Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Miranda Wilson April 9, 2025

Citizen Participation and NGO Strategy: A Survey Experiment-Based Approach to Understanding Chinese NGO Volunteer Engagement

by

Miranda Wilson

Dr. Eric Reinhardt
Adviser

Political Science

Dr. Eric Reinhardt
Adviser

Dr. Renard Sexton
Committee Member

Dr. Sarah Mellors Rodriguez
Committee Member

2025

Citizen Participation and NGO Strategy: A Survey Experiment-Based Approach to Understanding Chinese NGO Volunteer Engagement

by

Miranda Wilson

Dr. Eric Reinhardt
Adviser

An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Political Science

2025

Abstract

Citizen Participation and NGO Strategy: A Survey Experiment-Based Approach to Understanding Chinese NGO Volunteer Engagement
By Miranda Wilson

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in many societies by providing resources, addressing community needs, and raising public awareness about important issues. It is especially interesting to consider the role of civil society in authoritarian regimes like China, where political advocacy is often repressed. Volunteers are an instrumental part of ensuring that NGOs function effectively, and NGOs should consider how they can best recruit volunteers. This study investigates how NGO strategy plays a role in potential volunteer engagement in China. Previous research has focused on the growing presence of civil society in China but less on the variable of NGO strategy and how that might impact volunteers' willingness to engage. My study aims to fill this gap, offering empirical results intended to shape how NGOs in authoritarian contexts should frame their strategy to recruit volunteers.

I planned to conduct a survey experiment in China to test how potential volunteers respond to three different NGO strategies – welfare, research, and advocacy. Survey respondents would have been shown one of four possible vignettes (three treatment and one control), assigned randomly, that described an NGO focused on shrinking the gender education gap in rural China. They would then have been asked to indicate their likelihood to engage with the NGO in different but increasingly committed ways, from simple interest to volunteering weekly. Drawing from political process theory and resource dependency theory, I hypothesized that the welfare NGO treatment would have the highest level of engagement, and the advocacy NGO treatment would have the lowest level of engagement, with the research NGO falling somewhere in the middle. If the data had been in favor of my hypotheses, there would be empirical evidence that NGO strategy might play a role in volunteer engagement in China, and NGOs should consider this when framing their organization to potential volunteers. If the data had not been in favor of my hypotheses, strategy might not play as large of a role in volunteer engagement as I originally assumed, and other variables should be explored to determine how volunteers choose organizations to engage with in China.

Citizen Participation and NGO Strategy: A Survey Experiment-Based Approach to Understanding Chinese NGO Volunteer Engagement

by

Miranda Wilson

Dr. Eric Reinhardt
Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Political Science

2025

Acknowledgments

I first want to thank my exceptionally supportive and knowledgeable committee. I am grateful for the guidance of my advisor, Dr. Eric Reinhardt, who was my first introduction to this field at Emory. I took his Introduction to International Politics class during my first semester and knew it was what I wanted to pursue. From struggling for weeks over the wording of my research question to learning about PIPL, he helped me develop the best possible version of this project, and I am thankful for his help during our many meetings. I also could not have done this research without the help of Dr. Sarah Mellors Rodriguez and Dr. Renard Sexton, both of whom I was lucky enough to interview for the U.S.-China Perception Monitor. I admire both of their research and feel lucky to have received their advice during this process. Dr. Rodriguez's knowledge of contemporary gender issues in China and Dr. Sexton's knowledge surrounding surveys in China and Taiwan were extraordinarily valuable. I also want to give special thanks to Dr. David Davis. He was instrumental in helping me brainstorm the idea for the survey and providing feedback on my many first drafts. Dr. Davis taught me how to think like a political scientist during my sophomore year, and I am lucky to have taken my honors thesis seminar with him.

I owe a huge thank you to my China Focus Team at The Carter Center. Working with Dr. Yawei Liu, Michael Cerny, Juan Zhang, and Nick Zeller has been the best part of my college experience. I feel extraordinarily grateful to be a part of an organization that shares my values of promoting a cooperative U.S.-China relationship and reducing misunderstandings between our two countries. An extra special thanks to Juan and Chris Mao for their translation help.

Thank you to everyone at Beijing Foreign Studies University, especially Dr. Xie Tao. Without my summer experience in Beijing, I never would have discovered the Changier Foundation, which inspired this entire project.

I have many friends to thank. Jolie, 谢谢我的朋友, our weekly calls are such a highlight, and I will forever recognize and promote the value of people-to-people connections. Yingyi, who is my biggest role model, and makes the best 番茄炒鸡蛋 I have ever had. Emilyn, for being my best friend and listening to all my rants. Merrick, for his constant support, encouragement, and love.

Thank you to my family. To my Mom and Larry for modeling a strong work ethic. To my Dad and Casey for educating and inspiring me through travel. To Ellory, my little sister: always remember, even failures make memories.

Finally, thank you to the Emory Political Science Department for offering to provide generous funding for this project.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Study Overview

Why might Chinese citizens choose to volunteer with some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and not others? Modern Chinese civil society emerged and developed in the 1980s during the reform and opening-up period (Wang 2001). Since then, NGOs have taken on a variety of roles within Chinese society, from addressing the climate crisis to public health education. However, the political context of China and authoritarian societies raises important questions about the nature of these NGOs and the individuals who participate in them. This paper considers NGO strategy as a driving force behind why a potential volunteer might or might not choose to engage. It considers three main NGO strategies: welfare (goods or service delivery), advocacy (government lobbying), and research. Why might a Chinese citizen be willing to collect data about water pollution in their town on behalf of an NGO but not participate in an online awareness campaign? These are the sorts of questions this paper aims to address. The answers have important implications for how civil society in authoritarian contexts can recruit and maintain volunteer activity.

I hypothesize that welfare-based NGOs are likely to be most popular among potential volunteers and advocacy-based NGOs are likely to be least popular, with research-based NGOs falling in the middle. Drawing on literature from rational choice theory, political process theory, and resource-dependency theory, I presume welfare-based NGOs are likely to be perceived as the least politically risky and most well-resourced, and advocacy-based NGOs are likely to be perceived as the opposite. To test these hypotheses, I will run a survey experiment that asks participants how likely they

would be to engage in increasingly significant ways with an NGO. Survey participants will be randomly assigned one of four options: a control (no specified strategy), an advocacy-based NGO, a welfare-based NGO, or a research-based NGO. All four options will focus on the same issue: the gender education gap in rural China.

Why NGOs?

NGOs are important because they positively contribute to societies, undertake community and international development, exercise political influence, and fill gaps that governments neglect or cannot reach (Werker and Ahmed 2008). It is precisely because they are acting in ways that governments cannot that we should care about them. They can be considered "global players" that exercise influence and shape international goals (Arts 2000). There are an astounding number of NGOs across the world; the World Association of NGOs is a directory that contains over 54,000 organizations in more than 190 countries (WANGO 2025).

NGOs and governments interact in interesting ways, and NGOs are often vital in shaping political outcomes. In one study, Amanda Murdie and Alexander Hicks explore how international NGOs boost government services. They explain that while it may intuitively seem that international NGOs would *limit* government spending because they are taking on some of the burden of providing resources, they find the opposite to be true, specifically in the case of health spending (Murdie and Hicks 2013). This happens in three ways. First, NGOs indirectly impact the policy-making climate (Murdie and Hicks 2013). Second, international NGOs help support domestic NGOs and activists (Murdie and Hicks 2013). Third, international NGOs directly pressure the government (Murdie and Hicks 2013). Murdie and Hicks describe complex and interesting ways that NGOs

interact with individuals, other organizations, and the government. Studying these interactions is important to understanding how NGOs can best function, especially in contexts where the relationship between civil society and the government is strained.

It is hard to underestimate the impact of NGOs. Some of the most influential international NGOs include Oxfam International, Doctors Without Borders, and the International Rescue Committee. Oxfam International is an anti-poverty organization that helped over 14 million people during the COVID-19 pandemic and worked with 1.7 million people on gender justice, according to their 2020-2021 report (Oxfam 2022). In 2023, Doctors Without Borders performed over 16 million medical consultations and gave over 3.2 million vaccinations across the world (MSF 2023). The International Rescue Committee served 31.5 million clients in countries affected by conflict in 2021 (IRC 2022). While the numbers reported by these international NGOs are astounding, local NGOs also play a key role in community development. Local NGOs understand the nuances and communities they serve on a deeper level and can adapt to the contexts in which they operate.

Why China?

NGOs in China are worth exploring because they reveal interesting tensions between civil society, authoritarian regimes, and the public. If an NGO can function efficiently and *independently* in an authoritarian regime, then it is surmounting large challenges, and its methods should be studied and replicated. As noted above, civil society in China is relatively new. NGOs have exploded in the country since the 1980s, but they operate under strict conditions due to the nature of the country's authoritarian regime. One study finds that under Xi Jinping, repression against civil society has

become a “law-based systematic crackdown,” especially for advocacy NGOs with “pro-liberal inclinations” and “mass mobilization capacities” (Zhu and Lu 2021). Nevertheless, NGOs are operating in China and doing impactful work. In the literature review, this paper discusses many different organizations in China focused on issues such as women’s rights, environmental sustainability, and rural development. It is important to understand how these organizations function in an authoritarian regime and how they can engage volunteers amid increased repression. Why are some Chinese citizens willing to risk their political standing in order to contribute to society? Are they more willing to join certain NGOs than others?

One example of an NGO making a large impact in China is Friends of Nature (FON). Wang and Lo present a case study of FON which uses legal advocacy to promote energy justice and the transition to renewable energy in China. According to Wang and Lo, “FON has waged a series of legal battles on Chinese energy companies that have significant implications for energy transition” (Wang and Lo 2022). Despite China’s authoritarian regime, a civil society organization is making a massive impact in the energy field. Wang and Lo note, in line with the political process theory outlined in the theory section, that part of FON’s success is due to the structural setups of China’s legal system, namely the environmental public interest litigation (Wang and Lo 2022). The Chinese government has also been prioritizing environmental efforts, and thus become more open to help from NGOs. The FON example proves that in politically opportune contexts, NGOs in China can work to achieve important goals and function with few restraints. Understanding the reasons why organizations like FON are efficient, and why

lawyers, or volunteers, are willing to get involved, provides important policy advice for future NGOs in China.

Theoretically, the scope of the argument goes beyond China to apply to other authoritarian settings. NGOs across the globe consider how to frame their strategies and their volunteers are concerned with avoiding backlash from the government. I would expect the theory to apply in countries such as Egypt, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Russia. I would expect volunteers in these settings to weigh the costs and benefits of the organization's political riskiness and its ability to achieve its goals and the results to be the same: welfare NGOs have the easiest time recruiting volunteers and advocacy NGOs have the hardest time. The issue of a rural gender education gap could be used to run the survey in other authoritarian nations. The results might differ some; for example, in Afghanistan, engagement might be lower across all treatment groups, but the overarching hypotheses would be the same. Overall, I would expect the other authoritarian contexts to have similar results.

Why Volunteers?

NGOs could not exist without volunteers. Social movements require participants who are willing to sacrifice time and sometimes safety to make a difference. One of the theories this paper draws on is political process theory, which has often been discussed in the context of the American Civil Rights Movement. Without brave volunteers, the Civil Rights Movement would not have been a success. While money and resources are important to the functioning of organizations, it is the people who allow them to function. This paper recognizes the instrumental role volunteers play in civil society and aims to understand how and why they get involved. If there is a better understanding of why

volunteers choose to engage with certain NGOs and not others, or how more people can be convinced to join an effort, then civil society organizations can continue to grow and thrive.

One paper considers the impact of volunteers in a large NGO in Indonesia. The authors found that volunteers play an important role in communicating with NGO beneficiaries (Dewi et al. 2019). Volunteers facilitate effective communication and hold the NGO accountable for providing services (Dewi et al. 2019). The authors also found that volunteers help narrow the gap between donors and beneficiaries, enhancing the NGO's work (Dewi et al. 2019). Volunteers are key to ensuring that NGOs are held accountable to the people they serve and facilitating an organization's on-the-ground efforts.

