Online Appendix for "Making the List: Reevaluating Political Trust and Social Desirability in China"

Stephen P. Nicholson and Haifeng Huang

Appendix A: Demographics and Ethical Considerations

Appendix A1: Demographics

Table A1. Sample Demographic Breakdown

Variables	Categories	Our Study	2018 CFPS (Internet Active Adults)	2018 CFPS (Adults)
Gender	Female	46.7%	48.7%	50.6%
	Male	53.3%	51.3%	49.4%
Age Group	≤ 19	3.6%	4.5%	2.7%
	20-29	39.9%	29.5%	15.7%
	30-39	39.2%	27.7%	17.2%
	40-49	12.5%	19.0%	18.5%
	50-59	3.9%	12.2%	19.8%
	≥ 60	0.9%	7%	26.2%
Education	≤ Primary school	0.2%	13.5%	37.3%
	Junior high school	3.1%	34.6%	32.5%
	Senior high school	12.7%	22.8%	15.9%
	3-year college	19.7%	14.6%	7.6%
	≥ 4-year college	64.4%	14.5%	6.7%
CCP Member	Yes	25.8%	11.7%	9.7%
	No	74.2%	88.3%	90.3%

Note: CFPS refers to China Family Panel Studies, a biennial longitudinal general social survey of China using multi-stage probability sampling. We use its "resampled sample" (subsample=1), which is nationally representative by design (see CFPS User's Manual, 3rd Edition, available at http://isss.pku.edu.cn/cfps/docs/20200315092524928116.pdf). We also only include participants aged 18 and above from CFPS in order to make the data comparable to our study. "Internet active" participants are those for whom the importance of the internet as an information source (qu802) is 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 to 5. The variable in CFPS used for education is "cfps2018sch," urban/rural residence is "urban," and CCP Member = Yes if "party" or "qn4001" is 1.

Appendix A2: Ethical Considerations

This is a standard survey experiment with the item count method (list experiment) embedded in it. The survey was anonymous and no personal identifying information was collected. Respondents were required to be at least 18 years old, and they first completed a voluntary consent page before participating in the survey. They could also withdraw from the survey at any time. Although the respondents were from China, they completed the survey on Qualtrics, a US-based survey platform, which allowed the authors to maintain full control of the survey process and only we have access to the anonymized data.

Most of the questions in our study have appeared regularly in previous studies. The list experiment method is used to indirectly measure the aggregate distribution of respondents' attitudes on certain questions without explicitly asking individual respondents to directly reveal their attitudes. The method reduces the sensitivity of relevant questions and has been widely used in political science research including studies in Chinese politics. Further, as mentioned in the article, our list items were adapted from existing studies.

Respondents were recruited by Qualtrics, which maintains a large panel of respondents in China who are compensated for participation. The participant pool was highly diverse and, as Appendix A1 shows, the demographic distributions were comparable to Chinese internet users in general. It was a voluntary and broad-based survey, and we do not see how it differentially benefited or harmed particular groups in a meaningful way. The coauthors were faculty members at the same university at the time of the survey and the study was deemed exempt from review by the Institutional Review Board of the University of California, Merced (protocol ID: UCM12-0032).

Appendix B: Survey Question Wording

I. Attitudinal Questions

1. Life satisfaction:

All things considered, how do you feel about your life these days?

A. Satisfied
B. Somewhat satisfied
C. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
D. Somewhat dissatisfied
E. *Dissatisfied*

2. Political interest:

To what extent are you interested in political affairs?

A. Very interested
B. Somewhat interested
C. Not very interested
D. Not interested at all

3. Confucian values:

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1) "Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask."
2) "Being a student, one should not question the authority of their teacher."
3) "Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions."
4) "Even if there is some disagreement with others, one should avoid the conflict."

A. Agree
B. Somewhat agree
C. Somewhat disagree
D. Disagree

4. China's current situation:

How do you feel about the overall situation in China today?

A. Satisfied
B. Somewhat satisfied
C. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

D. Somewhat dissatisfied
E. Dissatisfied

5. Self-monitoring

1) When you're with other people, how often do you put on a show to impress or entertain them?

A. Never
B. Once in a while
C. About half the time
D. Most of the time
E. Always

2) How good or bad of an actor would you be?

A. Very poor
B. Poor
C. Fair
D. Good
E. Excellent

3) When you're in a group of people, how often are you the center of attention?

A. Never
B. Once in a while
C. About half the time
D. Most of the time
E. Always

6. Direct measures of trust in government:

1) Central Government

To what extent do you trust the central government to do what is right?

A. A great deal
B. A fair amount
C. Not very much
D. None at all

2) Local Government

To what extent do you trust your county/municipal government to do what is right?

A. A great deal

B. A fair amount
C. Not very much
D. None at all

7. Direct measure of support for the removal of the presidential term limit:

   Do you support the removal of the term limit for the national leader from the constitution?

   A. Support
   B. Somewhat support
   C. Neither support nor oppose
   D. Somewhat oppose
   E. Oppose

8. List experiment for trust in government

   1) Control:

      How many of the following do you trust? Don't tell us which ones, just how many (from 0 to 4).

