Social Status and Governmental Trust:
A Study of Civil Society Organizations in Guangzhou, China

by

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ABSTRACT

Previously, two extreme points describe civil society organizers’ intention to engage with the government. Western modernization theories suggest that all civil society organizations oppose the state; and State-dominant theories claim that all the civil society groups depend on the state and support the state. Based on my two months’ fieldwork in Guangzhou City between May and July 2010, however, I find that some civil society organizations support the state while other groups oppose the state. Specifically, elite civil society organizations, which are established by people with mid or high social status, have more contacts with the government and show low trust in the government. On the other hand, non-elite civil society organizations, which are established by people with low social status, have fewer contacts with the government and show their willingness to engage with the government. This conclusion is valid in both the public good provision organizations and the advocacy groups. Four case studies of civil society groups in Guangzhou are used to illustrate the points above.

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Introduction

It has reached a consensus that civil society organizers with higher economic and social status have better relations with the government than the poor and disadvantaged group organizers.\(^2\) Standard civil society theories also claim that public-good provision organizations are more inclined to engage with the government while the advocacy groups not.\(^3\) Another general argument in civil society theories is that people who are rich and more educated can establish larger-scale and stronger organizations and their counterparts.\(^4\) I contend that these theories are partially misconceived in the field of autonomous civil society organizations in China. I want to argue that although Chinese group organizers with higher social status have more contacts with government, they have low trust in government and prefer to remain independent and keep the government at a distance. On the contrary, group organizers

\(^{1}\) The use of the term “civil society organizations” is similar to the term “non-governmental organizations (NGO).” They both refer to organizations that are with wider social aim and operate independently from the government. However, the “civil society organizations” differ from “non-governmental organizations” in that the non-governmental organizations are generally non-profitable while the civil society organizations can be both profitable and non-profitable groups.


with lower social status and fewer opportunities to contact with government show high trust to the government and are willing to be co-opted by the government. I also find that the intention to engage with the government does not have a strict division between the advocacy groups and the public-good provision organizations. It is possible that the advocacy groups are willing to engage with the government while the public-good provision groups not. Moreover, my research suggests that elite organizations, the organizations established by people with higher economic and social backgrounds, are not necessarily large in scale and have more economic resources. This paper draws on my two months’ fieldwork in Guangzhou City between May and July 2010. Four case studies of civil society groups in Guangzhou are used to demonstrate the points above.

**Explain Civil Society Organization’s Intention to Engage with the Government**

What is civil society organizations’ intention to engage with the government? Do they want to stay independent from the government and keep the government at a distance or, do they want to depend on the government and cooperate with the government? Organizers’ willingness to engage with the government, or their trust to the government, is the dependent variable of this paper. Citizen’s trust to its government is of great importance, both practically and theoretically. Some researchers claim that high political trust have a positive correlation to people’s

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5 This paper draws on case studies from two months of dissertation research, conducted in the summer of 2010. Fieldwork site is located in Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province. The fieldwork site is consisted of four districts in Guangzhou City, including Tianhe District, Baiyun District, Liwan District and Panyu District.
compliance. Other researchers argue that people’s trust to the government will improve governmental performance.

Previous studies on civil society organizations’ willingness to engage with the government can be divided into three categories. The first category is the standard Western modernization theories, which argue that civil society organizations intend to stay autonomous from the state and oppose the state. The second category argues that social organizations in some authoritarian countries rely on the state and support the state. The third category reflects the complex interplay between state and civil society organizations, arguing that the nature of state agencies and civil society groups is uncertain and the relationship between them is not straightforward. I will show these three categories in detail in the following part.

In the first category, the standard Western modernization theories argue that civil society organizations are pro-democracy and oppose the state. Based on Mark Warren, the civil society associations can contribute to the development of democratic citizens and democratic distribution of state power. With the help of these associations, as Warren suggests, citizens obtain the capacity to organize themselves, either in the form of demonstrations or civil disobedience, and gain enough power to resist the strong state. Warren also argues that civil society’s capacity of organizing collective actions can finally increase the state’s responsiveness to its citizens.

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Civil society's pro-democracy nature and its separateness from the state can be traced back to American's history between the nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century, when the flourish of voluntary associations went hand in hand with the building of American democracy. The early American civil society organizations are "apolitical", achieving social goals with little intertwining with government. Since the industrialization process in the 1970s, civil society organizations in the United States transformed from "small, local, and informal" to "big, national, and bureaucratic." These trans-local civil society organizations are parallel to the three-level governmental structure, which enables them to exert close supervision over the government departments and confront the state more effectively when it fails to provide public goods.

Besides the United States, civil society organizations in some developing countries mount significant protests against the state power. In Poland, a large number of civil society organizations accumulate their strength to oppose the strong Communist state in the 1970s. Similarly, military regimes in some Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, witnessed a large number of civil society organizations severely protested against them in the 1980s. Although civil society organizations in various developing countries take active protests against the state, Garrenton and Schneider suggest that their protests have little influence on the

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10 See Theda Skocpol, "How American Become Civic", from Civic Engagement in American Democracy, edited by Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina, (Brookings Institution Press, 1999) pp. 32-33
13 See Adam Michnic, "1989 and the European Social Model: Transition without Emancipation?", from Philosophy and Social Criticism, November 2009, pp. 1019-1037
development of democracy. 14

However, the Western Modernization theories face great difficulty when explaining the state-society relations in many developing countries. In countries with authoritarian tradition, social organizations depend heavily on state and support the state. This significant difference brings us to a second category of thought about civil society organization’s intention to engage with the government. The best example in the second category is various governmental-organized non-governmental organizations (GNGOs) in China. These GNGOs receive their funding from government; their organizers are either appointed by the government or government officials themselves; and their existence is to support the government with policy implementation. Kenneth Foster studies a bunch of business associations created by the local government in Yantai City, Shandong Province to demonstrate the functions of GNGOs above. As Foster concludes, the existence of these social organizations and their support to the local government have formed a new kind of corporatism 15

The two categories above, the civil society organizations either oppose the state or support the state, go to extreme to some extent. In the third category, researchers argue that some groups oppose the state while others support the state. Specifically, the public-good provision organizations are more likely to support the state while the advocacy groups tend to oppose the state. Based on Daniel Posner, public good provision groups, which aim to improve the public welfare by providing citizens with

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order and public service themselves, actually act as “substitutes” for the state when the state fails to provide public goods.16 Advocacy groups, however, function as “watchdogs” to the state. These advocacy groups do not provide public goods themselves, but will bring trouble to the state policy-makers when they fail to provide enough public goods or public service. Posner concludes that compared with the public-good provision organizations, advocacy groups are more likely to have an adversarial relation with the government.17

In sum, the first category of Western Modernization Theory predicts that all the civil society organizations are pro-democracy and oppose the state. The second category predicts that all the civil society organizations rely on the state and assist the state. The third category predicts that public-good provision organizations support the state while the advocacy groups do not. From my opinion, the predications of the first and second categories are not true, since my research suggests that some civil society organizations want to engage with the government whereas others do not. Moreover, the predication of the third category is incorrect either. Based on my study, it is possible that public-good provision groups oppose the state while the advocacy groups support the state.

My study of Chinese grassroots autonomous civil society organizations also suggests that it is the social status of the group organizers that plays a decisive role in civil society organizations’ intention to engage with the government. Specifically,


organizers with higher social status want to keep the government at a distance while organizers with lower social status want to be co-opted by the government. I also argue that this finding is valid for both the public good provision organizations and the advocacy groups.

The fact that not every organizer of the elite organization is willing to engage with the government is worth thinking about in the Chinese context. In the authoritarian regime like China, it is worth thinking why some people want to and dare to oppose government. Group organizers’ unwillingness to engage with the government is very different from the attitude of “red capitalists”, the private entrepreneurs who choose to become a party member and support the government. Many researches have shown that private entrepreneurs in China have high trust to the government and show great obedience to the government. As Bruce Dickson pointed out, private entrepreneurs in China usually supported the government because they feared that political instability may harm their economic interest. Moreover, Kellee Tsai argues that Chinese red capitalists tried to build a good relationship with the government and to take an active part in the policy-making process to guarantee their economic property. Although the relation between the state and private entrepreneurs is good, Tsai suggests that this close state-business association is not likely to bring in democracy.

