The Impact of Traditional and Digital Media on Political Participation: A Multilevel Analysis

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University of Connecticut, 2012

This dissertation investigates the impact of traditional and digital media on political participation in China. In particular, this study aims to test existing theories of media effects in a different society where both traditional and digital media are heavily controlled. Using an existing probability-based dataset, the study specifically tests the impact of media use, political interest, social capital, and social conflict on political participation and voting. Results indicate that traditional news media measured by frequency and attention remain relevant to voting and political participation in both urban and rural China. Importantly, this research shows that the impact of digital media–the Internet–is even more prominent than traditional news media. Social capital measures are overall important correlates of political outcomes. Social networks are overall more important to voting in local people's congress while norms of reciprocity matter more to voting in villagers' and residents' committee. Among trust measures, trust toward people with close ties is important to engaging in informal political participation while trust toward people with weaker ties matters more to engaging in formal political participation. Finally, social conflict including conflict with others and conflict with the government is a potent predictor of informal political participation.

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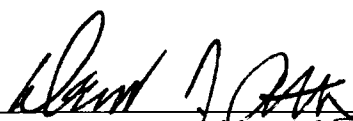
Major Advisor 
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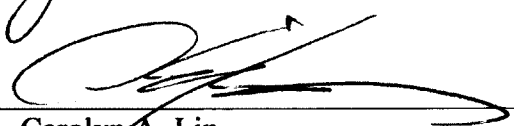
Associate Advisor 
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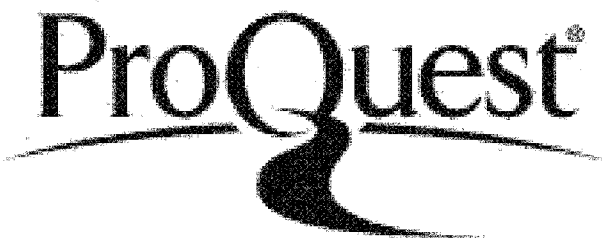

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that mass media exert some degree of influence on audience and society. Although critical scholars have alerted us to the hegemonic process in our mass media system (e.g., Gitlin, 1979), empirical research focuses primarily on media content, audience characteristics, and modality differences when analyzing media effects. Political communication scholars, for years, decried the impact of mass media on alienating citizens from meaningful civic engagement, especially among the younger generations (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Cappella & Jamieson, 1996). As Glynn, Huge, and Lunney (2009) recount, citizens ages 18 to 29 remain at the lowest level of reported voting among eligible voters. In the meantime, new information and communication technologies (ICTs) erode the audience pool of traditional broadcast and print media. The big-three's prime-time decline is positively related to the penetration of cable and multiple video programming distribution sources (Hindman & Wiegand, 2008). What is worrisome to researchers is that younger voters treat non-traditional media such as political comedy and late night talk shows as their primary sources of public affairs information (Holbert, 2005). Scholars argue that American participatory democracy hinges upon a shared public discourse sustained by traditional print and broadcast media (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). New media such as the Internet may segment public discourse, and therefore threaten the correlation function of traditional media.

Considering the fact that the rise of new media precedes decreasing civic activities, it is not surprising for scholars to blame new media as the culprit for

disaffecting younger citizens politically. However, precedence does not necessarily imply causality. The content is just as, if not more than, important as the medium. Recent meta-analysis shows that the Internet has a mild positive impact on citizens' political knowledge (Boulianne, 2009). For instance, Hariman (2007) argues that viewers need to have a certain amount of background information in order to understand the satire in *the Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (abbreviated as "DS" thereafter). In short, there is evidence that the influence of new media is not all detrimental.

Concerns over the impact of negative political advertising remain applicable to the larger debate over "media malaise." The attack ads on the Internet are not fundamentally different from attack ads on television. What set them apart are the Internet's unique capabilities to repackage and deliver the content to audience. The Internet affords greater interactivity such that viewers can interact with other online viewers in ways similar to how audiences would interact in a town hall meeting. Under this context, it becomes particularly meaningful to ask how viewers react to the content on new media aside from what they have experienced. Collapsing across traditional and new media outlets, researchers need to take into account the time spent with a medium, the content, and particularly the reaction to the content when examining the impact of news media.

News media use has consistently been found to positively influence political knowledge. Although intuitive logic suggests that viewers gain more information after watching more news, it is theoretically important to know what information viewers gain and how the information adds to their public affairs knowledge. In addition to political knowledge, political communication scholars are concerned with how information can

translate into political participation. A body of research has investigated how political knowledge can be affected by communication behaviors, cognitive antecedents, and environmental factors. But researchers have not paid equal attention to voting confidence and likelihood, which theoretically are more important than knowledge itself. One of the reasons that voting behavior and intentions are less studied is that voting is more difficult to explain, because the link between knowledge and behavior is often mediated by other cognitive processes (e.g., Tan, 1980). Nevertheless, it is imperative that communication scholars look beyond pure knowledge measures and pay more attention to voting intentions.

Literature on comparative political communication is lacking, which can limit the generalizability of existing findings. It is therefore important that empirical findings be replicated in different cultures or societies to identify potential contingent conditions. Against this backdrop, this study examines the impact of news media, both traditional and digital, on various forms of political participation in China. The literature on political participation suggests that social capital, political interest, and socio-economic status are found to affect the level of political participation. More importantly, variance in these factors at higher levels (e.g., neighborhood, community, city, state) can significantly influence political participation (e.g., Kang & Kwak, 2003; Paek, Yoon, & Shah, 2006). As such, this study also examines how differences in social capital, political interest, and socio-economic status at the individual and higher level can influence political participation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Political Participation

In their seminal work, Verba, Nie, and Kim (1971) define political participation as "the means by which the interests, desires and demands of the ordinary citizen are communicated ... all those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the decisions that they make" (p. 9). More recently, Verba et al. (1995) define political participation as "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing governmental action-either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (p. 38). This definition contrasts with the psychological approach to measuring political participation, where political participation is gauged by the intentions or motivations to be politically involved (Pinkleton, 1999; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001; Zaichowsky, 1996).

It is also necessary to distinguish civic participation from political participation. According to Zhang and Chia (2006), civic participation addresses community concerns through nongovernmental or non-electoral means, such as volunteering for building a homeless shelter or working on a community project. Political participation, on the other hand, concerns activities that attempt to directly or indirectly influence politicians and the political process. Civic participation, to many, is considered important to political participation such that strong civic associations provide a solid foundation for political engagement (Putnam, 2000; Zhang & Chia, 2006).

2.1 News Media

While earlier research was more skeptical, modern political science scholarship generally suggests that the news media play a central role in democratic governance by, among other things, shaping public opinion and electoral preferences (Cohen, 2001). For instance, research on mediated political socialization suggests that news media are among the most important socializing agents (Atkin, 1981; Austin, 1993; Wilkin, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2009), and often serve as the first channel by which young citizens encounter politics (Chaffee & Frank, 1996; Chaffee & Yang, 1990; Eveland, McLeod, & Horowitz, 1998). The central debate in political communication boils down to the competing media malaise and media mobilization thesis (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Finkel & Geer, 1998; Goldstein & Freedman, 2002; Newton, 1999; Stromback & Shehata, 2010). The Internet complicates, to a great extent, the scholarly debate as its role as a news medium constantly evolves. Research on the role of the Internet in political communication has gained increasing momentum in recent years (Boyd et al., 2011; Dimitrova, Shehata, Stromback, & Nord, 2011; Hassid, 2012; Xiao, 2010; Yang, 2011)

From a source and receiver perspective, mediated political influences can be gauged along two dimensions: media sources and audiences. In terms of media sources, research has investigated the impact of macro-level differences such as socio-economic status, media market structure, education, and community structure (Althaus et al., 2009; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Gaziano, 1983; Hindman, 1996; Tichenor et al., 1970; Zukin & Snyder, 1984). Macro-level parameters are less often studied than micro-level differences in the literature. In fact, media effects research has been predominantly

individual-behavioristic (Pan & McLeod, 1991; Shen, 2009). In terms of audience studies, research has examined media use frequency (Becker & Dunwoody, 1982; Drew & Weaver, 1998, 2006; Feldman & Kawakami, 1991), attention to media (Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Pinkleton, 1999; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001), media reliance and dependence (Culbertson & Stempel, 1986; Becker & Whitney, 1982; Guo & Moy, 2008; Johnson & Kaye, 2004), need for cognition (Liu & Eveland, 2005; Schroeder, 2005), elaboration (Eveland, 2001), perceived utility (McLeod & Perse, 1994), and selective scanning (Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002).

Within media sources, research has examined the impact of both content and medium (Eveland, Seo, & Marton, 2002; Guo & Moy, 1998; Miller & Reese, 1982; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Patterson & McClure, 1976). As content is invariably tied with a medium, it is often hard to separate the two. The image versus issue debate represents earlier reasoning on the differences between television and newspaper processing (Chaffee & Frank, 1996; Guo & Moy, 1998; Miller & Reese, 1982), and continues to be utilized as a rationale for explicating the gap between television and newspaper effects. More recently, new media--including the Internet--are found to be different from traditional print and broadcast media along structural as well as topical dimensions (Eveland, Seo, & Marton, 2002; Tewksbury, 2003; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000). In that vein, it is necessary to gauge the potential impact of these differences. In fact, comparisons among different media outlets represent one of the recurring themes in the political communication literature (Drew & Weaver, 2006; Martinelli & Chaffee, 1995; Miller & Reese, 1982; Newton, 1999; Zhao & Chaffee, 1995).

2.2.1 Traditional Media

Patterson and McClure (1976) maintain that there is an effects gap between television and newspaper, and citizens learn public affairs. This gap does not come from televised news but, surprisingly, from televised entertainment. They conclude that television does not inform voters while newspaper does. By contrast, it is rare to find a study in which newspaper is not a significant predictor of political knowledge (Chaffee & McLeod, 1996; Hoffman & Appiah, 2008; McLeod, Shah, Hess, & Lee, 2009; Newton, 1999). Although an extreme proposition that television news has an inhibiting effect on political information sounds counterintuitive and theoretically implausible, the television and newspaper hiatus may result from differences in content, time constraints on television, and audience characteristics (Eveland, 2003; Miller & Reese, 1982; Newton, 1999). Eveland (2003) suggests that television is high in audio and visual attributes but low in textuality, whereas print media lack an audio component but are high in textuality and user control. As such, the video-centric television news is more likely to be visually interesting but not substantively significant (Miller & Reese, 1982).

In terms of time constraints, television news is considered as a headline service such that it is less likely to offer in-depth analysis and detailed background information (Tuchman, 1978). In addition, television is temporal, while newspapers can be reread at audience's convenience (Miller & Reese, 1982). Although recent recording technologies such as TiVo afford viewers greater control, television news is designed for fast consumption. Finally, the gap between television and newspaper may be due to the fact that television and newspaper audiences are fundamentally different. Individuals who rely on broadcast media are less informed than those who rely on the print media as their

primary information source (e.g., Patterson & McClure, 1976; Wade & Schramm, 1969). The audio-visual nature of television lends itself better to dramatization than does the newspaper. Recent observations (Coe et al., 2008; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009) that dramatization contributes to the popularity of partisan cable news perhaps provide further clues as to why the gap exists.

The learning gap between television and newspaper might be a function of measurement artifacts and variation in audience responses (Chaffee & Kannihan, 1997; Miller & Reese, 1982). One of the methodological problems in media effects research has been the inconsistency in measuring media exposure or "use" (Eveland, Hively, & Shen, 2010; Slater, 2004). Regardless, evidence continues to suggest that traditional media will remain important information sources for public affairs in the years to come (Boulianne, 2011;Wring & Ward, 2010).

2.2.2 New Media

Another prominent thread in the field of political communication is the comparison between traditional and "new" media. In the meantime, researchers grapple with how to define new media. Holbert (2005) provides a typology for studying entertainment news based on the degree and explicitness of political content. The nine types of entertainment television news are entertainment talk show interviews with politicians, fictional political dramas, traditional satire, soft news, political docudrama, situational comedies, entertainment television events, reality TV, and life world content. Soft news, according to Baum (2003), is different from hard news in degree rather than kind. Soft news is typically more sensational, more personality-centered, less time-

bound, more practical, and more incident-based than other news (Prior, 2003). Soft news is essentially more entertainment-focused and less objective than hard news. Research in general suggests a leveling effect of soft news on learning such that politically disengaged audiences could learn from exposure to soft news. For instance, Baum (2002) found that soft news contributes to the attention of politically inactive citizens, resulting in a reduction in the disparity of attentiveness to public affairs.

Prior (2003) found that preference for entertainment predicted exposure to soft news and had a weak but positive impact on political knowledge. Traditional satire, particularly *DS,* has attracted sizable academic attention (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Baym, 2005; Hariman, 2007). Similar to soft news, research suggests that *DS* serves a gateway to more serious information seeking by raising awareness to public affairs (Hollander, 2005; Prior, 2003; Xenos & Becker, 2009). In particular, the less politically interested viewer benefits from political satire through increased attentiveness and awareness, which in turn is favorable to information acquisition. Interestingly, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) found that *DS* enhances viewers' confidence in their abilities to understand politics while driving up their cynicism toward politics, thus casting doubt on the so-called *the Daily Show effect.*

Scholars caution that old theoretical models may not apply to new media environment and as a result more theorizing is needed to avoid the lag between theory and reality (e.g., Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Chaffee & Metzger, 2001). As a narrowcasting technology, the Internet, allows user control over the production as well as the exposure of the content (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001). Negroponte's (1995) conception of "Daily Me" provides a stark demarcation between online and traditional news media.

The technical features of the Internet such as the hyperlink and the menu structures have led researchers to hypothesize that online news is more likely to influence an individual's knowledge structure than their factual knowledge (Eveland, Seo, & Marton, 2002). Technical novelties within the Internet may influence cognition or behavior in ways different from traditional media. For instance, selective scanning is more frequent on the Internet than on traditional media (Eveland & Dunwoody, 2002). Tewksbury (2000) suggests that the Internet is more often used for entertainment news rather than public affairs information. People who attend to public affairs online tend to be those who are also attentive to public affairs on traditional media (Tewksbury & Althaus, 2003). In that vein, the Internet–as an extension of traditional media–is more likely to widen rather than narrow the gap between the less-informed and the better-informed (Schonbach et al., 2005).

The danger with a comparative approach is that one medium is often pitted against another medium such that they are immiscible. Baum (2003) suggests that the distinction between hard and soft news is one of degree rather than kind. Chaffee and Frank (1996, 1997) argue that the television and newspaper often complement each other in that newspaper is often the primary information source for politically engaged citizens, while television news serves to raise the awareness of the politically inactive.

As such, the television is considered as the "bridging medium" connecting two segments of the population. Similarly, although online news is not primarily used for public affairs, involved individuals are more likely to go online for political topics after exposed to traditional media (Tewksbury, 2000; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2003). In other

words, online news supplements rather than supplants traditional broadcast and print media.

Users have been shown to access functionally similar media amongst a multimedia environment, (Atkin, 1993; Reagan et al., 1996). Reagan and his colleagues (1996) found that the audience accesses separate repertoires of media and technological sources for different topics. If citizens use a set of media sources for information seeking, it is enlightening to know how different media are clustered together. Holbert (2005) found that there is intramedia mediation, such that a cumulative and complementary relationship exists among uses of various media outlets. Mediation dynamics, together with direct effects, provide a stronger explanation of outcome variables. Researchers have also demonstrated that different media interact with each other, which results in a multiplicative effect on political outcomes (Shen & Eveland, 2010; Tewksbury, 2003). In a word, one type of media use can influence another and the complementary relationships can influence political communication processes.

2.3 Mediated Political Outcomes

Political knowledge is undoubtedly one of the most studied outcome variables in political communication and political science literatures (Hively & Eveland, 2009). The reason that political attitudes and behaviors are less often used as outcome variables is that political behavior is more difficult to predict and often the relationship between media exposure and political behavior is mediated by other cognitive and affective variables (Chaffee & Kannihan, 1997; Tan, 1980). However, as Tan (1980) pointed out, political participation, particularly voting, should be the ultimate concern of political

communication researchers. As such, it is necessary to move beyond political knowledge and connect media use with voting behavior and intentions (e.g., Fu & Mou, 2010).

