network. Moreover, exchange theory seems to possess a central role and a good ability to link theories that are not directly connected to each other, whereas resource based view theory is typically used on its own: it ranks high in frequencies, but is weak in centrality and linking measures. Thus, exchange theory may have a more essential role in the CPA research than its frequency of appearance might lead us to assume, whereas the less central position of resource based view implies to an isolation from the rest of the CPA discussion. Furthermore, a relatively high amount of the core management and organization science theories that are absent in the CPA research might indicate that the field is not necessarily as fragmented as it has been assumed to be in earlier literature. Accordingly, the strong emphasis on resource dependencies provides further support to this assessment.

 Table 5 about here

The betweenness centrality analysis reveals three theories, whose bridging ability clearly outperforms the other theories, namely collective action theory, theory of regulation, and resource dependence theory. Reflecting the inter-disciplinary nature of the field, the theories represent divergent disciplines, i.e., economics, political science, and organization science, respectively. Unlike the other two, however, the theory of regulation acts as a pure linking theory in the field. According to Oliver & Ebers (1998), there exist two contradictory interpretations to the role of linking theory. First, one could

assume that the high betweenness centrality of the theory of regulation stress its strength to attract and link complementary research and improve dialogue among otherwise unconnected perspectives. The other possible interpretation would emphasize the focal theory's weakness by arguing that it is not fully developed in order to be applied directly to the field of CPA.

Another interesting observation is related to the positions of resource dependence theory and exchange theory. As Getz (1997) has noted, these theories are closely inter-related, both making assumptions of power and dependency of actors. The more central position of resource dependence theory implies that the CPA research has emphasized more business' dependence on government than the mutual interdependence of business and government suggested by exchange theory.

In terms of the antecedents' network positions, intangible resources seem to have a low bridging ability, i.e. it does relatively little thematic integration between the various explanations for CPA. On the contrary, effectiveness and legitimacy, two basic objects of measurement and relatively generic antecedents to CPA, act as key linking antecedents together with tangible resources. Dependency is relatively more central but possesses less bridging capability, which can be thought to emerge from the relative centrality of resource dependence theory. Institutional constraints, as an antecedent, have a role similar to dependency, i.e. its linking ability is relatively weak.

Co-occurrence analysis

In order to further deepen our analysis of the structure of the CPA research we conducted co-occurrence analysis. With the analysis, we examine which theories and antecedents most typically co-occur with the most dominant theories and antecedents in the existing CPA research (Table 6). The analysis strengthens some aspects emerged from the citation and network centrality analyses. It reveals that the field is divided into two identifiable theory clusters, the other including collective action theory, resource dependence theory, exchange theory and new institutional sociology, and the other consisting of public choice theory, interest group theory and behavioral theory of firm. For example,

collective action theory and resource dependence theory - the two most frequently used and central theories in the CPA discussion - seem to be clearly the most co-occurring theories with both other theories and all antecedents. Moreover, exchange theory and new institutional sociology seem to frequently co-occur with both of these theories.

Furthermore, the analysis verifies the isolated role of the two strategic management-oriented theories, i.e. resource based view and industrial organization economics, in the CPA discussion. Although they are widely applied in research, none of the other theories are systematically co-occurring with them and they are not co-occurring with each other as well. Thus, these two theories seem to form two separate patches in the research field. Similarly, supporting the results of network centrality analysis, regulation theory is not dominantly used with some specific theory in the CPA articles, although it has a good bridging capability. Thus, it seems that the theory of regulation has been used as a complementary and linking theory, but not as a single theoretical foundation of research. However, the three most frequently appearing antecedents in the CPA discussion are typically examined in terms of collective action theory. This implies that scholars tend to argue that collective action problems in CPA are closely related to the amount of resources of a firm and the structure of a particular industry.

The co-occurrences of antecedents reveal that the conceptual foundation of CPA discussion has centered on firm-specific resources (both tangible and intangible) and industry structure. These concepts are clearly the most employed and they are systematically co-occurring with each other in the CPA research network. Moreover, the analysis shows that the concepts of legitimacy and effectiveness are closely inter-related, both dominantly co-occurring with each other in the existing research. This might imply that the earlier research, while attempting to identify the most effective political tactics, has also emphasized that also the most effective activities should have a legitimate position within society. Another noteworthy conceptual co-occurrence pattern, although not surprising, is found between government regulation and dependency, which suggests that the dependence on government regulation has been seen as a focal explanation for

CPA in earlier research. This finding is supported by the observed centrality of the resource dependence theory in the CPA discussion.

