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Citizen attitudes towards China's maritime territorial disputes: traditional media and Internet usage as distinctive conduits of political views in China

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differential impact of Chinese citizens' use of traditional media and Internet sources on their political views about the country's territorial dispute with Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Chinese citizens can utilize a variety of conduits of information that allow varying degrees of government control over the way foreign affairs and other controversies are presented. Those who rely on mainstream, state-controlled television, radio, and printed media for information on the disputes, and those who turn to less-prescriptive sources on the Internet, can be expected to have distinctive political attitudes. We use original 2013 Chinese survey data to explore patterns of media consumption and citizens' attention levels towards the Sino-Japanese island dispute, and views regarding the government's performance in handling the issue and appropriate policy responses. Those who derive their information from traditional media tend to view the government's performance more positively, and are more likely both to favour compromise and to oppose the use of military force. By comparison, information from Internet sources, which is more user selfselective, sustains a wider range of attitudes about the Sino-Japanese island dispute and the appropriate policies for dealing with it, including both militaristic and moderate stances. All told, we find that Chinese citizens bring distinctive predispositions to their consumption of media information on this issue, but our results also clearly reflect an ongoing, pervasive influence for China's state-run traditional media. These findings have important implications for considering the resilience of authoritarian systems in the Internet era.

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Introduction

Citizens everywhere are exposed to a variety of informational cues about the world of politics around them. But despite the plethora of informational avenues, the impact of political news and information on individuals' political attitudes and actions is fundamentally perceiver-determined, and hinges on the interaction between audiences and messages (Graber, 1989, 2006). Indeed, research in Western democracies has long demonstrated that individuals' existing opinions, values, and loyalties constrain both their exposure to

mass-media information, and their receptiveness to those cues (Converse, 1966; Denmark, 2002, 2005; Zaller, 1991, 1992). In this sense, as Everson (1982) argues, 'no one receives the messages of the media unaffected by predispositions' (p. 99). The impact of mass-media-conveyed political information, therefore, is not one of a deluge washing away citizen resistance to new cues across the board. Rather, media effects require perceiver willingness to seek out and pay attention to new political information as well as receptiveness to those cues, thereby making the political effects of media cues fundamentally differential. This has been reinforced with the rise of digital online media, argues Iyengar (2011), which 'provide greater user control, thus facilitating consumers' ability to attend to information selectively' (pp. 124–125). In this context, the Internet can be seen as a source of alternative, critical information that resists the mass-consumption orientation of the traditional media.

In authoritarian systems such as China, media effects and the impact of Internet-based political information have often been assumed to take fundamentally different forms. On the one hand, some contend that because government censors and propaganda offices manage news and information, including Internet sources, the media remain vital factors for sustaining authoritarian systems (MacKinnon, 2012; Morozov, 2011). Other analysts, however, contend that the Internet represents an intrinsically critical and independent domain for political evaluations, one that inherently resists governmental control (Howard, 2010; Shirky, 2011) and frequently undermines the authoritarian state's legitimacy, despite its censorial efforts (Bennett, 1998; Ferdinand, 2000). Still other researchers have underscored the importance of media source variability, even in authoritarian systems, and emphasize the need to examine citizens' differential exposure to, and effects from, a range of media sources, despite the systematized censorship of the state (Kern & Hainmueller, 2009; Levitsky & Way, 2002).

Despite the distinctive political milieu of authoritarian systems, research has shown that individuals' self-selection of political informational channels is comparable in many ways to the media usage patterns and attitudinal effects in liberal democratic systems (see Geddes & Zaller, 1989). Indeed, recent research on contemporary China's authoritarian media landscape has shown that despite the state's sophisticated centralized control systems, citizens selectively seek alternative information sources based on their perceptions of media outlets' credibility and style, and to some degree 'the reduced ability of the state to control its content' (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011, p. 441; also see Stockmann, 2013, pp. 184, 185). Although the political messages in China's nonofficial and online media sources may vary only slightly from those of the more tightly scripted newspapers and television, their distinctive and often sensationalist style, commercialization, and perceived distance from state control mean that messages and informational believability are distinctive across the alternative media avenues. As Stockmann has shown, this can have significant effects on individuals' political evaluations, policy judgements, and governmental performance assessments (2013, p. 211).