2.3.1 News Media and Political Participation

In general, mass media influence audiences cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally (Atkin, 1983; Eveland, McLeod, & Horowitz, 1998; Hoffman & Appiah, 2008; Tan, 1980). Recent evidence continues to show that news media have a considerable effect on political participation (Boyd et al., 2011; Hendricks & Denton, 2010; Himbelboim, Lariscy, Tinkham, & Sweetser, 2012; Papacharissi, 2002; Stanley & Weare, 2004). Newton (1999) found that both newspaper and television have positive impacts on political participation while tabloid news has no impact on political outcomes. Based on a multi-national survey, Stromback and Shehata (2010) found no support for the media malaise hypothesis. They instead found substantial support for the media mobilization hypothesis, that is, news media play a positive role in involving the public into the political process. Similarly, Zhang and Chia (2006) found that both television and newspaper impact positively on political participation, while the Internet does not.

It is important to know what kind of impact the news media have on the Internet. A more important question to ask is how the news media influence the political process. One of the fundamental arguments is that news media inform the public (Drew & Weaver, 2006; Newton, 1999). An informed public is critical to the effective functioning of a vibrant democracy (Barber, 1984; Dahl, 1979; Putnam, 2000). Implicit in this argument is the assumption that citizens are informed about politics such that they could participate meaningfully in the political process (Levendusky & Jackman, 2003; McChesney, 2004). An informed citizenry is the basis for a strong democracy (Barber,

1984), because they are more likely be able to guard against manipulation while holding politicians accountable. Delli-Carpini and Keeter (1996) argue that citizens need a basic amount of public affairs knowledge to be "good" citizens. In that sense, being informed about and involved in politics helps comprise the normative duties for citizens in a representative democracy.

Shah et al. (2009) suggest that communicative activities underpin civic competence because viewers are able to form arguments and develop complex understanding of political ideas in the communication process. News media are an indispensable part of this communication process. Another important avenue through which news media could influence politics is through its influence on psychological processes. For instance, Hoffman and Thomson (2009) found that the impact of local television news viewing on civic participation is mediated through political efficacy. Sotirovic and McLeod (2001) found that newspaper reading mediates the positive impact of post-materialistic values on political participation. Boulianne (2011) maintains that online and print news stimulates political interest, which in turn spurs political participation. Himelboim et al. (2012) found that generalized trust (trust toward people with weak social ties) is a major predictor of using social media to interact with others about politics. Similarly, Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly (2001) found that personal-psychological variables such as efficacy and involvement are antecedents to political participation. All in all, research consistently shows that news media could influence political participation through both cognitive and affective routes (Namkoong, Fung, Scheufele, 2012).

2.3.2 News Media and Voting

Voting is one of the most important forms of formal political participation. Because of its importance, voting is often being discussed separately from other forms of political participation. Personal characteristics, attitudinal variables, social norms and other factors are identified to impact actual voting (e.g., Leong, Tan, & Wong, 1989; Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987; Sigel, 1964). Voting intentions have often been used a surrogate for actual voting behavior. According to the theory of reasoned action, intention plays a critical role in mediating the effect of attitudinal variables on actual behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Hence, voting intentions function as a crucial predictor in electoral forecasting. Different from and related to voting behavior, voting intention has been conceptualized as "the strength of the association between the memory representation of the voting options and the representation of a pre-election choice among these options" (Bassili, 1995, p. 688). The stronger the association, the more likely the voting behavior will be.

Earlier studies focus on the effects of candidates' characteristics and attributes. In their 1972 U.S. presidential election study, Brigham and Severy (1976) found that racial attitude and candidate evaluation directly predict voting. Debate performance was also found to be significantly related to voting intentions (Davis, 1982). More recent studies have established the relationship between voting intentions and the partisan information of a candidate (e.g., Schaffner & Streb, 2002). Additionally, Social imagery of the candidate, political issues, candidate personality or morality, party affiliation, and party traits and morality, have been linked with voting intentions (Ben-Ur & Newman, 2002; Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987; Sigel, 1964).

The decreased voting turnout in the U.S. presidential elections over the past decades prompts scholars to investigate the impact of political campaigns on voting behavior. Driven by a communication perspective, some researchers blame negative political advertising (e.g., Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, & Simon, 1999). For instance, Ansolabehere and his colleagues found that exposure to negative advertisements reduced voting intentions by five percent (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994). Similarly, Faber, Tims and Schmitt (1993) found that negative political advertising has considerable impact on voting intents in senatorial race in Minnesota. However, the link between attack ads and voting behavior is not always consistent. Garramone, Atkin, Pinkleton, and Cole (1990) found that negative political advertising does not suppress voting likelihood. In fact, the participants exposed to negative candidate ads in TV news programs are more likely to vote than those exposed to either situation comedies or dramas (Kaid, Chanslor, & Hovind, 1992). Pinkleton, Austin, and Fortman (1998) found that media use positively predicts voting likelihood.

Although the literature is equivocal in terms of the nature of relationship, the literature, taken together, suggests that news media is generally associated with voting behavior and intentions. Recently, Hoffman and Oppiah (2008) found that reading the newspaper and time spent using the Internet are each positively related to both voting and civic engagement. However, television viewing is negatively related to voting and civic engagement (e.g., Putnam, 2000). With regard to newspaper reading, the finding is consistent with previous studies that show a positive link between civic and political participation with newspaper reading (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001).

On the other hand, the results are conflicting when it comes to the impact of general frequencies of television viewing. For instance, general television viewing has shown a significant but weaker negative relationship with civic and political participation (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Jeffres, Jian, Neuendorf, & Bracken, 2004). To the contrary, television viewing has been found to be positively related to civic participation.

In particular, research consistently shows that informational use of mass media such as watching public affairs news on television and browsing the Web for news is positively related to political and civic participation (Boyd et al., 2011; Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007; Pasek, Kensiki, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006; Zhang & Chia, 2006). It is argued that the modality matters less to the politically engaged because they will access political information through whatever available platforms such as the social media (Himelboim et al., 2012), news sites (Boulianne, 2011), blogs (Zuniga et al., 2010), and online forums (Stanley & Weare, 2004).

2.3.3 News Media and Political Participation in China

Branaman (2009) suggests that news media in China, a transitioning system with a capitalist base, contain all of the essential elements of a Western-style media system. Sparks (2008) argues that the media system in China resembles that of former Soviet Union nations in that it represents an elite continuity model where the elite wants to restructure itself as legitimate owners of the private capital. The news media system in China is essentially a hybrid of capitalist and authoritarian components where the news media enjoy as much as freedom as their Western counterpart on non-political issues

while enjoy limited or zero freedom on issues that are deemed political or even sensitive in nature (Xiao, 2010).

Earlier research shows that traditional news media have a negative impact on people's attitudes toward the government (Chen & Shi, 2001). People tend to discredit official information sources, as they are considered non-credible. It is possible that such a relationship is spurious because deep-seated distrust toward the political system causes both media use and attitudes toward the government. The literature is severely lacking when it comes to traditional news media and political participation in China. The field of political communication in China is only getting started after all. Research overall seems to highlight the importance of non-media factors such as SES, personal characteristics, motivations in political participation (Huang & Chen, 2009; Tong, 2003; Tang, 1993). Nevertheless, sparse evidence suggests that attention to traditional media as information sources plays a positive role in political participation (Jennings, 1997).

Despite the government's notorious efforts to censor information on the Web, its decentralized, borderless, and interactive nature has made censoring increasingly difficult (Yuan, 2010). The Internet, overall, has weakened the information control (Tang, 2009). The new media empower China's "netizens" by diminishing the state's ability to set public agenda (Esarey & Xiao, 2011). Hassid (2012) suggests that blogs are serving both as a safety valve and pressure cooker in the Chinese political life. Blogs serve as a safety value on issues where the government feels comfortable managing and less often as a pressure cooker on issues where the government does not feel comfortable managing.

Researchers overall are much more sanguine about the impact of the Internet on the political scenery in China (Xiao, 2010; Yang, 2011). Xiao (2010) argues that digital

or Internet popular opinion as a new phenomenon is setting agenda for public discourse. Recent incidents such as Xiamen chemical plant demonstration and slave labor at brick kilns in a remote province are all first leaked to the Internet, and only to be carried unwillingly later by the mainstream media (Xiao, 2010). Yang (2003) suggests that the Internet energizes civil society and is slowly transforming the tone of political discourse. Research also shows that political discourse is an important component of online discourse (Xu, 2012). In fact, the Internet has created a popular form of political discourse characterized by political satire and spoofing (Esarey & Xisao, 2011).

Research suggests that Internet users are different from non-users. For instance, Internet users are overall more opinionated and more supportive of the norms of democracy, more critical of the party-state, and more active participants in collection action (Xu, 2012). Political bloggers are more sophisticated than non-bloggers (Esarey & Xiao, 2011). Empirical evidence confirms that the Internet is serving the role of news, media where it informs the public and provides a public space for political discussion. Furthermore, it impacts directly on politics by fostering political sophistication and galvanizing political participation (Lei, 2011; Xiao, 2010; Zeng, 2009). For instance, local government officials are forced to resign due to the criticism raised through the Internet (Zeng, 2009).

Extant evidence overall suggests that informational use of news media including the Internet plays an increasingly positive role in informing the public and fostering political participation. Examples abound in showing that the Internet rallies the public to defend their own rights, criticize crooked officials, and mock the status quo. Considering the evidence purveyed, hypotheses are posited as follows:

H1a: Attention to the news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet will be positively associated with voting in urban China.

H1b: Attention to the news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet will be positively associated with voting in rural China.

H2a: Attention to the news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet will be positively associated with informal political participation in urban China.

H2b: Attention to the news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet will be positively associated with informal political participation in rural China.

H3a: General frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to voting in urban China.

H3b: General frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to voting in rural China.

H3c: General frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to political participation in urban China.

H3d: General frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to political participation in urban China.

Extant evidence is conflicting with regards to the relationship between general frequency measures of television and the Internet and political participation, which is particularly true in research on Chinese politics. Given the paucity of solid evidence in the Chinese context, research questions therefore are raised to probe the relationship.

RQ1a: What is the relationship between general frequency of TV and Internet use and voting in urban China?

RQ1b: What is the relationship between general frequency of TV and Internet use and voting in rural China?

RQ2a: What is the relationship between general frequency of TV and Internet use and political participation in urban China?

RQ2b: What is the relationship between general frequency of TV and Internet use and political participation in rural China?

2.4 Social Capital

Characteristic of the elusive nature of many social science concepts, social capital has strong intuitive appeal when elaborated broadly and vaguely. Social scientists can define social capital as they wish, but the controversies around the meaning of the concept ultimately can only be settled by sticking to consistent and precise measurements. Consistency in measurement will circumvent the chaos in conceptualization, helping to generalize the concept and its relationship with other related variables.

The concept of social capital has its theoretical origin in the work of French sociology, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1988, 1991). In Bourdieu's terms, social capital is but one of the three forms of capital, namely, economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital, that can be collectively understood as the set of usable **resources** and powers (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu is primarily concerned with economic capital and cultural capital, with social capital a distant third (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000). Social capital plays a distinct but subordinate role to economic capital because economic capital is at the root of class relations (Bourdieu, 1991).

James Coleman is credited with providing an explicit definition of social capital (Coleman, 1988). To Coleman, social capital represents "a particular kind of resource available to an actor, comprising a variety of entities which contained two elements: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure" (Coleman, 1988, p. 98). Further, Coleman refined the definition as "the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person" (Coleman, 1994, p. 300). In this sense, social capital is relationship-based resources that can be used to further personal growth. More specifically, Coleman (1994) suggests that the resources endowed by social capital might be shaped by the level of trustworthiness, the actual needs, the degree of affluence, cultural differences, the degree of closure of social networks, and among others.

Social capital, in Colemanian terms, is created within a closely-knit circle of relationships through an unintentional process. First, social capital arises precisely from activities that are intended for other purposes (Coleman, 1994). Second, Coleman focuses on the dense ties such as kinship, family, and friends. Coleman's definition contrasts with many other theorists where social capital represents an active process where investment in relationships is expected to produce a return (Lin, 2001; Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital has also been defined as resources embedded in social networks (Lin, 2007). According to Lin (2007), it may be measured operationally as the quantity or quality of actual and perceived resources embedded in one's networks. More precisely, Lin (2001) defines social capital as investment in social relations for expected

returns. Social relations are dictated by "the positions of the actors in the hierarchical or stratification structure and by their locations in social networks" (Lin, 2007, p. 3). Social capital, in this sense, showcases a dynamic production process where actors actively seek to obtain more social capital. As Lin (2007) suggests, the process underlying the production and returns of social capital can be summarized in the following terms:

> Investment in social relations produces social capital, which in turns generates expected returns. Within these structural constraints, actors make choices in the retention and reciprocal relations with certain others; these choices represent investments of each actor's time and efforts. Social capital, then, consists of resources embedded in such invested relations. Such capital is expected to generate returns. (Lin, 2007, p. 4).

Lin's elaboration captures the essence of the original definition of social capital by Bourdieu. That is, social capital, at its outset, is defined as an individual and family asset (Portes, 2000).

The concept of social capital, in its most popular form, is due to Robert Putnam. Putnam is primarily concerned with the general trend of decline in civic engagement in the U.S. and European countries (Putnam, 2000). Drawing upon the work of de Tocqueville, Putnam (2000) utilizes civic community, particularly vibrancy of civic life and newspaper readership, as exogenous variables to explain electoral turnout and preference voting. Putnam (1996) defines social capital as "features of social life–networks, norms, and trust–that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (p. 56). Networks, norms, and trust are a triad that serves as

the foundation of Putnam's thesis and a significant portion of conceptual discussion of social capital across many social science disciplines (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000).

To Putnam, participatory activity is central to the notion of civic life and therefore social capital (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000). In turn, enhanced social capital will make participatory activity more effective, which is important to achieving shared objectives. Evidently, Putnam's elaboration clearly broadens the conceptual scope of social capital as his definition hinges upon the communal activities to achieve "common good." According to Portes (2000), such an inclusive definition (individual and collective) deviates from its theoretical origin as ties around individuals or small groups, and is responsible for much of the confusion over the meaning of social capital.

2.5 Social Capital: Underlying Dimensions

Coleman (1988) set forth three dimensions of social capital: obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms. He put the relationship between obligations and expectations and social capital into the following terms:

> If A does something for B and trusts B to reciprocate in the future, this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B. This obligation can be conceived of as a credit slip held by A for performance by B (1988, p. s103).

Information channels refer to the idea of other people can be trusted as accurate information sources. Interpersonal communication thus becomes an important information channel for people who are not motivated to become acquainted with politics by themselves. This dimension differs from the first of these in that it necessitates a pre-existing level of trust between the parties involved. Social norms comprise the third type

of social capital, where the emphasis is placed on the trustworthiness of the social environment (Whitely, 2000). Coleman (1988) suggests that effective social norms are crucial because it makes it possible for us to "walk freely outside at night in a city and enable old persons to leave their houses without fear for their safety" (p. s104).

The trustworthiness of the social environment is deemed the most important factor because it is a very foundation of any cooperative endeavor. Without such an environment, trust cannot be cultivated and social networks cannot be established (Coleman, 1990). When provided with such an environment, social capital can be built upon a reciprocal relationship among trust, networks, and social norms.

2.5.1 Trust

Newton (2001) suggests that trust, as articulated in the theory of social capital, should not be considered a generalized personality trait but as an expression of how people evaluate the world around them. That is, trust represents the collective culture rather than individual orientations. Such a distinction brings home the central debate regarding whether Putnam-based social capital is conceptually divergent from its original conceptions (Jackman & Miller, 1998; Portes, 1998, 2000; Schyns & Koop, 2010). Further, there is a sharp distinction between social trust and political trust (Newton, 2001; Sachyns & Koop, 2010). Social trust is often found to be related to a set of social categories such as income, education, employment status, and so on. Political trust, on the other hand, is frequently found to be associated with a set of political variables such as political interest, belief in democratic ideals, and political involvement (Newton, 2001).

