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Community Governance and Citizens' Interest Articulation: How structural constraints shape civic engagement in China

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Abstract

Nowadays in China, communities have played a crucial role in the governance framework and policy-making process. Thus, it is important to understand the functioning of community governance and citizens' participation in their daily public affairs. This study aims to analyze citizens' interest articulation process and identify the crucial influencing factors within communities in China. Specifically, based on the community level and individual level, two critical aspects are considered in this study. By analyzing the China General Social Survey (CGSS) and the zero-inflated ordered probit (ZIOP) model, the results reveal whether residents are well organized and whether feelings of resentment play a crucial role in the rights-based interest articulation. In addition, public trust across levels of government—the hierarchical government trust—also facilitates the occurrence of protests. These findings highlight not only the importance of establishing a well-functioning community agency, but also the open—participation—accountability local governance mechanism to protect residents' rights. A transparent decision-making process and diverse communication channels are crucial for rebuilding residents' confidence in local governance.

Keywords: China, community governance, interest articulation, public trust in government, CGSS

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I. Introduction

Since China's reform and opening in 1978, the resulting dramatic economic growth has not only improved people's living conditions, but also strengthened their consciousness of citizenship. Consequently, the government's tasks have become more complex and difficult, especially as the public sector has faced new, unforeseen challenges. Responses to these challenges have attracted widespread interest in academia and practice, focusing on the relevant issues for improving the governance capacity and effectiveness in China. Under China's current administrative system, "community" is the essential core unit of government governance and policy operation. The change has resulted in several contradictions and social risks, posing challenges for governance between community governance and the market economy. Thus, it is important to understand the functioning of community governance and citizens' participation in their daily public affairs.

The focus of this study is to analyze the relevant factors of residents' decisions on rights-based interest articulation under the system of community governance in China. Existing literature has focused on rights-based interest articulation, like rights protection, which can be divided into farmers' fighting politics, urban movement, and working class movement if we consider protection subjects (Tong & Zhang, 2013). Furthermore, research on reasons for rights protection can be divided into the NIMBY Movement (Feng, 2007; Shi, 2005), urban and rural demolition (Zhang, & Tang, 2013), rural land disputes (Ying, 2007), and so on. Such literature facilitates our understanding of the nature of rights protection in China, but current research on rights protection in the community neglects the space in which they happened and the influencing mechanism behind them. For example, most farmers fighting politics or the citizens' rights protection might occur in the community. On this occasion, rights protection and its causes in the community indeed warrant further discussion.

To answer this question, this study first observes residents' rights-based interest articulation in the community and considers the causal mechanism of residents' behavior choices. Second, this study deliberately measures the unique hierarchical government trust culture in China to define its influence on residents' interest articulation. Under China's centralized ruling regime, people would rather believe the central government than the local government (*ningxin zhongyang buxin difang*). Such a phenomenon is different from phenomena in Europe, America, Japan, and Taiwan.¹ Many researchers believe that hierarchical government trust might influence rights

¹ Research in Europe, the United States, Japan, and Taiwan has shown that people's political trust is inversely proportional to the level of government; thus, people would rather believe the local government than the central government (*ningxin difang buxin zhongyang*). See Chen and Chen (2012), Cole and Kincaid (2000), Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), Huang (2014), and Nye (1997).

protection behavior, but the relevant studies lack empirical tests; this article aims to fill this gap. Third, this study advocates the empirical analysis method of residents' rights-based interest articulation. Research on rights-based interest articulation differs from work on citizen participation, like voting and campaigning. Decisions related to this kind of non-traditional citizen participation cannot be made at specific times and are even hard to predict. In addition, because the amount of rights-based interest articulation is characterized by a variety of zeros, the value of zeros can reflect different situations, and neglecting zeros will lead to bias (Cameron & Trivedi, 1998). For residents' rights-based interest articulation, the community constraints need to be considered. This article estimates efficiency based on zero-inflated ordered probit (ZIOP) regressions.

This study is divided into six sections. After the introduction, Section II presents the development of community governance and highlights its importance in China. Section III analyzes the influencing structure, including community variables, government trust, and some traditional variables. Section IV presents our empirical data sources and variables' measurement. Section V discusses the data analysis of the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS); we explain the factors of community rights-based interest articulation through the ZIOP regression model. The conclusion and policy recommendations are summarized in the final section.

II. Development of Community Governance in Modern China

Over the past few decades, the content of governance theory has focused importance on the changing relationship of operating patterns between the state and society. Specifically, it increases stakeholders' chances to participate in state governance through cooperation among the public authorities, private sectors, and citizens (Kooiman, 1993, 2000; Rhodes, 1997).

The foundation of governance theory has shown great influences on the thoughts of public administration in modern China. The community, as a unit of grassroots autonomy in China, has already been seen as the core of the governance system. In May 1991, the Office of China (Ministry of Civil Affairs) officially proposed the concept of community building for the first time. With the construction of urban community pilot districts at the national scale in 1991 and the laws from the Principles of the Ministry of Civil Affairs on Nationally Promoting Urban Community Building issued in 2000, the tasks and missions of community building were clarified and definitive. Since then, community building has played a key role in driving community urbanization and development in modern China.