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18 See Bruce Dickson, Red Capitalists in China: the Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.13-14
19 See Kellee Tsai, Capitalism Without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China (Cornell University Press, 2007), pp.4-6
Some people may argue that elites’ distrust in the government and willingness to stay away from the government may result from their capacity to collect resources from various social actors such as private entrepreneurs, lawyers and doctors. Therefore, it becomes unnecessary for them to rely on the government. This argument is proved by G.Lachelle Norris in the Western context. He claims that in a movement, elite-organizations have more social networks, which enable them to mobilize economic and human resource from other social elites. 20

In the Chinese context, it is also true that elites as a group have strong resource mobilization ability than their counterpart, the non-elites such as workers and peasants. However, this capacity declines significantly after they run a civil society groups. This may seem a bit weird at the first glance. I will take Mr. Zeng, the organizer of Panyu Workers’ Paperwork Service Center, as an example to illustrate this point. Mr. Zeng transferred from a lawyer assisting the private entrepreneurs with their law case to a lawyer engaging in a lawsuit against the entrepreneurs on behalf of the migrant workers. During this process, his original good relation with the private entrepreneurs was gone simultaneously and he could no longer mobilize resources from these entrepreneurs.

Other people may suggest that elites’ distrust to the government may result from the government’s unfriendly attitude, for example, to remain vigilant and exert tight control, to them. From the perspective of these people 21, this is because elite groups

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are generally large in scale, which makes them more threatening to the government. This logic is not valid in the Chinese society. For Chinese grassroots civil society organizations, the elite groups are not necessarily larger than the non-elite groups and many Chinese elite organizations are small in scale. According to a special report from the *China Development Brief*, only the Government-owned organizations in China are large in scale, most grassroots and autonomous civil society organizations in China are very small. Another survey on civil society organizations in Guangzhou City also claims that grassroots civil society groups are generally small and most of them remain unregistered.

Actually, based on my research, it is common that the Chinese government wants to co-opt these elite organizations, just as the government wants to co-opt the “red capitalists”, rather than treating them unfriendly. This is because elite organizations usually act as the leader of other civil society organizations in a certain field. If the government is able to co-opt civil society organizations organized by elites, the government gains the capacity to exert indirect control over all the civil society groups in a particular domain. I will take the Xinfu School, an elite organization in Guangzhou City, as an example. The government treats its organizer very well and always invites him to attend government conference, but this organizer ignores the government’s invitation and never attends these conferences. Elite’s distrust of government is thus not because of the government’s unfriendly attitude to them.

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22 See 250 Chinese NGOs, a special report from the *China Development Brief*, August 2001 [http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/userfiles/250%20NGOs.pdf](http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/userfiles/250%20NGOs.pdf)

Researchers may also claim that elites' distrust to the government may result from their education background rather than their contact frequency with the government. According to Bill Beattie, the purpose of education is to develop people’s mind and make them think independently. Since elites as a group are more educated than the non-elites, the longer period of education may cultivate their capacity of critical thinking, make them less obedient to the government and become more judgmental to the government policies. This idea goes with the modernization theories where education is critical to “create modern individuals.” Again, this argument is true in the Western context; however, it is not suitable in the Chinese society. In Chinese education system, imparting students with independent and critical thinking is not very important. However, students’ utmost responsibility is to remember the knowledge given by the textbooks or the teachers and write down the exact answer as they say in the examination. Moreover, Chinese education put a great emphasis on teachers’ authority, which is thought to be unchallenged. Under this education system, “the best students” are usually those who are willing to follow everything the teachers say. Therefore, it is unlikely that people under this education mechanism are taught to become distrust to the government.

24 See Judith Lloyd Yero, *The Meaning of Education*, 2001, more information can be found in the website: http://www.teachersmind.com/pdfdirectory/Education.PDF
Research Hypothesis

My research hypothesis is as follows: elite organizers, organizers with high social status, have negative appraisal of the government before they establish the civil society organizations; after they run their organizations, their trust in government deteriorates step by step through their frequent contacts with the government. On the contrary, the non-elite organizers, organizers with low social status, have positive appraisal to the government before they establish their organizations; and their trust in government maintains or even improves after they build up their organizations even if they contact government rarely. In this hypothesis, the independent variable is the social status of the group organizers; the dependent variable is group organizers’ trust to the government after they establish the organizations; and the intermediary variable is organizers’ contact frequency with the government. I want to test whether this hypothesis is valid in both the public-good provision organizations and the advocacy groups.

The hypothesis above is surprisingly similar to the logic described in Mary Gallagher’s paper. During her fieldwork at a large legal aid center in Shanghai, Gallagher had an interesting finding. That is, after the legal process, although plaintiffs gain strong capacity to work the law well, they become disillusioned to the legal system as a whole. In other word, the more the plaintiffs involve in the legal process, the more likely that they hold a negative evaluation to the legal system. Gallagher coins a term “informed disenchantment” to illustrate this phenomenon and argue that this disenchantment may finally lead to the public’s distrust to the
government.\textsuperscript{28}

Since it is very important to define the key terms in the research hypothesis, the next part will provide a clear and detailed definition of the key words in the hypothesis. First, “civil society organizations” in this paper refer to the indigenous societally-formed organization, which remain autonomous from the state and act as the intermediate groups between the state and the society. The civil society organizations would not seize political power\textsuperscript{29} but act to promote social reform and to solve social problems, such as poverty alleviation, public-good provisions, and environmental protections. Noticeably, civil society groups are different from the government-organized organizations, which are closely affiliated with the government and lack of autonomy. Moreover, civil society groups in this paper, similar to the concept of “social force”, including both the for-profit and non-profit activity.

In my hypothesis, “the elite organizers” refer to the group organizers with high education background and with professional skills. These people usually obtain a bachelor degree from top universities and later have decent jobs such as working in the bank or at the law firm before they establish the organization. Noticeably, these people are not necessarily very wealthy in economics status. In other word, the elites considered in this paper include the “knowledge expertise” and the “technological expertise”. On the contrary, in this paper “the non-elite organizers” refer to people


who are poorly-educated, having no professional skills and mainly doing laboring work.

“Contact with the government” can take various forms, which include the group organizers seeking contact with the government and the government officials making regular check-ups on the organizations. Noticeably, the contact frequency between the civil society groups and the government can be viewed as an intermediary variable of the hypothesis. It serves as a bridge between the social status of the group organizers and their trust to the government.

“The trust to the government” is an important term in the hypothesis. In this paper, political trust means that group organizers have a general perception that the government and its staffs are good. In more detail, organizers who trust the government hold a view that the government will bring good to their organizations and support the development of their organizations. On the other hand, organizers who do not trust the government believe the government staffs are bad and think that the government will intervene and impede the development of their organizations. Political trust is very important. Some researchers, such as Marc Hetherington, contend that high political trust can gain obedience from the citizens.30

The “desire to cooperate with the government” takes two different forms: whether they want to get funding from the government and whether they want to do a project with the government. Receiving funds from the government is a relatively weak type of cooperation, while doing a project with the government is stronger, more

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active type of cooperation. My aim is to see whether organizers with different backgrounds differ in their intentions to cooperate with the government, either in terms of receiving funds or collaborating on projects.

**Research Design**

When looking at the intention of indigenous autonomous civil society groups and their contacts with the government, one of the most difficult problems is the lack of statistical data. Official statistical yearbooks do not include data of autonomous civil society organizations. When I decide to conduct my own large-scale survey, I face another problem. That is, I can not get a complete name list of all the autonomous organizations any city from either the government agencies or the academic institutions, which is indispensable for me to conduct random selection and the large-scale survey afterwards.

I thus decide to conduct in-depth case studies to understand organizations’ intention to engage with the government. When conducting case studies, it is better to do in-depth face-to-face interviews with these group organizers rather than simply ask the group organizers to fill in a questionnaire. This is because the dependent variable of this paper, political trust or organizers’ willingness to engage with the government, is very subjective. During the face-to-face interviews, I can get more background information of the civil society organizations and understand how they view the government from the words they choose and intonation they use.

It is also very important to pick up good cases. The principle to judge whether the cases are good is that these selected cases must be appropriate to test the research hypothesis, that is, civil society groups organized by people with higher social status have low trust to the government, and people with lower social status have high trust to the government. I also want test whether these hypothesis is valid to both the public good-provision organizations and the advocacy groups. I want to prove that the
public-good provision organizations are not always support the state and the advocacy
groups are not always oppose the state.

I thus select four cases in total. I first select two public-good provision
organizations, one of which is established by social elite while the other is organized
by people with low social status. I want to see if the organizers’ political trust varies
in these two public-good provision organizations. Next, I carefully select two
advocacy groups. Again, one of the groups is managed by people with higher social
status and the other is organized by people with lower social status. By doing this, I
am able to verify whether organizers’ political trust differs in the two advocacy
organizations.