Kim (2005) found that political trust and social trust are negatively related and their relationship is mediated by perceptions of institutional performance such as corruption and accountability. The central argument is that political participation is directly related to political attitudes such as political efficacy and political trust, which is further dependent upon perceptions of government performance. Social trust, as articulated in the theory of social capital, is not a direct correlate of political participation but of perceptions of institutional performance. Studying the effects of political distrust on social capital in several European countries, Schyns and Koop (2010) found that political distrust negatively impacts on interpersonal or social trust. That is, the less people trust politicians, the less they trust other people in general. This conflicting conclusion on the relationship social and political trust could be due to different political dynamics in America and Europe (Newton, 1999).

2.5.2 Norms of reciprocity

Schuller, Baron, and Field (2000) argue that trust is at the core of Putnam's theorizing of social capital, in particular, trust facilitates the establishment of norms of reciprocity. These norms of reciprocity can be obtained by socialization mechanisms and sanctions (Sachyns & Koop, 2010). Actors make choices in the retention and reciprocal relations with certain others; these choices represent investments of each actor's time and efforts (Lin, 2007). In this sense, reciprocity might be forged by expected return of investments in social relations. Luo (2011) suggests that social trust prompts the formation of horizontal networks and norms of reciprocity; norms of reciprocity, in turn, enhance trust and horizontal networks.

In Putnam's theorising, social capital is considered within the framework of civic associations and political participation. Norms of reciprocity are treated as a related but distinct construct from trust, because norms are critical to formal and informal civic engagement. Norms of reciprocity, to some, are not as essential to the theory of social capital as trust. In fact, trust and norms of reciprocity therefore can be merged without the loss of generality. It is possible that trust and norms of reciprocity represent two related aspects of relational capital (Castiglione, 2007; Paxton, 1999). Relational capital can be considered as an actor's personal resources on which he or she can draw as a result of direct or indirect relations with other actors (Castiglione, 2007).

2.5.3 Social Networks

The majority of empirical research agrees that there are at least two dimensions to the concept of social capital (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Castiglione, 2007; Coleman, 1990; Hall, 1999; Halpen, 2005; Ikeda & Richey, 2005; Krishna, 2002; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Putnam, Leonardi, & Newton, 1997; Uslaner, 1999; Saxton & Benson, 2005). Social networks comprise another important dimension of social capital. Zhang and Chia (2006) suggest that social connectedness and trust are related but distinct constructs. Paxton (1999) distinguishes objective associations from subjective ties in conceptualizing social capital. The objective associations, or social networks, refer to one's formal and informal associations with other actors or organizations. The subjective ties refer to trust and reciprocal norms in those associations (Chen & Lu, 2007).

While trust and norms of reciprocity tap into the intensity, social networks gauge the density of one's associations. It is an "objective" measure because it can be

accurately quantified by the number of associations, whereas trust and norms are "subjective" perceptions. Social networks can be considered at both the individual and collective level. Individually, the size of one's social networks denotes the potential or latent resources available to him or her at a given time (Lin, 2007; Zhang & Chia, 2006). At the collective level, social networks represent the strength of associations within an organization or community (Putnam, 2000). Castiglione (2007) argues that social networks at the collective level indicate characteristics of the entire relation system, which goes beyond the relationships of single actors and includes aspects of a 'collective' attitude towards the social system as a whole. At this level, social networks present an apt measure of social solidarity, a sociological concept that lies at the heart of Putnam's thesis.

In sum, the bulk of social capital literature suggests that social capital is composed of three interconnected components: trust, norms of reciprocity, and social networks (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Castiglione, 2007; Coleman, 1990; Hall, 1999; Halpen, 2005; Ikeda & Richey, 2005; Luo, 2011; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Kahn, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006; Kim, 2005; Lin & Si, 2010; Schyns & Koop, 2010; Skoric, Ying, & Ng, 2009; Zhang & Chia, 2006; Xu, 2007). The three components can enhance each other such that trust can facilitate the formation of norms of reciprocity and the establishment of social networks, and norms of reciprocity and social networks are conducive to the spread of trust.

2.6 Social Capital and Political Participation

Norris (2002) suggests that the distinguishing feature of social capital theory is

that it projects political consequences from non-political social interactions compared to the most pluralist theories. Importantly, social capital theory encompasses a wide array of non-political activities such as ties with family and relatives, community involvement, religious activities, and leisure clubs (Kim, 2005; Putnam, 2000). The theory's broad coverage explains its immense popularity as it has been used to predict a host of seemingly unrelated variables in public health (Chen et al., 2011), political science (Kim, 2005; Nelson & Paxton, 2010; Newton, 2001; Paxton, 2002), sociology (Bourdieu, 1988; Coleman, 1990), communication (Norris, 1996; Paek, Yoon, & Shah, 2005; Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004; Romer, Jamieson, & Pasek, 2009; Uslaner, 1999), and economics (Gu, Hung, & Tse, 2008; Karlan, 2005; Knight & Yueh, 2002; Whiteley, 2000).

One of the most contested arguments of Putnam's thesis is that non-political associations are assumed to provide civic skills and serve as the foundation for political engagement (Hay, 2007; Kim, 2005; Norris, 2002). Empirical evidence seems to support that non-political activities have political implications (Putnam, 2000; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012; Zhang & Chia, 2006). Portes (2000) argues that such a relationship could very well be spurious and could be explained by external variables such as education level, income level, past democratizing struggle, political interest, and so on. In particular, Portes maintains that political interest might account for higher exposure to news media, higher social capital and its residual benefits, as literature in communication and political science frequently links news media exposure with social capital. Measuring social capital by community attachment, community activities, organizational ties, and community assessment, Jeffres, Lee, Neuendorf, and Atkin (2007) found that

both values and reading the newspaper predict community social capital. They argue that reading the newspaper and having political discussion adds to audience backgrounds and values.

In contrast to newspapers, research indicates that excessive consumption of television news could sap trust and social capital (Jeffres et al., 2007; Putnam, 2000; Romer, Jamieson, & Pasek, 2009). Different from newspaper reading, Romer et al. (2009)found that heavy consumption of television negatively impacts social capital. It is argued that television represents a medium that places low cognitive demand on the youth and heavy consumption suppresses meaningful cognitive deliberation. On other hand, newspaper reading, along with books,and informational use of the Internet, requires more cognitive resources, thereby providing a catalyst for political engagement.

Social capital is believed to mobilize alienated citizens and lubricate the political machinery in society. Social capital theorists conclude that social capital is a necessary condition of social integration, economic efficiency, and democratic stability (Arrow, 1972: 357; Coleman, 1988: 306; Ostrom, 1990; Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000). As Putnam (1995) pointed out, the decline in "social capital" leads to the decline in civic engagement. Social capital is related to but different from political participation because political participation refers to our relations with political institutions while social capital denotes our relations with one another (Putnam, 1995, 2000). Putnam sees social capital as the basis for civic engagement. As such, the theory of social capital suggests that the more we connect, the more trust each other. Ultimately, a cohesive and trusting community should have high levels of civic participation.

Although social capital seems to explain many aspects of civic life, it is unclear as to the mechanism by which social capital impacts civic life. As mentioned earlier, social capital encompasses a broad array of civic and non-civic activities. Take church attendance, for instance. Brown, McKenzie, and Taylor (2003) argue that attending church and participating in church activities develops civic skills such as retreats and choir, and serving on church committees enhances individuals' civic skills, civic duty and motivates political involvement. In a similar vein, Hoffman and Oppiah (2008) suggest that Black congregations provide churchgoers with communication networks that can be used to coordinate social and political activities, from which churchgoers obtain the organizational skills, coupled with political communication, may facilitate political involvement.

Communication scholarship considers interpersonal discussion at least as important as other media variables in shaping political outcomes (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Jeffres, 2007; Kwak, Williams, Wang, & Lee, 2005). Increased interpersonal communication derived from enhanced social capital can serve to increase the likelihood of civic and political participation. For instance, Zhang and Chia (2006) found that social connectedness (a surrogate measure of social networks) shows a consistent positive relationship with civic and political participation. They suggest that casual conversation and informal socializing, political or non-political, are no trivial matter because they represent "networks of recruitment" that can create more opportunity for deeper civic and political involvement. Further, political discussion provides a catalyst for deliberation and critical thinking (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009), which enhances the likelihood of informational use of media sources when the interests of discussant are triggered.

In addition to the provision of potential knowledge and experience, social capital could facilitate political participation via influencing political attitude and motivation (Neilson & Paxton, 2010). Norms of reciprocity provide a potent environment for motivating members to participate in civic activities because individuals risk stigmatization when making behavioral choices inconsistent with other members (Neilson & Paxton, 2010). Additionally, trust is important to motivating members to participate in civic and political activities. An overwhelmingly trusting majority is likely to curb cynicism at the individual level.

Although research suggests that social trust and political trust are separate entities (Newton, 2001; Kim, 2005), social trust at both the collective and individual level cannot be divorced from the political process. Social trust may influence political participation indirectly through a direct impact on attitudes toward media and political institutions (Kim, 2005; Mou, Atkin, & Fu, 2011). Despite that the causes of the decline of social capital are heavily contested, Putnam's assertions and evidence concerning the positive role of social capital have generally been well accepted (Zhang & Chia, 2006). Taken together, literature suggests that social capital has a positive impact on political participation (Hoffman & Oppiah, 2008; Kahn et al., 2006; Kang & Kwak, 2003; Romer et al., 2009; Paxton, 2002; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Smith, 1999; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012; Zhang & Chia, 2006). High levels of social capital indicate a trusting electorate that is usually civically active, and they are more likely to share information and participate in political activities as a result.

2.7 Social Capital and Political Participation in China

Despite literature suggests that the basic positive relationship between social capital and civic participation is applicable to China (Chen & Lu, 2007; Jennings, 1997), the Chinese society harbors unique features that forbid direct transplant of a predominantly Western theoretical framework (Lin, 2007; Xia, 2011).

Guanxi (literally "relationship") has been described as a distinguishing feature of social capital in Chinese society (Gu, Fung, & Tse, 2008; Knight & Yueh, 200; Lin, 2007). At its core, *guanxi* refers to personalized relationships or connections with important people (Gu, Fung, & Tse, 2008). *Guanxi* is a governance structure resulting from the lack of other balancing institutions and governance mechanisms in China. Additionally, *guanxi* is also corporate resource and capital because ties with key decision makers enable firms to bypass institutional hurdles (Gu, Fung, & Tse, 2008) and thus can be employed to enhance firm competitive advantage and performance (Barney, 1991). Lin & Si (2010) suggest that *guanxi* approximates the structural dimension of social capital–social networks –because *guanxi* is not necessarily always forged by trust and reciprocity but by other mechanisms such as bribery. Measuring *guanxi* by the size of social network and communist party membership, Knight and Yueh (2002) argue that *guanxi* is a variant of social capital, and found that it has a positive impact on income.

According to Lin and Si (2010), the Chinese society is characterized by dense strong ties and sparse weak ties. In other words, people tend to rely heavily on their close relations from family or kinship rather than on weak ties in their social and business lives (Xia, 2011). The boundaries between personal and social ties are often ambiguous. As a case in point, scientific research in China is normally done within closely-knitted groups of researchers who maintain consensus, harmony and high deference to authority and

senior personnel. The peer-review system plays a much weaker role in empirical scholarship. The same can be said of many other walks of life.

Research on social capital in China suggests that there is a clear distinction between rural and urban China, reflecting dual-society economics where rural and urban China are sharply different in social and economic life (Chen & Lu, 2007; Knight & Yueh, 2002; Lin, 2007; Lin & Si, 2010; Xia, 2011; Xu, 2007; Xu, Perkins, & Chow, 2010; Yan & Gao, 2007). For instance, Lin (2007) found that gender, education and work experience are all significant correlates of general social capital in urban China. In particular, residing in the metropolitan cities contributes to the variations in social capital because a diverse environment offers more choices and more opportunities to enhance one's social capital (Lin, 2007). In turn, social capital impacts on the attainment process such as becoming an executive or professional, having supervisory responsibility, or having higher earnings.

Before we discuss the relationship between social capital and political participation, we need to make it clear what constitute political participation in the Chinese context because civic and political participation, after all, takes different forms in an authoritarian political system.

2.7.1 Civic and Political Participation in Urban China

Community participation in China originates from the Chinese tradition of neighborhood mutual help, and historically has rarely involved political decision-making (Xu et al., 2010). Before the economic reform in 1978, the employment unit (*danwei*) represents the basic unit of community in a centralized political system in urban China

(Shi, 2008). Under the socialist governing scheme, employment units provide education, health care and welfare programs to their employees (Yan & Gao, 2007). After the economic reform, many state-owned enterprises as basic employment units disintegrated, along with government-sanctioned organizations. Marketization and urbanization under the reform have created strong incentives to foster contractual relationship among fellow citizens, providing a fertile ground for voluntary and information mass organizations (Chen & Lu, 2007). Different from the pre-reform era, the concept of community in modern urban China is synonymous with a Western conception of community, where citizens join voluntary and informal organizations for shared objectives.

In urban China, community residents' committees (CRC) are popularly elected by law and serve to organize and lead community activities. CRCs are both grassroots organizations and a mandate basic unit in China's political hierarchy (Xu et al., 2011). CRCs carry out administrative tasks mandated by the government as well community care and service programs independently.

Research shows that social capital has steadily increased in contemporary urban China (Chen & Lu, 2007; Yang, 2004; Zhou, 2000), and increased social capital plays a positive role in the economic and social lives. Chen and Lu (2007) found that social capital positively impacts on faith in community residents' committees, democratic values, and political participation in an urban setting. In their study, political participation is measured by contacting members from community resident committees (CRCs) with regard to public affairs, political discussion, and petitioning CRC members. Xu et al. (2010) found that sense of community and neighboring are positively associated

with voting in both urban and rural China. However, only reciprocity among measures of social capital has a significant relationship with voting in urban China.

Based on a case study in Shanghai, a metropolis in Eastern China, Shi (2008) found that social capital is critical in building local resistance against erosion of power from the Communist government. Specifically, social capital built upon grassroots movements and horizontal networks between fellow citizens galvanizes community solidarity against their own interests.

3.4.2 Civic and Political Participation in Rural China

In rural China, villagers' committees (VC) are a counterpart to CRC in urban settings. Formal political engagement centers on activities organized by VCs such as voting, public deliberation and decision-making, while "informal" political participation takes the form of protest, petition, sit-ins, and sometimes violent revolt (Yu, 2007).

Jennings (1997) found that demographic variables, political attitudes, and perceived local problems are related to cooperative actions, voicing opinions to cadres, and contacting representatives in rural China. Jennings argues that (formal) political participation in rural China is similar, in many ways, to civic participation in democratic countries. The difference lies in the fact that party membership and occupational standing (with a second job) offer comparative advantage and more opportunities for political participation. Xia (2011) found that bridging social capital positively affects the governance performance of VCs while bonding social capital negatively impacts on the governance performance. Bonding social capital, based on dense strong ties within family and kinship, has a solid foundation in rural China. Based on weak social ties, bridging social capital is at its early stage in rural China. Overall, social capital, in its

various forms, is important to the effective self-government in rural China (Tsai, 2007; Xia, 2001; Xiao, 2010).

Empirical evidence from rural China suggests that bonding social capital's impact on local politics is more pronounced than bridging social capital (Xiao, 2010). Selection of candidates is often determined by kinship or clan membership rather than political performance (Wen & Jiang, 2004; Xiao, 2010), a nepotism tradition that is considered by many as the "dark" side of *guanxi* or social capital in the Chinese society (Gu, Fung, & Tse, 2008; Lin & Si, 2010).

Taken together, research on social capital and political participation in China indicates that social capital has a considerable influence on the political scenery in both urban and rural China (Jennings, 1997; Knight & Yueh, 2002; Lin, 2007; Luo, 2010; Shi, 2008; Wang & Zhong, 2011; Xu, 2007). Specifically, social capital impacts positively on the evaluation of local governance (Chen & Lu, 2007; Tsai, 2007; Wang & Zhong, 2011; Xia, 2011), voting (Xu et al., 2010), income and entrepreneurial success (Knight & Yeuh, 2002; Lin, 2007), democratic values (Chen & Lu, 2007), and civic activities (Xu, 2007). Additionally, research suggests that social capital is a multi-faceted concept with related but distinct dimensions and better be treated separately to avoid masking unique effects (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Schyns & Koop, 2010). Given the empirical evidence and theoretical framework considered, it seems reasonable to posit that social capital have a positive relationship with voting in villagers' committee (rural China) and residents' committee (urban China), and forms of informal political participation such as protest, petition and contacting officials.