China has seen a huge increase in volunteering over the past three decades, coinciding with the increase in civil society. In 2021, the total number of volunteers in China reached 217 million, 15.4% of the total population (Hu et al. 2023). Scholars have attributed this increase to the rise of individualism, the growing non-profit sector, and the government itself promoting volunteering (Hu et al. 2023). Fifteen percent is not an insignificant portion of China's population, and the motivations and interests of these volunteers should be understood. Additionally, as volunteering becomes more popular in the country and is promoted by the government, NGOs should be made aware of best practices to engage and recruit volunteers.

Contributions

This study ultimately aims to act as a policy recommendation for NGOs in China by suggesting that pursuing certain strategies might be more effective at recruiting

volunteers than others. My research aims to illuminate how NGOs can best position themselves to have the greatest possible impact in an authoritarian setting, arguing that volunteers are essential to an organization's ability to grow and thrive. Governments cannot accomplish everything. They are bound to make mistakes and leave gaps in important social services. NGOs can help fill these gaps, and they need manpower to do so. Ideally, this study serves as a loose instruction manual on how to craft an NGO in China that is politically acceptable, efficient, and attracts volunteers.

The literature review discusses in-depth contributions to the literature specifically, which I will summarize here. First, most literature on this topic focuses broadly on how NGOs operate rather than how they recruit volunteers; my paper narrows the focus. Second, my paper takes an original approach by focusing on three NGO strategies: welfare, research, and advocacy. Third, the majority of research on NGOs in China pertains to environmental NGOs. While these organizations are important, there are other organizations operating simultaneously, and other social issues should be investigated to gain a larger perspective on civil society in China.

Ultimately, the broader goal of such a research question is to reduce misunderstanding about China and other authoritarian regimes: civil society exists outside of democracies, and it is just as worth investigating and celebrating.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The question this paper aims to address is: How does the strategy of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in China impact potential volunteer engagement? The literature review contains four sections to address the relevant research on this topic.

First, I will define NGOs and address the typology of NGO strategies it aims to utilize. Second, I will discuss how NGOs recruit volunteers and why potential volunteers might or might not join an organization. Third, I will cover three main schools of thought to consider the relationship between NGO strategy and potential volunteer engagement. These schools of thought include political process theory, resource dependency theory, and world society perspective. Fourth, I will briefly describe the contributions this paper aims to make based on the review of the literature.

2.2 Defining NGOs and Their Strategies

While non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can be hard to define, they should have six basic elements: formal nature, non-governmental, self-governing, voluntarism, and accountability (Kuruvila 2015). Overall, NGOs can be defined as "formal, self-governing, voluntary organisations involved in helping individuals and communities to achieve their social, economic and cultural goals. They are institutionally separate from government and commercial organisations and do not distribute profits, but are accountable to their stakeholders" (Kuruvila 2015). This definition is also applicable to Chinese NGOs (Wang 2001).

In China, there are two kinds of organizations that fit this framework: social organizations and non-profit organizations (Wang 2001). Social organizations are "voluntarily formed by citizens, developing activities according to their charter to realize common will of their members" (Wang 2001). Private non-profit organizations undertake "non-profit social services" like private schools, hospitals, and community service centers (Wang 2001). The main legal difference between the two is that private NGOs have no member system (Wang 2001). For the purposes of this paper, the distinction between the

two legal categories is not important, and this paper will consider both types. In total, there are roughly 500,000 registered NGOs in China (Hasmath 2016).

NGOs across the world and in China adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their goals. A typology for the different strategies NGOs might adopt is provided by Anna C. Vakil, who discusses six different "orientations" of NGOs:

1. Welfare: NGOs that "deliver services to specific groups based on their charity model" (Vakil 1997).
2. Development: NGOs that focus on providing basic needs for a community (Vakil 1997).
3. Advocacy: NGOs with an intention of "influencing policy or decision-making related to particular issues and building social support" with like-minded organizations and the broader population (Vakil 1997).
4. Development Education: NGOs focused on educating citizens in industrialized countries about development issues (Vakil 1997).
5. Networking: NGOs that provide assistance to lower-level NGOs and individuals (Vakil 1997).
6. Research: NGOs that utilize "participatory research as a legitimate means of acquiring knowledge along with the pressing need for interventions based on sound information" (Vakil 1997).

This paper will focus on three of the six strategies ("orientations"): welfare, advocacy, and research. I argue the "development" orientation is a subset of the "welfare" orientation and will define a "welfare" organization as an NGO that delivers goods or services to a specific community. The orientation of "development education" is

less relevant to the question this paper aims to address because I am largely concerned with NGOs focused on domestic issues in China, rather than international NGOs. "Networking," similarly, is a strategy that is not as relevant to the theme of this paper because I aim to study NGOs focused on specific social issues rather than NGOs that are managing other NGOs.

Within these broad categories, there are subsets of more specific strategies. Many studies of Chinese NGOs have taken a narrower lens when creating a typology, listing strategies among a specific type of NGO. For instance, a paper on environmental NGOs in China lays out different policy advocacy channels that NGOs use to communicate with the government, such as policy networks, state alliances, or government consultation (Liu 2020). Another study looks at NGO strategies in China based on the resources they require, grouping them into three main categories: volunteer-dependency, state-dependency, and donor-dependency (Hsu et al. 2017). This paper requires a broader approach to NGO strategy in order to test which strategies citizens in China are most willing to engage with.

Using the China Development Brief's NGO Directory, examples can be found of Chinese NGOs that adopt strategies of welfare, advocacy, and research. First, an example of a welfare-based NGO in China is the Able Development Institute, which provides services to employers that support the hiring of disabled individuals. Gender and Development in China is another welfare-based NGO that provides tutoring, computers, and school supplies for youth in Qinghai. Second, an example of an advocacy-based NGO in China is the Beijing LGBT Center, which closed in 2023 (Wu 2023). The Beijing LGBT Center aimed to "improve the living conditions for the sexually diverse

community" and published lists of LGBT-friendly health professionals to strengthen social support (Wu 2023). Another advocacy group is Justice for All, which promotes the social equality of women, disabled individuals, and those with AIDS in China. Their projects have included an anti-discrimination newsletter, gender equality demonstrations, and meetings to discuss anti-discrimination laws. They also produce reports for government use in policy formation. Third, most research-based NGOs in China are focused on environmental issues. One example is Green Zhejiang, an environmental NGO that mobilizes citizens to collect data on water pollution to hold local governments accountable (Gao and Teets 2021). Other environmental NGOs pursue research with an end goal of innovation rather than government accountability. For instance, the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences has over 300 researchers focused on developing green technologies (CDB 2025).

2.3 Why do Volunteers Engage with Certain NGOs?

An important question to examine next is what factors citizens consider when deciding whether to volunteer with NGOs. A prevailing theory in response to this question is rational choice theory. Rational choice theory predicts that "individuals weigh the benefits and costs of volunteer activity in their decision to volunteer" (Lee and Brudney 2009). For example, a literature review by David Smith on this topic concluded that volunteer activity cannot be maintained solely through altruism because volunteers are not generally altruistic (Smith 1994). Smith found that while most research in this area pertained to consideration of volunteers' values, personality, and social contexts, not enough attention was paid to how volunteers weigh the pros and cons of volunteering (Smith 1994), a consideration much closer to rational choice theory. When thinking about

why citizens might join an NGO, rational choice theory would include how potential volunteers can maximize their utilities, the benefits to a volunteer's community versus the cost of volunteering on the individual (or other personal losses), and what the individual is sacrificing to volunteer (time or money, for example) (Lee and Brudney 2009).

Other studies have looked at more specific factors that play a role in a potential volunteer's willingness to engage. One study surveyed members of the Appalachian Trail Conference, an NGO in the United States dedicated to conserving the Appalachian Trail, to determine what influenced volunteers to join. They found the two most important factors of whether an individual volunteered or not to be whether the individual had competing commitments and whether they believed their efforts would be effective at achieving the NGO's goals (Martinez and McMullin 2004).

In China specifically, factors influencing Chinese citizens' interest in volunteering may include common grievances about social problems, whether the political context is appropriate for social movements, whether an NGO aligns with an individual's cultural or personal values, or how legitimate the individual determines the NGO to be (Ru and Ortolano 2009). For both the Appalachian Trail study and the China-based studies, it is possible to see how these factors fit into rational choice theory. The participants of the Appalachian Trail study weighed sacrificing prior commitments against how likely their volunteering would be to make a difference. Chinese citizens, due to the authoritarian context, have different political risks to consider. For instance, will volunteering for certain groups risk their safety in the existing political context?

Along with rational choice, another broad theory that can be used to think about this question is framing techniques. How NGOs frame their work or the issue they support might influence how likely citizens are to engage. Framing is "the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue" (Chong and Druckman 2007). A paper by McEntire et al. tests if people are more willing to participate in a campaign against sleep deprivation based on the frame they are given (McEntire et al. 2015). They write, "different frames tap into different elements that may be critical to one's decision to participate politically, such as lowered costs of participating, greater feelings of empathy, or an increased sense of efficacy and agency" (McEntire et al. 2015). They find that personal narratives are the most effective frame to convince people to care about and take action on the issue (McEntire et al. 2015). Another study found that individuals who believe their vote is more likely to make a difference are more willing to sacrifice their time to vote (Duffy and Tavits 2008). This represents another kind of "framing," how likely people believe their actions are to have desirable effects. Strategies can also be thought of as "frames": they impact how people view the issue the NGO represents and how effective the NGO might be at achieving its goals.

2.4 How Do Potential Volunteers Weigh NGO Strategy?

There are three main schools of thought relevant to addressing how potential volunteers might weigh NGO strategy in their decision to engage: political process theory, resource dependency theory, and world society perspective.

2.4a Political Process Theory

Political process or political opportunity theory broadly argues that organizations aim to capitalize on opportunities arising from political changes (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). More specifically, organizations take advantage of the following situations: "increasing openness of the political process, unstable alignments and conflicts among political elites, and the government's decreased capacity and propensity for political repression" (Zhan and Tang 2013). One such example occurred in China during the 1980s and 1990s when civil society organizations exploded due to an increase in political openness (Zhan and Tang 2013). NGO leaders took advantage of the improved political openness, but simultaneously, individuals also felt more empowered to engage in civil society organizations because they perceived less of a political risk.

One of the foundational scholars of this theory is Doug McAdam, who defines political opportunities as "changes in either the institutional features, informal political alignments, or repressive capacity of a given political system that significantly reduce the power disparity between a given challenging group and the state" (McAdam 1996). Much of McAdam's research focuses on the American Civil Rights Movement, exemplifying the ways in which African American activists in the South took advantage of media coverage of atrocities against Black people to shape public opinion and pressure the government (McAdam 1996). When the nation was enraged at the newest act of violence against Black people, activists were able to effectively pressure the government to pass policies that improved civil rights to assuage public opinion (McAdam 1996). Taking advantage of politically advantageous moments is a core tenet of political opportunity theory. In the example of the Civil Rights Movement, potential volunteers weighed their

likelihood of making an impact with this type of media-based strategy and found it to be viable based on the political context.

Another researcher on this topic, Aldon Morris, discusses how American civil rights activists utilized political momentum from bus boycotts to achieve social change. The bus boycotts were notoriously nonviolent on the part of the protesters, but many Black activists were brutally attacked by white mobs for violating Jim Crow-era bus laws (Morris 2021). Once again, potential volunteers utilized rational choice: they weighed their likelihood of success against the risk of being arrested. Due to the political context, they decided the success of such a strategy was worth the risk. The civil rights struggle in the United States was broadcast around the world, "making a mockery of the nation's claim to representing the pinnacle of democracy" (Morris 2021). This was especially problematic for the American government during the context of the Cold War, when defeating communism with democracy was the number one priority. Civil rights activists knew it was an important moment to capitalize on, and they trained in preparation to be arrested, attacked, and face harassment to gain news coverage and spur social change (Morris 2021). Importantly, volunteers were willing to join their movement because they understood their actions could enact real change within the political context.

The above application of political process theory is very different from how it has played out in China. Protest is a key part of a democratic system, but the same sorts of strategies are rarely effective in authoritarian societies. In 2019, the Chinese government cracked down on Hong Kong pro-democracy protests with police violence, and the brutalities made international news (Inocencio 2024). However, rather than such international disapproval spurring social change, Hong Kong has become even more

politically repressed following the crackdown. In 2020, the government passed a law aimed at Hong Kong criminalizing activities that could be viewed as "succession, subversion, treason and collusion with foreign forces" (Inocencio 2024). Therefore, political process theory plays out differently in authoritarian contexts: it is less about preying on the government's weaknesses and more about taking advantage of issues they have decided are less threatening or less risky.

