

Empowerment or Disintegration? Migration, Social Institutions, and Collective Action in Rural China

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ABSTRACT

This paper integrates literature on social movements and migration to examine how migration shapes both the cognitive and social foundations of collective action in origin communities. Using longitudinal data and in-depth interviews from rural China, we find that outward migration spurs collective resistance in origin communities and shapes the form and scale of collective action. Migration fosters non-institutionalized rather than institutionalized collective action, because it induces relational diffusion that empowers peasants to mobilize and employ more effective resistance strategies. This holds more for small- and medium-size collective action than for large-scale mobilizations, mainly because out-migration can also trigger community disintegration that inhibits larger-scale action. Furthermore, local social institutions condition the role of migration: migration has a stronger positive impact in close-knit villages embedded in strong lineage networks than in less cohesive villages. We contextualize the findings against the distinct institutional arrangements in China, which were originally engineered to disenfranchise rural-origin people but which instead have inadvertently politicized migrants and peasants alike.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic and overseas migration are ever-growing phenomena with implications for both receiving and sending communities (Collier 2013). Previous research has demonstrated the complex ways in which migration promotes or impedes economic and social development in origin communities (Eckstein and Najam 2013). Migration, which flows disproportionately toward more developed and democratic settings, often coincides with political change in origin societies. How that process occurs remains an open question. This article shifts an earlier focus on the economic and social effects of migration on origin communities to its political consequences. In doing so, we bring together two fields that have largely developed separately—migration and social movements. This approach reflects the increasing recognition that demographic phenomena at the micro and macro level, such as migration, can shape the dynamics of political contention (Goldstone and McAdam 2001; Goldstone, Kaufmann, and Toft 2012).

The nature of contemporary migration calls for a new way to conceptualize the effect of migration beyond the existing framework of “exit and voice.” Early exit-voice theory views the two strategies as mutually exclusive: emigration (exit) serves as a safety valve to relieve local pressure and, in the process, undermines collective action (Hirschman 1970). A revised formulation of the theory sees exit as spurring voice by signaling the extent of discontent (Pfaff and Kim 2003). Both lines of research emerged from the study of political exit, which entails the complete uprooting and limited repatriation of politically-active individuals. Today’s migrants are driven primarily by economic rather than political concerns (World Bank 2014). They may be “permanent settlers, temporary ‘guest workers,’ circular ‘birds of passage,’ return migrants to their homeland, or some combination of those categories at different points in the life course”

(FitzGerald 2012, p. 1726). These fluid circumstances prompt migrants to maintain connections and allegiances with their homelands. One would thus expect different, more dynamic, social processes linking migration with political developments in areas of origin.

In the present study, we integrate literature on social movements and on migration to develop and empirically test a conceptual framework linking contemporary migration and collective action. Whereas previous research tends to adopt a unidirectional view, seeing migration as either beneficial or detrimental to development, we offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship. First, we propose that migration can have competing effects on the *likelihood* of collective action in origin communities because it shapes the *cognitive* and *social* foundation of social movements in opposing directions. In cognitive terms, migration can produce relational diffusion through the transmission and brokerage of “political remittances” along established social ties (Levitt 2001; Goldring 2004; Kapur 2010). This empowers people remaining in origin communities and engenders the “cognitive liberation” that is critical for collective action (McAdam 1982). However, a social consequence of migration may be community disintegration, whether resulting from population depletion, erosion of community solidarity, or disengagement (De Haas 2010; Eckstein and Najam 2013). This undermines the community's mobilizing capacity. In these respects, migration simultaneously fosters and stymies collective action.

Second, we contend that the cognitive and social processes driven by migration affect not only the likelihood but also the *nature* of collective action, including its form and scale. Migration-driven relational diffusion exposes people in origin communities to new, broadened repertoires of contention, which subsequently inform their tactical choices. At the same time, changes in the social structure can affect the scale of collective action, especially to the extent

that the process of disintegration severely weakens the community's capacity for large mobilization.

Third, because of these competing forces, the overall impact of migration may not be uniform and should be understood within its local social-institutional context. We propose that preexisting social institutions interact with migration patterns to affect the likelihood and nature of collective action. Established social institutions, particularly solidarity-based institutions, can reinforce relational diffusion from migrants to origin communities while shielding against community disintegration. The combination of indigenous social resources from established institutions and external political resources from migrants contributes in distinct yet complementary ways to collective action.

We study the political impact of migration in China, which has undergone two profound transformations in recent decades: massive rural-to-urban migration (Liang, Li, and Ma 2014) and growing collective resistance¹ across the country (Cai 2010) (Appendix A displays the two trends). Despite these parallel transformations, collective resistance in rural China is rarely discussed in connection with migration. China also offers a useful setting for understanding how institutional context structures the dynamics and subsequently the influence of migration. Chinese migrants face distinct institutional conditions that impel activism but simultaneously create high levels of circularity and return migration (Liang, Li and Ma 2013). Such institutional conditions effectively bolster sustained linkages between migrants and their places of origin and therefore strengthen the political impact of migrants.

¹ We use the term “collective resistance” to refer to the form of collective action most common in China. Collective resistance is not analogous to social movements, which entail aggregates of collective actions that are more sustained, larger in scale, and have broader policy or social goals. In China, incidental rather than structural grievances trigger collective resistance, which is locally oriented, centers on modest and narrow (typically economic) claims, and is rarely sustained.

We use longitudinal village-level data and in-depth interviews to assess how outward migration shapes both the occurrence and nature (forms and scales) of collective action in origin communities, and how the effect of migration is conditioned by preexisting social institutions. The village-level time series data are uniquely suited to studying aggregate-level processes such as collective action and general patterns of the impact of migration. We further use qualitative data from in-depth interviews to interrogate the mechanisms behind the quantitative results.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH RELATIONAL DIFFUSION

Our conceptual framework, displayed in Figure 1, delineates the ways in which migration shapes both cognitive and social mechanisms of collective action.

[Figure 1 about here]

Outward migration can produce a process of relational diffusion that builds the cognitive foundation of collective action (path a). The social movement literature has long been interested in how elements of collective action spread, and has highlighted the importance of both social and structural conditions underlying the diffusion process (Oliver and Myers 2003; Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010; Tarrow 2010). A common form of diffusion is relational diffusion, whereby movement repertoires are transmitted through strong social ties and established lines of interaction. Relational diffusion, however, often confronts a tradeoff between the fundamental social and structural conditions for diffusion, which can have a countervailing effect on the diffusion of new information.

On the one hand, because individuals with strong ties have more frequent and richer interactions, relational diffusion produces great communication bandwidth (i.e., total volume of information transmitted) than non-relational forms of diffusion (Aral and Alstynne 2011). Also,

relational diffusion carries greater social influence in orienting people toward new attitudes and behaviors because of high mutual trust and shared identities embedded in strong social relationships (Strang and Soule 1998; Tarrow and McAdam 2005). On the other hand, relational diffusion can be limiting in the range of novel, non-redundant information that is spread (Siegel 2009). Actors embedded in strong ties tend to be homogeneous and geographically proximate, and are therefore less likely than those with socially-distant ties to form structurally-diverse networks that are particularly suited for delivering novel information. Therefore, the social conditions fostering high communication bandwidth and social influence are often counterbalanced by structural deficiencies that constrain the "bridging" social capital needed to reach disparate sociopolitical environments and to generate diverse resources.

Migration provides an undertheorized mechanism for collective action diffusion that can overcome the bandwidth-diversity tradeoff in ways that simultaneously achieve both favorable social and structural conditions for relational diffusion. Migrants (senders) are embedded in strong relational ties with people in origin communities (recipients), which strengthen their communication bandwidth and social influence. Migrants also occupy a unique bridging position as they transcend social-geographic boundaries and spread non-redundant information beyond locally-circumscribed social networks. The structurally-diverse networks that migrants create can provide access to new information and ideas for origin communities. As such, migration produces bridging ties with a strong relational base, capable of channeling novel resources in high bandwidth while effectively shaping attitudes and behaviors. The role of migration can be especially powerful in scenarios where collective action is costly and risky, as is the case in China. In these high-risk settings, unfiltered transmission of sensitive information requires high

social trust. Adoption of contentious behaviors requires social affirmation and reinforcement. Both rest heavily on strong social ties (Völker and Flap 2001; Centola and Macy 2007).

The relational diffusion process driven by migration is premised on strong, continuous linkages that migrants preserve with their origin communities (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton 1992; Faist 2000; Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002; Vertovec 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Some argue that the linkages can be undermined by migrant integration, which shifts allegiance from the sending country to the host state (Waldinger 2015). However, a recent empirical study finds evidence for high durability in cross-border ties between migrants and origins (Verdery et al. 2018). These ties tend to be particularly strong among temporary migrants who intend to return or have little opportunity of settlement (Portes 1999). This characterizes the conditions in China. The massive flow of rural-to-urban migration, estimated at over 168 million people (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2015), is constrained by distinct state institutions, specifically the *hukou* (registration) system, which denies permanent settlement for many migrants (Solinger 1999). Such structural exclusion has produced distinct migration dynamics, marked by families that are split between origins and destinations (Fan, Sun, and Zheng 2011) and a high rate of circular migration and eventual return (Zhang 2015). These migration dynamics bolster the attachment of migrants to origin families as well as to their rural land (Murphy 2002), which serves as a critical safety net that allows migrants to retreat home in times of unemployment and retirement.²

Migrants are uniquely positioned to act as bridge actors in the diffusion process. This stems from their contact with, and subsequent transformation by, different political environments

² Given the distinct institutional context surrounding internal migration, the degree of connection between internal migrants and origin communities in China is higher than internal and international migrants in a range of other settings (Liang, Li, and Ma 2013).

at their destinations. Migrants tend to adopt new political values and practices through socialization or political participation, even if they do so unconsciously (Fitzgerald 2000; Smith and Bakker 2008; Branton et al. 2015). Most research on migrants' political transformation focuses on international migrants in advanced democracies. However, migration to or within less-democratic or non-democratic societies can also produce a decoupling of locality and political sphere (FitzGerald 2006), similar to that theorized in the context of international migration. In these settings, a different mechanism of transformation may arise: lack of freedom and rights, rather than weakening democratic attitudes, raises or reinvigorates migrants' political awareness and provokes them to claim their rights (Kessler and Rother 2016).

The experiences of rural-urban migrants in China are emblematic of these situations. Because of the structural exclusion, Chinese migrants confront substantial discrimination in the labor market and all too often fall victim to labor rights violations (Lee 2007; Lu and Wang 2013), including low wages, overtime arrears, unlawful layoffs, and unpaid social insurance. In the meantime, they experience a more open political environment in cities that provide greater informational and political access than rural settings. Migrants are exposed to more reporting on labor laws and increased information about collective resistance staged by fellow migrant workers and urban residents (Qiu 2009). In the process, migrants become politicized, developing a keen perception of structural injustice and autonomous action, and increasingly mobilize among themselves to resist state discrimination (Lee 2007; Chan and Ngai 2009).

As transformed migrants link previously unconnected milieus, they can spread politically-based cognitive resources to otherwise ill-informed villagers, thereby promoting democratic values and behaviors back home (Kapur 2010; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010; Batista and Vicente 2011; Pfitze 2012). A key question is whether that impact is realized

through a broad transmission of information and ideas or through a more instrumental process of political brokerage. In the former scenario, migrants may communicate with their kin about how political institutions function and how people engage in contentious politics in their destinations. They may also articulate opinions about political institutions and civic rights at home. This process shares a close affinity to the concept of "political remittances" in migration scholarship, which refers to the transfers of political information, ideas, and repertoires of contention from migrants to sending communities via long-distance communication or visits (Levitt 2001; Goldring 2004). The social movement literature suggests that real influence often involves more than the mere act of transmission, but rather, actions in which brokers consciously unpack and translate ideological and behavioral repertoires in ways that resonate with the concerns and specific situations of the recipients (McAdam and Rucht 1993; Tarrow and McAdam 2005; Della Porta, Kriesi, and Rucht 2009). In order to institute new ideas and practices in the origin population, migrants may consciously construct repertoires from previously disconnected localities or issue areas into meaningful substance and useful tools that allow people in the origin to adapt to their own struggles. The processes of political remittances and brokerage send cognitive cues that accumulate to engender "cognitive liberation," a condition fundamental to the development of collective action (McAdam 1982; Nepstad 1997). These processes can spark spillover through reiteration and circulation within local social networks, reaching even individuals having no direct ties to migrants (Pérez-Armendariz and Crow 2010). The multiplier effect creates a community of cognitively empowered individuals who form a solid base for collective action.

