

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION, COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT, AND  
DECISION LEGITIMACY: A CASE IN CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

Performance Evaluation, Communication Environment, and Decision Legitimacy: A

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Doctoral Advisory Committee Chair: Dr. Thomas L. Jacobson

Questions regarding the concept of legitimacy are central to social and political science. Exploring how people justify legitimacy and why people grant legitimacy to leadership and collective decisions in groups, organizations, and nations is generally agreed to be essential to scholarship on legitimacy. One line of research finds contributing factors in bureaucratic effectiveness and efficiency that can provide substantive benefits to people. Another line of research expands legitimacy to procedural elements such as fairness of treatment or quality of communication (deliberation) in the decision-making process.

This dissertation intends to contribute to the research of legitimacy and hopes to further the understanding of communication's role in decision outcome legitimacy by incorporating two sets of contributing factors: Performance factors and communication factors. This will enable a side-by-side comparison of instrumentalist and communicative factors in predicting legitimation. In addition, the study will observe the quality of the communication environment as a contextual variable upon which the relationship between performance elements and decision outcome legitimacy depends. Specifically, how the communication environment moderates the strength of the relationship between output of public service in a certain domain and

the perceived legitimacy of the decision made in the same domain will be observed.

Drawing on the framework from Habermas's theory of communicative action and the public sphere, the literature on deliberative democracy, and organizational studies, the project intends to observe how the communication environment or speech conditions (in Habermasian terms) may affect the legitimacy of a decision outcome, and at the same time may influence the relationship between the perceived performance in a certain public service sector and the perceived legitimacy of a decision outcome in the same sector.

Using a sample of 255 adult residents in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan province in southwest China, the study found that perceived government performance and perceived speech conditions were both positively related to perceived legitimacy of government decision; furthermore, perceived speech conditions moderated the relationship between the performance evaluation and legitimacy perception. These findings suggest some important insights into the role of communication in political legitimation and the evolving communication expectations in China.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Questions on the concept of legitimacy are central to social and political science. Exploring how people justify legitimacy and why people grant legitimacy to leadership and collective decisions in groups, organizations, and nations is generally agreed to be essential to scholarship on legitimacy. One line of research finds contributing factors in bureaucratic effectiveness and efficiency that can provide substantive benefits to people. Another line of research expands legitimacy to procedural elements such as fairness of treatment or quality of communication (deliberation) in the decision-making process.

These two categories of contributing factors are rooted in two streams of thought about human behavior. Max Weber, who considered societal progress as a process of rationalization through effective bureaucracy or legality, believed that instrumental, or purposive, reasoning drives both bureaucratic and legalistic rationalization, utilizing the most efficient means available for optimal achievement of predetermined goals (ends). Weber viewed modern society as being characterized by increasing rationalization or, to be more specific, increasing diffusion of instrumental reasoning. In political science, rational choice theory which embodies this type of reasoning is very influential. Rational choice theory is based on the assumption that an individual seeks the best action that maximizes personal gain. Thus the rational choice perspective posits that voters in a voting booth are fundamentally the same as consumers in a supermarket. They are maximizers of self-interest, always comparing the expected costs and benefits of their behaviors (Gibson, Caldeira, & Spence, 2005). Scholarship based on a rational choice framework appeals to individual calculations and incentives to explain political outcomes such as voting

turnout, political coalitions, and collective action (Green & Shapiro, 1996). In the case of evaluating a government or an organization, this perspective posits that stakeholders would hold a positive view of a government if it has produced the outcome that directly benefits them, or if it is considered to have the greatest potential to achieve their individual goals.

The instrumental approach is criticized by Jurgen Habermas and other scholars, who argue that human actions are not driven exclusively by instrumental reasoning. Although Habermas recognizes the existence of strategic action based on instrumental rationality, he suggests that such rationality may overlook the fact that individuals cannot achieve their goals without establishing relationships with one another and that social actors' linguistic interactions serve to coordinate interests and achieve a wide range of goals. The driving force of human activities should include both goal-oriented motivations (strategic action) and the orientation to reach mutual understanding among social members through linguistic means (communicative action). According to Habermas, "A communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis ... an agreement rests on common convictions ... both [parties] ... base their decisions on potential grounds or reasons." (Habermas, 1984, p. 287).

These two perspectives have led to different interpretations of how people evaluate political decision making. Citizens may consider a policy decision fair, or acceptable, or legitimate, or representative. Studies based on the instrumental reasoning view have found that stakeholders consider whether they themselves benefit from the collective decision as the main criterion in evaluating the decision outcome (e.g., Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Leventhal, 1976; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Conlon, 1993). In contrast, studies using theories sharing similar logic with the theory of communicative action (such as procedural justice) have found that stakeholders will

evaluate the outcome based not only on whether the decision has produced desired benefits but also on the quality of the decision-making procedure (e.g., Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Folger, 1977; Kernan & Hanges, 2002; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992).

Among the many criteria that are used to evaluate a decision outcome, legitimacy is considered an important but understudied one (George, 1980; Obradovic, 1996; Smoke, 1994). Research has justified the concept of political legitimacy from the perspective of the performance of the incumbent government. Government performance here is defined as the output of services and goods that may meet the material needs of the people (Finkel, Muller, & Seligson, 1989; Hibbs, 1982; Pissarides, 1980). Studies explicitly linking communication procedure and the evaluation of political legitimacy are few. Even fewer are studies that link communication elements in the decision-making process to the legitimacy of the decision outcome. One exception is a recent study by Stomer-Galley and Mulhberger (2009), which treated deliberation as a communication process and tested a hypothesis about the relationship between deliberation evaluation and decision outcome legitimacy. Another exception is a study by Chang and Jacobson (2010) that directly tested Habermas's theories and found evidence that sound communication (in Habermasian categories) between the decision maker and stakeholder will produce the perception that the decision-making procedure is legitimate (Chang & Jacobson, 2010).

This dissertation intends to contribute to this line of research and hopes to further the understanding of communication's role in decision outcome legitimacy by incorporating two sets of contributing factors: Performance factors and communication factors. This will enable a side-by-side comparison of instrumentalist and communicative factors in predicting legitimation. In addition, the study will

observe the quality of the communication environment as a contextual variable upon which the relationship between performance elements and decision outcome legitimacy depends. Specifically, how the communication environment moderates the strength of the relationship between output of public service in a certain domain and the perceived legitimacy of the decision made in the same domain will be observed.

Drawing on the framework from Habermas's theory of communicative action and the public sphere, the literature on deliberative democracy, and organizational studies, the project intends to observe how the communication environment or speech conditions (in Habermasian terms) may affect the legitimacy of a decision outcome, and at the same time may influence the relationship between the perceived performance in a certain public service sector and the perceived legitimacy of a decision outcome in the same sector. The theory of communicative action provides a general guide for evaluating the quality of the communication environment; theories of the public sphere and deliberation are more specific about the structure and practice of communication in people's political life. The justice literature also supports the argument of this study. Organizational justice studies have tested the "voice effect" as an important facet of procedural justice and have provided evidence that informational justice (concerning people's perception of explanations about the information of the decision-making procedure and outcome delivered by the decision makers) and interpersonal justice (concerning how people are treated by decision makers) will lead to increased acceptance of a decision outcome.

This dissertation first reviews general theories of legitimacy and the literature on the legitimacy of decision outcomes, and then discusses the literature on the influence of government performance on outcome legitimacy. It presents Habermas's concept of speech conditions based on his theory of communicative action and

discusses the idea of sound speech conditions in relation to the concept of the public sphere, the notion of democratic deliberation, and the justice literature. Guided by those ideas, it will explore how the legitimacy of the decision outcome is obtained and finally, observe how two sets of contributing factors—government performance and speech conditions—interact in evaluating the legitimacy of a government decision outcome.

### **Communicative Action and the Public Sphere: A Brief Introduction**

Communicative action is action oriented toward reaching mutual understanding through linguistic means. To assess whether human action is communicative or not, three validity claims –truth, appropriateness and sincerity—embodied in human discourse can be applied. In the context of communicative action, individuals are rational if they can 1) assert a statement and provide appropriate evidence when the statement is criticized (truth claim); 2) follow an established norm and justify their action using established norms when being criticized (appropriate); and 3) express themselves and convince their critics that they are acting consistently with what they have said (sincerity). Each act of speech assumes a structure in which the speaker is telling the truth based on his or her knowledge. Each act also assumes that the speech act is socially appropriate or normative, and that the speaker is sincere in making the statement. A speaker presumes that his/her claim is true if the content is accurate; the appropriateness claim refers to the speaker's assumption that the speech act conforms to social norms and cultural values; and the sincerity claim means that the speaker's real intention is in earnest (Habermas, 1979).

In addition, Habermas specifies the speech, or symmetry, conditions necessary for communicative action to take place (Habermas, 1984, p. 25). For instance, if a government is making a decision about a certain public policy, communicative action

requires that 1) everyone potentially affected by the policy is allowed to participate in the (mediated) discussion; 2) everyone feels free and equal to ask questions or express his/her own views about the policy; 3) the discussion or debate is conducted without the interference of internal or external coercion; and 4) propositions raised by citizens are treated fully by the government (Habermas, 1990).

The Habermasian public sphere refers to a social realm where private individuals and autonomous groups can gather and freely discuss issues of general interest. It is a discursive space where public opinions arise out of discussion among concerned citizens, and it is hoped, can influence political decision-making. The public sphere can be anything from a theatre, to a tea house or coffee shop. In the information age, the public sphere is very often mediated by the media. Habermas underwrote the theory of public sphere with his theory of communicative action. He included the concept of deliberative democracy to illustrate the mechanisms of communication in the political public sphere. At the macro-level, a communication model of deliberative politics requires a self-regulating and independent media system and a public opinion industry that generate a well informed public and facilitates a feedback loop between the elite and the civil society (Habermas, 2006). It must be noted that Habermas's theory does not say that citizens and politicians behave in an ideal manner; rather, it specifies what must take place if democracy is to be possible at all.

Habermas links deliberation to his theory of communicative action in the public sphere by arguing that public deliberation occurs when discussion of issues concerning the public interest is guided by norms of free and equal communication, i.e. norms that aim to reach mutual understanding. Habermas's idea of deliberation is in line with those of others in terms of the contention that deliberation concerns public

issues. His conception of communicative action can be used to define the quality of discussion required for democracy and democratic deliberation to be possible.

The communication process of deliberation may be assessed using the following criteria: Deliberation is considered communicative when participants are free and equal to raise any questions regarding a speaker's validity claims of truth, appropriateness and sincerity. Here the deliberation process is evaluated by the participants in at least two aspects: 1) whether mutual understanding is achieved through communication, i.e., whether agreement is reached about the validity claims; and 2) whether the communication environment, i.e., speech conditions is sound (Jacobson, 2004; Chang & Jacobson, 2010). The same logic of evaluation applies for discourse in the public sphere at a more general level.

The theory of communicative action recognizes that in the real world these speech conditions are seldom fulfilled perfectly. However despite any disagreements, when all participants in a discussion feel equal and free to carry on dialogue questioning any validity claims, and when all participants hope to increase mutual understanding through the interaction, the process is considered communicative. Here the validity claims of truth, appropriateness and sincerity along with ideal speech conditions, comprise the discursive norms of communicative action through which political opinion and will formation is produced via rational debate and argumentation in which affected participants can raise or dispute validity claims equally and uncoercively.

### **Performance Evaluation, Speech Conditions, and Decision Outcome Legitimacy**

Political legitimacy, which concerns any state, leaders, authorities, public policies, or power relations, has been discussed widely in law and the social sciences. Legal experts interested in questions of how power is acquired and limited by the law

tend to equate legitimacy with legal validity (Beetham, 1991); they consider the power legitimate when it is obtained and exercised according to established laws. Moral and political philosophers are more concerned with the arrangement of power relations and justifications of such arrangements; to the moral and political philosopher, legitimacy is moral justifiability or rightfulness of the power relations (Beetham, 1991, p.5). In contrast to these two fields, sociology and political science seek to understand people's expectations of the power relations, the consequences of existing power arrangements, and the means of obtaining legitimacy. To most sociologists, the arrangement of power relations is legitimate when the society believes it to be so.

Studies have identified many legitimacy bases. According to Max Weber who provides the most influential categories, legitimate authority is based on traditions, charismatic leadership, or a system of bureaucracy and legality. Legitimacy often relies on more than one source, although one may prevail. Hechter (2009) differentiates elements of the legitimacy basis as substantive determinants (effectiveness of provision of public goods), procedural determinants, and constructivist determinants (ideologies, symbolic scripts, and mass persuasion). In Weberian models, a democratic regime usually legitimates through legalistic procedures, although it does have to be effective in provision of public services. Although an authoritarian government may obtain legitimacy mainly through substantive means of increasing economic and welfare benefits, it also has to institutionalize democratic procedures of elections and decision-making to build a more durable legitimacy basis (Zhao, 2009).

One line of research in political science has identified effective government as a source of legitimacy in cross-country studies (e.g. Gilley, 2006). However, with the

growing support for deliberative democracy worldwide, deliberation, which is often lauded as a major complement to other forms of political participation, is increasingly assumed to be able to generate legitimacy. Theorists argue that authentic deliberation involves a relatively high degree of civic participation in the decision-making process; however, although this link is theorized by many in the western democratic setting, empirical tests are very few.

Habermas who has discussed legitimation at length in two works, *Legitimation Crisis* (1975) and *Between Facts and Norms* (1998b), has ideas that are close to those of the deliberative perspective. He believes that legitimacy is generated by communication between the government and the people. Within the framework of communicative action, such communication refers to the requirement that people may question government decisions in terms of validity claims (of truth, appropriateness, and sincerity) in an environment where they feel equal and free to speak and where every proposition is given full consideration (speech conditions).

Building on the theoretical frameworks of communicative action, deliberative democracy and justice, this study investigates the independent contribution of communication factors represented by the soundness of the speech conditions during the decision-making procedure and substantive factors. These are represented by the stakeholders' evaluation of the performance of the government making the decision. In addition, the study will explore the possible interaction effect of the two sets of contributing factors.

### **China: Development, Communication, and Legitimacy**

Over the past three decades, China has experienced tremendous socio-economic changes. The momentum behind these changes is the vigor of economic reforms occurring since the late 1970s. Switching from a socialist planning economy

to a market economy as well as practicing an open-up policy have brought to China not only increased national wealth and improved living standards for many but also socio-political and cultural changes with both positive and negative consequences. The economic reforms planted the seeds for restructuring of many areas, such as media, work units and labor relations, schools, and families.

It is perhaps fair to say that the project of development and modernization in China has been treated as equivalent to economic growth and technological advancement for a very long time, a mindset that probably still predominates today. The government and nation take pride in the economic miracles created within a short time but while the economy has grown very rapidly and national wealth has accumulated, many social problems have accompanied these changes, such as greater inequality between the rich and poor, uneven development in urban-rural areas and coasts-hinterland, corruption of officials, and inadequate social welfare provision. Confronting such social problems, Chinese leadership has launched the new goals to construct a “people-centered” society, embrace a scientific development concept, and achieve a “harmonious society”. The idea of a “people-centered” society is constructed on Mencius’s and Confucius’s philosophical thoughts of “people as roots.” “Scientific development” addresses the criticism of China’s “quantitative driven growth” in the past and advocates for ecologic and sustainable development in the future (Holbit, 2006, p. 26). The concept of a “harmonious society” evolves from the ideas of “people-centered” and “scientific development” and is defined as “a society built on democracy and rule of law, justice and equality, trust and truthfulness, amity and vitality, order and stability, and a harmonious relation with nature” (Trans. by Holbit, 2006, p. 28). These concepts signal that the present leadership acknowledges the existing problems and conflicts and intends to adjust the standpoint from

overwhelming emphasis on economic development to a balance between economic growth and social justice, environmental sustainability, and governing capability. The changing ideology may represent the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) effort to legitimate its rule not only on economic performance but also on meeting social expectations in other areas and solving the problem of social injustice. As evidenced by a previous study: Chinese people judge the government's legitimacy not solely on economic performance but on transparency and accountability as well (Zheng & Lye, 2005).

Historically, the CCP finds legitimacy in its charismatic leaders by virtue of their being revolutionary heroes, in socialist ideology, and in traditional culture (e.g. Confucianism). More recently, the primary basis of legitimacy has perhaps gradually evolved from ideology to performance (Zhao, 2009). Utilitarian justifications began to play a more important role particularly after the setting off of the economic reform and open-up policy. Such justifications have relied primarily on nationwide market reform, rapid economic development, improved administrative skills and technical expertise, which have been successful for a period of time. But as new problems and conflicts arise from deepening economic reform and social change, the government recognizes that its legitimacy basis needs to be expanded to include other sources, such as anti-corruption efforts and governance reform (Chen, 1997; Gilley, 2008; Gilley & Holbig, 2009; Guo, 2003; Tang, 2005; Zhao, 2001).

At the 2010 People's Congress, in response to social expectations for justice and equality, Premier Wen Jiabao remarked once again in the annual government report that media channels should be set up for the people to monitor the activities of the government. Although the main purpose of this advocacy may be to deal with the pervasive corruption among government officials, the remark has been used

subsequently as a tool by Chinese citizens to expose inappropriate conduct on the part of Chinese officials. As a matter of fact, in recent years, many Chinese have learned to use media, particularly social media, to express their views and discontent regarding public affairs. The BBS (Bulletin Board System) and forums are the major venues where Chinese people present conflicting views and critical discourse and some online discussions and instant messaging have culminated in social movements at various levels (Yang, 2009). Other changes have occurred as well. Research on the public sphere and nongovernmental organizations reveals that civil society has been growing and issue-specific public spheres have emerged in China (Howell, 2007; Yang, 2003; Yang & Calhoun, 2007). Direct elections of village and county level government officials have been put into practice widely (O'Brien, 1994; Shi, 1999; Thurston, 1998; Unger, 2002). Deliberative practices have been expanding in China as well. The national as well as the local governments have initiated citizen deliberation, consultative practices, public hearings, and deliberative institutions since the 1980s (Bell, 2006; Dong & Shi, 2006; Dryzek, 2006; Leib & He, 2006; Tan, 2006; Xu, 2006). James Fishkin and colleagues have conducted successful deliberative polling in coastal areas (Fishkin, He, & Siu, 2006; 2010) and studies have found evidence that Chinese villagers with various backgrounds would and could participate in discussion of public concern about issues with the government, sometimes perceiving the fairness of the procedure as more important than the actual outcome (Michelson, 2008; Kennedy, 2009).

Despite various inherent problems with democratic and deliberative experiments, the above phenomena raise the prospect that improved free speech rights and more practice of decision making that involves participation in public affairs may be an emerging expectation among the Chinese people. Today, legitimacy might still

derive primarily from economic and social welfare performance in China; expanded freedom of speech and fairness of procedure might be taking on a non-trivial role that may be growing so as to become a possible source of legitimacy. Understanding the current status of Chinese discursive norms will provide insight into the extent to which democratic speech norms might be emerging as a force for legitimation there, and will also provide baseline data for future research. Therefore, this study is intended to test the previously mentioned model in China, where it is expected that the assessment of government performance in substantive areas plays an important role in legitimacy evaluation, although the influence of communication factors can no longer be ignored. The research assumes that in China's current development stage, although government performance of public service is a significant predictor of legitimacy, the quality of the communication environment (speech conditions) between the government and citizens also weighs into the predictive power of performance variables.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study has two primary purposes: Theoretically, it explores two sets of contributing factors of performance and communication to political legitimation. Comparative country analysis shows that government performance in the areas of economy, politics, and social welfare is positively associated with the public's acceptance and support of government rules (Gilley, 2006). However, theorists of deliberative democracy and justice argue that functional and distributive achievements account for part, but not all, of the sources of legitimacy and propose that unrestrained democratic deliberation and fair procedures are also important sources of legitimacy (Benhabib, 1996; Cohen, 1989; Habermas, 1973; Tyler, 2006). Also recent results from political analysis, legal studies and organizational research on

procedural justice tend to corroborate this idea. Similar to this line of thought, Chang and Jacobson (2010) and Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009) have tried to link communication elements in the decision-making procedure with the legitimacy of the decision outcome and have found promising results. The current study adds to the existing but still new body of work on communication and legitimacy by replicating the use of empirical concepts and measures in a new setting. At the same time, it extends existing research by expanding it to a different cultural setting. To research this idea, Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, particularly his ideas of speech conditions, will be applied to examine communication expectations and experiences, and to test how these communication variables, along with certain performance factors, affect perceived government decision outcome legitimacy.

Empirically, the dissertation intends to reflect the communication experiences and expectations of a sample of the Chinese people in the current social context. This project selected China as the site of study and tries to determine whether a healthy communication environment would be a possible source of legitimacy in addition to government performance in the socio-economic arena. Scholars have long claimed that economic and trade development may foster development of democracy (Lipset, 1959). Habermas also argues that it is hard to resist the norms and values that come along with modern forms of trade and economy and this seems to be true when China is observed. With ongoing economic and technological change, China's political system and socio-political conditions are also evolving. Although it is a nation rooted in Confucianism and collective thinking, China is transitioning to a market economy that demands greater individual autonomy and more democratic decision-making in social life. Studies from sociology, political science and communication have touched on these issues and found support for these contentions. Social change requires that

political authority make constant efforts to legitimate its rule and actions of the CCP in recent decades have manifested an active search for legitimacy in all areas. All these changes make China an interesting case for the proposed study.

In addition as Gunter Schubert (2008) points out, political legitimacy is understudied by scholars on China and systematic research is needed. While claiming that it should not be taken for granted that the regime in China is illegitimate, Schubert suggests the idea of “zones of legitimacy” to look at regime legitimacy in present-day China (p. 194). By “zones of legitimacy,” he means “the net sum of those ‘partial legitimacies’ of moral values, institutional order and roles of authority which are generated in different spaces, as well as at different administrative layers and by different personal relationships within the Chinese political system.” (p. 194) The logic of this view is in line with the scholarship on public spheres and civil society in China, which also argues for analyzing micro-level changes rather than focusing on complete system level change (Chamberlain, 1993; Huang, 1993; Perry & Selden, 2000; Rankin, 1993; Rowe, 1993).