Then I need to decide the research site. Due to my limited time and financial
resources, I can only select one city in China to conduct my face-to-face interviews.
Therefore, selecting a city which is appropriate to study the autonomous organizations
has become the next important issue. In China, four cities have abundant civil society
organizations: Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming and Guangzhou. By doing more research,
I find that cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Kunming are characterized by flourishing
international civil society groups and government organized organizations, whereas
the civil society groups in Guangzhou City are mainly indigenous and autonomous.
Indigenous civil society organization flourishing in Guangzhou may partly results
from Guangzhou’s far away from China’s capital city Beijing and its close relation
with Hong Kong and Macau, which enables Guangzhou to become a city with
relatively open political environment and new ideas. Moreover, this paper pays
special attention to organizations for rural migrant workers and Guangzhou is an ideal
place for studying this kind of organizations. This is partly due to its large gathering
of migrant workers, and partly due to its rapid development of organizations of
migrant workers. From the analysis above, Guangzhou is an ideal site for studying the
indigenous civil society groups, especially groups for the rural migrant workers.

During my fieldwork, I was very fortunate to get help from professors in Sun Yat-sen
University, Guangzhou. It is their introduction that facilitates my contact with the autonomous civil society organizations in the Guangzhou City.

**People’s Political Trust in China**

Before we understand group organizers’ political trust in China, it is necessary to have a general knowledge of how every Chinese view the government. Contrary to the Western society in which people hold a negative appraisal to the government before they know what the government actually do, nearly every Chinese have a rather positive view to the Chinese government before they have any direct contact with the government. Mary Gallagher gives us a concrete example of how the plaintiffs at a large legal aid center in Shanghai have high trust in the legal system before they are involved in any legal process, and how plaintiffs’ trust to the legal system disappears step by step during their engaging in the lawsuit. Gallagher points out that it is the direct contacts with the legal department that gradually leads to people’s negative evaluation of the legal system. 31

Moreover, people in China tend to express high trust to governmental officials with whom they are not familiar and have fewer contacts; on the contrary, they are inclined to distrust governmental officials with whom they are familiar and have frequent contacts. Therefore, Chinese people’s political trust in the central government and their trust in the local government differ significantly. Based on Lianjiang Li, Most Chinese villagers believe that the central government has beneficial intention; they also believe, however, that the local government lacks the

capacity to implement these good central policies. Furthermore, as Kevin O’Brien and Lianjiang Li argue, sometimes the poor and weak rural peasants would use the promise of the central government to fight against the local officials when they fail to provide adequate public goods.

The Development of Civil Society Organizations in Guangdong Province

Based on a survey conducted in 2007, civil society organizations in Guangdong Province have experienced a rapid growth between 1995 and 2007. The rapid increase of the civil society groups since 1995 can be partly contributed to the World Conference on Women being held in Beijing in the year 1995. Not only did this conference popularize the concepts of civil society organizations, it also provided a perfect chance for people in China to learn about what an international social organization looked like and how it functioned. Since this conference, indigenous civil society groups, such as groups aimed at environmental protection, education issues, poverty alleviation and legal assistance, have been springing up. The rapid growth of Chinese civil society organizations may also be due to the promulgation of

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32 See Lianjiang Li, “Political Trust in Rural China”, from *Modern China*, April 2004, pp. 228-258
33 See Kevin O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-15
34 This survey is conducted by the Research Center of the Civil Society Organizations in Guangdong Province in 2007. This Subject Group randomly selected over fifty civil society organizations in Guangdong as the research sample, did in-depth interviews with them and finally drew a conclusion.
35 Tony Saich quotes the statistical data from the *China Daily* in 1993 and the *Annual Report of the Ministry of Civil Society* in 1996 to do a comparative study. The *China Daily* reported that there were 1,500 national civil society groups and 180,000 local ones in October 1993, compared with 1,845 civil society organizations at the national level and 186,666 locally reported by the Ministry of Civil Affairs at the end of 1996. See Tony Saich, “Negotiating the State: the Development of Social Organizations in China”, *the China Quarterly*, 2000, pp. 124-141. Some other articles reveal the development mode of various non-governmental organizations in the Pearl River Delta, Guangdong Province. See Jingwei He and Hui Huang, “NGOs Defending Migrant Labor Rights in the Pearl River Delta Region,” the *Hong Kong Journal of Social Science*, No.35, 2008, pp. 41-71; See Chubin Wu “the imploration of the management mode of volunteering work: to take the Qizhi Mode as an example”, *Youth Studies*, June 2008, pp.74-77; Also see “Non-governmental Organization and the Protection of the Rights of the Rural Migrant Workers”, *Journal of Sun Yat-sen University*, No.3 2007, pp.80-127.
the revised version of the *Management of the Registration of Social Organizations*\textsuperscript{36} in the year 1998. This national regulation gave clear instructions about what governments at different levels needed to do to manage social organizations, which greatly encouraged the development of civil society organizations in China.

The Guangdong government has paid more attention to the development of civil society groups since 2007. As Jianguang Tan has pointed out, four measures were adopted by the Guangdong government to promote the development of civil society groups. The first measure was to initiate a province-wide investigation, conducted by three government departments, the Guangdong Public Policy Research Office, the Department of Civil Affairs and the Communist Youth League, to study the development of civil society groups in Guangdong Province in the last thirty years. The outcome of this investigation will provide the government accurate information of civil society groups in Guangzhou and enable the government to make sensible policies to promote the development of civil society organizations. The second measure was to build up a specific governmental civil society guiding committee to provide instructions regarding practical problems. The third one was to set up a governmental foundation to provide financial assistance to Guangdong volunteer work. The fourth one was to provide honorable title to people who have made contributions to civil society.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36} The 1998 Management of Registration of Social Organizations set up a relatively clear criteria for the government to manage the civil-society groups, for example, it gives a clear description about how the groups to be registered as a civil society groups, how to manage the groups after they are established and how to punish the groups when they do something wrong.

\textsuperscript{37} Jianguang Tan studies the development of civil society groups in various cities in Guangdong Province such as Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Foshan and draws a conclusion. See Jianguang Tan, “The Case study of Shenzhen Youth Volunteering groups.” The Journal of Chinese Youth Political College, 2001, pp.52-55
After more than twenty years’ self-development and accumulation, the civil society organizations in Guangdong Province have experienced a rapid development in the past few years.\textsuperscript{38} Statistical data from the Research Center of the Civil Society Organizations in Guangdong Province in 2007 reflects that the civil society groups in Guangzhou experienced fast growth between 1995 and 2007. Social Organizations established during this period count for 76\% of all the civil society organizations in Guangdong Province. This survey even suggests that the number of civil society organizations emerged between 1978 and 2006 is fewer than the number of social groups established in a single year 2007\textsuperscript{39}. The civil society organizations played a significant role in alleviating the serious snow disaster at the beginning of 2008\textsuperscript{40}. The civil society groups also showed their strong ability to deal with the rescue and recovery needs in the Sichuan Earthquake in May 2008. Moreover, the next Asian Games, which will take place in Guangzhou City in November 2010, will provide another important opportunity for the civil society organizations in Guangzhou to enhance their capacities.

Although civil society organizations in Guangzhou have grown and developed greatly in recent years, they still face many difficulties. As Jiangang Zhu concluded\textsuperscript{41}, first, the civil society groups still have difficulty getting registered as legal

\textsuperscript{38} Jianguang Tan studies the development of civil society groups in various cities in Guangdong Province such as Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Foshan and draws a conclusion. See Jianguang Tan, “The Case study of Shenzhen Youth Volunteering groups.” The Journal of Chinese Youth Political College, 2001, pp.52-55; See Jianguang Tan, Guoshen He and Shan Liu, “Development of Modes of Youth Voluntary Service in Small Medium towns: Take Foshan City as an example,” The Journal of Chinese Youth Political College, 2002, pp. 52-55.

\textsuperscript{39} This survey is conducted by the Research Center of the Civil Society Organizations in Guangdong Province in 2007. This Subject Group randomly selected over fifty civil society organizations in Guangdong as the research sample, did in-depth interviews with them and finally drew a conclusion.

\textsuperscript{40} Many civil society organizations participate in the relieve work during the snow disaster, such as the Foundation of Chinese Anti-poverty Organization, Chinese Welfare Organization, and Hong Kong Oxfam Organizations, and so on.

associations. In order to get registered, the civil society organization needs to find a
government agency as its affiliated organization. However, seldom government
agencies are willing to do so.\footnote{This is because if a government agency becomes an affiliated organization of the civil society groups, this
government agency must take up the responsibility for whatever the group does. If the civil society group
conducts something illegal, the affiliated government agency would be involved too.} Second, the civil society organizations usually face a
shortage of funding and human resources. A large proportion of civil society
organizations in China get their funding from indigenous or international foundations,
which needs to be renewed every year and is not guaranteed. Third, the indigenous
civil society organizations have to make great efforts to become professional and
promote their organizational management skills. The loose organization structure has
become a common problem faced by indigenous grassroots organizations. Fourth,
since there is no professional organization in China to supervise and give objective
appraise of the existing civil society organizations, social associations in China
usually lack credibility from the public. By referring to various problems faced by the
civil society groups in Guangzhou, Jiangang Zhu concluded, China is still in the
"pre-civil-society" stage\footnote{See Jiangang Zhu, "Grassroots NGOs and Development of China Civil Society", \textit{Open Times}, 2004, Volume 6.}.