The cognitive empowerment induced by outward migration not only affects whether collective action occurs but what form it takes (e.g., contained and institutionalized vs.

contentious and non-institutionalized). This engages an important question in the movement literature—what conditions shape the radicalization of a movement? Is it a conscious strategy among actors who lack institutionalized political power (Gamson 1975)? Or is it an unintended consequence of structural breakdown in mobilization networks (Piven and Cloward 1979; Staggenborg 1988)? The process of relational diffusion leads us to expect the former in the context of migration. Movement actors rely heavily on known and available repertoires (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). Migration engenders new repertoires of contention in origin communities, prompting villagers who occupy subordinate positions to adopt more effective disruptive strategies. By disrupting public order using “unruly tactics” (Gamson 1975), or “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985), challengers can create a form of “negative inducement” (Wilson 1961) to offset their structural powerlessness and increase their chance of redress.

The role of migration in the development and form of collective action is especially relevant for China. The resistance of both migrants and peasants has shifted from contained institutionalized strategies toward more contentious, non-institutionalized collective action. In the past, migrants usually resorted to orderly procedures by filing legal claims or petitions against exploitative employers or local officials (China Labour Bulletin 2009). In the process, they developed “informed disenchantment” (Michelson and Read 2011), as they discovered the inconsistency and corruption inherent in these formal routes (Cai 2010; Su and He 2010). These “insider” routes represent the “rule of man” rather than the “rule of law” (Minzner 2006), with decisions largely left to the discretion of state authorities and often leading to frustration. This frustration spurs the adoption of deinstitutionalized tactics, such as strikes and protests (Nang and Ngai 2009; Cai 2010; Elfstrom and Kuruvilla 2014). These “outsider” tactics prove more effective because of their ability to make grievances known, to disrupt public order, and to

directly challenge local officials' desire for stability. This effectively offsets the institutional powerlessness of migrants.

Peasant collective resistance has also grown steadily (O'Brien and Li 2006; Bernstein and Lü 2008). Since the early 2000s, peasant actions are organized overwhelmingly to oppose abusive land expropriation (Ho and Lin 2005; Yu 2007), in which local officials dispossess farmers of part or all of their land. This often occurs by force and without appropriate compensation. A detailed discussion of land expropriation is provided in Appendix B. Similar to migrants, peasants have gradually steered away from institutionalized channels of claims-making, namely collective petition³, and have turned to noninstitutionalized action such as demonstrations, sit-ins, traffic stoppages, office blockades, construction obstruction, and clashes with officials or the police (O'Brien and Li 2006; Chen 2008; Cai 2010). These more contentious tactics supplement or replace petitions and often yield a better chance of redress.

Peasant activism takes place amid a large information divide. Whereas ICT (information and communication technology) development in urban areas has created a more open public sphere and facilitated activism of migrants and urban residents (Harwit 2004; Qiu 2009; Yang 2013), it lags far behind in rural China, where official media remains the key mechanism of political control (Sun and Chio 2012). This should limit peasants' ability to obtain information on policies and rights, to develop political efficacy, and to stage effective resistance. Nonetheless, the reverse outcome has occurred, where peasants have increasingly engaged in non-institutionalized collective action. This highlights the importance of non-media channels,

³ Collective petition is defined as more than five people lodging a formal complaint against local authorities (usually village or township officials) with higher-level authorities. According to the Regulations on Letters and Visits (State Council 2005), citizens filing petitions must elect no more than five delegates to represent themselves. A petition with more than five participants thus reflects an act of defiance against authoritarian rule and is regarded as collective resistance (Yu 2007).

such as relational channels induced by migration, for the rising collective resistance and changing forms of actions among peasants.

DISINTEGRATION THROUGH COMMUNAL EROSION AND DEPOPULATION

Migration also influences the social structure of origin communities in ways that shape collective action. The detrimental social consequences of migration have been documented, but have remain inadequately theorized and tested in relation to collective action. We contend that the social consequences of migration have the potential to undercut the structural basis for collective action (path b), even in cases where members of the origin communities become politically empowered.

One immediate outcome of migration is depopulation, which depletes sending areas of able-bodied people who can be mobilized for collective action (De Haas 2010; Pedraza 2013). The problem becomes severe if migrants comprise disproportionately members of the community who would otherwise be especially likely to voice their discontent. This leads to “political brain drain” (Kapur 2010). In extreme situations, communities turn into “ghost towns” consisting primarily of the elderly and children (Kurtz 2004).

When migration is used to flee local problems, it may provoke political disengagement within the origin population (Goodman and Hiskey 2008). The option of migration decreases the stakes that villagers attach to their home communities and estranges them from local political processes. In this respect, migration serves as a pressure valve that deflates mobilization from below by undercutting incentives in pressing for local political change.

More important in the context of contemporary migration, out-migration tends to fragment initially dense social networks and erode the connective structure of local networks.

Both of these effects lead to communal erosion and impaired mobilizing capacity. The social movement literature has demonstrated a robust relationship between network density and connectivity on the one hand, and collective action on the other (McCarthy and Zald 1977; McCarthy 1996; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Diani and McAdam 2003; Tilly and Tarrow 2007). Dense social networks, in which actors have many ties, serve as important mobilizing structures that foster solidarity and help amass resources for collective action. High network connectivity, in which actors can reach many others through direct or indirect ties, fosters cohesion and eases information diffusion as well as coordination of collective action. Migration inevitably weakens the density and connectivity of local networks by removing nodes (potential actors) and their associated edges (ties) (Entwisle et al. 2007). This is especially detrimental to mass mobilization when migrants occupy key nodes in the local networks. Their departure removes the nexus that previously connected community members. This undermines the connective structure of origin communities and diminishes social cohesion.

The network-eroding process emanating from migration is likely not only to disrupt the social base of collective action but also to reduce the scale of action. The disintegrating effect is particularly strong for large-scale mobilization, which rests on a large number of participants and dense networks. The effect also tends to be amplified at a high level of migration. As a result, migration can exhibit a curvilinear relationship with collective action (Pfaff and Kim 2003). This means that migration can increase the likelihood of collective action in localities where it occurs on a small or moderate scale, but the positive effect decreases or even reverses when the level of exit becomes large.

The detrimental social repercussions of migration are largely predicated on permanent out-migration that results in complete uprooting and limited connections. In China, migration is

characterized by high circularity and continuous attachment to the origin. Neither migrants nor peasants uproot or disengage entirely from their rural communities (Zhu 2007). In this context, the adverse disintegration effect may be attenuated and unlikely to completely suppress the mobilizing capacity of origin communities.

THE ROLE OF PREEXISTING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The empowering and disintegrating effect of outward migration, hence the net impact of migration, is likely to be conditioned by established social institutions in origin communities. Not all communities experience the process of empowerment and disintegration uniformly. It is the confluence of migration and local social institutions that shapes the development of collective action.

In rural China, the most important social institution is the lineage network (Cohen 2005; Liu and Murphy 2006). Villages are embedded in strong lineage networks when a large proportion of villagers descend from the same (or a few of the same) patrilineal ancestors and share the same surnames. The lineage system came under severe attack during the Mao era, but has experienced a remarkable revival since the beginning of economic reforms (Xiao 2001). These indigenous kinship-based institutions are a key source of collective identity, responsibility, and solidarity in rural China, and are reinforced through traditional rituals of ancestor worship and other social activities. They function as informal solidarity institutions, substituting for or complementing weak formal institutions in the countryside (Tsai 2007; Peng 2010; Lu and Tao 2017).

In the context of collective action, these institutions provide a durable relational and normative base that can be harnessed for collective action (path c; Lu and Tao 2017).

Specifically, strong lineage ties produce a connective structure to foster communal cohesion and dissemination of information. These ties further forge shared identities and moral obligation in ways that facilitate cooperation and help to overcome collective action problems of free-riding and defection. The power of these agnatic ties derives partly from their ability to enforce informal but efficacious social control through stable social interactions and social sanctions (He 2003). These networks provide especially important mobilizing structures in repressive settings because they consist of actors in “abeyance” (Boekkooi and Klandermans 2013). That is, they may lie dormant in routine situations but bear a reserve of relational and normative resources that can be reactivated in times of need. In such times, lineage ties produce favorable social structures that translate cognitive liberation into collective action.

Particularly relevant in the context of migration, established kinship-based social institutions help sustain migrants’ connections with home communities, thereby fostering the migration-driven diffusion process (path d). Specifically, lineage institutions include a strong discourse of membership, providing migrants with the means for activating solidarity and for remaining an active part of the family and community they leave behind. Migrants from villages embedded in dense local networks, such as strong lineage networks in our study setting, are more likely to maintain tight bonds with people who stay behind (Entwisle et al. 2007; Xiao 2001). This is especially true for cross-generational bonds, because strong lineage ties heighten a sense of filial piety and obligations to the family (Peng 2010). Migrants from these villages are also more likely to return for communal events (Xiao 2001). The robust bonds between migrants and home communities can generate high political remittances and brokerage, which further filter throughout the community along dense, highly connective local networks. In this context, even a

moderate number of bridge actors (i.e., politicized migrants) can trigger a chain reaction of diffusion and adoption, leading to community-wide shifts in collective behavior.

Established social institutions can also shield against structural disintegration (path e), thereby mitigating the disruptive social effects of migration on collective action. Villages embedded in strong lineage networks are characterized by high village network density and connectivity, thus have a strong degree of cohesion (Entwisle et al. 2007). They are emblematic of “networks with structural cohesion” (Moody and White 2003). In such networks, removal of members (nodes) through migration is unlikely to erode the network's connectivity structure. People left behind remain connected and can still reach many others through direct ties or indirect paths. Consequently, the relational and connective structure for mobilization, as well as communal cohesion, are preserved even if somewhat weakened. By contrast, villages with weak lineage networks become less cohesive and more likely to fragment, or even collapse, in the face of migration.

MIGRATION AND COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE IN RURAL CHINA: WORKING HYPOTHESES

The overall effect of migration on collective resistance depends on the balance of the opposing mechanisms of empowerment and disintegration; this in turn is shaped by the specific context of migration and preexisting local social institutions. China's institutional context results in migration dynamics that reinforce strong linkages between migrants and origin communities while protecting against severe communal erosion. This institutional context also places migrants in a unique bridging position to spur relational diffusion. We thus expect the mechanism of cognitive empowerment to be more dominant than that of structural disintegration, leading to an

overall positive relationship between outward migration and collective resistance in rural China. In other words, the likelihood of collective resistance is greater in villages that experience a higher level of out-migration than in similar villages with a lower level of out-migration (*Hypothesis 1*). This does not imply that all migrants transmit political remittances or engage in political brokerage. But the higher the proportion of migrants from a village, the more likely these processes will transpire.

Migration is also likely to shape the nature of collective resistance in rural China. Distinguishing between form and scale of collective action allows us to isolate the mechanisms at play. On the one hand, the cognitive channel tends to operate differently for different forms of action (e.g., collective petitions vs. protests). Migrants serve as a source of cognitive empowerment through brokerage of repertoires of contention. This leads us to expect converging forms of collective resistance between migrants and peasants, that is, a tactical escalation from institutionalized (i.e., petitions) to noninstitutionalized forms (i.e., protests) of collective resistance. This would be manifested in the increasing adoption of non-institutionalized tactics in rural China. Put differently, outward migration increases the likelihood of protests rather than petitions (*Hypothesis 2a*).