This paper uses original 2013 survey data (Chubb, 2013a) on Chinese citizens' media usage and attitudes towards a high-salience foreign affairs controversy as a way to explore the role of media conduits of political information in an authoritarian system – a connection still under-researched (Norris & Inglehart, 2009) and only rarely examined using survey data (Stockmann, 2013, p. 203). Specifically, this paper examines the impact of citizens' use of Internet-based information sources to inform themselves about a key

foreign affairs issue, and assesses the extent to which Internet news sources convey or, alternatively, attract those with existing, critical attitudes towards state policies.

Although the universe of alternative conduits in authoritarian systems is more sharply constrained, and state censorship of political information more pervasive, the world of political information available to Chinese citizens is by no means monolithic. Instead, China has a variety of political media sources that vary in the degree to which they portray their distance from the government, and the extent to which, in fact, the state orchestrates the cues they convey. Our theoretical expectation is that Chinese citizens with different levels of education, class, and age pursue political information from different media avenues and differentially use those cues to inform themselves about key political issues and policies. We expect these differential media usage patterns to yield distinctive political assessments and performance judgements, with important implications for understanding the way the mass media, especially nonofficial sources including the Internet, inform Chinese citizens' political views. The results outlined below add significant new insights to the growing body of work examining how the Internet as an informational domain has so far tended to reinforce, rather than undermine, the resilience of China's authoritarian regime (Bondes & Schucher, 2014; Hyun & Kim, 2015; Sullivan, 2014).

Traditional and Internet media and the flow of political information in China

The mass media are both a vital conduit of political information for the citizens of China and an important, if evolving, instrument of the government's political control. Though, during the Maoist era, the mass media were almost entirely a vehicle of the political agendas of party-state actors, in the early 1980s the Chinese government, faced with budgetary shortfalls, slashed state funding of television and newspaper news outlets, and pushed them to commercialize and secure advertising revenue (Zhao, 1998). The result was the first step towards the creation of today's bifurcated media news avenues in China. The state retains its most obvious control over television news, which remains the most popular source of news in China, and the locus of the vast majority of advertising revenue in China (see Burkitt, 2011). Combined with radio and China's official newspapers, the broad reach of these traditional media outlets means they remain vital conduits of political information, especially on sensitive foreign policy issues, which are issue domains in which all governments tend to enjoy an 'informational advantage' (Baum & Potter, 2008).

However, with the rise of commercially funded nonofficial newspapers and, more recently, commercial Internet news portals, China has seen the emergence of news avenues that are distinctive for both their sensationalistic (and in some cases jingoistic) style and their conveyance of a sense of independence from the government. Though, as Stockmann (2013, p. 12) argues, these news conduits are only notionally less closely managed by the party-state's propaganda organs, their less official format, acerbic headlines, and more irreverent characterization of the news give these media an air of 'belonging to a social sphere dissociated from the state'. Tellingly, China's major online news portals are frequently explicit in proclaiming their distinction from the state media. NetEase, for example, in late 2013 launched an aggressive marketing campaign centred on the slogan, 'News With Attitude'. Its rival Tencent, meanwhile, identifies itself as 'The Fact Faction'. This purported independence and self-portrayal as professionally

objective, trustworthy advocates of the public interest, has been shown to boost these media outlets' credibility in the eyes of Chinese citizens – particularly on sensitive foreign affairs controversies (see Stockmann, 2010). In so doing, we would expect these nonofficial media to attract and sustain more critical citizenry on issues such as the maritime disputes at the heart of this paper.