A relevant aspect of political opportunity for NGO volunteers in China and other authoritarian contexts is the measure of regime repressiveness. One study argues that NGOs in China have increased in recent years due to the central government's desire for social stability, which has created "a more favorable context" for NGOs to "play a more active role" (Zhan and Tang 2013). Potential volunteers who are aware of this context might feel more comfortable engaging with NGOs they previously saw as riskier. Additionally, this study argues that the decentralization of political authorities has resulted in administrative divisions that leave "opportunities for NGOs to participate in policy-making and implementation" (Zhan and Tang 2013). A gap in administrative resources might also create an important political role for NGOs (Zhan and Tang 2013), especially those that adopt a service delivery strategy. Potential volunteers might feel this gap leaves room for them to make a difference and avoid political consequences.

Another study looks specifically at environmental NGOs (eNGOs) in China, claiming two factors have determined the effectiveness of eNGOs. First, the "greening" of the central state and its turn towards prioritizing environmental sustainability, and second, the "alternating politics of tolerance and strict control of civil organizations" (Ho 2001). Citizens of China might consider certain NGOs to be more attractive if they

pursue a strategy that accounts for the priorities of the national government and the likelihood of repression. These factors represent a politically opportune environment for potential volunteers.

2.4b Resource Dependency Theory

The second relevant school of thought is resource dependency theory. Resource dependency theory argues that "the types and levels of resources available to and exploited by movements are important influences on movement emergence, growth, form, and impact" (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996). Resources might include funding, political networks, volunteers, information, or recognition. Examples of this include Civil rights activists' access to associations like Black churches, colleges, and chapters of the NAACP or environmental NGOs' access to educated professionals (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996). Other NGOs might benefit from high levels of donations, whether in the form of monetary assistance, goods, or services. Potential volunteers might be more likely to engage with an NGO if they perceive it as well-resourced or well-connected.

Several researchers have considered resource dependency theory in the China context. One study on eNGOs considers the importance of political resources in China, such as NGO leaders' connections to political officials as well as other personal connections (Liu 2020). Another study considers three different kinds of resource dependency for NGOs in China: volunteer-dependency, donor-dependency, and state-dependency (Hsu et al. 2017). The authors found that NGOs' strategies were tied to the resources that were available to them (Hsu et al. 2017). In Beijing and Shanghai, for example, NGOs had access to more generous donors and thus participated in environmental lawsuits and educational campaigns (Hsu et al. 2017). This is strategic

because potential volunteers are likely to be more interested in an NGO that they perceive as well-resourced and, thus, more likely to make a tangible difference. Additionally, resource dependency theory works hand-in-hand with political opportunity theory. In China, NGOs that are more politically advantageous are more likely to have secured more resources, both politically and financially (Zhan and Tang 2013). Therefore, volunteers might see the number of resources an NGO has as a direct indication of its political riskiness.

2.4c World Society Perspective

The third school of thought is referred to as the world society perspective. This theory draws from scholars like Mark Suchman, who argue organizations are successful when society deems them "legitimate" (Suchman 1995). He defines legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman 1995). Researchers in China have argued that the more NGOs are "viewed as commonplace elements in the Chinese sociopolitical arena, the more legitimate they become in the eyes of both the government and the citizenry" (Ru and Ortolano 2009). They argue that in the context of eNGOs, terms like "nature" and "environment" are socially constructed, and as public opinion around these terms becomes changed by cultural values, environmentalism becomes a greater priority, and NGOs will be more successful at achieving their goals (Ru and Ortolano 2009). Therefore, potential volunteers might be more motivated to engage with an NGO that aligns with their personal and cultural values. They might also feel that a certain strategy

better aligns with their values. For instance, service delivery could be more appealing than research for an individual who finds value in directly helping others.

2.5 Gaps and Contributions

While the three schools of thought outlined above provide a good starting point for exploring the relationship between NGO strategy and citizen engagement in China, none address my research question specifically. This paper aims to contribute insight into three gaps in the current literature. First, most research around this topic has pertained to *how* NGOs function in an authoritarian context and what makes them most likely to exist, rather than asking why citizens join or not. Because scholarship surrounding Chinese NGOs is relatively new, this paper looks a step further than the simple existence of civil society in China, instead taking its existence for granted, and then asking which NGOs are most likely to be attractive to potential volunteers. Second, no research studies look specifically at the three strategies I outline in the first section of the literature review. This paper will take a much broader approach to NGO strategy typology, focusing on large categories like welfare, research, and advocacy instead of narrowly considering subsets of one strategy. Third, the majority of research on Chinese NGOs and their efficacy pertains to environmental NGOs. While this is understandable due to their political advantages, this paper aims to consider NGOs that focus on other social issues and test whether the same theories apply. As civil society continues to grow in China, social movements other than environmentalism will play a bigger role in NGO activities, and this paper aims to understand why citizens join (or do not join) their efforts.

3. Theory

This paper combines rational choice theory, political process theory, and resource dependency theory to explain how the strategy of an NGO plays a role in potential volunteer engagement. There are three main actors relevant to the explanation: the NGO, potential volunteers, and the Chinese government. The NGO decides which strategy to pursue: welfare, advocacy, or research. Many factors go into why an NGO chooses the strategy it does, but this paper is more interested in how the strategy influences whether volunteers engage with an established organization. Potential volunteers must decide whether or not to join the NGO based on that strategy, and I argue that a large part of their decision will be based on the political context set by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The overarching theory that explains citizens' level of interest in an NGO is rational choice theory: I propose potential volunteers will consider the pros and cons of engaging with the organization, and if the pros outweigh the cons, they will engage. The extent to which the pros outweigh the cons will determine the *level* of engagement. Engagement is an umbrella term that covers the many ways Chinese citizens could participate in an NGO. Engagement could be as simple as voicing support for the issue the NGO focuses on or as complex as donating money or volunteering weekly. To determine the possible harms or benefits of engaging with an NGO, I presume they will consider the factors laid out in political process theory and resource dependency theory. For instance, the likelihood of government backlash or the resources of an NGO. Ultimately, potential volunteers want to avoid unnecessary risks and sacrifice their time only if they can make a difference.

3.1 Welfare-Based Strategy

I will first consider NGOs with a welfare-based strategy. I define this strategy as one where the NGO delivers goods or services to a community in need. The political context for this type of strategy, based on the issue, is relatively positive. The CCP has "encouraged government authorities at various levels to be more supportive of NGOs as a vehicle for helping disadvantaged groups and for reducing social conflicts" (Zhan and Tang 2013). NGOs that frame their deliveries in the context of assisting disadvantaged groups are, therefore, more likely to avoid government suspicion. Furthermore, delivering aid in the form of goods or services is easily neutral or non-political. It can be framed as beneficial for the community rather than trying to make any kind of political statement or pressure the government to take a certain action. Additionally, welfare-based NGOs must be well-resourced, either with teachers to provide education-based services, goods to hand out to disadvantaged communities (such as food packages or medical supplies), or money to fund projects. Potential volunteers, therefore, might be drawn to welfare-based NGOs due to their political neutrality and resources. They might even surmise that NGOs with more resources operating on a wider scale are more likely to have government approval. From these ideas, I draw the following hypotheses:

H1: Potential volunteers are more likely to engage if the NGO uses a welfare-based strategy than if the NGO uses an advocacy-based strategy.

H2: Potential volunteers are more likely to engage if the NGO uses a welfare-based strategy than if the NGO uses a research-based strategy.

3.2 Advocacy-Based Strategy

The second strategy I consider is an advocacy-based strategy. Such strategies have historically and recently been very politically contentious. For example, the Beijing

LGBT Center was closed by the government after years of political pressure against its advocacy efforts (Wu 2023). In 2021, WeChat similarly shut down accounts run by nonprofit groups that focused on LGBTQ+ advocacy (Wu 2023). Potential volunteers might view advocacy-based groups as politically sensitive due to their attempts to pressure the government and may not want to risk involvement in case of political consequences. Advocacy-based NGOs that lobby the government are inherently creating tension by implying something about the CCP needs to change. Furthermore, advocacy-based groups are likely to have fewer resources. Their strategies often revolve around online campaigns or in-person meetings, meaning physical resources are not as abundant. Large online campaigns do not have to rely on lots of volunteers as a resource either; just one person can be responsible for a viral post. For these reasons, I assume advocacy-based NGOs will garner the least engagement.

3.3 Research-Based Strategy

The third strategy I consider is a research-based strategy. This strategy can go in two directions. First, it might involve collecting data to create a report that is used to hold the government accountable for certain promises or pressure the government to adopt a certain policy. Second, it might involve research with the goal of innovation. This paper will mainly focus on the first research-based strategy, as it is far more common.

While a research-based strategy could still be considered politically contentious, there are two reasons it is less politically contentious than advocacy-based. First, most research-based NGOs are focused on environmental issues, which the CCP has shown support for and has begun prioritizing in recent years. Therefore, research efforts might align with the government's goals and even be done in alignment with the government.

Framed this way, the political risk is lower. Second, potential volunteers might view research as a more objective form of lobbying the government. Rather than criticizing the government's actions or behaviors, they are simply reporting facts about the country for the government to consider. Furthermore, research-based NGOs require abundant resources to operate effectively. They need volunteers to do the research, supplies to gather data, and funds to support their efforts. For these reasons, I draw the following hypothesis:

H3: Potential volunteers are more likely to engage if the NGO uses a research-based strategy than if the NGO uses an advocacy-based strategy.

4. Research Design

I plan to conduct a survey experiment in China to assess the validity of the hypothesis. The survey adopts a "back translation" strategy (including the consent form) between English and Simplified Chinese. The Simplified Chinese version will be distributed to survey participants in China. The number of participants who complete the survey will be 1,500. To achieve this, I will use the company Weidiaocha to recruit subjects to take the survey I designed and will administer on Qualtrics.

4.1 Survey Platform

Weidiaocha is a professional data collection software company based in Beijing that serves both businesses and academic clientele. The survey will be administered to Weidiaocha's registered respondents, and the respondents will be compensated at the rate of approximately $1.

4.2 Survey Overview

The survey experiment is intended to take less than 15 minutes to complete. In the treatment part of the survey, participants are asked about a fictional NGO. There are four

different possible NGOs a participant can receive (welfare-based, advocacy-based, research-based, or a control), assigned randomly. I decided to invent fictional NGOs to avoid any preconceived notions about existing NGOs and isolate the independent variable of NGO strategy. While the NGO is fictional, I based the vignettes on real NGOs in China. In order for survey respondents to be effectively persuaded by certain framing, the vignettes need to be viewed as credible sources (Druckman 2001). Anonymity can help achieve this by avoiding preconceived notions brought on by respondents' associations with other NGOs. McEntire et al., whose study was discussed in the literature review, similarly used a fictional human rights organization to maintain credibility and isolate the independent variable (McEntire et al. 2015). While not applicable to my survey experiment, even color can inadvertently influence respondents' emotions and reactions (Valdez and Mehrabian 1994), so it is important to eliminate any element that might confound the independent variable. The dependent variable, potential volunteers' willingness to engage, will be measured by respondents' answers to questions about how likely they are to support, volunteer, or donate to each NGO. The four NGOs pursue the same topic to avoid the issue area acting as a confounding variable.

The issue the fictional NGOs focus on is women's rights, which has become increasingly popular in public Chinese discourse and civil society (Lindberg 2021). A 2024 survey found that public opinion in China is shifting to expect women to become more responsible for paid jobs (Wang, et al. 2024). This issue, however, walks a fine line, as the official direction from the CCP and Xi Jinping himself has implied women should be focused on the home, likely in response to the shrinking birthrate (Stevenson 2023). For the first time in two decades, there are no women in the Politburo, the CCP's

executive policymaking body. To avoid an overly politically contentious women's rights-centered issue, the survey experiment focuses on the gender education gap in rural villages in China. While the gender gap in education has significantly decreased in China, there is still a gap between the number of boys and girls attending school in rural parts of China. Overall, boys in rural areas have 1.12 more years of education than girls (Hu et al. 2022). Research has shown that girls in rural areas are more likely than boys to drop out of school and have fewer years of education than their male counterparts (Hao 2021). This issue persists in rural areas due to the lower quality of education offered, the inability of some families to afford to send their daughters to school, or the traditional norms of families preferring to educate their sons (Hao 2021).