With an aim to build community autonomy, the measures emphasized enforcing grassroots political power construction and reforming the grassroots management system (Xia, 2008). In this way, the content of community building focuses not only on reforming the process of community service delivery, but also on the innovation of the management system. On this occasion, the concept of community governance appeared. With regard to this development, community governance is defined as a transformation of the relationship between state and society and a process of collective choice—namely, cooperation among the government, community, companies, NGOs, and residents (Chen & Li, 2003). Several community governance characteristics can be summarized as follows. First, multiple community governance bodies exist, and the government is not the leader. Second, the process of governance involves the collaboration and interaction among different governance bodies, and community building occurs among the government, community organizations (NGOs, companies, etc.), and community residents. Each of the different participating bodies fulfill different role assignments. Third, the main function of the government is leading/serving, not steering, and the top-down hierarchical commanding structure is not the basic means for maintaining social order. As many scholars have pointed out, the goal of community building is community governance and self-governance with the reform of the marketing economy and social management system (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Tong, 1997).

As mentioned, community building and governance have become critical issues of grassroots social governance in China. Many scholars have pointed out that community governance should be regarded as an application of governance theory to the community, and it needs to be analyzed through governance bodies and their relationships. Thus, research on community governance concentrates on the power structure and relationship of governance bodies (Edwards, 2001; Gerhard, 2002; Sullivan, 2001; Thomas, 1966; Zhu, 1997). Power relationships between community organizations and the government are discussed through theory research and case studies. From the microscopic perspective, governance bodies are discussed by constructing their power relationships—that is, the roles and functions of governance bodies in the community. Moreover, existing research agrees that community residents play a critical role in community governance (Guan, 2010; Li, 2009; Marilyn, 2006; Marshall et al., 2000). Therefore, community participation and democracy are important themes of community governance and social stability maintenance.

III. Community Autonomy in China: Causes of residents' interest articulation

Community participation can be conducive to public empowerment and the

effectiveness of community governance, which encourages governments to facilitate public involvement. Broadly speaking, community participation mechanisms are categorized as either citizen-driven or government-organized (Simonsen & Robbins, 2000; Wandersman, 1984). In China, two kinds of participation are (1) rights-based community participation, which has the function of interest articulation and rights protection (e.g., petitions, citizen complaints, media reports, protests) and are mostly citizen driven, and (2) traditional community participation, which is motivated by the government (e.g., voting, advising the neighborhood committee). Rights-based community participation is different from traditional community participation as it focuses on the maintenance of residents' own interests or the local public interests and has the characteristic of contentious politics (Read, 2003, 2007; Shi & Cai, 2006). Yang (2007) found that rights-based community participation can arouse the spirit of self-protection and solidarity of residents, which can sprout a citizen participation characteristic that is similar to that in the West. However, rights-based community participation, such as community residents protesting, which will cause a serious challenge to governance legitimacy, continues to be neglected (Chen, 2015).

Community Structure and Residents' Rights Protection in the Community

The owner committee (*yezhu weiyuanhui*) is the primary factor in residents' rights protection. As one of residents' autonomous organizations, the owner committee is closely related to rights protection for three main reasons. First, the owner committee provides an organizational guarantee when residents participate in rights protection protests. It is very hard to mobilize residents to participate in rights protection if there is no owner committee in the community because, for an individual unit, it is difficult to make their voices heard. Second, the owner committee also provides strategy, resource, and behavior choice support for rights protection and interest articulation (Huang & Gui, 2009; Shi, 2005; Zhang, 2005; Zhang & Zhuang, 2008; Zhu, 2010). Finally, building an owner committee facilitates the development of civil society (Fei, 2001) and political participation in the community (Gui, 2001; Li, 2009).² As previously discussed, this study expects the owner committee to have a positive effect on rights protection not only by increasing civil consciousness, but also by providing organizational guarantees.

² According to Xia (2003), the owner committee promotes the development of civil society and provides a broad space for discussing community affairs because of its close relationship with residents' interests. Under this circumstance, the development of an owner committee raises residents' civic consciousness (Chen, 2009). Gui (2001) considered the owner committee to be a self-governing organization that increases residents' willingness to participate and becomes an enlightenment school of grassroots democracy compared with residents' committee. Therefore, as a self-governing organization, the owner committee plays an active role in promoting residents' civic consciousness and political participation in the community.

Another crucial factor is house ownership (Cox, 1982; Cox & McCarthy, 1980; Davis, 1990; Li, 2009; Nicolaides, 2004; Purcell, 1997; Winter, 1990). Housing reform and the breakdown of the *danwei* system has promoted residents' property consciousness and appeal of common interests. Housing property influences rights protection for several reasons. First, home ownership is a manner of appreciation or investment for residents. As housing prices increase, owning a house means a lifetime investment and corresponding rights and interests for residents (Chen, 2009). Hence, house owners will actively participate in rights protection to protect their own rights and interests (Nicolaides, 2004). Second, Nicolaides (2004) concluded that home ownership plays a key role in residential political preference. When a state does not provide social welfare, home ownership can provide residents with a sense of security. On this occasion, house owners will be interested in community affairs to protect their economic security. Third, home ownership means high transaction costs. Unlike renters, homeowners' transaction costs may be considerable because the cost of selling a house is much greater than renting a house (Dietz & Haurin, 2003). High transaction costs lead to low mobility willingness, so homeowners are motivated to participate in community affairs to maintain their life quality and reduce losses in the community. Homeowners are more likely to participate in rights-based interest articulation.