\textbf{Comparing Four Organizations}

This section presents case studies of four civil society organizations. For
confidential reason, I will call these four organizations Group A, Group B, Group C,
and Group D. The organizers of these groups are called Mr. A or Ms. B according to
their gender. The four civil society organizations are selected due to their variation
along two dimensions: whether the organization is organized by people with mid or high social and economic status, and whether the organization provides public goods or whether it aims at advocacy. The purpose of selecting these two dimensions is to test the research hypotheses: (1) people with higher social and economic background have higher trust to the government, and (2) the above hypothesis is valid for both the public-good provision organizations and the advocacy groups. (Figure 1)

**Figure 1: Variations in Public-good Provision and in the Status of Organizer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizer with Mid or High Social and Economic Status</th>
<th>Public Good Provision Groups</th>
<th>Advocacy Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A: Organized by an intellectual</td>
<td>Group C: Organized by an intellectual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B: Organized by a migrant worker</td>
<td>Group D: Organized by a worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these four cases studies, two public-good-provision groups, Group A and Group B (on the second role of Figure 1), are organized by people with different social and economic backgrounds. Specifically, Group A is organized by Mr. A, a talented person graduated from Sun Yat-sen University and had working experience in Industrial and Commercial Bank of China; Group B organized by Ms. B, a female rural migrant worker coming from Sichuan Province. My purpose is to test whether political trust, the dependent variable of this paper, varies significantly between Mr. A and Ms. B.

Similarly, two advocacy organizations, Group C and Group D (on the third role
of Figure 1), are taken charge by people whose social and economic backgrounds vary significantly. Specifically, Group C is organized by Mr. C, a person who is graduated from the Law and Politics major at South China Normal University and has worked as a civil servant at the Bureau of Justice; Group D is organized by Mr. D, a person who once worked as a decoration worker, vendors and manufacturing workers. My research is to test whether the Mr. C’s trust to the government differs significantly from Mr. D’s political trust.

Since all the four civil society organizations I selected are located in Guangzhou City. Therefore, some macro-factors, such as the level of local economic development, government performance and some demographic factors are naturally controlled. This natural control of the macro-economic standard and general political environment is very important to identify the effects that organizers’ social and economic status has on organizers’ political trust to the government.

Moreover, I will also control some micro-factors that may influence group organizers’ trust to the government. Previous research claims that organizers in larger civil society organizations are more likely to oppose the state, so I will first control the size of the organization, such as how many full-time employees they have and whether its funding is substantial or not. I will also control the source of funding, such as whether this organization receives foreign funding or not. This is because civil society organizations that receive foreign funding may show different trust to the government than organizations that depend on endogenous funding.

Next, I will give detailed description to each of the four cases. My first two cases are two public-good provision organizations, Group A and Group B. These two groups have very similar aim: providing education to the children of rural migrant workers. Since these two groups are established by people with different social and economic background, their trust to the government vary significantly.

Case one: Groups A

The first public-good provision organization I am going to introduce is the Group A, a formally registered private school in Guangzhou City. In this case, the independent variable is Mr. A’s high social status. The dependent variable is Mr. A’s low trust to the government. The intermediary variable is Group A’s frequent contacts with the government. In the following part, I want to show how the independent variable leads to the dependent variable through the intermediary variable.

My first impression to Group A is its high administrative efficiency, which could be sensed shortly after I walked into its headquarters. When I got out of the elevator, a middle-aged woman—whom I later knew was the administrative manager of Group A-- smiled at me and asked what she could do for me. With her help, it took less than three minutes to find Mr. A, the president of Group A. This high efficiency is unbelievable in any public school, where it may take days or even weeks to meet a secretary, not mention the president. Later I got to know that Group A has practiced a very egalitarian management mode. The whole organizations have only three levels:
the president, seven general managers who are in charge of different departments, and staffs. Actually, every one who works for Group A is called staffs, they are granted enough discretionary power, and there is little supervision from above. As Mr. A Said, he hope to create a egalitarian environment in the working place and he hope every one who work for Group A would love their jobs and would think by themselves about how to do the job better

Group A is composed of a group of private schools in Guangzhou. Unlike the United States, private schools in China are usually low in quality and the tuition fee. Since the Chinese government officials hold the view that the state should monopolize education supply, the private schools are not welcomed by the government. Although Chinese unique compulsory education system requires children at the age between seven and fifteen to be enrolled in public primary schools and public middle schools, not every child is lucky enough to attend public schools. These unfortunate children are usually children of rural peasants and children of rural migrant workers. Children’s unable to enroll in any public school is partly due to the limited public good provision in rural China, and partly because of the restriction of the Household Registration System, which makes it very difficult for children with a rural identity to attend a public school in the city. Under these circumstances, it is common that children of rural migrant workers to attend primary schools as Group A in the urban area.

Group A was established in 1989. Interestingly, Group A combines the laid off teachers, children of the migrant workers, and peasant’s factory building to set up a
large-scale “education supermarket”. Nowadays, the Group A contains eighteen kindergartens, three primary schools and four middle schools. It has employed more than one thousand full-time staff and has provided education opportunities for more than ten thousand children. Understandably, most students at Group A are the children of migrant workers or children coming from the poor families.

Mr. A has a clear idea about what a good education is like. He believes that a good education should combine the skills training with moral quality. He told me that he wanted to “turn his students from villagers to citizens.” To enable these children to continue their study, the tuition fee at Group A is much lower than that at the public schools. For example, it takes only two hundred yuan per month to get into Group A’s Kindergarten, compared with the two thousand yuan per month in the public kindergarten in Guangzhou; and it takes around one thousand yuan to attend Group A’s Primary School for a whole semester, compared with the six thousand yuan per semester in the public primary school. As Mr. A said, what we are currently doing “combines the economic value with the social value.”

I will give more description to the independent variable: Mr. A’s high social status. Mr. A was born in the mid-1950s. Before graduating from the Department of Chinese Language at Sun Yat-sen University in 1982, he had performed military service and had been sent to the countryside as an educated urban youth during the Cultural Revolution. After graduating from Sun Yat-sen University, he worked for People’s Government and some state-owned enterprises such as the Power Company and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. Mr. A quitted his decent jobs and
established Group A mainly because he could not bare the low efficiency in the
government or any state-owned enterprise. In this sense, Mr. A can be viewed as
cultural elite with high social status.

After Mr. A established Group A, he had to contact the government frequently
to finish many administrative procedures. Mr. A told me, “On average, we need to
contact with the government two or three times a month.” During these contacts
with the government, Mr. A became increasingly unsatisfied with the government.
The first case Mr. A told me is about Group A’s denomination. At first, Mr. A wanted
to call his school “A Academy.” “Academy” is a word with traditional Chinese
humanistic ideal, which reflects that Group A would equip the students with both
technical skills and humanistic ideas. However, when registered, the name “A
Academy” was immediately vetoed by the government. The government officials
believe that “academy” is feudal survivals and Mr. A’s organization could only be
called as “school” or “training center.” Mr. A felt very unhappy about the reason given
by the government.

Another conflict between Mr. A and the government is about the building of
Group A’s kindergartens. In the early 1996, a government-run kindergarten was on the
verge of bankruptcy because of bad management. A government official knew that Mr.
A was good at running schools and invited him to purchase the kindergarten. Mr. A
thought this was a good chance to enlarge his business and finally bought the
kindergarten with five hundred thousand yuan. After taking charge of this

45 Interview with Mr. A, the president of Group A, Guangzhou City, May 27, 2010
kindergarten, Mr. A investigated more than ten hundred thousand yuan to renew the facilities. With Mr. A's good management, the kindergarten developed quickly: its recruited children increased from one hundred and sixty-nine to six hundred and seventy in three years and the kindergarten became very profitable. Looking at Group A's great success, the government official became very jealous and tried his best to confiscate the kindergarten by executive privilege. Mr. A had no choice but to watch the government took away his kindergarten. This event made Mr. A very angry and he became increasingly distrust to the government.