On the other hand, the process of disintegration is likely to affect the scale of collective resistance. Even if community disintegration does not completely undermine the relational basis for collective mobilization in rural China, it can impede the community's capacity for staging large-scale action. Large-scale collective action requires a larger network size and a higher degree of cohesion than small and medium-scale action. Out-migration adversely affects both of these preconditions. Therefore, we hypothesize that migration will have a weaker effect on large-scale collective resistance than on small- and medium-scale action (*Hypothesis 2b*). Another way

of assessing the consequence of community disintegration is to examine whether a curvilinear relationship exists. The positive relationship between outward migration and collective action may exist for a certain level of migration and taper off (or first taper off and then reverse), if the level of migration increases further. However, migration in China is characterized by a high level of circularity and attachment, which suggests that migrants may not completely detach from origin communities and may return when crises strike. Hence, high outward migration is unlikely to completely suppress political engagement and collective action. We expect a weak or no curvilinear relationship between out-migration and collective action (*Hypothesis 2c*).

The role of migration is likely to depend on local social institutions. Cognitive empowerment inspired by migration and indigenous institutions built on strong social relations contribute distinct yet complementary resources for collective action. Communities embedded in strong lineage networks can leverage their established social ties and connective structure to foster migration-driven diffusion and offset structural disintegration. Put differently, strong lineage networks accentuate the positive effect while suppressing the negative effect of migration. Hence, we expect that the effect of migration on collective resistance is stronger in villages embedded in strong lineage networks than in villages with weak lineage networks (*Hypothesis 3a*). Strong lineage networks are especially critical in mitigating the negative effect on large-scale resistance (*Hypothesis 3b*). In contrast, less cohesive villages are more severely impaired by community disintegration, which limits the positive political effect of migration, even if their members do become politicized.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

We first use longitudinal survey data to examine the relationship between migration and collective resistance. The data are from the Rural Survey of Land, Migration, and Local Governance in China, carried out by the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy at the China Academy of Sciences. The survey consisted of two rounds. The first round was conducted in 2004-2005 using a multistage stratified sampling procedure. First, the country was divided into six commonly recognized geographical regions (State Council Development Research Centre 2002), and one province was randomly chosen from each region: Shaanxi (Northwest), Sichuan (Southwest), Hebei (North-Central), Jilin (Northeast), Jiangsu (East/Central Coast), and Fujian (Southeast). All counties in each province were then sorted into five strata (quintiles) according to per capita gross industrial output. One county was randomly selected from each stratum, yielding a total of 30 counties. Next, all townships in each selected county were sorted into two groups according to per capita net income—above and below the median. One township was randomly selected from each group (a total of 60 townships). Following the same procedure, two administrative villages were chosen from each township (a total of 120 villages). Serious flooding prevented data collection in 4 villages, resulting in a total of 116 villages. The second round was conducted in 2008 and sought to re-interview all sample villages. Three villages were not re-interviewed due to massive disruptions caused by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Therefore, 113 villages were interviewed in both periods and included in the analysis.

Village-level data were gathered in both waves. Village-level information on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics came from village officials (party secretaries, village heads, and accountants). Such information was available from 2004 to 2008. The information was verified with village official statistics to ensure accuracy.

Household data were also gathered. Specifically, a random sample of 20 households based on village registration lists was chosen in each village. In each household, one adult was randomly selected for interview. More important, the household-level data were used to derive information on village collective resistance from 2004 to 2008. Because of the sensitivity of the subject, responses from local officials are unreliable. The survey did not ask about a respondent's own participation to avoid putting them at risk. Instead, each respondent was asked to report collective incidents that had occurred in the village, regardless of their own participation. Each did so by answering a series of structured questions about timing, reasons, form (collective petition or a non-institutionalized form of collective action), scale, and outcome of petition. Trained project personnel, who were graduate students and faculty from local universities and who spoke local dialects, synthesized responses in each village to obtain an annual time series of collective incidents. This was done by corroborating respondents' reports about timing, reasons, and form of the action. In most cases, an event was reported by more than one respondent and the multiple reports matched, allowing us to identify and code a particular collective action incident. When there was ambiguous information or when respondents provided discordant information, respondents were re-contacted to verify details. Once event identification was completed, we integrated the event data with the village-level data.

Our approach of surveying a random sample of respondents to collect information on local collective action has several distinct strengths. First, this approach generates more complete data than reports from newspapers.⁴ Second, this approach tends to generate more representative

⁴ Newspapers have been an important source of protest event data in many societies. However, newspaper data are constrained in China because of heavy censorship. They catch only a small subset of collective action events (Goebel and Steinhardt 2019). We compared our data on protests with newspaper data from the WiseNews database, which contains more than 600 Chinese language newspapers, magazines, and websites since 1998. We confirmed the low coverage rate of newspapers for rural collective action: about 19% of the protests in our data could be found in the database. In comparison, our approach covers

data than reports from either newspapers or a small, selected number of informants. Villagers can recall recent collective incidents relatively well because collective action constitutes a rare, salient event in village life and tends to be well-known in the local area (Wang and Wang 2016). Even if some respondents do not know about all collective incidents (especially in large administrative villages), a random sample ensures that we cover and receive information from different parts of the village (so that at least one report is provided). Third, the survey-based approach improves on conventional “protest event analysis,” which selects on the dependent variable by including only collective action that has emerged (Koopmans and Rucht 2002). The survey-based approach incorporates situations both where collective action erupts and where it fails to emerge. This allows for a more systematic investigation of the circumstances underlying the collective action emergence or community quiescence.

We supplement the survey analysis with in-depth interviews to illuminate the mechanisms underlying the migration effect. The interviews took place in 61 villages across 40 townships from six sampled provinces. They were initially conducted during the 2005 and 2008 surveys. Periodic revisits and follow-up interviews in selected villages occurred between 2009 and 2017. The researchers who ran the survey led the interviews, with assistance from local informants and graduate students. The interviews were conducted with ordinary villagers and migrants who were on return visits. We also interviewed by telephone nine migrants who were absent from the villages at the time. The interviews consisted of semi-structured questions designed to elicit narratives of local conflicts and collective incidents, migrants’ experiences, and

substantially more events, even when newspapers are silent. The events in our data were further verified during in-depth interviews in a subset of 61 villages, in which we were able to further corroborate survey reports and obtain additional details for each collective incident in these villages. We carried out a sensitivity analysis by restricting the statistical analysis to these 61 villages and obtained consistent results. For these reasons, we believe that our survey-based approach is a useful alternative that overcomes the limitation of newspaper-based data in authoritarian regimes such as China.

ties between migrants and origin families. One hundred and fifty-one interviews were completed throughout these rounds of fieldwork. We anonymized our respondents and village names to ensure confidentiality.

Variables

We conducted village-level analysis of several dependent variables that indicate different forms and scales of collective resistance. The first set of dependent variables measures the occurrence of collective petitions. The first variable indicates whether any collective petition (with more than five complainants) occurred in a village in each year. The second variable measures the occurrence of collective petitions with more than 50 participants, which we categorized as large-scale collective incidents at the village level, in accordance with the “Emergency Plan for Preventing and Dealing with Mass Incidents” administered by local governments (Yu 2007).

The second set of dependent variables measures the occurrence of non-institutionalized collective resistance (including protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, road or government building blockades, obstruction of construction, or physical confrontations with police or officials, hereafter, “protests”). Again, we constructed two dichotomous variables, indicating the occurrence of any protests and of protests with more than 50 participants.

Figure 2 presents the total number of collective petitions and protests (in parentheses) across sample villages from 2004 through 2008 in each of the six provinces. Despite some regional variation, collective incidents spread across all provinces. In rural China, collective petitions are in general more common than protests.

[Figure 2 about here]

The main predictor is the village out-migration ratio, which was measured by the proportion of working-age population (age 16-60) who worked and lived outside the county in each year.⁵ We focused on cross-county migration, following the standard definition in China (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2015). This is because within-county (e.g., cross-village or cross-township) migration involves shorter distances and more limited change in the socioeconomic environment. Within-county migrants often commute daily, which is different from the typical out-migration situation where migrants spend most of their time in urban areas away from home. We also controlled for whether land expropriation occurred in a village in a given year, which is the major source of local grievances and often triggers disputes over related issues such as local governance and elections (Yu 2007). As a measure of past local conflict, we used a dichotomous variable to indicate whether any collective resistance occurred in the village in the previous year.

We controlled for a series of factors that may be associated with local political environment. We measured education by the proportion of villagers with at least some high school education. Village per capita annual income reflects the level of resources that may shape need and willingness to participate in collective resistance. Per capita fiscal transfer from upper-level government indicates the degree of village collective resource endowments and the degree of financial reliance on local government. The proportion of households with a telephone (landline or cell phone) is an indicator of local telecommunications development, which shapes the frequency and quality of long-distance interactions with migrants. For the village non-

⁵ This study focuses on internal migration in China, which is substantially higher than international migration from China. International migration is low except in one of the survey provinces in our sample (Fujian province). Our data do not provide information on international migration. The role of international migration for rural collective action deserves separate investigation. We think that the political impact of international migration may be more limited because of its low rate and more permanent nature (hence lower circularity and linkage with origin communities).

agricultural economic structure, we included the number of privately owned enterprises.

Measures of village population composition include village population size and the proportion of working-age population (age 16-60); both excluded migrants. The latter serves as a proxy for village population age structure. To account for land scarcity, we controlled for per capita household farmland. We also controlled for political capital by measuring whether anyone from the village currently works in the upper-levels of government.

Pre-existing village social institutions, specifically the strength of village lineage networks, were operationalized in two ways in the analysis. We first constructed a variable of lineage structure. Following earlier research, we distinguished between villages embedded in strong lineage networks dominated by one or a few large lineages and villages where multiple descent groups exist (Kennedy 2002; Murphy, Tao, and Lu 2011). Villages with one or a few lineages are often referred to as having monopolistic or oligopolistic structures. These villages are characterized by a single or a few dense clusters of strong social ties. Villages with multiple descent groups, none with sufficient strength to dominate village life, are often referred to as mixed surname villages. The lineage structure variable was constructed using cluster analysis with information on the diversity of large surname clans (*daxing*) in the village—namely the percentage of households belonging to the largest patrilineal clan and the percentage of households belonging to the three largest patrilineal clans (more details in Appendix C). The procedure accounts for the absolute size of the largest lineage as well as its position relative to other descent groups. This is a measure of the structural features of lineage networks (i.e., density), which even if their power seems latent, can be reactivated for collective resistance when needs arise. The existence of dense lineage networks often, but not always, reflects the depth of social relations and cohesion. Hence, we also created a dichotomous variable that more

directly captures lineage solidarity and organizational strength. This is a measure of the regularity of organized lineage collective activities: that is, whether the village holds ancestral worship ceremonies at least annually (coded as 1, and 0 otherwise). Ancestral worship represents one of the most common collective lineage practices. Regular clan rituals represent a primary manifestation of the continuous presence of lineage in local life and solidarity among lineage members.

Descriptive statistics of village-level variables in the first and last year of the analysis appear in Table 1 and are discussed in Appendix D. They are generally consistent with patterns demonstrated in previous research.

[Table 1 about here]

Methods

The unit of analysis is the administrative village. We pooled village-level data from 2004 through 2008. This longitudinal design allows us to reduce potential biases and obtain more reliable results. A main source of bias occurs when village contextual factors (e.g., poor economic development or local governance, or other local socioeconomic and political factors) caused both out-migration and collective resistance. Without accounting for these conditions, which often are not adequately measured by the data, estimates of village migration tend to be unreliable (e.g., inflated if unobserved factors are positively associated with both out-migration and collective resistance). We used longitudinal fixed-effects models to adjust for potential confounding factors along socioeconomic and political dimensions at the village level, so long as they were time-invariant. This procedure effectively adjusts for village factors that remain stable during the five-year study period, including the village's geographic location (and the higher

administrative level that incorporates the village), its geographical proximity to township seats or local economic center, its history of migration, and its political structure. There also could be time-varying factors that are associated with both out-migration and resistance. We included a rich array of time-varying factors in the models insofar as they are observable. For example, to capture local political shocks, we included previous collective action and occurrence of land expropriation in the village. We included year fixed effects to account for time-varying shocks across villages.