Based on previous studies, the following hypotheses are tested in this study:

H1.1: A resident who is a member of the owner committee is more likely to participate in community rights protection.

H1.2: A resident who owns houses is more likely to participate in community rights protection.

Hierarchical Government Trust and Residents' Rights Protection within the Community

Existing research points out that a high level of confidence in the government is positively associated with the institutional expression of interest, like voting. However, if civil citizens do not trust the government, it will lead to the tendency of non-institutional participation, like rights protection (Norris, 2011; Pattie & Johnston, 2005; Shaffer, 1981; Southwell, 1985; Xie & Xu, 2012). Mass demonstrations in China have a character of hierarchical government trust (Li, 2004, 2012). There are different levels of trust toward different levels of government. Citizens trust the central government, but do not trust the local government.

Hierarchical government trust in China has its own unique contextual reasons. The first is the priority of the central authority in Confucian culture, which results in imperial power worship toward the central government among residents (Li, 2012; Xue,

2014). Another reason is the special political institution system in China: “The political trust structure of trusting the central government may be an accidental consequence of the Chinese centralized system” (Ye & Peng, 2010). Under the centralized system, the government’s power comes from the top to the bottom and the local government’s power comes from the central power, so the local government must do as requested by supervisors and fail to meet people’s demands. Consequently, the local government lacks the power to meet people’s demands and faces difficulties in gaining residents’ trust. The most important reason is that residents’ different evaluations of performance between the local and central governments lead to the phenomenon of people preferring to believe the central government over the local government (Huang, 2014; Xue, 2014). The dramatic growth of the economy enhances residents’ confidence toward the central government. However, the local government takes on the role of developing the economy, which creates an image of the local government as one that “succeeds in pleasing business, but fails to please residents” (Xue, 2014). A variety of research has revealed that the hierarchical power structure between the local and central governments has a great impact on rights protection in the community (Cai, 2008; O’Brien & Li, 2006). The impact of the trust gap on rights protection may be:

H2.1: The bigger the public trust gap between the central and local authorities, the higher the probability that rights protection participation occurs.

Traditional Perspective on Residents’ Rights Protection in the Community

In addition to the relevant factors of community governance, traditional social movement theory also needs to consider when to explore factors of residents’ participation in rights protection. First, scholars such as Gurr (1970) have focused on the grievance theory to explain rights protection. They consider participants in social movement to be irrational, and collective protests are caused by the strong emotion of grievance, which is induced by conflicts and contradictions in society or residents’ dissatisfaction with the current situation, such as the inequitable distribution of wealth and the government’s inaction (Muller & Jukam, 1983, p. 159). Thus, people feel deprived if the changing society cannot meet their expectations. The stronger emotional feelings related to grievance that people have, the more chances people have to participate in protests or revolutions against the government. Various researchers have used grievances or relative deprivation to explore protests or revolts (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Canache, 1996; Kim, 1996; Loveman, 1998; Scott, 1985; Seligson, Muller, & Jukam, 1982). The grievance theory illustrates people’s emotion of relative deprivation; as such, it is also called deprivation and relative deprivation theory (Opp & Roel, 1990). According to this theory, residents’ absolute deprivation and relative deprivation are taken into consideration to analyze the impact on rights protection. The following

hypotheses are included:

H3.1: A resident whose absolute deprivation is stronger is more likely to participate in community rights protection.

H3.2: A resident whose relative deprivation is stronger is more likely to participate in community rights protection.

The resource mobilization theory has also been posed to explain rights protection at the individual level (Gamson, 1975; Jenkins, 1983; Oberschall, 1973). Sociologists think that grievances are not the only reason; people participate in collective protests when they have the capability to take action. Two essays published by McCarthy and Zald (1973; 1977) have posed resource mobilization theory, arguing that—if an individual's grievance is not necessary and sufficient for the conditions of social movement—the resources that are effectively mobilized can really affect social movement. Furthermore, organizations have advantages in human, physical, and financial resources and communication, and people in organizations will form consensus and common interests. Thus, pressure from other members in an organization will lead to collective action. Klandermans (1984) called this social-psychological expansion, which has a multiplier effect on members' willingness to participate in rights protection. Political mobilization theory asserts that someone who has a specific party preference can be easily mobilized to participate in rights protection (Finkel & Opp, 1991).³

H3.3: A resident who belongs to an organization is more likely to participate in community rights protection.