Among the studies analyzing political support and legitimacy in China, Weatherley (2006) has documented how the CCP has legitimated its rule since the founding of the PRC through transformation of CCP rule from charismatic authority to rational-legal authority. Chen Jie (2004) surveyed Beijing residents in the 1990s, studying the relation between political support toward the regime and specific policies and socio-demographic characteristics and political orientation. In a very recent article, Zhao Dingxin (2010) provides a cultural and historical perspective on performance legitimacy in China and suggests that the Chinese state needs a more durable basis for legitimacy. He argues that the concept of performance legitimacy can be found in Confucian and traditional Chinese political thought and is

complementary to Weber's conception of rational-legal state legitimacy, but cautions that if performance is the sole source of legitimacy. It will be dangerous for the government and regime if the government cannot meet the people's expectations (p.429).

Although this study assumes that a certain degree of change and certain advances in speech conditions have occurred in China, it is acknowledged nevertheless that setbacks also may have occurred and that some examples of progress may be episodic. However, as Gunter Schubert (2008) suggests, we should avoid stereotypes when viewing China, because both economic and social development varies greatly across the country. When changes occur and democratic experiments are ongoing, this does not mean they are blossoming everywhere in the nation. But yet they are meaningful. The proposed research shares the logic of Schubert's "zones of legitimacy" and focuses on speech conditions in China. Although it is true that control of the information flows is still extensive, the Chinese people's experiences and expectations regarding speech norms have been evolving over the years (Huang, 2001; Ogden, 2002; Zhao, 2000).

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Following the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 reviews the scholarly literature relevant to government performance, speech conditions, and political legitimacy. Several general conceptions of legitimacy are introduced and decision legitimacy is discussed. Habermas's ideas of speech conditions are then discussed, along with his theories of the public sphere and communicative action, and the literature on deliberative democracy and procedural justice that may support the arguments is also introduced. After the relevant literature is presented, the chapter identifies some gaps in the literature. The chapter closes with presentation of the three

hypotheses on the direct effects among perceived performance, perceived speech conditions, and perceived decision outcome legitimacy, as well as the contextual effects of perceived speech conditions on the relation between perceived performance and perceived decision outcome legitimacy.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methods used. It introduces and justifies the fit between the theories and the applied research context, which is the case of the taxi fare increase in Chengdu, China. The research design employed a small sample pre-test among Chengdu adult residents and a final survey among 260 adult Chengdu residents. The chapter also describes the measures, the revisions made to the survey questionnaire after the pretest, and items used in the final survey.

Chapter 4 reports statistical results of the full survey. Included in the data analysis are the descriptive statistics of the demographic information, descriptive analysis of all the variables, reliability tests of the survey items measuring major independent and dependent variables, the solution to a multicollinearity problem in the final regression model, and the steps and results of the regression test. The analysis also plots a moderating effect and presents a graph to show the direction of the effect.

The final chapter (Chapter 5) discusses the key findings, theoretical implications of the results, limitations of the study, and possible future research.

## CHAPTER 2 THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Part 1 of this chapter reviews the literature on legitimacy; Part II introduces the existing literature on government performance; Part III discusses the idea of speech conditions in relation to the theories of communicative action and the public sphere, deliberation, and procedural justice. It addresses the relation between communication and legitimacy of decisions so as to help explain why speech conditions are important and how they may contribute to decision legitimacy; Part IV identifies gaps in the literature reviewed so far; Part V presents the theoretical model and hypotheses; and Part VI summarizes the chapter as a whole.

### **Part 1: Legitimacy**

The question of legitimacy is important to many elements of government, including regime, political institutions, business organization, leadership, and individual public policies and political decisions (Chen, 2004; Easton, 1975; Lujan, 1974; Miller, 1993; Rigby, 1982; Wallner, 2008). It is generally agreed that obtaining legitimacy through coercion is costly and inefficient (Tyler, 2006).

The effects of the granting and withdrawing of legitimacy have been discussed extensively. For a state or government, the main benefits of obtaining legitimacy include political stability and survival of the government or political system. In contrast, extreme loss of legitimacy may result in collapse of the system, disobedience on the part of the ruled, reduced degrees of cooperation, and deteriorated quality of performance from subordinates (Beetham, 1991; Chen, 2005; Easton, 1975; Lipset, 1959, 1981; Miller, 1974; Muller, 1977; Zhao, 2009). At the organizational level, the importance of legitimacy is similar to that of a state—it facilitates stability and credibility. A legitimate organization is perceived to be meaningful and trustworthy, and members of the organization tend to be more loyal. In the case of political and

social entities, the legitimacy of political or collective decisions matters because of its long-term effects on legitimacy of the state or government. The legitimacy of a political institution may increase if citizens accept and support its policy outputs (Gibson et al., 1998). In contrast, a government may gradually lose its legitimacy among the citizens if it fails to obtain assent for public policies, since such failure will “compromise the long term goals and interests of authoritative decision makers by eroding society’s acceptance of their legitimate claim to govern” (Wallner, 2008, pp. 421-422).

**An overview.** Although different streams of scholarship hold divergent logics of legitimacy, most discussion starts with Max Weber, who, with his followers, generally treated legitimacy as the capacity to engender and maintain the belief of rightness and appropriateness in the ruler (Weber, 1968; Lipset, 1981; Merelman, 1966). Weber’s classic typology of legitimate authority includes legitimacy based on norms and values (traditional authority), legitimacy resting on loyalty or obedience to the extraordinary qualities and personalities of leadership (charismatic authority); and legitimacy founded on a system of bureaucracy and legality (rational legal authority). This typology, despite its limitations, is highly influential. In modern societies, legitimacy derived from effective bureaucracy and legal rule is widespread despite many other explanations and justifications (Tyler, 2006). Rational-legal legitimacy resides partly in institutionalizing democratic practices such as voting and elections and partly in government performance in the areas including economic development, political stability, and social distribution, among others (Finkel et al., 1989; Saich, 2007; Weil, 1989).

Criticism and modifications exist with regard to the Weberian approach. Some scholars call for justification of people’s belief in legitimacy. They consider

legitimacy as consent after the ruled have evaluated the authority and then have decided whether to grant legitimacy to the power arrangement (e.g. Beetham, 1991; Schaar, 1969). Beetham argues that legitimacy goes beyond people's belief in the legitimacy of power or the political system; it is more about how people justify such belief. For Beetham and like-minded scholars, a government is legitimate if the populace agrees that it "has the right to issue directives and make demands" (Rigby, 1982; Weatherley, 2006) and if the subordinates believe they ought to obey rather than obeying out of fear (Barker, 1990). The two approaches differ mainly in that Weberian thought assumes that legitimacy exists already and tries to interpret what generates legitimacy, while Beetham and others do not consider legitimacy as a *de facto* attribute of the regime, state, or political institutions but a possible attribute that needs to be justified. Similar to this line of thought, more recently, Zhao Dingxin (2009) modified Weber's categories, adding performance as another dimension to legitimacy. Yang (2005) proposes "goal-rational legitimacy" to describe legitimacy based on the belief in the ruler's "cognitive superiority" as manifested in the ruler's effectiveness "in the pursuit of shared goals."

Other influential theories of political legitimacy include David Easton's notion of diffuse support, which refers to "a reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or effects of which they see as damaging to their wants" (Easton, 1965, p. 273). Easton considers legitimacy as a major dimension of diffuse support as expressed in belief in the legitimacy of "political objects" of authorities, regime, and community (p. 447). He defines legitimacy as the belief "That it is right and proper ... to accept and obey the authorities and to abide by the requirements of the regime" (Easton, 1975, p. 451). In this sense, a state or authority is legitimate when the ruled perceive that it holds and

exercises political power appropriately (Gilley, 2006).

Easton has differentiated between diffuse support and specific support, arguing that legitimacy is a dimension of diffuse support, which is support toward regime, political community and authority, rather than specific support which is support toward incumbent government and specific decisions and policies. However, although according to this theory the two concepts are interrelated—accumulative specific support will transform into diffuse support—Easton and other scholars acknowledge the empirical difficulty of differentiating between the two because people often have difficulty distinguishing whether their support or belief in legitimacy is toward the regime or the incumbent authority (Easton, 1975; Craig, Niemi, & Sliver, 1990).

Legitimacy is sometimes considered to be psychological because it relies largely on people's subjective evaluation of the authority and their willingness to support and accept its binding decisions. Social psychologists conceptualize legitimacy as “the belief that authorities, institutions, and social arrangements are appropriate, proper, and just” (Tyler, 2006, p. 376), a type of social influence that induces people to feel that they should support and obey orders from the authority (French & Raven, 1959; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989).

Scholars of organizational studies such as Suchman (1995) define legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (p. 574). When the activity of the authority is perceived as legitimate by a social group, such activity is accepted or supported. His analysis of legitimacy typologies suggests that people do evaluate legitimacy both from the perspective of fulfillment of self-interests and from congruence of their own values

and the values of the leadership and the organizations.

Policy legitimacy refers to the stakeholders' support and acceptance of decisions. It is argued that even if a policy is implemented and obtains its goals, it may still lack legitimacy. Legitimacy of policies may obtain from the substantive aspect or the content of the policy, which requires the policy to align with the interests of those affected. Policy legitimacy may also be drawn from procedural elements, which involves a considerable amount of genuine participation from the citizens or stakeholders (Gibson et al, 2005; Wallner, 2008, pp. 421-422).

The foregoing discussion of the literature indicates that legitimacy is people's belief that authority is exercised appropriately while such belief needs to be justified. Rothenstein (2009) concluded that there are at least four reasons that people may accept the legitimacy of authority: 1) tradition, 2) charisma of the leader, 3) provision of public goods and services by government, 4) fairness perception of the procedure.

This project will study legitimacy justification from two perspectives: The instrumental approach, which suggests that authority can obtain legitimacy through delivering desired (material) outcomes, and the discursive approach, which emphasizes fair and democratic discourse processes. The former perspective is one of the most influential streams of thought and the latter is becoming increasingly popular in recent decades. Legitimacy has been observed both as an antecedent (e.g., Levi, Sacks, & Tyler, 2009; Tyler, 2004) and a consequence (e.g., Albano & Barbara, 2010; Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Hedgvedt & Johnson, 2009) in previous studies; this research will treat legitimacy as an outcome.

**Legitimacy of government decision outcomes.** Some research in political science and public administration indicates that citizens' or stakeholders' evaluation of a government depends substantially on their immediate benefits from the output of

public services or public goods provided by the government (Easton 1965). Therefore, one stream of research has focused particularly on fulfillment of various functions by the government, arguing that a government's performance directly affects election turnout and approval rate of the incumbent authority (Hibbs, 1982). Weatherford (1987) provides two justifications of this perspective. First, the functionalities of government agencies may have direct effects on the stability of the environment whereby the stakeholders generate their utilities. Second, the government has the power to make collective decisions that are long-standing and that will influence individual interest and social life profoundly. Such justifications imply that the self-interest of an individual or a group forms the basis of people's approach to evaluating the government (Wilson, 1989).

The idea that legitimacy is the outcome of effective bureaucracy is evident in modern society, where social and economic performance constitutes the major criterion for judging the competence and achievements of a government. However, to evaluate whether a government decision is legitimate, justification should go beyond that. While Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence (2005) argue that instrumental calculations contribute to people's willingness to accept an undesirable or unfavorable outcome, they also consider procedural assessment as another important factor. The rest of Part I will be devoted to introducing literature on the scholarship of the procedural justification of legitimacy, to which Habermas's theories of communicative action and the public sphere, the literature on deliberative democracy, and justice research have contributed substantially.

Theorists of deliberative democracy have explicitly "regarded deliberative procedures as the sources of legitimacy" (Cohen, 2003, p.346). Habermas shares their view, directly relating discursive norms to legitimation. He is not content with

Weberian instrumental justifications of legitimation, which rely primarily on perfecting legal rules, bureaucratization, and economic production. His thesis of legitimation is underwritten with his theory of communicative action. Habermas believes that legitimacy refers to “a political order’s worthiness to be recognized” or being justified through discursive process (Habermas, 1979, pp. 178-83) and that in modern society, legitimacy should be evaluated against a government’s ability to guarantee social integration and establish collective identity through binding decisions.

What fundamentally are the “formal conditions of justification” (p. 184), or how is agreement reached? Legitimacy results from citizen participation in the law making process and dialogue between citizens and governing bodies. Citizens will perceive an authoritative power as legitimate only when they assume that they have free and equal opportunities to challenge the government’s collective decisions in terms of its claims and actions and that the government has considered their needs to a full extent. In other words, citizens perceive the decisions of government as legitimate because they believe that the government represents general interests and they are able to contest its decisions in case of doubt.

The interactions between citizens and government over decision making may take place at many levels, including direct exchanges between people and decision makers and discussion mediated through the public sphere. In both cases, legitimacy represents a general agreement between citizens and the government, founded on citizens’ belief that the government tries to understand the needs of the people (Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Habermas, 1996).

Tyler (2006), who has reviewed psychological perspectives on legitimacy, recognizes distribution (outcome) and procedure as two important bases of evaluating

legitimacy of decisions. The theory of distributive justice is based on the widely accepted assumption that people are outcome-oriented and are driven fundamentally by calculation and instrumental rationality. According to this logic, a negative outcome is deemed unacceptable (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Fox, 1999; Tyler, 1997). However, this idea has been challenged by findings of recent studies, which found that when decisions and rules are made in various political, legal and organizational settings, procedural justice is desired even if the outcomes are not affected and that people in general often value fair procedures over fair outcomes (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992; Lind & Tyler, 1988).

Empirical evidence also suggests that people view the decisions of authorities and institutions as more legitimate when they perceive that the authorities exercise power through fair procedures (Tyler, 2006). Such fairness largely refers to having adequate opportunities to state the issues during the decision-making process (Tyler, 1997, p. 888). Tyler and Blader's (2000) studies in work organizations support the argument that in dealings with authorities, the perception of fair procedures leads people to become loyal to organizations, resulting in various forms of cooperation and compliance to the decisions. More importantly, Tyler (1997) shows that in legal settlement conferences, people may express anger and dissatisfaction even if the decisions are favorable to them because they wanted to be but were not involved in the process (p. 889). Even when an outcome is not favorable, the affected people will still accept the result and recognize the legitimacy of the decision maker if they think that the process was fair. Levi and colleagues (2009), using African survey data to test multiple sources of legitimacy, found that procedural justice possesses stronger predictive power than either administrative competence or government performance.

The following parts of this chapter will introduce perspectives on government performance and speech conditions, representing instrumental and procedural justifications of legitimacy.

## **Part II: Government Performance**

Government performance refers to the output of public services and public goods that meet the demands of the people. Such services and goods in socio-economic areas may involve income levels (Gilley, 2006), welfare levels (Haggard, 1990; Przeworski, 1991), economic growth (Clarke, Ditt, & Kornberg, 1993; Finkel et al., 1989), and poverty reduction (Gurr, 1971; Solimano, 1998). In socio-political aspects, performance may include political stability, control of corruption (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Seligson, 2002), defense of national security and territories (Zhao, 2009), the rule of law (Ackerman, 1991), civil liberties and political rights (Hofferbert & Klingemann, 1999; Mishler & Rose, 2001).

People's perception of government performance has some direct consequences; trust in government is reduced if its performance is perceived as unsatisfactory (Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2000; Citrin & Green 1986; Feldman 1983; Hetherington 1998; Miller 1991). In addition, government performance systematically influences voting intentions (Miller & Mackie, 1973; Pissarides, 1980). Among other consequences, the effect of government performance on legitimacy is well established (Levi, 2009; Miller, 1974; Zhao, 2009). According to Gilley (2006), legitimacy is often evaluated from a "common good" perspective (p. 48). Such common good includes the previously mentioned social welfare conditions and economic status that are direct outcomes of government performance. Weatherford (1987) found that the quality of performance influences citizens' judgment of the government's competence and their support of political institutions. Poor performance results in citizens'

withdrawal of support and a legitimation crisis (Brown, 1998).

Two approaches are commonly used to evaluate performance of a government. The first, which is more structured, either employs existing data or implements the evaluation with preset goals, measures and standards. For instance, in evaluating performance of the political system in democratic countries, Powell (1985) uses voting turnout rate, number of social riots and deaths related to such riots, and duration of government as measurement of government performance in a number of democratic countries across several decades. Another method is more open-ended and participatory, relying on stakeholders' perception of whether government performance meets their demands (Karkkainen, 2000). The citizen or stakeholder driven approach to performance evaluation is advocated and has been used extensively in recent development projects and policy studies (e.g. Jacobson & Lambino, 2008). This procedure relies on the subjective judgment of the stakeholder to evaluate whether the organization, policy or project meets the needs of the people affected or whether stakeholders are satisfied with the fulfillment of responsibilities of the organization or potential effect from the policy. This study will adopt this second approach, obtaining subjective evaluations from the stakeholders.

### **Part III: Speech Conditions**

Speech conditions are criteria that characterize the soundness of the communication environment. Although there are other possible criteria for assessing speech conditions, this study will use three criteria framed within Habermas's theory of communication. These criteria subjectively assess people's potential opportunities 1) to express opinions freely, 2) to participate equally, and 3) to have issues that are raised by citizens be treated fully by decision makers (Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Jacobson, 2004).

A sound speech condition is relevant to everyday talk as well as to communication in more specific modes, such as expression of opinions in the media and formal deliberation. Many countries have constitutions or laws to protect people's speech rights, and the United Nations has recognized speech freedom as a human right. These in general can be regarded as efforts to establish a healthy speech environment. Sound speech conditions are particularly meaningful when disagreements arise between the authority and the governed, a normal state of affairs in most countries. Pippa Norris (1999) has commented that with continued economic development, "critical citizens" less deterred by government authority and increasingly ready to express discontent, are emerging. Inglehart (1997) also identifies the rise of self-expression values as a new political culture, a trend that is growing even in some Confucian, and other non-western cultures that emphasize social hierarchy and respect for authority (Kim, 2010).

**Speech conditions and communicative action.** In this study, the notion of speech conditions is derived mainly from that part of Habermas's theory of communicative action in which he discusses general symmetry conditions, and is also closely linked to his theory of the public sphere. Communicative action refers to action oriented toward mutual understanding. Mutual understanding means agreement over a linguistic expression at the least; at a higher level, it describes a situation in which participants in the conversation agree with each other about "the rightness of the utterance in relation to a mutually recognized normative background" (Habermas, 1979, p. 3). Habermas believes that an ideal communication structure should exclude all forces "except the force of better argument." In the communication process, the participants can raise questions and provide justifications regarding a problematic validity claim and then decide whether to reject or accept the validity claim

(Habermas, 1984, p. 25).

Communicative action is a type of social action that deals with the relations between subjective actors and their objective, social and subjective worlds. Habermas differentiates two types of social action—strategic action and communicative action—based on their different rationality. Strategic action is guided by purposive rationality, which posits that human activities are goal-oriented and that social interactions aim at manipulating others to fulfill their own goals. In contrast, communicative action uses language as a medium to pass information and to coordinate action based on the listener and bearer’s “preunderstanding” developed out of shared lifeworld experiences. It is based on communicative rationality, which proposes that social interaction serves to coordinate individual action. According to the theory of communicative action, communication takes place when the three validity claims of truth, appropriateness and sincerity may be mutually raised and accepted through the exchange of illocutionary speech acts in ideal speech conditions (Habermas, 1984; 1989; 1998b).

Speech conditions and validity claims are two sets of core concepts of Habermas’s theory of communicative action, which can be used as a general framework to study human communication environments and processes. Communicative rationality involves a process of argumentation “in which validity claims can be criticized as untrue, immoral, insincere, or inauthentic” (Rojas, 2008, p. 456). In exchange or communication between at least two subjects about validity claims, validity is fulfilled through processes of intersubjective agreement. However, since language can be used strategically or be manipulated, the use of language itself does not guarantee a communicative orientation during the interpersonal communication, nor does it necessarily lead to mutual understanding of the situation

among the speakers. Therefore, additional criteria that can differentiate communicative versus strategic orientations are needed.

Habermas's ideas of speech conditions constitute just such a set of criteria, and in fact they stand alongside his concepts of validity claims in development of the theory of communicative action. Three core criteria are: 1) Symmetric opportunities (participants' perception of whether opportunities for them and others to raise questions are *equal*); 2) freedom to raise any proposition (participants' perception of whether they feel free to raise *any* questions); 3) full treatment of every proposition (participants' perception of whether their propositions are treated *fully* and *equally fair*) (Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Habermas, 1984; 1990; Jacobson & Jun, 2006). To reach mutual understanding in a non-strategic way, free and equal speech conditions are necessary, to ensure that validity claims of comprehensibility, theoretical truth, moral appropriateness, and sincere intentions can be negotiated. In cases in which one or more validity claims is challenged and needs further deliberation, sound speech conditions serve as a set of rules to facilitate full resolution of validity claims. Townley and colleagues (2003) considered a case in which validity dimensions of communicative actions were engaged as primary methods for decision making regarding government performance in the Province of Alberta, Canada. Their results suggest that when speech conditions are not protected, instrumental rationalization will erode reasoned justification or communicative rationalization. As a result, technical reasoning will prevent or close off open debate.

