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Please cite this paper as Zhan, X., & Tang, S. Y. (2016). Understanding the implications of government ties for nonprofit operations and functions. *Public Administration Review*, 76(4), 589-600.

Understanding the Implications of Government Ties for Nonprofit Operations and Functions¹

Xueyong Zhan (corresponding author: msxzhan@polyu.edu.hk)
Associate Professor, Department of Management and Marketing
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong
&
Shui-Yan Tang
Frances R. and John J. Duggan Professor of Public Administration
Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California, CA, U.S.A

Author Information:

Xueyong Zhan is associate professor in the Department of Management and Marketing, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He received his Ph.D. from the Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. His research examines environmental policy implementation, environmental NGOs, and public management. His recent work has been published in the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Policy Studies Journal*, *Public Administration*, and *Public Administration Review*.

E-mail: xueyong.zhan@polyu.edu.hk

Shui-Yan Tang is Frances R. and John J. Duggan Professor of Public Administration in the Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. His research focuses on institutional analysis and design, common-pool resource governance, and collaborative governance. He is author of *Ten Principles for a Rule-Ordered Society: Enhancing China's*

¹ Acknowledgments: We would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments. Research for the article was supported in part by the Central Research Grant (Project No. G-YN60) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. An earlier version of this article was presented at the *Improving Chinese Public Service: Theories and Empirical Evidence* seminar at the City University of Hong Kong in 2013. The seminar was supported by grants from Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation (#CS002-P-12) and City University of Hong Kong (#1860403).

Governing Capacity (China Economic Publishing House, 2012) and *Institutions, Regulatory Styles, Society, and Environmental Governance in China* (with Carlos Lo; Routledge, 2014).
E-mail: stang@usc.edu

Abstract

This research explores the implications of nonprofit leaders' government ties for nonprofit operations and functions. Based on 81 survey questionnaires with civic environmental NGOs (eNGOs) in China and interviews with executives from 33 eNGOs, we examine the personal backgrounds of eNGO leaders and found that most Chinese civic eNGOs are connected with the government in one or more of three ways—political ties, service-organization ties, and personal ties. Personal ties, or good *guanxi* with government officials, are positively associated with a higher level of funding stability and a more developed management system. ENGOS with leaders as current government officials or legislative body members are more likely to be engaged in policy advocacy. Service-organization ties facilitate eNGOs' effort to be engaged in legal services and to scale up to work on environmental issues at the national level. Moreover, an eNGO's policy advocacy engagement is associated with its ties with the nonprofit community.

Numerous models have been developed for understanding government-nonprofit relations in Western, democratic societies, usually assuming a relatively independent non-profit sector and a collaborative relationship between government and nonprofits (Suárez, 2011, Lecy and Van Slyke, 2013). Compared with their counterparts in the West, nonprofit and non-governmental organizations in the developing world may face fundamentally different institutional contexts in terms of political, economic, and social parameters (Kim and Kim, 2015, Ma, 2002). In China, for example, the authoritarian government used to restrict nonprofit organizations and civil society activities that may challenge the party-state regime; yet the market-oriented economic reforms over the past three decades have triggered remarkable economic growth and made the Chinese society more pluralistic. With the emergence of a large middle class and a vibrant civil society, public policy and administration in China have in recent years been reshaped by the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in numerous policy fields (Kang and Han, 2008, Hsu, 2010, Michelson, 2007, Teets, 2009). On the one hand, the dominant role of government in public policy and management has been challenged by many civic NGOs with divergent preferences on many policy issues (Zhan and Tang, 2013). On the other hand, the Chinese government has begun to collaborate with NGOs to deliver public services or even to seek support from civil society in formulating and implementing public policies (Jing and Gong, 2012). A notable example is the development of environmental non-governmental organizations (eNGOs), which have played an increasingly visible role in China's environmental governance by providing environmental education programs, promoting pollution information disclosure, influencing environmental policy making and implementation, and more recently supporting local environmental movements against polluting sources (Ho, 2001,

Martens, 2006, Mol and Carter, 2006, Ho and Edmonds, 2007, Ru and Ortolano, 2009, Schwartz, 2004, Tang and Zhan, 2008, Johnson, 2010, Yang, 2005).

The development of NGOs in China and other authoritarian countries has raised many intriguing questions about government-nonprofit relations to the students of public administration and nonprofit studies. The translation of Western models of government-nonprofit relations to these contexts, however, may be problematic if we do not have a good understanding of the organizational antecedents and institutional context of nonprofit development in these countries. In China, for example, existing literature suggests that NGOs originated from two major sources. One source relates to the broader administrative reform undertaken in the past three decades in which as part of an effort to downsize the government bureaucracy, many government entities have established quasi-public entities called service organizations to deliver public services (Tang and Lo, 2009). Many of these service organizations—like those involved in environmental protection, health care, higher education, scientific research, and other social services—are supported by a combination of government funding and income generating activities. To further streamline the government bureaucracy, some of these service organizations have been converted to either for-profit enterprises or government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) (Tang and Lo, 2009). As a result, the leaders and executives of these government-initiated enterprises and NGOs were former government officials. Although not formally part of the government, these leaders and executives continue to maintain close ties to it. As a result of such ties—“political capital” in Nee and Oppenheimer’s (2012) term—these NGO leaders have preferential access to government funding and philanthropic donations, contracts, and sometimes policy-making processes related to their particular service areas (Zhan and Tang, 2013, Johnson and Ni, forthcoming). Some authors have indeed complained that many government-initiated

NGOs in China have become recipients of major international funding and acted more like government agencies than typical NGOs in the West (Tang and Zhan, 2008).

Some civic NGOs did originate from the grassroots; in such fields as environmental protection, labor protection, women's rights, and HIV/AIDS prevention, most NGOs are initiated by private individuals, sometimes with support from international foundations (Kaufman, 2011, Spires, 2011a, Tang and Zhan, 2008). Compared with GONGOs, civic NGOs in China are more similar to those in Western societies. Although many executives of these NGOs are not former government officials, most of them are social elites that have strong ties to the government (Ho, 2001&2007, Tang and Zhan, 2008, Ru and Ortolano, 2009). Thus, unlike their counterparts in the United States and other developed countries who are likely to have professional backgrounds either in the private sector or have moved up the organizational ladder within the nonprofit sector (Suárez, 2010), civic NGO leaders in China are more likely to have personal ties and professional backgrounds that connect them to the government. Although many scholars have documented the influences of political constraints on the development of nonprofit organizations in China (Ma, 2002, Schwartz, 2004, Sullivan and Xie, 2009, Teets, 2013), relatively little has been written on the role of nonprofit leadership in China (Pittinsky and Zhu, 2005). For example, what are the educational and professional backgrounds of civic NGO leaders in China? In what ways are they connected to the government? How do their backgrounds and government connections affect the operations and functions of their nonprofits?