Some, like Gries (2004) and Shirk (2007), contend that the Internet and other commercialized news sources thus provide China's citizens with an outlet for their political dissatisfactions that might well undermine the control of the national government. Citing a Chinese journalism professor, Shirk argues that media in contemporary China are forced to 'reflect public sentiment or else the Internet commentary will turn against the government' (2007, p. 239). Other research indicates that China's nonofficial media provide the government with an effective political tool precisely because of the legitimacy produced by its irreverent style – affording the government channels through which to convey political cues to its more unsympathetic citizens (Stockmann, 2013, p. 13). Thus, despite its tendency to foster criticism of the government, the online media should not necessarily be regarded as a threat to the party-state's position.¹ Research has yet to establish a definitive impact for Internet news coverage in authoritarian systems, despite the universal acknowledgement of its increasingly significant role in conveying political information. In the remainder of this paper, we analyse survey data on a high-salience foreign policy issue in China to bring new insights to these debates.

The Diaoyu Islands dispute as media usage case study

China's burgeoning economic and military power has raised a number of issues in recent years that test the national government's ability to sustain popular support for its foreign policy through the mass media. Perhaps none is as important as the dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and the natural resources in the surrounding area of the East China Sea. The group of eight uninhabited islands, which are under the administrative control of Japan, first became an issue in the early 1970s, after UN-sponsored preliminary surveys indicated the likely presence of significant hydrocarbon resources in the area (Park, 1973). Since 2010, two highly publicized incidents pitting the Chinese and Japanese governments against each other over control of the islands have brought the issue firmly to the forefront of public consciousness, causing the most serious deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations since normalization in the early 1970s. The most serious of these was Japan's decision to nationalize five of the islands in 2012, which China's top leaders condemned as an attempt to legitimize an illegal occupation of China's 'sacred territory' (see Weiss, 2014). In both instances China's response involved intensive domestic and international propaganda campaigns to publicize the party-state's official position that sovereignty over the islands belongs to China, and to lay the blame on Japan for the crisis. Leading state media, including CCTV and most newspapers, reported the latest developments prominently and, particularly in 2012, commercial media headlines and commentary raised the possibility of military conflict between China and Japan (China Central Television, 2012; Huanqiu Shibao, 2012a, 2012b). In both cases, thousands of Chinese citizens participated in anti-Japan street protests.

The Diaoyu Islands issue, therefore, represents an excellent case study for testing the role and impact of different media on Chinese audiences' political views, using survey

research. Because the combination of heavy state propaganda and the strong news value of the conflict has given the issue high levels of coverage across the Chinese media – traditional and online, state-run and commercial – we can expect survey respondents to share a high baseline level of exposure to and salience for the issue. Additionally, unlike issues such as pollution or food safety, the Diaoyu issue revolves around a dispute over uninhabited offshore islands and maritime spaces that are remote from audiences' direct experience; so members of the public have little information upon which to form their views besides the media content they consume. Research has shown that it is for these kinds of 'unobtrusive issues' that the media are most strongly able to convey their issue agenda to their audiences (see Graber, 1989, p. 154; Weaver, 1981, p. 50). Research on China's contemporary information environment has primarily focused on 'obtrusive' issues that affect citizens' everyday experiences, such as the environment, corruption, the legal system, and public health and safety. The 'unobtrusive' Diaoyu Islands case has theoretical significance precisely because of its lack of real-world referents for the audience. This makes it a critical case for testing whether or not citizens use different media avenues for developing distinctive political evaluations and views about the government and its policies – even on issues particularly amenable to state information control.

The ability of the Chinese government to use media news coverage to direct popular consciousness towards foreign affairs issues, such as the Diaoyu Islands dispute, raises the possibility that it does so partly as a considered strategy to bolster the legitimacy of the political status quo (Hyun & Kim, 2015). If so, argues Stockmann, it runs the risk of hefting a double-edged sword: 'Popular nationalism has gone beyond the boundaries of the official discourse and contains criticism of the CCP and its foreign policy stances, thus posing pressures and constraints on Chinese foreign policy' (2013, p. 16). Similarly, Shirk (2007, 2010) argues nationalist public opinion, fanned by commercial media and online platforms, could lead to irrational foreign policy choices and potentially even international conflict. These more sharp-edged, critical nationalist views are most likely to be sustained by China's commercialized, nonofficial online news media, where strident messages and sensationalist headlines help attract audiences (Chubb, author interviews, conducted in Beijing, October 2012). In the survey analysis below, we explore whether assessments of the government's performance assessments and policy preferences on the Diaoyu dispute are distinctly different for citizens using, respectively, traditional and Internet media as their source of information. If the sensationalistic tendencies of China's online media influence Internet users' views of the Diaoyu issue, we should expect our results to show stronger criticism of the government, and support for the idea of military action over the issue among those who get their information from online sources.