One example of a real NGO in China focused on gender equality is Pucheng Women's Sustainable Development Association. This organization offers microfinance services for poor women to help them increase revenue and support their families (CDB 2025). This NGO uses a welfare-based strategy. The Chinese Women's Health Network, in contrast, uses a research-based strategy, conducting research around factors that impact women's health, social lives, and economic status (CDB 2025). Justice for All, an NGO mentioned earlier in this paper, is an example of an advocacy-based NGO focused on women's rights. Another women's rights NGO was the Beijing Zhongze Women's Legal Counseling and Service Center, which was closed by the government in 2016 (ISHR 2016). It focused on providing legal services to women who experienced domestic violence and advocating for women's rights-related issues. I include this example to exemplify that while the issue of women's rights (especially improved education for rural girls) is relatively innocuous, survey participants might associate some political risk with

certain types of NGOs. The fictional NGOs in the survey experiment draw inspiration from these real-life examples.

4.3 Survey Design

In the first part of the survey experiment, participants are asked basic questions about themselves and their backgrounds. The survey asks questions about children and their connection to rural areas due to the topic of the survey. Participants with children or connections to rural areas might be more inclined to support initiatives that shrink the gender education gap. The following tables include how the survey responses will be coded in the results part of the paper, using dummy variables for non-ordinal categorical variables like gender and employment status.

Table 1. Demographic Questions and Answer Choices

Demographic Question	Answer Choices	Variable Values
Age	18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+, did not answer	18-24 = 0 25-34 = 1 35-44 = 2 35-44 = 3 45-54 = 4 55-64 = 5 65+ = 6
Gender	M, F, other, did not answer	See Table 1a.
Education level	primary school, middle school, secondary education, some college, college degree, graduate degree, did not answer	primary = 0 middle = 1 secondary = 2 some college = 3 college degree = 4 graduate degree = 5
Income	0-30k, 30001-50k, 50001-80k, 80001+, did not answer	0-30k = 0 30001-50k = 1 50001-80k = 2 80001+ = 3

Employment Status	not employed, part-time, full-time, student, did not answer	See Table 1b.
Do you have children?	yes, no, did not answer	no = 0 yes = 1
Do you live in a rural area?	yes, no, did not answer	no = 0 yes = 1
Do you have family in a rural area?	yes, no, did not answer	no = 0 yes = 1

Table 1a. Variable Values for Gender

Gender	Dummy 1 (Female)	Dummy 2 (Male)
Male	0	0
Female	1	0
Other	0	1

Table 1b. Variable Values for Employment

Employment Status	Dummy 1 (Part-Time)	Dummy 2 (Full-Time)	Dummy 3 (Student)
Not Employed	0	0	0
Part-Time	1	0	0
Full-Time	0	1	0
Student	0	0	1

In the second part of the survey, the pre-treatment, participants are given a brief paragraph about the gender education gap and asked for their opinions on the issue. They are asked to answer the questions on a seven-option Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, partially disagree, neutral, partially agree, agree, strongly agree. This is to

ensure the participants were interested in the NGOs' missions. If, for example, a participant does not care about women's rights or the gender education gap, they might simply choose the NGO that seems like the least amount of work or a random answer. In this section of the survey, participants are also asked to complete an attention check to ensure they are attentively reading the survey prompts. The end of the background information paragraph includes a sentence instructing participants to select answer "B" for question 5. When analyzing the data, I will remove respondents who failed the attention check from the analysis.

Table 2. Pre-Treatment Information and Questions

Background Information	**Questions**
While the gender education gap in China has significantly improved, girls in rural areas are still less likely to attend secondary schools than boys. In some rural areas, on average, boys have completed 1.12 more years of school than girls. Research has shown girls in rural areas are more likely than boys to drop out of school. If you have read this paragraph, please select the letter "B" for question 6. Please answer the following questions about your opinion on this issue.	(1) How big of an issue do you think the gender education gap is in rural China? (2) It is just as important for girls to attend secondary school as boys. (3) The benefits of education apply to both girls and boys equally. (strongly disagree, disagree, partially disagree, neutral, partially agree, agree, strongly agree) (4) The government is doing enough to address the gender education gap. (5) Attention Check: To ensure you have read the paragraph in its entirety, please select the instructed answer.

In the third part of the survey experiment, the treatment, participants are shown a control NGO or a treatment NGO. They are randomly assigned either the control NGO or one of the three possible treatment NGOs. The control NGO does not specify a strategy; the treatment NGOs are either advocacy-based (Treatment Option #1), welfare-based

(Treatment Option #2), or research-based (Treatment Option #3). They are then asked a series of questions with two goals in mind. First, I want to measure their likelihood and level of engagement with the NGO. The questions aim to increase the level of engagement as they go on, from participants indicating interest in the NGO to participants being willing to volunteer weekly with the NGO. Second, I want to test the validity of the political process and resource theories. The survey asks participants to indicate if they think the NGO is well-resourced, politically risky, and affiliated with the government. The survey asks respondents to answer the treatment questions on the same seven-option Likert scale as the pre-treatment questions. The respondents are asked the same questions regardless of which treatment they receive.

Table 3. Control and Treatment Vignettes

NGO Strategy	**Vignette**
Advocacy	This NGO advocates for better quality of education in rural schools and for more resources to be given to families so they are incentivized to send their girls to school. The NGO posts information about the issue of the gender education gap on social media, encourages people to talk to their families and neighbors about this problem, and calls local and national government officials to urge them to act on the gender education gap in rural China.
Welfare	This NGO aims to train teachers in rural areas to be aware of the gender education gap and inform them of tactics they can employ to encourage girls to stay in school and encourage families to send their girls to school. They also deliver supplies to schools in rural areas to decrease the cost burden on families that have multiple children. They often hold teacher trainings and run supplies donation drives.
Research	This NGO conducts research to determine how many boys vs. girls are attending secondary schools in rural areas and collect data on the gender education gap. They then report these statistics to both local governments and the national government to aid in policy-making decisions about education. They help collect data on schools in their area and create reports.

Control	This NGO focuses on decreasing the gender education gap in rural areas. It promotes equal education for both boys and girls. Its goal is to eliminate the gender education gap and ensure boys and girls receive the same amount and quality of education.

Table 3a. Questions for Treatment Vignettes

	Questions
Participants are asked the same 9 questions regardless of if they receive a treatment or the control vignette	(1) This NGO interests me. (2) This NGO can make a difference. (3) I would be willing to help raise money for this NGO. (4) I would be willing to donate $5 to this NGO. (5) I would be willing to volunteer with this NGO for one hour. (6) I would be willing to volunteer with this NGO weekly. (7) I believe this NGO is well-resourced. (8) I believe this NGO is affiliated with the CCP. (9) I believe this NGO is politically risky.

Lastly, in part four of the survey, the post-treatment, participants are asked to indicate which strategy they believe the NGO from the treatment section is pursuing. The purpose of the post-treatment question is to, first, determine if the independent variable, NGO strategy, played a role in respondents' answers and, second, test if the vignettes adequately form an association with their intended strategy. If participants associate their given vignette with the wrong strategy, I will account for that in the data analysis. Answer choice "D" states that the NGO did not specify a strategy, which the survey intends for participants who have the control vignette to choose. After completing the survey, participants are shown a message explaining that while the background

information they were asked to read is truthful, the NGO in the survey is entirely fictional, and any similarity it may have to a real-life NGO is coincidental.

Table 4. Post-Treatment Question

Question	Answer Choices
Based on the information you have read about the NGO, which strategy or method do you think the NGO uses to achieve its goals? Please select the answer you feel best matches with what you have read about the NGO.	(A) The NGO uses a welfare strategy that aims to deliver goods and services to communities in need. (B) The NGO uses an advocacy strategy that aims to inform the population of important social issues and urge the government to take action. (C) The NGO uses a research strategy to collect data about an issue so that better policies can be developed. (D) The goals of the NGO were described, but the strategy of the NGO was not provided. I am unsure how the NGO would achieve its goals.

4.4 Running the Survey

Unfortunately, I was not able to run the survey and collect responses. While Emory's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved all other aspects of my survey, the one piece that caused uncertainty was the applicability of China's Personal Information and Protection Law (PIPL), which applies to "the processing of personal information of individuals living in mainland China" (Dai and Deng 2022). After many discussions with Emory's Institutional Review Board, Office of Ethics and Compliance, General Counsel, and an outside counsel, it was decided that PIPL could not confidently be excluded from my project. This was for two main reasons. First, Qualtrics collects IP addresses, which count as personal information under PIPL. Even if the anonymous setting is used, it is

possible that IP addresses are still being collected and stored by Qualtrics. Second, the survey answers could count as personal information since I aimed to collect opinions that could be considered sensitive. The survey asks the respondents' opinions on gender equality and political riskiness, which are potentially sensitive issues. For those reasons, my project was unexpectedly rejected quite late in the process. My initial submission to IRB was November 26th, 2024, and I did not receive a decisive rejection from outside counsel until March 7th, 2025.

While the ultimate decision was pending, I was able to secure funding from Emory's Political Science Department, translate the survey materials, and complete multiple rounds of IRB revisions. I was also able to create a shell of the results section, which is what the following section contains. Because I do not have real data to analyze, section 5 of this paper includes what I would have expected to see had I collected responses, the statistical methods I would have used to analyze the data, and the inferences I could have drawn from such analysis.

5. Results

I expected a total of 1500 observations from the survey, which would have been divided into four groups (one control and three treatments). Two attention checks would have been used to remove certain observations from the formal analysis. First, I would want to address the concern that some survey respondents might have just been choosing random answers without reading the prompts. To check back against this, I would have dropped the observations of anyone who failed the attention check in the pre-treatment section, which asked respondents to choose answer choice "B" for question 6. Second, I would want to remove any respondents in which I have reason to believe the NGO

strategy did not play a role in their answer choices. For this, I would have used the responses in the post-treatment section. I would have dropped the answers of respondents who chose an answer in the post-treatment section that did not align with the strategy they read in the treatment section. For example, if someone was shown the vignette about an advocacy-based NGO, but chose answer choice "C," indicating a research-based NGO, I would have filtered out their response. If someone misidentified the strategy they were being shown, I would not be able to confidently isolate the dependent variable of NGO strategy. Additionally, a third attention check could be used based on the pre-treatment questions. If someone indicated they do not care about gender equality at all, then I would consider removing their responses.

Dropping all observations that failed either one of the attention checks would have resulted in the number of valid observations for the formal data analysis. I hope that the number of observations I would have had to drop would not have been more than 25%. If the number was greater than 25% of the sample, I would have produced a result that compared those who failed with those who did not. To demonstrate what my results might have looked like, I have estimated the number of valid observations in each group to be 300 (75 per group "failed" the attention checks). However, if I had actually run the survey, it is unlikely that there would have been exactly 300 per group for three reasons. First, I designed the survey to randomly and evenly assign each respondent one of the four possible NGO options, but if there was not a number of respondents evenly divisible by four, there might have been a slight differentiation in the number of respondents in each group. Second, when dropping the respondents who failed the attention checks, it is unlikely that the exact same number would have failed in all four groups. Third, while the

survey did not include any “I don’t know” options or “choose not to answer” options, a respondent could have simply not answered a question. This is especially relevant for the treatment balance in the next section. If someone did not answer a demographic question, their answer would not be included in the treatment balance, meaning the n values could differ slightly between groups.

5.1 Sample Demographics and Treatment Balance

Using the demographic section of the survey, I would have first attempted to describe the features of the sample. My first concern would be understanding who took the survey and, if the data skewed heavily towards a certain group, how that might impact my results. Because Weidiaocha draws from pre-registered panelists, the sample might have represented a certain population of people who self-select into taking surveys at home for money. This might mean my sample would have included younger, more internet savvy respondents, who live in urban areas where access to a computer or the internet is easily accessible. Additionally, Weidiaocha’s pool has an uneven gender split, 60% women and 40% men. If young people and women were overrepresented in my sample, that would not necessarily be a bad thing. One study found that women in China are more likely to volunteer than men because women have a lower employment rate and are socialized to embody a caretaking role (Liu and Zhang 2021). If my sample had had more women than men, it might have been more representative of what the volunteer pool in China realistically looks like. The same study found that the relationship between age and the likelihood of volunteering is curvilinear, meaning that middle-aged people are the most likely to volunteer (Liu and Zhang 2021). I would assume that many people taking online surveys for money skew young to middle age since they would have to be

internet savvy, meaning this possible "bias" in the sample might have been useful to interpreting the results.