      A. Neighbors
      B. Schoolmates/colleagues
      C. Drug users
      D. Policemen

   2) Central government treatment:

      How many of the following do you trust? Don't tell us which ones, just how many (from 0 to 5).

      A. Neighbors
      B. Schoolmates/colleagues
      C. Drug users
      D. Policemen
      E. Central government

   3) Local government treatment:

      How many of the following do you trust? Don't tell us which ones, just how many (from 0 to 5).

      A. Neighbors
      B. Schoolmates/colleagues
      C. Drug users

D. Policemen
E. County/municipal government

9. List experiment for support for the term limit removal:

1) Control:

How many of the following do you like/approve? Don't tell us which ones, just how many (from 0 to 4).

A. Bike sharing
B. Smoking
C. Restricting the celebration of Western holidays
D. Sending children to study abroad

2) Treatment:

How many of the following do you like/approve? Don't tell us which ones, just how many (from 0 to 5).

A. Bike sharing
B. Smoking
C. Restricting the celebration of Western holidays
D. Sending children to study abroad
E. Removing the term limit for the national leader

II. Demographic Questions

1. *Your age:*

A. 19 or below
B. 20-24
C. 25-29
D. 30-34
E. 35-39
F. 40-44
G. 45-49
H. 50-54
I. 55-59
J. 60 or above

2. *Your gender:*

A. Female
B. Male

3. *Your highest education attainment (or the degree you are currently pursing if you are a student):*

A. Primary school or below
B. Junior high school
C. Senior high school
D. Three-year college
E. Four-year college
F. Graduate school

4. *Are you a member of the Chinese Communist Party?*

A. Yes
B. No

5. *On a scale from 1 (worst) to 9 (best), how would you describe your family's overall income situation relative to other people in society?*

Appendix C: Summary Statistics and Balance Check of Covariates

Table C1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	N
Age Group	3.993	1.786	1	10	1602
Income Level	5.939	1.582	1	9	1602
Female	.467	.499	0	1	1602
CCP Member	.258	.438	0	1	1602
Education	4.582	.983	1	6	1602
Life Satisfaction	3.951	.894	1	5	1602
Political Interest	2.976	.836	1	4	1602
China Situation	3.963	.888	1	5	1602
Confucian Value	2.618	.610	1	4	1602
Self-Monitoring	2.754	.742	1	5	1602

Table C2: Balance by Trust in Government List Experiment Groups

	Control (N=514)	Central List (N=520)	Local List (N=568)	*F*	*P*-Value
Age Group	3.969 (1.779)	3.992 (1.796)	4.016 (1.785)	0.09	0.911
Income Level	5.975 (1.683)	5.898 (1.517)	5.945 (1.547)	0.31	0.734
Female	.446 (.498)	.512 (.500)	.445 (.497)	3.09	0.046
CCP Member	.278 (.449)	.235 (.424)	.261 (.439)	1.30	0.273
Education	4.689 (.981)	4.588 (.997)	4.481 (.963)	6.10	0.002
Life Satisfaction	3.907 (.942)	3.919 (.854)	4.021 (.883)	2.71	0.067
Political Interest	2.928 (.850)	2.990 (.836)	3.005 (.822)	1.27	0.280
China Situation	3.911 (.936)	3.938 (.862)	4.032 (.864)	2.80	0.061
Confucian Value	2.618 (.631)	2.600 (.582)	2.636 (.616)	0.47	0.623
Self-Monitoring	2.790 (.727)	2.724 (.752)	2.749 (.747)	1.03	0.358

Note: Group means with standard deviations in parentheses. One-way ANOVA.

Table C3: Balance by Support for Term Limit Removal List Experiment Groups

	Control (N=810)	List (N=792)	*t*	*P*-Value
Age Group	3.960 (1.794)	4.027 (1.778)	-0.740	0.460
Income Level	6.005 (1.536)	5.872 (1.626)	1.676	0.094
Female	.458 (.499)	.476 (.500)	-0.721	0.471
CCP Member	.260 (.439)	.255 (.436)	0.249	0.804
Education	4.562 (.984)	4.604 (.982)	-0.851	0.395
Life Satisfaction	3.980 (.867)	3.922 (.921)	1.309	0.191
Political Interest	3.006 (.822)	2.944 (.849)	1.478	0.140
China Situation	4.002 (.854)	3.922 (.921)	1.819	0.069
Confucian Value	2.637 (.614)	2.599 (.605)	1.244	0.214
Self-Monitoring	2.783 (.730)	2.725 (.754)	1.563	0.118

Note: Group means with standard deviations in parentheses. Independent sample t-tests with unequal variances. *P*-values reflect two-sided tests.