Data and methods

The survey data² used in this paper were generated through face-to-face interviews conducted by a Beijing-based research consultancy in April 2013, with 1413 residents in five major cities: Beijing (286 responses), Shanghai (286), Guangzhou (290), Chengdu (281), and Changsha (270). The questions on China's maritime disputes were part of an omnibus questionnaire that also included items on wildlife protection, health reform, aged care, and confidence in government. A multi-stage cluster sampling strategy randomized the location of target households across the five cities, with a maximum of

10 interviews taken in each cluster. Successful responses were collected from a total of 29.1% of target households – a rate that compares favourably to telephone and online survey methods.³ However, several caveats should be borne in mind. First, being limited to five Chinese cities, the sample is not nationally representative. Second, as the survey was only administered to adults who had lived in the city of their residence for at least one year, the results offer no indication of the opinions of rural residents, although 30.1% of respondents were holders of rural residency status (*hukou*). Third, given the subject matter, political correctness may have influenced some response patterns. However, on a number of questions related to government policy, clear majorities expressed dissatisfaction or disagreement, indicating that most respondents were in fact willing to criticize the government. The omnibus questionnaire format has some advantage in this regard: addressing a number of non-political topics with the interviewers before discussing the Sino-Japanese maritime territorial issue may have helped to mitigate respondents' political concerns. See the [Appendix 1](#) for details of question wording and the coding of all variables used in the empirical tests.

Results and discussion

Media usage and selective exposure to political information

As noted, despite the propaganda authorities' management of news content across all of the nation's media conduits, Internet news sources convey China's political information in decidedly different formats that are likely to attract a distinctive clientele, in part because their more sensational and irreverent style (Stockmann, 2013). If so, then the first key to assessing the political significance of China's Internet for high-salience foreign affairs issues such as the Diaoyu Islands dispute is to establish whether there are distinctive patterns in citizens' use of the nation's various media conduits for this sort of political news. In sum, because the influence of the media is constrained by individuals' selective exposure to information and, in turn, their receptivity to the cues they encounter, the political effects of China's media-conveyed news coverage rests on its citizens' patterns of media usage. These patterns are explored next.

Table 1 presents respondents' self-reported frequency of obtaining information about China's maritime disputes from the country's most important sources of political news: television, newspapers, online news portals, and Weibo (microblogs). It also shows the frequency of respondents accessing such information via any of four Internet sources (online news portals, Bulletin Board Service (BBS) forums, Weibo, and the instant messaging service Weixin).⁴ In interpreting these data, it is important to note that respondents

Table 1. Frequency of using various media for information on the maritime disputes (per cent, rounded).

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Newspapers	33	39	29
TV	8	31	61
Any Internet source	54	23	23
News portals	58	22	20
Weibo	76	13	12

Source: Chinese maritime disputes public opinion survey dataset (Chubb, 2013a).

were not asked about their media usage habits per se, but rather from which media they obtained information *about China's maritime disputes*, and how often. Television news in China, tightly managed by the Communist Party and government propaganda agencies, is far and away the most widely used source for information on China's maritime disputes. More than three-fifths (61%) of respondents report getting information on the maritime disputes from television 'often', while another 31% said they rely on television news 'sometimes' for this news coverage.⁵ Only 8% of respondents say they 'never' use television for information on the maritime disputes – a measure of the near-universal exposure of China's citizens to television news.