Rational choice theory has posed several challenges to the grievance theory. Scholars, such as Olson (1965) and Tullock (1971), have asserted that the grievance caused by absolute deprivation cannot impact a rational and self-interested person's decision to participate in rights protection. These researchers argue that citizens' grievance toward the government can be considered a demand or preference that has a character of public good. Rational individual actors will not bear the cost of protesting (like time, money, or injury) if they realize that their contributions have little influence on the success of the protest. Thus, the rational individual's best choice is not to

³ There are two different viewpoints of non-typical political behavior. One is party integration, indicating that a person who has a strong party identification will prefer a stable political system and will not support protesting outside the political system. Another is party mobilization, which accepts the concept of resource mobilization and believes a person who has a strong party preference will be more easily mobilized to participate in protests than those who do not have a party preference (Finkel & Opp, 1991, pp. 341–342). As these two opinions do not reach a consensus, it is hard to evaluate the impact on protest participation. Thus, we propose the assumption according to the resource mobilization theory.

participate, but instead to be a free rider (Finkel, Muller, & Opp, 1989).⁴

Rational choice theory explains citizens' attitude of abstention from protest by using public good, but does not reasonably explain the motivation of protest participants. Hence, rational choice theory posts opinions of selective motivation or private benefit, which believe it is individual efficacy having nothing to do with specific behavioral goals that will affect rights protection participation. According to Tullock (1971), motivations of protest are not only material factors, but also non-material factors, including pursuing power, status, and even entertainment. In addition, Finkel et al. (1989), Finkel and Opp (1991), Finkel and Muller (1998), Muller and Opp (1986), Opp (1990), and Opp and Roehl (1990), in their efforts to find a solution to free riders, pointed out that, if residents believe their participation will influence the provision of public good, they will have a high awareness of political efficacy, which can reduce free riders. At this point, civilians dissatisfied with the government will actively participate in rights protection. The following assumption is put forward according to Campbell et al. (1960, p. 187)⁵:

H3.4: A resident who has high political efficacy is more likely to participate in community rights protection.

Figure 1 depicts the theoretical analytical framework of this study. The theoretical hypotheses and expected influencing directions are marked with positive and negative signs.

⁴ Public good has two characteristics in protest: nonrival and nonexclusive. Nonrival means that, if the protest succeeds, all civilians benefit, and civilians' marginal utility will not be reduced by adding another person. Nonexclusive means the person who does not pay the cost in protest will also benefit when the protest succeeds.

⁵ According to Campbell et al.'s (1960, p. 187) definition, political efficacy is people's attitude that personal political behavior will or can affect the political process. This concept has demonstrated that it can impact traditional political participation like voting, but research into political efficacy has nothing to do with non-traditional political participation (e.g., protests).