The sections that follow will speculate regarding the role of speech conditions in the public sphere, where communication and participation of people should play the central role. In a democratic society, citizens express their will and their expectations of the government in everyday talk as well as through the media, while

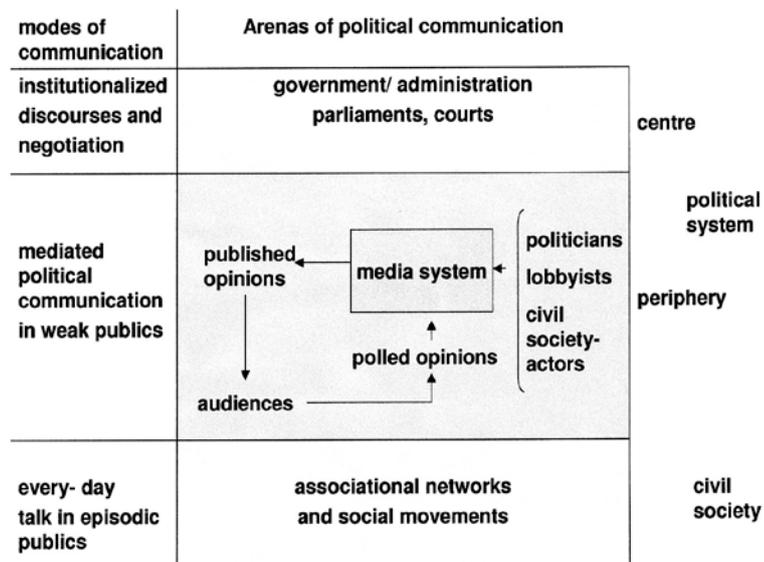
the government may rely on the media to learn and respond to public opinion as well. The media thus can be regarded as a mediated public sphere, where ideally everyone should have access to and participate equally in the discussion of issues concerning the public. To achieve free and equal participation in the public sphere, sound speech conditions should play an important role. Deliberation, a particular type of communication, has become popular recently with increasing worldwide enthusiasm for deliberative democracy and procedural justice. Public deliberation today is often lauded as a major complement to other forms of democratic practices, because genuine deliberation is considered capable of increasing procedural fairness through civic participation and interactions in the decision-making process. Authentic deliberation of matters of public affairs exhibits extensive input from the citizens and active listening from the government. Sound speech conditions would be essential for the citizens to freely and equally express their ideas.

**Speech in the public sphere.** Numerous scholars have theorized the formation and importance of public opinion in political life and decision making. Habermas contributes to the literature through his theory of the public sphere, which he defines as a social realm where private individuals and autonomous groups can gather and discuss issues of general interest freely. It is a discursive space where public opinions can be formed through rational discussions and ideally can influence formal political decision-making. He has described the structure and mechanism of political communication and the public sphere in the form of a graph.

Figure 2-1 illustrates that government is one of the core institutions of the state, while the public sphere is at the periphery of the political system. However, the public sphere is “an intermediary system of communication between formally organized and informal face-to-face deliberations in arenas at both the top and the bottom of the

political system” (Habermas, 2006). The major function of the political public sphere is to “mobilize and pool relevant issues and required information, and to specify interpretations” so as to prepare issues for political institution. Since the public sphere is rooted in the lifeworld, it has a highly sensitive “warning system” to detect and thematize problems and draw the attention of the core institutions. While the output of each institutional branch comes from formal deliberation and negotiation processes, the public opinion of the civil society is shaped in the public sphere through informal deliberation via everyday talk as well as mediated communication carried on by “various types of actors”: journalists, politicians, lobbyists, advocates, experts, moral entrepreneurs, and intellectuals. Journalists and media professionals construct public opinion exhibiting “respective weights of the accumulated yes or no attitudes that they attract from various audiences” (Habermas 1998b; 2006).

Figure 2-1. Structure of the Public Sphere



Source: Habermas (2006)

Public opinion formed in this way goes in two directions for responses: Above, to the government that needs to learn what citizens think, and below, to the citizens who generate the ideas. The process demonstrates the “reflexive character” of the public sphere and bridges the gap between the communication flow between the episodic public in the civil society and political institutions at the center (Habermas, 1998b; 2006, pp.415-418).

As a functional element in the political system, the public sphere “was given the normative status of an organ for the self-articulation of civil society with a state authority corresponding to its needs” (p.74). A major function of the public sphere is to pass on the needs of the society to the state “in order, ideally, to transform political into ‘rational’ authority.” Such rationality is measured by the extent to which the “interest” expressed, shared and satisfied, can be deemed “general.” The general interest is assured when “the activities of private individuals in the marketplace are freed from “social compulsion and from political pressure in the public sphere” (Habermas, 1964, p.53).

In a pluralistic and complex society, the public sphere as an intermediary between the political system, the economic system and the private sphere of the lifeworld, can be highly differentiated by the actors from multiple points of reference. However, since the communication structure is embedded in the public sphere, which can best be described as a network for communicating information and points of view (i.e., opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes), the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions (Habermas, 1998b, p.360).

Access to the public sphere should be equal to all citizens. Ideally, participants in the public sphere, protected by the constitutional freedom of assembly and speech

in countries such as the United States, are individuals, who, although coming from the private sphere, transcend their social status and self-interest and behave as “a public” to exchange their opinions on matters of general interests (Habermas, 1964; 1991; 2006). In his later work, Habermas specifies discourse rules and mechanisms of political communication in the public sphere by incorporating a theory of communicative action and deliberative democracy, which will be covered in the following sections.

**Speech conditions and deliberation.** Cohen (1989) defines deliberative democracy as “an association whose affairs are governed by public deliberation of its members.” Deliberative democracy focuses on the process of deliberation in which public opinion is formed discursively by a well-informed public (Page, 1996). Having no uniform definition, public deliberation generally refers to issues of public concern and requires citizens’ free and equal participation and informed reasoning (Chambers, 2003; Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004). Deliberation is a particular form of communication which involves both “serious listening” and “frank speaking” (Page, 1996, p. 3). During deliberation, participants will obtain information beyond what is heard or experienced by the immediate self, after which they will be willing to reflect upon the new information, their own preferences, and arguments from peer participants. Finally, the participants should be willing to revise their preferences, although consensus is not necessarily the ultimate goal (Chambers, 2003). Gastil (2000) offers a formal definition of public deliberation in which “judicious argument, critical thinking, and earnest listening” are involved in the discussion (p. 22). James Fishkin’s idea of public deliberation has evolved from a strict one to a more practical one allowing for “incompleteness” of deliberation in the following sense

When arguments offered by some participants go unanswered by others, when information that would be required to understand the

force of a claim is absent, or when some citizens are unwilling to weigh some of the arguments in the debate, then the process is *less deliberative* because it is incomplete in the manner specified. (Fishkin, 1995, p. 41)

Fishkin proposes that the aim of improving deliberation is to improve “the completeness of the debate and the public’s engagement in it.” His idea of incompleteness of deliberation also highlights the significance of speech rights. Despite the divergent interpretations of deliberation, it is evident that communication is one conceptual core of deliberation—either reasoning or argumentation, or becoming informed participants, or expression of changed preferences. Therefore, understanding the communication norms of deliberation is important, in addition to other important issues such as the scope of participation. It is here that Habermas’s theories are rendered useful.

The concept of deliberation is closely related to several other concepts including argumentation, public discourse and discursive participation. Levine et al. (2005) distinguish between public deliberation and public discourse (or dialogue), arguing that while dialogue or public discourse is an integral part of deliberation, deliberation goes beyond simple discourse and dialogue. It is a discourse type oriented to problem solving, which involves “problem analysis, setting priorities, establishing evaluative criteria, identifying and weighing alternative solutions.” As a procedure, deliberation should be egalitarian and conscientious.

Iris Young suggests a loosening of the term “deliberation.” She argues that because formal deliberation involves argumentation and reasoning, it tends to privilege highly educated, western, male groups and to exclude socially and culturally marginalized groups. Therefore, she proposes that “deliberation” should be replaced by “communication,” which includes not only formal reasoning but also everyday talk and those less formal means of communication. Finally, researchers suggest that

deliberation may include either face to face, or mediated, or any other form of idea formation and exchanges (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Gundersen, 1995; Lindeman, 2002; Page, 1996).

Habermas provides his thoughts on deliberative democracy. He believes that democracy should be based on neither the liberal view that “programs” the state in the interest of the society nor the republican view that depends heavily on the virtue of the citizens, but on deliberative politics growing out of discourse-centered concept of democracy (Habermas, 1998a, 1998b; 1992). Informed by discourse theory and theory of communicative action, deliberative democracy integrates elements from both liberal and republican views. It has a stronger normative requirement than the liberal model but a weaker one than the republican model. Deliberative politics asks for democratic procedures of political opinion-and-will formation through rational debate and argumentation, in which affected participants can raise validity claims equally and un-coercively. He sees deliberative democracy as discourse-centered and as the practice of deliberative procedure in the public sphere to “build” a social space generated through communicative action. Successful deliberative politics presents two aspects: 1) the institutionalization of communication structures and 2) the interaction of formal deliberative procedures at the centre of the political system with informal public opinion formation (Habermas, 1998a, 1998b).

While theorists are enthusiastic about deliberative democracy, empirical studies of deliberation identify a number of obstacles to understanding just how it might be executed and sustained. One challenge lies in understanding the deliberation process itself. As Ryfe (2005) points out, past studies do not give adequate attention to examining the deliberation procedure itself. Delli Carpini et al (2004) conclude that the rules of deliberation affect the consequences of deliberation and merit further

study. They agree that there should be ways to create conditions favorable to the occurrence of authentic deliberation so that greater legitimacy will be achieved.

One line of research into this argument studies the fairness and equality of the deliberation. The fairness of the procedure requires equal distribution of opportunities for free participation in the deliberation process. Free deliberation ideally satisfies the conditions that the participants are bound not by authority but by the antecedents and consequences of the deliberation and that deliberation by the participants does not stop at the result but allows participants to continue with the process until they perceive a reason sufficient for them to comply to the result. Equal deliberation requires that every participant has an equal right to participate in the process, to make any proposition, and to enjoy equal consideration of their opinions (Cohen, 1989, pp. 73-75).

Deliberation is often complicated by issues of free, fair and equal participation that have been addressed by researchers from different angles. The communication ability of citizens varies; some are skillful at articulating, making argumentations, and reasoning, whereas others are more likely to speak. In addition, for various reasons, some participants enjoy greater opportunities to be listened to. Thus the speech of all participants is not weighed equally during discussion, although it must be admitted that in the real world absolute fairness and equality are rarely achieved at any time. To tackle the above issues, Levine and colleagues (2005) suggest achieving equitable deliberation by training good organizers and moderators who intentionally support participants who are potentially disadvantaged in skills or status in the discussion (Levine et al., 2005). Others suggest setting discussion rules that may enhance the fairness of the deliberation, which provides opportunities for all interested persons to participate in a deliberative decision-making process. Habermas's concept of speech

conditions is considered one of the most comprehensive bases for addressing the issue of fairness and equality in deliberation (Abelson et al., 2003; Webler & Tuler, 2000). Because free deliberation among individuals enjoying equal treatment is considered the basis of legitimacy (Cohen, 1997), sound speech conditions that may enhance the authenticity of deliberation can increase the degree of legitimacy.

**Speech conditions and procedural justice.** Colquitt et al. (2001) and Thibaut and Walker (1975) introduced the concept of procedural justice focusing primarily on disputant reactions to legal procedures. Leventhal and colleagues then extended the notion of procedural justice to non-legal contexts such as organizational settings (Leventhal, 1976). The justice literature focuses primarily on the antecedents and consequences of two types of fairness perceptions: Procedural and distributive justice. Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures used to determine outcomes, and distributive justice is the fairness of outcome distributions (Adams, 1965; Colquitt et al., 2001; Leventhal, 1976; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). People desire fair procedures since these are more likely to produce fair outcomes. Researchers of procedural justice have posited that procedural justice is likely to have great influence on support and acceptance of decisions (Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1990b; Lind & Tyler, 1988; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). A number of studies suggest that procedural fairness judgments are probably the most important fairness judgments used to determine the legitimacy of authority. When stakeholder judgments of justice procedures are positive and their impressions of the procedure are favorable, then they are more likely to accept the decision of an authority (Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & de Vera Park, 1993).

Bies and Moag (1986) extend procedural justice and introduce the concept of interactional justice, which focuses on the quality of interpersonal treatment that

people receive when procedures are involved in decision making. More recently, interactional justice has been considered as consisting of two types of interpersonal treatment received by participants in the procedure, namely interpersonal justice and informational justice (Greenberg, 1993; Kernan & Hanges, 2002). Interpersonal justice refers to the perceived politeness, dignity, and respect on the part of the authority; informational justice focuses on people's perceptions of explanations of the information of the decision-making procedure delivered by the decision makers. Interpersonal justice and informational justice are distinguished from although associated with procedural justice, since they are related to fair treatment of the people during the procedure but predict fairness perception through different mechanisms (Besley, 2010; Colquitt et al, 2001). Empirical studies have found that interpersonal justice is directly related to people's perception of leadership and authority (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Kernan & Hanges, 2002).

A number of studies on justice concern social-psychological perspectives on decision making in legal or work-place settings. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001) suggest that citizens expect procedures that will enable their participation. Kernan and Hanges (2002)'s study tests the hypothesis that both input from employees to decision makers within the organization and communication quality predict employees' perception of procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. Leventhal's (1980) theory of procedural justice judgments focused on six criteria that could be used to judge the fairness of a procedure; at least one of the six states that procedures should ensure that the opinions of various groups affected by the decision be taken into account, a criterion directly related to "voice" or input of the stakeholders.

The literature has established the importance of participants' voice (input) and communication between decision makers and participants in justice perception.

Besley and McComas (2005) suggest the use of justice literature to advance studies in communication. They propose a framing model to understand the absence and presence of frames in the procedure and the influence of frames in evaluating fairness of the procedure. Their empirical studies on political aspects of science communication found results consistent with results of research in other areas that "nonoutcome fairness perception often plays a role in how individuals perceive decision makers and their decisions" (Besley, 2010, p. 260). In a study by Lind et al. (1998) previously mentioned, and in a study by Tyler and Lind (1992), the participants' process impressions of the decision-making procedure were found to predict their acceptance of the decision outcomes. In those studies, the process impression measures included items asking about the opportunity for fair communication, implying that communication does affect the stakeholders' evaluation of the decision outcome.

One stream of procedural justice research conceptualizes procedural justice as the provision of process control (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Following this line, speech or "voice effect" is found to be "one of the most replicated findings" (Colquitt et al., 2001, p. 426). As a process control effect, "voice effect" refers to people's perception that they had control over their arguments and enough time to present their case (Folger, 1977; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). The decision-making process that allows input from people is called voice procedure; the opposite is "mute procedure." Lawler (1975) suggests that participation is an important mediator of satisfaction in business and organizational settings. People perceive voice procedure as fairer than mute procedure even when the outcome is not favorable to them (Bies & Shapiro, 1988). Also the perception of ongoing communication concerning all the aspects of the procedure is positively related to fairness perception (Kernan & Hanges, 2002).

Having a voice in the process means having a certain degree of involvement in decision making by expressing one's own opinion, which has positive psychological effects on the participants. First, participants will expect to have some form of control of the outcome, since they will provide input into the decision before it is made. Second, participants will feel that the superiors or authority respect them. A number of studies implemented in experiments and in natural settings reveal that the “voice effect enhances procedural fairness even when the individual making the fairness judgment has no direct control over the decision itself”; people perceive the procedure as being fair just because they think the authority is concerned about them or respects them (Kernan & Hanges, 2002; Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990, p.952).

Voice is implemented in a number of ways, and various consequences may follow. In the pre-decision stage, when stakeholders have greater opportunity for input into the final results, voice may lead to higher degree of perceived fairness. In contrast, some research found that at the post-decision stage, when citizens see no chance of providing meaningful input, the perceived fairness is lower and is termed the “frustration effect” (Folger, 1977). In some cases, providing a low degree of voice may actually serve as a means of restricting the type of participation. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (in press) found that voice may have mixed (positive and negative) effects, on participants’ perception of the outcome legitimacy, depending on their perception of the motives of the decision makers. Input (voice) from the participants will have a positive effect when they are convinced that they are valued in the group but a negative effect when they think that the decision makers are self-serving.

As mentioned previously, people’s criteria of the fairness of the procedure include the quality of the decision-making procedure and the quality of the treatment they received during the procedure (Blader & Tyler, 2003). Communication processes

are essential to procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice (Besley & McComas, 2005). Speech conditions, which set formal rules for communication processes, may promote the quality of the procedure and treatment of the participants by encouraging equal and free linguistic means of participation. Sound speech conditions would enhance the fairness perception in at least two ways. On one hand, sound speech conditions allow speakers to express their opinions freely and equally, which encourages authentic participation in the procedure and increases the voice effects. The criteria of “fully,” i.e., with regard to being listened to by decision-makers, would avoid or at least reduce the “frustration effect.” On the other hand, allowing free and equal participation as well as full treatment of people's proposals indicates politeness and respect by the authority, which should increase the perception of interpersonal fairness. Thus better speech conditions will likely increase the fairness perception.

Research on voice effects in procedural literature reveals that people simply value the opportunity to express their views in decision making because they expect that such participation will increase the fairness of the procedure (Tyler, 1997). When people perceive a procedure as fair, they are more likely to support and accept the decision and the authority (Levi et al., 2009). Sound speech conditions that ensure people's right to speak and participate may enhance the perceived fairness of the procedure and thus result in a higher perception of legitimacy of the outcome.

#### **Part IV: Gaps in the Literature**

Although the relationship between communication and political outcomes has drawn interest from many disciplines, a few important gaps exist in the literature. First, few studies have examined the specific communication environment during decision making and even fewer studies are based on Habermas's concept of speech

conditions. Most research in organizational justice conceptualizes communication in terms of the causal accounts or explanations that management provides for its initial decision, and the fairness perception is seen as the result of an adequate explanation of action taken or decision made (Bies & Shapiro, 1988; Brockner, DeWitt, Grover, & Reed, 1990; Daly & Geyer, 1994; Greenberg, 1993, 1994; Mansour-Cole & Scott, 1998). However, communication in these studies is more strategic oriented rather than communicative, because the communication under study tends to be in the form of persuasion that often takes place after the decision is made, and the purpose of the communication is to convince the people affected that the decision outcome is legitimate. Researchers in this field, such as Bruning et al. (1996) and Kernan and Hanges (2002), argue that fairness perceptions should also depend on additional communication elements. They extend their research to the communication of the decision results to affected personnel from initial managerial explanations. However, their studies only explore the characteristics of the communication, such as timeliness, accuracy, and helpfulness.

There is a second gap in the literature. With very few exceptions, studies have not explicitly linked communication directly with legitimacy of the decision outcome. Although deliberative theorists argue that deliberation leads to legitimacy of the decision outcome and deliberation is considered a special type of communication, few researchers have treated communication as the key predictor to legitimacy or adequately tested legitimation models. Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009) argued that most research “has not conceptualized deliberations as *communication* events” (p. 74) and tried to fill the gap by approaching deliberation as a communication process. They tested how expression of agreement and disagreement among individuals during deliberation affect deliberation outcome. Their findings suggest that participants’

positive deliberation evaluations will increase their perceived decision legitimacy. Their work is among the few studies that explicitly treat deliberation as a communication event; however, the predictors in this model are restricted to communication content and attributes, not the speech environment.

Procedural justice studies have found that the stakeholders' assessment of fairness of the decision-making procedures leads to perceived institutional legitimacy (Kitzmann & Emery, 1993; Lind et al., 1993; Tyler, 2001). Extending procedural justice from the legal to the organizational setting, organizational studies have proposed to investigate the voice effect during the decision-making procedure on the stakeholders' fairness perception of the decision outcome. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's study (in press) used experiments to observe the voice effect on outcome legitimacy; their findings showed mixed results of the voice effect on outcome legitimacy. However, the primary purpose of their study was to explore how the characteristics of the decision-makers would bring about a negative effect of voice on decision outcome. Therefore, they simply tested the voice vs. no voice binary conditions, paying little attention to conceptualize into the voice effect.

A third and final gap in the literature is addressed by this study's use of an integrative approach to studying the emergence of legitimacy. Previous research has evaluated decision outcomes through either substantive or procedure means separately; very few bring the two together and investigate their relations. Hegtvedt and Johnson (2009)'s study can be counted as one; they proposed a power-based approach (on the basis of instrumental rationality) as a complement to a procedural-based explanation of legitimacy. However, this theoretical model is in need of further empirical examination. Many studies have tested the separate models of distributive justice and procedural justice as predictors of decision outcome. However, Colquitt and

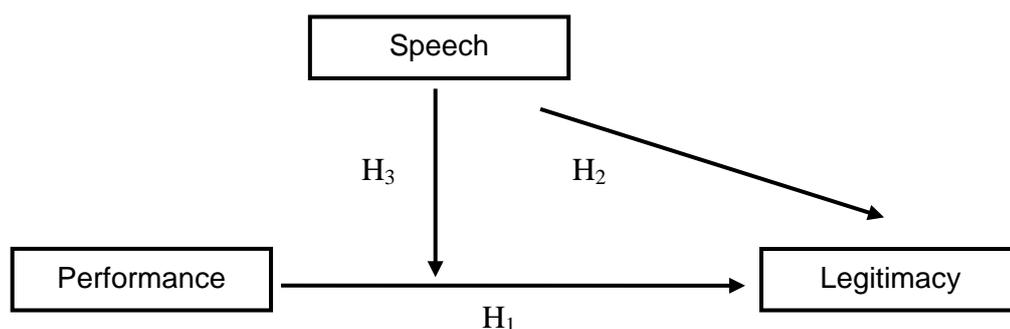
colleagues' (2001) meta-analysis of previous studies reveal that while studies of procedural justice test the influence without including an examination of distributive justice, other studies do examine distributive justice but use it only in analyses separate from procedural justice. Research using an integrated approach is thus far inadequate in analyzing to what extent each logic contributes to an explanation of the perception of the outcome.

To sum up, previous studies of deliberative democracy and deliberation have theorized an association of democratic deliberation and legitimacy, but empirical studies are few. Even fewer are studies in all areas that explicitly link the communication environment to outcome legitimacy. Also additional efforts are needed to further test the interaction effect brought about by justifications of legitimacy based on two types of rationality of human activities.

#### **Part V: Theoretical Model and Hypotheses**

This study will test two perspectives in a moderation effects model. Specifically, the perspective states that, 1) performance is closely related to legitimacy of the government, 2) speech conditions are closely related to government legitimacy, and 3) the effects of performance will be moderated by sound speech conditions. Figure 2-2 illustrates the relations among the variables.