China's print media, the nation's other major traditional source of news coverage, are also subject to relatively tight control by the state's propaganda offices. We can see that around 29% of respondents say they 'often' use print media, such as newspapers, for their information on the nation's maritime disputes. Another 39% of respondents report using print media 'sometimes', while one-third (33%) say they 'never' use print media for this information. Internet sources, dominated by online news portals, are used 'often' by 23% of respondents for their information on the maritime disputes, and 'sometimes' by another 23%. Unlike China's traditional media, which only a minority of respondents *do not* rely on at least sometimes for their political news, more than half (54%) of respondents say they 'never' use any of the four Internet sources for their information on the maritime disputes. Finally, in [Table 1](#), we can see that while 20% of respondents say they use the Internet news portals 'often', only 12% frequently get information on China's maritime disputes via Weibo. The figures were smaller still for bulletin board forums and Weixin.

As nearly all respondents report getting news on the maritime disputes from television at least sometimes, and more than two-thirds use print media for this information, it is important to examine the extent to which Chinese citizens who access Internet sources for this purpose also rely on the traditional media, thus exposing them to mixed political cues. [Table 2](#) reports the percentage of respondents who say they use at least one of the various Internet sources 'often' for their information on the maritime disputes, and also report using either newspapers or television 'often' for this purpose.

The percentages in [Table 2](#) show that a strong majority of those who use any of the Internet sources for news about the maritime disputes also get relevant information from television. Indeed, 73% of those using Internet sources say they also use television for information on these issues. At the same time, only 40% of these Internet users say they also rely on newspapers for this news coverage. The usage patterns for online news portals and for Weibo, not surprisingly, closely echo these results, as they are subsets of Internet sources. All told, the patterns of [Table 2](#) clearly show that, though a significant minority of citizens turn to the Internet for their political news, a significant proportion of these also rely on the state's traditional conduits of political news, television and

Table 2. Proportion using Internet media 'often' for info on maritime disputes who also use traditional media 'often' (per cent, rounded).

	Any Internet source	News portals	Weibo
Newspapers	40	43	42
TV	73	78	73

Source: Chinese maritime disputes public opinion survey dataset (Chubb, 2013a).

newspapers – a finding observed in previous research on news media usage in China (Yuan, 2011). This raises the potential of cross-cutting influence of traditional and non-official media in citizens' political assessments.

Unlike television, which is used at least sometimes for these purposes by 92% of respondents, the Internet remains a much more sharply self-selected conduit of political information – 54% of respondents saying they never get information on China's maritime disputes from any of the four major online sources. In order to focus in on citizens' differential use of media cues, Table 3 presents the percentages of four key demographic groups (the young, middle-class, men, and the university educated) to see if there are significant subsets of China's citizenry who are especially likely to use the Internet, or alternatively, traditional media, for their political news.

Immediately apparent in the percentages of Table 3 is the fact that the young are especially likely to use Internet sources of political news, and far less likely than their older counterparts to use the traditional media: television and newspapers. While 45% of the young (23 years of age and younger – China's 'post-1990 generation') use at least one Internet source 'often' for their political information on China's maritime disputes, only 22% of those aged 24 and older do so. At the same time, only 46% of the young often get such information from television, compared with 63% of those in the older age category. Similarly, with newspapers, only 13% of the young use print media often for information on maritime disputes, while 30% of those aged 25 and older do so. Clearly, then, China's young, as around the world, are disproportionately likely to turn to online sources for their news and information on this issue.

Respondents in China's middle class (an income-based measure of economic standing – see the Appendix 1 for details) were only slightly more likely than non-middle-class respondents to use the Internet for news on China's maritime disputes: 27% as opposed to 23%. And their use of traditional media sources for this information closely parallels the patterns of their non-middle-class counterparts. Men are more likely to avail themselves of Internet sources than women (27% against 20%), but they are also more likely than women to rely on all the various news sources for information on China's maritime disputes. As we shall see below, this is because men tend to pay more attention to the topic. Clearly, then, gender is likely to play a role in the process of engagement with political news, but not distinctively for one or another of China's news conduits.