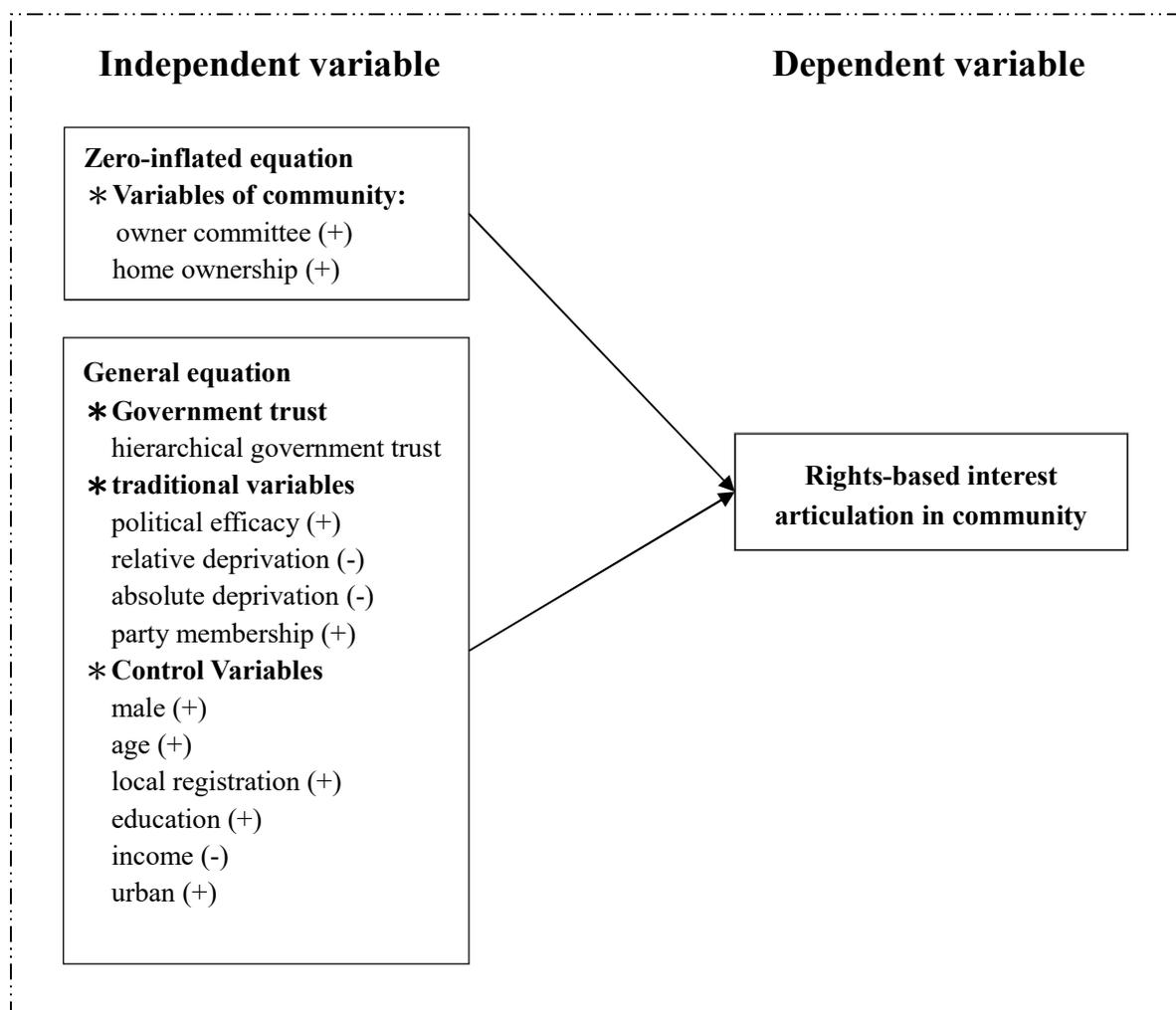


Figure 1: Theoretical analytical framework

Source: Author.

IV. Data and Variable Measurement

This study explores community rights-based interest articulation using individual-level data from the CGSS, the earliest national representative continuous survey project conducted by Renmin University and other academic institutions in China. Since 2003, the CGSS has surveyed nearly 10,000 families every year and summarized the long-term trends of society by systematically and continuously collecting data from people.⁶ The sample design of 2010 data we used was based on a multi-stage stratified design. In the sample designed, primary sampling units (county-level units) and secondary sampling units (community-level units) were sampled using 2009 national population

⁶ Except for the national population census, the CGSS is the second-most frequently used study of China in international social science. The National Survey Research Center at Renmin University was accepted as a member of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which represents the highest level of the Chinese social survey.

data as the sampling frame. Third-level sampling units (households) were then sampled by GPS. Finally, in each selected household, an 18-year-old or older adult was sampled using the Kish grid. CGSS uses face-to-face interviews. CGSS (2010) samples included nearly 12,000 families in 480 villages or resident committees covering all provinces of China; 11,783 valid questionnaires were collected.

The measurement of the dependent variable in this study focused on the residents' participation in rights-protection events. Under China's centralized system, residents participate in mass incidents to protect their rights and interests. Therefore, mass incidents will not turn into social movements or revolutions, but have characteristics of protest and non-movement. Lots of citizens appeal to the government for interests and rights by submitting petitions (*shangfang*), writing joint letters, searching for help in the media, participating in sit-in demonstrations, etc. This study uses questionnaire answers to measure rights-protection participation: "In the past year, did you participate in these activities in your community," including collective petitioning, the writing of joint letters, exposure to the media, and participation in protests (from D20.3 to D20.7 in the CGSS).

Variables relative to the community are the main independent variables for exploring the impact of home ownership and self-governing organizations in the community on rights protection. Based on relative theories, owner committee and house ownership have a positive impact on residents' rights protection, whether by promoting civil society or providing organizational guarantees. CGSS questionnaires also measure the following variables: whether interviewees know there is an owner committee in their community (D19a) and the owner of their house (A121).

As to hierarchical government trust, to reflect the structure of government trust between the central and local authorities, calculating the trust gap is a common method. According to questions of people's trust toward political institutions in China (D3), the gap of trust between the central government and local government is calculated using a Likert scale.

Residents' cognition of social justice (A35 in CGSS) and calculation of feelings of social or mobility changing (A43a and A43b in CGSS) are measured to analyze the impact of absolute deprivation and relative deprivation on rights protection. Residents' party affiliation (A10 in CGSS) is also used to explore the impact of party attribution on rights protection. Civilians' knowledge of political affairs (D10.1; internal political efficacy) and their possible effect on government decision (D10.4, D10.5; external political efficacy) are asked about in the CGSS. A factor analysis is used to inspect

civilians' political efficacy.⁷

As previously mentioned, this study summarized many crucial aspects to answer the possible casual mechanism of rights protection in China. The variables inducted from theory as well as gender, age, education, income, and urban location are considered control variables that facilitate avoiding the statistical problems of spurious correlation.⁸ Descriptive statistics of these variables are summarized in Table 1.

⁷ The Cronbach's alpha of political efficacy questions in CGSS just meet the minimum standards (= 0.570), but only one factor's eigenvalue exceeds 1 (= 1.637) in the factor analysis. Cumulative variability is explained by 54.57% by the first factor, and there is a significant decrease after this. Thus, there is no doubt of unidimensionality and homogeneity among the items, and the conclusion of the factor analysis solidly supports this method.

⁸ Xie and Chen (2014) found that older people are likely to participate in protests. Whether researchers focus on community rights protection in urban areas (Zhu, 2011) or collective protests in rural areas (Ying, 2007), older people are the main participants. Young people in the community are busy at work and indifferent to community affairs. On the contrary, older people can gain interpersonal capital in community because they have much free time. In such a situation, they will have the capability and willingness to participate in rights protection in the community. Feng (2007) considered males and low-income people to be at high risk for participating in rights protection because of differences in political efficacy and the cost of rights protection. Moreover, some researchers have pointed out the positive relationship between education and political participation, and education will also affect non-institutional political participation (Jin, 2012).