The existing literature has identified that civic NGOs in China have utilized their government ties to grow in China's semi-authoritarian setting (Ho, 2007, Ho and Edmonds, 2007). These empirical studies can be connected to the broader literature on *guanxi*—an informal relationship with governmental officials—which is a core element of Chinese life and is

based on a blending of exchanges and mutual affection that create feelings of responsibility and obligation on the one hand and mutual indebtedness on the other (Ma and Ortolano, 2000, Michelson, 2007). In his study of private business enterprises in the late 1980s, Nee (1992) found that having political capital/connections was critical for the success of private business enterprises during a time when many basic commodities were still under government control. Yet in a more recent study, Nee and Oppen (2012) found that political capital and connections have remained important only for private enterprises exposed to markets that are still heavily government-regulated like the credit market, but have become unimportant for those exposed to global market forces. Based on a similar logic, government ties may matter in China's NGO sector because this sector is at a very initial stage. Given the significant role of government ties in China's political and social transitions, the lack of an understanding of Chinese nonprofit leaders' connections with the government should not be overlooked.

Indeed, a major gap in the literature is not about whether civic NGOs in China are connected with the government, but in what ways and to what effects. This research aims to understand the complexity of government ties of civic NGOs and their implications for nonprofit operations and functions in China. In the following sections, we will first discuss government-NGO relations in China and develop our research propositions. Based on information obtained from interviewing and surveying civic eNGO leaders, we further examine how various types of government ties of civic NGO leaders are related to nonprofit operations and two important functions of eNGOs: policy advocacy and service provision. This paper concludes with a discussion on the implications of this research to the development of the nonprofit sector in China and to the general literature on government-nonprofit relations.

Literature Review and Research Propositions

To examine government-NGO relations in an authoritarian and transitional country like China, one must pay careful attention to China's fragmented but also resilient authoritarian regime (Lieberthal, 1992, Nathan, 2003, Teets, 2013). In its effort to monopolize the management of public affairs, the Chinese government has been reluctant to engage civic NGOs in policy making or to share resources with civic NGOs. Instead, for the purpose of avoiding potential political instability, the Chinese government has established stringent regulations that limit the registration and operations of civic organizations, and to crack down on those that are deemed to be subversive (Hildebrandt, 2011, Tang and Zhan, 2008). However, the Chinese government does not have enough capacity to control all civic NGOs (Zhan and Tang, 2013). In recent years, the Chinese government has adjusted its strategy in managing government-nonprofit relations by both containing and empowering nonprofits (Jing, 2015). Heurlin (2010) also argues that the Chinese government has moved from an exclusionary approach to a corporatist strategy in managing the relations between government and civil society organizations. On the other hand, Hsu (2010) reported that Chinese civic NGOs are more interested in building alliances and collaborations with the government, rather than maintaining their organizational autonomy.

Although China's political environment has been restrictive, it has provided some opportunities for civic NGOs' resource mobilization and policy advocacy, especially for those with leaders who are social, economic, and political elites (Ru and Ortolano, 2009). In the field of environmental protection, it is widely known that China's environmental movement has been spearheaded by prominent individuals committed to environmental protection such as Liang Congjie (one of the co-founders of Friends of Nature) and Liao Xiaoyi (founder of Global

Village Beijing). More recently, Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba Group and one of the richest persons in China, has established an environmental protection foundation. Many civic eNGOs have grown from small groups consisting of a few committed environmentalists to well-established organizations with legal registration status, regular offices and staff, and well-managed operations (Ho, 2001, Tang and Zhan, 2008). Many social elites, including university professors, academic researchers, former government officials, news reporters, have sought to address problems in ecological conservation, environmental protection, animal welfare, etc. Many of them have established various ties with China's political institutions, and they have utilized these ties to develop and operate their NGOs. As argued by Ho (2007), China's semi-authoritarian political system both restricts and supports civil society organizations and activities, and such a path of civil society development has significantly reduced the possibility of social instability. Similarly, Spires (2011b) suggests that government and grassroots NGOs have been coexisting in some form of contingent symbiosis, with government officials willing to draw on support from grassroots NGOs to boast their annual performance rating when the NGOs are considered politically non-threatening.

Indeed, an emerging consensus in the literature is that government ties have played a very important role in the development of NGOs in authoritarian China. That being said, it is less clear in what ways civic NGOs have utilized their government ties to deal with various opportunities or constraints set by the authoritarian government. Institutional theory argues that internal factors and organizational strategies matter, and different organizations may use different strategies to respond to external institutional pressures. For example, Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that organizational success depends on organizational conformity, or "the ability of given organizations to conform to, and become legitimated by, environmental institutions"

(Meyer and Rowan, 1977, p. 352). As argued by Ho (2007), most eNGOs in China have adopted “self-imposed censorship and de-politicized politics” (p. 20). As a result, pressures from eNGOs have yet to be a significant factor in promoting corporate compliance to environmental regulations (Liu et al., 2015, Zhan, Lo, and Tang, 2014). Yet Oliver (1991) suggests that organizations may resist or conform to institutional pressures. Thus, divergent strategies, rather than simple conformity, will be used by organizations to respond to different institutional environments. Being embedded in different networks, organizations may develop divergent organizational strategies (Hung, 2005). Personal connections may help civic NGO leaders gain resources from and establish partnerships with government entities, yet good *guanxi* with government may constrain a civic NGO’s independence and willingness/ability to engage in politically sensitive activities, such as advocating for policy change, providing legal services, and tackling environmental issues at the national level. Thus, different types of government ties may have complex relations with nonprofit operations and functions.

Borrowing from the existing literature on government ties in China (Peng and Luo, 2000, Sheng, Zhou, and Li, 2011), we operationalize the concept of “government ties” by examining three types of ties—political, service-organization, and personal ties. *Political ties* is defined as an NGO leader being a current or former governmental official and/or legislative body member (either the People’s Congress or the People’s Political Consultative Committee). *Service-organization ties* means that an NGO leader has current or former affiliations with public-sector service organizations, such as universities, research institutes, and the state-owned media. In China, these public-sector service organizations are directly controlled by the government; employees in these organizations usually have strong connections with various party and state entities (Tang and Lo, 2009). *Personal ties* means that an NGO leader has maintained good

personal relationships with governmental officials/agencies (Xin and Pearce, 1996). While the three ties represent three distinctive dimensions of government ties, they are not mutually exclusive; an NGO leader may have one or more of the three ties. For example, a university professor may be a legislative body member and maintain good *guanxi* with government officials at the same time.