Though the university-educated are, like the young, significantly more likely than their less-educated counterparts to turn to Internet sources for information on the maritime disputes, they are also much more likely to use print media for this purpose – a pattern that echoes those of their Western counterparts, as the educated are typically the most

Table 3. Proportion using various media 'often' for information on the maritime disputes (per cent, rounded).

	Young	Not young	Middle class	Not middle class	Male	Female	Univ. educated	Not univ. educated
Newspapers	13	30	33	28	36	22	34	28
TV	46	63	60	61	66	56	47	63
Any Internet source	45	22	27	23	27	20	47	21
News portals	38	19	24	20	24	17	41	18
Weibo	23	11	17	11	13	10	33	10

Source: Chinese maritime disputes public opinion survey dataset (Chubb, 2013a).

likely to be newspaper readers and also to avail themselves of other sources of political information, including the Internet (Graber, 2006, p. 183). And, like the young, the university educated are far more likely than those with lower levels of education to eschew television news – while, as we have seen, middle-class respondents are just as likely as non-middle-class respondents to turn to television news. All told, then, Chinese citizens' use of the nation's mass media is far from monolithic. The patterns of media usage in Table 3 underscore a number of sharply distinctive patterns of usage of China's different conduits for their political information on contentious national issues such as the maritime disputes with Japan.

As these demographic influences may well co-vary with each other, it is important to see whether there are significantly different patterns of media usage, despite controlling for the influence of each demographic factor. Table 4 uses ordinary least squares regression analysis to test for the independent influence of the four demographic factors examined in Table 3.

The patterns in Table 4 confirm that several of the demographic influences evident in the previous tables have cross-cutting effects – some that eliminate independent effects, others that remain significant despite controlling for the influences of the other demographic factors. For the traditional media, despite controlling for the influence of each demographic factor, we can see that television is relied on equally by men and women, and by middle-class and non-middle-class respondents. However, despite these controls, university-educated and young respondents are significantly less likely than their non-university-educated and older counterparts to use television news for their maritime dispute information.

Turning to print media, men are significantly more likely than women to get information on the maritime disputes from newspapers and magazines, but middle-class and university-educated respondents are no more or less likely to use these print sources than are non-middle-class or non-university-educated respondents. However, we can see that the young are significantly less likely than others to use print media for this information.

Reliance on Internet sources for political information, not surprisingly, prompts several distinctive patterns of media usage. University-educated and young respondents are significantly more likely than their lower-educated and older counterparts to use various Internet sources for their information on the maritime border disputes, much as male

Table 4. Single-media use for information on the maritime disputes by demographic groups.

	Regression				
	Newspapers	TV	Any Internet source	Internet: portals	Internet: Weibo
Constant	1.83*** (.03)	2.50*** (.03)	1.49*** (.03)	1.44*** (.03)	1.24*** (.03)
Males	0.26*** (.04)	0.14 (.03)	0.18*** (.04)	0.17*** (.04)	0.04 (.04)
Middle-class (income)	0.08 (.06)	0.01 (.05)	0.09 (.06)	0.06 (.06)	0.09* (.05)
University educated	0.07 (.07)	−0.19** (.06)	0.64*** (.07)	0.57*** (.07)	0.57*** (.06)
Post-1990 young	−0.28*** (.07)	−0.17** (.06)	0.60*** (.07)	0.49*** (.07)	0.39*** (.06)
Adjusted R ²	.04	.02	.11	.08	.09
n	1401	1410	1397	1380	1386

Source: Chinese maritime disputes public opinion survey dataset (Chubb, 2013a).

Note: Figures in the table are regression coefficients (b) with the standard error in parentheses.

*Significant at the .1 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

***Significant at the .01 level.

respondents are significantly more likely than women to use the Internet for their political information (as they were newspapers). Middle-class respondents, however, are not significantly more likely than non-middle-class citizens to do so.