Table 1.
Variable Definition and Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | Definition | Mean/ SD |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Rights protection | Number of participating rights protection, ordered data | 0.069/0.361 |
| Owner committee | Having owner committee, dummy variable | 1,053 (person) |
| House ownership | One of couple owns house, dummy variable | 7,545 (person) |
| Hierarchical government trust | Central government trust–local government trust, continuous variable | 0.692/1.035 |
| Relative deprivation | Change of social class from past to present, ordinal variable | 0.681/1.643 |
| Absolute deprivation | Cognition of social equality, ordinal variable | 2.986/1.086 |
| Political efficacy | Political efficacy consciousness, factor score | 7.16e-04/ 0.999 |
| CCP members | CCP member or not, dummy variable | 1466 (person) |
| Male | Gender of interviewee, dummy variable | 5677 (person) |
| Income | Income of interviewee (RMB), logarithmic value | 19210.68/80835.92 |
| Age | Age of interviewee, logarithmic value | 52.30/15.68 |
| High school | Education of interviewee, dummy variable | 2,263 (person) |
| College | Education of interviewee, dummy variable | 1,813 (person) |
| Urban | Belong to urban communities or not, dummy variable, dummy variable | 7,222 (person) |

Source: summarized by the author.

V. Findings and Discussions

Table 2 provides the ZIOP regression model results of rights protection in the community based on the CGSS data. As previously mentioned, the ZIOP regression model is a mixed probability distribution model that consists of the counts of zero and non-zero values and builds its corresponding logit model and ordered probit model to estimate efficient and unbiased estimates (Bagozzi et al., 2015; Harris & Zhao, 2007). Therefore, two equations are included in this study: (i) zero-inflated equation of rights-based interest articulation that directly relates to residents' participation in rights protection, which includes the owner committee and home ownership; and (ii) general equation of rights-based interest articulation, which includes hierarchical government trust, traditional social movement (social grievance/rational choice variables and resource mobilization variables), and controlling variables. The model in this article can be expressed as follows (Harris & Zhao, 2007):

$$P(Y_i = 0) = (1 - w_i) + \Phi_2(Z_i' \gamma, -X_i' \beta; -\rho) \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

$$P(Y_i > 0) = \begin{cases} P(Y_i = j) = \Phi_2(Z_i' \gamma, \mu_j - X_i' \beta; -\rho) - \Phi_2(Z_i' \gamma, \mu_{j-1} - X_i' \beta; -\rho) & (j=1, \dots, J-1), \\ P(Y_i = J) = \Phi_2(Z_i' \gamma, X_i' \beta - \mu_{J-1}; -\rho) \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Goodness-of-fit amounts are tested for this model. The value of the Vuong test of ZIOP versus the ordered probit model, $Z = 1.67, p < 0.05$, demonstrates too many zero values in the model, and the ZIOP model is needed to estimate precise estimates. Table 2 summarizes the results of the ZIOP regression model. The null hypothesis of all variables' parameters when each model is equal to zero was rejected (LR test = 39.60; $p < .001$). The results revealed that the significant factors affecting rights protection are owner committee, absolute deprivation, hierarchical government trust, high school education income, and quadratic term of income. The following sections will further interpret the influence of these variables.

Table 2.
Statistical Results of Rights-based Interest Articulation in Communities: CGSS 2010

| | B | (S.E.) |
|--|---------------------|--------|
| <i>Zero-inflated equation</i> | | |
| Owner committee | 0.246* | 0.103 |
| House ownership | 0.076 | 0.070 |
| <i>General equation</i> | | |
| Government trust | | |
| Hierarchical government trust | 0.243*** | 0.050 |
| Traditional variables | | |
| Relative deprivation | -0.016 | 0.024 |
| Absolute deprivation | -0.095** | 0.036 |
| Political efficacy | 0.102* | 0.040 |
| CCP members | 0.168 | 0.111 |
| Control variables | | |
| Male | 0.099 | 0.086 |
| Age | 0.260 | 0.161 |
| High school | 0.197 ⁺ | 0.111 |
| College | 0.016 | 0.139 |
| Income | 0.705 ⁺ | 0.389 |
| Income ² | -0.035 ⁺ | 0.021 |
| Urban | 0.366** | 0.121 |
| Constant | -1.071 | 0.188 |
| N | 8,672 | |
| Log likelihood | -2029.7211 | |
| LR chi2(12) | 39.60 | |
| P > chi2 | p < 0.001 | |
| Vuong test of zioprobit vs. ordered probit | Z = 1.67, p < 0.05 | |

Note: ⁺ p < 0.10; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001; age and income are values of taking logarithms.

Source: Author.