As extensively documented in the existing literature, government ties may help firms in China to get more resources and perform better in the market (Peng and Luo, 2000, Sheng, Zhou, and Li, 2011). Similar observations have been made by nonprofit scholars in Europe, where there is a long tradition of the welfare state relying on NGOs to deliver many kinds of social services. Rumbul (2013), for example, found that structurally embedded NGOs in Wales are more likely to get government funding due to their political connections with the government. In China, most civic eNGOs face resource constraints because they have limited opportunities for fundraising, limited membership base, and limited opportunities to provide pay-for-services (Tang and Zhan 2008, Zhan and Tang 2013). Leaders of some eNGOs have to fund their operations out of their own pockets. However, if its leaders have ties to the government, an eNGO may have a better chance of obtaining funds from multiple sources. For example, foundations still constitute the primary source of funding for civic eNGOs in China; yet good *guanxi* with government can help NGOs to obtain funding from donors (Johnson and Ni, forthcoming). For example, some NGOs are established by government officials because of the existence of significant amounts of international funding that preferred government supported NGOs (Hildebrandt, 2011). While contracts and subsidies from government have been a limited source of funding for most civic eNGOs, government funding has become more important in recent years as governments at different levels have become more willing to draw on civic NGOs to help deliver various types

of public and social services. Government funding is a potential source of funding for civic NGOs, and it is also a way of securing government recognition (Jing, 2015). Arguably, civic eNGOs whose leaders have government ties are more likely to receive stable and sustainable funding from multiple sources. Given the importance of resources for nonprofit organizations, if eNGOs with leaders having stronger government ties are more likely to obtain stable resources, they are also more likely to have a more developed management system, such as establishing a functioning board of directors, hiring accounting staff and lawyers, regularly recruiting full-time staff, etc. Since in this exploratory study it is difficult to speculate on all the possible scenarios, we adopt the following general proposition:

Proposition 1: Civic eNGOs with leaders having, and having more, government ties are more likely to maintain a higher level of funding stability and a more developed management system.

In the existing literature, multiple typologies have been developed to understand the major functions of nonprofits. In this research, we focus on policy advocacy and service provision, which are arguably the two most important functions of nonprofits (Salamon, 2012). While policy advocacy may be a core mission of most environmental NGOs in Western countries, environmental policy advocacy has been facing a much more restrictive political environment in China. As noted earlier, it is still politically dangerous to be openly critical of government policies and projects. A civic eNGO fighting against a government supported hydropower or nuclear power plant may find itself being targeted by public security bureaus. Some empirical studies, for example, have identified that civic eNGOs in China have adopted a “non-confrontational” strategy to engage the state in policy-making processes (Ho, 2001, Stalley and Yang, 2006). That being said, opportunities have open up for civic eNGOs to advocate for

policy positions in less controversial areas, such as garbage recycling and energy saving. On the one hand, ENGO leaders' government ties may facilitate policy advocacy; on the other hand, these ties may also constrain their willingness to do so, because advocacy may potentially antagonize government officials. Yet on balance, one might argue that government ties do make it more feasible for eNGOs to participate in policy advocacy and to influence government policy.

Proposition 2: Civic eNGOs with leaders having, and having more, government ties are more likely to be active and effective in policy advocacy.

When performing their service function, civic eNGOs in China also face constraints set by the government. For many years, most civic eNGOs in China have depoliticized their service activities by mainly focusing on providing environmental education, a service that is less political (Tang and Zhan, 2008). In recent years, there has been a trend for some eNGOs to be involved in environmental lawsuits and to provide legal services to pollution victims. While such activities can be considered a service a civic eNGO provides to citizens, they also have the effect of raising societal awareness about environmental problems and exposing the shortcomings of current regulations and their enforcement by government agencies. ENGOs engaging in such activities need to maintain a delicate balance. In some circumstances, government officials may not oppose, or indeed support, such activities, seeing it as ways to help go after companies that broke the law. The Chinese government has recently amended the *Environment Protection Law* and begun to allow eNGOs to initiate environmental public-interest litigations since January 2015. That being said, in some circumstances, government officials may consider these activities as unwelcome challenges to government authority, especially when such litigations are directly targeting local governments or firms connected to governments. If the civic eNGO leaders have political, service-organization, and personal ties, they may understand

better the types of activities that are politically acceptable and also the proper channels for undertaking them. On the other hand, eNGO leaders' government ties may also constrain their willingness to engage in these politically risky activities. Yet on balance, one might argue that government ties do make it more feasible for eNGOs to engage in environmental public-interest litigations and provide legal services to pollution victims. Moreover, the Chinese government has set strict regulations on the geographical focus of NGO activities. A very important rule in social organization registration, for example, is that civil society organizations, including eNGOs, are usually registered with a specific government unit at a specific administrative level, and they are restricted to undertaking activities only within the jurisdiction they are registered. An eNGO may face possible police harassment or even legal prosecutions if it is deemed to be involving in activities outside its permitted area of operations. For the vast majority of civic eNGOs, it is politically safer to be dealing with issues that are local in nature. Perhaps this is why civic eNGOs in China usually work at the community level (Hsu, 2014). Legal restrictions may compel civic eNGOs to avoid having a national focus; yet for those with stronger ties to the government, they may be better able to assess and cope with the associated risks with engaging in national-level issues, and are thus more likely to scale-up by focusing on environmental issues at that level.

Proposition 3: Civic eNGOs with leaders having, and having more, government ties are more likely to expand their service scope by being engaged in environmental lawsuits and providing legal services to pollution victims; such civic eNGOs are also more likely to expand their service scale by focusing on environmental issues at the national level.