H4a: Social capital measures will be positively associated with voting in urban China.

H4b: Social capital measures will be positively associated with political participation in urban China.

H4c: Social capital measures will be positively associated with voting in rural China

H4d: social capital measures will be positively associated with political participation in rural China.

2.8 Social Tensions and Conflicts

In a world of scarce resources and expanding populations, disagreements or conflicts are inevitable. Hindman (2008) conceptualized social conflict as a ubiquitous but intense form of social interaction that can have positive and negative implications for the groups involved. Social conflict is a product of the social environment but also serves as a mechanism to regulate the growth of society. In other words, "social conflicts lead to inner adjustments of social systems or to the breakup of existing social orders and the emergence of a new set of social relations within a new social structure" (Coser, 1970, p. 18). As Dahrendorf (1959) once argued, conflict is not the only force for change in society, but is a fundamental and ubiquitous force behind the gradual forms of social change that characterize different societies.

Social conflict theory suggests that conflicts occur when disparate social groups clash over antagonistic interests (Yu, 2007). In an unjust system like China, the governed group develops a sense of relative deprivation and unfairness, resulting in a loss of political authority of the governing group (Yu, 2007). The news media, particularly the Internet, provide the public with information that was nevertheless unavailable to them before. As the masses become aware of the unequal distribution of limited resources,

they are more likely for them to rebel against the beneficiaries of the system. In particular, when these differences between disparate social groups become most stark during social and economic transition, raised awareness of citizenship and rights provides sources of conflict and political participation.

As an externalization of social conflict, social unrest has been on an exponential increase in recent years in China. The number of "mass incidents" (over one hundred people) has surged from 8,700 in 1993, to approximately 10,000 in 1994, 32,000 in 1999, 58,000 in 2003, and 74,000 in 2004 (Li & O' Brien, 2008; Shirk, 2007). Ethnic unrest is manifested as the conflict between the Han ethnic majority and the Uyghur and Tibetan. The most recent clash between the Uyghur and the Han occurred in 2009, resulting in 150 deaths and thousands more casualties. Unemployment and mistreatment by employers lead to widespread labor unrest. Labor unrest is more frequent and commonplace where agitated factory workers strike, demonstrate and sometimes resort to violence.

Additionally, rapid urbanization takes its toll on the CCP governance by generating massive rural unrest (Didio, 2007; Shirk, 2007). The government's plan to build highways and skyscrapers inevitably conflicts with the rural lifestyle when farmers' land is taken away without proper compensation. Social unrest in various forms has prompted gradual social change in China. For instance, labor unrest led to the promulgation of a new law on labor contract and employment (Lu, 2010; Liu, 2008).

Jennings (1997) found that social tensions between the authority and the public are conducive to local political participation in rural China. Li and O'Brien (2008) found that protest leaders play a significant role in rural politics and protest is becoming more frequent. Didio (2007) observes that huge inequalities between the urban and rural, and

the urban and the migrant are the sources for class clashes in modern China. Specifically, Guo (2001) suggests that land expropriation, escalating fees, and postponed renewal of land contracts are among the frequently-cited reasons of rural

In short, social conflict has become a driving force for political participation. As a result, we expect that social conflict should be in a positive relationship with political participation such as protest, demonstration, and appeals to higher authorities.

H5a: Social conflict will be positively related to voting in urban China.

H5b: Social conflict will be positively related to political participation in urban China.

H5c: Social conflict will be positively related to voting in rural China.

H5d: Social conflict will be positively related political participation in rural China.

2.9 Economy and Political Participation

The heightened level of social conflict and widening gap between the rich and the poor is a byproduct of economic reforms. The CCP leadership has been advocating a policy where a segment of the population become rich first and the poor would benefit from the expanding size of the rich. Economic flux agitates social life and frees people to form new thought and behavior patterns over which the Communist Party has no control. In the end, economic development becomes a necessary evil. The whole society, to a large extent, rests upon economic growth. As China's leaders well know, the greatest political risk lying ahead of them is the possibility of an economic crash that throws millions of workers out of their jobs or sends millions of depositors to withdraw their savings from the shaky banking system (Shirk, 2007).

In the meantime, economic development has contributed to forces which could be socially and politically destabilizing. Gilley (2007) noted that the introduction of market economy is the bedrock of the supply-side revolution in China. Free markets facilitate the development of rational individualism and formation of the middle class. When the middle class seek protection for its assets and a voice for its interests, the post-totalitarian society needs to be gradually restructured to accommodate these interests. If we define middle class as anyone who is not a worker, peasant, unemployed or below the poverty line, it is becoming a formidable force shaping police-making in China.

Literature suggests that economic development necessitates the establishment of the rule of law and cultivates a middle class (Lum, 2004; Shirk, 2007). If capitalist development is successful in reaching economic growth from which a sizeable proportion of the population benefits, pressures toward democracy are likely to appear (Lum, 2004). Building on the notion of rational actor, Downs argues that political behaviors reflect the principle of marginal cost-return utilized by political actors (Downs, 1957). In other words, political actors' willingness to social change will be determined by their evaluation of potential gains and losses.

Some scholars have contended that GDP is a good indicator of possibility of transition (e.g., Gilley, 2004; Lum, 2004). When a post-totalitarian country's per capita reaches around $3,200, it has entered "the danger zone." When it reaches above $4,500, political pluralism becomes highly likely. The probability of democratization doubles every year as income per capita grows from $1,700 to $8,400. Although this does not imply causality, the correlation between economic prosperity and democratic transition remains robust (Lipset 1956; Lum, 2001; Gilley, 2004). In a nutshell, economic

development can predict political participation such that people in the more economically developed regions are more likely to participate in politics because they are more knowledgeable and politically active.

Defining social capital as trust, Whitely (2000) found that social capital is a strong predictor of variations in economic growth regardless of differences in socio-political system. As a result, the levels of economic development influence the levels of social capital, which in turn could influence interaction between different social groups, social dynamics, and political participation. In this vein, the economy can cast an indirect impact on political participation where social capital serves as a mediator.

As Cohen (2001) pointed out, evidence pointing to the impact of socio-economic factors on political participation at the microscopic level abounds. For instance, the relationship between SES and political participation has been examined extensively. The salient patterns observed has been that higher levels of political participation are often found in citizens with higher SES (Verbal et al., 1995; Cohen et al., 2001; Dalton, 1988; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Peterson, 1990; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). Citizens with higher education and higher income, and who were employed in higher status occupations, participated in politics more than did citizens with lower SES.

Research on Chinese politics corroborates the importance of social-economic factors in the Chinese political scenery. For instance, Jennings (1997) found that occupational standing (in the form of a second job) is a significant predictor of political engagement in rural China. The changes in economic development of a given region have a direct impact on the social stratification, often reflected by the diffuse changes of SES among its citizens. As a society becomes more affluent, the flush of wealth and

improved education enable a considerable segment of the population to leapfrog into middle or higher social class. These structural changes, coupled with psychological changes on the individual level, cast important influence on the operation of the political machinery. Fu and Yuan (2011) found that the geographic neighborhood effects are more important than individual characteristics such as income, employment, and home ownership in accounting for the variance in social capital. In particular, the influence seems to be less positive in affluent cities. Taken together, literature suggests that regional variation in political participation is often a function of socio-economic development. Specifically, regions that are economically more advanced are different in political participation from regions that are economically less developed. The economic difference can be quantified by average disposable income, a more accurate measure than GDP per capita.

H6a: Average disposable income, as a second-level predictor, would moderate the impact of media use, social capital, and conflict on voting.

H6b: Average disposable income, as a second-level predictor, would moderate the impact of media use, social capital, and conflict on political participation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study is based on a probability-based sample from China General Social Survey (CGSS) conducted in 2005. The survey, modeled on the General Social Survey (GSS) in the U.S., was conducted collaboratively by Renmin University in Beijing and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Similar to GSS, the survey contains tailor-made items that can be used to measure social capital, political attitudes, and media use. The reason for choosing this particular dataset is that there is a dearth of research that is based on nationally representative samples (Xu et al., 2010).

3.1 Sample Profile

The survey used probability proportionate to size (PPS) sampling, a technique in which the probability of selecting a sampling unit is proportional to the size of its theoretical population. The sampling involved four steps. First, 2798 primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected from 30 provinces and special municipalities. Secondary sampling units (SSUs) –including towns and streets–were selected from PSUs. Then neighborhoods and villages were selected as the third sampling units (TSU) from SSUs. The final sampling units were selected from neighborhoods and villages. The final sample consisted of 10,372 cases (N=10,372), in which 58.5% the sample (n=6.098) were from urban areas while 41.2% (n=4,274) were from rural regions. Male respondents accounted for 47.4% (n=4,919) of the sample and female respondents accounted for 52.6% of the sample (n=5,453).

3.2 Measures

Political Participation

Political participation will be assessed by three types of activities: voluntary demonstration or protest, appeal to a higher authority by visitation (individually), appeal to a higher authority by visitation (collectively). Responses will be recoded such that participation in any of three activities will be coded as 1 and 0 for non-participation.

Voting

Similar to political participation, voting is assessed by two dichotomous items probing whether respondents have voted in local people's congress and local neighborhoods (urban) or villages (rural). Voting in either one of the two occasions is recoded as 1 and 0 for all negative responses.

Social Capital

Social capital is measured by three dimensions. The first dimension is generalized trust, which is measured by respondents' trust toward neighbors, relatives, colleagues, old classmates, people who are in the same social clubs, strangers, and so on. Responses are anchored on a Likert-type scale, where 1 indicates that most cannot be trust and 5 indicate that most can be trusted. This is a standard measure in the majority of social capital literature. Responses are recoded such that the higher the value, more trusting toward others.

The second dimension involves social networks, which is measured by the frequency of participation in athletic activities, entertainment and social activities, religious activities, nonprofit organizations, and educational clubs. Responses range from 1 to 5, in which 1 means several times a week while 5 means never. Responses are

recoded such that the higher the value, more trusting a respondent is towards others. The Cronbach's alpha for social networks is 0.73.

The third dimension is norms of reciprocity, which measures how respondents participate in activities that are reciprocal in nature and are conducive to building trust. This dimension is assessed by the frequency of participating in reciprocal activities in athletic activities, entertainment and social activities, religious activities, nonprofit organizations, and educational clubs. Responses are recoded such that the higher the value, more trusting toward others. The Cronbach's alpha for norms of reciprocity is 0.75.

Social conflict

Social conflict will be measured by two dichotomous items. One asks whether the respondent had conflicts with other individuals. The second one asks whether the respondent had conflicts with government and other administrative organizations. Admittedly, the second item appears to have more direct relationship with our dependent measures, but conflicts with others are often of political nature when they escalate and local governments need to step in. Two items are kept separate to identify unique relationships.

Media use

Media use is measured by the frequency of exposure to television, newspaper, and the Internet. Additionally, respondents' attention to news content on these outlets is assessed by one item that taps into the cognitive dimensions of media use. The questions ask respondents how much attention they pay to the news content on television,

newspaper, and Internet. Frequency and attention measures are kept separate to identify individual contribution.

Political interest

Political interest is assessed by two continuous items. The items ask respondents how interested they are in issues related to the local People's Congress's elections; and how interested they are in issues about the villagers' committee elections (rural) or residents' committee elections (urban). The two items are anchored on a Likert scale, where 1 means not interested at all and 5 means very interested.

Control variables

The research design includes several control variables, including education, income, gender, party membership, and socio-economic status (SES). These variables have been found to influence income, civic activities, social capital, and political participation (e.g., Lin, 2007; Xu, 2007).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Social Trust

Literature increasingly agrees that social trust is very different from political trust (Kim, 2005; Newton, 2001), and social trust itself is multidimensional (Lin & Si, 2010; Xia, 2011). Specifically, research on Chinese social capital indicates that social trust subsumes dimensions that are based on perceived social distance (Lin & Si, 2010; Luo, 2008).

An exploratory factor analysis using principal component as method of extraction and varimax as method of rotation was conducted to explore the dimensions of social trust. Inspection of the scree plot based on eigenvalue larger than one suggests a three-factor solution is appropriate in both urban and rural sample. Results indicate that a three-factor solution accounts for 58% of the total variance in the urban sample and 60.85% of the variance in the rural sample.

In the urban sample, results indicate that the dimensions of social trust diverge along social distance. Trust toward people that share close ties such as neighbors, relatives, colleagues and old friends cluster together. Items are subsequently condensed to a scale labeled "trust toward close ties" (Cronbach's alpha = .73). Trust toward people that share some social ties such as people who belong to the same entertainment clubs, gyms, and social groups cluster together. Items are subsequently condensed to a scale labeled "trust toward social ties" (Cronbach's alpha = .79). Finally, trust toward people that share weak or no ties such as people who are from the same county,

acquaintances, and simply strangers hang together. Items are also condensed to a scale labeled "trust toward weak ties" (Cronbach's alpha = .61).

–Insert Table One about Here–

In the rural sample, results also indicate that the dimensions of social trust diverge along social distance. Trust toward people who share close ties such as neighbors, relatives, and old friends cluster together. Items are subsequently condensed to a scale labeled "trust toward close ties" (Cronbach's alpha = .84). In contrast, trust toward colleagues seems to load better on the third dimension –trust toward people who share weak ties such as people who are from the same county, acquaintances, and simply strangers (Cronbach's alpha = .66). Similarly, trust toward people that share some social ties such as people who belong to the same entertainment clubs, gyms, and social groups cluster together. Items are subsequently condensed to a scale labeled "trust toward social ties" (Cronbach's alpha = .93). Overall, trust toward colleagues and old classmates are lower in our rural sample.

–Insert Table Two about Here–

4.2 Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA)

In terms of voting, 23% of the rural respondents indicate that they voted unwillingly in the last election of local people's congress, while 16% indicate that they voted willingly. By contrast, voter turnout is much higher when it comes to voting in the villagers' committee, with 39.3% voting unwillingly and 28.4% willingly. Villagers do not seem to be very active in protesting, petitioning individually, or petitioning collectively, as the rate with the three activities is only .6%, .9%, and .9%, respectively. Among urban residents, 21.8% report that they voted unwillingly in the last election of

local people's congress, while only 8.6% indicate that they voted willingly. Urban residents are equally lukewarm about voting in residents' committees, as 18.3% indicate that they voted unwillingly and only 8.7% voted willingly. Compared to villagers, urban residents are more active in protesting (1.9%), petitioning individually (1.2%), and petitioning collectively (1.8%). In short, urban residents are slightly more active in terms of "informal" political participation, but are overrun significantly by rural residents in voting in both grassroots organizations and local congresses.

4.3 Analytical Models

Since the dependent measures are ordinal, ordinal regression with logistic links were constructed to test the hypotheses concerning voting. Social capital dimensions (trust, social networks, and norms of reciprocity), media use, conflict with others, conflict with government, and political interest were used as covariates, along with control variables including gender, income (after logarithmic transformation), education, SES, and party membership, to predict voting and political participation. The ordinal logistic model can be expressed as follows:

$$\ln\left(\frac{P(y \le j)}{P(y > j)}\right) = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \beta_i X_i \qquad (1)$$

where $P(y \le j)$ represents the probability of not voting or below not voting, and $P(y > j)$ represents the probability of voting. Binary logistic regression model was constructed to test the hypotheses concerning political participation after it was recoded into dichotomous, with 1 indicating participation, and 0 indicating non-participation. The model can be expressed as below:

$$\ln\left(\frac{\hat{p}_i}{1-\hat{p}_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \beta_i X_i \qquad (2)$$

In equation (2), $\hat{p}_i$ represents the probability of voting, and $1-\hat{p}_i$ therefore represents the probability of not voting.