Similarly, I would have also used the demographic questions to determine how representative the survey sample was of China's population as a whole. The National Bureau of Statistics of China published a report in 2023 that includes statistics for proportions of the population based on age, gender, urban or rural, and employment. I would have evaluated how closely my sample matched with the general population. For example, it would probably not align with the national gender split; 51.1% of the Chinese population is male, and 48.9% of the Chinese population is female (NBSC 2024). However, for reasons described above, it would be useful for my sample to skew female due to the volunteer pool skewing female. Additionally, 66.2% of the Chinese population lives in urban areas, and 33.8% lives in rural areas (NBSC 2024). It would have been interesting to see how the survey sample compared and to consider the implications. By comparing the survey sample with the general population, I would have an understanding of the national representativeness of my sample.

Next, I would perform a treatment balance to assess if the randomization process created a balanced sample. I would consider if the demographics of the four groups (3 treatment, 1 control) were balanced. This would allow me to ascribe any differences in the groups to the randomized treatment rather than essential covariates. Because the size of my sample would have been large (1500, over 300 in each group), I expected to have a balanced sample. Table 5 is what I would have filled in to perform the treatment balance. I included a column that lists the values I would have used to determine the mean and standard deviation (sd) for each demographic variable.

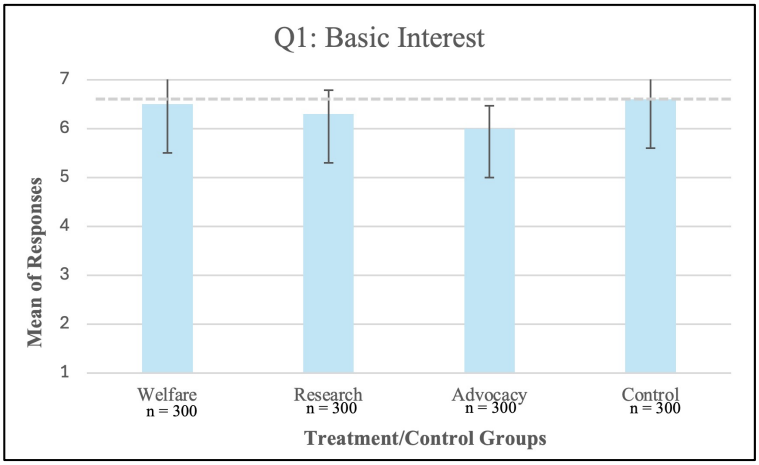
Table 5. Treatment Balance

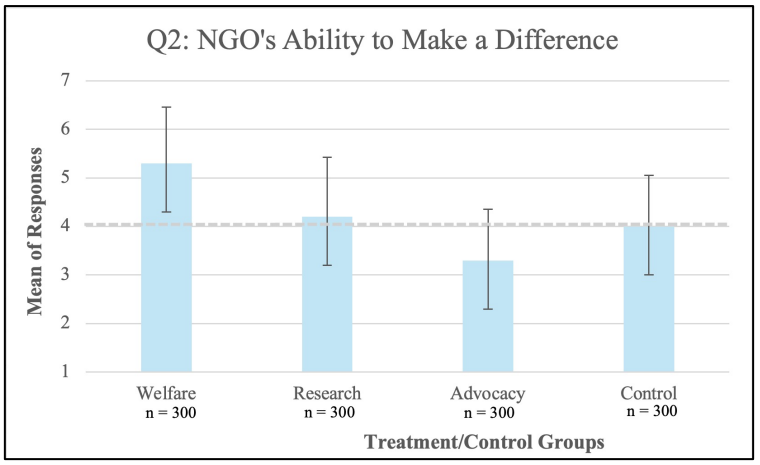
	Treatment Group: Welfare	**Treatment Group: Advocacy**	**Treatment Group: Research**	**Control Group**	**Total**
Age	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	n =
Gender	[mean female] [mean other] [sd female] [sd other]	[mean female] [mean other] [sd female] [sd other]	[mean female] [mean other] [sd female] [sd other]	[mean female] [mean other] [sd female] [sd other]	n =
Education Level	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	n =
Income	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	n =
Employment	[mean PT] [mean FT] [mean student] [sd PT] [sd FT] [sd student]	[mean PT] [mean FT] [mean student] [sd PT] [sd FT] [sd student]	[mean PT] [mean FT] [mean student] [sd PT] [sd FT] [sd student]	[mean PT] [mean FT] [mean student] [sd PT] [sd FT] [sd student]	n =
Subject Has Children	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	n =
Subject Lives in a Rural Area	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	n =
Subject Has Family that Lives in a Rural Area	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	[mean] [sd]	n =
Total	*n = 300*	*n = 300*	*n = 300*	*n = 300*	N = [total # of responses]

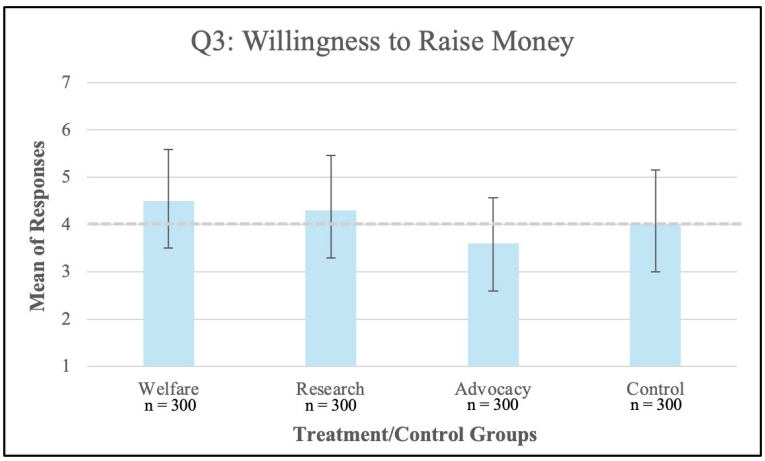
5.2 Evaluating Treatment Effects

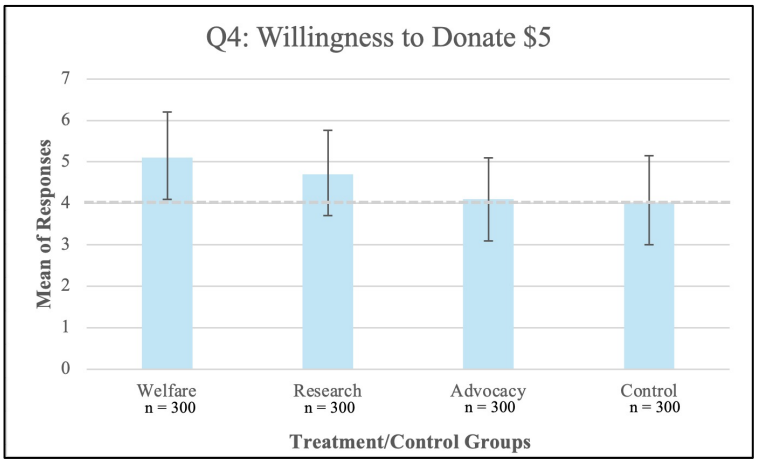
Figure 1 displays the sample mean and 95% confidence interval over that mean by treatment category for all of the dependent variable questions (questions 1-6 in the treatment section of the survey). Because the survey asks respondents to answer on the Likert scale, I would have assigned each answer choice a value from 1-7. For example, "strongly disagree" would be 1 and "strongly agree" would be 7. This means the mean for each question would have fallen somewhere between 1 and 7. I would have wanted to see the highest mean for respondents who received the welfare treatment, the second highest for respondents who received the research treatment, and the lowest mean for respondents who received the advocacy treatment for all six questions. This would have indicated survey respondents were most likely to engage with the welfare organization. As the level of engagement increased, I would have wanted to see the difference between the welfare group and advocacy group grow. For example, while the level of basic interest (question 1) might have been relatively equal for all three groups, I would expect the mean of the welfare group to be significantly higher than the advocacy group for question 5, willingness to volunteer for 1 hour. To demonstrate the ideal results, I estimated that after the attention checks were factored in, I would have about 300 valid responses in each group. Figure 1 is an example of what the ideal results would have looked like.

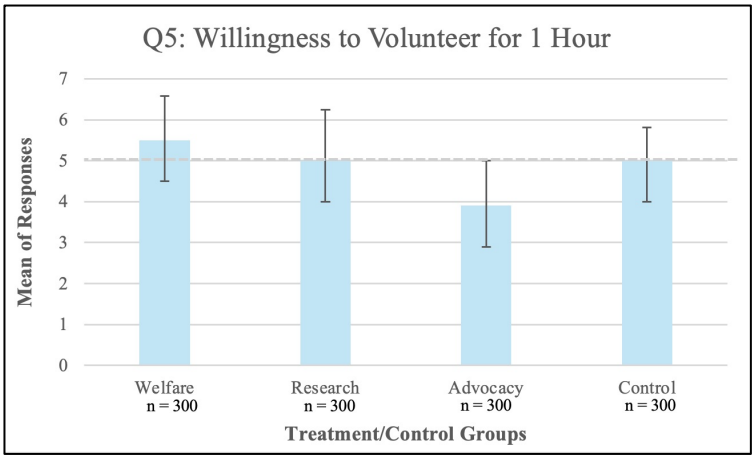
Figure 1. Example Graphs for Evaluating Treatment Effects

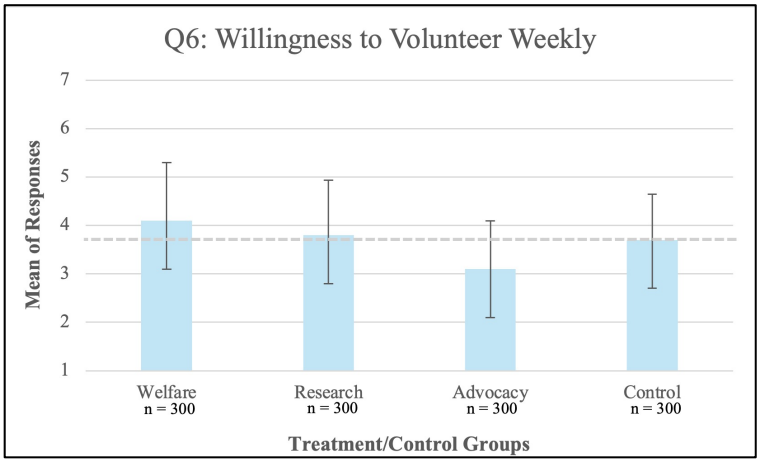












As exemplified in the graphs above, the welfare bar is consistently the highest, and the advocacy bar is consistently the lowest, with the research bar falling in between. As the questions ask about higher levels of engagement, the difference between the welfare and advocacy bar becomes more extreme.

A two-sample t-test of the equality of means would be used to test the null hypothesis that the average response to question 1, i.e., is the same for any two of the treatment/control groups. I would compute this t-statistic and two-tailed p-value for each such comparison, with the p-value noted in the text where that comparison would have been discussed (less than 0.05 indicates significance). I also would have wanted to note how big the differences are between the groups substantively. For instance, a 0.1 difference in mean between two groups is not that large, but a 1.5 difference in mean (with the maximum amount of difference being 7), is a substantive difference. For the questions where the means show a substantive difference (1.0 or greater), I would have used a t-test to determine if the results were statistically significant.

5.3 Evaluating Theoretical Assumptions

Figure 2 and Figure 3 display the sample mean and 95% confidence interval over that mean by treatment category for questions 7-9, which aimed to evaluate the theoretical assumptions of the study. I would have used the same strategy of assigning a number 1 through 7 to the answers on the Likert scale. In an ideal scenario, the advocacy treatment group should have the highest mean for the “politically risky” question. This would align with my assumptions about political process theory. The welfare treatment group should have the highest mean for the “well-resourced” question to align with my assumptions about resource dependency theory.