In addition to ties to the government, several other variables may influence NGO operations and activities. First, ties to other civil society organizations may help an NGO to

obtain information, increase organizational capacity, pool resources, leverage influence, and gain recognition from the larger society (Provan, Huang, and Milward, 2009, Zhan and Tang, 2013). In the context of authoritarian China, eNGO may have to work with other eNGOs to undertake certain types of activities, especially when activities such as policy advocacy and helping pollution victims may be considered by the authoritarian regime as political challenges to its rule. In China and elsewhere, NGOs often network and collaborate with one another in their service and advocacy activities. For example, Diamond (1999) argues that there are six types of NGO activities: “to express their interests, passions, and ideas; to exchange information; to achieve collective goals; to make demands on the state; to improve the structure and functioning of the state; to hold state officials accountable” (Diamond 1999, p. 221). According to Diamond’s classification, the more NGOs are engaged in activities further down this list, the more they contribute to democratization. Using Diamond’s classification of government-NGO relations, Zhan and Tang (2013) suggested that political regime changes have created opportunities for those civic NGOs with better resources and political connections to engage in policy processes (i.e., activities related to, in Diamond’s words, making “demands on the state”, improving “the structure and functioning of the state”, and holding “state officials accountable”). Moreover, NGO ties can potentially help a civic eNGO do better in developing its management system, and engaging in service and advocacy activities. Sullivan and Xie (2009) also report that some Chinese NGOs are connected to one another through region and nationwide social networks. This explains why some NGOs have access to institutional channels for negotiating with the state (Saich, 2000).

Second, stringent registration requirements have been used by the Chinese government as a means of monitoring and controlling NGO development. As a result many eNGOs have been

operating without being formally registered as a social organization. Their activities are often tolerated by the government, but only as long as they are not perceived as creating political troubles. On the other hand, being registered gives an NGO some degree of independence as they can open bank accounts, do public fundraising, become more transparent in their operations (thus making them less likely to be suspected by government officials), and are less subject to the whims of government officials (Hildebrandt, 2011). Thus registered civic eNGOs may be able to develop its management system better, but may be more circumscribed in their service and advocacy activities.

Third, it is a tough environment, both political and financial, for civic eNGOs in China to survive. Thus the age of a civic eNGO matters; the longer it has been around, the more likely it can build up its financial capacity, and thus more likely to have a better developed management system, and to engage in service and advocacy activities.

Research Methods

Data Collection

To conduct our survey of civic eNGOs in China, we first identified three target regions in China, and then adopted a rolling snowball approach to identify civic eNGOs located in these cities and provinces. The three target areas are Beijing, coastal regions, and inland regions, representing the political capital, the rich regions, and less developed regions in China. Beijing was singled out since as China's capital it has traditionally been home to many NGOs. Inland regions are less developed areas and known for ecological diversity, and they are home to many environmental protection and ecological conservation projects, with the presence of many domestic and international eNGOs. Coastal regions, such as Shanghai and Guangdong, are

developed areas in China. Although not the traditional home to civic eNGOs, these locations have seen their growth in recent years.

We consulted *China Development Brief*, a web-based database that provides lists of civic NGOs in multiple policy arenas, to identify eNGOs in China. We also relied on personal contacts to approach civic eNGOs. Based on data and information from multiple online and personal sources, we estimated that there are around 300 active civic eNGOs in China. Between July 2010 and December 2014, we sent our invitations to 214 civic eNGOs, and asked each eNGO to answer a questionnaire survey. Eventually 81 eNGOs completed and returned the questionnaire surveys, with a 37.8% response rate. While the sample size is relatively small, we believe that this is a valuable dataset given the difficulty in administering large-scale surveys with civic NGOs. While NGOs in China usually would like to have interviews with researchers, many of them would decline invitations to complete questionnaire surveys due to time constraints or political risks, not to mention the fact that some NGOs have experienced fatigue as more and more researchers are approaching them for interview and questionnaire survey. Given the political sensitivity of civil society in China, getting NGOs to respond to surveys has never been an easy task. Indeed, most of the previous studies on eNGOs in China have relied on the case-study approach.

The survey collected information related to several aspects of these eNGOs: organizational characteristics and major activities, organizational leaders' relationships with government agencies/legislative bodies and a few other stakeholders, organizational management practices, policy advocacy experiences, and the scope and scale of the services they provide. We also sent out invitations for face-to-face interviews in six cities in China (Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Kunming, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen). Eventually around 33 eNGOs accepted our

invitation for face-to-face interviews. We had ten field trips to these six cities and conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders of the 33 eNGOs. Each interview lasted one to two hours. During the interviews, we focused on the career backgrounds and major duties of the civic eNGOs' chief executives or leaders. Specifically, we asked the executives about their career and professional backgrounds in order to assess their levels of ties to the government. The data enable us to identify (1) major types of professional profiles and career paths of the eNGO executives; and (2) how different types are related to the growth of the eNGOs and their major activities and orientations. All the 33 eNGOs were invited to finish the questionnaire survey, and eventually 20 returned completed questionnaires.

Table 1 provides a summary of all the civic eNGOs that returned questionnaires. Overall, the majority of the NGO leaders surveyed have educational backgrounds and professional experiences in either law or environmental protection, two fields that are highly relevant to the operation of eNGOs. Overall, 63 eNGOs reported one or more types of ties with the government. We provide the locations and registration status of the survey respondents.

Table 1 around here

Table 2 shows a total of eight possible combinations of different types of ties to the government. We found that a large number of eNGOs in our sample have double or triple ties with government. Nineteen eNGOs reported that their leaders have triple ties with the government. Eighteen eNGOs reported double ties. Twenty-six eNGOs reported only one type of tie with the government. Among the 81 eNGOs, only 18 reported that they have no government ties.

Table 2 around here

Measurements

The questions used for measuring all the independent and dependent variables are listed in the Appendix. Some questions requested categorical responses of yes/no (1/0); some questions asked for degree of agreement with a statement on a 5-point Likert scale. Specifically, to measure ties with other NGOs (*NGO ties*), we adopted the classification introduced in Diamond (1999) and asked each eNGO the extent to which they have worked with other NGOs. To measure *NGO's funding stability*, we asked each eNGO whether its external grants are mainly long-term and multiple times. To measure *NGO's Management System*, we asked each eNGO whether they have adopted certain management practices—for example, whether they have accounting staff, lawyers, annual financial statements, a board of directors/advisors, regular performance evaluation, and others. To measure NGO engagement in *Policy Advocacy*, we asked each eNGO the extent to which it has engaged in specific dimensions of policy advocacy (*Policy Advocacy Engagement*), and how they assess their policy impact on government (*Policy Advocacy Effectiveness*). To measure *NGO's service scope* and *service scale*, we asked each eNGO whether it is engaged in providing environmental law services and lawsuits and whether it is focusing on environmental issues at the national level. The measurements of *Management System*, *Policy Advocacy Engagement*, and *NGO Ties* are the means of answers to the questions used in the survey. The Cronbach's Alpha for *Management System* is 0.668 (11 Items); that for *Policy Advocacy Engagement* is 0.779 (5 Items); and that for *NGO Ties* is 0.836 (5 Items). We have obtained Cronbach's alphas ranging between 0.668 and 0.836, representing relatively

reliable measurements (Nunnally, 1967). For the other two control variables, *age* is the difference between the year when an eNGO was established and the year when it was surveyed; *registration* is coded as “1” if an eNGO is legally registered with a government body, and “0” otherwise. The descriptive statistics of and correlations among the dependent, independent, and control variables are provided in Table 3.