Regional differences manifested as different rates of voting and political participation are hypothesized to be linked with the level of economic development. Residents in economically advantageous regions are expected to be more politically active than residents in economically disadvantageous regions. To test this contextual influence hypothesis, a generalized hierarchical linear model was constructed, which can be expressed as below:

$$\text{Level 1: } \ln\left(\frac{P(y \le j)}{P(y > j)}\right) = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X_{1ij} + \beta_{2j}X_{2ij} + \cdots + \beta_{qj}X_{qij}$$

$$\text{Level 2: } \beta_{qj} = \gamma_{q0} + \sum_{s=1}^{sq} \gamma_{qs}W_{sj} + u_{qj} \qquad (3)$$

The Level-1 equation represents an ordinary logistic regression model, while the level-2 equation indicates that differences in voting and political participation can be partially explained by regional differences in the economy quantified by average disposable income (log transformed).

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

4.4.1 News Media and Dependent Measures

Hypothesis 1a posits that attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet would be positively associated with voting in urban China. Results indicate that attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet is positively related to voting in the local people's congress in urban China (b= .18, s.e.=.04, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 1.20 ($e^{(0.18)}$=1.20), this indicates that urban residents who pay attention to

news content on news media are 1.2 times more likely to vote in local people's congress. By contrast, attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet does not have a significant relationship with voting in residents' committee (b= -.014, s.e.=.04, p=.75). This is not surprising given the fact that the voter turnout in residents' committee elections is alarmingly low (28% voted willingly or unwillingly). Hypothesis 1a is thus partially supported.

Hypothesis 1b posits that attention to the news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet will be positively associated with voting in rural China. Results indicate that attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet is not related to voting in local people's congress in rural China (b= .05, s.e.=.05, p=.28). By contrast, attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet does not have a significant relationship with voting in villagers' committee (b= .31, s.e.=.04, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 1.36 ($e^{(0.31)}$=1.36), this indicates that rural residents who pay attention to news content on news media are 1.36 times more likely to vote in villagers' committee. Hypothesis 1a is partially supported.

Hypothesis 2a posits that attention to the news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet will be positively associated with other forms of political participation in urban China. Results indicate that attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet is positively related to political participation in urban China (b= .31, s.e.=.09, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 1.36 ($e^{(0.31)}$=1.36), this indicates that urban residents who pay attention to news content on news media are 1.4 times more likely to participate in protest, petitioning and demonstration. Hypothesis H2a is therefore supported.

Hypothesis 2b posits that attention to the news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet will be positively associated with political participation in rural China. Results indicate that attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet is not related to political participation in rural China (b= -.04, s.e.=.16, p=.82). Hypothesis H2b is therefore not supported.

Hypothesis H3a predicts that the general frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to voting in urban China. Results indicate that general frequency of newspaper reading is not related to voting in residents' committee in urban China (b= -.014, s.e.=.02, p=.52). Frequency of newspaper reading is positively related to voting in local people's congress, but the relationship does not reach the traditional significance level (b= .037, s.e.=.02, p=.08). Hypothesis H3a is therefore not supported.

Hypothesis 3b predicts that general frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to voting in rural China. Results indicate that general frequency of newspaper reading is not related to voting in villagers' committee in rural China (b= -.04, s.e.=.03, p=.23). Frequency of newspaper reading is however, positively related to voting in local people's congress (b= .21, s.e.=.03, p<.001). Hypothesis H3b is therefore not partially supported. With an odds ratio of 1.23 ($e^{(0.21)}$=1.23), this indicates that rural residents who read newspaper are 1.23 times more likely to vote in local people's congress. Hypothesis H3b is thus partially supported.

Hypothesis 3c posits that frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to political participation in urban China. Results indicate that frequency of newspaper reading is not related to political participation in urban China (b= -.01, s.e.=.05, p=.82). Hypothesis 3cis therefore not supported. Hypothesis 3d posits that

general frequency of newspaper reading will be positively related to political participation in rural China. Results indicate that frequency of newspaper reading is not related to political participation in rural China (b=.02, s.e.=.11, p=.84) . Hypothesis 3d is therefore not supported.

4.4.2 Social Capital and Dependent Measures

Hypothesis 4a posits that social capital measures will be positively associated with voting in urban China. Results indicate that norms of reciprocity are positively related to voting in residents' committee and the relationship is close to the traditional significance level (b= .09, $e^{(0.09)}$=1.09, s.e.=.05, p=.06). The second dimension, social networks, is positively related to voting in residents' committee (b= .31, s.e.=.06, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 1.36 ($e^{(0.31)}$=1.36), this indicates that urban residents who have strong social networks are 1.4 times more likely to vote in residents' committee.

Among measures of trust, only trust toward people with weak ties is significantly related to voting in residents' committee (b=-.12, s.e.=.06, p=.03). With an odds ratio of .88 ($e^{(-0.12)}$=.88), this indicates that urban residents who tend to trust people with whom they have weak ties are 0.88 times less likely to vote in residents' committee. Worded differently, urban residents who tend to distrust strangers are more likely to vote in residents' committee. Trust toward people with close ties (b=.07, s.e.=.06, p=.25) and social ties (b=.06, s.e.=.04, p=.19) are not related to voting in residents' committee.

Results indicate that norms of reciprocity are not related to voting in local people's congress (b=.03, s.e.=.04, p=.46). Social networks, on the other hand, have a significant positive relationship with voting in local people's congress (b=.15, s.e.=.06,

p=.01). With an odds ratio of 1.16 ($e^{(0.15)}$=1.16), this indicates that urban residents who have wide social networks are 1.16 times more likely to vote in local people's congress.

Finally, all trust measures bear significant relationships with voting in a local people's congress. First, trust toward people with close ties has a positive relationship with voting in a local people's congress (b=.12, s.e.=.06, p=.045). With an odds ratio of 1.13 ($e^{(0.12)}$=1.13), this indicates that urban residents who are trusting toward their friends and relatives are 1.13 times more likely to vote in local people's congress. Second, trust toward people with social ties has a positive relationship with voting in local people's congress (b=.15, s.e.=.04, p=.001). With an odds ratio of 1.16 ($e^{(0.15)}$=1.16), this indicates that urban residents who are trusting toward people with whom they have social connections are 1.16 times more likely to vote in local people's congress. Finally, trust toward people with weak ties such as strangers have a negative relationship with voting in local people's congress (b=-.29, s.e.=.05, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 0.74 ($e^{(-0.29)}$=0.74), this indicates that urban residents who are trusting toward people with whom they have weak ties are 0.74 times less likely to vote in local people's congress.

Taken together, hypothesis 4a receives mixed support. Social networks are consistently predictive of voting in both residents' committees and local people's congresses. Norms of reciprocity are less predictive of both voting in residents' committees and local people's congresses. Trust is more predictive of voting in local people's congress than of voting in residents' committees, where only trust toward people with weak ties is significantly predictive. In general, social capital measures are related to voting in urban China.

Hypothesis 4b posits that social capital measures will be positively associated with political participation in urban China. Results indicate that norms of reciprocity are positively related to political participation in urban China, but the relationship does not reach the traditional significance level (b= .18, $e^{(0.18)}$=1.19, s.e.=.09, p=.06). The second dimension, social networks, is positively related to political participation (b= .62, s.e.=.11, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 1.86 ($e^{(0.62)}$=1.86), this indicates that urban residents who have strong social networks are 1.86 times more likely to engage in protest, demonstration, and petitions.

Among measures of trust, only trust toward people with close ties is negatively related to political participation (b=-.27, s.e.=.13, p=.03). With an odds ratio of .76 ($e^{(-0.27)}$=.76), this indicates that urban residents who are trusting toward their friends and relatives are 0.76 times less likely to participate in protests and petitions. Trust toward people with social ties (b=-.10, s.e.=.10, p=.29) and weak ties (b=.10, s.e.=.12, p=.39) is not related to political participation in urban China. Taken together, hypothesis 4b is not supported.

Hypothesis 4c posits that social capital measures will be positively associated with voting in rural China. Results indicate that social networks do not have a significant relationship with voting in villagers' committee (b=.07, s.e.=.14, p=.63). Instead, norms of reciprocity has a positive relationship with voting in villagers' committee (b=.28, s.e.=.05, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 1.3 ($e^{(.28)}$=1.3), this indicates that villagers who perceive norms of reciprocity as important are 1.3 times more likely to vote in a villagers' committee. In terms of voting in a local people's congress, social networks are more important than norms of reciprocity (b=-.025, s.e.=.05, p=.60), as social networks have a

significant positive relationship with voting in a local people's congress (b=.37, $e^{(.28)}$=1.45, s.e.=.14, p=.01). Villagers with strong social networks are 1.45 times more likely to vote in local people's congress.

Finally, measures of trust have different relationships with voting in a villagers' committee and local people's congress. Trust toward people with close ties has a significant positive relationship with voting in a villagers' committee (b=.24, $e^{(.24)}$=1.27, s.e.=.07, p=.001). Both trust toward people with social ties (b=.07, s.e.=.05, p=.16) and weak ties (b=-.10, s.e.=.08, p=.22) have no significant relationship with voting in villagers' committee. Trust toward people with close ties also has a significant positive relationship with voting in local people's congress (b=.23, $e^{(.23)}$=1.26, s.e.=.07, p=.003). Similarly, trust toward people with social ties (b=.07, s.e.=.05, p=.16) and weak ties (b=-.10, s.e.=.08, p=.22) has no significant relationship with voting in local people's congress. Hypothesis 4c is therefore partially supported.

Hypothesis 4d posits that social capital measures will be positively associated with political participation in rural China. Results indicate that trust toward people with close ties is positively related to political participation (b=.23, s.e.=.08, p=.003). With an odds ratio of 1.26($e^{(.23)}$=1.26), this indicates that rural residents who are trusting toward people with whom they have close ties are 1.26 times more likely to participate in protests and petitions. Trust toward people with social ties (b=.002, s.e.=.05, p=.97) and weak ties (b=-.076, s.e.=.08, p=.35) is unrelated to political participation in rural China. Social networks have a significant positive relationship (b=.37, $e^{(.37)}$=1.45, s.e.=.15, p=.01). Finally, norms of reciprocity have no relationship with political participation (b=-.025, s.e.=.05, p=.60). Hypothesis 4d is therefore partially supported.

Hypothesis 5a posits that social conflict will be positively related to voting in urban China. Results indicate that conflict with others is negatively related to voting in local people's congress (b=-.29, $e^{(-.29)}$=0.75, s.e.=.13, p=.02), while conflict with the government has no significant relationship with voting in local people's congress (b=-.07, s.e.=.23, p=.76). People are less likely to vote in local people's congress when conflict with others occurs. They perhaps seek other ways of settling the conflict. With regards to voting in residents' committee, results reveal a similar pattern, that is, conflict with others (b=-.06, $e^{(-.06)}$=0.94, s.e.=.13, p=.64) or government (b=-.09, $e^{(-.09)}$=0.91, s.e.=.24, p=.71) does not have significant relationship with voting in residents' committee. Hypothesis H5a overall receives very limited support.

Hypothesis H5b predicts that social conflict will be positively related to political participation in urban China. Results indicate that conflict with government has strong positive relationship with political participation (b=1.83, $e^{(1.83)}$=6.23, s.e.=.25, p<.001). With an odds ratio of 6.23 ($e^{(1.83)}$=6.23), this indicates that urban residents who have had conflicts with the government are 6.23 times more likely to engage in protest, demonstration, and petitions. Similarly, conflict with others has a positive relationship with political participation (b=.66, s.e.=.21, p=.001). With an odds ratio of 1.93 ($e^{(.66)}$=1.93), this indicates that urban residents who have had conflicts with others are almost twice as likely to engage in protest, demonstration, and petitions. Hypothesis 5b is therefore supported.

Hypothesis 5c predicts that social conflict will be positively related to voting in rural China. Results indicate that conflict with others has a significant relationship with voting in a villagers' committee (b=.35, exp(.35)= 1.42, s.e.=.14, p=.013) while conflict

with the government does not (b=-.068, s.e.=.27, p=.80). This means that villages who are involved in conflicts with others are 1.42 times more likely to vote in villagers' committee. Similarly, conflict with others also has a significant positive relationship with voting in local congress (b=.56, exp(.35)= 1.75, s.e.=.14, p<.001). This means that villages who are involved in conflicts with others are 1.75 times more likely to vote in local people's congress. Conflict with the government has no significant relationship with voting in local congress (b=.03, s.e.=.27, p=.91). Hypothesis 5c is thus partially supported.

Hypothesis5d postulates that social conflict will be positively related political participation in rural China. Results indicate that conflict with the government increases the likelihood of protesting or petitioning by 9 times (exp(2.2)=9.03). Conflict with others have a positive relationship with political participation (b=.45, s.e.=.41, p=.27), but the relationship is not significant. Overall, hypothesis 5d is partially supported.

4.5 Research Questions

With regard to research question 1a, results indicate that general frequency of TV use has a significant negative relationship with voting in local people's congress in urban China (b= -.10, s.e.=.04, p=.03). Internet use, on the other hand, has a positive relationship with voting in local people's congress (b=.38, s.e.=.09, p<.001). When it comes to voting in residents' committee, the frequency of TV use has no significant relationship (b=.04, s.e.=.04, p=.35), but the frequency of Internet use has a significant positive relationship with voting in residents' committee (b=.43, s.e.=.09, p<.001).

With regard to research question 1b, results indicate that general frequency of TV use is positively related to voting in local people's congress (b=.10, s.e.=.04, p=.03).

With an odds ratio of 1.11 ($e^{(0.10)}$=1.11), this indicates that rural residents who watch TV on a regular basis are 1.11 times more likely to vote in local people's congress. By contrast, general frequency of TV use has no relationship with voting in villagers' committee (b=-.04, s.e.=.04, p=.35). Results also indicate that general frequency of Internet use is negatively related to voting in local people's congress (b=-.38, s.e.=.09, p<.001). With an odds ratio of .68 ($e^{(-.38)}$=.68), this indicates that rural residents who use the Internet frequently are .68 times less likely to vote in local people's congress. Finally, general frequency of Internet use also has a negative relationship with voting in villagers' committee (b=-.43, s.e.=.08, p<.001). Again with an odds ratio of .65 ($e^{(-.43)}$=.65), this indicates that rural residents who use the Internet frequently are .65 times less likely to vote in villagers' committee.

Research question 2a asks about the relationship between general frequency of TV and Internet use and political participation in urban China. Results indicate that frequency of TV use does not have a significant relationship with political participation (b=-.082, s.e.=.13, p=.53). However, frequency of Internet use has a significant positive relationship with political participation (b=.33, s.e.=.16, p=.04). An odds ratio of 1.39 means that frequent Internet users are 1.39 times more likely to participate in protest and petition than non-frequent users.

Research question 2b asks about the relationship between general frequency of TV and Internet use and political participation in rural China. Results indicate that general frequency of TV use is not related to political participation in rural China (b= -.08, s.e.=.13, p=.53). However, general frequency of Internet use is positively related to political participation in rural China (b=.33, s.e.=.15, p=.04). With an odds ratio of 1.39

($e^{(.33)}$=1.39), this indicates that rural residents who use the Internet frequently are 1.39 times more likely to engage in protest and petitions.

Hypothesis 6a predicts that average disposable income, as a second-level predictor, would moderate the impact of media use, social capital, and conflict on voting. Since the average disposable income at the second level is only measured in the rural sample, multilevel analysis is conducted on the rural sample only. Results indicate that significant variation in voting exists between villages. Intraclass correlation (ICC) for voting in villagers 'committee is $\tau_{00}/(\sigma^2+\tau_{00})$ = .197/(.197+.409) = .33. This indicates that 33% of the variance in voting in villagers' committee can be explained by second-level (between villages) differences. Intraclass correlation (ICC) for voting in local congress is $\tau_{00}/(\sigma^2+\tau_{00})$ = .219/(.219+.348) = .38. This indicates that 38% of the variance in voting in local congress can be explained by second-level (between villages)

A preliminary analysis indicates that average disposable income does not have a strong relationship with the voting in villagers' committee ($r=.04$, $p<.01$) and voting in local people's congress ($r=-.02$, $p<.01$). Considering the sample size, the effect sizes are not big enough to support average disposable income as a meaningful second-level predictor. Hypothesis 6a is therefore not supported.