The fixed-effects linear probability model is:

$$P(C_{it} = 1 | x) = \mu_t + \alpha_i + \beta \times Mig_{i(t-1)} + \mathbf{X}_{i(t-1)} \mathbf{\Gamma} \quad (1)$$

where C_{it} is the occurrence of collective petition or protest (of different scales) for village i in year t ; μ_t is the year effects that absorb aggregate time-varying shocks which affect villages in a given year; $Mig_{i(t-1)}$ indicates the village out-migration ratio for village i in year $t-1$; $\mathbf{X}_{i(t-1)}$ is a vector of one-year lagged control variables for village i in year $t-1$; and α_i represents the fixed effects specific to each village but constant over time, which effectively adjusts for time-invariant observed and unobserved factors specific for each village. In all models, we lagged the independent variables by one year from the dependent variable to reduce possible bias from reverse causation. In essence, the time-lag strategy allows us to examine how out-migration (measured prior to the onset of collective action) affects subsequent collective resistance.⁶ This

⁶ As an additional test, we examined whether local conditions including collective resistance could induce outward migration. The models were estimated via village-level fixed-effects regressions. Specifically, we used collective resistance or land expropriation in the previous year (together with one-year lag of the same set of control variables discussed above) to predict the rate of out-migration in the following year. Results in Appendix E show that decreased land resources were associated with a higher-level of migration from the community. But local political environment (as measured by the occurrence of collective petition or protest) was not systematically associated with out-migration. Hence, there is little evidence that migration occurs in response to political tensions at home. This is in line with previous research that the majority of peasants migrate for economic opportunities (Chan 2013).

strategy also takes account of the period required for new information and ideas from migrants to flow back. Using the lagged longitudinal design, the final sample size is 452 (village years).

We could also use logit models with fixed-effects. But these models drop villages that experience no change in the occurrence of collective resistance over time (45% of villages in the data) and would result in a smaller sample and reduce the power and accuracy of our estimates. In this situation, a linear probability fixed-effects model is an effective approximation of the underlying probability for discrete-choice data and generally yields similar results (Wooldridge 2010). It is also worth noting that, by design, time-invariant variables are not explicitly estimated in the fixed-effects models. This applies to the lineage variables, which do not change during the study period because they are the product of decades of evolution. A common identification strategy is to interact the time-invariant variables with time-varying variables (Allison 2009; Wooldridge 2010). Following this common practice, we included interactions between lineage structure and land expropriation (time-varying) to examine the role of lineage networks in collective resistance.

To examine how local social institutions shape the role of migration, we included interactions between the village migration ratio and the measure of the strength of lineage networks, as in equation (2).

$$P(C_{it} = I | x) = \mu_t + \alpha_i + \beta_1 \times Mig_{i(t-1)} + \beta_2 \times Mig_{i(t-1)} \times L_i + X_{i(t-1)} \Gamma \quad (2)$$

where L_i indicates village lineage networks (measured by network structure or collective activities), and $Mig_{i(t-1)} \times L_i$ is the interaction between migration and lineage networks. By examining the coefficients of migration and the interaction term, we are able to determine whether migration interacts with local social institutions to shape collective resistance.

RESULTS: MIGRATION AND COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

Regression results are presented in Table 2, which highlights the role of migration in shaping the occurrence and the nature of collective resistance. The village migration ratio was not significantly related to the probability of collective petitions (Model 1). It even seemed to decrease the emergence of large-scale petitions (Model 2). By contrast, the village migration ratio was positively associated with protests: protests were more likely to occur in villages with a higher level of out-migration than in otherwise similar villages with a lower rate of migration (Model 3). But the role of migration diminished and became nonsignificant for large-scale protests (Model 4). We conducted an additional analysis using logit fixed-effects regression (Model 5), which dropped villages with no over-time variation in the occurrence of protests. This analysis yielded a smaller sample size, but the result was substantively similar, pointing to a positive relationship between migration and protests. We thus used linear probability models for the main analyses because they retained a larger sample size.

The results support Hypotheses 1 and 2 (2a and 2b). The observation that migration led to an increase in protests but not petitions is consistent with the radicalization of migrant activism in China. The convergence in the form of collective action provides suggestive evidence for migration-driven relational diffusion. Moreover, the politicizing effect of migration holds largely for small- and medium-size collective action, but not large-scale mobilization. This variation is consistent with the process we posited that the depleted human resources and communal erosion due to out-migration can undermine the social basis for large-scale mobilization.

[Table 2 about here]

Other important predictors of collective resistance include lineage networks. Villages embedded in strong lineage networks were more likely to experience collective petitions and

protests when facing land expropriation. Also important was the prevalence of telephones, presumably because they facilitated communication between migrants and home communities. Per capita farmland was negatively associated with the probability of large-scale protests, suggesting that more abundant land resources reduced the grievances triggered by land expropriation. Finally, there was an over-time increase in the probability of protests (except for the last year of survey) across sample villages. This was not the case for collective petitions.

The in-depth interviews provide details about the transformation of migrants and the various mechanisms through which they shaped collective resistance back home. Many migrants acknowledged migration as a liberating and transformative experience, thanks to greater access to information in cities and to their interactions with fellow migrant workers and local residents. Interviewees noted several sources of enlightenment: being exposed to internet news about new labor policies or mass incidents; witnessing or participating in migrant labor strikes and protests (especially common in coastal cities with a large manufacturing sector); and observing protests organized by local residents to defend their property rights and collective rights to urbanized land (especially common in inland cities and migrants working in the service sector).

Through socialization or first-hand experience, migrants received cognitive cues and developed a greater sense of political consciousness and efficacy, setting the stage for migration-driven diffusion. This was manifested in a deeper understanding of the political system and repertoires of contention, particularly how collective action and direct action can make a difference by exerting pressure on the government. One recurring narrative was the power of collective action as opposed to individual action. A migrant from Hebei noted: “The more people, the greater the force (*ren duo li liang da*). The government ignores individual claims. We can resolve problems in the short term when we gather force.” Another recurring theme was the

effectiveness of direct action. This was especially common among migrants who were directly involved in labor struggles or closely witnessed their coworkers' struggles. These experiences prompted migrants to develop negative dispositions, or “informed disenchantment,” toward the state bureaucracy and formal channels of claims-making. A migrant from Jiangsu, who engaged in a yearlong struggle to claim back pay, discussed his revelation: “Petitions are useless. Before we petitioned, I thought government officials obeyed the law. They did not know about our problems. After the petition, I realized that all officials collude (*chuantong*). They ignore you (*buli ni*) and hold you back (*tuozhe ni*). It is like stones sinking into the ocean (*shichen dahai*). We cannot afford it (*hao bu qi*)... Going to the street is most direct. After we took to the street, people from the labor bureau came to us. They solved our problems.”

Our fieldwork illustrates the *reactive* nature of migration-driven diffusion. Diffusion was most often activated in response to local crises that infringed upon the immediate interests of peasants and migrants. Routine communications between migrants and remaining villagers largely focused on family matters. Talk about rights or migrant struggles in the city filtered only intermittently into these communications. However, the situation thoroughly changed when troubles struck at home. This was especially true when villagers fell victim to land expropriations, the primary trigger of grievances in rural China. In our data, more than 87% of collective action can be attributed to land-related issues. Such troubles not only put the immediate interests of peasants at stake but also threatened the long-term interest of migrants. Many migrants, even the younger generations, acknowledged land as a critical form of insurance should they fail to make ends meet in the city or intend to return at old age.

Local infringements revolving around land issues compelled migrants to engage and

those who remained to actively seek help from migrants.⁷ A Fujian peasant recounted a land crisis in his village, where the expansion of a cement plant imperiled local farmland: “Although my son went out for work, he is always a member of the family. We surely informed him of the land issue the first thing (*diyì shíjiān*) and discussed (*shàngliàng*) it with him. It involves his interest as well. I cannot make all the decision myself. He also wished to settle this problem, to maximize our interest. If we lose our land, it is a life matter.” Another peasant in the village added: “At that time, there were mostly elderly people, women, and children in the village. They must call on young people and men. Migrants also called back to check on the situation... How can they [migrants] concentrate at work (*ānxīn dàgōng*) when their houses and land are being torn down?” Statistical analysis (Model 6) supports the reactive nature of the migration effect. The interaction term between the village migration ratio and the occurrence of land expropriation was positive and statistically significant. This suggests that migration is most likely to drive diffusion and mobilization in the face of local crisis.

When land expropriation occurred, migrants activated a process of political diffusion. It took various forms, ranging from providing information on policies and diagnosis of local violations, to raising rights consciousness and action orientations, to advising on repertoires of contention. Because peasants often have limited knowledge about government policies and their legal rights, migrants helped fill the information gap. In one example, a Jiangsu village took part in a national highway project in which families had plots of farmland expropriated. The township

⁷ To be sure, not all migrants share the kind of liberating experience and positive political impact back home. Some migrants were frustrated or even went through significant losses (e.g., fired, detained) in fighting for their labor rights in cities. There are reasons to believe that the role of politically unsuccessful migrants is limited as they become disempowered and less contentious. However, extreme circumstances such as land expropriations can activate even these migrants to reflect on and share their experiences and lessons learned. A migrant from Sichuan described how he was initially depoliticized by his urban experience but later re-politicized to help peasants defend their land rights: “Even a rabbit will bite if it is desperate (*tuzi jile ye yaoren*).”

government promised peasants standard compensations but delivered none. At first, villagers had little knowledge of their land rights, the compensation to which they were entitled, or means for redress. They believed that the local government had the rights to their land and they could hardly make any claims on the government. When migrants learned about this, they explained national policies to their families, helped peasants identify local abuses, and encouraged them to take action to defend their rights. Some migrants went a step further, checking local and national compensation standards and finding that the appropriate compensation should be at least 20,000 RMB per mu. These efforts provided aggrieved peasants with cognitive cues that eventually spurred them into action. A villager recounted how his perceptions changed after a series of discussions with his migrant son: “Before, I thought we had few rights and we could not win over the government. There is no point in bothering with them. I talked to my son and I realize that actually we can do something about it. We have more rights than we thought. Defending our land rights is not illegal. We should stand up for ourselves.”

Migration-driven diffusion involves not only informational and ideational dimensions but also a broad repertoire of contention, particularly tactics effective with local governments. Our interviews are replete with cases where migrants emphasized the leverage peasants can gain through the use of collective action and non-institutionalized tactics. A migrant from the Jiangsu village advised his fellow villagers, who at the time were contemplating a formal complaint: “Don’t go as one person. You need to call a lot of people to make it work... Petitioning the government is a dead end, no matter which level of government you petition. You don’t even know who is the person in charge. Officials protect each other (*guanguan xianghu*). It is unlikely to be resolved in three months, or in a year, or longer. How long can you wait?... You have to cause some disturbance (*nao*). You can block the construction. Then the government pays more

attention to you. I have seen other people succeed this way.” The input of migrants prompted villagers to reevaluate the traditionally favored institutionalized strategy of claims-making and expand their tactical repertoires to include non-institutionalized strategies. In this example, the peasants were eventually empowered to act on their new consciousness and repertoires by taking their issues to the street. They flocked to the construction site, blocking the site and seizing the bulldozers for several days. This pressured local officials to deliver compensations totaling over 500,000 RMB.

Whereas peasants in the Jiangsu village bypassed institutionalized channels, others sometimes used direct action to supplement petitions. Peasants who take their cues from official media see petitioning the government as the default strategy. As they humbly petition and patiently wait for a response, they have little knowledge of other means of redress and thus have the tendency to relinquish claims when petitions fail. In a Jilin village, local governments planned on expropriating over 400 mu of land for a commercial park development project. If completed, per capita farmland would have decreased to below 0.5 mu. Villagers filed a series of collective petitions to different levels of government but failed to elicit a response. As villagers discussed their frustrations with families and friends, many of whom worked in cities in the North, they became aware of alternative strategies that would tip the balance of power. One peasant recalled conversations with his migrant family members: “They told me not to quit. If the government keeps ignoring us, we should call up a lot of people and sit-in in front of the government building.” Another migrant from the village advised the villagers on ways to legitimize their sit-in, by portraying it as a natural growth of petitioning: “You are not breaking the law. You have something to say (*youhua keshuo*). Tell them you have followed the regulations. You petitioned first. But there was no response.” Feeling emboldened, a group of

peasants went to sit in and protest in front of the municipal government building. In the end, local governments paid partial compensations to peasants and agreed to appropriate half of the originally planned land.