Table 3 around here

Empirical Findings

We used three sets of models to test the hypotheses. The models are about whether the different types of government ties - *political*, *service-organization*, *personal*, *current political ties*, and *the number of government ties*—are related to the six dependent variables: *nonprofit funding stability*, *nonprofit management system*, *policy advocacy engagement*, *policy advocacy effectiveness*, *service scope-legal Services*, and *service scale-national focus*.² Each model includes a different combination of independent variables and the same set of control variables, including *NGO ties*, *registration*, and *age*. Tables 4 and 5 show the OLS regression results for the first two propositions, and Table 6 shows the binary logistic regression results for the third proposition.

Table 4 around here

² We thank the reviewers for suggesting us to include the following two variables, *current political ties*, and *the number of government ties*, into our models.

As shown in Table 4, consistent with our prior expectations, *personal ties* are positively associated with *nonprofit funding stability* and *management system*. This result confirms the conventional wisdom that *guanxi* is important for dealing with foundations and government officials and obtaining funding from various sources. Unexpectedly, *political ties* are negatively and significantly associated with *funding stability*, while *service-organization ties* and *current political ties* have no significant associations with *funding stability*. Perhaps, for eNGOs with leaders being a current or former government officials or legislative body members, such ties may not help a civic NGO get stable funding due to potential conflicts of interest. A more developed management system is associated with civic eNGOs that have bigger numbers of ties with the government. *Registration* also matters to *management system* since without a legal status, it is unlikely that an NGO in China can gradually build a formal management system.

As shown in Table 5, we found that both *current political ties* and the *number of government ties* are positively and significantly associated with *policy advocacy engagement*. Perhaps, an NGO leader being a current government official may help the organization's involvement in policy advocacy. Most types of *government ties*, however, do not help a civic eNGO's self-assessment of *policy advocacy effectiveness*. *NGO ties* is the only variable that is positively associated with both *policy advocacy engagement* and *policy advocacy effectiveness*. Ties with other NGOs are more important for this type of work, since such activities are potentially political and require careful strategizing on the part of the NGO.

Table 5 around here

One may only speculate on why *political, service-organization, and personal* ties have no statistically significant association with *policy advocacy engagement and effectiveness*. As we learned from our interviews, this may be because government ties have both positive and negative effects on a civic eNGO's motivation to engage in politically sensitive activities. On the positive side, many interviewees acknowledged the advantage of government ties in facilitating policy-related activities. For example, one eNGO staff (NGO ID: 42) indicated that as former insiders, eNGO leaders with governmental backgrounds have more accesses to the policy process. Another eNGO staff (NGO ID: 15) mentioned that her NGO leader is a Communist Party member and a former government official:

...she wanted to do something for environmental protection, but as a Communist-Party member, she could not do this within the government system; thus she chose to leave the government and become a bridge between government and society...

This leader's political ties have helped recruit some retired government officials from the local Environmental Protection Bureau and City Water Department, who have provided this eNGO with knowledge and experience. One research report submitted by this eNGO helped convince the city and provincial governments to postpone and eventually cancel the construction plan of a local hydropower station due to potential ecological risks (NGO ID: 15).

We found that civic eNGOs with leaders holding current positions in the government are more likely to be engaged in policy advocacy. This makes sense because such leaders can still use formal procedures within the government/legislative system to deliver policy proposals to relevant government bodies. For example, an eNGO leader (NGO ID: 48) is a research scientist at a local institution and has occupied multiple positions over her careers, including being a member of both the District Political Consultative Committee and the District People's

Congress. When she made policy proposals for environmental protection, she usually used her titles within the system rather than the title as a civic NGO leader (NGO ID: 48).

Policy advocacy work may also make the NGO leaders more politically cautious. One interviewee, for example, indicated being confrontational and raising too many criticisms may push governmental officials to treat civic eNGOs as enemies. When government officials believe that an eNGO is not a protesting group, they are more likely to accept its policy suggestions and proposals (NGO ID: 46). Another interviewee suggested that if the local government does not understand an eNGO's work, it is unlikely that the eNGO can accomplish much (NGO ID: 40). An eNGO leader simply indicated that her *guanxi* gave her opportunities to influence government policy if she wanted to, but she did not treat policy advocacy as one of her NGO's core work areas; she would rather focus her work on environmental research, education, and ecological conservation (NGO ID: 48). Finally, one other interviewee simply said that policy advocacy, no matter how subtly done, still carries some political risks (NGO ID: 31), which would probably make any civic eNGO leader with government ties doubly cautious.

When assessing the overall influence of civic eNGOs on government policy, our interviewees have diverse opinions. One eNGO leader (NGO ID: 05) said that "Chinese eNGOs are irresponsible to the reality, and they do not dare to address pollution and ecological degradation issues; thus many eNGOs are simply disappointing for us." Yet another eNGO leader (NGO ID: 45) said that eNGOs do not need to focus primarily on monitoring the government, instead they should utilize their expertise to work on specific issues, such as environmental education. As reported by a local eNGO leader (NGO ID: 42), after successfully initiating a local anti-dam movement, he was forced to resign from his research fellow position at a government-owned research institute. A few eNGO leaders are quite pessimistic about the

possibility of changing the government by policy advocacy. One eNGO leader explicitly indicated that his NGO would not collaborate with government in environmental protection (NGO ID: 5). Although several eNGOs have experiences in collaborating with government or reaching out to governmental officials, they did not believe that they have the capacity to exert real impacts on government policy.

As shown in Table 6, *service-organization ties* is the only independent variable that has significant and positive correlation with both *legal services* and *national focus*, meaning that NGO leaders who are former/current researchers, academics, and journalists are more likely to engage in the provision of legal services and environmental issues at the national level. This makes sense given that providing legal services and tackling environmental issues at the national level usually require extensive professional knowledge and more independent position, and it is reasonable that those leaders with service-organization ties are more capable of dealing with these kinds of work. The dual identities held by many eNGO leaders have helped their eNGOs to survive and develop. On the one hand, they are leaders of civil society organizations, representing a relatively independent sector and expressing voices on behalf of the general public; on the other hand, they are affiliated with the government through their positions as university professors, news reporters, and research scientists, which may help them to “scale up” the organizational focus of their eNGOs. For example, Chai Jing, an environmentalist and also a former journalist associated with state-owned China Central Television, released an environmental documentary called “*Under the Dome*” in March 2015, which has ignited national and global concerns on the possible public health effects of air pollution in China.