*Figure 2-2. The Theoretical Model*



**Perceived performance.** Perceived government performance refers to people's perception of government delivery of public services or public goods. The literature indicates that perception of government performance is positively associated with people's view of and supportive attitude toward the government. When performance is perceived to be good, citizens will regard government as competent and effective (Levi, 2005) and effectiveness and competence of government in the pursuit of shared goals will generate people's belief in the ruler's cognitive superiority. In addition, they will have greater confidence in the government's decisions, making the decisions more acceptable (Levi et al., 2009; Yang, 2005). In contrast, when performance is deemed unsatisfactory, citizens tend to lose trust in the government (Wang, 2007), and its ability to make binding decisions that will benefit the people will be in doubt. This is perhaps especially the case when government is going to make decisions in an area that it fails to perform well.

Furthermore, the substance or content of the decision is directly associated with stakeholders' perception of its legitimacy. Stakeholders are seldom willing to accept the decisions that do not fit with their substantive goals (Mondak, 1994; Wallner, 2008). Making solid and well grounded decisions requires knowledge and expertise related to the subjects. Thus when government is perceived as doing well in a certain economic, social, or political aspect, it is likely that citizens will have higher confidence in the expertise of the government and may view the decisions made by such government as more reasonable and substantively sound. If a new decision is to be made in an area where the government has a good record of performance, it is more likely to win support from the people.

Finally, collective action theory posits that individuals form groups on the basis of similar self interests. These groups are present in various forms of

organizations, firms, or nations. When individuals find that a group best fulfills their interests, they tend to have a higher sense of identity with that group. In the citizen-government relation, when people see that the government, which is regarded as the representative of the group, meets their demands, they will identify more with the group and tend to be compliant to the leaders' decisions (Olson, 1965; Tyler, 2006). With similar logic, rational choice theory states that as rational actors, when citizens perceive that the government meets or can satisfy their needs, they tend to support and grant legitimacy to the decisions of the government (Gibson et al., 2005). Based on the above literature, the following is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 1: Perceived government performance in a certain domain will be positively associated with the perception that the government decision in the same domain is legitimate.*

**Perceived speech conditions.** While the direct relation of performance to legitimacy is often discussed, it is also argued by other scholars that legitimacy is associated with sound communication as well. In particular, Habermas proposes that in addition to purposive rationality, communicative rationality is fundamental to human society. Legitimation of authority is realized through institutionalizing discourse rules, of which speech conditions are an integral part. Theorists of deliberative democracy also posit that public deliberation will generate legitimacy (Cohen, 1989; Habermas, 1996). In modern society, the legitimation of domination preferably should be realized through good reasoning of which democratic deliberation is one major form. A law or political decision is legitimate not only because the citizens feel or believe that it is but also because they participate in the justification of the law making or decision-making process through reasoning (Thompson, 2008). Legitimacy is produced when all citizens have equal opportunity

to participate, to understand what they truly want through deliberation and dialogue with other participants, and are free to support or oppose several possible solutions (Chambers, 2003; Cohen, 1989; Dryzek, 2001; Manin et al., 1987). Or, in Habermasian terms, when citizens perceive that the full range of speech conditions are met in communication with government over all kinds of validity claims, then legitimacy is generated (Habermas, 1973, 1998a, 1998b). A summary of empirical evidence in Delli Carpini and colleagues' (2004) article on public deliberation and citizen engagement reveals that increasing acceptance and support of decisions is one of the positive consequences brought about by public deliberation.

In modern societies, public opinion is valued because it represents the general will, to which the government should respond when making collective decisions so as to generate legitimacy (Manin, 1987). The ideal public sphere, which should have the quality of sound speech conditions, allows equal opportunities to participate and speak, open discussion of any question, and full consideration of any propositions on issues of public concern; it also facilitates input from civil societies to the center of decision-making institutions. Institutionalizing the public sphere, i.e., formalizing the discourse rules, including speech conditions that are communicative, gives people a venue to express opinions on public issues and be listened to by the authority. This way, the risk of alienation may be reduced and social integration enhanced.

In public policy making, a sound communication environment may increase the legitimacy of the decisions. Results in the literature show that having a say in the decision-making process can increase the legitimacy of the outcome since people desire to have input and influence over the policies that will affect them. For instance, the government of Alberta, Canada reported that the people of Alberta demand a higher degree of participation in the discussion of the decision-making process; they

are no longer content with “closed-door” politics in which citizens are not informed and have no say in the decisions (Townley et al., 2003). The opportunity for people to voice their opinions increases the outcome legitimacy because when people are allowed to participate in the decision-making process, they feel more fairly treated as the result of having more control over the decision outcome through participation in the decision procedure (Blader and Tyler, 2003; Lind and Tyler, 1988). Similarly, a participatory approach that is communicative during the decision-making process increases the legitimacy of the outcome (Chang, 2007; Chang and Jacobson, 2010; Jacobson and Jun, 2006) while sound speech conditions will ensure that people have free and equal opportunities to express their will and to receive full treatment of their expressed will. Therefore,

*Hypothesis 2: The perception of the decision-making process as communicative in terms of speech conditions will be positively associated with the perception that the government decision is legitimate.*

**The moderating role of perceived speech conditions.** In addition to the independent effects of perceived performance and speech conditions on legitimacy of the government decision, interaction effects are likely. It is expected that the relationship between perceived performance and legitimacy of the decision will be positively moderated by perceived speech conditions during the decision-making procedure. Satisfying people’s immediate interests may strengthen collective identity and induce them to support the binding decisions (Olsen, 1965). When the citizen stakeholders think that government performance in a certain domain meets their needs, the decisions by the government in that area will appear to be more acceptable, and this relationship may be stronger if the speech conditions are perceived as communicative by the stakeholders. When decisions are being made on public affairs,

communicative or sound speech conditions require that government grant symmetric opportunities for people to participate, give them freedom to raise questions, and provide equal and full chance to be heard in the process. Such efforts to ensure sound speech conditions signal that the government is willing to treat people fairly and with respect.

As discussed earlier, many scholars agree that self-gain or individual benefit is not the sole basis on which people decide whether or not decisions are supported and acceptable; whether the decision makers explain well the procedures and prospective policies to the stakeholders can affect the stakeholders' evaluation of the outcome (Greenberg, 1993), and having a "voice" in the pre-decision stage increases the perceived fairness (Thibaut, 1975; Tyler, 2006). Kernan and Hanges (2002) identified communication as a significant antecedent of interpersonal justice during the management decision-making process regarding reorganization and communication has been found to be one of the most important aspects of the decision-making procedure in a chaotic and uncertain environment (Tombaugh & White, 1990).

Involving the public in a decision-making process will increase the likelihood that a positive attitude will be produced toward the outcome through inducing the feeling that the decision makers are concerned about their interests, respect them, and treat them fairly, even if their opinions do not affect the outcome or the outcome is not favorable. Consistent with this argument, Blader and Tyler's (2003) model tests the hypothesis that people assess the fairness of the procedure according to the formal and informal rules by which decisions are made and how the authority treats group members. Empirical studies in organizational justice indicate that the input or the voice of the organizational members and communication quality are predictors of procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, which directly affect employees'

perception of the leaders and decisions of an organization.

Therefore, even if people hold the belief that the government is competent and will make decisions leading to favorable results, they still care about how they are treated during the decision-making process. The perception of being treated fairly will likely increase the support and acceptance of the decisions. In contrast, the perception of unfair treatment during the process may reduce the legitimacy of the decisions even when the outcome is favorable. Thus, whether the decision makers could engender the stakeholders' supportive attitude by ensuring practical benefits is contingent upon whether people think they are treated politely and fairly in decision-making procedures (Colquitt et al., 2001; Tyler, 2006). Reichers et al. (1997) found that when stakeholders perceive the decision-making process as uninformative or non-communicative, they are less likely to accept the decision.

In the cases in which people are not satisfied with the performance of their government, the legitimacy of the decisions will be likely to suffer. Unsatisfactory performance of the government usually denotes that the government cannot meet the demands of the people. In such circumstances, the government's competence to make decisions on behalf of the people is often in doubt, since its representativeness of the people and its capability to meet their interests are in question. When this happens, involving a broader public and having its members participate freely and equally in the decision-making process may improve the situation. Free and equal participation and input of a broader public means that everyone's interests have the opportunity to be counted in decision making, which expands the representativeness of the government and may result in a more positive view toward the use of its authoritative power in decision making (Manin, 1986).

In addition to the arguments made by Habermas and others that

communication and deliberation will generate people's belief in legitimacy, scholars of post-materialism argue that people will possess a more supportive attitude toward authority and feel less alienated if their higher level needs of self-expression and autonomy are satisfied in addition to their basic material needs (Inglehart, 2008). This implies that the government may convince people and win their support through meeting their immediate needs when making collective decisions, but inducing such supportive attitude in a society where a desire for speech rights is emerging will also depend on the soundness of the communication environment.

To sum up, on the one hand, when government performance meets the demands of the people, the government decisions may be regarded as legitimate, and this relationship will be stronger when speech conditions are sound. On the other hand, when government performance is perceived as unsatisfactory, sound speech conditions will reduce the negative effect.

*Hypothesis 3: During the decision-making, speech conditions that are perceived as communicative will moderate the relation between perceived government performance in a certain domain and perceived legitimacy of government decisions in the same domain.*

## **Part VI: Summary**

The research will investigate two sets of factors that contribute to the justifications of decision outcome legitimacy: Substantive factors, represented by perceived performance by the government making collective decisions, and communication factors, represented by speech conditions during the decision-making process. It aims to test the idea that legitimacy of government decisions is related to performance of the government body, and such relation is contingent upon the soundness of the communication environment (speech conditions) whereby the

decisions are made. The soundness of speech conditions is evaluated by the extent to which citizens feel that they are able to challenge government proposals in case of doubt. To test this idea, information will be collected about people's perception of a city government's performance in the public transportation sector and their perception of communication with the authority during a public transportation policy-making process.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODS

This chapter summarizes the design of the study aimed at testing the three hypotheses on relations between perceived performance, perceived speech conditions and perceived legitimacy of government decisions. A research setting involving a great amount of public debate and discussion on a public transportation issue was selected. A survey methodology was employed, beginning with a pilot test to assist in the design and revision of a survey instrument. The design of the final survey is discussed, along with the measures of the control variables, independent variables and dependent variables used.

### **Research Setting**

This study selected the case of a government decision on taxi fare increase in Chengdu City, the capital of Sichuan province, in southwest China. The study observed Chengdu residents' attitudes toward, and acceptance of, the decision made by the municipal government on taxi fare increase in 2010—an important decision about a public transportation service that impacts the life of many on a daily basis.

Although this sample is not a random national population sample, it should provide some basis for tentative generalizations about large urban cities in China (in terms of population, Chengdu is the fourth largest city in China and the most important city in west China). Manion (1994), addressing the challenges of doing survey research in contemporary China, argues that obtaining a representative sample of the national population is unrealistic because of the large population, complicated geographic composition, and political constraints. Although it is technically possible to obtain a probability sample, it would be very difficult to obtain the cooperation from all government administrations, which must be relied on to obtain the detailed population information required for true random sampling. As a result, using samples

of a local population where the researchers have formal or informal connections is the typical practice. Furthermore, Manion suggests that even if a local sample is not nationally representative, data collected this way can produce reliable responses which are “generalizable to a population beyond the sample, to a crucial category of questions –those about relationships between variables” as long as there is no unusual element related to the theorized relationships (Manion, 1994, p. 747).

The Chengdu case was selected on the basis of several considerations. First, the study required that the selected case be known by the majority of Chengdu residents, and the residents should have shown interest in the matter. The Chengdu case received a great amount of press coverage because of its sensitivity and wide impact. Considerable discussion and debate took place after the municipal government bureau proposed a taxi fare increase in the urban areas of Chengdu.

Government decisions about price changes in China today are required by law to involve citizens in the decision through public hearings and such cases often receive great attention from the residents who may potentially be impacted. The practice of public hearings started in the mid-1990s. As early as 1997, the People’s Congress passed the *Price Law of PRC*, which establishes the requirement that public hearings be used to involve consumers and all other affected parties in decisions about the price of public services and public goods. In 2000, the Chinese central government directed local governments to hold public hearings over important administrative and price decisions affecting public life, such as fares of public transportation, utility fees, land use etc. Since then, numerous public hearings have been held in these areas, particularly with regard to price change concerning daily life. In major urban cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Fujian and Hangzhou, over 100 public hearings have been held each year, and between 1998 and 2001, more than

1,000 public hearings on prices were held throughout the nation (He & Warren, 2011). Despite doubt regarding the genuineness of the public hearing practices, compared with closed-door decisions of the government, which may inspire great debate during the post-decision stage, pre-decision deliberation at least invites input from the public and usually draws open discussion and relatively extensive media coverage. As a result, a broader interested public will be engaged in the discussion.

In addition, because of urbanization and increased automobiles, road conditions and urban transportation service have become major concerns in many large cities in China, stimulating numerous public debates. Therefore, topics related to public transportation easily draw people's attention. In 2010, Chengdu had at least three public hearings each on the bus fare system, taxi fare change, and fare policy of the new subway system.

As a consequence, after the municipal government proposed a price increase in the taxi fares in urban areas of Chengdu, the issue received so much press coverage that most of the city residents were aware of the proposed change in taxi fares. Many residents showed strong interest in the issue, and as a result, considerable discussion and debate took place in both private and public spaces.

Two major local newspapers, *Chengdu Business News* and *Chengdu Evening News*, and one major local TV station, *Chengdu TV Station*, reported the proposed increase. On the websites of the local news outlets, many users left comments or exchanged opinions following the news threads about the issue of the taxi fare increase. One popular local news website can be used as an example: Between July 23, 2010 and October 6, 2010, before and after a public hearing on August 3, 1,350 comments were left right below the news thread discussing the issue; the website held five online public opinion polls among Chengdu residents between June 8, 2010 and

August 4, 2010. On average, 54,520 people participated in each poll (www.cd.qq.com). The website also devoted a special section to a debate on the increase. News articles and in-depth analyses can be found on websites, which both approve and disapprove with the proposal, representing views from residents of all walks of life: Local government officials, taxi drivers, professors at universities, etc. Based on personal communication with some Chengdu residents and the participants in the survey, the researcher found that they often discussed the issue with friends and relatives while at work or when they gathered together after work or on weekends.

Second, the taxi fare increase decision is considered a suitable political issue for exploring two sets of factors that contribute to citizens' acceptance of government decisions. The issue concerns the regulations and decisions made by the administrative branches of Chengdu municipal government.

The Pricing Administration Bureau of Chengdu, a functional department of the municipal government, regulates and decides price related policies including changes in taxi fare. In addition, although taxi companies in Chengdu are privately owned, they are under strict control and regulation by the Transport Committee of Chengdu, which is another department of the city government. Under the Chengdu Transport Committee, an Administrative Office of Taxi Service controls and regulates almost every aspect of taxi service. The office states on its website that its major responsibilities include supervising the operation of taxi services, designing future development plans, drafting laws and regulations affecting taxi service, managing registration of individual taxis, checking and evaluating the credentials of taxi drivers, dealing with complaints from customers and residents, and improving the safety and quality of the service managing the taxi service. Another sign that the municipal government supervises taxi service is that major official regulations regarding taxi

service such as *Regulations of Taxi Service in Chengdu (2011)*, must be approved by the People's Congress Standing Committee of Chengdu. This official document covers nearly all aspects of taxi service operations in Chengdu.

In the specific case of a taxi fare increase, two functional departments of the Chengdu municipal government are involved. The Pricing Administration Bureau of Chengdu is responsible for proposing plans for a taxi fare increase and making the final decision, while the Transport Committee of Chengdu is responsible for regulating taxi service operations. Therefore, Chengdu residents would consider the taxi service and price decision as government responsibilities and, when asked about their perceived performance of taxi service or perceived legitimacy of the policy, they might not differentiate between the two functional departments while generally speaking they very likely had the municipal government in mind. For these reasons, it is legitimate to use the Chengdu case for the proposed study.

It should be noted that the project did not intend to investigate the public hearing itself, i.e., the formal deliberation procedure over the decision, but just to select a case that was high profile in nature because it received so much attention and was much talked about by the citizens. Compared with closed-door decisions of the government, which may inspire great debate in the post-decision stage, pre-decision deliberation invites input from the public and usually draws open discussion and extensive media coverage. In this case, a broad public was clearly interested and engaged in the discussion.

## **Respondents**

Survey data were collected during September 2011 in all six urban districts of Chengdu city. The sample was designed to represent the city's adult population. Since the taxi fare increase was limited to six central urban districts of Chengdu city,

participants were recruited from these six districts and residential neighborhoods were randomly selected. A total of 300 survey questionnaires were delivered in person by six volunteers to the neighborhoods randomly selected in the six districts and 260 questionnaires were returned. After five cases were removed because of either excessive missing data or invalid demographic information, the size of the final sample was 255, making the response rate 85%. Residents of all six urban districts were represented in the sample, with Gaoxin district having the lowest proportion of responses (3.6%) and Jinjiang district having the highest proportion of responses (38.5%). In addition, 81 respondents (32.1%) identified themselves as from "Other" districts in Chengdu and 3 respondents did not reveal their residential district (1.2%). Sixty-two percent of the respondents were female, 38% were male. Their ages ranged from 18 to 79, with a distribution as following: 21 were 18-24 (8.8%); 94 were 25-34 (39.5%); 95 were 35-44 (39.9%); 14 were 45-54 (5.9%); 4 were 55-64 (1.7%); 9 were 65-74 (3.8%); and one was above 75 (.4%).

### **Translation of the Survey Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaire was originally designed and written in English. Then the English version was translated into Chinese by two social science scholars competent in both English and Chinese; each scholar did an independent translation. After that, the two Chinese versions were discussed and compared to form a Chinese version to be used in the pretest.

The Chinese version was then back-translated into English by two Chinese bilingual language professionals having background in social science and humanities, with special attention to detecting misunderstandings and mistranslations. The results of the back translations were compared with the source questionnaire, and no critical confusions or mistakes were found, despite variances in terms of the grammar and

sentence structure due to differences across the two languages (Harkness, Pennell, & Schoua-Glusberg, 2004). Table 3-1 presents the source survey questions and results from one copy of the back-translation of the key independent and dependent variables (see Appendices C and D for the full versions of back-translation from the Chinese questionnaire).

Table 3-1 shows that the words expressing evaluation, attitude, or belief were translated into exactly the same or comparable words as in the source questions. However, as mentioned previously, the structures of the sentences were not the same because of language differences. For instance, the “Speech 1” source question, “Last year, Chengdu residents all had *equal opportunities* to express how the municipal government should make adjustments to taxi fares.” was back translated from Chinese as “Last year, regarding the issue of how the municipal government would adjust the taxi price, all Chengdu citizens had equal opportunities to raise their opinions.” The key phrase “equal opportunities” was exactly the same in source and target questions but there are some structural and lexical differences. In some other cases, the source and target words and phrases, although slightly different, were similar. The “Speech 2” source sentence “Last year, during the decision-making process, I believe I had *plenty of opportunities* to make proposals to Chengdu government about changing taxi fares.” was back translated from the Chinese version as “I believe that I had *ample opportunities* to express my suggestion to the Chengdu government during the taxi price adjustment policymaking process last year.” In the two sentences, phrases such as “plenty of opportunities” and “ample opportunities”; “make proposals” and “express my suggestion”; and “changing taxi fares” and “taxi price adjustment” although not exactly the same, convey essentially the same meaning. However, there were still a few cases in which technical problems in translation may have led to

inaccuracies. For instance, the “Performing 2” source statement is “The price I pay for Chengdu’s taxi service is reasonable,” while the back translation from the Chinese version is “I think the taxi fare in Chengdu is appropriate.” Here in English the words “appropriate” and “reasonable” may be somewhat different while in translation practice, the two words “appropriate” and “reasonable” are often translated into the same Chinese word. Thus in doing back translation, it can be very difficult for a translator to differentiate between the two. However, such problems were addressed in the pilot study and it is believed that they did not seriously hamper use of the Chinese version.

Table 3-1. Source Survey Questions and Back-Translations from Chinese to English

Items	Source questions in English	Translation from Chinese to English
Performance 1	I have easy access to taxi service in Chengdu.	It's convenient for me to take a taxi in Chengdu.
Performance 2	The price I pay for taxi service is affordable.	I can afford a taxi.
Performance 3	The price I pay for Chengdu's taxi service is reasonable.	I think the taxi fare in Chengdu is appropriate.
Performance 4	Taking a taxi is safe in Chengdu.	It's safe to take a taxi in Chengdu.
Performance 5	I'm satisfied with the customer service of Chengdu's taxi.	I am satisfied with the service attitudes of the taxi drivers in Chengdu.
Performance 6	I have no complain about the taxi service in Chengdu.	I don't have any complaints about the taxi services in Chengdu.
Performance 7	My demands are met by the taxi service in Chengdu	The taxi services in Chengdu can meet my needs.
Performance 8	The overall quality of taxi service in Chengdu is high.	In general, the quality of the taxi services in Chengdu is quite high.
Speech 1	Last year, Chengdu residents all had <i>equal opportunities</i> to express how the municipal government should make adjustments to taxi fares.	Last year, regarding the issue of how the municipal government would adjust the taxi price, all Chengdu citizens had <i>equal opportunities</i> to raise their opinions.
Speech 2	Last year, during the decision-making process, I believe I had <i>plenty of opportunities</i> to make proposals to Chengdu government about changing taxi fares.	I believe that I had <i>ample opportunities</i> to express my suggestion to the Chengdu government during the taxi price adjustment policy-making process last year.
Speech 3	I believe the Chengdu municipal government <i>talks more</i> than it <i>listens</i> to residents' opinions about taxi fare policy changes last year.	I think regarding the issue of taxi price adjustment, the Chengdu municipal government <i>spent more time in publicizing</i> the policy than <i>hearing the ideas</i> of its people last year.