The foregoing examples illustrate the mechanisms by which migrants diffuse new information, consciousness, and repertoires of contention to those who stay behind. This cognitive process empowered peasants to engage in non-institutionalized collective resistance in defense of their rights. By using more radical tactics, peasants forced state officials to engage them outside the established channels within which the officials derive their power. In these processes, migrants acted not simply as carriers of political remittances but more often as concerted political brokers. They translated their experience and knowledge to peasants' struggles; they also consciously shaped villagers' understanding about the workings of the political system and ways to challenge their structural powerlessness. The brokerage process carries substantial social influence as it is built on strong social relations characterized by trust and shared interest. A peasant in Jiangsu commented on the influence of his son: "Of course I listen to him. My interest is his interest. He thinks in our best interest. He learns about these things from his personal experience. It is not like we read it from a newspaper."

Our fieldwork also reveals detrimental social transformations that had taken place or loomed large in migrant-origin communities. One is depopulation. A Fujian villager noted: "We no longer have many people in the village. Sometimes we are even short-handed (*que renshou*) for weddings and funerals (*hongbai xishi*)." Another challenge is weakened local networks and solidarity. As an increasing number of people leave for work, connections between those who remain loosened. A villager from Shaanxi acknowledged the change: "People drift apart, not as close as before. It is more difficult to organize public events now." These patterns can undercut

the community's ability to organize large-scale action due to a lack of people and diminishing solidarity.

Nevertheless, even if villages lose a notable share of members to migration, their capacity for collective action may not be entirely depleted. We find that many migrants maintained enduring attachment to their origin villages and land. This is true even for the small group of relatively well-off migrants, many of whom earn stable income or own property, but who are excluded from full urban citizenship and feel a strong sense of attachment to their rural land. This durable link compels many migrants, regardless of socioeconomic status, to guard their land rights with unusual ferocity. Crises that directly threaten migrants' interests, for example land expropriation, can even prompt some migrants to return home and participate in collective resistance. This was particularly true if migrants were close by. But even long distances do not preclude migrants from contributing to rural collective resistance. In such cases, migrants engaged in long-distance communications and, when the circumstances were especially dire, often returned to join the action. In the Jiangsu village discussed above, dozens of migrants returned to join peasants in protest, some from as far as Guangdong. Consistent with these processes, we find little evidence for a curvilinear relationship between migration and collective resistance (Hypothesis 2c). As shown in Model 7, the quadratic term was not significant. In other words, collective action can occur even when a village experiences a high level of out-migration. This is because migrants can buttress collective action through political brokerage that mobilizes collective resistance in the home village; migrants may also return to participate in such actions.

RESULTS: MIGRATION, LINEAGES, AND COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE

We also find substantial variations across villages embedded in distinct social institutions. As displayed in Table 3, the effect of migration unfolds in distinct ways depending on local lineage networks. Although the main effect of the village migration ratio was small and insignificant, the interaction term between migration and lineage networks was positive and significant. The pattern holds for both measures of lineage networks (Model 1 and 2). This suggests that the positive role of migration for protests was more pronounced in villages embedded in strong lineage networks (Hypothesis 3a). By contrast, in villages lacking a strong social base, community disintegration loomed large, thereby limiting the positive effect of migration. The difference is clearly illustrated in Figure 3, which shows the marginal effect of migration on the probability of protests for villages embedded in strong and weak lineage networks. The solid line indicates the effect of migration and the dotted lines represent the 95% confidence intervals (CIs). A statistically significant positive effect appears when the upper and lower bounds of the CIs are both above zero. We see that in villages embedded in strong lineage networks, migration had a positive effect on protests, except at very low levels of out-migration (village migration ratio < 0.1). In villages with weak lineage ties, however, migration was not significantly associated with protests across all levels of migration. Moreover, Model 3 shows that in close-knit villages, the role of migration turns positive even for large-scale protests (Hypothesis 3b). This result further underscores the importance of pre-existing social institutions in facilitating collective mobilization.

[Table 3 and Figure 3 about here]

Additional quantitative analysis and in-depth interviews illuminate the ways that lineage networks accentuate the positive effect while suppressing the negative impact of migration. First, connections between migrants and their home villages were stronger in villages embedded in

strong lineage networks, as these networks facilitate frequent contact and subsequent migration-driven diffusion.⁸ The household survey included several questions indicating the link between migrants and origin families. One question asked: “On average, how often does the migrant call (to the respondent’s phone, neighbor’s phone, or a public phone)?” Another question asked: “Did the migrant pay return visits in the past year during major holidays (Spring Festival, Tomb Sweeping Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and National Day), family weddings and funerals, and the harvest season?” Results show that 69% of migrants in close-knit villages phoned home at least once every month, compared to 48% of migrants in less cohesive villages. About 66% of migrants in close-knit villages paid one or more return visits in the previous year, which was true for 51% of migrants in less cohesive villages. Differences in both long-distance communication and return visits are statistically significant. Maintaining frequent communications and making regular visits evince the strength of migrant-origin connections and reaffirm migrants' belonging to their family and kinship clans. The pattern was also illustrated in interviews. As a Jiangsu villager commented: “People go out to work. We don’t see each other very much. But they come back for Qingming, for Spring festival. When they are back, things are just like before. People are still affectionate (*qinre*) with each other.” In fact, these holidays are important occasions for hosting traditional lineage rituals such as ancestral worship.

Second, strong lineage networks preserve community solidarity and shield against communal erosion. Whereas peasants in close-knit villages felt somewhat loosened communal

⁸ We also examined the relationship between village lineage networks and out-migration. Specifically, we tested whether the rate of out-migration in villages embedded in strong lineage networks was lower than that in less cohesive villages. The results show no significant relationship. This is consistent with previous research documenting that internal migration in China is primarily economically driven and that many villagers fulfil family obligations through migration and monetary remittances (Chan 2013). That said, it is probable that individuals from villages with strong lineage networks exhibit different patterns of migration (e.g., shorter distance). This is an interesting question that deserves future research.

ties after migration, they also acknowledged the preservation of a baseline level of cohesion, which helped overcome some of the negative disintegrating effect of migration. In the words of one Fujian villager:

Young people leave. There are fewer people in the village. But those of us who are left here still consider each other relatives. We have been on good terms (*jiaoqing hao*) before people moved out. And we remain close now. Migration does not change our relationship. We often visit one another (*zoudong*). For weddings and funerals, we don't have to call on people (*buyong han*). People will come together. When we are short-handed for weddings and funerals, we call back migrants ... If anything happens in the village that involves people's common interest, it is easy to mobilize. People identify with each other.

We also find that, even in places where lineage ties seemed to lie dormant on a routine basis, these ties could be reactivated in times of need. One Hebei villager illustrated the point: "Now there is a weaker sense of collective. But if something big and terrible happens (*chu dashi*), clan elders would speak out. People can still be rallied around the issue. There were worries that people's hearts no longer go together (*renxin sanle*). So last year the clan elders organized entertainment and sports games to raise money from society. Most villagers participated. The event raised more than 9,000 RMB."

A shared identity and strong solidarity permeated close-knit communities even in the face of exodus, providing important mobilizing structures for collective resistance. The Jiangsu village, which was dominated by a single clan, offers a telling example of how migration combines with lineage networks to facilitate collective action. As discussed above, migrants

from the village brokered new consciousness and repertoires of contention back home. In the process, several activists surfaced, including two migrant workers and several villagers who were empowered by migrant family members. Together they sought out local elites (i.e., clan elders), sharing information and urging them to take action. This strategy turned out to be critical in disseminating information to the wider community and mobilizing a broad mass base. One activist remarked: “We pushed them [clan elders] to the front (*tuidao qianmian*). After all they are well-regarded. We told them—you should go talk to people. Tell them what we told you. People really listen to you.” Feeling obligated, two clan elders came forward and helped mobilize villagers into action. They spoke out during a village opera (*changxi*) and called on villagers to join later meetings. Families sent representatives to the subsequent meetings, in which the elders and activists discussed land rights and strategies and reiterated a message: “The policy said the land is ours. Whoever uses our land should compensate us. They cannot use the land before the money is in place (*qian budaowei*).” The message was diffused along the dense local networks, even as villagers gathered to chat or play cards and mahjong together. In this way, repertoires of contention initially brokered by migrants reached a wider audience.

The dense local networks also cultivated collective responsibility and cooperation. Families took turns protesting and occupying the construction site during the blockade, alternating between day and night shifts. This ensured that no construction could possibly take place on their land. A group of migrants also returned to join the villagers. As one villager recounted: “As long as somebody takes the lead (*daitou*), the rest will respond (*xiangying*). After a little mobilization (*diaodong yixia*), people all went to the street. How could someone stay home and do nothing when the rest of the village take action?” On the fifth day of protest, a police force arrived at the village. The entire village was informed of the police presence and

was called upon to show up at the construction site. House to house, the villagers shouted, “Let’s all go there to express our will and to support (*zhiyuan*) each other.” More than 120 people showed up within hours, cramming the construction site and nearby areas. The scale and solidarity manifested in the protests contributed to its peaceful resolution. In this example, dense local networks provided the mobilizing structure and a high degree of coordination for large-scale collective action, even in this high-migration village.

In contrast, the case of a Sichuan village lends insights into how out-migration can disrupt mobilizing capacity and counteract migrant-driven diffusion in less cohesive villages. A villager noted a dearth of communal activities: “After people go out, the rest just mind their own business. We rarely visit each other’s house (*chuanmen*) anymore. People have drifted apart (*shuyuan*).” Diminished interactions and communal unity turned costly when local authorities robbed villagers of their land without proper compensation. Anguish and helplessness permeated the village. Instead of rising in protest, the village was paralyzed. One migrant worker from the village who spoke to us expressed great frustration over his fruitless effort. The migrant had repeatedly discussed the issue with his family and neighbors and urged them to take action. He lamented: “I talked to them about rights, about doing something. But nothing happened. By now many people know it is illegal. But just knowing is not enough. People live their own lives (*geguo gede*). It is difficult to rally people together. People talked about it. No one takes action. No one takes the lead.” At the time of the fieldwork, a quarter of the land had been taken while the villagers received no compensation. No protest has erupted.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The present study examines the relationship between migration and collective action in migrant-sending communities. We consider multiple facilitating and inhibiting mechanisms emanating from outward migration. We also identify social conditions that promote or attenuate the politicizing effect of migration. Using longitudinal data and in-depth interviews from rural China, we find that outward migration affects both the cognitive and social foundation of collective action in origin communities, which subsequently shapes the development and the nature of collective action. In rural China, migration in general spurs collective action, especially non-institutionalized action similar to that adopted by migrants. The convergence of tactics between migrants and peasants occurs because of migration-driven relational diffusion through political remittances and brokerage. The process of brokerage is especially salient, as migrants introduce new repertoires of contention, which through interpretive exchanges both inform and embolden peasants. Nevertheless, the same process of outward migration precipitates adverse social transformations that can lead to community disintegration. These transformations weaken the potential of origin communities for large-scale mobilization, even though they do not entirely deplete the foundation for smaller-scale collective action. In the end, the role of migration depends on local social institutions: it is stronger in close-knit villages embedded in dense lineage networks and weaker in less cohesive villages. The combination of cognitive resources induced by migration and social reserves built on preexisting social institutions provides the most favorable conditions for collective action.

Our study makes several contributions to the literature. First, it connects previously separate literature on migration and social movements to show the micro- and meso-level dynamics of collective action development in changing demographic landscapes. Both the theories of collective action and of migration can benefit from analysis of the relationship

between the two. On the one hand, our findings highlight the value of considering the influence of demographic forces, such as migration, in studying the processes of diffusion, empowerment, and mobilization in collective action. The migration process sheds light on a new, effective mechanism of relational diffusion, whereby migrants act as bridge actors rooted in strong, enduring social ties. This form of relational diffusion contrasts with other scenarios of diffusion that often confront a tradeoff between diversity and bandwidth (Aral and Alstyne 2011).