Table 6 around here

When carefully examining the results shown in Tables 4-6, one can see that different types of government ties vary systematically in their relationships with different dimensions of nonprofit operations and functions. Unexpectedly, *political ties* have no significant relationships with most dependent variables. One possible explanation is that political ties may be a mixed bag for NGO leaders. Political titles offer NGO leaders some degrees of protection from political prosecution, but they may also dampen their motivation to undertake politically sensitive activities, as these NGO leaders have vested interests in maintaining cordial relationships with government officials. *Personal ties* matter for *nonprofit funding stability* and *management system*. This is compatible with other studies about the importance of personal ties in various types of business and social activities. Nee (1992) suggested that many private corporations during the early reform era benefited from having close relationships with government officials as these relationships would help them gain priority access to discounted credit and basic commodities. Apparently, in today's China, civic NGOs are in a similar situation, in which *guanxi* with government officials increase resources and opportunities, suggesting that the survival and development of the NGO sector is still highly dependent on *guanxi* with the government. *Personal ties*, however, is not significantly related to other dependent variables in service and advocacy, probably reflecting the result of counteracting effects: while facilitating access to government, personal ties also circumscribe NGO leaders' willingness to potentially upset government officials by crossing the boundaries set by government, such as engaging in advocacy and providing legal services to pollution victims.

Overall, the results suggest the need to sort out the contingent value of different government ties, which have been neglected to a large extent in previous research on

government-NGO relations in China. Specifically, personal ties with government officials may help seek stable funding and develop the management system for the civic eNGO, but these ties may discourage the NGO leaders from engaging in politically risky activities, such as providing legal services and advocating for policy changes. Service-organization ties facilitate eNGOs' effort to provide legal services or to scale up to work on environmental issues at the national level. Currently political ties and the number of government ties may help eNGOs to be engaged in policy advocacy, but surprisingly government ties do not seem to matter much in terms of generating impacts on government policy.

We also found some interesting results regarding the control variables. *NGO ties* are positively and significantly related to *policy advocacy engagement* and *policy advocacy effectiveness*. This result suggests that collaboration with one another helps eNGOs to engage in politically sensitive activities and to generate tangible impacts. It suggests that the NGO sector in China has evolved towards stronger inter-organizational collaboration despite various restrictions imposed by the government to limit the extent to which NGOs may network with one another and potentially form alliances against the regime; endogenous developments within the NGO sector are beginning to make a difference.

Registration status only matters for *management system*, and it is not related to the other dependent variables, possibly showing that the current registration requirements may not have systematic effects on other dimensions of eNGOs' operations and functions. This result may also partly explain why the Chinese government has recently decided to lessen the registration requirements for social organizations in China by eliminating the requirement for obtaining the sponsorship of a government organization as the pre-condition for registration for some types of NGOs.

Finally, *age* is positively and significantly related to *funding stability* and *legal services*, showing that organizational age may matter to an eNGO's financial capacity and service role. Interestingly, *age* is not related to *policy advocacy engagement* and *effectiveness*, possibly showing that more established eNGOs are not necessarily more likely to participate in advocacy.

Discussion and Conclusion

The existing literature on government-nonprofit relationships has been mainly focused on inter-organizational interactions, with limited attention paid to how such organizational relationships are embodied at the level of individuals and organizational leaders. In this exploratory research, we have decomposed the concept of “government ties” and identified several interesting findings on the complex relationships between government ties and nonprofit operations/functions in China. First, most civic eNGOs have reported connections with the government through their leaders' political, service-organization, or personal ties, suggesting that a large portion of civic eNGOs in China did not emerge from the grassroots of society; many instead emerged from within the government. While this research focuses on civic NGOs in the field of environmental protection, similar government ties can be observed in many other types of nonprofits in China, including private universities, private hospitals, private philanthropic foundations, etc. Leaders in these nonprofits are connected with the party-state in multiple and complex ways.

While government ties of nonprofit leaders may have helped or even protected the survival and development of civic NGOs in such a restrictive political environment (Michelson, 2007), the ties between government and NGOs have also put in doubt the so-called civic nature of Chinese eNGOs. This is especially the case given the fact that personal ties of civic eNGOs

are not significantly related to their engagement in services and activities that can be regarded as politically sensitive in the authoritarian context of China: advocating policy changes, providing legal services to pollution victims, and tackling environmental issues at the national level, all of which can be regarded as the core activities among eNGOs in Western societies. Guo (2007) argued that heavy reliance on government resources may decrease the representational capacities of nonprofit organizations in the U.S. Similarly, our findings suggest that maintaining good *guanxi* with government may also constrain the capacities of eNGOs to deliver what they are supposed to do.

Given the importance of *guanxi* in China's social and political life, one may expect that good personal relationships with governmental officials may help civic eNGOs in policy advocacy. While our statistical analysis does not support this proposition, our interviews show that some civic eNGOs used their personal ties with government officials to build collaboration with government or to influence policies. That being said, when using such personal relationships, they have to be very careful, and this may not enhance their willingness to advocate for policy change and to hold government accountable. On the other hand, given the limited fiscal resources and an increasing use of public purchase of social services provided by NGOs, it is quite likely that NGOs, especially those with good personal *guanxi* with the government, are more likely to receive government funding. This trend will likely continue when contracting out becomes a standard practice in China's public policy and social service delivery (Jing and Gong, 2012, Jing and Savas, 2009). Our research provides partial support for the projection that government-NGO relations in China may move towards a *corporatist* regime.

Our research findings echo the arguments raised by a few scholars who have used a state-centered perspective to explain the rise of civil society in China. Although the development of

civil society has been made possible by major changes in government policies regarding registration, service delivery, etc. (Spires, 2011a, Teets, 2013), NGO development has so far never gone beyond the constraints set by the authoritarian regime, and most NGOs have so far been in service, or in support, of continuing authoritarianism. Yet we have also found that many of the new arrangements in government-NGO relations have actually been initiated by social elite entrepreneurs, especially those with ties to the government. These eNGO leaders have tried to overcome difficulties and tested the boundaries of state toleration in spite of the restrictions imposed by unreasonable formal institutions. If NGOs in China can build a much stronger nonprofit network and civic community, they may work together to be more successful in taking collective actions to push for policy change. After they have demonstrated successes, government leaders may eventually, sometimes reluctantly, grant the new practices legitimacy by building true collaborative relationships with civil society.