Table 3-1. (continued)

Items	Source questions in English	Translation from Chinese to English
Speech 4	Last year, the Chengdu government was <i>eager</i> to have residents make <i>any</i> propositions or raise <i>any</i> questions they might wish about the taxi fare change.	Last year, the Chengdu government <i>actively collected</i> Chengdu citizens' opinions, suggestions, and questions on the taxi price adjustment.
Speech 5	I think every Chengdu resident felt free last year to raise any questions or to make any suggestions concerning how the government might change the taxi fare.	Based on the issue of the taxi price adjustment issue last year, I think every Chengdu local residents thinks that they can bring at ease their questions or suggestions to the bureau in charge.
Speech 6	Last year, the government was interested in hearing <i>certain</i> suggestion from Chengdu residents.	Last year, the government had interest in knowing the suggestions of Chengdu citizens.
Speech 7	I think the government gave <i>full</i> consideration to what Chengdu residents said they needed when the making decision to increase taxi fares last year.	During the policy-making process of the taxi price adjustment, I think the government took Chengdu residents' needs into <i>full</i> consideration.
Speech 8	I think last year the government responded to Chengdu residents' concerns about the taxi fare increase <i>seriously</i> and <i>thoroughly</i> .	I think during last year, the government responded to the Chengdu citizens' concerns <i>seriously</i> and <i>completely</i> .
Speech 9	I think last year the government tried to respond to all questions and suggestions from Chengdu residents <i>carefully</i> and <i>thoughtfully</i> .	I think last year, the government <i>earnestly</i> and <i>thoroughly</i> tried to respond to all the citizens' questions and suggestions.
Legitimacy 1	The municipal government's decision to increase the taxi fare is appropriate.	It is a reasonable decision that the municipal administration's decision on increasing the taxi fare.

Table 3-1. (continued)

<b>Items</b>	<b>Source questions in English</b>	<b>Translation from Chinese to English</b>
Legitimacy 2	The decision to increase the taxi fare is fair to all residents.	Raising the taxi fare is a fair decision for all the local residents.
Legitimacy 3	I support the decision to increase the taxi fare by the municipal government.	I am in support of raising the taxi fare.
Legitimacy 4	I am willing to accept the decision to increase the taxi fare though I disagree with it.	Although I am not in agreement with the decision on taxi fare raising, I am still willing to accept it.

### **Pilot Test and Revision of the Survey Questionnaire**

For a pilot test implemented to evaluate the clarity and structure of the survey questions, 25 adult Chengdu residents were recruited between June 5 and June 22, 2011. After they filled out the questionnaires, the survey questions were discussed. The questionnaire was then revised based upon responses to the questions and feedback about clarity and structure of the questionnaire. The pilot test showed that the participants had no major issues with understanding the questions in the survey, but the structure of the questionnaire needed to be revised to make it simpler and easier to read according to feedback from respondents. Changes made to the questionnaire after the pilot test are illustrated in Tables 3-2, 3-3, and 3-4. The survey used in the pilot test listed the following four questions together in the same table as shown in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2. Questions Used in the Pilot Test and Revised After

“To begin, we would like to know how interested you are in local affairs generally and the taxi fare increase in specific.”

Please circle a number on the right that best describes each answer	Strongly Agree <span style="float: right;">Strongly Disagree</span>						
1. I am very interested in Chengdu's local affairs.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. I have heard a lot about Chengdu's taxi fare change.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I am very interested in the issue of Chengdu's taxi fare change.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I use taxi services very often in Chengdu.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Following the suggestions of the respondents in the pilot test, the questions were restructured as below: Question 2 in the Table 3-2, “I have heard a lot about Chengdu's taxi fare change,” was separated from all other questions and listed as the first question in the final survey. Also for question 2, the 7 point scale in the pilot test was changed into “yes-no” answer choices in the final survey (See Table 3-3). Question 1, “I am very interested in Chengdu's local affairs,” and Question 3 “I am very interested in the issue of Chengdu's taxi fare change,” were put into one group of questions and the 7-point likert scale was retained. Finally, the fourth question in Table 3-2, “I use taxi services very often in Chengdu,” was reworded into “The frequency of taxi use in Chengdu,” and the 7 point scale was changed from “7 = Strongly agree” and “1 = strongly disagree” to “7 = very often” and “1 = never”. This question was also listed, together with those questions measuring respondents’

evaluation of taxi service (See Appendix A1: Survey questionnaire English version).

*Table 3-3. Revision of Question 2*

“To begin, please circle the answer that best fits you on the right:”

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. I have heard about Chengdu's taxi fare change.	1	0

*Table 3-4. Revision of Question 1 and Question 3*

“There are seven choices on the right of the table below. “7” stands for that you strongly agree with the statement on the left while “1” stands for that you strongly disagree with the statement on the left. The number from 7 to 1 indicates that the degree of your agreement with the statement on the left reduces. Please circle the number that best represents your feeling on the right.”

	<b>Strongly agree</b>							<b>Strongly disagree</b>
2. I am very interested in Chengdu's local affairs.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
3. I am very interested in the issue of Chengdu's taxi fare change.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	

## Measures

The design of major independent variables categorized as “perceived speech conditions” was based on efforts of Jacobson (2004), Jacobson and Jun (2006), and Chang and Jacobson (2010) to develop an operational protocol. The operationalization of another independent variable, “perceived performance,” was derived from the literature on public administration with the measures borrowed

specifically from the European public opinion survey Eurobarometer 62.1 (2004). The operationalization and measurement of dependent variables for “perceived legitimacy of the government decision” were guided by Suchman (1995); Tyler’s (2006) conceptualization of legitimacy; Chang and Jacobson (2010); and Chen’s (2004) measurement of legitimacy.

**Perceived speech conditions.** The study employed operational protocols measuring citizens’ perceived speech conditions based on Habermas’s theories of communicative action, as developed by Jacobson (2004) and Jacobson and Jun (2006) and as elaborated by Chang and Jacobson (2010) and Chang (2007). Results from these studies indicate that independent communicative action variables (validity claims and speech conditions) can account for variance in dependent variables of legitimacy ranging from .15 to .55 (multiple  $R^2$  change after controlling for demographics).

The concept of perceived speech conditions has three dimensions (symmetric opportunities, freedom to raise propositions, and equal treatment of propositions) and the survey included three items for each dimension. Thus the total number of items is nine. Respectively, “Symmetric opportunities” is respondents’ perception of the sufficiency of opportunities for them and other citizens to raise questions of government during the policymaking process. “Freedom to raise any proposition” is defined as respondents’ perception of citizens’ freedom to raise any proposal or idea they wished to discuss. “Equal treatment of propositions” refers to respondents’ perception of the government’s fair and full consideration of every proposal raised by citizens. Each item was measured on a 7-point scale, with “1 = strongly disagree” and “7 = strongly agree.” Table 3-5 presents the 9 items measuring perceived speech conditions. Among the 9 items, item S3 was a reverse question.

Table 3-5. Items Measuring Perceived Speech Conditions

No.	Dimensions of speech conditions	Questions
S1	Symmetrical opportunities	Last year, Chengdu residents all had <i>equal opportunities</i> to express how the municipal government should make adjustments to taxi fares
S2		I believe I had <i>plenty of opportunities</i> to make proposals to Chengdu government about changing taxi fares last year
S3		I believe the Chengdu municipal government <i>talks more</i> than it <i>listens</i> to residents' opinions about taxi fare policy changes last year
S4	Freedom to raise any proposition	Last year, the Chengdu government was <i>eager</i> to have residents make <i>any</i> propositions or raise <i>any</i> questions they might wish about the taxi fare change
S5		I think every Chengdu resident felt free last year to raise <i>any</i> questions or to make <i>any</i> suggestions concerning how the government might change the taxi fare
S6		Last year, the government was interested in hearing <i>certain</i> suggestion from Chengdu residents
S7	Equal treatment of propositions	I think the government gave <i>full</i> consideration to what Chengdu residents said they needed when making the decision to increase taxi fares last year
S8		I think last year the government responded to Chengdu residents' concerns about the taxi fare increase <i>seriously</i> and <i>thoroughly</i>
S9		I think last year the government tried to respond to all questions and suggestions from Chengdu residents <i>carefully</i> and <i>thoughtfully</i>

**Perceived performance.** Perceived government performance is defined as people's evaluation of the output of public services and goods by the government. According to the literature on public administration, output evaluation is very important for performance evaluation of the government. Performance measures often include input, activity/process, output, outcome, cost/efficiency, quality/customer satisfaction, and benchmarks. Melkers and Willoughby (2005) provided the following definition of outcome types of performance measures:

Outcomes—Measures of the results that occur, at least in part, because of services provided. This may include initial, intermediate, or long-term outcomes. (For example, the percentage of lane miles of road maintained in excellent, good, or fair condition or the clearance rate for serious crimes, or the percentage of residents rating their neighborhood as safe or very safe). (p. 183)

In surveys of nearly 300 government agencies, studies by Melkers and Willoughby, a majority of the participants indicated that at least half of their agencies used outcome measures; one quarter indicated that all departments within their government use outcome measures. The two authors suggest that the outcome measurement of performance implies an evolution of measurement from the consideration of quantity to the consideration of results. Assessing outcome is more meaningful than evaluating the activities conducted by the government, because outcome type emphasizes results rather than merely tracking events or costs (Henrich, 2002). In addition, for outcome evaluations of government performance, citizens' assessment of the quality of the service and their satisfaction with the service were very often used because citizen input tends to be more valued (Melkers & Willoughby, 2005; Poinster & Streib, 1999).

For these reasons, the present study adopted the outcome type of performance measurement and used residents' evaluation of the oversight of the service by the municipal government. In this particular research setting, performance was measured

by citizens' assessment of the taxi service in Chengdu city. The instruments of the measurement were borrowed from the *Eurobarometer 62.1* (2004), which is a public opinion survey on many issues, including assessment of the transport system service across member states of the European Union. This study, which employed eight questions on performance, asked about Chengdu residents' opinions of the convenience, affordability, safety, customer service, and overall quality of the taxi service. These criteria aimed at measuring different aspects of the outcomes resulting from government regulations and oversight. Each item was measured by a 7-point scale with "1 = strongly disagree" and "7 = strongly agree".

*Table 3-6. Items Measuring Perceived Performance*

No.	Questions
P1	I have easy access to taxi service in Chengdu
P2	The price I pay for taxi service is affordable
P3	The price I pay for Chengdu's taxi service is reasonable
P4	Taking a taxi is safe in Chengdu
P5	I'm satisfied with the customer service of Chengdu's taxi
P6	I have no complain about the taxi service in Chengdu
P7	My demands are met by the taxi service in Chengdu
P8	The overall quality of taxi service in Chengdu is high

**Control variables.** Participants were asked to provide standard demographic information, including age, gender, education level, income level, party affiliation, and residency. In addition, the survey asked questions related to the specific research setting. First, because the survey concerned local affairs, participants were asked to report their level of interest in Chengdu local affairs: “I am very interested in Chengdu's local affairs.” They were also asked to evaluate two statements about their awareness of and interest in the taxi fare change issue: “I have heard about Chengdu's taxi fare change” and “I am very interested in the issue of Chengdu's taxi fare change.” Second, participants were asked to evaluate a statement about their frequency of taxi usage: “I use taxi services very often in Chengdu.” Finally, the study sought to obtain information about respondents’ media use for the purpose of learning local news by asking participants to evaluate four statements about how often they use Internet, newspaper, TV and radio to obtain information related to local affairs.

Except for the item asking about the participants' awareness of the proposed taxi fare increase, which was a yes-or-no question, all items were measured on a 7-point scale, where “1” indicates strong disagreement and “7” indicates strong agreement with the statements.

**Perceived legitimacy of the government decision.** Perceived legitimacy of government decisions in this research setting refers to people’s willingness to support and accept the government decision to increase the taxi fare. The measures of outcome legitimacy were guided by Suchman’s (1995) paper, in which he summarized types of legitimacy; Tyler’s (2006) conceptualization of legitimacy from the social and psychological perspectives; Chang and Jacobson’s (2010) research on the legitimacy of the policy outcome of the smoking ban by the Philadelphia municipal government; and Chen’s (2004) study on political legitimacy in Beijing.

Table 3-7 presents the four items measuring the perceived decision legitimacy. The respondents were asked about their attitude toward the statements regarding the Chengdu municipal government's final decision to increase the taxi fare. All four items were measured on a 7-point scale, where "1" indicates strong disagreement and "7" indicates strong agreement.

*Table 3-7. Items Measuring Perceived Legitimacy*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Questions</b>
L1	The municipal government's decision to increase the taxi fare is appropriate
L2	The decision to increase the taxi fare is fair to all residents
L3	I support the decision to increase the taxi fare by the municipal government
L4	I am willing to accept the decision to increase the taxi fare though I disagree with it

## CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS

This chapter reports the data analysis and results of the final survey. The first part describes participants' demographic information and summarizes the descriptive statistics of other control variables. The second part reports the descriptive statistics and the reliability tests of the three major independent and dependent variables, perceived performance, perceived speech conditions and perceived legitimacy of the decision. The third part summarizes the process of selecting control variables, the method of correcting for a potential multicollinearity problem in the model, the descriptive statistics of all variables used in the final analysis, and the tests of hypotheses, using a hierarchical moderated regression model.

### **Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Information**

Three hundred questionnaires were delivered in person to the front door of homes; 260 were returned of which 5 were removed because of excessive missing data and invalid answers. Of the 255 valid cases, 62% were female and 38% were male. Their ages range from 18 to 76 years ( $M = 35.66$ ,  $SD = 10.41$ ). The educational backgrounds of the participants are as follows: 2.4% completed elementary school, 10.6% middle school, 35% high school, 47.6% college, and 4.3% graduate school. In addition, 80.7% of the participants are non-party members of and 19.3% are party members of the Chinese Communist Party. The distribution of monthly income of the participants (in RMB, 1 US dollar equals approximately RMB 6.5) was: below 2,499 (51.6%), 2,500-4,999 (37.3%), 5,000-7,499 (7.5%), 7,500-9,999(2.0%), 10,000 and above (1.6%), missing (1.2%). In terms of residency, 82% of the respondents are Chengdu residents while 18% are not. The distribution of the urban residential districts is: 9% are from Gaoxin, 7.5% are from Wuhou, 38.5% are from Jinjiang, 4.4%

are from Jinniu, 7.9% are from Chenghua, 6% are from Qingyang ; 32.1% of the participants claim that they are from “other” districts.

*Table 4-1. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Information*

<b>Variables</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Gender	Male	80	31.4		
	Female	135	68.6		
Age	18-24	21	8.8	35.66	10.41
	25-34	94	39.5		
	35-44	95	39.9		
	45-54	14	5.9		
	55-64	4	1.7		
	65-74	9	3.8		
	75-84	1	0.4		
	Missing	17	6.7		
Educational level	Primary school	6	2.4		
	Middle school	27	10.6		
	High school	89	35		
	College	121	47.6		
	Graduate/ postgraduate	11	4.3		
	Missing	1	0.4		
Monthly income (RMB) (US dollars)	0-2,499 (0-396.6)	130	51.6		
	2,500-4,999 (396.7-793.4)	94	37.3		
	5,000-7,499 (793.6-1,190.2)	19	7.5		
	7,500-9,999 (1,190.4-1587.0)	5	2		
	≥ 10,000 (≥ 1,587.1)	4	1.6		
	Missing	3	1.2		

Table 4-1. (continued)

Variables		Frequency	Percent(%)	Mean	SD
Party affiliation	Yes	49	19.3		
	No	205	80.7		
	Missing	1	0.4		
Chengdu resident	Yes	209	82		
	No	46	18		
Urban districts	Gaoxin	9	3.6		
	Wuhou	19	7.5		
	Jinjiang	97	38.5		
	Jinniu	11	4.4		
	Chenghua	20	7.9		
	Qingyang	15	6		
	Other	81	32.1		
	Missing	3	1.2		

*N*=255

Table 4-1 summarizes the frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the key demographic information of the 255 respondents in the survey. Overall, this sample includes adult residents from all six urban districts with various age groups, educational levels, and income levels; both party and non-party members are included. The sample has more females than males. In addition, the proportion of respondents with college degrees is higher than that among Chengdu residents, which may be because people with a college education are more likely to concentrate in urban areas and thus are more likely to be available to participate in this survey. Finally, the statistics reveal that the residences of the respondents are not distributed evenly, with the Jinjiang district having the highest proportion among the respondents who provided residence information. Jinjiang district is among those with the highest population density in Chengdu, which is one possible explanation for the high

proportion in the sample. Thirty-two percent of the respondents did not reveal information about their residence. Although the survey has people from all six districts, the real distribution of residences is unknown because of missing information. To detect possible effects of those variables on the outcome variable, “gender” and two dummy variables were created for “educational level” and “residential district” in the preliminary analysis of the control variables. The results showed that “gender” and “educational level” are not significant predictors of the outcome variable and that “residential districts” has marginal effect on perceived decision legitimacy. To control for their possible effects on the outcome variable, the two dummy variables and “gender” were included in the final model.

Table 4-2 presents a summary of statistics on respondents’ interest in local affairs, frequency of using taxi service, awareness of taxi fare change, and interest in the issue of the taxi fare increase. The majority of the respondents show moderately high interest in Chengdu local affairs ( $M = 5.22, SD = 1.60$ ). 84.3% of them were aware of the taxi fare change initiated by the city authority; most showed strong to moderate interest or moderate interest in the taxi fare change issue ( $M = 4.51, SD = 1.93$ ). Most of the respondents have used the taxi service of Chengdu, but the frequency was on average low ( $M = 3.48, SD = 1.51$ ), with 2.7% claiming that they have never used the taxi service.

*Table 4-2. Interest and Awareness of Local Affairs and Taxi Fare Increase*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Scales</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Interest in local affairs	7(Interested)	76	29.8	5.22	1.6
	6	42	16.5		
	5	61	23.9		
	4	35	13.7		
	3	24	9.4		
	2	12	4.7		
	1(Not interested)	5	2		
Frequency of taxi usage	7(Very often)	16	6.3	3.48	1.51
	6	15	5.9		
	5	26	10.2		
	4	44	17.3		
	3	79	31		
	2	68	26.7		
	1(Never)	7	2.7		
Awareness of taxi fare change issue	Yes	215	84.3		
	No	40	15.7		
Interest in the taxi fare change issue	7 (Interested)	56	22	4.51	1.93
	6	34	13.3		
	5	47	18.4		
	4	32	12.5		
	3	38	14.9		
	2	29	11.4		
	1(Not interested)	19	7.5		

*N*=255

Table 4-3 summarizes respondents' description of their use of four types of media to learn about Chengdu local news; 26% claimed that they often use the Internet to obtain news about Chengdu, 22.4% said that they often read newspapers to learn about local news, 31.9% often watched TV to learn about local news, while 11.4% learned about local news via radio.

*Table 4-3. Media Consumption: Internet, Newspaper, TV, and Radio*

<b>Media type</b>	<b>Scales</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
Internet (How often do you use the Internet to learn news of Chengdu?)	7(Often)	66	26.0
	6	35	13.8
	5	39	15.4
	4	47	18.5
	3	30	11.8
	2	12	5.1
	1(Never)	23	9.1
Newspaper (How often do you read newspapers to learn what is going on in Chengdu?)	7(Often)	57	22.4
	6	39	15.3
	5	44	17.3
	4	42	16.5
	3	25	9.8
	2	35	13.7
	1(Never)	12	4.7
TV (How often do you watch TV to learn what is happening Chengdu?)	7(Often)	81	31.9
	6	52	20.5
	5	35	13.8
	4	50	19.7
	3	23	9.1
	2	12	4.7
	1(Never)	1	.4
Radio (How often do you listen to the radio to learn news of Chengdu?)	7(Often)	29	11.4
	6	21	8.3
	5	26	10.2
	4	31	12.2
	3	31	12.2
	2	52	20.5
	1(Never)	64	25.2

N=255

## **Analyses for Theoretical Variables**

This part first presents the descriptive statistics of the items measuring perceived performance, perceived speech conditions and perceived legitimacy of the decision. The second part shows the results of a reliability test of the survey instruments. Correlation coefficients, values of Cronbach's Alpha among items measuring independent and dependent variables, and the correlations among the three theoretical variables are reported in tables 4-5 through 4-8.

**Descriptive statistics of the theoretical variables.** Descriptive analysis of the theoretical variables consists of the total number of cases for each item of the theoretical variables, minimum and maximum values, the number of missing cases, means of each item and the aggregate variables, and standard deviations of each item and the aggregate variables, missing cases, means, and standard deviations. Table 4-4 summarizes the statistical results.

On average, the respondents' evaluation of the performance of the municipal government regarding public transportation service was close to neutral ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ). As for individual indicators, the respondents held a neutral attitude toward affordability ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.92$ ), safety ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ), and taxi drivers' customer service ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ). On average, respondents disagree very slightly with the following two statements: "My demands are met by the taxi service in Chengdu" ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ) and "The overall quality of taxi service in Chengdu is high" ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ). They felt that access to the taxi service was not very convenient ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ) and the price is somewhat unreasonable ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ). Finally, they disagree slightly with the statement that "I have no complain about the taxi service in Chengdu" ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ).