Hypothesis 6b predicts that average disposable income, as a second-level predictor, would moderate the impact of media use, social capital, and conflict on political participation. Results indicate that significant variation in political participation exists between villages. Intraclass correlation (ICC) for political participation is $\tau_{00}/(\sigma^2+\tau_{00})$ = .003/(.01+.003) = .19. This indicates that 19% of the variance in political participation can be explained by second-level (between villages) differences. Similarly,

average disposable income does not have a significant relationship with political participation ($r=-.004$, $p=.57$). Hypothesis 6b is therefore not supported. Taken together, average disposable income cannot explain the variations in voting and political participation between villages.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Research on the interactions between social capital, news media, and political participation has been predominantly based on surveys in the U.S. As a result, more research on other countries is needed to extend the validity of the extant findings. Additionally, research on Chinese news media, social capital, and political participation is lacking. In particular, there is a dearth of research of this kind using representative national samples (Xu, 2007; Xu et al., 2010). Driven by these considerations, this dissertation set out to test existing theoretical frameworks using nationally representative samples in a different cultural context–China.

Further, with the omnipresence of the Internet, research on digital media, particularly the Internet, occupies an increasing portion of political communication scholarship. With about 513 million users by the end of 2011, China boasts of the world's largest online population and a penetration rate of 38.3% (CNNIC, 2012). Considering its huge online population and political system, research on the political effects of digital media in China is particularly meaningful (Xiao, 2010; Yang, 2011; Yuan, 2010).

Importantly, researchers of digital political communication need to be aware of the differences between rural and urban China. This is due to the fact that urban China and rural China are at different stages of social and economic development, a situation called "*er yuan shi hui*", or two different societies. Urban China has been at the epicenter of economic reform receiving substantial policy support, while rural China, based on incompatible land contractual system, struggles with keeping up with rapid economic

growth in cities. The rural Chinese society is based on a patriarchal kinship system where families sharing common ancestors live together in a village. Each village is a community and several villages form a villagers' committee, a grassroots administrative unit.

Specifically, in urban China, families are historically grouped together by employment units because employment units take care of housing, education, and retirement under the planned economic system. After the economic reform, communities are formed based on socio-economic status rather than where people work. Residents' committee serves as a comparable grassroots unit in cities. As it is shown in this dissertation, key relationships of interest are quite different between the rural and urban sample, even opposite in some cases. Findings based on urban samples may not be applicable to the rural population and vice versa.

5.1 News Media

This research uncovers interesting relationships between news media and political participation. First of all, news media, in particular the Internet, play an important role in the political process in both rural and urban China. Although the finding that politically informed citizens are more likely to engage in politics generally applies, the relationship is contingent upon factors that somewhat unique to China.

Attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet has a positive impact on voting in local people's congress but not in residents' committee in urban China. Interestingly, the pattern of relationship is reversed in rural China where attention to news content on TV, newspaper and the Internet has a positive impact on villagers' committee but not voting in local people's congress. This indicates that politically

informed urban residents are more likely to engage in "formal" politics, whereas politically informed rural residents are more likely to engage in grassroots politics. The discrepancy may be due to two different political participation environments.

The urban environment consists of citizens who are better educated and informed, while the rural environment consists of villagers who are comparatively less educated and informed. Political institutions in urban China are within city limits, whereas political institutions in rural China are often far from sparse villages. To urban residents, residents' committees are very limited in administrative power, and participating in these elections does not lead to immediate returns. To rural residents, participating in formal politics involves significant social costs but has no direct impact on their day-to-day toil. Participating in grassroots politics, such voting in villagers' committee, can make a direct impact, and therefore represents a much more reasonable choice for the politically engaged rural citizens. Overall, the situation where politically informed villagers vote in villagers' committee and politically informed urban residents vote in local congress reflects rational behaviors under different political participation environments.

Attention to news media has no impact on political participation in rural China, but has a positive impact on political participation in urban China. In other words, attention to news media plays a much more positive role in galvanizing citizens in urban China. This finding is consistent with results found in the U.S., confirming the positive role of attention to news media in the political process (Boyd et al., 2011; Chaffee & Frank, 1996; Dimitrova et al., 2011; Hoffman & Thompson, 2009). The rural-urban gap is likely due to the fact that the penetration rates of cable TV and Internet are not as high

in rural China. Although rural population constitutes 50.32% of the entire Chinese population, it is about 27% of the online population (CNNIC, 2011). This means that attention to news media matters less when it comes to fostering political participation in rural China.

Research consistently shows that newspaper reading is predictive of political outcomes, in particular political knowledge (Hoffman & Thompson, 2009; McLeod et al., 2009; Zhao & Chaffee, 1995). This pattern of relationship receives mixed support in this dissertation. First of all, the general frequency of newspaper reading is not related to voting in residents' committee. Although the general frequency of newspaper reading is positively related to voting in local people's congress, the relationship is not quite significant ($p=.08$) according to the significance level cut-off.

In rural China, the general frequency of newspaper reading is not related to voting in villagers' committee but is positively related to voting in local people's congress. This overall suggests that the pure frequency of newspaper reading is not as relevant to voting in China as to other countries. The difference could be due to the fact that newspapers are often considered government mouthpiece by many in China. Voters in local people's congress, consisting of party members, officials, and business men, represent an elite segment of the population in rural China (Xiao, 2010). These voters who are deeply connected with the Communist party are more likely to read the newspapers and more likely to vote.

Voting, be it in local congress or grassroots administrative units, is a formal form political engagement. Protest and petition, on other hand, are informal political participation. Research shows that political participation such as protest and petition is

often linked with grievances resulting from governmental intrusion (Yu, 2007). Complainants are less trusting toward media sources that are considered non-credible by many and therefore are less likely to use for political information. This is reflected in the result that frequency of newspaper reading is not related to political participation in both urban and rural China.

5.2 Social Capital

Consistent with research in the U.S., study findings suggest that the conceptual framework of social capital is applicable to the Chinese context. Social capital consists of three dimensions: trust, social networks, and norms of reciprocity. The three dimensions need to be kept separately (Chen & Lu, 2007; Xu et al., 2010) as they have different relationships with civic and political engagement. In particular, considering existing differences between rural and urban China, conflation will mask the unique relationships between dimensions of social capital and political outcomes.

5.2.1 Voting in Urban China

In urban China, norms of reciprocity and social networks are significant predictors of voting in residents' committee. Norms of reciprocity, however, are not related to voting in local people's congress, while social networks are positive related to voting in local people's congress. Results highlight the importance of social networks in formal politics, confirming previous finding that *guanxi* plays a critical role in party politics (Chen & Si, 2010). In the absence of proper legal framework, political decision-making is fraught with favoritism and nepotism in China (Shirk, 1992). In this environment, pulling strings with the influential figures (*zouhoumen*) becomes an alternative mechanism for upward mobility. Similar to rural China, voters in local

people's congress, consisting of party members, officials, and business men, represent an elite segment of the population in urban China (Xiao, 2010). As a result, politically engaged citizens have all the motivations to expand their networks to gain an advantage. In brief, dense social networks often indicate stronger political involvement including voting.

Interestingly, all trust measures including trust with close ties, trust with social ties, and trust with weak ties have significant relationship with voting in local people's congress in urban China. This indicates that cultivating a trusting environment is important for formal political engagement in urban China. Trust toward people with close ties and trust toward people with social ties positively influence voting while trust toward people with weak ties negatively influence voting in local people's congress. This suggests that voting relevant trust is confined to people within personal and social circles. This makes sense because trust toward people with close and social ties provide incentives for political engagement, but trust toward people with weak ties normally does not provide any incentives at all.

When it comes to voting for residents' committee, only trust toward people with weak social ties is negatively related. Overall, this finding indicates that trust overall is less relevant to voting in grassroots administrations. This could be due to the fact that urban residents in general do not show much enthusiasm in voting for residents' committee.

5.2.2 Political Participation in Urban China

Both norms of reciprocity and social networks are important for political participation, while only social networks are consistently predictive of voting in residents'

committee and local people's congress. This finding indicates that being connected with others is just as important to informal political participation (Shi, 2008), because protesting and petitioning call for substantial horizontal and vertical support. A strong network provides physical and non-physical resources that are critical to the success of petitioning or protesting efforts. Trust overall seems to be less relevant to political participation. Only trust toward people with close ties is negatively related to political participation. In other words, people whose circle of trust is limited to relatives and friends are less likely to participate in informal politics. People with a small trust circle are less likely to have large social networks, therefore, less likely to be politically involved.

5.2.3 Voting in Rural China

Different from urban China, social networks do not play a significant role in voting in villagers' committee but social networks do play a positive role in voting in local people's congress. The difference reveals two different voting environments: villagers' committee consisting most of villagers and local people's congress consisting mainly of party members, local business men, and influential locals. Social networks are less relevant to voting in villagers' committee because it takes place within an already small community while voting in local people congress is based on a much broader constituent.

Norms of reciprocity have a positive role in voting in villagers' committee but not in local people's congress. Again, voters in villagers' committee are often from the same village or related in some way. Understandably, their interactions are based on strong norms of reciprocity. By contrast, voters in local people's congress are more diverse and

are usually from different parts of a town or county. To such a temporary crowd, establishing connections is more viable than building norms, which could take much longer. In sum, social networks are more important to voting in local people's congress while norms of reciprocity matter more to voting in villagers' committee.

Finally, trust toward people with close ties has a significant positive relationship with voting in villagers' committee. This result again reflects the fact that voters for villagers' committee are based on a closely-knit circle of kinship. As such, voting in such an environment often boils down to trust toward candidates and between voters (Xia, 2011). Not surprisingly, trust toward people with social ties and weak ties is not relevant to voting in such as a closely-knit environment.

5.2.4 Political Participation in Rural China

When it comes to political participation, trust toward people with close ties is positively related to political participation. Political participation such as protesting and petitioning could be a dangerous endeavor as participants could face jail terms or other forms of persecution. It is natural for villagers to rely on the support of fellow villagers or people they have close relationships with. In the meantime, trust toward people with social ties and people with weak ties are less relevant to such precarious undertakings. Socially connected villagers are more likely to engage in protest or petition because they are more likely to receive peer support (Xu et al., 2010).

5.3 Conflict

5.3.1 Voting in Urban China

With regard to the relationship of conflict and political participation, this dissertation shows that conflict with others is negatively related to voting in people's

congress while conflict with the government has no significant relationship with voting in local people's congress. The finding suggests that urban residents who are involved in conflicts with others are less likely to participate in formal politics. However, they may seek other ways of settling the conflict. Such relationships apply to conflict with the government and voting in residents' committee.

5.3.2 Political Participation in Urban China

Conflict with the government has a strong positive relationship with political participation. In particular, urban residents who have had conflicts with the government are 6.23 times more likely to engage in protest, demonstration, and petitions. This is consistent with existing finding that grievances resulting from conflicts with the local government are the major motivator for political participation (Xia, 2011; Xu et al., 2010; Shi, 2008; Yu, 2007). Similarly, conflict with others is ultimately political in nature, and unfair handling from the government could just as well lead to informal political participation. Overall, conflict is a significant motivator for political participation.

5.3.3 Voting in Rural China

Conflict with others has a significant positive relationship with voting in villagers' committee while conflict with the government does not. This means that villagers who have conflicts with other are more likely to settle the conflict within the local political platform. Conflict with the local government cannot be resolved by a villagers' committee and often needs to be appealed to a higher level authority for settlement. Rural residents who are involved in conflicts with others can also appeal to the local congress for settlement when it cannot be resolved by the villagers' committee

(Xia, 2011). This explains the positive relationship between conflict with others and voting in local congress.

5.3.4 Political Participation in Rural China

The results show that conflict with the government can significantly heighten the likelihood of protesting and petitioning to higher authorities, which is consistent with previous finding that conflict with the government has been a major source of rural instability (Yu, 2007). Villagers often have to resort to protest and petitioning to higher authorities to settle a conflict with local governments. The rate of mass incident has been on steady increase in rural China (Yu, 2007; Shirk, 2007). These conflicts could lead to dire consequences when left unchecked.

5.4 Limitations

This dissertation has a few limitations. First of all, the dataset does not contain a rich set of measures for digital media, particularly social media. Recent research based on non-representative samples has yielded interesting relationships between social media and political participation (e.g., Mou, Atkin, & Fu, 2011). Future research could investigate the relationship between social media and political participation by utilizing representative samples with a set of rich measures for social media.

Although it is shown that significant amount of variation in dependent variables can be explained by second-level differences, this dissertation does not identify meaningful second-level predictors. Future research could explore a whole range of second-level or even higher level predictors that can explain these between-village or between neighborhood differences in political engagement.

This dissertation does not investigate political attitudes such as political efficacy and political cynicism, which have been shown important to political engagement (Pinkleton & Austin, 1999). Future research could investigate the relationship between social capital, political attitudes, and political participation. Additionally, it would be particularly meaningful to specify the process model where news media influence social capital and political attitudes which in turn influence political participation. To that end, future research could employ longitudinal designs to track the process and changes.

Finally, this study, based on a cross-sectional survey, does not provide evidence to draw causal conclusions. Nevertheless, this dissertation uncovers many interesting correlational relationships that could provide a basis for subsequent experimental work. Future research could utilize other research designs to test the relationships considered here.

5.5 Conclusion

This dissertation set out to test the relationship between news media, social capital, social conflict, and political participation in China. In particular, distinction is made between rural and urban China as they represent two different societies. Traditional news media measured by frequency and attention remain relevant to voting and political participation in both urban and rural China.

Importantly, this research shows that the impact of digital media–the Internet–is even more prominent than traditional news media. Traditional news media are found to be related to formal political participation whereas the Internet is found to facilitate informal political participation such as protest and petition. Social capital measures are overall important correlates of political outcomes. In rural China, social networks are

more important to voting in local people's congress while norms of reciprocity matter more to voting in villagers' committee. In urban China, a similar pattern emerges except that norms of reciprocity matters less to voting in residents' committee. Among trust measures, trust toward people with close ties is important to engaging in informal political participation while trust toward people with weaker ties matters more to engaging in formal political participation. Finally, social conflict including conflict with others and conflict with the government is a potent predictor of informal political participation.