Appendix D: Other Results

Table D1: No Order Effect in the List Experiments

List Question	Direct Question First	List Question First	*t*	*P*-value
Trust in Central Government (N=520)	2.976 (0.069)	3.071 (0.070)	0.963	0.336
Trust in Local Government (N=568)	2.892 (0.071)	2.970 (0.066)	0.808	0.419
Support for Term Limit Removal (N=792)	2.354 (0.053)	2.389 (0.057)	0.443	0.658

Note: The second and third columns show mean responses to the list questions by whether the respondents answered the direct question first or list question first, with standard errors in parentheses. Independent sample *t*-tests with unequal variances. *P*-values reflect two-sided tests.

Table D2. Trust in Different Levels of Government by List Experiment and Direct Questioning (Unweighted)

	List Experiment	Direct Questioning	Diff (List-Direct)
Central Government (N=1034)	0.716 (0.591, 0.840)***	0.928 (0.913, 0.944)	-0.212
Local Government (N=1082)	0.624 (0.500, 0.748)***	0.722 (0.695, 0.749)	-0.098

Note: Point estimates of trust in government with 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. The list experiment results are difference-in-means estimates. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table D3. Support for the Term Limit Removal by List Experiment and Direct Questioning (Unweighted)

	List Experiment	Direct Questioning	Diff (List-Direct)
Non-Neutral Respondents in Direct Questioning (N=1138)	0.428 (0.310, 0.546)***	0.591 (0.562, 0.619)	-0.163
Neutral Respondents in Direct Questioning (N=464)	0.323 (0.164, 0.483)***		

Note: Point estimates of support for the term limit removal with 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. The list experiment results are difference-in-means estimates. *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix E: Multivariate Regression Results

Table E1: Multivariate Regression Results of Overreporting Trust in Government

Category	Subgroup	Level of Government	Overreporting (SE)
Age	Young (< 30)	Central Government	-0.202 (0.079)
		Local Government	-0.183 (0.113)
	Old (⩾ 30)	Central Government	-0.193 (0.066)
		Local Government	-0.162 (0.091)
Education	⩾ 4-Year College	Central Government	-0.256 (0.070)
		Local Government	-0.146 (0.096)
	< 4-Year College	Central Government	-0.128 (0.083)
		Local Government	-0.211 (0.091)
Gender	Female	Central Government	-0.161 (0.066)
		Local Government	-0.203 (0.087)
	Male	Central Government	-0.256 (0.077)
		Local Government	-0.169 (0.120)
Income	High	Central Government	-0.607 (0.066)
		Local Government	-0.293 (0.073)
	Low	Central Government	-0.156 (0.112)
		Local Government	-0.014 (0.092)
CCP Member	Yes	Central Government	-0.236 (0.122)
		Local Government	-0.247 (0.129)
	No	Central Government	-0.202 (0.058)
		Local Government	-0.165 (0.115)
Life Satisfaction	High	Central Government	-0.210 (0.049)
		Local Government	-0.198 (0.087)
	Low	Central Government	-0.177 (0.090)
		Local Government	0.103 (0.141)
Political Interest	High	Central Government	-0.181 (0.078)
		Local Government	-0.256 (0.078)
	Low	Central Government	-0.283 (0.081)
		Local Government	-0.005 (0.103)
China Situation	High Satisfaction	Central Government	-0.209 (0.073)
		Local Government	-0.208 (0.083)
	Low Satisfaction	Central Government	-0.323 (0.104)
		Local Government	-0.045 (0.112)
Confucianism	High	Central Government	-0.162 (0.100)
		Local Government	-0.322 (0.090)
	Low	Central Government	-0.274 (0.073)
		Local Government	-0.106 (0.104)
Self-Monitoring	High	Central Government	-0.485 (0.098)
		Local Government	-0.191 (0.141)
	Low	Central Government	-0.055 (0.132)
		Local Government	-0.144 (0.086)

Note: Estimates of differences between list and direct measures of trust in government (list-direct) with standard errors in parentheses. Categories are dichotomized using median split.

Table E2: Multivariate Regression Results of Overreporting Support for Term Limit Removal

Category	Subgroup	Overreporting (SE)
Age	Young (< 30)	-0.022 (0.084)
	Old (≥ 30)	-0.195 (0.064)
Education	≥ 4-Year College	-0.078 (0.065)
	< 4-Year College	-0.214 (0.065)
Gender	Female	-0.135 (0.078)
	Male	-0.121 (0.068)
Income	High	-0.212 (0.063)
	Low	-0.020 (0.076)
CCP Member	Yes	-0.110 (0.093)
	No	-0.134 (0.061)
Life Satisfaction	High	-0.193 (0.056)
	Low	0.078 (0.086)
Political Interest	High	-0.104 (0.058)
	Low	-0.199 (0.122)
China Situation	High Satisfaction	-0.214 (0.054)
	Low Satisfaction	0.118 (0.083)
Confucianism	High	-0.141 (0.076)
	Low	-0.083 (0.093)
Self-Monitoring	High	-0.079 (0.072)
	Low	-0.167 (0.071)

Note: Estimates of differences between list and direct measures of support for the term limit removal (list-direct) with standard errors in parentheses. Categories are dichotomized using median split.