*Table 4-4. Descriptive Statistics of Theoretical Variables*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Valid N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
P1	255	1	7	0	3.17	1.78
P2	255	1	7	0	4.18	1.92
P3	255	1	7	0	3.31	1.78
P4	255	1	7	0	4.53	1.74
P5	255	1	7	0	4.16	1.66
P6	255	1	7	0	3.69	1.80
P7	255	1	7	0	3.99	1.73
P8	254	1	7	1	3.95	1.65
Performance	255				3.87	1.32
S1	255	1	7	0	3.78	2.00
S2	254	1	7	1	2.98	1.76
S4	255	1	7	0	3.29	1.70
S5	254	1	7	1	3.63	2.01
S6	254	1	7	1	3.69	1.85
S7	255	1	7	0	3.33	1.72
S8	255	1	7	0	3.41	1.73
S9	255	1	7	0	3.27	1.65
Speech conditions	255				3.42	1.45
L1	255	1	7	0	3.28	1.82
L2	255	1	7	0	3.14	1.81
L3	255	1	7	0	2.89	1.86
L4	255	1	7	0	2.52	1.97
Legitimacy	255				3.21	1.68

On average, respondents' assessment of the speech conditions were slightly negative ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) and the respondents tended to disagree moderately with each of the items. They slightly disagreed that they had equal opportunity to express how the municipal government should make changes to taxi fares ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 2$ ). They also slightly disagreed that every Chengdu resident felt free to raise any questions or to make any suggestions concerning how the authorities might change the taxi fare ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 2.01$ ) and that the government was interested in hearing certain suggestion from Chengdu residents ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ).

In addition, the participants did not feel that the government either responded to the residents' concerns about the taxi fare increase seriously and thoroughly ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ) or gave full consideration to what the residents said they needed when making the decision to increase taxi fares in 2010 ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ). The respondents did not feel that the municipal government was eager to have residents present any propositions or raise any questions they might wish about the taxi fare change ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) nor did they feel that the government tried to respond to all questions and suggestions from the residents carefully and thoughtfully ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ).

Finally, the respondents tended to disagree that they had ample opportunities to make proposals to the municipal government about changing taxi fares in 2010 ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.76$ ). In terms of the legitimacy of the decision to increase the taxi fare in 2010, overall the respondents tended to hold a slightly negative perception ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ). They disagreed slightly that the decision was appropriate ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 1.82$ ) and fair ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ). In general, the respondents did not support the decision ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 1.86$ ). Finally, they tended to disagree more strongly with the statement that "I am willing to accept the decision to increase the taxi fare

though I disagree with it" ( $M = 2.52, SD = 1.97$ ).

**Reliability of the measures.** This section presents three sets of statistics to evaluate the reliability of the measures: correlations among the items of the three theoretical variables, Cronbach's Alphas for items measuring each theoretical variable, and correlations among the three theoretical variables.

Table 4-5 shows that all indicators of perceived performance were positively correlated and statistically significant. The strongest relation existed between P5, "I'm satisfied with the customer service of Chengdu's taxi," and P6, "I have nothing to complain about Chengdu's taxi service" ( $r = .75, p < .01$ ). The weakest relation existed between P1, "I have easy access to taxi service in Chengdu" and P2, "The price I pay for taxi service is affordable" ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .89 for all eight indicators.

Table 4-5. Correlations and Cronbach's Alpha among Measures of Perceived Performance

Item	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
P1: I have easy access to taxi service in Chengdu		.20**	.31**	.34**	.30**	.29**	.48**	.33**
P2: The price I pay for taxi service is affordable			.60**	.45**	.40**	.38**	.40**	.47**
P3: The price I pay for Chengdu's taxi service is reasonable				.55**	.57**	.54**	.47**	.50**
P4: Taking a taxi is safe in Chengdu					.68**	.60**	.55**	.64**
P5: I'm satisfied with the customer service of Chengdu's taxi						.75**	.57**	.72**
P6: I have no complaint about the taxi service in Chengdu							.67**	.74**
P7: My demands are met by the taxi service in Chengdu								.69**
P8: and The overall quality of taxi service in Chengdu is high								
Cronbach's alpha: .89								

Note:  $N = 254$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

As Table 4-6 shows, except item S3, all items measuring perceived speech conditions were positively correlated and achieved statistical significance (See Table 4-6). The strongest relation existed between S8, "I think last year the government responded to Chengdu residents' concerns about the taxi fare increase *seriously* and *thoroughly*," and S9, "I think last year the government tried to respond to all questions and suggestions from Chengdu residents *carefully* and *thoughtfully*" ( $r = .79, p < .01$ ). In general, item S3, which states that "I believe the Chengdu municipal government *talks more* than it *listens* to residents' opinions about taxi fare policy changes last year," was mostly negatively correlated with other items because of reverse coding and showed very low levels of correlations. This item was then dropped from further statistical analysis. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .89 for all nine items and .92 after S3 was dropped.

Table 4-6. Cronbach's Alpha and Correlations among Measures of Speech Conditions

Items	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9
S1: Last year, Chengdu residents all had <i>equal opportunities</i> to express how the municipal government should make adjustments to taxi fares		.59**	.02	.55**	.55**	.43**	.48**	.49**	.55**
S2: I believe I had <i>plenty of opportunities</i> to make proposals to Chengdu government about changing taxi fares last year			.07	.66**	.51**	.50**	.62**	.61**	.61**
S3: I believe the Chengdu municipal government <i>talks more</i> than it <i>listens</i> to residents' opinions about taxi fare policy changes last year.				-.13*	-.16*	.02	-.04	-.03	-.03
S4: Last year, the Chengdu government was <i>eager</i> to have residents make <i>any</i> propositions or raise <i>any</i> questions they might wish about the taxi fare change					.58**	.56**	.68**	.74**	.73**
S5: I think every Chengdu resident felt free last year to raise any questions or to make any suggestions concerning how the government might change the taxi fare						.57**	.59**	.56**	.57**

Table 4-6. (continued)

Items	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9
S6: Last year, the government was interested in hearing <i>certain</i> suggestion from Chengdu residents							.74**	.64**	.64**
S7: I think the government gave <i>full</i> consideration to what Chengdu residents said they needed when the making decision to increase taxi fares last year								.76**	.75**
S8: I think last year the government responded to Chengdu residents' concerns about the taxi fare increase <i>seriously</i> and thoroughly									.79**
S9: I think last year the government tried to respond to all questions and suggestions from Chengdu residents <i>carefully</i> and <i>thoughtfully</i>									
Cronbach's alpha: 9 items: .89; if S3 deleted: .92									

Note:  $N = 254$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 4-7 shows that all indicators of perceived legitimacy were positively correlated and statistically significant (see Table 4-7). The strongest relation existed between L1, “The municipal government's decision to increase the taxi fare is appropriate” and L3, “I support the decision to increase the taxi fare by the municipal government” ( $r = .82, p < .01$ ). The weakest relation existed between L2, “The decision to increase the taxi fare is fair to all residents,” and L4, “I'm willing to accept the decision to increase the taxi fare though I disagree with it” ( $r = .68, p < .01$ ). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .92 for all four indicators, indicating a high level of reliability among the measures of “perceived legitimacy.”

*Table 4-7. Cronbach's Alpha and Correlations among Measures of Perceived Legitimacy*

<b>Items</b>	<b>L1</b>	<b>L2</b>	<b>L3</b>	<b>L4</b>
L1: The municipal government's decision to increase the taxi fare is appropriate		.80**	.82**	.70**
L2: The decision to increase the taxi fare is fair to all residents			.79**	.68**
L3: I support the decision to increase the taxi fare by the municipal government				.70**
L4: I am willing to accept the decision to increase the taxi fare though I disagree with it				
Cronbach's alpha of 4 items: .92				

Note:  $N = 255, ** p < .01$

Table 4-8 shows the means and standard deviations of the measures of perceived performance, perceived speech conditions and perceived legitimacy. The value for each variable was the mean of the indicators for that specific variable. The respondents in general did not consider the municipal government to have performed well in providing taxi services. They did not feel that they had opportunities to freely and equally express their proposals or that their proposals or suggestions had received full treatment from the authorities. Overall, the respondents perceived the decision to increase the taxi fare as not highly legitimate.

*Table 4-8. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation among Theoretical Variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
1. Perceived Performance	3.87	1.32		.57**	.65**
2. Speech conditions	3.42	1.45			.62**
3. Legitimacy	3.21	1.68			

Note:  $N = 255$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

To summarize, the findings revealed that the measures of theoretical variables were reliable; perceived performance, perceived speech conditions, and perceived legitimacy all had high reliability values. The reliability coefficient of perceived speech conditions increased from .89 to .92 after one item was dropped. The results of the reliability tests demonstrated high internal consistency within each variable. The measures appeared to represent their theoretical properties well. The findings allowed further statistical analyses and hypothesis testing to continue with these measures.

## Hypotheses Testing

This section reports the selection of the control variables included in the final model, followed by discussion of techniques to reduce multicollinearity among the variables, descriptive statistics of all variables included in the final regression model, and the results of the final hierarchical regression model.

**Selection of control variables.** Standard linear regression was performed to filter significant predictors of legitimacy from the 15 demographic and control variables. The variable “education level” was recoded to create a dummy variable, with “college level” recoded into “1” and all other education levels recoded into “0”. Another variable, “urban district,” was also recoded to create a dummy variable: “Jinjiang district” was recoded into “1” and all other districts recoded into “0”.

Table 4-9 shows the unstandardized regression coefficients, the standardized coefficients, and the t-values. In the analysis, the multiple correlation coefficient was significantly different from zero ( $R = .49, p < .001$ ). Twenty percent (Adjusted R-square) of the variance in legitimacy was explained by the 15 control variables. The VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values suggested no critical problem of multicollinearity (except for the VIF of “newspaper reading,” which is 2.129, the VIFs of other variables were all below 2).

Table 4-9. Regression Analysis of Legitimacy on Control Variables

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t-value	VIF
Hear the issue	.18	.04	.66	1.099
interest in local affairs	.33	.32 <sup>***</sup>	4.34	1.622
interest in taxi fare change	-.13	-.15 <sup>*</sup>	-2.04	1.783
frequency of taxi use	.20	.18 <sup>**</sup>	2.64	1.487
Internet use	-.11	-.13	-1.65	1.809
newspaper reading	.24	.28 <sup>***</sup>	3.25	2.129
TV watch	.03	.03	.44	1.644
radio listening	-.02	-.03	-.35	1.619
Gender	.09	.03	.42	1.206
Age	.01	.05	.81	1.302
Education level	-.35	-.10	-.56	1.406
party affiliation	-.48	-.11	-1.81	1.209
Income	-.07	-.04	-.50	1.592
Residence	-.09	-.02	-.35	1.117
urban district	.39	.11 <sup>+</sup>	1.74	1.324

Note:  $N = 255$ , <sup>+</sup> $p < .1$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < .05$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < .01$ , <sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < .001$   
 $\Delta R^2 = .25$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .20$ ,  $F$  value = 5.20<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

The results in table 4-9 reveal that two factors, “interest in local affairs” and “newspaper reading,” were most influential in predicting participants' perception of the legitimacy of the taxi fare increase decision. If the respondents were interested in local affairs ( $p < .001$ ), or read newspapers often ( $p < .001$ ), they were more likely to perceive the taxi fare increase decision as legitimate. In addition, the “frequency of taxi use” was positively related to perceived legitimacy ( $p < .01$ ). Moreover, the “interest in taxi fare change” of the participants was also negatively related to their perception of the decision legitimacy ( $p < .05$ ). Finally, whether the participants were Jinjiang residents had a marginal effect on the perceived decision legitimacy ( $p < .1$ ). Therefore, it was decided to include the following variables as controls in the final analysis: "interest in local affairs," "newspaper reading," "interest in taxi fare change," and "frequency of taxi use." In addition, the study included the three variables gender, educational level (dummy), and “urban district” (dummy) in the model so as to control for the possible effects of over-representation of females, college graduates, and Jinjiang residents.

**Correction for multicollinearity.** One of the greatest challenges of including interaction terms in hierarchical moderated regression analysis is the potential existence of multicollinearity. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is the major criterion for detecting multicollinearity. Table 4-10 shows the VIFs for all control variables, independent variables, and the interaction term in the regression model before multicollinearity was dealt with. The VIFs for all control variables were below 2; for both independent variables, the VIFs are above 5, suggesting the existence of multicollinearity and a weak regression model; and the VIF for the interaction term is larger than 10, which is not acceptable, indicating the existence a serious problem of multicollinearity.

Table 4-10. VIFs for Variables in the Regression Model with Multicollinearity

Variables	VIF
<b>Controls</b>	
Interest in local affairs	1.65
Interest in taxi fare change	1.75
Frequency of taxi use	1.42
Newspaper reading	1.33
Gender	1.17
Education	1.24
District	1.10
<b>IVs</b>	
Performance	6.09
Speech	7.44
<b>Interaction term</b>	
Performance*Speech	17.72

The following part will deal with the issue of multicollinearity by use of a residual centering technique (Lance, 1988). To tackle the problem of multicollinearity, mean centering and residual centering are the two most frequently used techniques; using one or sometimes combining the two will reduce the effect of multicollinearity substantially. This study chose to apply residual centering following Lance's (1988) method.

In the first stage, the interaction term "speech  $\times$  performance" was regressed on the two independent variables—"perceived performance" and "perceived speech conditions"—involved in generating the interaction term to obtain the coefficients for each variable. Table 4-11 presents the results from the linear regression. In the second stage, the error term was calculated from the regression equation built on the statistics from Table 4-11. Unstandardized coefficients were applied in the calculation. The error term then replaced the original interaction term in the final moderated regression

analysis.

*Table 4-11. Summary of Linear Regression*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Unstandardized coefficients</b>	<b>Standardized coefficients</b>	<b>t- value</b>
Performance	0.51	0.52	26.37***
Speech conditions	3.5	0.58	28.53***

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

The test results showed that after residual centering, the degree of multicollinearity was greatly reduced (See Table 4-12). The VIFs for “perceived performance,” “perceived speech conditions” and their interaction term “performance × speech” were reduced from 6.09, 7.44, and 17.72 to 1.70, 1.56, and 1.20, respectively, well below the general cutoff point of VIF (below 5 for a stronger model and below 10 for a weaker model).

Table 4-12. VIFs for Variables in the Final Model

<b>Variables</b>	<b>VIF</b>
<b>Controls</b>	
Interest in local affairs	1.71
Interest in taxi fare change	1.82
Frequency of taxi use	1.47
Newspaper reading	1.78
Gender	1.14
Education	1.33
District	1.30
<b>IVs</b>	
Perceived performance	1.80
Perceived speech conditions	1.71
<b>Interaction term</b>	
Performance*Speech	1.22

**Descriptive statistics and correlations.** Table 4-13 provides means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables used in the final analysis.

Table 4-13. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables in the Model

Variables		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interest in local affairs	1	5.22	1.60	1.00									
Interest in taxi fare issue	2	4.51	1.93	0.51***	1.00								
Frequency of taxi use	3	3.48	1.51	0.43***	0.41***	1.00							
Newspaper reading	4	4.65	1.88	0.30***	0.42***	0.17**	1.00						
Gender	5	0.31	0.46	0.00	0.12	0.06	0.17**	1.00					
Education level	6	3.41	0.83	0.22***	0.19**	0.23***	0.23***	0.17**	1.00				
District	7	0.04	0.18	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.19**	0.19**	1.00			
Performance	8	3.87	1.32	0.35***	0.23***	0.32***	0.28***	0.14*	0.17**	0.13*	1.00		
Legitimacy	9	3.21	1.68	0.36***	0.17**	0.28***	0.30***	0.07	0.10	0.08	0.65**	1.00	
Speech conditions	10	0.49	0.21	0.22***	0.01	0.24***	0.15*	-0.12	0.01	0.09	0.57**	0.62***	1.00
Speech*performance	11	-1.64	0.33	-0.05	0.23***	0.12	0.30***	0.09	-0.01	-0.04	0.00	0.17**	0.00

**Hierarchical regression results.** Following Baron and Kenny (1986), a hierarchical moderated regression model was used to test the influence of perceived performance, perceived speech conditions, and their interaction term on perceived legitimacy. The first is a base line model which included only the control variables selected from the preliminary analysis; the second model added the two independent variables perceived performance and perceived speech conditions; the third model included the interaction term and tested the moderating effect of perceived speech conditions.

*Table 4-14. Summary of Hierarchical Regression*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
<b>Controls</b>			
Interest in local affairs	.32 <sup>***</sup>	.16 <sup>**</sup>	.20 <sup>***</sup>
Interest in taxi fare change	-.15 <sup>*</sup>	-.06	-.10 <sup>+</sup>
Frequency of taxi use	.18 <sup>**</sup>	.04	-.01
Newspaper reading	.28 <sup>***</sup>	.10 <sup>+</sup>	.04
Gender	.03	.04	.04
Education level	-.11 <sup>+</sup>	-.07	-.05
District	.17 <sup>+</sup>	.12 <sup>**</sup>	.12 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Main effects</b>			
Performance		.35 <sup>***</sup>	.37 <sup>***</sup>
Speech		.38 <sup>***</sup>	.36 <sup>***</sup>
<b>Moderating effects</b>			
Performance * Speech			.16 <sup>***</sup>
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	.22 <sup>***</sup>	.55 <sup>***</sup>	.57 <sup>***</sup>
<b>ΔR<sup>2</sup></b>	.24 <sup>***</sup>	.33 <sup>***</sup>	.02 <sup>***</sup>

Note:  $N = 255$ , <sup>+</sup> $p < .10$  <sup>\*</sup> $p < .05$  <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < .01$  <sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < .001$

All coefficients are standardized

Table 4-14 shows the results of hierarchical regression. Multiple correlation coefficients were significantly different from zero at the end of each step, with step one having  $R = .46, p < .001$ , step two model  $R = .75, p < .001$ , and step three  $R = .76, p < .001$ .

In the first step, the study entered respondents' interest in local affairs, interest in taxi fare change, frequency of taxi use, newspaper reading, gender, education level (dummy), and district (dummy) to test their predictability of legitimacy. The findings indicated that the seven control variables jointly accounted for 22% of the variance in legitimacy (Adjusted  $R^2 = .22, p < .001$ ). The results revealed that except for "gender", the association between perceived decision legitimacy and all other six control variables were statistically significant. Among them, "interest in local affairs" ( $p < .001$ ), "frequency of taxi use" ( $p < .01$ ), and "newspaper reading" ( $p < .001$ ) were positively related to perceived legitimacy while "interest in taxi fare change" ( $p < .05$ ) was negatively related to perceived legitimacy, suggesting that participants with higher interest in the issue were less likely to perceive the taxi fare change decision as legitimate. The dummy variable "education level" had a marginal yet negative effect on perceived legitimacy, while the dummy variable "district" had marginal yet positive effect on perceived legitimacy ( $p < .10$ ). The results imply that those respondents with college degree were less likely to view the decision as legitimate and those with residence in Jinjiang district were more likely to perceive the decision as legitimate.

In the second step of the hierarchical regression model, the study entered perceived performance and perceived speech conditions variables to examine how much variance in perceived legitimacy could be explained in addition to the part predicted by the seven control variables. This step was to test the first two hypotheses

that perceived government performance as positively associated with the perception that the government decision is legitimate (Hypothesis 1) and the perception of the decision-making process as communicative in terms of speech conditions being positively associated with the perception that the government decision is legitimate (Hypothesis 2).

In step two, the performance and speech conditions variables, together with the control variables, jointly accounted for 55% of the variance in perceived legitimacy of the decision and was significant (Adjusted  $R^2 = .55$ ,  $p < .001$ ). More than half of the variance in perceived legitimacy could be explained by participants' evaluation of the municipal government's performance in taxi service and their perceived soundness of the speech conditions when communicating with the government about the taxi fare increase issue. The  $R$ -square change statistic for model 2 shows that after the effects of the control variables had been removed, the two independent variables accounted for an extra 33% of the variance in perceived legitimacy and was significant ( $p < .001$ ).

The standardized coefficients indicated that "perceived performance" ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) possessed slightly weaker predictive power than "perceived speech conditions" ( $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in predicting the perception of decision legitimacy. After entry of these two variables, only "interest in local affairs" ( $p < .01$ ), "newspaper reading" ( $p < .10$ ), and "district" (dummy) ( $p < .01$ ) remained significant. The results suggested that if the respondents were satisfied with the taxi service or if they felt that they had free and equal opportunities to speak on the issue and be listened to, they were more likely to recognize the legitimacy of the taxi fare increase decision. Thus hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported by the model.

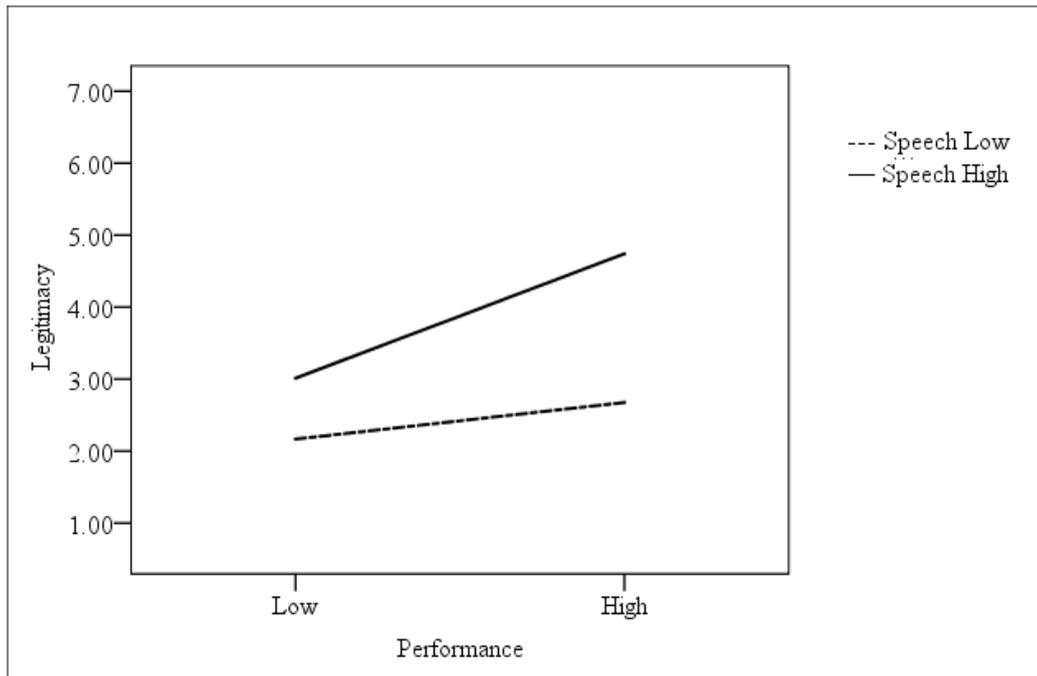
The perceived performance and perceived speech conditions (after controlling

for perceived performance) both had an independent effect on perceived legitimacy of the decision. In the third step, the model added the interaction term formed by multiplying performance with speech conditions; this step was to test the third hypothesis, that speech conditions that are perceived as communicative will positively moderate the relation between perceived government performance and perceived legitimacy of government decisions.