Table 6 around here

Discussion

In this study, we integrated three distinct bibliometric methods, i.e. citation analysis, network analysis and co-occurrence analysis, in order to examine the intellectual foundations and various dimensions and their inter-relations in the network of existing CPA research. In comparison to the earlier narrative literature reviews (Berman, 2002; Epstein, 1980; Getz, 1997, 2002; Hillman, 2002; Meznar, 2002; Preston, 1986; Schuler, 2002; Vogel, 1996; Windsor, 2002), we contributed a systematic view of *de facto* structuring of the CPA research. Overall, the results of both the citation analysis and the network analysis indicated high congruence, revealing a research field that has generated a relatively coherent body of knowledge. Accordingly, there seems to prevail “an internal paradox” in the field: although the field has multidisciplinary roots (Mahon & McGowan 1998; cf. the results of citation analysis in this study), the field itself has utilized relatively homogenous and narrow range of perspectives. In our view, the results highlight four distinctive, although partly overlapping issues prevailing in existing research. These include the theoretical coherence vs. divergence in the field, the integration of CPA research into mainstream organization theory and strategic management literature, the methodological choices in studying CPA, and the role of international perspectives. In the following, we will discuss how our findings relate to the earlier assessments in these four issues and what kind of theoretical and managerial implications our findings provide for the future development of the field.

In the earlier literature reviews scholars have debated over whether the field needs theoretical coherence or diversity. Some scholars assert that the field is highly fragmented and needs a grand model of CPA (Schuler 2002; Windsor 2002). Similarly, it has been pointed out that the field is disorganized because the extant literature does not generate a cumulative stream of knowledge (Getz, 2002; Mezner, 2002; Vogel, 1996). Hillman (2002)(Hillman, 2002) and Berman (2002)(Berman, 2002), on the contrary, maintain that there is no need for grand model that would incorporate all perspectives. In this study, we found that the discipline is conceptually abundant and interconnected, but theoretically scant and dispersed. In other words, the field is lacking of theoretical diversity and interconnectedness in the sense that there are two clearly dominant clusters of theories that are disconnected from other theories. However, even if we agreed that the most important objective of the field was to generate a grand model that would drive the accumulation of the knowledge, we would argue that this also would require a use of diverse theoretical perspectives.

Furthermore, our results indicate that a remarkable fraction of the research is labeled as atheoretical, lacking of explicit reference to a specific theory. This view is further validated by the relative paucity of theoretical contributors and contributions in the citation analysis. Accordingly, our findings support the assessment made by Getz (1997) that the initial emphasis on descriptive and atheoretical works in the 1960s and 1970s (Epstein, 1980) have been “resurrected” during the 1990s. On the other hand, a relatively large amount of atheoretical research partly supports the view presented in earlier research that the field is lacking accumulation of coherent theoretical knowledge (e.g. Schuler 2002; Windsor 2002).

As the other major issue, scholars have emphasized the importance of integrating the CPA research into mainstream organization theory and strategic management literature (Boddeyn & Brewer, 1994; Hillman, 2002; Shaffer, 1995). According to our results, this task is not yet completely fulfilled (cf. Shaffer 1995, 511). For example, many established and widely applied theories in organization and management science (such as network theory, evolutionary theory, and organizational ecology) are absent from the

CPA field. Furthermore, the concept of integrated strategy, i.e. market and nonmarket strategy (see, (Baron, 1995), seem not to be very central in the research field, thus implying an incomplete usage of the concept in the existing research. We argue that all this has a clear interface with the issue of theoretical congruence in the field. Namely, the integration of CPA research into the mainstream organization theory and strategic management literature may turn out to be a difficult task as long as the research field remains theoretically congruent. As noted by Hillman (2002), this kind of adherence to few dominating theoretical perspectives is not intrinsic to other areas of management and organization literature (cf. (Bartunek, Bobko, & Venkatraman, 1993; McKinley, Mone, & Moon, 1999; Pfeffer, 1993). Moreover, several studies have noted that multiparadigm approaches that integrate disparate theoretical perspectives are essential in developing new insights to organizational realm (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

Parallel to theories, the research field also indicates a high congruence in methodologies. A large part of the works has concentrated on researching CPA with cross-sectional qualitative data in order to offer prescriptive implications. Moreover, the dominant research design in the field includes inter-organizational level of analysis in a country-specific environment. According to Shaffer (1995) this monotony in research design is largely accounted for the limits in available data. Especially in the United States, large and easily accessible government records have induced the scholars to construct research methods based on statistical analysis. Simultaneously, in-depth case studies requiring access to firm-level data have been more rare, partly because the data is more difficult to attain due to secretive attitude of firms towards the issues of corporate political behavior. Despite these impediments, we argue that the field needs more research that utilizes longitudinal, firm-specific data. In this respect, historical studies based on company archives could be one possible solution to overcome the problems of data limitations. Moreover, studies focusing on processual and co-evolutionary approaches could extend the scholars' knowledge of dynamic aspects of CPA.