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Table 1: Factor Analysis of Social Trust (Urban)

Variables	Factor Loadings		
	1	2	3
Trust toward close ties			
Neighbors	.75		
People in the same community	.65		
Relatives	.75		
Colleagues	.67		
Classmates	.53		
Trust toward social ties			
Social clubs, gyms		.82	
Religious activities		.83	
General social events		.86	
Trust toward weak ties			
Acquaintance			.67
People from the same county			.66
Strangers			.81
Variance Explained	29.43%	17.46%	11.11%
Eigenvalue	3.24	1.92	1.22

Table 2: Factor Analysis of Social Trust (Rural)

Variables	Factor Loadings		
	1	2	3
Trust toward close ties			
Neighbors	.81		
People in the same community	.79		
Same surname in the village	.84		
Different surname in the village	.78		
Relatives	.58		
Trust toward social ties			
Social clubs, gyms		.92	
Religious activities		.93	
General social events		.93	
Trust toward weak ties			
Colleagues			.48
Acquaintance			.74
Classmates			.63
People from the same county			.68
Strangers			.59
Variance Explained	28.92%	20.69%	11.25%
Eigenvalue	3.76	2.69	1.46

Figure 1: Scree Plot of Factor Analysis of Social Trust (Urban)

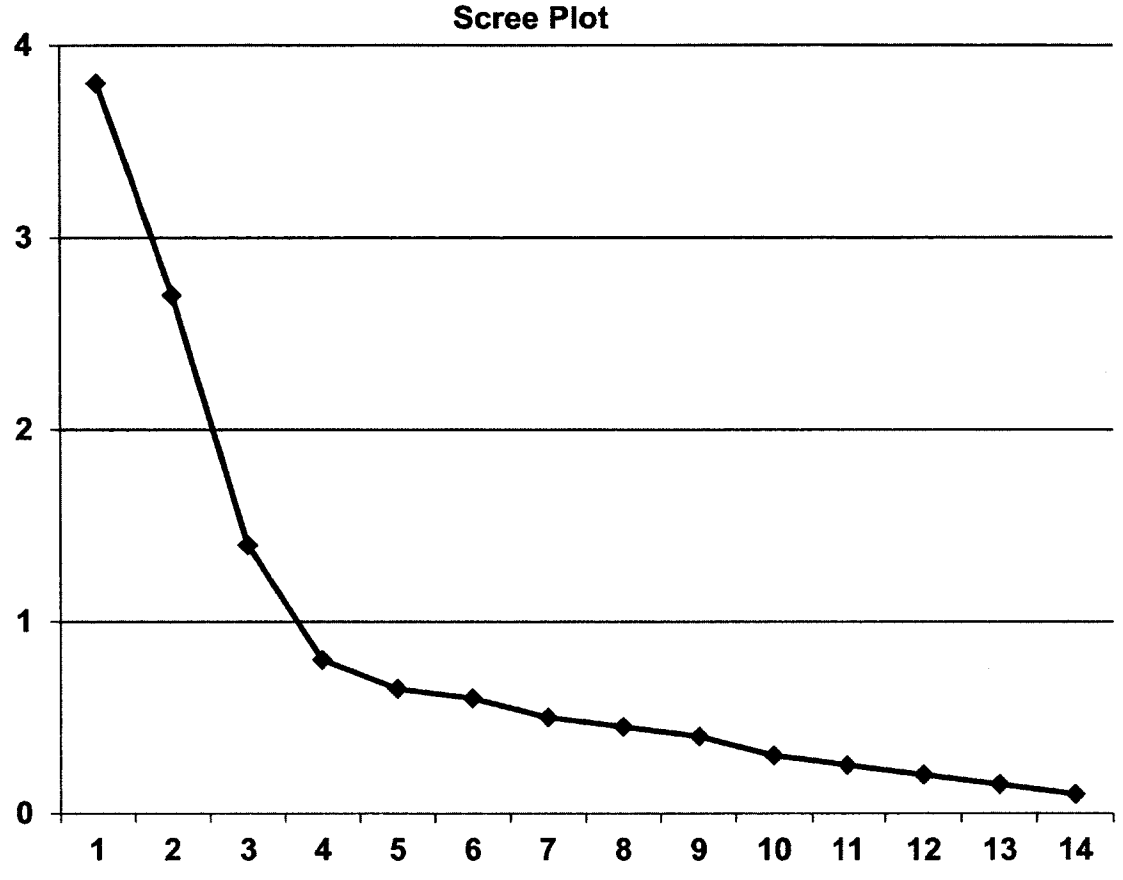


Figure 2: Scree Plot of Factor Analysis of Social Trust (Rural)

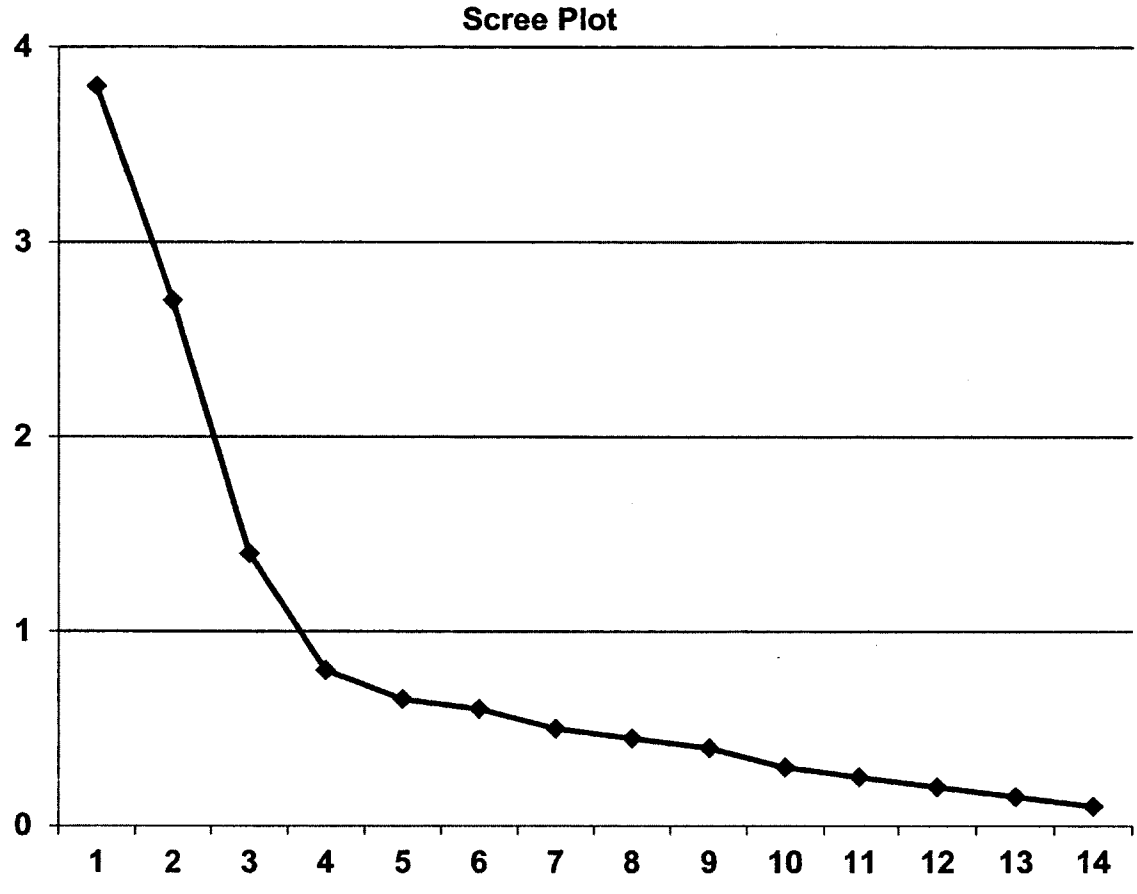
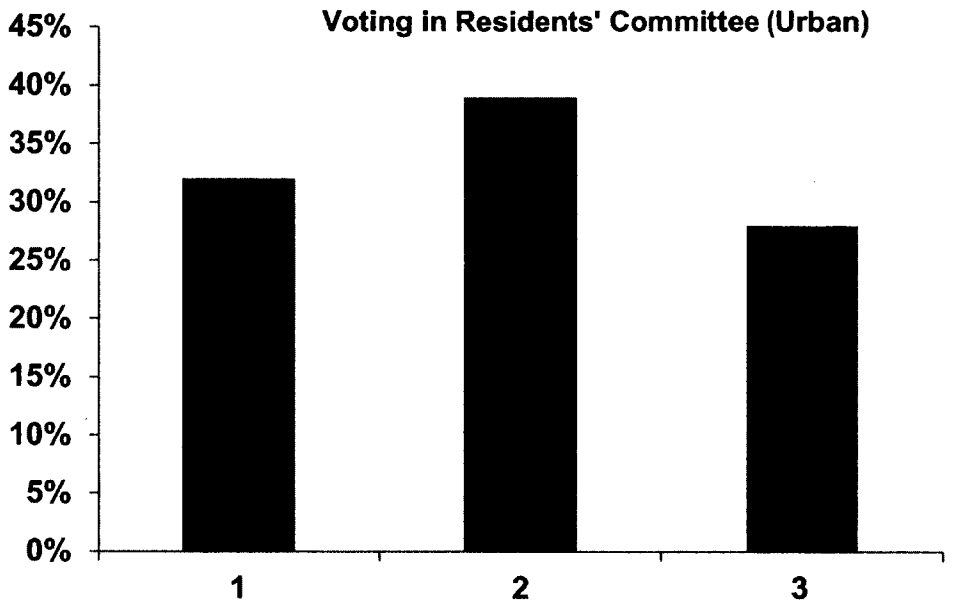


Figure 3: Voting in Residents' Committee and Local People's Congress



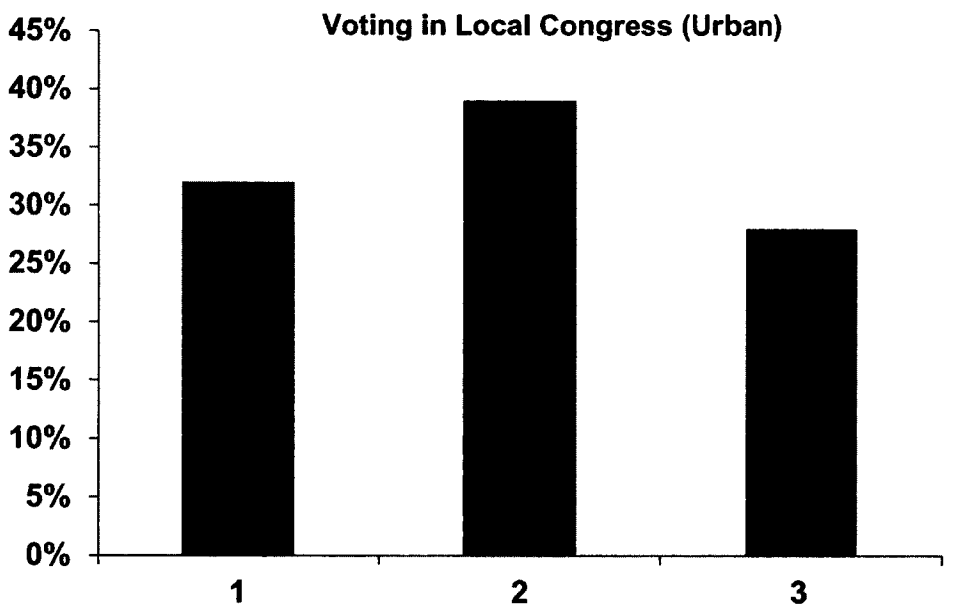


Figure 4: Voting in Villagers' Committee and Local People's Congress

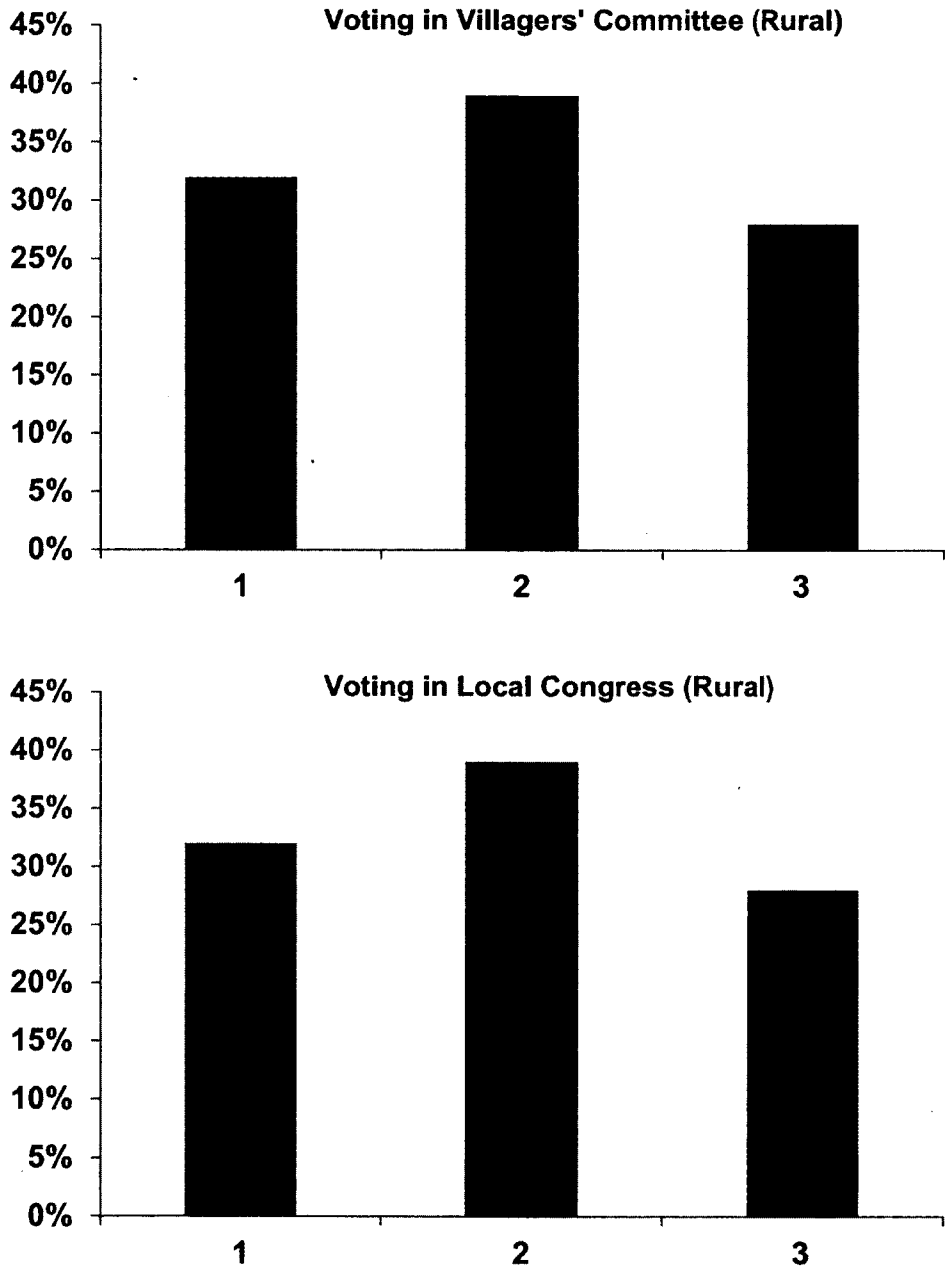


Table 3: Predicting Voting in Villagers' Committee (VC) and Local Congress (LC) in Rural China

	Voting (VC)		Voting (LC)	
Independent variables	B(SE)	Exp(B)	B(SE)	Exp(B)
Income	-.08(.05)	.92	-.18(.05)***	.83
Education	.009(.01)	1.00	-.02(.01)	.98
Gender	.30(.09)***	1.35	.41(.09)***	1.51
SES	.16(.05)***	1.17	.09(.05)#	1.09
Party membership	.44(.16)**	1.55	.50(.16)**	1.65
News media				
TV	-.04(.04)	.96	.10(.04)*	1.10
Newspaper	.04(.03)	1.04	.21(.03)***	1.23
Internet	-.43(.09)***	.65	-.38(.09)***	.68
Attention to news media	.31(.04)***	1.36	.05(.05)	1.05
Social Capital				
Trust with close relationship	.24(.07)***	1.27	.23(.07)**	1.26
Trust with social relationship	.07(.05)	1.07	.002(.05)	1.00
Trust with weak relationship	-.10(.08)	.90	-.08(.08)	.92
Social networks	.07(.14)	1.07	.37(.15)*	1.45
Norms of reciprocity	.28(.05)***	1.32	-.03(.05)	.97
Conflict				
Conflict with others	.35(.14)*	1.42	.56(.14)***	1.75
Conflict with the government	-.07(.27)	.09	.03(.27)	1.03
Log Likelihood	-2076.67		-1915.77	
Nagelkerke R^2	14%		11%	

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 #p close to .05

Table 4: Predicting Political Participation in Rural China

Independent Variables	Political Participation	
Control Variables	B(SE)	Exp(B)
Income	.04(.18)	1.04
Education	-.03(.04)	.98
Gender	.48(.35)	1.62
SES	-.27(.18)	.76
Party membership	.63(.44)	1.88
News media		
TV	-.08(.13)	.92
Newspaper	.02(.11)	1.02
Internet	.33(.16)*	1.39
Attention to news media	-.04(.16)	.97
Social Capital		
Trust with close relationship	-.50(.25)*	.61
Trust with social relationship	.33(.19)#	1.4
Trust with weak relationship	.32(.28)	1.4
Social networks	-.15(.49)	.87
Norms of reciprocity	-.33(.16)	.72
Conflict		
Conflict with others	.45(.41)	1.57
Conflict with the government	2.2(.48)***	9.06
Log Likelihood	409.58	
Nagelkerke R^2	15%	

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 #p close to .05

Table 5: Predicting Voting in Residents' Committee (RC) and Local Congress (LC) in Urban China