Migration-driven relational diffusion assumes substantial social influence, particularly in high-risk nondemocratic settings where trust and shared identity is key. In this respect, "exit" and "voice" can be complementary in bringing about political change. It is also worth noting that the effect is largely reactive: relational diffusion induced by migrants is commonly activated in response to local crises, such as when peasants' and migrants' rights (e.g., land rights) are challenged. This finding underscores the importance of threats as inducements to contention (Almeida 2003; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Snow et al. 1998). Threats operate in concert with political opportunities generated by migration networks to promote the development of collective action.

On the other hand, the findings add to the migration literature by extending the analysis of the "migration-development nexus" (Curran 2016) to the political realm. Migrants are capable of bringing not only economic and social transformation but also political change back home. Furthermore, the study adds to our understanding of the relationship between human behavior and social structure (Entwisle 2007; Entwisle et al. 2007). Human behavior such as migration can shape the relational and connective structure of locally-based social networks. This has important ramifications for communal cohesion and community-level outcomes such as collective action. Ideally, one would directly measure complete village networks for a large

number of villages. But such data are seldom available in surveys, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Entwisle et al. 2007). We thus rely on qualitative interviews to illustrate changing village network structure and cohesion in the context of out-migration. A more systematic investigation of the relationship between migration and social structure requires better data.

Second, the present study engages the question of why certain forms and scales of action emerge. This investigation allows us to uncover multiplex, nuanced impacts of migration. Indeed, the cognitive and social processes underlying migration shape not only whether collective resistance occurs but also its form and scale. Migration spurs non-institutionalized collective action but not institutionalized action. The results shed light on the question of whether movement radicalization represents a conscious choice or is the unintended result of organizational breakdown. In the context of migration, peasants consciously escalate tactics. They are inspired by the repertoires of contention brokered by migrants; they also comprehend the effectiveness of de-institutionalized “outsider” tactics as a means of offsetting their structural powerlessness. Furthermore, the scale of collective resistance is closely associated with the level of outward migration. A large exodus of migrants can lead to communal erosion in origin villages, undercutting the capacity for large-scale mobilization. Hence, the positive effect of migration holds largely for small- and medium-scale collective action.

Third, the role of migration is conditioned by local social-institutional context. Indigenous social institutions in origin communities interact with the sociopolitical processes induced by migration. This adds to our understanding of the ways in which agency and structure interact to shape collective action. Preexisting social institutions built on strong lineage networks provide durable mobilizing structures. They reinforce migrants’ connections to home communities and foster high solidarity to overcome the disintegrating effect of exodus. Such a

social base makes even large-scale mobilizations possible in the context of out-migration. Local social institutions provide complementary resources to the cognitive liberation brokered by migrants, allowing some communities to maintain their connective structure while enjoying the fruits of migration.

Finally, the present study emphasizes a contextualized approach, focusing on the role of broader institutional environments in structuring the politicizing effect of migration. The positive net effect of migration in rural China grows largely out of structural exclusion embodied in the *hukou* system and associated social policies that have created a high circular and return migration. The structural exclusion fosters migrants' attachments to home communities and farmland, while also buffering original communities from severe, chronic disintegration. The same institutional factors provoke migrants' activism in cities as they protest structural discrimination. The confluence of these forces places Chinese migrants in a unique position to transcend the enclosed rural political environment and serve as a conduit of political diffusion. In this respect, China's distinct institutions produce *converging* effects that inadvertently strengthen the political significance of migrants for origin communities. This stands in contrast to many other settings of migration, where the same institutional forces often produce *diverging* consequences—bolstering migrants' integration in destinations while dampening their connections to origins (Waldinger 2015).

Our study brings internal migration and nondemocratic settings back into conversations about migration and social movements that have largely focused on international migration and democratic settings. Migration-driven diffusion is not restricted to transnational migration to more democratic societies. Although transnational migration typically entails greater socioeconomic and political differences than domestic migration, rural-to-urban migration in

developing countries often faces a similar kind of transition and challenge (albeit possibly to a lesser degree) (Fitzgerald 2006). In China, rural-to-urban migration spans distinct political spheres and constitutes a transformative experience for migrants and their families. What differentiates migrants' experiences is less about the dichotomy between internal and international migration than the structural distinctions based on migrants' "membership and belonging" – that is, the barriers to integration and distance traveled (economic, sociocultural, and political) (Brown and Bean 2016). China, with its controlled migration system and political environment, also reveals a less discussed mechanism underlying the political importance of migrants—empowerment in an exclusionary context. Previous research focuses on the role of inclusionary reception contexts in enhancing migrants' exposure to democratic institutions (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Giugni and Passy 2004). These studies focus on the way such *positive* political experience may subsequently be channeled back home. We argue that the liberating experience of migration is not confined to these settings. An exclusionary context characterized by discrimination and limited protection can also spur migrants' political activism, as they strive to maintain their status quo (Okamoto and Ebert 2010; Kessler and Rother 2016). This *negative* experience, which is not unique to Chinese migrants and is also observed for undocumented and minority immigrants across diverse settings, can also heighten migrants' commitment to political participation.

This study provides a useful new lens for understanding contentious politics in China. It underscores the linkage between urban and rural resistance, which have traditionally been portrayed as unrelated phenomena. We argue that migration inherently opens political spaces for migrants and peasants, bringing together typically segmented lines of contention in rural and urban areas. In doing so, migrants have emerged as critical allies of peasants, helping the latter to

overcome their structural powerlessness. In this respect, the long-standing separationist state institutions (i.e., the *hukou* system and associated policies) that have marginalized peasants and maintained socio-political stability by forestalling links between rural and urban sectors (Wang 2005) have inadvertently politicized and emancipated many migrants and peasants. This shift has begun to impinge on the central government, as it gradually loses levers of political domination. Because our study focuses on the agency of migrants and peasants in origin communities, we have not examined local state responses to this phenomenon. Whether state authorities have fully grasped the political potential of migrants and how they grapple with maintaining control over an increasingly open rural society is an important question that merits in-depth investigation.

It is premature to tell if migrants will emerge as a formidable source of fundamental political change in rural China. For one, migration is not a sufficient condition for collective action. Its influence is heavily conditioned by local social institutions. Neither is migration the only conduit of information flows to the village. Rather, we contend that migration serves as an important channel of diffusion, independent of and in addition to other media-based channels of information access, which are often undermined by authoritarian control. For another, rural resistance is too complicated to be explained solely by migration. A limiting factor is the cellular nature of migrants' and peasants' activism, which is locally oriented, short-lived, and centered on narrow economic claims and remedial measures. These actions rarely escalate into class movements or trans-local struggles, and they are seldom directed at instituting broader changes for improving the collective rights of migrants or peasants. The cellularization is partly inherent considering the importance of cohesive networks for movement diffusion in high-risk authoritarian settings (Flap and Volker 2003). It is further reinforced by the common local social structure underlying collective action. Lineage networks, while providing an important social

foundation for collective action in the face of exodus, tend to be tightly clustered and lack bridging capacity outside the localized society to create wider diffusion (Siegel 2009). Hence, we have yet to see an upward “scale shift” (McAdam 2003; Tarrow and McAdam 2005), in which localized collective action reaches a geographically or institutionally distant group, with coordinated action between the two sites to forge a broader social movement around a common set of goals.

Current changes in migration and public space in China are likely to govern the political effect of migration for origin communities. At the moment, first-generation migrants are retiring and returning home (Liang, Li, and Ma 2014). Furthermore, recent economic slowdowns lead to factory closures, generating a reverse migration flow among young and middle-age migrants (Kong et al. 2009). For those who return, land becomes a potential source of contention. This is illustrated by the fact that land disputes involving return migrants increased by 125% between 2007 and 2008 (Shi 2009). These outcomes are reinforced by a general pattern of migration involving shorter distances, as migrants increasingly choose to move to cities and provinces closer to home (Liang et al. 2014). All this facilitates persistent connections between migrants and their origin communities. It is also worth noting that second-generation migrants have come of age. Compared to the first generation, who often view themselves as temporary workers, the second-generation expresses a stronger intention to take root in cities and thus have weaker attachment to their rural home. But these young migrants confront as many structural barriers as the older generation, which many recognize over time. This motivates them to maintain their village affiliation and land rights (Zhu 2007; Fan and Wang 2008). With all this in mind, the political significance of migration is likely to persist, insofar as migrant workers continue to be denied full urban citizenship (Chan 2013). The importance of migrants as an interpersonal

channel of diffusion may even grow in the face of contracting public space and tightening media control in China. In such a setting, migrants can serve as an informal source of political diffusion and influence that helps break through authoritarian censorship.

To what extent are our findings generalizable outside China? Because the circumstances underlying migration in China are unique, we may not observe identical migration effects elsewhere. However, we are likely to find commonalities in settings with similar migration dynamics—where permanent settlement is elusive and ties to homeland remain strong. Even if the overall impact of migration does not generalize, the underlying mechanisms of migration (i.e., relational diffusion, community disintegration) are likely to unfold in similar ways, albeit to varying degrees. With increasing migration worldwide, especially that originating from authoritarian regimes and developing democracies, investigating the political impact of transnational and trans-local migration under distinct institutional contexts will be a fruitful direction for research.

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Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Migration and Collective Action

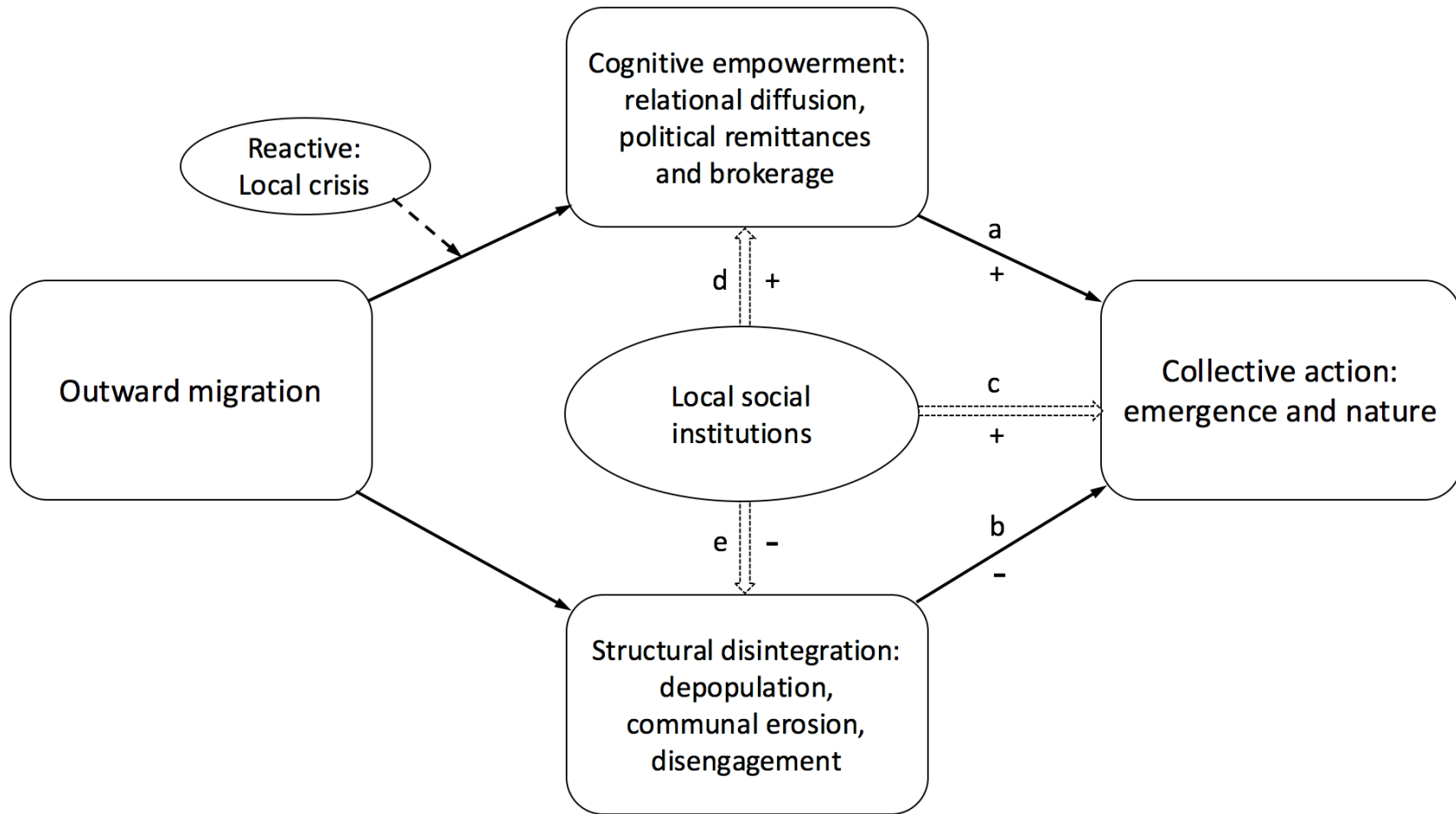


Figure 2. Total Number of Collective Petitions and Noninstitutionalized Collective Action (in parentheses) during 2004-2008 by Province, Rural China