As to the fourth issue, international perspective has been generally seen ignored or at least undervalued in the research field. It has been noted that the lack of international perspectives is a result from “ethnocentric bias” (Meznar 2002, 330) developed by the fact that the research has primarily been conducted by North-American scholars with North American data (cf. Getz 1997; Schuler 2002). Our findings in this study support this assessment: the discussion of CPA has been to date almost non-existent in the European journals and all of the ten most published authors in the field are North Americans. Although there exist a research stream focused on the relationship between governments and multinational companies (Blumentritt & Nigh, 2002; Boddewyn, 1975, 1988; Lenway & Murtha, 1994; Mitchell et al., 1997; Rugman, 1998), we argue that the real challenge of the field in terms of international perspective is to compare the political behavior of different firms in different country environments. Moreover, we encourage European (and other non-American) scholars to be more active in the future. As the European scholars are generally perceived to have different methodological and theoretical perspectives in organization and management studies than North American scholars (Grunow, 1995; Koza & Thoenig, 1995; Pilkington & Liston-Heyes, 1999; Üsdiken et al., 1995), it is conceivable that an increase in European research would enrich the understanding of CPA by enhancing the intellectual diversity in the field.

In this paper, we limited our focus on one specific sub-area of the study of business and politics in management science, i.e. corporate political activity. Moreover, we intentionally concentrated only on the vanguard scientific discussion in the field, excluding all managerial-oriented contributions and articles in several other outlets. Due to these strict limitations, the empirical data used in this study was relatively small consisting of 43 articles. Although a critical reader might consider this as a potential weakness in terms of generalization, our sample covers the most influential discussion in the research area, and thus it can be considered to provide a representative picture of the whole field. There are, however, some statistical problems related to small sample size. For example, the frequency differences in several facets were minor, which means that some of the results are tentative at best.

Despite these limitations, we hope that our findings will spur additional theoretical and empirical works that will generate multivariate knowledge of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon. We believe that an increased diversity in the field has implications for both academia and practitioners. The former will attain new theoretical and empirical insights into the corporate political behavior, and the latter will benefit from the diversity because both business managers and policy makers need multiple lenses in the interpretation of complex and turbulent environments.

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Appendix

1. Facets Used in the Network Analysis

Theories

1. **interest group theory** (e.g. Dahl; Schattschneider)
2. **collective action theory** (e.g. Olson)
3. **public choice theory** (e.g. Buchanan)
4. **resource dependence** (e.g. Pfeffer, Salancik)
5. **game theory** (e.g. von Neumann, Morgenstern; Axelrod)
6. **exchange theory** (e.g. Homans; Ekeh)
7. **network theory** (e.g. Wellman; Wasserman, Faust)
8. **behavioral theory of the firm** (e.g. Cyert, March)
9. **historical institutionalists** (e.g. Skocpol)
10. **rational choice theorists** (e.g. Shepsle, Weingast)
11. **transaction cost** (e.g. Williamson)
12. **agency theory** (e.g. Alchian, Jensen)
13. **new institutional sociology** (e.g. Meyer, Rowan)
14. **bargaining power** (e.g. Vernon, Rubin)
15. **theory of economic regulation** (e.g. Stigler)
16. **evolutionary theory** (e.g. Nelson, Winter)
17. **contingency theory** (e.g. Galbraith, Hofer)
18. **resource based view** (e.g. Wernerfelt, Barney)
19. **industrial organization economics** (e.g. Porter)
20. **strategic choice** (e.g. Rumelt 1984??)
21. **competitive dynamics** (e.g. Schumpeter)
22. **organization ecology** (e.g. Hannan, Freeman)
23. **chaos theory** (e.g. Thietart, Anderson)
24. **class cohesion theory** (e.g. Westhues, Domhoff)
25. **cognitive theory** (e.g. Simon)
26. **grounded theory** (e.g. Glaser & Strauss)
27. **atheoretical**