Group A has frequent contact with the government. However, these frequent contacts do not lead to a high trust between these two groups. After these contacts, Mr. A becomes increasingly distrust to the government. He no longer shows up in the conferences held by the education bureau and only sends his subordinate to attend these conferences. He no longer fawns upon the government officials. By contrast, Mr. A becomes more and more distrust the government. As Mr. A summed up, “it has been sixteen years for running Group A and it has been sixteen years to fight with the government.”

Mr. A told me a case between he himself and the government and he gave it a name “bombing the education bureau” Several months ago, a government officer, who is in charge of the education issues in Haizhu District, gave him several calls and asked him to pay a visit to his office, but Mr. A refused. As Mr. A told me “I do not want to see the officer. This officer wants to see me because he wants to ask for money and he wishes to work at Group A after retirement. Unfortunately, I don’t buy
what he was saying and ignore him.\textsuperscript{46} It is interesting that although the government officer was rejected by Mr. A, but he was very persistent and kept calling. Finally Mr. A could not bear anymore and "abused him severely and even abused his grandfather and grand-grandfather."\textsuperscript{47} These abuses lead to a huge disaster to the Group A. In the next month, more than ten governmental departments such as education department, Health Bureau, public fire department and price control department came to Group A, checked up relevant works, and "gave a ticket". Group A thus lost a lot of money in these checkups.

When asked if Mr. A wanted to get any economic help from the government or want to do a project with the government, He smiled but did not give the answer immediately. He first admitted that it was important to "have a good relationship with the government", or Group A might suffer from severe punishment from the government. "Now I have learned how to "pretend" to be polite to the government officers,"\textsuperscript{48} Mr. A smiled again. Mr. A also said that he did not want to get any economic support from the government. "Actually this is also impossible," as Mr. A told me, "every year Group A has to pay 30\% of its total earnings in forms of tax or fees to the government. Do you think it is possible that they could support us? At least I don't think so." When talking about doing a project with the government, Mr. A gave a frank answer: "No way! We are working in different styles and we did not like each other."\textsuperscript{49}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{46} Interview with Mr. A, the president of Group A, Guangzhou City, May 27, 2010
\textsuperscript{47} Interview with Mr. A, the president of Group A, Guangzhou City, May 27, 2010
\textsuperscript{48} Interview with Mr. A, the president of Group A, Guangzhou City, May 27, 2010
\textsuperscript{49} Interview with Mr. A, the president of Group A, Guangzhou City, May 27, 2010
\end{footnotesize}
Case Two: Group B

The second public-good provision organization I am going to introduce is the Group B, an unregistered private school in Guangzhou City. In this case, the independent variable is that Group B’s non-elite character. The dependent variable is Ms. B’s high trust to the government. The intermediary variable is Group B’s contact frequency with the government. In the following part, I want to show how the independent variable leads to the dependent variable through the intermediary variable.

I will first introduce the concept “village-in-city,” the place where Group B is located. “Village-in-city” a unique phenomenon in the Guangzhou City and it is formed during the process of urbanization. Up to 2009, there is one hundred and thirty-eight village-in-cities in the Guangzhou City. Because of its relatively low rent and close to the working place, the village-in-city has become the gathering place of rural migrant workers. B village is one of those village-in-cities in Guangzhou. It is located in Tianhe District, one is the most prosperous and luxurious districts in Guangzhou. When I walked into the B village, I was shocked by the huge difference in and out of the village: outside the village, there stands the most flourishing skyscrapers of Guangzhou City; inside the village, there is crowded with the low and dilapidated housing built by villagers themselves. As one migrant worker told me, “the wall of B village separates the dream from the reality.”

My target organization, Group B, is a private school located in B Village. Actually, this school does not have a name and I give it a name due to its location.
The school is the most “simple” school I have ever seen. It only has one “classroom”, which is actually changed from the abandoned factory building. The teachers of this school are three female migrant workers, who previously worked for different IT companies in Guangzhou City. This special school recruited twenty-four students in total, ranging from eight years old to fourteen years old. All these students are the children of migrant workers. Surprisingly, although the age of these children varies significantly, all of them are receiving the same course: the third-year course of the primary school. The study condition is tough; however, all these twenty-four students work very hard. Ms. B told me that all of these children were concentrated in class and did a careful homework after class.

Ms. B, the establisher of this school, is a non-elite group organizer. She is a female migrant worker coming from the countryside of Sichuan Province. Before coming to Guangzhou, Ms. B finished her high school study and then helped her brother with some farming works in her village. Two years later she met a guy in her hometown and they got married. “After marriage, my husband always wants to go to Guangdong Province to earn some money. Finally we leave for Guangdong.” Ms. B smiled. With dreams, this couple came to Guangzhou to look for jobs in 2004. With the help of two fellow villagers, Ms. B and her husband finally found a job in the same IT company and settled down in the B Village, a village-in-town which near to their working place.

Although she could receive a good salary from an IT company, Ms. B did not

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50 Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010
like the work there, thinking it is tiresome and boring. Instead, she never forgets her childhood dream: to be a teacher. She told me, “If you are a teacher, you can exert great influence on a child. It is always a happy thing to watch a child grow up and make progress.” Therefore, when Ms. B noticed that the children of her migrant friends could not attend schools due to the high sponsor fee, it suddenly occurred to her that she could be a teacher and taught these children. Ms. B then discussed her idea with two other female migrant workers, both of whom showed interest in teaching. Since these two female migrant workers have middle school degree, one received the junior high school degree and the other received the senior high school degree, Ms. B and these two female migrant workers had the capacity themselves to teach children in their primary school. Finally, they three decided to run a school themselves.

With this rough idea, Ms. B began to build her school in 2008. The first thing she did is to count how many children she could receive. She gave a call to all the rural migrant workers she knew and finally got fifteen students. The next step is to rent a classroom in a low price. She picked up a room in a dilapidated factory building with the rent of 1000 yuan per month. In order to attract more students, the tuition fees are made very low: 300 yuan per month or 1200 yuan per semester. This low tuition fees result in Ms. B’s dramatically decline in her monthly earning. The compensation for running the school, around 1000 yuan per months, is only half of the wages in the IT company. She also brought in a very flexible mode for tuition payment: their client...

51 Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010
could choose to pay for three months, a semester, or one year. Due to the limited
economic and human resources, the school has to provide the same education to all
the children. Ms. B mentioned: “This is a really big problem. Some children have
already learned the courses but others have not; some children are able to learn faster
but others are slow-learner. But we have no choice but to offer them the same
course.” Although the possible education choice was very limited, Group B got
more students step by step, considering a large number of rural migrant workers
crowded in this village.

Group B has little contact with the government. Ms. B told me, “The government
officials visit us only one or two times a year.” This is partly because Group B is too
small to catch the government’s attention. Ms. B told me the government did sent
people to look around the school and ask some questions. Since the school is very
small in size, although the government staffs seem to be a little doubt about it, they
actually say nothing and leave. Moreover, Ms. B told me that she had no other contact
with the government except these accidental government work-checks. “I do not
know any one inside of the Guangzhou City Government,” as Ms. B mentioned, “And
I have never thought to contact them actively.”

Although Ms. B has little contact with the government, she holds a rather
positive view of the government. In her opinion, the governments cared about the
rural migrant workers. As she said, not only did Premier Wen Jiabao pay a visit to the
migrant workers on the eve of spring festival, the government also passed the Labor

52 Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010
53 Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010
Contract Law to protect the migrant workers. When asked how did she know these issues? She replied that she had interest in current affairs and most of her information came from television news or radio broadcast. She also mentioned that her husband is good at current political issues and is always willing to tell her some interest stories. Moreover, Ms. B told me that many migrant workers around her hold a similar view to the government: they trust the government and think the government care about them.\(^5\)

Ms. B’s good impression on the government may also be traced back to her previous experience with the rural cadre in Sichuan Province. In the interview, Ms. B told me “The cadres in my village are generally good. I know the village secretary quite well. He is a good guy, having a lot of good ideas in farming and is also willing to renew the old infrastructure in the village.\(^5\)\(^5\) She gave me one specific example. A short time before she left for Guangzhou, a terrible drought occurred in her village and her vegetables were about to die. She and the other villagers were very worried about it. It was at that time when the village secretary took effect. He organized all the male villagers to build an irrigation ditch and finally solved the problem. Ms. B told me that this event left a deep impression in her mind and also made her has a high trust of government officers.