Figure 2. Example Graph for Evaluating Resource Dependency Theory

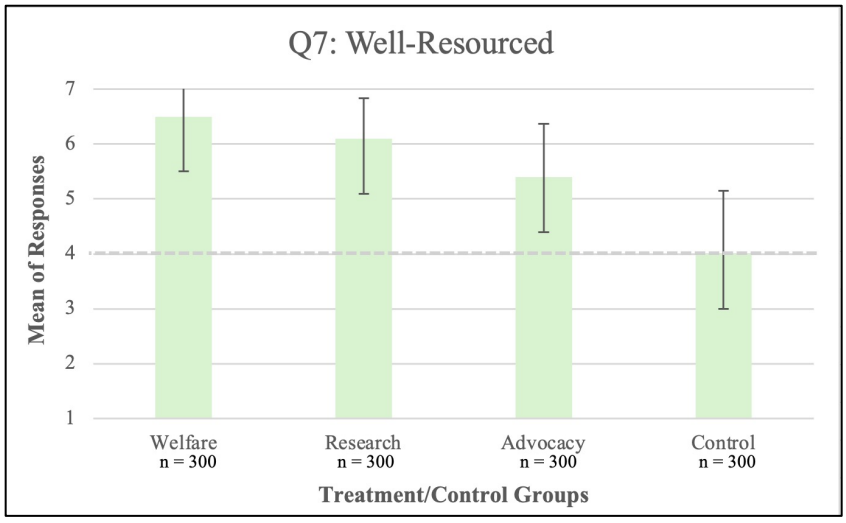
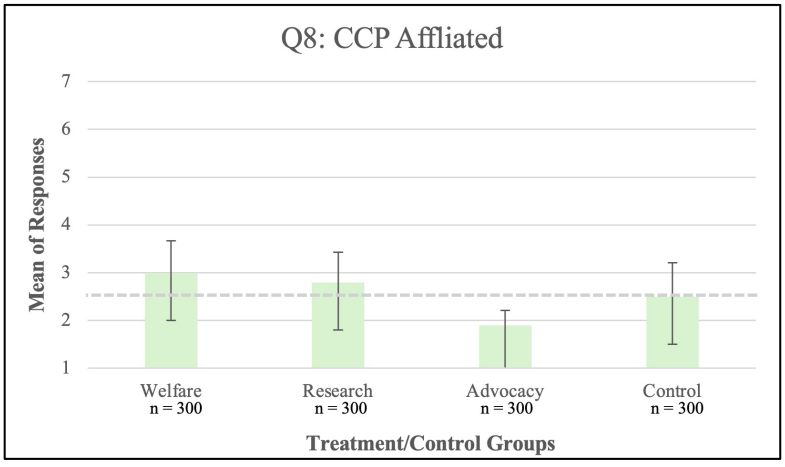


Figure 2 shows an example of what I would have wanted to observe for the resource dependency assumption. The mean for the welfare treatment group is the highest, and the mean for the advocacy group is the lowest. This would suggest that survey respondents who were shown the welfare NGO were more likely to believe the NGO is well-resourced than those shown the advocacy NGO.

Figure 3. Example Graphs for Evaluating Political Process Theory



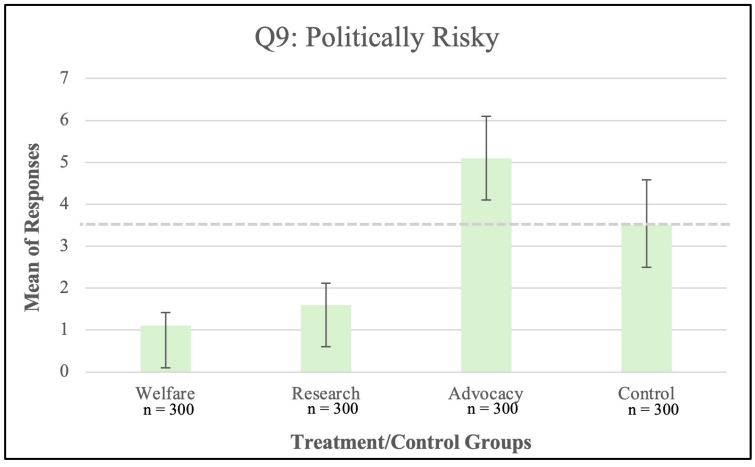


Figure 3 exemplifies the ideal means for questions 8 and 9, which are intended to test the applicability of political process theory. For question 8, I would expect the mean for each group to be relatively low, as an NGO by nature is *not* government affiliated. However, if one of the organizations were to have a government affiliation, the theory would suggest welfare NGOs to be in the best standing with the government. Therefore, I would expect the welfare treatment group to have the highest mean and the advocacy treatment group to have the lowest mean for this question. For question 9, I would expect the opposite to be true. When asking survey respondents to consider the political riskiness of the organization they are shown, I predict that welfare would have the lowest mean and advocacy would have the highest mean.

Like the evaluation of the treatment effects, if the graphs exemplified a substantive difference in means, I would have used a two-sample t-test of the equality of means to test the null hypothesis that the average response to the questions are the same for any two of the treatment/control groups. I would have computed the t-statistic and two-tailed p-value for each such comparison and would have determined statistical significance based on the p-value (less than 0.05 indicates significance).

5.4 External Validity Discussion

I would next like to briefly discuss the benefits and drawbacks of a survey experiment on external validity. First, how valid would the survey results have been for drawing conclusions about people's actual political behavior? Obviously, the survey is a one-time occurrence; it would have taken respondents less than 15 minutes and is based on a fictional organization. Indicating volunteer interest through an online survey and actually volunteering in real life are two different things. This is a common problem with

survey experiments: researchers cannot know that someone would truly do something just because they said they would. However, there have been studies that suggest survey experiments are reliable indicators of political action. One paper titled "Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid?" compares the results of several survey experiments with real-life policy changes. The authors found that "what occurs in survey experiments resembles what takes place in the real world" (Barabas and Jerit 2010). While they did find that the treatment effect in surveys was often larger than the effect in natural experiments, they concluded that there is a real benefit to using survey experiments to understand public opinion (Barabas and Jerit 2010).

Another study, based in Switzerland, compared the results of a survey experiment, in which vignettes were used, with a natural experiment on the topic of immigration. The researchers found that the "effects estimated from the surveys match the effects of the same attributes in the behavioral benchmark remarkably well" (Hainmueller et al. 2015). Overall, while I cannot ensure that the survey respondents' online commitment to volunteering would perfectly match up with their real-world behavior, studies confirm that survey experiments are a reliable indicator of political action. Additionally, for the purposes of my research question, it is more important to understand if the respondents *would* be willing to engage with an organization rather than trying to change their behavior and increase their volunteer hours.

Second, how durable is the treatment effect? Some survey experiments aim to influence respondents' opinions and change their behavior. McEntire et al., for instance, measure the impact of certain framing techniques on respondents' willingness to support a campaign against sleep deprivation. With their experiment, the concern would be that

the framing effect would "wear off" after a certain amount of time and only be applicable during the time the participant is actively taking the survey. If McEntire et al. had asked their respondents the same questions in 24 hours, would the framing technique still be in effect? For my project, this is not a concern. I did not aim to change or influence behavior; rather, I wanted to explore how potential volunteers respond to different NGO strategies. The treatment effect is durable because it is based on how respondents felt before and outside of the survey. Therefore, the results would likely be persistent and long-term. The treatment effect might change only if the political context of civil society in China underwent a dramatic transformation.

5.5 Further Analysis

If the results from the tests of equality of means had been significant for treatment questions 1-9, I would have run several different regressions to determine if the treatment had yielded different results for certain groups of respondents. I would have been especially interested in gender – are women more risk averse when volunteering than men? – and the pre-treatment questions about gender equality – were participants who had stronger predispositions for gender equality more likely to engage with advocacy NGOs? Question 4 of the pre-treatment asks participants if they believe the government is doing enough to solve the issue of the gender education gap in rural areas. It would have been interesting to determine if people who answered "strongly disagree" or "disagree" to this question were more likely to engage with the advocacy NGO. Similarly, I would have been curious about respondents who had a special connection to the issue area. For example, respondents who have school-age children or are from a rural

area. Perhaps their levels of engagement would have been stronger across all four groups due to their personal connections.

6. Conclusion

This paper aimed to study how NGO strategy impacts volunteer engagement in China. It focused on three common NGO strategies: welfare, research, and advocacy. Drawing from rational choice theory, political process, and resource dependency theory, the hypotheses posited that welfare NGOs would have the most success at generating volunteer engagement. This is for three reasons. First, potential volunteers are presumed to be rational actors, meaning they will weigh the pros of engaging with an organization against the cons to decide on their level of involvement. Potential volunteers will also consider how likely the NGO is to make a difference and whether engaging is worth their time. Second, welfare NGOs are more likely to be viewed as filling a gap for the government rather than directly criticizing the government. Volunteers might view the NGOs' work as apolitical and solely to better society through welfare and service-based initiatives, meaning they do not risk government retaliation. Third, welfare NGOs are more likely to be viewed as better resourced. This is because their services require many resources to function, but also because they are not politically risky, they can operate on a wider, more public scale, generating donations and drawing more volunteers. For these same reasons, the hypotheses posit that advocacy-based NGOs are likely to generate the *least* volunteer engagement. They are most likely to be viewed as politically risky due to their role in directly confronting and critiquing government action. Because most of their work is intangible, they might have the least number of physical resources and volunteers. This will make potential volunteers wary of their ability to operate

successfully. The last category of NGOs, research-based, were hypothesized to land somewhere in the middle of welfare and advocacy NGOs. Depending on their goals, the research could be in line with government efforts or used to lobby the government. Research NGOs likely need a lot of resources to complete their research, but their efforts might be decentralized.

The research this paper contributes is important because it has implications for how NGOs in authoritarian contexts should frame their strategies to best recruit volunteers. In all authoritarian societies, potential volunteers will presumably weigh the costs and benefits of how politically risky the organization is, how likely it is to make a difference, and how well-resourced it is. The theoretical framework the paper outlines, therefore, is applicable to a broad range of nations and contexts and can serve as a policy suggestion for NGOs all over the world. Volunteers are essential to the functioning of NGOs; organizations could not operate or achieve their goals without them. Therefore, it is important to understand how potential volunteers feel about certain strategies and which methods are most appealing.

6.1 Barriers to Running the Survey

Unfortunately, as noted in the research design, I was not able to run the survey and test this project's hypotheses.

After talking through alternatives with both the outside and General Counsel, I have several ideas on what a future iteration of this project could look like that would maintain PIPL compliance. First, an outside counsel could be used to make the survey as it is compliant with PIPL. This would involve, among other things, changing the consent form so that survey participants are aware of the risks associated with PIPL and how their

data is being processed. Using outside counsel to achieve PIPL compliance exceeded the budget of my project, but it could be a useful option for future research endeavors in China. Second, the survey could be administered in person in China. This would avoid the collection of IP addresses or having a digital record of personal information. An in-person survey would completely anonymize the process. Traveling to China was infeasible for my project, but the survey could be modified for an in-person collection strategy as a future iteration. Third, the survey could be administered in a different country with less strict personal information and data collection laws. The theories the hypotheses are based on are generalizable to other authoritarian countries and so could be tested elsewhere. If a future version of this project were to administer the survey in a different authoritarian country, the issue area of the NGOs might need to be changed to be more applicable to the social issues of that nation. However, there are many countries where the rural gender education gap is relevant, and the same vignettes could be used.

I would like to note that the barriers I faced in running this survey exemplify the broader tensions in U.S.-China relations. As someone who cares about improving people-to-people connections between Chinese and American citizens, I believe it is important for American researchers to understand and uplift Chinese civil society. Civil society looks different in democracies and autocracies, but understanding and appreciating those differences is key to fostering mutual understanding. There are nearly 300,000 Chinese students in the United States; in China, there are only 800 American students (Ruwitch 2024). From 2016 to 2020, enrollment in university Mandarin courses in America fell by 21% (The Economist 2023). This is a problem. China is the second-largest economy in the world, and whether it is for the purpose of “winning” the U.S.-China competition or

fostering cooperation with an ever-growing superpower, American students should be encouraged to learn about China. Academic exchange should be supported and simplified. I hope that my project is a record of the work that needs to be done to improve communication and transparency between China and the United States and that there are American students who care about studying these issues.