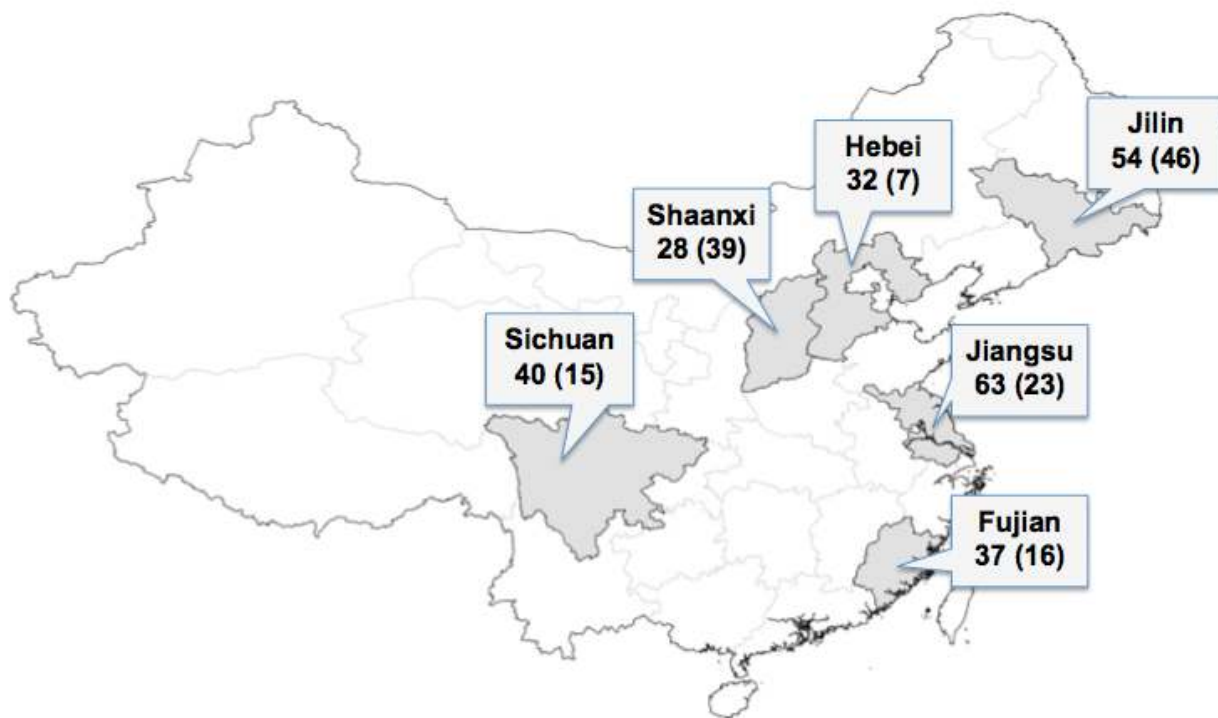


Figure 3. Predicted Probability of Protests based on Village Migration Ratio, by Strength of Lineage Networks

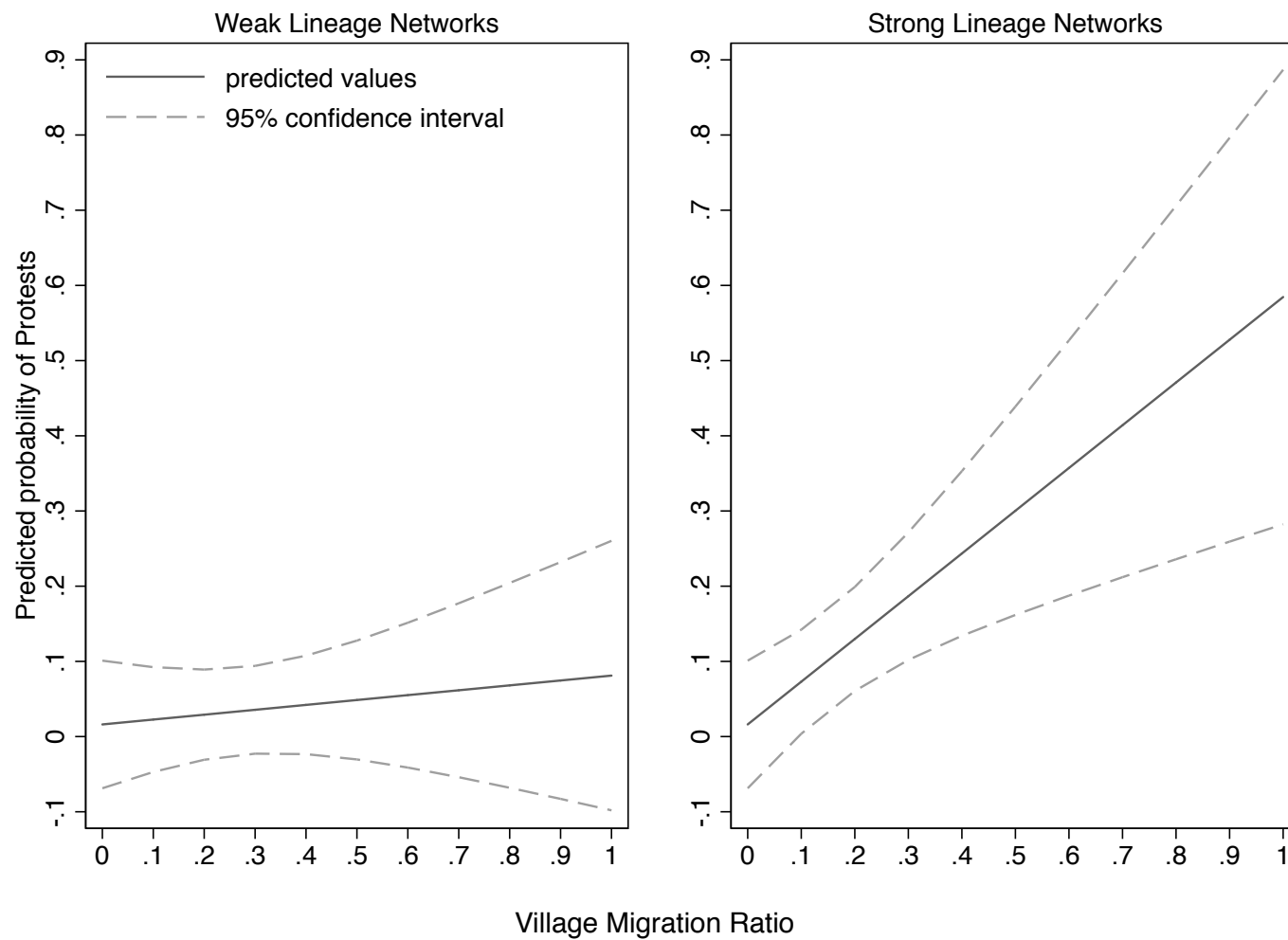


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	2004/2005		2007/2008	
	Mean/Prop.	Std. Dev.	Mean/Prop.	Std. Dev.
Any collective petition (1=Yes; 0=No)	0.25	---	0.21	---
Any collective petition > 50 participants (1=Yes; 0=No)	0.11	---	0.07	---
Any protests and other non-institutionalized collective action (1=Yes; 0=No)	0.08	---	0.11	---
Any protests > 50 participants (1=Yes; 0=No)	0.04	---	0.06	---
Village out-migration ratio	0.28	0.18	0.32	0.19
Land expropriation (1=Yes; 0=No)	0.11	---	0.14	---
Lineage structure (monopoly or oligopoly village)	0.56	---	0.56	---
Regular ancestral worship ceremony	0.35	---	0.35	---
Village population (unit: 1,000 people)	1.58	0.98	1.58	1.08
Proportion of working-age population	0.51	0.12	0.49	0.15
Proportion of population with high school or higher education	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.11
Per capita annual income (yuan)	2,808	1,556	3,525	2,181
Number of enterprises	3.62	8.89	4.18	9.37
Proportion of households with telephone	0.35	0.24	0.39	0.25
Per capita household farmland (unit: mu)	6.86	10.48	6.57	9.29
Per capita fiscal transfer from upper-level government (yuan)	20.31	39.83	44.95	59.43
Villagers working in upper-level government (1=Yes; 0=No)	0.62	---	0.71	---

Note: $N=113$. The outcome variables (collective action) in 2005 and 2008 were shown. The independent variables in 2004 and 2007 were shown (one year lagged of the outcome variables, to be consistent with regression analysis). The *mu* is a traditional unit of land area in China. One *mu* is about 675 square meters. The yuan is the Chinese currency. In 2008, one US dollar was about 6.9 Chinese yuan.

Table 2. Village-level Fixed-effect Regressions of Collective Petitions and Protests, 2005-2008, Rural China

	Collective petition	Collective petition	Protests	Protests	Protests	Protests	Protests
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	All	Size>50	All	Size>50	All Logit	All Interaction with land expropriation	All Curvilinear
Village out-migration ratio	-0.14 (0.15)	-0.26* (0.11)	0.28** (0.11)	0.09 (0.09)	3.61* (1.68)	0.18+ (0.10)	0.38* (0.17)
Village out-migration ratio squared							-0.14 (0.39)
Village out-migration ratio * Land expropriation						0.44* (0.20)	
Land expropriation	0.15+ (0.08)	0.08 (0.06)	0.09 (0.07)	0.06 (0.05)	0.61 (0.74)	0.12 (0.11)	0.04 (0.07)
Strong lineage networks * Land expropriation	0.11 (0.12)	0.22* (0.09)	0.24* (0.10)	0.18* (0.07)	4.20** (1.60)	-- --	0.24* (0.10)
Village population (log)	-0.06 (0.17)	-0.12 (0.12)	-0.03 (0.14)	-0.07 (0.10)	2.09 (4.50)	-0.04 (0.14)	-0.03 (0.14)
Proportion of working-age population	0.21 (0.21)	0.11 (0.16)	0.14 (0.18)	0.09 (0.13)	5.15+ (3.07)	0.17 (0.18)	0.14 (0.18)
Proportion of population with high school or higher education	-0.30 (0.29)	-0.34 (0.21)	0.07 (0.25)	0.33+ (0.17)	1.19 (3.36)	0.07 (0.25)	0.08 (0.25)
Per capita annual income (log)	-0.02 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.72 (1.64)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)
Number of enterprises	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.00 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.00 (0.003)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Proportion of households with telephone	0.08 (0.14)	0.09+ (0.05)	0.13* (0.07)	0.14+ (0.08)	1.15 (1.54)	0.15 (0.09)	0.11 (0.09)
Per capita household farmland (log)	-0.04	-0.03	-0.07	-0.10*	-0.47	-0.08	-0.07

	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.80)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Per capita fiscal transfer from upper-level government (log)	-0.03	-0.003	-0.01	0.003	-0.33	-0.01	-0.004
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.36)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Villagers working in upper-level government	0.02	0.04	-0.02	0.07	-1.16	-0.01	-0.02
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(1.24)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Collective action in village (previous year)	0.32***	0.12**	0.24***	0.15***	2.15***	0.24***	0.24***
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.52)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Year (ref. 2005)							
2006	-0.004	-0.02	0.10*	0.03	1.46*	0.10*	0.09*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.63)	(0.05)	(0.05)
2007	-0.001	-0.01	0.12*	0.01	1.28+	0.12*	0.12*
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.69)	(0.05)	(0.05)
2008	0.002	-0.01	0.07	0.003	0.04	0.07	0.06
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(1.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Constant	0.03	-0.36	-0.03	0.16		-0.02	0.04
	(0.87)	(0.63)	(0.74)	(0.52)		(0.74)	(0.76)
<i>N</i>	452	452	452	452	248	452	452

† p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Note: Standard Errors are in Parentheses. Time-invariant variables, such as the geographic location of village, are effectively controlled for in fixed-effect models.