These results add insights to the current literature on government-nonprofit relations by offering a more nuanced view on the contingent value of government ties to nonprofit operations and functions. Our study on the government ties of civic eNGOs in China provides a window for understanding the nature of government-nonprofit relationships in authoritarian regimes, shedding light on the political fragmentation and the resilience of China's authoritarian system, and the possible political continuity of the party-state in the long run. Using a relatively small sample and a mixed-methods approach, our research has also identified signs of emerging collaborations between NGOs and government in environmental governance. While Chinese civic eNGOs' close ties to the government may help move the landscape of environmental governance in China towards a more collaborative one; such a path may also lead to a *corporatist* regime, given the fiscal capacity of the Chinese government. Indeed, NGOs in many

fields, especially those focusing on service provision, may find it difficult to resist government imposed political constraints when receiving government subsidies and contracts. One possible direction for future research is to explore how government ties of nonprofit leaders may impact the revenue portfolios and advocacy strategies of NGOs. Future studies should also explore the dynamics of government-nonprofit relationships in other authoritarian countries and in what ways civic NGOs can contribute to the formation, operations, and outcomes of government-NGO collaborations in such settings.

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Table 1. Professional Backgrounds and Government Ties of eNGO Leaders

	Items	Beijing	Costal Provinces	Inland Provinces	Other	Total
Professional Backgrounds of Surveyed NGO Leaders	College Degrees or Above	17	29	29	1	76
	Background in Law Education or Practices	7	10	10	0	27
	Experiences in Environmental Protection Work	13	21	21	0	55
Government Ties of ENGOS	Political Ties	5	9	17	1	32
	Service-Organization Ties	11	13	16	1	41
	Personal Ties	8	16	21	1	46
	Current Political Ties	1	5	10	1	17
	At Least One Type of Ties	14	20	28	1	63
Registration Status	Registered	9	23	27	1	60
	Non-registration or declined to Report	8	7	6	0	21
Number of Questionnaires Returned		17	30	33	1	81

Note: In our sample, coastal provinces include Shanghai City, Liaoning Province, Jiangsu Province, Guangdong Province, Shandong Province; inland provinces refer to the jurisdictions other than Beijing and coastal provinces. One eNGO with its leader having current political ties chose to submit its questionnaire anonymously without disclosing its name, and thus we cannot trace its location.

Table 2. Summary of eNGO Leaders' Government Ties
(Sample Size: 81)

Number of Cases	Political ties	Service-Organization ties	Personal ties	Notes:
19	x	x	x	ENGOs with all three types of ties
4	x	x		ENGOs with two types of ties: both political and service-organization ties
4	x		x	ENGOs with two types of ties: both political and personal ties
10		x	x	ENGOs with two types of ties: service-organization and personal ties
5	x			ENGOs with only political ties
8		x		ENGOs with only service-organization ties
13			x	ENGOs with only personal ties
18				ENGOs without any type of ties

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Variables	Min	Max	Mean	S. D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Funding stability	1	5	3.19	1.27													
2	Management system	0	1	.59	.22	.315**												
3	Policy advocacy engagement	1	4.6	2.78	.86	.203	.185											
4	Policy advocacy effectiveness	1	5	3.37	.91	-.142	.236*	.462**										
5	Legal services	0	1	.25	.44	-.066	.210	.139	.248*									
6	National focus	0	1	.33	.47	.025	.104	.175	.127	.296**								
7	Political ties	0	1	.40	.49	-.120	.181	.228	.236*	.133	.019							
8	Service-Organization ties	0	1	.51	.50	-.002	.121	.099	.132	.231*	.290**	.344**						
9	Personal ties	0	1	.57	.50	.263*	.336**	.131	-.015	.102	-.018	.246*	.285**					
10	Current political ties	0	1	.21	.41	.104	.225*	.376**	.254*	.144	-.022	.638**	.206	.266*				
11	Number of government ties	0	3	1.47	1.09	.066	.287*	.209	.161	.216	.137	.726**	.750**	.703**	.507**			
12	NGO ties	1.6	5	3.61	.762	.113	.115	.555**	.342**	.191	.092	.158	.055	-.064	.264*	.067		
13	Registration	0	1	.74	.44	-.053	.473**	.044	.044	-.049	-.083	.190	-.134	.053	.097	.048	.008	
14	Age	0	18	6.06	5.21	.153	.048	-.094	.105	.169	.068	.064	.012	-.172	-.076	-.045	-.018	-.058

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Government Ties and Nonprofit Operations

Variables	Model 1-A: <i>Funding stability</i> as Dependent Variable			Model 1-B: <i>Management system</i> as Dependent Variable		
	Model 1-A-1	Model 1-A-2	Model 1-A-3	Model 1-B-1	Model 1-B-2	Model 1-B-3
<i>Political ties</i>	-.638 (.328)*			-.029 (.053)		
<i>Service-Organization ties</i>	-.041 (.308)	-.241 (.304)		.052 (.050)	.039 (.047)	
<i>Personal ties</i>	.978 (.306)***	.838 (.315)**		.151 (.049)***	.136 (.050)***	
<i>Current political ties</i>		.079 (.383)			.032 (.064)	
<i>Number of government ties</i>			.092 (.140)			.057 (.021)***
<i>NGO ties</i>	.281 (.193)	.223 (.207)	.202 (.204)	.04 (.029)	.032 (.030)	.027 (.029)
<i>Registration</i>	-.042 (.333)	-.227 (.330)	-.136 (.338)	.243 (.005)***	.234 (.050)***	.232 (.050)***
<i>Age</i>	.057 (.028)*	.050 (.029)*	.038 (.030)	.006 (.005)	.006 (.005)	.004 (.005)
Sample Size	81	81	81	81	81	81
R ²	.186	.140	.045	.363	.363	.315
F (sig.)	2.510 (.030)	1.785(.116)	.798 (.530)	6.366 (.000)	6.355(.000)	7.914 (.000)

Note: Models were tested by using OLS regression. Coefficients are listed with standard errors included in parentheses. * p <0.1; ** p <0.05; *** p <0.01.