Community Structure Constraints of Residents' Rights Protection in Community

Of the community variables, the owner committee is significant, with a coefficient value of 0.246; its participation margin is 0.60 (see Appendix 1). Thus, the probability of residents organized by an owner committee participating in rights protection is 0.60 times greater than those not participating in rights protection. This result confirms the research exploring community governance and the development of self-governing organizations. Furthermore, after community building was initially proposed in China, the first owner committee was set up in Shenzhen Jingtian Garden in 1991, representing the formation of community self-governance in an urban area. Owner committees subsequently developed in Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou, and local governments issued local property management regulations. The Property Management Regulation issued by the State Council in 2003 regulated organic standards, rules, and functions of owner convention and owner committee, thereby legalizing owner committees (Mao, 2014). Housing reforms and the breakdown of the *danwei* system in the Chinese marketing economy raised civilians' property consciousness and their appeal to common interest. Thus, owner committees should be organizations that have complete functions and represent residents' interest among community self-governing organizations in China (Sun & Fan, 2007). Consequently, with the promotion of housing marketization and commercialization, owner committees help residents meet their demands, and the building and mobilization of owner committees will provide organizations with guaranteed rights protection for residents.⁹ Owners' rights protection as a new kind of community movement, such as protecting the interests of house property and promoting owners' self-governance, is an important factor in community management (Li, Wen, & Xu, 2007). Yet it is rather hard to mobilize residents to participate in rights protection in the community if the community has no owner committee. It is difficult for an individual to fight property management companies and local governments, thereby highlighting the existence of owner committees as an essential condition of fighting against organizations that violate individuals' interests.

Residents' Rights Protection Evaluation at the Individual Level: Hierarchical government trust, absolute deprivation, and political efficacy

Table 2 shows that government trust positively affects rights protection. The

⁹ Zhang (2005) concluded that leading activists, building owner committees, mobilizing owner committees, developing suitable strategies, and maximizing owners' resources are five factors of rights protection's success in communities. Community residents who run for and succeed in owner committee elections have personality, charm, or resources. These people have great charisma, can affect others, and can provide ideas and support for resources and organizations.

hierarchical government trust variable's parameter is 0.243, indicating that—if other variables do not change—a larger gap in trust between the central and local government correlates to a greater probability of residents protecting their interests in a non-traditional way.

The impact of hierarchical government trust on rights protections in this study not only confirms the conclusions of qualitative research, but is also important to local governance and political participation theory. First, under the structure of the hierarchical government trust within the Chinese context, local governments always become the target of residents' rights protection. The central government and laws and policies issued become political resources that residents use to prove their legality and the main basis for expressing their dissatisfaction toward the local government. In conclusion, the hierarchical power structure provides a specific political opportunity for residents' protests (Cai, 2008; O'Brien & Li, 2006).

Furthermore, because of the centralized system in China, the degree of decentralization is limited. The local government's financial, administrative, and legislative power conferred from the central government is limited, which leads to the local government's short sightedness in neglecting public opinion and the prevalence of behaviors against laws and regulations and local protectionism. As the evaluation of the local government's performance is based on political achievements, the local government is motivated by its own achievements and interests in pursuing economic development. Although the local government does not have legislative power, it can issue regulations. Several local governments expand their power of permit for their own interests. Issues such as law enforcement departments violating civilians' interests are always happening, thereby causing losses in justice and the trust of local governments. These phenomena reflect local governments' distortion of political achievement concepts and short-sighted development concepts, which are the main reason for the low level of trust in local governments. Therefore, the hierarchical government trust phenomenon of searching for help for the central government is very common. Examples include the slogan "collecting a house like this, Xi Dada do you know" at Xianghe Tianyue Hebei on October 10, 2014, and "Qingnian Xincheng owner group@ Xi Dada: seeking attention, real estate developer is too capricious" in Qingnian Xincheng, Yanjiao, Hebei, on March 7, 2015.

According to traditional social movement theory, grievances and local residents have positive impacts on participation in rights-protection activities. Table 2 shows that the coefficient of the absolute deprivation is -0.095. Thus, if residents' degree of satisfaction with social justice adds one unit, they will be less likely to participate in rights protection. This result confirms the conclusions of research analyzing protests in

developing countries (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Canache, 1996; Kim, 1996; Loveman, 1998; Scott, 1985; Seligson et al., 1982). Although the nature of protests happening in China differs from those in the West, the gap between the wealthy and poor and between urban and rural areas increases the probability of protests. These structural contradictions deserve to be considered given the rapid economic development.

In terms of political efficacy, which has a positive impact on residents' rights protection, residents with the political efficacy are likely to participate in rights protection. This result reveals that whether residents choose to participate depends on their recognition of government responsibilities and their own rights. This result from the 2010 CGSS is very important. On one hand, residents' active interest articulation in recognizing government duty reflects the positive significance of political efficacy on residents' community participation (Fung, 2015; Herian, Hamm, Tomkins, & Pytlik Zillig, 2012). On the other hand, with the dramatic socio-economic transformations that have occurred over the past nearly 40 years in Mainland China, residents' community participation has begun to form a character of real interest articulation because of the appearance of rights consciousness (Hu & Chan, 2012; Lorentzen & Scoggins, 2015; Yang, 2007). How this kind of residents' interest articulation will evolve in the future in Mainland China is worth ongoing observation.