6.2 Evidence in Favor of The Hypotheses

Had the results shown evidence in favor of the hypotheses, the main implication would be that NGO strategy does have some effect on volunteer engagement, particularly in authoritarian contexts. The results would have been useful for organizations looking to gain more volunteers or increase volunteer engagement. NGOs might have more success at recruiting NGOs if they take a welfare approach rather than advocacy. If the theoretical assumptions had also been significant, it would have implied that welfare NGOs benefit from being viewed as the least politically risky and most well-resourced. This could aid NGO organizing in how they frame their goals, motivations, and tactics in authoritarian contexts.

6.3 Evidence Not in Favor of The Hypotheses

Had the results not shown evidence in favor of the hypotheses, the study would still have revealed important implications. Mainly, the evidence would suggest that NGO strategy does not play as large of a role in volunteer engagement as I originally thought. Political risk and resources could still play a role, but NGO strategy might not be what potential volunteers are considering when weighing how politically risky or well-resourced an organization is. This outcome would have had exciting implications for advocacy-based NGOs in particular because it means that a more confrontational strategy

does not necessarily "scare off" potential volunteers. This would be interesting in the context of China and authoritarian regimes because it would suggest that potential volunteers might be willing to directly lobby against or confront the government, at least in comparison to other strategies. This would mean that when NGOs attempt to recruit volunteers, framing their strategy might not be the most important aspect when attempting to draw engagement.

6.4 Improvements and Future Considerations

One area of the research design that could be improved is the control vignette. When testing the survey on colleagues, they did not always choose the right answer in the post-treatment that corresponded to the control vignette. They often assumed it must be one of the other strategies. Since they were not exposed to strategies until the post-treatment part of the strategy, there is still a possibility that they did not have a strategy in mind when answering the treatment questions, but ideally, survey participants would confidently choose the post-treatment answer that matches the control. Additionally, the control group is useful as a baseline, but because the hypotheses specify how the treatment groups interact with each other, an improved version of the project might make better use of the control group. For instance, I might think through how potential volunteers would engage with a welfare NGO versus an NGO where no strategy is specified. This might lead to important research concerning how specificity plays a role in potential volunteer engagement or how learning an NGO's strategy changes a volunteer's willingness to engage.

Another improvement to the design of the survey might include two different treatment groups for the research-based NGO. As discussed earlier, research NGOs can

operate in several different ways. They can innovate, research for the purpose of lobbying the government (leaning into advocacy), or research for the purpose of aiding the government. An improved version of this project might have included two research-based NGO vignettes, one that is more focused on advocacy and one that is less focused in order to test the difference. The hypotheses of this paper would posit the advocacy-leaning research NGO to have less engagement. If the survey were to be restructured this way, there would be four treatment and one control group, meaning fewer participants in each group or trying to get more respondents.

It is also important to consider that this research project was conducted with mostly Western sources and methods. While I included many studies that were conducted in China by Chinese researchers, I was only able to read the studies that had been translated to English. A future version of this study would expand the literature base to studies written in Chinese and also consider including methods beyond what are most commonly used in Western political science studies. This might reveal causal mechanisms I had not considered or different ways of framing the theoretical assumptions I uncovered. It might also have better informed the exact phrasing I used on the survey questions. While I feel confident that the theory section is applicable to Chinese society based on the sources I could access, a more thorough version would include more Chinese scholars and sources.

Lastly, I believe a future version of this study could expand beyond the survey-based experiment and include case studies. The NGO that inspired this project, the Beijing Changier Foundation, is a welfare-based NGO that operates widely in China, even though it focuses on the controversial issue of adolescent aids. Looking deeper into

the strategies it uses to avoid government crackdown might provide key insights into the relationship between NGOs, the CCP, and volunteers. Other cases that might be worth exploring are advocacy NGOs that have been shuttered by the government and comparing them to NGOs focused on the same topic that have not been shuttered. For example, seeing if there is a difference in strategy between LGBTQ+ rights-centered NGOs that have been shut down versus those that have not. Conducting interviews and speaking directly to volunteers to understand their motivations in these organizations could also illuminate new and interesting pieces of the NGO strategy and volunteer engagement puzzle.

Appendix

Appendix A: Survey Questions in Simplified Chinese

第一部分：人口信息

1. 年龄：18-24 岁，25-34 岁，35-44 岁，45-54 岁，55-64 岁，65 岁及以上
2. 性别：男，女，其他
3. 教育程度：小学，初中，高中，专科，本科，研究生
4. 收入：0-3 万，3 万 1-5 万，5 万 1-8 万，8 万以上
5. 就业状况：无业，兼职，全职，学生
6. 您有子女吗？是 或 否
7. 您居住在农村地区吗？是 或 否
8. 您有家人住在农村地区吗？是 或 否

第二部分

尽管中国的性别教育差距已显著改善，但农村地区的女孩仍然比男孩更容易辍学。在一些农村地区，男孩平均比女孩多完成 1.12 年的学业。研究表明，农村地区的女孩辍学的可能性比男孩更高。如果您已阅读此段内容，请在第 6 题选择字母“B”。请回答以下关于您对此问题看法的问题：

1. 您认为中国农村的性别教育差距有多严重？（重大问题，比较大的问题，轻微问题，完全不是问题，无意见）
2. 女孩上中学与男孩一样重要。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
3. 教育的益处对男孩和女孩同样适用。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
4. 政府在解决性别教育差距问题上做得足够了。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
5. 注意力检测：为了确保您已完整阅读段落，请选择指示的答案：A，B，C，D，E

第三部分

接下来您将阅读一个关于非政府组织（NGO）的段落。阅读后，您将被问及一系列关于参与该类组织的方式的问题。

该 NGO 致力于缩小农村地区的性别教育差距，倡导男女平等教育。其目标是消除性别教育差距，确保男孩和女孩获得相同数量和质量的教育。

1. 我对这个 NGO 感兴趣。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）

2. 我认为这个 NGO 可以产生影响。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
3. 我愿意帮助为这个 NGO 筹款。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
4. 我愿意向这个 NGO 捐赠 5 美元。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
5. 我愿意为这个 NGO 志愿服务一小时。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
6. 我愿意每周为这个 NGO 志愿服务。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
7. 我认为这个 NGO 资源充足。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
8. 我认为这个 NGO 与中国共产党有联系。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
9. 我认为这个 NGO 存在政治风险。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）

该 NGO 倡导改善农村学校的教育质量，并为家庭提供更多资源，以激励他们送女孩上学。该组织在社交媒体上发布有关性别教育差距问题的信息，鼓励人们与家人和邻居讨论这一问题，并呼吁地方和国家政府官员采取行动解决中国农村的性别教育差距问题。

1. 我对这个 NGO 感兴趣。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
2. 我认为这个 NGO 可以产生影响。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
3. 我愿意帮助为这个 NGO 筹款。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
4. 我愿意向这个 NGO 捐赠 5 美元。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
5. 我愿意为这个 NGO 志愿服务一小时。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
6. 我愿意每周为这个 NGO 志愿服务。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
7. 我认为这个 NGO 资源充足。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
8. 我认为这个 NGO 与中国共产党有联系。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）

9. 我认为这个 NGO 存在政治风险。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）

该 NGO 致力于培训农村地区的教师，让他们意识到性别教育差距的问题，并向他们介绍可以采用的策略，以鼓励女孩继续学业，以及鼓励家长送女孩上学。他们还向农村学校提供物资，以减轻拥有多名子女家庭的经济负担。该组织经常举办教师培训并组织物资捐赠活动。

1. 我对这个 NGO 感兴趣。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
2. 我认为这个 NGO 可以产生影响。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
3. 我愿意帮助为这个 NGO 筹款。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
4. 我愿意向这个 NGO 捐赠 5 美元。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
5. 我愿意为这个 NGO 志愿服务一小时。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
6. 我愿意每周为这个 NGO 志愿服务。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
7. 我认为这个 NGO 资源充足。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
8. 我认为这个 NGO 与中国共产党有联系。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
9. 我认为这个 NGO 存在政治风险。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）

该 NGO 开展研究，以确定农村地区男孩和女孩就读中学的人数比例，并收集性别教育差距的数据。他们随后将这些统计数据报告给地方政府和国家政府，以协助教育政策制定。他们帮助收集有关当地学校的数据并撰写报告。

1. 我对这个 NGO 感兴趣。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
2. 我认为这个 NGO 可以产生影响。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
3. 我愿意帮助为这个 NGO 筹款。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
4. 我愿意向这个 NGO 捐赠 5 美元。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）

5. 我愿意为这个 NGO 志愿服务一小时。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
6. 我愿意每周为这个 NGO 志愿服务。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
7. 我认为这个 NGO 资源充足。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
8. 我认为这个 NGO 与中国共产党有联系。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意）
9. 我认为这个 NGO 存在政治风险。（完全不同意，不同意，部分不同意，中立，部分同意，同意，完全同意

第四部分

根据您阅读的有关该 NGO 的信息，您认为该 NGO 使用哪种策略或方法来实现其目标？请选出您认为最符合该 NGO 描述的答案。

A) 该 NGO 使用福利策略，旨在向有需要的社区提供物资和服务。

B) 该 NGO 使用倡导策略，旨在让公众了解重要的社会问题，并敦促政府采取行动。

C) 该 NGO 使用研究策略，收集有关某一问题的数据，以便制定更好的政策。

D) 该 NGO 的目标清楚，但并未说明其使用的策略。我不确定该 NGO 将如何实现其目标。

问卷结束说明

虽然您在问卷中了解到的有关中国农村地区性别教育差距的信息是真实的，但您所阅读的有关该 NGO 的内容完全是虚构的。任何与现实中的 NGOs 有相似的地方，纯属巧合。

Appendix B: Consent Form in Simplified Chinese

研究介绍和概述

感谢您对我们进行的非政府组织研究的兴趣。在您决定参与该调查研究前，请阅读以下注意事项。您本人全权决定是否参与该调查。即便您选择参与，也可以随时改变主意并退出该调查。

本调查研究旨在探讨潜在的志愿者对于不同类型的非政府组织的接受程度。研究由美国埃默里大学政治学系资助，完成调查所需时间少于 15 分钟。

如果您参与，您需要回答一些关于您个人基本信息的问题。随后，您将阅读有关中国农村地区教育性别差距的介绍。最后，我们将询问您对不同非政府组织在这一问题上开展工作的参与意愿。在最终研究完成之前，所提到的非政府组织的部分具体信息不会对外公开。

所有回答将严格保密，我们不会收集任何身份识别信息。本研究不存在可能冒犯参与者的语言。但仍有可能存在隐私泄露或保密性受到影响的风险。如果您在研究过程中希望退出，您可以随时退出该调查。

参与此调查虽然不能给您带来直接的利益，但您可能会在调查研究过程中了解到更多关于教育性别差距的相关信息。研究结果将帮助研究人员理解不同类型的信息及其来源如何影响志愿者对非政府组织的态度。

完成本调查研究后，您将通过“微调查”获得少量报酬。完成问卷的报酬为 0.7 美元。如果您在一分钟内完成问卷，则无法获得报酬。本研究收集的数据将归研究人员所有，不会向参与者收集任何具体的信息。如果您在完成问卷前选择退出，您已经提供的数据仍可能被用于本研究。

信息存储与共享

通过本研究收集的数据将被安全存储，且只能在埃默里大学受密码保护的计算机上查看。数据中不会包含任何身份识别信息。如果研究结果发表，所有不含身份识别信息的研究数据可能会被存储在一个公开可访问的复现档案中。

保密性

除本调查的研究人员外，某些办公室人员可能会查看研究记录。监管研究合规性的政府机构和埃默里大学相关人员可能会查看研究记录。这些机构包括人类研究保护办公室、资助方、埃默里大学机构审查委员会（IRB）、以及埃默里大学合规办公室。研究资助方也可能会查看该研究记录。根据法律要求，埃默里大学会尽可能保持研究记录的私密性。研究记录将尽可能使用研究编号而非您的姓名。研究结果公开或发表时，不会包含您的姓名及其他可能泄露您身份的信息。

使用/披露您信息的人员和机构：

以下人员和机构将使用您的信息以开展研究：

该研究的首席研究员及研究团队将使用您的信息进行研究。

在某些情况下，该研究的首席研究员或其他研究人员可能会转至其他机构。如果发生这种情况，您的信息可能会与新机构及其监督办公室共享。信息将通过安全方式共享，并在法律协议下确保其继续按本协议书的条款使用。

请注意，根据 2021 年颁布的《个人信息保护法》，中国政府可能会访问研究记录，包括个人身份信息。如有疑问，请联系 irb@emory.edu。

退出研究

您有权在任何时候退出本研究，无需承担任何责任。

研究人员也有权在未征得您同意的情况下将您移出本研究。如果他们认为这样做符合您的最佳利益或您未能完整完成本问卷，他们在这些情况下可能会采取此行动。

联系信息

如果您对本研究还有其他疑问，或对研究及您的参与有其他问题或顾虑，请联系 Miranda Wilson 和 Dr. Eric R. Reinhardt，邮箱地址为 erein@emory.edu。本研究已通过伦理委员会的审查，以确保研究参与者的权益受到保护。如果您对作为研究参与者的权益有疑问，或对研究有任何投诉，或希望与研究团队之外的人员讨论相关问题，请联系埃默里大学机构审查委员会（IRB），电话：404-712-0720 或 877-503-9797，或通过电子邮件 irb@emory.edu 联系。

同意书

您是否同意参与本研究？

参与者同意参与：

是（继续填写问卷）

否（退出研究）

Bibliography

Arts, B. “Political influence of NGOs on International Environmental Issues.” In H. Goverde, P. G. Cerny, M. Haugaard, H. H. Lentner (Eds.) *Power in Contemporary Politics: Theories, Practices, and Globalizations,* 2000, pp. 132-148, SAGE Publications Ltd, doi:10.4135/9781446219935.