When asked her plan for the development of Group B, Ms. B stopped talking and considered seriously. About three minutes later, she gave me some analysis. First, she wanted to make the school a larger scale. As she mentioned, she hoped to provide

\(^5\) Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010

\(^5\) Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010
different courses to children with different levels and made her school into a "real school". Second, she herself did not have enough economic resources for her plan. So she needed to look for helps. She told me that her husband had a friend, who had some money and would like to invest in the schools. But she did not like this person because he was very selfish. She was still thinking about if there was some other chance to get the funding.56

When asked if she would like to get the economic resources from the government, Ms. B seemed to be very excited about this idea. She told me she would definitely like to cooperate with the government if there was a chance. As Ms. B said "If the government can provide me funding or other support, that would be great. I even do not mind that the government would take charge of my school and I am willing to work under the instruction of the government."57 From her perspective, the government had economic resources and human resources. She also believed the government had more experience in the teaching students. More importantly, as she mentioned, the government cared about the migrant workers and the cooperation with the government would give them great help. However, only a short time later Ms. B stopped her imagination and got rid of this idea quickly. She continued by saying that it was impossible for her to get help from the government, since she did not know any one in the government.

56 Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010
57 Interview with Mr. B, the president of Group B, Guangzhou City, June 15, 2010
The two cases above suggest that the research hypothesis, organizers with higher social status have lower trust to the government, is valid in two public-good provision organizations. Specifically, in the case of Group A (I will have more discussion below), the organizer Mr. A is a social elite, has frequent contacts with the government, and does not want to engage with the government. In the case of Group B (I will have more discussion below), its organizer Ms. B is a non-elite, has rare contacts with the government, and express high trust to the government.

Next, I am going to test whether the research hypothesis is valid in the advocacy groups. I carefully select two advocacy organizations, Group C and Group D, both of which provide rural migrant workers with legal issues but are established by people with different social status. I will test whether organizers’ trust to the government vary in these two advocacy groups.

Case three: Group C

The first advocacy group I am going to introduce is Group C, a non-registered civil society organization providing rural migrant workers with legal assistance. In this case, the independent variable is that Mr. C’s high social status. The dependent variable is Mr. C’s low trust to the government. The intermediary variable is its contact frequency with the government. In the following part, I want to show how the independent variable leads to the dependent variable through the intermediary variable.

Group C is located in the business centre of Panyu District, Guangzhou. I walked
across shops and shops and finally found it on the third floor of a resident building. Interestingly, their office—the 303 room—is totally covered by a kind of opaque paper and I could not see anything in the office from outside. Moreover, there is no golden-lettered signboard on the doorway and I could not find any letter outside their office which indicates this is Group C. Before knocking at the door, I sensed that this organization was filled with mysterious atmosphere.

After I entered their office, all the mystery disappeared. Their office is very clean, spacious and bright. The whole office is separated into two parts, an administrative area and a conference room. Besides Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, three full-time staffs were working earnestly. Interesting, there are two student interns in the organization, who are both undergraduate students majored in social work and want to gain some practical experience. During my two-hour interviews, I saw three migrant workers coming into the office, asking for help. Staffs are very patient to them and provide some detailed legal assistance. I still remember a staff said to a wounded migrant worker: “Don’t worry. You can view this office as your home. We can help you.” Staying a short time in their office, I could sense that this organization is very helpful to migrant workers in Guangzhou.

Group C was established in August 1998 by two people: Mr. H, a migrant worker and Mr. C, an experienced lawyer. At first this center is a profitable organization, charging low service fee and providing migrant workers with legal paperwork. In 2002, the organization received a large sum of foreign funds and changed from a

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58 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
profitable organization to a non-profitable organization. At the same time, Mr. H withdrew the organization due to economic reasons. So it is Mr. C who took up the responsibility and continue running the Group C by himself. Group C has several functions. First, it provides the rural migrant workers with detailed legal assistance when they have problems. Second, it offers legal training to the rural migrant workers, either by phone or by class. As Mr. C told me, “Sometimes he may ask his friends, such as legal experts, lawyers, government officials, to give lectures on legal issues to the migrant workers.”

I will give more introductions to Mr. C, the elite organizer of Group C. Mr. C was graduated from the Law and Politics major at South China Normal University in 1996. After graduation, he passed the entrance examination for government employee and became a civil servant at the Bureau of Justice in the Guangzhou City. This is a very decent job; however, Mr. C quit it within one year. “It is very boring to work in the Bureau of Justice. Every day all I need to do is to read the newspaper and sip tea.” Later he began his work at Kinglum Law firm, one of the largest law firms in Guangdong Province. In the Kinglum Law firm, he was arranged to the consultant department and helped the private entrepreneurs to solve their legal problems. Mr. C’s main task was to deal with the conflicts between employers and employees such as wage arrears and the compensation of industrial injury. To complete his work, he needed to negotiate with the workers on behalf of the entrepreneurs.

59 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
60 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
In 1998, a law case impressed Mr. C significantly and changed his career path. At that time, his new client, a private entrepreneur, faced a problem. His factory had a worker wounded and this worker was proved disability on level five. According to the law requirements, this entrepreneur needed to compensate this wounded worker 100,000 yuan. But the entrepreneur declared arrogantly that he would only give the worker 50,000 yuan. Mr. C had no choice but to negotiate with the worker on behalf of his merciless client. To Mr. C's surprise, this negotiation went on very smoothly and the wounded worker took the “discounted” compensation quickly. After describing this case, Mr. C told me “Although my law firm and my client felt satisfied for my work, I feel very uncomfortable. In the conflict between employers and employees, the employees had no power to fight with their right. They are very helpless.”

Shortly after this law case, Mr. C quitted his decent job in the law firm, established the Group C with Mr. H, and devoted himself to providing the migrant workers with legal assistant. “My salary at the law firm is 2,200 yuan per month; however, this new job could only pay my 600 yuan a month. But never mind. I was young and I could try.” Mr. C smiled. Although Mr. C decided to take charge of Group C without hesitation, he could sense the huge difficulty shortly afterwards. When Mr. C went to the government office, he was told that Group C was not allowed to register as a social association. Mr. C had no choice but to register

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61 There are ten levels of disabilities in total. The higher the level, the more severe the wound is.
62 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
63 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
64 Actually it is very difficult for organizations in China to register as “social associations”. They need to get a governmental organization to work as their affliction organization and they also need to get the approval of the
Group C as a business organization and pay high tax to the government. Moreover, when the Industry and Commerce Bureau knew that Group C was to provide the rural migrant workers with legal assistance, this bureau issued a very strict government certificate. This certificate only allowed the PWWSC to write legal paperwork for its clients, but not allowed it provides any legal consulting. “But secretly,” as Mr. C said, “we still provide the legal consulting to the migrant workers. It is our major task.  

The government and the Group C have a lot of contacts. As Mr. C told me, “The average contact frequency between our organization and the government is three or four times a month.” Moreover, the government officials in the Youth League, Trade Union and Women’s Federation often gave a positive appraisal for Group C. Mr. C was also frequently invited to attend a variety of governmental conferences. Mr. C told me “It seems that the government supports us. However, we only receive the oral support from the government. Mr. C continued by telling me that not only did the government provide any financial support to his organization, the government put strict restriction on the development of Group C.

Ironically, most of the governmental restrictions to Group C came from the Bureau of Justice, the place where Mr. C once worked. “Actually I still have contacts with some previous colleagues working in the Bureau of Justice. However, these contacts do not always bring something good to our organization and it is the Bureau of civil affairs. Since these procedures are very complex, few civil society organizations could actually get registered.

65 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
66 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
of Justice that often brings us trouble. For example, the Bureau of Justice has once made a spot inspection to Group C and confiscated its business license, arguing that it is out of the Group C’s operating range to provide the rural migrant workers with legal service. The Bureau of Justice also prohibited the staffs in the Group C to visit the wounded migrant workers in the hospital, thinking that they would bring trouble to social stability. Moreover, the Bureau of Justice prohibited Mr. C and his colleagues to be the attorneys for the rural migrant workers, arguing that they did not have the right to do so. In a word, the Bureau of Justice seemed to be unhappy about its pervious employee and often brought trouble to him.

The government remains vigilant on Group C is partly due to Group C’s close relationship with foreign funds and foreign non-governmental organizations. As early as 2000, the Group C began its first program cooperation with German Christian Center. In the second half of 2001, the PWWSC received its funding from the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee. This committee promised to provide Group C with 2000 yuan per month. In 2003, Mr. C received the largest international donations he has ever got. The America Company Reebox offered Group C 15,000 dollars and helped the organization to build a cultural service center. With this money, Group C could update its facilities and provide the rural migrant workers with computer training, dancing class, English class, and so on. Although the international funds help the organization greatly, it remains unclear about whether it is this foreign funding that makes the government unhappy with the PWWSC.

67 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
The government's watchful attitude to the Group C may be also result from Group C's frequent contacts with other civil society organizations; especially those organizations also aim at providing rural migrant workers with legal assistant. For example, Mr. C told me that he had good relationship with other organizations providing services to the rural migrant workers, such as Home for the female migrant workers at Beijing, Female workers' Service Center at Shenzhen, and so on. Not only do the staffs in the Group C have frequent mail contacts with these organizations, they also pay a visit to each other, participate in their activities, and learn experience. Since the government has a natural fear of various organized activities, the close relation between Group C and other advocacy groups may also result in the strain relation between Group C and the government.