Antecedents

1. **Firm-specific tangible resources** (focus on firm-specific resources, such as size and slack, explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
2. **Firm-specific intangible resources** (focus on intangible resources, such as contacts with politicians (access), credibility and managerial capabilities, explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
3. **Firm structure** (focus on firm structure, e.g. level of diversification/concentration, as an explanation for CPA)
4. **Industry structure** (focus on industry characteristics, e.g. size, high level of government regulation, high level of concentration, in determining the probability and nature of CPA)
5. **Group characteristic** (focus on problems of collective action (free riding) and its effects on the probability and nature of CPA)
6. **Cognition** (focus on managerial cognitive understanding and sensemaking of complex business-government relations)
7. **Government regulation** (focus on regulative power of government, such as generating imperfect market conditions, restrict free competition, creating uncertainty etc. in explaining the probability and nature of CPA)

8. **Macro-economic conjuncture** (focus on macro-economic factors, such as unemployment rate, balance of trade in explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
9. **Market conditions** (focus on market conditions, such as import competition and export market conditions in explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
10. **Institutional constraints** (focus on country-specific institutional conditions in explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
11. **Information** (focus on the supply of and demand for information in explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
12. **Historical trajectories** (focus on the organization's past political success or failure in determining the probability and nature of CPA)
13. **Resource accumulation** (focus on the possibility to accumulate and generate new firm-specific resources through CPA)
14. **Organizational resource deficiency** (focus on the organization's financial problems as an explanation for CPA)
15. **Industry decline** (focus on industry based resource deficiency as an explanation for CPA)
16. **Profitability** (focus on CPA as a means for increasing or maintaining firm efficiency and profitability)
17. **Rent seeking** (focus on CPA aimed to achieve abnormal profits)
18. **Social waste** (focus on the effects of corporations' disproportionate political power to functionality of a society)
19. **Business-government cooperation** (focus on cooperation between government and business in explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
20. **Conflict** (focus on competition of various interest groups for government benefits and conflictual aspects of business-government relations indicating the probability and nature of CPA)
21. **Issue characteristics** (focus on policy issue characteristics, such as life cycle, salience and frequency as an explanation for the probability and nature of CPA)
22. **Geographic expansion** (focus on internationalization or entry to new markets as a motivation and explanation for CPA)
23. **Effectiveness** (focus on effectiveness and success of CPA)
24. **Growth** (focus on the role of CPA in the corporate growth by e.g. penetrating new product market or seeking for enhanced market power)
25. **Legitimacy / ideology** (focus on issues related to promoting firm legitimacy and ideology in society in explaining the probability and nature of CPA)
26. **Trust** (focus on CPA as a tool to create trust in business-government relations)

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

- 27. **Coordination** (focus on issues related to formulation, implementation, and coordination of CPA inside the organization)
- 28. **Integrated strategy** (focus on the interconnection between corporate competitive and political strategy)
- 29. **Bargaining power** (focus on CPA as a means to gain political leverage over government)
- 30. **Dependency** (focus on the interdependence of business and government)
- 31. **Agency** (focus on CPA as a means to create and control agents in government)
- 32. **Expected benefits** (focus on expected benefits explaining the probability and nature of CPA)

Focus

- 1. **who** (aims to reveal the typical characteristics of firms that engage in CPA)
- 2. **how** (aims to reveal the typical tactics and approaches employed in CPA and their effectiveness)
- 3. **why** (aims to reveal the rationale of CPA, i.e. why firms engage in CPA)
- 4. **when** (aims to reveal the temporal variations of CPA)
- 5. **where** (aims to reveal the context in which CPA takes place)

Activity measured

- 1. **petitions to government**
- 2. **executive lobbying**
- 3. **testifying in governmental legislation process**
- 4. **organizational structure**
- 5. **election funding**
- 6. **advocacy advertising**
- 7. **constituency building**

- 8. **coalition building**
- 9. **litigation**
- 10. **public exposure** (pressure campaign)
- 11. **civil disobedience**
- 12. **bribery**
- 13. **not specified** (CPA examined as a general phenomenon including all possible actions and tactics related to CPA without specifying any of them)

Research design

- 1. **empirical**
- 2. **theoretical**
- 3. **review**
- 4. **qualitative**
- 5. **quantitative**
- 6. **static**
- 7. **dynamic**
- 8. **descriptive**
- 9. **prescriptive**
- 10. **case study**
- 11. **illustrative case**
- 12. **comparative**

Level of analysis

- 1. **managerial**
- 2. **intra-organisational**
- 3. **inter-organisational**
- 4. **intra-industry**
- 5. **inter-industry**

Context

- 1. **national**
- 2. **international**
- 3. **local**