Barabas, Jason and Jennifer Jerit. “Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid?” *The American Political Science Review,* vol. 104, no. 2, 2010, pp. 226-242, doi:10.1017/S0003055410000092.

CDB. “Pucheng Women’s Sustainable Development Association.” *China Development Brief*, 2025, https://chinadevelopmentbrief.org/ngos/pucheng-womens-sustainable-development-association/.

CDB. “Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences.” *China Development Brief*, 2025, https://chinadevelopmentbrief.org/ngos/chinese-research-academy-of-environmental-sciences/.

CDB. "Chinese Women's Health Network." *China Development Brief,* 2025, https://chinadevelopmentbrief.org/ngos/chinese-womens-health-network/.

CDB. “NGO Directory.” *China Development Brief*, 2025, https://chinadevelopmentbrief.org/ngo-directory/.

Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2007, pp. 103-26, doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054.

Dai, Ken (Jianmin) and Jet (Zhisong) Deng. “China’s Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL).” *Bloomberg Law,* 2022, https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/insights/privacy/china-personal-information-protection-law-pipl-faqs/.

Dewi, Miranti Kartika, Melina Manochin, and Ataur Belal. “Marching with the volunteers: Their role and impact on beneficiary accountability in an Indonesian NGO.” *Accounting, Auditing, and Accountability Journal,* vol. 32, no. 4, 2019, pp. 1117-1145, doi:10.1108/AAAJ-10-2016-2727.

Druckman, James N. “On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who Can Frame?” *The Journal of Politics,* vol. 63, no. 4, 2001, pp. 1041-1066, doi:10.1111/0022-3816.00100.

Duffy, John and Margit Tavits. "Beliefs and Voting Decisions: A Test of the Pivotal Voter Model." *American Journal of Political Science,* vol. 52, no. 3, 2008, pp. 603-18, doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00332.x.

The Economist. “Why fewer university students are studying Mandarin.” *The Economist,* 2023, https://www.economist.com/china/2023/08/24/why-fewer-university-students-are-studying-mandarin.

Gao, Xiang and Jessica Teets. "Civil Society Organizations in China: Navigating the Local Government for More Inclusive Environmental Governance." *China Information*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2021, pp. 46-66, doi:10.1177/0920203x20908118.

Hainmueller, Jens, Dominik Hangartner, and Teppei Yamamoto. “Validating vignette and conjoint survey experiments against real-world behavior.” *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.,* vol. 112, no. 8, 2015, pp. 2395-2400, doi:10.1073/pnas.1416587112.

Hao, Jingjun et al. “Gender Differences in Rural Education in China.” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies,* vol. 27, no. 1, 2021, pp. 66-86, doi:10.1080/12259276.2021.1893924.

Hasmath, Reza. “China’s NGOs Go Global.” *The Diplomat*, 2016, thediplomat.com/2016/03/chinas-ngos-go-global/.

Ho, Peter. "Greening without Conflict? Environmentalism, NGOs and Civil Society in China." *Development and Change*, vol. 32, no. 5, 2001, pp. 893-921, doi:10.1111/1467-7660.00231.

Hsu, Jennifer Y. J. et al. "Ngo Strategies in an Authoritarian Context, and Their Implications for Citizenship: The Case of the People's Republic of China." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2017, pp. 1157-79.

Hu, Chenxu et al. "Son Preference, Intrahousehold Discrimination, and the Gender Gap in Education in China." *International Review of Economics & Finance*, vol. 79, 2022, pp. 324-39, doi:10.1016/j.iref.2022.02.007.

Hu, Ming, Qianjin Zhang, and Mark Sidel. “Building State-controlled Volunteering in China.” *The China Quarterly,* vol. 256, 2023, pp. 854-870, doi:10.1017/S0305741023000632.

Inocencio, Ramy. “5 years after China's crackdown on democracy, ‘the Hong Kong we used to know is gone.’” *CBS News,* 2023, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hong-kong-activist-the-price-of-freedom-is-eternal-vigilance/.

IRC. “2021 Annual Report Executive Summary.” *International Rescue Committee,* 2022, https://www.rescue.org/report/2021-annual-report-executive-summary.

ISHR. "China: Closure of Women's Legal Aid Centre a Blow for Women's Rights and Gender Equality." *International Service for Human Rights,* 2021, https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/china-closure-womens-legal-aid-centre-blow-womens-rights-and-gender-equality/.

Kuruvila, Albert. “Non-Governmental Organisations(NGOs): Issues of Terminology and Definitions.” *Rajagiri Journal of Social Development*, vol. 7, no. 1, June 2015, pp. 20–29, http://journals.rajagiri.edu/index.php/rssJ/article/view/102.

Lee, Young-joo and Jeffrey L. Brudney. "Rational Volunteering: A Benefit-Cost Approach." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, vol. 29, no. 9/10, 2009, pp. 512-30, doi:10.1108/01443330910986298.

Lindberg, Frida. “Women’s Rights in China and Feminism on Chinese Social Media.” *Institute for Security & Development Policy,* 2021, http://isdp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Lindberg.-2021.-Womens-Rights-in-China-and-Feminism-on-Chinese-Social-Media.-1.pdf.

Liu, Dongshu. “Advocacy Channels and Political Resource Dependence in Authoritarianism: Nongovernmental Organizations and Environmental Policies in China." *Governance*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2020, pp. 323-42, doi:10.1111/gove.12431.

Liu, Fengqin and Xiulan Zhang. “Who are Volunteers in Urban China?” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations,* vol. 32, 2021, pp. 1359-1374, doi: 10.1007/s11266-020-00251-4.

Martinez, Teresa A. and Steve L. McMullin. "Factors Affecting Decisions to Volunteer in Nongovernmental Organizations." *Environment and Behavior*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2004, pp. 112-26, doi:10.1177/0013916503256642.

McAdam, Doug. "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Direction." *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 23-40. *Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics,* Cambridge Core, https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/F91EC3E59BB6F7B7033B44411722541B.

McAdam, Doug. "The Framing Function of Movement Tactics: Strategic Dramaturgy in the American Civil Rights Movement." *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 338-56. *Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics,* Cambridge Core, https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/07F94E0008B60B3ADE6BC3E1AC635659.

McCarthy, John D. and Mark Wolfson. "Resource Mobilization by Local Social Movement Organizations: Agency, Strategy, and Organization in the Movement against Drinking and Driving." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 61, no. 6, 1996, pp. 1070-88, doi:10.2307/2096309.

McEntire, Kyla Jo et al. "Human Rights Organizations as Agents of Change: An Experimental Examination of Framing and Micromobilization." *American Political Science Review*, vol. 109, no. 3, 2015, pp. 407-26, Cambridge Core, doi:10.1017/S0003055415000295.

Meyer, David S. and Suzanne Staggenborg. "Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 101, no. 6, 1996, pp. 1628-60, doi:10.1086/230869.

Mitchell, George E. "The Strategic Orientations of Us-Based NGOs."*Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, vol. 26, no. 5, 2015, pp. 1874-93, JSTOR.

Morris, Aldon. "From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter." *Scientific American*, 2021, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/from-civil-rights-to-black-lives-matter1/.

MSF. "International Activity Report 2023." *Medecins Sans Frontieres,* 2023, https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-activity-report-2023.pdf.

Murdie, Amanda and Alexander Hicks. "Can International Nongovernmental Organizations Boost Government Services? The Case of Health*." International Organization,* vol. 67, no. 3, 2013, pp. 541-573, doi:10.1017/S0020818313000143.

NBSC. "Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2023 National Economic and Social Development." *National Bureau of Statistics of China,* 2024, https://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202402/t20240228_1947918.html.

Oxfam. "Oxfam International Annual Report." *Oxfam*, 2022, https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-02/OXFAM%2021_22%20Annual%20Report%20FINAL.pdf.

Ru, Jiang and Leonard Ortolano. "Development of Citizen-Organized Environmental NGOs in China." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2009, pp. 141-68, JSTOR.

Ruwitch, John. "Why the number of American students choosing to study in China remains low." *National Public Radio*, 2024, https://www.npr.org/2024/06/13/nx-s1-4989350/why-the-number-of-american-students-choosing-to-study-in-china-remains-low#:~:text=According%20to%20data%20compiled%20by,students%20in%20the%20United%20States.

Smith, David Horton. "Determinants of Voluntary Association Participation and Volunteering: A Literature Review." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1994, pp. 243-63, doi:10.1177/089976409402300305.

Stevenson, Alexandra. "China's Male Leaders Signal to Women That Their Place Is in the Home." *The New York Times,* 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/02/world/asia/china-communist-party-xi-women.html.

Suchman, Mark C. "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches." *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1995, pp. 571-610, doi:10.2307/258788.

Vakil, Anna C. "Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs." *World Development*, vol. 25, no. 12, 1997, pp. 2057-70, doi:10.1016/S0305-750X(97)00098-3.

Valdez, Patricia, and Albert Mehrabian. "Effects of Color on Emotions." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General,* vol. 123, no. 4, 1994, pp. 394-409, doi:10.1037/0096-3445.123.4.394.

Wang, Ming. "The Development of NGOs in China." *The Nonprofit Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2001, pp. 53-63, doi:10.11433/janpora.1.53.

Wang, Qianqian et al. "Attitude toward Gender Inequality in China." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications,* vol. 11, no. 1, 2024, pp. 353, doi:10.1057/s41599-024-02857-1.

Wang, Xinxin and Kevin Lo. "Civil society, environmental litigation, and Confucian energy justice: A case study of an environmental NGO in China." *Energy Research and Social Science,* vol. 93, 2022, doi:10.1016/j.erss.2022.102831.

WANGO. "Worldwide NGO Directory." *World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations,* 2025, https://www.wango.org/resources.aspx?section=ngodir.

Werker, Eric and Faisal Z. Ahmed. "What Do Nongovernmental Organizations Do?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* vol. 22, no. 2, 2008, pp. 73-92, doi:10.1257/jep.22.2.73.

Wu, Huizhong. "Beijing LGBT Center shuttered as crackdown grows in China." *AP News*, 2023, https://apnews.com/article/china-beijing-lgbt-center-shutdown-a5643c680e1faf5c8a7a7d9bdd627d6f.

Zhan, Xueyong and Shui-Yan Tang. "Political Opportunities, Resource Constraints and Policy Advocacy of Environmental Ngos in China." *Public Administration*, vol. 91, no. 2, 2013, pp. 381-99, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9299.2011.02011.x.

Zhu, Han and Jun Lu. "The Crackdown on Rights-Advocacy NGOs in Xi's China: Politicizing the Law and Legalizing the Repression." *Journal of Contemporary China,* vol. 31, no. 136, 2022, pp. 518-538, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3887239.