Table 5. Government Ties and Nonprofit Functions: Policy Advocacy

Variables	Model 2-A: Policy advocacy engagement as Dependent Variable			Model 2-B: Policy advocacy effectiveness as Dependent Variable		
	Model 2-A-1	Model 2-A-2	Model 2-A-3	Model 2-B-1	Model 2-B-2	Model 2-B-3
<i>Political ties</i>	.213 (.197)			.259 (.238)		
<i>Service-organization ties</i>	.006 (.189)	.025 (.175)		.127 (.226)	.176 (.213)	
<i>Personal ties</i>	.231 (.187)	.197 (.182)		-.059 (.222)	-.077 (.222)	
<i>Current political ties</i>		.473 (.220)**			.357 (.268)	
<i>Number of government ties</i>			.146 (.079)*			.112 (.093)
<i>NGO ties</i>	.625 (.115) ***	.581 (.114)***	.623 (.112)***	.378 (.135)***	.351 (.138)**	.402 (.132) ***
<i>Registration</i>	.057 (.199)	.067 (.190)	.094 (.189)	.050 (.239)	.083 (.232)	.076 (.228)
<i>Age</i>	-.006 (.017)	-.002 (.017)	-.006 (.017)	.014 (.020)	.018 (.020)	.019 (.019)
Sample Size	81	81	81	81	81	81
R ²	.355	.387	.348	.155	.162	.145
F (sig.)	6.049 (.000)	6.930(.000)	9.075 (.000)	2.117(.062)	2.229 (.050)	3.016(.023)

Note: Models were tested by using OLS regression. Coefficients are listed with standard errors included in parentheses. * p <0.1; ** p <0.05; *** p <0.01.

Table 6. Government Ties and Nonprofit Functions: Service Provision

Variables	Model 3-A: <i>Service scope- legal services as</i> Dependent Variable			Model 3-B: <i>Service scale - national</i> <i>focus as Dependent Variable</i>		
	Model 3-A-1	Model 3-A-2	Model 3-A-3	Model 3-B-1	Model 3-B-2	Model 3-B-3
<i>Political ties</i>	-.008 (.650)			-.423 (.607)		
<i>Service-organization ties</i>	1.109 (.664)*	1.099 (.644)*		1.540 (.590) *	1.479 (.567)*	
<i>Personal ties</i>	.640 (.679)	.623 (.675)		-.268 (.567)	-.244 (.573)	
<i>Current political ties</i>		.072(.738)			-.526 (.720)	
<i>Number of government ties</i>			.563 (.283)**			.310 (.239)
<i>NGO ties</i>	.714 (.436)	.702 (.446)	.663 (.428)	.297 (.366)	.363 (.385)	.270 (.346)
<i>Registration</i>	-.161(.661)	-.166 (.647)	-.370 (.631)	.083 (.612)	-.016 (.587)	-.314 (.558)
<i>Age</i>	.101 (.058)*	.101 (.058)	.093 (.055)*	.041 (.052)	.033(.051)	.041 (.048)
<i>Sample Size</i>	81	81	81	81	81	81
<i>-2 Log Likelihood</i>	71.955	71.946	73.122	86.757	86.702	92.548
<i>Cox & Snell R²</i>	.138	.138	.124	.117	.117	.045
<i>Nagelkerke R²</i>	.207	.207	.187	.161	.162	.062
<i>Percentage correctly predicated</i>	78.9%	78.9%	80.3%	71.6%	71.6%	64.9%

Note: Models were tested by using binary logistic analysis regression. Coefficients are listed with standard errors included in parentheses. * p <0.1; ** p <0.05; *** p <0.01.

Appendix: Survey Measures

<p>Nonprofit Operations: Funding Stability</p> <p>Question: To what extent do you agree that external grants of your NGO are mainly long-term and multiple times? (5-point Likert Response)</p>
<p>Nonprofit Operations: Management System, Cronbach's Alpha = .688 (11 Items)</p> <p>Question: Does your NGO meet any of the following conditions? (yes/no)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our organization has accounting staff (full time or part time). 2. Our organization has lawyers (full time or part time) 3. Our organization will prepare a financial statement every year 4. Our financial statement is available to public every year 5. Our organization has established a board of advisors 6. Our organization has established a board of directors 7. Our organization has a team of full time leaders and managers 8. Our organization provides internships for college students 9. Our organization regularly recruits full-time staff 10. Our organization regularly raise money from public and donors 11. Our organization regularly conduct performance evaluation for our work and completed projects
<p>Nonprofit Policy Advocacy Engagement, Cronbach's Alpha = .779 (5 Items)</p> <p>Question: To what extent do you agree that the descriptions below are consistent with your NGO? (5-point Likert Response)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are often invited to participate in the development of environmental regulations and policies 2. We often co-work with other NGOs to provide suggestions for environmental protection policy 3. We often criticize corporate environmental pollution behavior/incident jointly with other NGOs 4. We often release policy research report to raise attention of the government and public 5. We often do public interest advertisements to raise public concerns on environmental issues
<p>Nonprofit Policy Advocacy Effectiveness</p> <p>Question: To what extent do you agree that your NGO has policy influence on government? (5-point Likert Response)</p>
<p>Nonprofit Service Scope: Legal Services(coded as "1" if answer is "yes", otherwise "0")</p> <p>Question: Is your NGO engaged in providing environmental law services and lawsuits? (yes/no)</p>
<p>Nonprofit Service Scale: National Focus (coded as "1" if answer is "yes", otherwise "0")</p> <p>Question: Is your NGO focusing on environmental issues at the national level? (yes/no)</p>
<p>Political Ties (coded as "1" if answer to any one of the following four questions is "yes", otherwise "0")</p> <p>Current Political Ties (coded as "1" if the answer to question 1 or 3 is "yes", otherwise "0")</p> <p>Question: Do leaders of your NGO meet any of the four conditions? (yes/no)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Currently working in government 2. Formerly working in government 3. Current members of the People's Congress or Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference 4. Former members of the People's Congress or Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
<p>Service-organization Ties(coded as "1" if answer to any one of the following four questions is "yes", otherwise "0")</p> <p>Questions: Do leaders of your NGO meet any of the four conditions? (yes/no)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Currently working in universities/research institutes 2. Formerly working in universities/research institutes 3. Currently working in media 4. Formerly working in media
<p>Personal Ties (coded as "1" if answer to the following question is "yes", otherwise "0")</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Question: Do leaders of your NGO have good personal relationships with government officials? (yes/no)
<p>NGO Ties, Cronbach's Alpha = .836 (5 Items)</p> <p>Questions: To what extent do you agree that the descriptions below are consistent with your NGO? (5-point Likert Response)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We often share environmental protection information with other NGOs 2. We often cooperate with other NGOs to protect the environment 3. We often co-work with other NGOs to put forward request to the government 4. We often co-work with other NGOs to strive to improve environmental governance 5. We often work with other NGOs to hold officials accountable for environmental protection