In this model, the interaction between perceived performance and perceived speech conditions is positive and significant ( $\beta = .16, p < .001$ ), indicating that the healthier the speech condition is, the higher the government performance is perceived, leading to higher perceived legitimacy of the decision. The interaction term, together with the control variables and two independent variables, accounted for 57% of the total variance ( $R^2 = .57, p < .001$ ); and the incremental  $R^2$  was also significant ( $\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .001$ ) Thus hypothesis 3 was supported statistically.

According to Cohen and Cohen (1987) and Frazier et al. (2004), the value of sequential R-squared in a regression model with an interaction term is generally small, and  $\Delta R^2 = .02$  represents a small but meaningful effect according to Cohen's (1992) conventions. A large sample size is needed to detect a small interaction effect; or (and) the number of the items measuring the outcome variable will have to be equal or close to the product of the number of the items measuring the independent variable and the number of items measuring the moderator. In this study, the total number of items measuring the outcome variable should be 72 ( $8 \times 9$ ), which is much greater than the total number used in this study. Given the small sample size and small  $N$  of the items measuring the outcome variable, the model still caught the significant effect of the interaction term.

Figure 4-1. Performance × Speech Conditions Interaction



To further explore interaction effects, a common practice is to plot the predicted value for the outcome variable (in this study “perceived legitimacy”). Figure 4-1 is a plot of the interaction effect between perceived performance and perceived speech conditions. When the independent variable and the moderator are continuous variables, the predicted values of the perceived legitimacy are obtained by multiplying the scores of perceived speech conditions and perceived speech conditions at low and high levels. Figure 4-1 reveals that the pattern of interaction in this study is to enhance interactions where the independent variable “perceived performance” and moderator “perceived speech conditions” affect the outcome variable “perceived decision legitimacy” in the same direction and together have a stronger effect (Frazier et al., 2004). Furthermore, the unit change of perceived decision legitimacy brought about by perceived performance is larger when speech conditions are perceived to be high than when they are perceived low.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the study's key findings, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations, and suggestions for possible future research.

The project has two primary purposes. First, it hopes to advance understanding of the role of communication in political legitimation. On the one hand, it tests the communication model of legitimacy based on Habermas's theory of communicative action, which is the conceptual basis for the idea of soundness of speech conditions during collective decision making, and predicts that the degree of perceived soundness of speech conditions is positively related to the degree of perceived legitimacy of the decision. On the other hand, the study tests an integrative model of two approaches to justification of political legitimacy (performance justification and procedural/communicative justification). On the basis of these two perspectives, it also explores the moderating effect of perceived speech conditions on the relation between perceived performance and perceived legitimacy of the decision.

Second, the project intends to learn the current communication expectations of the Chinese in light of tremendous social and economic reforms. As observed by some, the improved living standard for many, the more open flow of news and information compared with before, and a growing awareness of economic and political rights are all possible factors in changes in social and political life. The study has focused on the communication environment, in particular that during a decision-making procedure of the municipal government, and is interested in learning how residents would evaluate speech conditions and how their perception of these speech conditions would affect their assessment of the legitimacy of the government decision outcome. At the same time, the study tried to gain knowledge of how the residents

would weigh the importance of speech conditions when they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the public services provided by the local government.

### **Discussion of Key Findings**

Using a sample of 255 adult residents in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan province in southwest China, the study found that perceived government performance and perceived speech conditions were both positively related to perceived legitimacy of government decision; furthermore, perceived speech conditions moderated the relationship between the performance evaluation and legitimacy perception. These findings suggest some important insights into the role of communication in political legitimation and the evolution of communication expectations in China.

To design and test an instrument suitable for the applied context, a pre-test of the survey questionnaire was carried out with a small sample of 25 Chengdu adult residents. Feedback and comments from the participants were used to revise the wording and structure of the questionnaire afterwards. Participants in the pre-test demonstrated their interest in the issue and revealed their concerns about the government's functional capability and communication practice, and expressed various opinions toward the municipal government's performance with regard to taxi service, the speech conditions during the decision-making process, and the legitimacy of the final decision.

The study tested the reliability of the measures of three major variables—perceived performance, perceived speech conditions, and perceived decision legitimacy—used in the final survey. The results revealed high reliability of the survey instruments: The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .89 for perceived performance, .92 for perceived speech conditions, and .92 for perceived decision legitimacy. The statistics suggest that the measures of the three key variables reflected

the theoretical constructs well.

The standard deviations and means of perceived performance ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ), perceived speech conditions ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ), and perceived legitimacy ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ) showed that the responses of the participants were widely distributed on a 7 point scale (where “1” represents “strongly disagree” and “7” indicates “strongly agree” with the statement), but on average, their evaluation of the three properties tended to be between “3” and “4”. Thus respondents were not unanimous in their opinions. In general they held a slightly negative view toward the quality of the municipal government's provision of taxi services, the soundness of the speech conditions for communicating with the authority when making the decision, and the legitimacy of the decision to increase the fare.

A hierarchical regression model was used to test the three hypotheses. First, seven control variables were put into the model; the main and independent effects of perceived performance and perceived speech conditions were then tested; and, finally, the moderating effect of the speech conditions was tested. Because the test of the moderating effect in the regression model involved more risk of multicollinearity among the independent variables and the interaction term, the study used a residual centering technique to reduce the effects of the problem and ensure that the estimates reflected a genuine predictive power of each variable and the interaction term. The VIF statistics of the IVs and interaction term in the final analysis did fall within the limits of a relatively strong model ( $VIF < 5$ ).

Hierarchical regression analysis showed that respondents’ “interest in local affairs,” “interest in taxi fare change,” “frequency of taxi use,” “newspaper reading,” “education level,” and “residential district” could explain 22% of the variation in perceived decision legitimacy (Adjusted  $R^2 = .22$ ). The test statistics showed that

respondents who were more interested in what was happening locally ( $\beta = .32, p < .001$ ), or who used the taxi service more ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ), or who read newspapers more ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ), were more likely to believe in the legitimacy of the decision to increase the taxi fare. However, the respondents' "interest in taxi fare change" issue is negatively associated with their perception of the decision legitimacy ( $\beta = -.15, p < .05$ ), indicating that the more interested they were in the issue, the less likely they were to perceive the decision as legitimate. The two dummy variables "education level" (college level = 1, all others = 0;  $\beta = -.11, p < .10$ ) and "residential district" (Jinjiang district = 1, all other districts = 0;  $\beta = .17, p < .10$ ) each showed only marginal effects. The negative sign of "educational level" suggests that respondents with a college degree were relatively unlikely to consider the decision as legitimate, while the positive sign of "residential" district suggests that respondents living in Jinjiang districts were relatively likely to perceive the decision as legitimate. After the independent variables of perceived performance, perceived speech condition, and their interaction term had been added, "interest in local affairs" remained significant predictor of perceived decision legitimacy ( $\beta = .20, p < .001$ ), whereas although "interest in taxi fare change" and "residential district" also showed effects, their predictive power was reduced. Such results persisted even after the interaction term was added.

The existing literature suggests that the performance of the government, represented by the output of public services or public goods, is associated with political legitimacy. This study tested this suggested relationship in a specific domain of municipal governance. The test statistics from the second step of the hierarchical regression model support this hypothesis ( $\beta = .35, p < .001$ ), indicating that when respondents hold a positive view of the performance of the government, they are

likely to hold a positive view of the legitimacy of its decision. This result not only echoes previous theories and studies about the influence of substantive benefits on evaluation of decision outcome but specifically suggests that to increase legitimacy, public policy makers need to demonstrate their ability to serve the public well in the specific policy area and satisfy the stakeholders' demands for public services and goods.

Theoretical reasoning of the role of communication in political legitimacy is relatively rich, compared to empirical tests of the hypothesized relationships. Habermas and theorists of deliberative democracy have explicitly argued that democratic procedures will affect the legitimacy of the political decision. Empirical tests from the justice literature lend indirect support of such theorizing that procedure matters in evaluating and accepting a decision outcome. In the framework of Habermas's theory of communicative action, studies of Jacobson and Jun (2004) and Chang and Jacobson (2010) provide direct support to such a hypothesis, while this study, which puts emphasis on the speech conditions based on Habermas's theory, again affirms the predictive power of communication to decision legitimacy ( $\beta = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

After controlling for the effects of the five demographic variables, the two independent variables "perceived performance" and "perceived speech conditions" together explain 33% of the variance in decision legitimacy ( $\Delta R^2 = .33$ ); the F value increased from 8.77 with  $p < .001$ , in the previous model to 91.61 with  $p < .001$ . In addition, the values of the regression coefficients of performance ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and speech conditions ( $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ ) differed only slightly in predictive power, suggesting that the two share almost equal power in predicting perceived decision legitimacy. The statistical results indicate that in the case of the taxi fare increase in

Chengdu, respondents evaluating the legitimacy of the decision to increase the taxi fare weighed almost equally the quality of taxi service regulated and operated by the government and the speech environment during the decision making.

The last step of the regression analysis examines the hypothesized moderating effect. of the stakeholders' perceived speech conditions on the relationship between perceived government performance in a certain area and the perceived legitimacy of the decision made in the same domain. The statistical results confirm the existence of a moderating effect, in addition to the independent effects of perceived performance and speech conditions ( $\beta = .16, p < .001$ ). Figure 1 in Chapter 4 illustrates that the perceived speech conditions positively moderates the relation between perceived performance and perceived legitimacy. When the stakeholders' perception of the government performance is low and they tend to perceive the decision outcome low, their perception that the speech conditions are communicative is likely to reduce the negative view of low perception of performance; when they perceive government performance as satisfactory and perceive the decision outcome legitimate, communicative speech conditions tend to strengthen the positive view of satisfactory performance

To sum up, the findings suggest that the stakeholders potentially affected will perceive a decision as more legitimate if they perceive the speech conditions as more communicative during the decision-making process. In addition, their belief in the legitimacy of the decision induced by the authority doing a good job in the domain under discussion will be enhanced if the speech conditions are perceived as communicative during the decision-making procedure.

### **Implications**

This study may have important implications for the literature on decision

legitimacy. The project contributes to the literature on political legitimation by introducing an under-explored issue, the extent to which communication is associated with legitimacy (exceptions include Jacobson and Jun, 2006 and Chang and Jacobson, 2010). The study adds to current efforts to integrate communication into the legitimation model based on Habermas's theory of communicative action, theories of deliberative democracy, and the justice literature. According to Habermas, stakeholders will perceive a decision as legitimate if they feel that the government's decision-making process is communicative. Legitimacy will be granted only if the stakeholders feel that the government's collective decision is made non-coercively and discursively. The decision-making procedure coordinates interests through reaching mutual understanding and results in a collectively agreed upon final decision that satisfies the individual interests of a particular group. In the real world, decision making is rarely based on a power free environment. Perfect speech conditions are ideal but may never be achievable. Therefore, the theory argues for an orientation toward mutual understanding and observes communication in terms of levels of fulfillment of sound speech conditions rather than in terms of a binary condition (e.g., free vs. not free, equal vs. unequal, etc). Theories of deliberative democracy suggest that participants in political deliberation tend to view the decision as more legitimate if they think favorably of the deliberation procedure (Stromer-Galley & Muhlberger, 2009); studies of organizational justice also find that fair procedures tend to affect stakeholders' perception of decision outcomes. This study, guided by these thoughts, has observed the relationship between degrees of the perceived communicativeness of the speech conditions during the decision-making procedure and the degree of decision legitimacy granted by the stakeholders.

In addition to the communicative perspective, the study considers another

important perspective of political legitimation—this is the substantive, or performance based, evaluation of decision legitimacy, which justifies decision legitimacy through assessing the quality of public service provided in the domain in which a collective decision is made. Some research in political science and justice supports the idea that direct and substantive gains in performance leads to positive views of legitimacy of decision outcome. However, the justice literature further calls for an integrative approach because empirical studies that have examined the effect of both favorable outcomes and fair procedures on stakeholders' perception of decision have not adequately examined the joint effect (Colquitt et al., 2001). The joint consideration of the two approaches to legitimation examined in this study echoes the call for an integrative approach to utilize the rationale of substantive benefits and procedural justice to study the evaluation of the decision outcome.

This study may also contribute to the literature on informal political communication and its effects on political outcomes, guided by two broad theoretical and empirical traditions. The first body of literature is guided by the theories of deliberative democracy. Empirical research on deliberative democracy in general investigates the implementation, institutional design, and evaluation of deliberative practice (Ryfe, 2005). Political communication studies with a deliberative turn attend mostly to the evaluation of the deliberation outcome. Those studies may include questions such as these: How does the participants' interest in and attitude toward political deliberation change before and after participating in a formal deliberation procedure? Does satisfaction with the deliberation on one occasion lead to interest in future participation? However, although deliberation is regarded as a “special type of communication” and the reason-given is the core to deliberation (Thompson, 2008), communication seems not to be treated as an integrative part of deliberation, and the

communication elements are not granted adequate attention. As discussed in Chapter 2, much of the research on democratic deliberation contributes little to understanding what actually happens during discussion procedures (Stromer-Galley & Muhlberger, 2009). Although the current study does not focus on formal deliberation, it has tried to draw attention to the possible effects of communication elements during the deliberation procedure. Its emphasis on the effects of the communication environment (the speech conditions), not fully addressed in previous studies, may suggest studies of both formal deliberation and informal political talks.

The second body of literature follows the media effects tradition and relies mostly on the frequency of engaging in and being exposed to political conversation or content to predict political outcomes, including increased political knowledge and participation, or normative outcomes such as political tolerance. In contrast with the deliberation research, research in this vein focuses on informal political discussion and concerns the motivation, attributes, and effects of daily and informal political talks and discussions among individuals (Eveland, Morey, & Hutchens, 2011).

This dissertation first contributes to how communication may affect political outcomes by looking at the relation between the communication environment during decision making and the outcome evaluation. It differs from the research just discussed in that it emphasizes the institutional factors key to communication—the speech conditions—rather than the content of the communication. As for the political outcome, this research differs from previous studies by linking the perception of the communication environment during the decision-making procedure to the legitimacy of decision outcomes.

Besides the implications for public policymaking, as already discussed, the study has other practical implications. One of these concerns theory and research

related to national development, or modernization. The current study suggests that achieving a higher degree of speech conditions that are communicative is desirable for achieving the legitimacy of decisions, although it is admitted that fulfilling this requirement alone cannot guarantee that people will grant legitimacy to the authority's collective decision. In many societies, and particularly in developing economies where substantive development is still set as a national priority, functional achievements play an incomparable role in evaluating political legitimacy. However, as the society evolves, people's expectations will go beyond satisfaction of immediate material needs, as suggested by studies based on the theory of the post-materialist society. Habermas also argues that societies participating in capitalistic modernization and economic reforms embracing a liberal market approach will inevitably lead to changes in the culture and traditions that are more compatible with the free market. The current study, which integrates both the procedural elements and the functional elements to examine their influence on legitimacy, lends support to those ideas. It implies that in a transitioning society, where economic development is fast and furious, the aspirations and expectations for free speech and democratic procedures cannot be ignored. Otherwise, the legitimacy of individual policy, as well as the legitimacy of the ruling regime, in the long run will be hampered.

Finally, there are theoretical and empirical implications for comparative research of the fact that the study was carried out in China. Two studies based on Habermas's theory of communicative action directly tested the hypothesis of the influence of communication on political legitimacy in the United States (Jacobson & Jun, 2004; Jacobson & Chang, 2010) and Singapore (Chang, Jacobson, & Zhang, 2011). The two countries have essential differences from China in terms of the political system, although Singapore and China may share certain characteristics of

Eastern and Confucian traditions. This study has explored a similar thesis in China, using the Habermasian concept of speech conditions derived from his theory of communicative action, while also incorporating the functional evaluation of government performance to investigate how Chinese people evaluate the political decision outcome. The findings reveal that Habermas's theories and other theories of free speech and justice, largely developed out of the western democratic culture, also hold in China. In fact, the statistical results of this study reveal that the survey respondents weighed equally the value of good performance and sound speech conditions, an unexpected finding, . The study might suggest that in contemporary Chinese society, many people desire to have these democratic rights even when they enjoy (or do not enjoy) other substantial benefits of economic development.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The study recognizes several limitations. First, the research included perceived performance and perceived speech conditions as two major factors to predict the stakeholders' perception of legitimacy of decision outcome. However, in addition to these two factors, as Geddes and Zaller (1989) suggest, that in authoritarian countries, the attempt of the government to control the flow of news and information was one of the effective tools to make people believe in the legitimacy of the decision, which depends to a large degree on citizens' political awareness. According to them,

In general, highly aware persons are more heavily exposed to government-dominated communications media, but are also better able to resist the propaganda they encounter. As a result, people in the broad middle ranges of awareness—who pay enough attention to be exposed but are not sophisticated enough to resist—typically are most susceptible to government influence. (Geddes & Zaller, 2005, p. 319)

In a government dominated communication model, exposure to political communication tends to increase support for the mainstream ideology implied in the communication. In contemporary China, official communication, or propaganda is

very likely to be an additional explanation of political legitimacy (Brady, 2009; Holbig & Gilley, 2010). In China, the media are still controlled to a large degree by the government and thus may represent the official ideologies (Dong & Chang, 2008; Huang, 2001; Zhao, 2000). Such propaganda may influence peoples' perception of legitimacy of the decision made by the government in at least two ways. On the one hand, the official propaganda may persuade people to believe that the policy or decision itself is legitimate. On the other hand, it may increase the legitimacy of the decision by making people believe in the legitimacy of the government. Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence (2005) tested the idea that institutional legitimacy may be related to acceptance of a decision. Therefore, increasing the legitimacy of the decision maker may increase its power to confer the legitimacy to the decision made by the institution. For future studies, it might be fruitful to include ideology as a predictor of political legitimacy, or perhaps treat the influence of ideology or propaganda as a control variable for both the procedural variable (e.g., speech conditions) and the substantive variable (e.g., performance), and again investigate their individual and interaction effect on political legitimacy.

Second, the study used a relatively small sample consisting mostly of local urban residents. Though it was argued earlier that a local sample would be reliable for gaining invaluable insight and the results of the study would be generalizable, if it were possible to use a random and representative national sample, this would provide a more comprehensive view into the communication norms and expectations of the Chinese people, including a rural population proportionate to the national demography. A possible future study may generate a sample that includes a representative rural population. Rural residents constitute a large percent of China's population and active deliberative and democratic experiments are being conducted in

the rural coastal south, southeast, and inner regions of southwest China. Research findings suggest that public deliberation is also well accepted there and that residents can participate in the deliberation processes competently.

Third, this study used a one-time survey and cross sectional data, which cannot reflect changes in the stakeholders' attitude from before to after the decision is made. A longitudinal research design, in which the researcher(s) can observe the major theoretical variables at least twice before and after the decision, would be more rigorous than a cross sectional study. In that case, the before and after difference, if any, may be observed; and the effects of potential alternative explanations from variables such as time and certain demographic differences would be controlled. Further, a triangulation method that incorporates qualitative data from interviews of survey respondents or news archives reporting the public issue or describing the decision making itself may provide more insights and strengthen the rigor of the study.

In addition, future studies may explore the individual effects of the hypothetical three dimensions of the speech conditions-- symmetric opportunities, freedom to raise propositions, and equal treatment of propositions--on the perceived outcome legitimacy. In Habermas's theory of communicative action, the concept of speech conditions is related to the idea of validity claims. Townley, Cooper, and Oakes (2003) suggest that speech conditions will directly influence the fulfillment of the validity claims of the speech acts. Coercive speech conditions will steer the exchange of validity claims toward those more instrumental or strategic in nature. Chang and Jacobson's (2010) study found that the validity claims are predictors of the legitimacy of public policy. Therefore, future studies may test the overall contextual effect of the speech conditions over the relation between validity claims and political legitimacy or set up a more sophisticated model to explore the contextual effects

among individual dimensions of speech conditions and each of the four validity claims.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This dissertation tests two sets of contributing factors that may potentially affect people's perception of decision legitimacy: Performance of the government that will make the decision, and the communication environment (speech conditions) during the decision-making procedure. As suggested in the literature, citizens or stakeholders may evaluate a decision based on a) the extent to which the government has fulfilled their demand for certain public services or public goods, or b) how they perceive the decision-making procedure in terms of democratic or fairness elements. The study then tested for such direct effects but also argued for a moderating effect in which the speech conditions, a key component of the decision-making procedure, might affect the influence generated by the quality of government provision of public service on legitimacy. The research used the case of a taxi fare increase in Chengdu, southwest China to test three hypothesized relations. The findings confirmed the three hypotheses and illustrated the important role of the communication environment (speech conditions) in political legitimation.

Despite the limitations of the study and questions to be explored by future research, this dissertation extends understanding of the relationship between communication and political legitimation. Focusing on the communication process during political decision making, the study supports the proposition that sound speech conditions not only are related to decision legitimacy but also exert contextual effect. Although the study has some limitations, the China sample provides valuable insights into the current state of mind of what some Chinese think about the current speech environment when the government makes decisions, what factors may influence their

justification of the legitimacy of political decisions, and how these factors individually and interactively affect their evaluation of the decision outcome. The test results suggest that while economic and substantive performance is important and may satisfy certain material needs and lead to a positive view of the authority, it cannot substitute for meeting people's higher level aspirations for free speech and political participation.