VI. Conclusions: Implications for theory and practice

This study considered rights-based interest articulation in Chinese communities to discuss the influencing mechanism of residents' rights protection behavior through policies, resources, and behavior choices. Several important findings can be drawn from CGSS. First, the construction of community governance has indeed had a significant positive effect on rights protection, indicating that owner committees can provide organizational guarantees to residents when they are pursuing their own interests. Second, the hierarchical government trust within the unique Chinese context has led to the heterogeneity of rights protection objects. Government trust closely relates to governance; if a local government cannot gain trust, it will lead to the failure of grassroots governance. Unlike most existing studies, this study not only tests the existence of hierarchical government trust, but also observes its direct impact on the expression of rights protection. Third, residents' grievances will lead to rights protection, conforming to research findings on centralization systems in developing countries in the West (Muller & Jukam, 1983). Conflicts or contradictions, such as the uneven distribution of wealth, policy bias, corruption, and people's discontent with these social problems, current situations, or the specific topic affect collective actions and collective protests. Fourth, political efficacy influences citizens' participation in the

rights-based community participation. A real interest in articulation has emerged because of the appearance of residents' rights awareness. Using a combination of theories and data from CGSS, this study hopes to promote the research agenda on existing community governance and mass incidents.

According to the results of this empirical research, at least three orientations could facilitate the public reform to realize good governance in China. First, creating community governance and developing the democracy at the grassroots level can achieve orderly community autonomy. The CGSS data appear to have different effects on different types of community self-governing organizations (especially owner commission) for the residents seeking to protect their rights and interests. Therefore, China's future grassroots governance can achieve its target by continuously strengthening and improving the construction of community self-governing organizations, which use a more organized and rational autonomous mode.

Second, enhancing the credibility of the local government can facilitate public trust in the government and eliminate discontent. Innovation in systems and institutions encourages citizens' participation in order to ensure legitimacy in the policy formulation and implementation process. Insisting on the logic of open participation in the accountability of democratic decision-making makes citizen participation essential to government accountability. Citizen participation is needed when constructing the local government decision-making accountability mechanisms. It is also critical to pay attention to citizens' views and public opinion in the investigation of decision-making. In the disposal stage of accountability, the timely disclosure of the results and responses must be ensured to reflect the value of citizens' participation in the process of accountability as this is an important means for enhancing the government's credibility to achieve citizens' participation and accountability mechanisms.

Third, it is important to realize a good interactive relationship between the government and community and to clarify the functions and duties of the government and the self-governing organization in the community. Unlike Western societies, the community governance model under China's centralized system involves both the government and the society. There are two directions for promoting the benign interaction between the grassroots government and community self-governance. First, the core aim of achieving the transformation of local government functions is to clear the duties and powers of the government and the self-governing organizations in the community and establish the community power lists of both bodies to ensure that grassroots government in the community does not do things without legal authority. Second, to establish an important form of good interaction between the local government and community, it is necessary to configure an open pipeline for citizens

to express their public opinions. Only by achieving political communication between the local government and community self-governing organizations can widespread community participation have its practical significance and can the local government respond to comments through political communication, thereby becoming a responsive government.

Appendix 1:

Marginal Effects of Right-based Interest Articulation in Communities: CGSS 2010

| | 0 dydx | 1 dydx | 2 dydx | 3 dydx | 4 dydx | 5 dydx |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Zero-inflated equation</i> | | | | | | |
| Owner committee | -0.060* | | | 0.060* | | |
| House ownership | -0.018 | | | 0.018 | | |
| <i>General equation</i> | | | | | | |
| Government trust | | | | | | |
| Hierarchical government trust | -0.078*** | 0.039*** | 0.021** | 0.008* | 0.007* | 0.002 ⁺ |
| Social Grievance/Rational Choice | | | | | | |
| Relative deprivation | 0.005 | -0.003 | -0.001 | -0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Absolute deprivation | 0.030* | -0.015* | -0.008* | -0.003* | -0.003 ⁺ | -0.001 |
| Political efficacy | -0.033* | 0.016* | 0.009* | 0.003 ⁺ | 0.003 ⁺ | 0.001 |
| CCP members | -0.054 | 0.027 | 0.015 | 0.006 | 0.005 | 0.002 |
| Control variables | | | | | | |
| Male | -0.032 | 0.016 | 0.009 | 0.003 | 0.003 | 0.001 |
| Age | -0.083 | 0.042 | 0.023 | 0.009 | 0.007 | 0.003 |
| High school | -0.065 ⁺ | 0.032 ⁺ | 0.018 ⁺ | 0.007 | 0.006 | 0.002 |
| College | -0.005 | 0.003 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Income | -0.226 ⁺ | 0.113 ⁺ | 0.062 ⁺ | 0.024 | 0.019 | 0.007 |
| Income ² | 0.011 | -0.006 ⁺ | -0.003 | -0.001 | -0.001 | 0.000 |
| Urban | -0.117* | 0.059* | 0.032* | 0.012* | 0.010 ⁺ | 0.004 |

Note: ⁺ $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; age and income are values of taking logarithms.

Source: the author.

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