Table 3. Village-level Fixed-effect Regressions of Protests, 2005-2008, Rural China

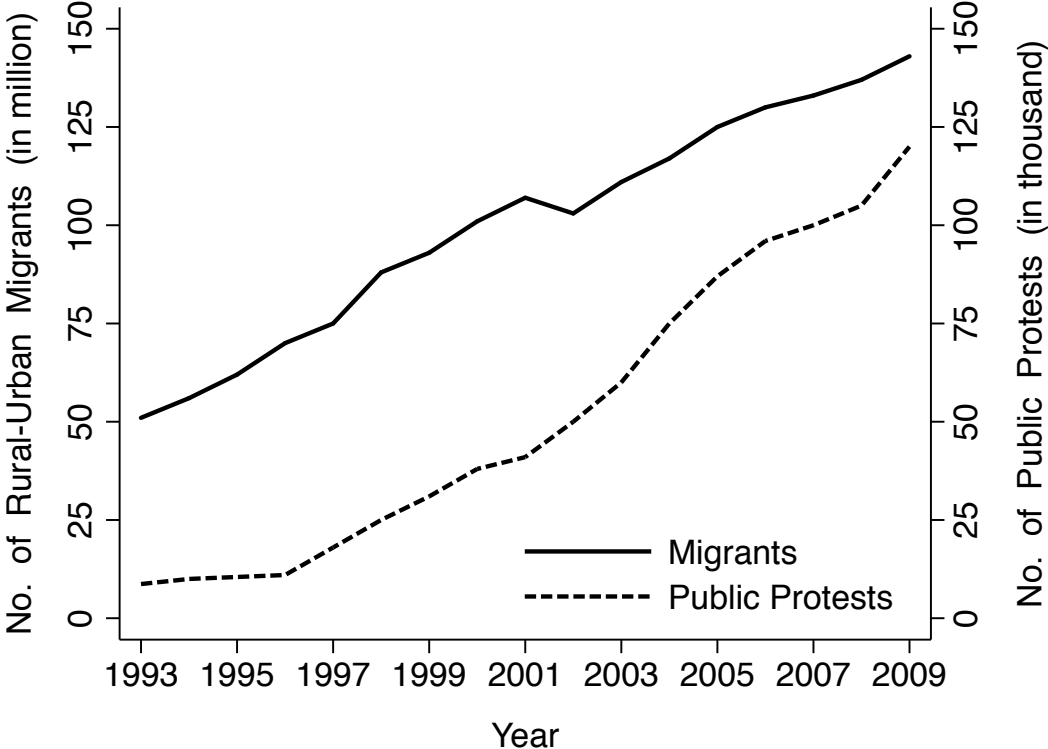
	Protests	Protests	Protests
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	All	All	Size>50
Village out-migration ratio	0.12 (0.17)	0.09 (0.14)	0.02 (0.11)
Village out-migration ratio * Strong lineage networks	0.29* (0.14)		
Village out-migration ratio * Regular lineage activities		0.49* (0.23)	0.35* (0.16)
Land expropriation	0.07 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	0.08* (0.04)
Village population (log)	-0.02 (0.14)	-0.01 (0.14)	-0.04 (0.10)
Proportion of working-age population	0.15 (0.18)	0.12 (0.18)	0.09 (0.14)
Proportion of population with high school or higher education	0.04 (0.25)	0.08 (0.25)	0.46* (0.20)
Per capita annual income (log)	-0.07 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.06)
Number of enterprises	-0.000 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.002)
Proportion of households with telephone	0.13+ (0.07)	0.14+ (0.08)	0.15 (0.09)
Per capita household farmland (log)	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.10* (0.05)
Per capita fiscal transfer from upper-level government (log)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.003 (0.02)
Villagers working in upper-level government	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.004 (0.07)	0.08 (0.06)

Collective action in village (previous year)	0.24*** (0.04)	0.24*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.03)
Year (ref. 2005)			
2006	0.10* (0.05)	0.10* (0.05)	0.03 (0.03)
2007	0.12* (0.05)	0.12* (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)
2008	0.06 (0.07)	0.07 (0.07)	0.004 (0.05)
Constant	0.10 (0.74)	-0.004 (0.74)	-0.12 (0.55)

† p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Notes: $N = 452$. Standard Errors are in Parentheses. Time-invariant variables, such as the geographic location of village, are effectively controlled for in fixed-effect models.

Appendix A. Number of Rural-Urban Migrants and Public Protests in China



Source: Hu, Hu, and Wang (2010); Herd, Koen, and Reutersward (2010); and Wedeman (2009)
Note: The number of public protests refers to all protests across China.

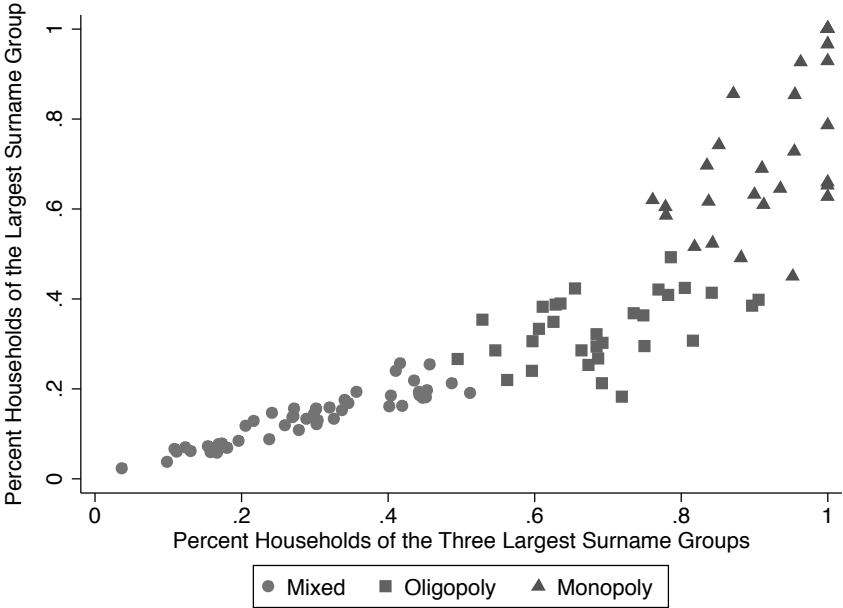
Appendix B. Land Expropriation as a Leading Source of Rural Unrest

In recent years, rural China has been swept by increasing collective resistance (O'Brien and Li 2006; Bernstein and Lü 2008; Cai 2010). The primary trigger of collective resistance is local government expropriation of peasants' land (Yu 2007). After the central government abolished agricultural taxes in the early 2000s, land expropriations replaced tax burdens as the leading cause of collective resistance (Kennedy 2007). In land expropriations, local cadres (village or higher-level officials) dispossess farmers of their land, often by force, pay them far below market value, and pocket the lion's share of the profits for themselves.

Abusive land practices are partly a result of the administrative and fiscal decentralization that have accompanied China's economic reforms. Administrative decentralization has led to declining effectiveness in the central state's control over local society, creating opportunities for official malfeasance against powerless peasants (Guo 2001). Fiscal decentralization exacerbates this tendency by forcing local governments to generate most of their revenues. Coupled with booming land values, local officials have come to rely on land expropriations for revenue generation, typically leasing out land use rights for nonagricultural purposes (Wong 1997). Land expropriation has gradually become the main business of local governments throughout the country, providing between 20% and 70% of local governments' administrative budgets (Lin and Ho 2005; Su, Zhao, and Tao 2013). Fiscal and administrative decentralization are compounded by pressures on local governments to demonstrate local economic growth and industrialization, which involve land conversions for infrastructure building and commercial use (Van Rooij 2007).

The problem of abusive land expropriation results from a lack of transparency in land property rights, as the owner of agricultural land in China is the "collective." This legal ambiguity has given the local state wide latitude to claim itself as the *de jure* owner of rural land, while peasants are deprived of nonagricultural developmental rights on their own land (Lin and Ho 2005). Under such a system, land expropriation has to be initiated by local governments, which decide not only where and how much land is to be appropriated but also the level of compensation (Su et al. 2013). County governments often set land development plans and propose terms for land expropriation. The township governments then carry out negotiations with village cadres (who represent the "collectives"), and together they coerce farmers to accept government-set terms, which come with little or no compensation. Local governments then lease the land to commercial land developers at the (much higher) market price. The profit is misappropriated by different levels of cadres. In this process, village cadres often develop entrenched interests in colluding with upper-level authorities to depress peasants' compensation to maximize profits (Su et al. 2013). Such abusive land expropriations naturally fuel farmers' resistance.

Appendix C. Scatter Diagram of Village Lineage Structure



Note: Monopoly villages are dominated by a single lineage, which accounts for more than 42% of households. Oligopoly villages are dominated by a few large lineage groups, with no one group able to claim substantially larger numbers than the other two. In these villages, the three largest lineage groups account for more than 53% of households. Mixed villages comprise families from many different descent groups, with no single group accounting for more than one-quarter of households.

Appendix D. Descriptive Statistics of Variables in the Analysis

Descriptive statistics of village-level variables in the first and last year of inclusion in the analysis appear in Table 1. From 2005 through 2008, the percentage of villages experiencing collective petitions decreased from 25% to a little over 21%. The decline holds for collective petitions with more than 50 participants. The percentage of villages experiencing protests increased from 8% to 11% during the same period. The growth of protests with more than 50 participants was more modest. These patterns should be interpreted with caution because events that occurred toward the end of 2008 (after the survey) may not have been recorded. Yet, comparing the trend in petitions and protests during the same period still reveals a diverging pattern.

Regarding the independent variables, which were lagged by one year from the dependent variables (in 2004 and 2007), we see that the proportion of migrant workers increased from 28% to 32%. Land expropriation also became increasingly common in sample villages. As for lineage structure, almost 56% of the villages were embedded in strong lineage networks. About 35% of the villages held regular ancestral worship ceremonies. The average village population size was 1,575 in 2004 and remained similar in 2007. The proportion of the working-age population declined slightly, by about 2%, reflecting population aging that loomed large across China.

Village educational level and per capita annual income, while improving over time, remained quite low. This is consistent with the widely-documented poor socioeconomic development in rural China. As for economic structure, the sample villages averaged 3.6 enterprises in 2004. The number increased to 4.2 by 2007. Also increased was the telephone prevalence in villages, which reflects telecommunication development in the countryside. For land resources, there was a decline in per capita household farmland, partly resulting from the nationwide conversion of farmland to nonagricultural purposes. Fiscal transfers from upper-level governments doubled during the same period. Finally, 62% of sample villages had someone working in upper-level governments in 2004 and this percentage increased to 71% in 2007.

Appendix E. Village Fixed-effects Models Predicting Out-migration Based on Land Expropriation and Collective Action, 2005-2008, Rural China

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Land expropriation in previous year	0.05* (0.02)		
Collective petition in previous year		0.01 (0.01)	
Protest in previous year			0.001 (0.02)

* $p < 0.05$

Note: $N = 452$. Standard Errors are in Parentheses. Other control variables are omitted and are the same as those presented in Table 1.