Although Mr. C hopes that the government can minimize its interference to Group C, he does not want to receive governmental funds or do a project with the government together. This is because, as he told me, the government and the social organizations have “different work divisions.” and it is not good to combine their functions. Moreover, Mr. C has a negative impression of the low efficiency in the government department when he once worked in the Bureau of Justice. He was not willing to make his organization another government agency with low administrative efficiency. As Mr. C said “The best thing a government can do is to provide a legal environment and grant the social associations more independence. It is not good for the government to exert strict control over civil society organizations.

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68 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
69 Interview with Mr. C, the organizer of Group C, Guangzhou City, July 3, 2010
Case four: Group D

The second advocacy group I am going to introduce is Group D, another unregistered civil society organization in Guangzhou City providing rural migrant workers with legal assistance. In this case, the independent variable is Mr. D’s low social status. The dependent variable is Mr. D’s high trust to the government. The intermediary variable is its rare contacts with the government. In the following part, I want to show how the independent variable leads to the dependent variable through the intermediary variable.

It took me more than one hour by bus to the suburb area of Baiyun District, Guangzhou City, where Group D is located. This suburb area is one of accumulating areas of rural migrant workers, partly due to its relatively low house rent and partly due to its gathering of manufactory factories. Up to now, it has become quite understandable about why Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, chose this place as his office site to provide migrant workers with legal assistance. Although I have heard how small the organization was before I arrived, I still felt very surprised when I walked into their “tiny” office. The area of the office is less than five square meters. Three small writing desks have tried to squeeze into the office. Mr. D and his two female assistants were busily working when I walked in. They are all very kind persons, willing to answer all my questions during my interview.

Group D is “devoted to fight for the right of the rural migrant workers”. Mr. D told me: “Although Group D is small in size, it can have many contributions.”

70 See their official website http://www.zwsc.org/zhuangongzuo.htm
71 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
also checked his workbook with me, on which it writes:

In the year 2009, Group D dispensed leaflets such as *Legal Assistance for Wounded Workers* and *Protecting Your Right* for more than 16 thousand pieces; it held more than one hundred legal training for the migrant workers; it answered more than ten thousand consulting phones; it helped around five hundred the wounded workers to get their *Injury Determination* and; it worked as a guardian in the law court for more than one hundred and thirty law cases.

Although Group D has only one office site in the Guangzhou City and Mr. D had no money to do advertisement, Group D has gained a high popularity among rural migrant workers in the whole Pearl River Delta area\(^\text{72}\). Nowadays, Group D has help-searching workers coming from various cities in the Pearl River Delta including Guangzhou City, Dongguan City, Foshan City, Jiangmen City, and Huizhou City. Group D thus has become one of most influencing workers' organizations in the area of Pearl River Delta.

I will give more introductions to Mr. D, the non-elite organizer of Group D. Mr. D was born in a small village in Yangzhou City, Jiangsu Province. He stayed with his grandparents—both of them are peasants—when he was young. Mr. D still remembers how hard his grandparents work every day and how little money they

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\(^{72}\) The Pearl River Delta, or Zhusanjiao, is a leading economic zone in south China. The Pearl River Delta includes nine prefectures of the Guangdong province, namely Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Huizhou and Zhaoqing.
earned. When he was seven, Mr. Jing witnessed a moment he could never forget: he saw the landlord severely bullied his grandfather when the harvest was bad and this poor old man had no money to pay for the rent. As Mr. D told me “This makes me know what is unfair.” Before he set up Group D, he had worked as a decoration worker, vendors and manufacturing workers. In 2003, Mr. D moved to Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province to look for a job. He happened to live in the hotel on the opposite site of the Shenzhen Bureau of Labor and Social Security. Every day he can see many rural migrant workers standing in a long queue in front of this Labor Bureau, waiting for legal assistance. “I talked with them and found surprisingly that they are shortage of basic legal knowledge,” as it is mentioned by Mr. D, “I want to help these people.” He stopped his work searching and established Group D shortly after in 2004.

Similar to the other civil society organizations that provide legal assistance to the rural migrant workers, Group D faces the “identity problem.” Since Group D can not find an affiliated governmental organization, it is unable to register as a “social organization.” Mr. D has no choice but to register his association as a “commercial organization.” As Mr. D mentioned, “It is very ridiculous for us to register as an enterprise. Being an enterprise, we cannot raise funding and we also need to pay high tax.” Moreover, Group D faced another problem: a shortage of funds. Since it could not raise money themselves and they received no money from the government or any private enterprises, nearly all their funds come from various international

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73 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
74 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
75 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
non-governmental organizations or international foundations. Mr. D told me “each year I receive no more than two hundred thousand funds." With this limited financial resources, he had no choice but to keep his organization tiny and all the equipment simple.

Due to its identity problem and limited financial resources, Group D lives a tough life. Mr. D used a Chinese expression “surviving in a chink” to describe the difficulty he faced. In terms of how to survive, Mr. Jing did a calculation. First, he himself did not have much money to sustain the organization. Second, entrepreneurs had an opposite interest to workers and they could not help his organization. Third, different kinds of international funds, which were always unwelcome by the government, are likely to make Group D seem “illegal”. Therefore, as he concluded, depending on the government is the most reliable and useful way for Group D.

Mr. D holds a very positive view to the city government and he is also very compliant. As it is written on the official website of Group D:

“Group D hopes that parties and governments in Guangdong Provinces and Guangzhou Cities can support us. Our development depends heavily on the policies and instructions from the Guangdong Provincial Government and Guangzhou City Government. We also hope that we can build more party organizations in Group D to

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76 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
77 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
enhance its working ability. 78

Interestingly, Mr. D even used the ideology of China, a socialist country, to justify the appropriateness of his organization. As he mentioned, in a socialist country, workers were the master of the state and the Communist Party is on behalf of workers' benefit. Since Group D defended workers' interest, it was on the same boat with the government. As Mr. D said “If we solve one hundred cases in a month, we actually help bring down the government's workload by one hundred people. This is actually beneficial to the government management.” 79 He also told me, through providing legal assistance to the rural migrant workers, he stops at least six upwards petitions 80 to Beijing, the capital city of China.

Since Mr. D has a high respect to the government, he has taken many measures to restrict his own actions, which may explain why the government is less vigilant to Group D than it to Group C. For example, when Mr. D provides legal assistance to rural migrant workers, he would give them individual-help rather than collective-help. “Sometimes, around ten migrant workers might come to our office simultaneously and talked about the same unfair treatment,” as Mr. D mentioned, “I would rather help them individually and prepare ten pieces of materials for them than help them collectively.” 81 This is because the Chinese government has a natural fear of migrant

78 See the website http://www.guangdongsw.com/html/nanyuexiehegong/shegongjiiguou/200808/12-629.html
79 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
80 Upward petition is a unique phenomenon in China. If petitioners cannot satisfy his needs when they protest against the government at the local level, they will then go to the provincial or even central level to articulate their interests. Since the central government fears national-level protests, it requires the local government to solve the problems locally. The local governmental officials will suffer from punish if some one in his place demonstrate in the upper level.
81 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
workers’ “collective action” and Mr. D does not want to infuriate the government by arousing collective actions. Another example is that Mr. D deliberately maintains rare contacts with other civil society organizations for migrant workers in Guangzhou City. He said “If we have a lot of communications, the government might fear that we would do something ‘big’. Mr. D also made a careful selection of the foreign funds. He would only accept the unconditional foreign funding. “If we are controlled by some foreign foundations, that would be very dangerous for us and the government might put us into the blacklist."

Mr. D has a strong desire to “depend on” the government. What exactly does he need the government to help him? Mr. D mentioned several perspectives. For one thing, Mr. D hoped that any governmental department could work as his affiliated organization so that Group D could register as a social association. For the other, he hoped that the government could outsource some programs to them. “The Government has money and we have the network and trust of the migrant workers. When combining these two important things, we could do a very good job.” Interestingly, Mr. D also mentioned that he does not want to get the foreign funds. “I receive foreign funding because I have no other choice. I always want to get funds from the government and work for the government. Actually, I really want to help the government and do a legal job.”