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APPENDIX A  
ENGLISH VERSION OF THE FINAL SURVEY

**Chengdu Taxi Service Survey**

Thank you in advance for completing this survey. Your response will help us understand how well the Chengdu local authority communicated with the residents in passing an increase of the taxi fare from September 10, 2010.

Anything you tell us in this questionnaire will be confidential.

Please **DO NOT** put your name in the questionnaire. Your answers are anonymous. Your data will be reported only in summary form.

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**Background information**

In August 2010, the Price Administration Bureau of Chengdu approved a proposal to raise the taxi fare beginning September 10, 2010. Before finally making the decision, there was much public debate and discussion. The Price Administration Bureau of Chengdu also held a public hearing on August 3.

According to some news reports recently, on average, you will have to pay RMB 1 more for every 3 km and RMB 2 more for every 5.5 km for taxi service.

In this study, we are particularly interested in how openly and thoroughly the government bureau has communicated with you--a Chengdu resident--while planning the increase.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested simply in your feelings and ideas. Please circle the numbers most represent your experiences and thoughts on the right of the table

-----

To begin, we would like to know how interested you are in local affairs generally and the taxi fare increase in specific.

	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
1. I have heard about Chengdu's taxi fare change.	1	0

The form below on the right contains 7 options. The "7" represents you totally agree the statement on the left in the form, the "1" represents you totally disagree the one, "6,5,4,3,2" represents the approval level on the statement decline one by one. Please circle the number on the right which matches your opinions at most on the base of your experience:

	<b>Totally agree</b>	<b>Totally disagree</b>
2. . I am very interested in Chengdu's local affairs..	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
3. I am very interested in the issue of Chengdu's taxi fare change.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1

Then please circle the numbers on the right which most represent your experiences or opinions:

	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Never</b>
4. I use taxi services in Chengdu.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
	<b>Totally agree</b>	<b>Totally disagree</b>
5. I have easy access to taxi service in Chengdu.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
6. The price I pay for taxi service is affordable.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
7. The price I pay for Chengdu's taxi service is reasonable.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
8. Taking a taxi is safe in Chengdu.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
9. I'm satisfied with the customer service of Chengdu's taxi.	<b>7</b> 6 5 4 3 2	1
10. I have no complain about the taxi service in Chengdu.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
11. My demands are met by the taxi service in Chengdu	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
12. The overall quality of taxi service in Chengdu is high.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1

Now, we are interested in learning your thoughts about taxi services in Chengdu:

<b>Please circle a number on the right that best describes each answer</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>						<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
5. I have easy access to taxi service in Chengdu.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. The price I pay for taxi service is affordable.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. The price I pay for Chengdu's taxi service is reasonable.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. Taking a taxi is safe in Chengdu.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. I'm satisfied with the customer service of Chengdu's taxi.	<b>7</b>	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. I have no complain about the taxi service in Chengdu.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
11. My demands are met by the taxi service in Chengdu.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
12. The overall quality of taxi service in Chengdu is high.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

In the second half of 2010, Chengdu residents, netizens, and media have talked about the Taxi fare increase a lot. We would like to know how do you feel about citizen communications with the city authority regarding this taxi fare increase

Please circle a number on the right that best describes your answers.	Strongly Agree							Strongly disagree
13. Last year, Chengdu residents all had <i>equal opportunities</i> to express how the municipal government should make adjustments to taxi fares.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
14. Last year, during the decision-making process, I believe I had <i>plenty of opportunities</i> to make proposals to Chengdu government about changing taxi fares.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
15. I believe the Chengdu municipal government <i>talks more</i> than it <i>listens</i> to residents' opinions about taxi fare policy changes last year.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
16. Last year, the Chengdu government was <i>eager</i> to have residents make <i>any</i> propositions or raise <i>any</i> questions they might wish about the taxi fare change.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
17. I think every Chengdu resident felt free last year to raise <i>any</i> questions or to make <i>any</i> suggestions concerning how the government might change the taxi fare.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
18. Last year, the government was interested in hearing <i>certain</i> suggestion from Chengdu residents.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
19. I think the government gave <i>full</i> consideration to what Chengdu residents said they needed when the making decision to increase taxi fares last year.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
20. I think last year the government responded to Chengdu residents' concerns about the taxi fare increase <i>seriously</i> and <i>thoroughly</i> .	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
21. I think last year the government tried to respond to all questions and	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	

suggestions from Chengdu residents <i>carefully and thoughtfully.</i>	
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In this series of questions, we would like to know how do you feel about the taxi fare increase in Chengdu, considering both the overall quality of taxi service and the communication regarding the taxi fare increase:

<b>Please circle a number on the right that best describes each answer.</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>						<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
22. The municipal government's decision to increase the taxi fare is appropriate.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
23. The decision to increase the taxi fare is fair to all residents.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
24. I support the decision to increase the taxi fare by the municipal government.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
25. I am willing to accept the decision to increase the taxi fare though I disagree with it.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

You are almost there! Now, we'd like to know how you learn about local affairs through media:

<b>Please circle a number on the right that best describes each answer</b>	<b>Very Often</b>						<b>Never</b>
26. How often do you use the Internet to learn news of Chengdu?	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
27. How often do you read newspaper to learn what is going on in Chengdu?	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
28. How often do you watch TV to learn what is happening Chengdu?	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
29. How often do you listen to the radio to learn news of Chengdu?	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Finally, a few questions about you:

30. What is your gender?

- 1) Male                      2) Female

31. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

32. What is your level of education?

- 1) Primary school  
2) Middle school  
3) High school  
4) College  
5) Graduate school

33. Are you a member of CCP?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

34. Please tell us your monthly income, including wages and other income, approximately: RMB\_\_\_\_\_ (Please select):

- 1) 0-2,499                      2) 2,500-4,999                      3) 5,000-7,499  
4) 7,500-9,999                      5) 10,000 and above

35. Are you a Chengdu resident?

- 1) Yes, (If yes, please answer question 36 below)                      2) No

36. Which district does your residence belong to? \_\_\_\_\_(Please select)

- 1)Gaoxin      2) Wuhou      3) Jinjiang      4) Jinniu  
5) Chenghua      6) Qingyang      7) Other

-----The End-----

Thank you very much for completing the survey. Your input is greatly appreciated and valuable to us. If you would like to learn the results of the study or have any other questions, please feel free to email us at [lpn@temple.edu](mailto:lpn@temple.edu). Thanks again.

APPENDIX B  
CHINESE VERSION OF THE FINAL SURVEY

关于成都出租车服务的调查

感谢您参与此次关于成都出租车满意度的调查。您的回应能够帮助我们了解成都市有关部门和市民就通过 2010 年 9 月 10 日起出租车调价的沟通状况。您在问卷中所提供的任何信息都是保密的。

**请注意：不要将您的名字写在问卷上。您的回答是匿名的。您提供的答案最终只会以汇总的方式出现。**

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背景介绍

2010 年 8 月，成都市物价局提出了将于 2010 年 9 月 10 号开始调整成都市城区出租车价的提案。在最终确定方案之前，市物价局，媒体，市民等各方进行了广泛的讨论。市物价局还于 8 月 3 号召开了关于出租车涨价的听证会。最终，市物价局的提议得以实行。

根据最近的新闻报道，和调价之前相比，现在在成都乘坐出租车，每 3 公里您平均需要多付 1 元钱，每 5.5 公里，您平均需要多付 2 元钱。

我们这项研究特别关心的是作为成都市民，在 2010 年商讨价格调整的过程中，您觉得成都政府相关部门跟您就此提议的沟通状况。

首先，基于您的个人感受，请在右边最符合您的情况的数字上画圈：

	听说过	没听说
1. 我听说了关于成都市出租车调价这件事。	1	0

下面的表格右边含有 7 个选项。其中“7”代表您完全同意表格左边的陈述，“1”表示您完全不同意表格左边的陈述，“6，5，4，3，2”表明您对此陈述的赞同程度依次递减。基于您的个人感受，请在右边最符合您的想法的数字上画圈：

	完全同意						完全不同意
2. 我对成都本地发生的事情感兴趣。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. 我对成都出租车调价这件事情感兴趣。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

其次，基于您使用出租车的个人经历，请在右边最符合您的想法的数字上画圈

	经常使用						从不使用
4. 我使用成都市的出租车的频率。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	完全同意						完全不同意
5. 我在成都打车方便。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. 我能够支付出租车的费用。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. 我认为成都出租车定价合理。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. 在成都坐出租车安全。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. 我对成都出租车服务态度满意。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10 我对成都的出租车服务没什么可抱怨的。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
11. 成都出租车服务能满足我的需要。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
12. 成都出租车总体服务质量很高。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

2010 年下半年，成都市物价局出台了调整出租车定价的政策，您对出租车调价方案制定过程的想法如何？请在右边最符合您的想法的数字上画圈

	完全 同意						完全 不同意
13. 2010 年 主管部门如何调整出租车定价这个问题上，所有成都市民都曾有 <b>平等的机会</b> 提出自己的看法。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
14 我相信 2010 年在制定出租车新价格的决策过程中，我有 <b>充分的机会</b> 向主管单位提出建议。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
15. 我认为 2010 年在出租车价格调整的问题上，主管单位宣传的时候多，听取民众意见的时候少。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	完全 同意						完全 不同意
16. 2010 年，主管单位积极地听取成都市民关于出租车价格变动的 <b>任何</b> 意见，建议和问题。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
17 针对 2010 年出租车价格调整的问题，我认为每一位成都居民都觉得能 <b>自由的</b> 向主管单位提出问题或建议。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
18. 2010 年，对成都市民提出的某些建议，主管单位有兴趣听取。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	完全 同意						完全 不同意
19. 在 2010 年出租车价格调整的决策过程中，我认为主管单位 <b>充分考虑</b> 了成都居民提出的需求	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
20 我认为 2010 年，主管单位 <b>认真的全面的</b> 回应了成都市民关心的问题。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
21 我认为 2010 年，主管单位试图对于市民的所有问题和建议都给予了 <b>认真，周全的</b> 回应。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

现在，基于您的个人经验，请在右边最符合您的想法的数字上画圈：

	完全 同意						完全 不同意
22. 市政府关于出租车涨价的决定是合理的。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
23. 出租车涨价的决定对所有居民都是公平的。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
24. 我支持政府出租车涨价的决定。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
25. 尽管我不同意政府出租车涨价的决定，我还是愿意接受这个决定。	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

我们了解下您是如何了解成都本地新闻的，请在右边最符合您的想法的数字上画圈：

	经常						从 不
26. 您通过上网了解成都市相关新闻么？	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
27. 您通过报纸了解关于成都市的新闻么？	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
28. 您通过看电视了解到成都市的新闻么？	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
29. 您通过听电台了解成都市的新闻么？	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

最后，请告诉我们关于您的一些个人信息：

30. 您的性别（请打勾）： 1) 男                      2) 女

31. 您的年龄（请填写）：

32. 您的受教育程度（请打勾）：

1) 小学              2) 初中              3) 高中              4) 大学              5) 硕士/博士

33. 您是共产党员么？（请选择）：

1) 是                      2) 不是

34. 您能告诉我们您的月收入么，包括工资跟其他收入（诸如奖金，分红，房屋出租收入，代课费，等等）？约合\_\_\_\_\_（请选择）：

1) 0-2499 元              2) 2500-4999 元              3) 5000-7499 元              4) 7500-9999 元

5) 10000 及以上

35. 您是成都市民么？（请选择）

1) 是 (如果是，请继续回答 36 题)    2) 不是

36. 您所居住的区 (请选择)：

1) 高新区    2) 武侯区    3) 锦江区    4) 金牛区

5) 成华区    6) 青羊区    7) 其它

-----问卷填写结束-----

非常感谢您的参与和宝贵意见。如果您想了解我们的研究结果或者与我们联系，请发送邮件至 [lpn@temple.edu](mailto:lpn@temple.edu)。再次感谢！

APPENDIX C  
BACK-TRANSLATION FROM CHINESE TO ENGLISH (1)

Survey

There are no right or wrong answers for all the questions. We are only interested in your personal ideas. There are 8 choices on the right side of the forms representing your levels of agreement/disagreement to the statements on the left side of the forms. The number “7” represents **totally agree** while “1” means **totally disagree**. The numbers from “6” to “2” (including “6, 5, 4, 3, and 2”) correspond to a **decreasing** trend of your levels of agreement. The letters “DK” mean you **don’t know** or you **don’t want to** express your idea to the corresponding statement.

First, please circle one choice (on the right of the form) most representing your thought to each statement (on the left), based on your personal feelings.

1. I am interested in the things happened in Chengdu.
2. I've heard of the taxi price adjustment in Chengdu.
3. I am interested in the taxi price adjustment in Chengdu.

Next, please circle the choice most representing your thoughts, based on your experience of taking taxi rides.

4. I **frequently** take a taxi in Chengdu.
5. It's convenient for me to take a taxi in Chengdu.
6. I can afford a taxi.
7. I think the taxi fare in Chengdu is appropriate.
8. It's safe to take a taxi in Chengdu.
9. I am satisfied with the service attitudes of the taxi drivers in Chengdu.
10. I don't have any complaints about the taxi services in Chengdu.
11. The taxi services in Chengdu can meet my needs.
12. In general, the quality of the taxi services in Chengdu is quite high.

In the second half of the last year, Chengdu Pricing Bureau launched the taxi price adjustment policy. What are your opinions toward the policy-making process? Please circle the choices (on the right of the form) most representing your idea to the statement (on the left side of the form).

13. Last year, regarding the issue of how the bureau in charge would adjust the taxi price, all Chengdu citizens had equal opportunities to raise their opinions.
14. I believe that I had ample opportunities to express my suggestion to the bureau in charge during the taxi price adjustment policy-making process last year.
15. I think regarding the issue of taxi price adjustment, the bureau in charge spent

- more time in publicizing the policy than in hearing the ideas of its people last year.
16. Last year, the bureau in charge actively collected Chengdu citizens' opinions, suggestions, and questions on the taxi price adjustment.
17. Based on the issue of the taxi price adjustment issue last year, I think every Chengdu local residents thinks that they can bring at ease their questions or suggestions to the bureau in charge.
18. Last year, the bureau in charge had no interest in knowing the suggestions of Chengdu citizens.
19. During the policy-making process of the taxi price adjustment, I think the bureau in charge took Chengdu residents' needs into **full consideration**.
20. I think during last year, the bureau in charge responded to the Chengdu citizens' concerns seriously and completely.
21. I think last year, the bureau in charge earnestly and thoroughly tried to respond to all the citizens' questions and suggestions.

Now, we would like to know your opinions toward the following statements. Please circle one choice (on the right) best representing your opinion toward the statement.

22. It is a reasonable decision that the municipal administration's decision on increasing the taxi fare.
23. Raising the taxi fare is a fair decision for all the local residents.
24. I am in support of raising the taxi fare.
25. Although I am not in agreement with the decision on taxi fare raising, I am still willing to accept it.

We would like to know how you get the local news in Chengdu. Please circle one choice (on the right) best representing your opinion toward the statement.

26. I go online to get the news related to Chengdu.

27. I read newspaper to get the news related to Chengdu.

28. I watch TV to get Chengdu news.

29. I listen to the radio to get Chengdu news.

Finally, please tell us your personal information.

30. Your sex (please check): 1) male 2) female

31. Your age (please write):

32. Your educational level (please check):

- 1) Elementary school      2) Middle school  
3) High school              4) Bachelor's              5) Master's/PHD

33. Are you a member of the Communist Party? (Please choose: 1) yes 2) no

34. Could you please tell us your monthly income (including salary, dividends, profit participation, bonuses, etc.) That is approximately RMB\_\_\_\_\_

- 1) 0-2,499                  2) 2,500-4,999              3) 5,000-7,499  
4) 7,500-9,999              5) 10,000 and above

35. Are you a local citizen in Chengdu? (Please choose)

- 1) Yes (If your answer is yes, please also answer question 36).              2) No

36. You live at \_\_\_\_\_ district (Please select below)

- 1) Gaoxin 2) Wuhou 3) Jinjiang 4) Jinniu 5) Chenghua 6) Qingyang 7) Other

-----The end of the questionnaire-----

Thank you very much for your participation and your valuable opinions. If you are interested in knowing the result of the research or if you want to contact us, please email me at [lpn@temple.edu](mailto:lpn@temple.edu). Thank you again!

APPENDIX D  
BACK-TRANSLATION FROM CHINESE TO ENGLISH (2)

**Investigation on Chengdu taxi service**

Thank you for your participation in the investigation on the satisfaction of Chengdu taxi. Your response can help us understand the communication situation between relevant departments and Chengdu citizens on passing the adjustment of taxi price since September 10,2010.

Any information you provide in the questionnaire is confidential.

**Please pay attention:** don't write your name on the questionnaire. Your answer is anonymous. Your answer provided will be shown in the summary form.

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**Background information**

In August, 2010, Chengdu Bureau of Commodity Price put forward the proposal that the taxi price would be adjusted from September 10, 2010. Before the final decision, Bureau of Commodity Price, the media and the citizens made extensive discussion. Bureau of Commodity Price held a hearing about the taxi prices on August 3. Finally, the proposal was undertaken.

According to the latest news report, you should pay more one yuan every 3 kilometers on average, and more two yuan every 5.5 kilometres on average when you take a taxi in Chengdu, compared with the former price.

Our study particularly concerned about is that how you feel the communication situation between the competent government authority and you during the price adjustment process as a Chengdu citizen in 2010.

First please circle the number on the right which matches your opinions at most on the base of your experience:

	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>
1. I heard of this stuff about the adjustment of Chengdu taxi price	1	0

The form below on the right contains 7 options. The "7" represents you totally agree the statement on the left in the form, the "1" represents you totally disagree the one, "6,5,4,3,2" represents the approval level on the statement decline one by one. Please circle the number on the right which matches your opinions at most on the base of your experience:

	<b>Totally agree</b>						<b>Totally disagree</b>
2. I'm interested in the local affairs in Chengdu.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I'm interested in the adjustment of Chengdu taxi price.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Then please circle the number on the right which matches your opinions at most on the base of your experience of taking taxi:

	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Never</b>
4. The frequency of taking Chengdu taxi	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
	<b>Totally agree</b>	<b>Totally disagree</b>
5. It is convenient for me to take a taxi.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
6. I can afford the fee to take a taxi.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
7. I think the taxi price is reasonable.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
8. It is safe to take a taxi in Chengdu.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
9. I am satisfied with Chengdu taxi service.	<b>7</b> 6 5 4 3 2	1
10. I have nothing to complain about Chengdu taxi service.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
11. Chengdu taxi service can meet my need.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1
12. The quality of Chengdu taxi service is high.	7 6 5 4 3 2	1

On the second half of 2010, Chengdu Bureau of Commodity Price issued a policy on the adjustment of the taxi price, how about your opinion on the decision-making process? Please circle the number on the right which matches your opinions at most on the base of your experience:

	<b>Totally agree</b>						<b>Totally disagree</b>
13. All of Chengdu citizens had an equal opportunity to put forward their own opinions on how the competent government authority adjusted the taxi price in 2010.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
14. I believe I had full opportunity to make a suggestion to the competent government authority on decision-making process about the new taxi price in 2010.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
15. I think there were more publicity the competent government authority pay, less attention to hear from the people on the adjustment of taxi price in 2010.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	<b>Totally agree</b>						<b>Totally disagree</b>
16. In 2010, the competent government authority actively listened to any comments, suggestions and questions from Chengdu citizens on adjustment of taxi price.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
17. According to the adjustment of taxi price in 2010, I think every citizen feels free to put forward suggestions or questions to the competent government authority.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
18. In 2010, the competent government authority had interests in listening to some suggestions from Chengdu citizens.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	<b>Totally agree</b>						<b>Totally disagree</b>
19. In 2010, the competent government authority considered fully the demands which Chengdu citizens put forward during the price adjustment decision-making process in 2010.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

20. I think the competent government authority gave serious and comprehensive responses to the issues Chengdu citizens cared about in 2010.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
21. I think the competent government authority tried to give serious and thoughtful responses to all the questions and suggestions from Chengdu citizens in 2010.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Now please circle the number on the right which matches your opinions at most on the base of your experience:

	<b>Agree totally</b>						<b>Disagree totally</b>
22. It is reasonable for the city government to decide the rise of taxi price.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
23. It is fair for all the residents about the rise of taxi price.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
24. I support the city government's decision on the rise of taxi price.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
25. Even though I disagree the city government's decision on the rise of taxi price, I am willing to accept it.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

We want to know how you get Chengdu local news, please circle the number on the right which matches your opinions at most:

	Frequently	Never
26. Do you know the local news via Internet?	7      6 5 4 3 2	1
27. Do you know the local news via newspaper?	7      6 5 4 3 2	1
28. Do you know the local news via TV?	7      6 5 4 3 2	1
29. Do you know the local news via radio?	7      6 5 4 3 2	1

**Finally, please tell us some of your personal information:**

30. **Your gender** (Please make a tick) : 1) male            2) female

31. **Your age** (Please fill in) : \_\_\_\_\_

32. **Your education level** (please make a tick) :

- 1) primary school      2) junior middle school      3) senior middle school  
 4) bachelor's      5) master's/doctor

33. **Are you a communist party member ?** (please make a tick) :

- 1) yes                  2) no

34. **Could you tell us your income monthly, including salary and others(such as bonuses,share,rental income,substitute teaching fee,etc)?Approximately?(Please make a choice):**

- 1) 0-2499 yuan    2) 2500-4999 yuan    3) 5000-7499 yuan    4) 7500-9999 yuan  
 5) 10000 and above yuan

**35. Are you a Chengdu citizen?**(Please make a choice):

1) Yes (If your answer is Yes, Please continue to answer No. 36) 2) No

**36. Which district do you live?**(Please make a choice):

1) Gaoxin District    2) Wuhou District    3) Jingjiang District  
4) Jinniu District    5) Chenghua District    6) Qingyang District  
7) others

-----**The end**-----

Appreciate your participation and valuable suggestions. If you want to know our research results or contact us, please email to [Ipan@temple.com](mailto:Ipan@temple.com). Thanks again.