	Voting (RC)		Voting (LC)	
Independent variables	B(SE)	Exp(B)	B(SE)	Exp(B)
Income	-.56(.10)***	.57	-.24(.11)***	.79
Education	-.01(.01)	.99	.02(.01)*	1.02
Gender	.09(.07)	1.09	.06(.07)	1.06
SES	.08(.04)*	1.08	-.05(.04)	.95
Party membership	-.75(.09)***	.47	-.50(.09)***	.61
News media				
TV	-.20(.06)**	.82	-.18(.06)**	.84
Newspaper	-.05(.02)*	.95	.02(.02)	1.02
Internet	.06(.02)**	1.06	.16(.02)***	1.17
Attention to news media	-.36(.04)***	.70	-.19(.04)***	.83
Social Capital				
Trust with close relationship	-.11(.06)#	.89	-.04(.06)	.96
Trust with social relationship	-.14(.04)***	.87	-.05(.04)	.95
Trust with weak relationship	.26(.05)***	1.30	.08(.05)	1.08
Social networks	-.23 (.05)***	.79	-.39(.06)***	.68
Norms of reciprocity	-.09(.04)*	.91	-.16(.04)***	.85
Conflict				
Conflict with others	.39(.12)**	1.48	.16(.13)	1.17
Conflict with the government	.06(.22)	1.06	.18(.22)	1.19
Log Likelihood	-3596.01		-3436.51	
Nagelkerke R^2	13%		20%	

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 #p close to .05

Table 6: Predicting Political Participation in Urban China

Independent Variables	Political Participation	
Control Variables	B(SE)	Exp(B)
Income	-.30(.22)	.74
Education	.04(.02)*	1.04
Gender	.28(.15)#	1.33
SES	.40 (.09)***	1.49
Party membership	.33(.19)#	1.39
News media		
TV	-.24(.08)**	.79
Newspaper	-.01(.05)	.99
Internet	.01(.04)	1.0
Attention to news media	.31(.09)***	1.36
Social Capital		
Trust with close relationship	-.27(.13)*	.76
Trust with social relationship	-.10(.10)	.90
Trust with weak relationship	.10(.11)	1.1
Social networks	.62(.11)***	1.87
Norms of reciprocity	.18(.10)#	1.2
Conflict		
Conflict with others	.54(.21)*	1.71
Conflict with the government	1.90(.26)***	6.70
Log Likelihood	1508.11	
Nagelkerke R^2	11%	

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 #p close to .05

Appendix A: SPSS Syntax File for Rural Sample

```
*****************************************************************
** Trust
*****************************************************************
**Recoding Trust with close ties.
RECODE qe14a qe14b qe14e qe14c qe14d (6=SYSMIS) (ELSE=Copy) INTO
reqe14a reqe14b reqe14e reqe14c reqe14d.
EXECUTE.

**Computing trust with close ties.
COMPUTE trust_close=mean(reqe14a,reqe14b,reqe14e,reqe14c,reqe14d).
EXECUTE.

**Recoding Trust with social ties.
RECODE qe14j qe14k qe14l (6=SYSMIS) (ELSE=Copy) INTO reqe14j reqe14k
reqe14l.
EXECUTE.

**Computing trust with social ties.
COMPUTE trust_social=mean(reqe14j,reqe14k,reqe14l).
EXECUTE.

**Recoding Trust with weak ties.
RECODE qe14g qe14i qe14m qe14f qe14h (6=SYSMIS) (ELSE=Copy) INTO
reqe14g reqe14i reqe14m reqe14f reqe14h.
EXECUTE.

**Computing trust with weak ties.
COMPUTE trust_weak=mean(reqe14g,reqe14i,reqe14m, reqe14f, reqe14h).
EXECUTE.

*****************************************************************
** Social Networks
*****************************************************************
RECODE qe18a qe18b qe18c qe18d qe18e qe18f qe18g (2=5) (1=4) (3=3)
(4=2) (5=1) INTO reqe18a reqe18b reqe18c reqe18d reqe18e reqe18f
reqe18g.
EXECUTE.

COMPUTE
social_networks=mean(reqe18a,reqe18b,reqe18c,reqe18d,reqe18e,reqe18f,re
qe18g).
EXECUTE.

*****************************************************************
** Norms of Reciprocity
*****************************************************************
COMPUTE norms=mean(qe19a,qe19b,qe19c,qe19d,qe19e,qe19f,qe19g,qf02).
EXECUTE.

*****************************************************************
** News media
*****************************************************************
**Recoding news media.
```

```
RECODE TV newspaper internet (6=1) (5=2) (4=3) (3=4) (2=5) (1=6)
(ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO re_TV re_news re_internet.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
** Gender
*************************************************************************
RECODE qa2_01 (2=0) (ELSE=Copy) INTO gender.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
** SES
*************************************************************************
RECODE qc13 (SYSMIS=SYSMIS) (5=1) (4=2) (3=3) (2=4) (1=5) INTO SES.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
** Party/Mobile
*************************************************************************
RECODE qb04a (1=1) (2=0) (ELSE=Copy) INTO party.
EXECUTE.
RECODE qb05a (1=1) (2=0) (ELSE=Copy) INTO mobile.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
**Conflict with others and conflict with government
*************************************************************************
DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet1.
RECODE qf20a qf21a (1=1) (2=0) (ELSE=Copy) INTO conflict_p conflict_g.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
** Political Participation
*************************************************************************
RECODE qf08a(1=1)(ELSE=0) INTO protest.
EXECUTE.
RECODE qf08b (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO petition_p.
EXECUTE.
RECODE qf08c (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO petition_c.
EXECUTE.

COMPUTE polpar =protest+petition_p+petition_c.
RECODE polpar (SYSMIS=SYSMIS) (3=1) (2=1) (1=1)(0=0) INTO polpar_new.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
** Vote in local congress / Villagers' Committee
*************************************************************************
RECODE qf03 qf05 (1=0) (2=1) (3=2) (ELSE=Copy) INTO vote_cong vote_vc.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
** Ordinal Logistic Predicting Voting in Local Congress (rural)
*************************************************************************
GENLIN vote_cong (ORDER=ASCENDING) BY mobile gender party conflict_p
conflict_g (ORDER=DESCENDING)
```

```
    WITH education lg_income SES attention re_TV re_news re_internet
trust_close trust_social
    trust_weak social_networks norms
  /MODEL mobile gender party conflict_p conflict_g education lg_income
    SES attention re_TV re_news re_internet trust_close trust_social
    trust_weak social_networks norms
 DISTRIBUTION=MULTINOMIAL LINK=CUMLOGIT
  /CRITERIA METHOD=FISHER(1) SCALE=1 COVB=MODEL MAXITERATIONS=100
    MAXSTEPHALVING=5
    PCONVERGE=1E-006(ABSOLUTE) SINGULAR=1E-012 ANALYSISTYPE=3(WALD)
    CILEVEL=95 CITYPE=WALD
    LIKELIHOOD=FULL
  /MISSING CLASSMISSING=EXCLUDE
  /PRINT CPS DESCRIPTIVES MODELINFO FIT SUMMARY SOLUTION.

*****************************************************************
** Ordinal Logistic Predicting Voting in Villagers' Committee (Urban)
*****************************************************************
GENLIN vote_vc (ORDER=ASCENDING) BY mobile gender party conflict_p
conflict_g (ORDER=DESCENDING)WITH education lg_income SES attention
re_TV re_news re_internet trust_close trust_social
    trust_weak social_networks norms
  /MODEL mobile gender party conflict_p conflict_g education lg_income
    SES attention re_TV re_news re_internet trust_close trust_social
    trust_weak social_networks norms
 DISTRIBUTION=MULTINOMIAL LINK=CUMLOGIT
  /CRITERIA METHOD=FISHER(1) SCALE=1 COVB=MODEL MAXITERATIONS=100
    MAXSTEPHALVING=5
    PCONVERGE=1E-006(ABSOLUTE) SINGULAR=1E-012
    ANALYSISTYPE=3(WALD)CILEVEL=95 CITYPE=WALD
    LIKELIHOOD=FULL
  /MISSING CLASSMISSING=EXCLUDE
  /PRINT CPS DESCRIPTIVES MODELINFO FIT SUMMARY SOLUTION.

*****************************************************************
** Logistic Predicting Political Participation (rural)
*****************************************************************
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES polpar_new
  /METHOD=ENTER lg_income education gender SES party mobile
  /METHOD=ENTER attention re_TV re_news re_internet
  /METHOD=ENTER trust_close trust_social trust_weak social_networks
norms
  /METHOD=ENTER conflict_p conflict_g
  /CONTRAST (party)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (mobile)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (gender)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (conflict_p)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (conflict_g)=Indicator(1)
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).

*****************************************************************
Merging file for Multilevel Analysis
*****************************************************************

DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet2.
MATCH FILES /FILE=*
  /FILE='DataSet1'
```

```
  /RENAME (qa01a qa01b qa02a qa02b qa03a qa03b qa03c qa04a qa04b qa04c
qa05a qa05b qa06a qa06b
    qa07a qa07b qa07c qa08a qa08b qa09a qa09b qa09c qa10a qa10b qa10c
qa11a qa11b qa11c qa11d qa12a
    qa12b qa12c qa12d qa12e qa13a qa13b qa14a qa14b qa14c qa14d qa14e
qb1a qb1b qb1c qb1d qb1e qb1f
    qb1g qb1h qb1i qb1j qb1k qb1l qb1m qb1n qb1o qb2a qb2b qb2c qb2d
qb2e qb2f qb2g qb2h qb2i qb2j qb2k
    qb2l qb2m qb2n qb2o qb2p qb2q qb2r qc01 qc02 qc03 qc04aa qc04ab
qc04ac qc04ad qc04ba qc04bb qc04bc
    qc04bd qc04ca qc04cb qc04cc qc04cd qc04da qc04db qc04dc qc04dd
qc04ea qc04eb qc04ec qc04ed qc04fa
    qc04fb qc04fc qc04fd qc05a qc05b qc06a qc06b qc07a qc07b qc07c
qc07d qc07e qc07f qc07g qc07h qc07i
    qc07j qc08a qc08b qc08c qs2a qs2b qs2c qs3 qs7 uniq_id serial = d0
d1 d2 d3 d4 d5 d6 d7 d8 d9 d10
    d11 d12 d13 d14 d15 d16 d17 d18 d19 d20 d21 d22 d23 d24 d25 d26 d27
d28 d29 d30 d31 d32 d33 d34 d35
    d36 d37 d38 d39 d40 d41 d42 d43 d44 d45 d46 d47 d48 d49 d50 d51 d52
d53 d54 d55 d56 d57 d58 d59 d60
    d61 d62 d63 d64 d65 d66 d67 d68 d69 d70 d71 d72 d73 d74 d75 d76 d77
d78 d79 d80 d81 d82 d83 d84 d85
    d86 d87 d88 d89 d90 d91 d92 d93 d94 d95 d96 d97 d98 d99 d100 d101
d102 d103 d104 d105 d106 d107
    d108 d109 d110 d111 d112 d113 d114 d115 d116 d117 d118 d119 d120
d121 d122 d123 d124)
  /BY qs2
  /DROP= d0 d1 d2 d3 d4 d5 d6 d7 d8 d9 d10 d11 d12 d13 d14 d15 d16 d17
d18 d19 d20 d21 d22 d23 d24
    d25 d26 d27 d28 d29 d30 d31 d32 d33 d34 d35 d36 d37 d38 d39 d40 d41
d42 d43 d44 d45 d46 d47 d48 d49
    d50 d51 d52 d53 d54 d55 d56 d57 d58 d59 d60 d61 d62 d63 d64 d65 d66
d67 d68 d69 d70 d71 d72 d73 d74
    d75 d76 d77 d78 d79 d80 d81 d82 d83 d84 d85 d86 d87 d88 d89 d90 d91
d92 d93 d94 d95 d96 d97 d98 d99
    d100 d101 d102 d103 d104 d105 d106 d107 d108 d109 d110 d111 d112
d113 d114 d115 d116 d117 d118 d119
    d120 d121 d122 d123 d124.
EXECUTE.
```

Appendix B: Syntax File for Urban Sample

```
*************************************************************
** Trust
*************************************************************
**Recoding Trust with close ties.
RECODE qe14a qe14b qe14e qe14f qe14h (6=SYSMIS) (ELSE=Copy) INTO
reqe14a reqe14b reqe14e reqe14f reqe14h.
EXECUTE.

**Computing trust with close ties.
COMPUTE trust_close=mean(reqe14a,reqe14b,reqe14e,reqe14f,reqe14h).
EXECUTE.

**Recoding Trust with social ties.
RECODE qe14j qe14k qe14l (6=SYSMIS) (ELSE=Copy) INTO reqe14j reqe14k
reqe14l.
EXECUTE.

**Computing trust with social ties.
COMPUTE trust_social=mean(reqe14j,reqe14k,reqe14l).
EXECUTE.

**Recoding Trust with weak ties.
RECODE qe14g qe14i qe14m (6=SYSMIS) (ELSE=Copy) INTO reqe14g reqe14i
reqe14m.
EXECUTE

**Computing trust with weak ties.
COMPUTE trust_weak=mean(reqe14g,reqe14i,reqe14m).
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************
** Social Networks
*************************************************************
RECODE qe18a qe18b qe18c qe18d qe18e qe18f qe18g (2=5) (1=4) (3=3)
(4=2) (5=1) INTO reqe18a reqe18b reqe18c reqe18d reqe18e reqe18f
reqe18g.
EXECUTE.

COMPUTE
social_networks=mean(reqe18a,reqe18b,reqe18c,reqe18d,reqe18e,reqe18f,re
qe18g).
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************
** Norms of Reciprocity
*************************************************************
COMPUTE norms=mean(qe19a,qe19b,qe19c,qe19d,qe19e,qe19f,qe19g,qf02).
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************
** News media
*************************************************************
**Recoding news media.
```

```
RECODE TV newspaper internet (6=1) (5=2) (4=3) (3=4) (2=5) (1=6)
(ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO re_TV re_news re_internet.
EXECUTE.

*************************************************************************
** Generalized Linear Model for Voting in Local Congress
*************************************************************************
GENLIN vote_cong (ORDER=DESCENDING) BY gender party conflict_p
conflict_g (ORDER=DESCENDING) WITH education lg_income SES attention
re_TV re_news re_internet trust_close trust_social trust_weak
social_networks norms
  /MODEL gender party conflict_p conflict_g education lg_income SES
attention re_TV re_news re_internet trust_close trust_social trust_weak
social_networks norms
 DISTRIBUTION=MULTINOMIAL LINK=CUMLOGIT
  /CRITERIA METHOD=FISHER(1) SCALE=1 COVB=MODEL MAXITERATIONS=100
MAXSTEPHALVING=5 PCONVERGE=1E-006(ABSOLUTE) SINGULAR=1E-012
ANALYSISTYPE=3(WALD) CILEVEL=95 CITYPE=WALD LIKELIHOOD=FULL
  /MISSING CLASSMISSING=EXCLUDE.

*************************************************************************
** Generalized Linear Model for Voting in Residents' Committee
*************************************************************************
GENLIN vote_rc (ORDER=DESCENDING) BY gender party conflict_p conflict_g
(ORDER=DESCENDING) WITH education lg_income SES attention re_TV re_news
re_internet trust_close trust_social trust_weak social_networks norms
  /MODEL gender party conflict_p conflict_g education lg_income SES
attention re_TV re_news re_internet trust_close trust_social trust_weak
social_networks norms
 DISTRIBUTION=MULTINOMIAL LINK=CUMLOGIT
  /CRITERIA METHOD=FISHER(1) SCALE=1 COVB=MODEL MAXITERATIONS=100
MAXSTEPHALVING=5 PCONVERGE=1E-006(ABSOLUTE) SINGULAR=1E-012
ANALYSISTYPE=3(WALD) CILEVEL=95 CITYPE=WALD LIKELIHOOD=FULL
  /MISSING CLASSMISSING=EXCLUDE.

*************************************************************************
** Logistic Regression Predicting Political Participation
*************************************************************************
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES polpar
  /METHOD=ENTER lg_income SES education gender party cellphone
interest_cong interest_rc
  /METHOD=ENTER attention re_TV re_news re_internet
  /METHOD=ENTER trust_close trust_social trust_weak social_networks
norms
  /METHOD=ENTER conflict_g conflict_p
  /CONTRAST (gender)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (party)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (cellphone)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (conflict_g)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (conflict_p)=Indicator(1)
  /PRINT=GOODFIT
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).
```