Mr. D remains so respectful and obedient to the government. This makes me

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82 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
83 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
84 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
85 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
believe that Group D has frequent contacts with the government and the relationship between Group D and the government is good. However, neither of the above is true. First, Group D has rare contact with the government. Mr. D told me, he did not know any one who works in the governmental organizations. All his contact with the government is paying taxes. Mr. D also mentioned that he was rarely invited to attend the governmental conferences. As Mr. D said, “The average contacts between our group and the government is only two or three times per year. It is very rare.” Second, the relation between Group D and the government is not very good. “Actually, any government official fears to have contact with an organization providing legal assistance to the migrant workers and receiving foreign funding. 86” Although the government does not treat Group D friendly, it seldom interferes with its daily work.

One question remains: since there is rare contact between Group D and the government, why does Mr. D have such a positive impression on the government? One possible answer is related to Mr. D’ family influence. As Mr. D said, both his grandfather and grandmother have a high appraisal of the Chinese Communist Party, and their political trust influences him greatly. Moreover, Mr. D told me that he likes reading newspapers and some positive news reports of the government, such as some top officials expressing their care to the rural migrant workers, or the government’s willingness to construct a new highway or build a new school, increase his confidence in the government.

86 Interview with Mr. D, the organizer of Group D, Guangzhou City, June 7, 2010
yuan per year. Finally, both these two organizations receive foreign funding, which constitute more than 90% of all their received funding.

Yet, the dependent variable--government trust--differs significantly in these two organizations. Although different government departments, such as the Youth League, Trade Union, and Women’s Federation, give lip service to Group C, its organizer Mr. C shows little trust to the government. In contrast, Mr. D, the non-elite organizer, shows high trust to the government.

These two civil society groups also differ in another dimension that is critical to this paper. First, the independent variable—organizers’ social status—differs greatly between these two organizations. Concretely speaking, Group C is organized by an elite organizer Mr. C, who is an intellectual who got a bachelor degree and have worked in the Bureau of Justice and the Law firm. On the contrary, Group D is organized by a non-elite organizer Mr. Jing, who is a worker who was born in a small village and has worked as a decoration worker and vendors.

Moreover, the intermediary variable—the contact frequency between the civil society organization and the government—also varies in these two organizations. Specifically, Mr. C, who knows many governmental officials, especially those in the Bureau of Justice, contacts with the government three or four times per month. However, Mr. D, who knows no one in the government, has rare contact with the government. His contact frequency with the government is only two or three times a year.

In sum, the most-similar-case comparison justifies the validity of the research
hypothesis. Specifically, in these most similar cases, the elite group organizer has frequent contacts with the government and expresses less trust to the government, while the non-elite organizer has rare contacts with the government and shows high trust to the government. The fact that political trust varies between these two organizations is the evidence that organizers’ social and economic status have a significant effect on their trust to the government.

Table 1: Most-similar Cases:

Similar in almost every way but different in the social and economic status of the organizer and contact frequency with the government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group C</th>
<th>Group D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of full-time staff</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving foreign funds or not</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The social and economic status of the organizer*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From mid or high social status?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From mid or high economic status?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The contact frequency between the organization and the government*

| Have frequent contact with the government? | Yes | No |

*Intention to cooperate with the government*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the organizer want to get help from the government?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the organizer want to do a project with the government?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will then compare the most different cases, which are Group A and Group C (Table 2). In most ways, these two organizations vary a lot. First of all, Group A is a public-good provision organization, trying to provide the children of rural migrant workers with basic education. However, Group C is an advocacy group and works to
assist the rural migrant workers with law cases. Second, the Group A is a very large organization with over one thousand full-time staffs and substantial funding, whereas the Group C is small in size and with limited funding. Furthermore, Group A does not receive foreign funds, whereas the major funding of Group C comes from foreign foundations.

Both the Group A and Group C, however, are similar in that they are organized by people with high economic and social background. In other words, the independent variable in these two organizations is very similar. Specifically, Group A is established by Mr. A, a man who graduated from Sun Yat-sen University and has worked for the Power Company, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and People's Government. Similarly, Group C is organized by Mr. C, a talented intellectual who got a bachelor degree at South China Normal University and had working experiences in both the Bureau of Justice and the Law firm.

Since people with higher social and economic background usually have more chance to contact with the government, both of these two organizations have frequent contacts with the government. Specifically, Group A contacts with the government two or three times a month and the contact frequency between Group C and the government is three or four times a month. Therefore, besides the independent variable, the intermediary variable is also similar in these two most-different cases.

When comparing the dependent variable of these two organizations--their political trust to the government--I find that both these two elite organizations have low trust to the government. In other words, both Mr. A and Mr. C do NOT want to
get funding from the government or do a project with the government together. By comparing the most-different cases, we can conclude that group organizers with better economic and social background have low trust to the government, which support the research hypothesis again.

### Table 2: Most-different Cases:

Different in almost every way but similar in the social and economic status of the organizer and contact frequency with the government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>Public-good provision</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of full-time staff</td>
<td>Over one thousand</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving foreign funds</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### The social and economic status of the organizer

| From mid or high social status? | Yes | Yes |
| From mid or high economic status? | Yes | Yes |

#### The contact frequency between the organization and the government

| Have frequent contact with the government? | Yes | Yes |

#### Intention to cooperate with the government

| Does the organizer want to get help from the government? | No | No |
| Does the organizer want to do a project with the government? | No | No |

**Conclusion**

Based on the four case studies above, we can draw the following conclusions. That is, civil society organizations which are established by people with mid or high social status have lower trust to the government before they establish civil society organizations; their trust to the government declines step by step after they establish their organizations through frequent contacts with the government. On the other hand,
civil society organizations established by people with low social status have higher trust to the government before they establish the civil society organizations. Moreover, their high trust to the government remains after they build up their own civil society organizations. Specifically, Group A is organized by a person with high social status and have low trust to the government; Group B is a non-elite organization and have high trust to the government; Group C is organized by an elite and does not willing to engage with the government; and Group D is established by a non-elite and have high trust to the government.

In the most-similar-case comparison, I compare Group C and Group D, which are similar in their advocacy nature, their small scale, and the limited funding. However, since these two organizations are organized by people with different social status, they have very different trust towards the government. In the most-different-case comparison, I compare Group A and Group C, which are different in most aspects such as the nature of their organizations, the scale of their organizations and the funding they receive. However, since these two groups are organized by people with similar social status, they show similar trust towards the government. These two pairs of comparison again support my research hypothesis.

This paper suggests that the intention to engage with the government does not have a strict division between the advocacy groups and the public-good provision organizations. In the Western modernization theory, advocacy groups are more likely to oppose the state than the public-good provision organizations and the public-good provision organizations are more inclined to engage with the government. However,
my research suggests that it is possible that public-good provision organizations choose to oppose the state while the advocacy groups are willing to support and state. What matters the most is NOT what these organization do, but the social status of the group organizers.

This research also claims that elite organizations, at least the autonomous grassroots civil society organizations in China, are not necessarily large in scale and have more economic resources. Based on this research, some elite organizations could be very small and their capacity of resources mobilization is not necessarily strong. This finding goes against the general rule in civil society that people who are rich and more educated have more personal networks and economic resources, which enable them to establish strong and larger-scale civil society organizations.

This paper still has some limitations. First, although I carefully selected four cases and conducted a comparative study, the sample size is too small and it is possible that all these four cases are exceptions. Second, since all of these four selected cases have relations to the rural migrant workers, either offering legal assistance to migrant workers themselves or providing education to their children, these cases cannot represent all types of civil society organizations in China. Third, although Guangzhou is an important city for studying the autonomous civil society organizations, the finding of this paper is still uncertain. We are still not sure about whether the conclusion of this paper can generalize the situation in the whole of China or even in other developing countries.

Due to these limitations, it is better to view this paper as “thesis-generating”
paper rather than “thesis-testing” paper. If given more time and resources, I will take
the following measures to overcome the limitations above. I will first interview a
much larger sample size and then do a quantitative analysis, such as regression
analysis, to show the effect of organizers’ social status on their political trust.
Moreover, I need to study various types of civil society groups to make the research
more comprehensive. For example, I will pick up not only the organizations working
for rural migrant workers, but groups with other objects, such as environmental
protections and medical assistance. Furthermore, instead of selecting only one city in
China, it is better to select the research sample from different cities in China or even
different cities in the developing countries. It is interesting to see whether the research
hypothesis is valid in a wider realm.

Finally, this research also suggests that more contact with the government will
lead to a lower appraisal of the government. This is actually not good news for the
Chinese government. It is true that the Chinese government has been more adaptive to
the market economy, become more responsive to its people, and has made great effort
to improve its administrative efficiency. However, this study reflects that the Chinese
government still faces many problems such as low efficiency, bureaucratic attitude,
exert too tight control over the society and pay no enough attention to the marginal
group of the society. It is these problems that make organizers of civil society
organizations, who have frequent contacts with the government officials and know the
government better, express their concern to engage with the government.
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