Overall, then, the patterns of media exposure and self-selection evident in [Tables 1–4](#) underscore Chinese citizens' differential use of various traditional and nonofficial news avenues for their political information. If, as previous research has shown, these different conduits not only attract distinctly different users, but also convey the political news in different ways, with implicit messages that speak to the government's performance on hot-button issues like the Sino-Japanese dispute over the Diaoyu Islands, then we would expect these different media avenues to attract and sustain distinctly different political assessments by those who avail themselves of their cues.

Demographic groups and political views on the Diaoyu Islands dispute

As we have seen, Chinese citizens are not monolithic in their use of media for political information. Rather, as elsewhere, gender, age, class, and educational distinctions in China yield differential patterns of reliance on the nation's various media. This section explores whether these groups of citizens pay significantly different levels of attention to the Diaoyu dispute, hold sharply different perceptions of the Chinese government's performance on the issue, and are more or less likely to approve of the idea of military engagement or compromise as policy responses. In particular, we seek to establish whether those who use the Internet for their political news pay closer attention to the issue as well as hold distinctly critical assessments of the government's handling of the issue and, if so, to ascertain the impact of the Internet in sustaining those critical sensibilities.

[Table 5](#) presents grouped means scores for the four demographic groups of respondents examined above. These are grouped as four either/or categories: male and female; young ('post-1990') and older; middle class and non-middle class; and university educated and non-university-educated (see the [Appendix 1](#) for details on all measures used in these tests).

The first section of [Table 5](#) reports grouped means scores for men and women on the attention paid to the Diaoyu Islands issue, their perceptions of the government's performance on the issue, and their approval or disapproval of using military force or pursuing compromise through negotiation to deal with the issue. Each pair of means scores is tested for the level of significance of that difference. The first score shows that men were significantly more likely than women to pay attention to the Diaoyu Islands issue. Men were also significantly more likely than women to approve the use of military force to resolve the issue. However, although men on average assigned a lower score to the government for its performance on the Diaoyu dispute than did women, the difference was not significant. Nor was there a significant difference between the views of men and women on the issue of seeking a compromise in the disputes.

The second set of grouped means scores in [Table 5](#) is for young and older respondents. Here, we can see that the only significant difference between the attitudes of these two groups is the attention paid to the Diaoyu Islands issue – young respondents paid significantly less attention than those 24 years of age and older. Though the young gave the

Table 5. Political views on the Diaoyu Islands maritime disputes for key demographic groups' means.

Political issue perceptions	Groups	t-Test for equality of means ^a		
		Mean	t	Signif. (2-tailed)
Attention paid to Diaoyu	Women	3.50	-8.48	.00
	Men	3.91		
Govnt performance on Diaoyu	Women	3.74	0.97	.33
	Men	3.69		
Approve of military use in Diaoyu	Women	0.47	-2.01	.05
	Men	0.53		
Approve of compromise in Diaoyu	Women	0.61	-0.83	.41
	Men	0.63		
Attention paid to Diaoyu	Young	3.43	-3.63	.00
	Not-Y	3.73		
Govnt performance on Diaoyu	Young	3.63	-1.15	.25
	Not-Y	3.72		
Approve of military use in Diaoyu	Young	0.43	-1.42	.16
	Not-Y	0.51		
Approve of compromise in Diaoyu	Young	0.68	1.37	.17
	Not-Y	0.61		
Attention paid to Diaoyu	M-class	3.90	3.28	.00
	Not M-C	3.68		
Govnt performance on Diaoyu	M-class	3.79	0.99	.32
	Not M-C	3.70		
Approve of military use in Diaoyu	M-class	0.57	1.99	.05
	Not M-C	0.49		
Approve of compromise in Diaoyu	M-class	0.50	-3.43	.00
	Not M-C	0.64		
Attention paid to Diaoyu	Uni-Ed	3.85	1.85	.07
	Not Uni-Ed	3.69		
Govnt performance on Diaoyu	Uni-Ed	3.60	-1.46	.15
	Not Uni-Ed	3.73		
Approve of military use in Diaoyu	Uni-Ed	0.56	1.37	.17
	Not Uni-Ed	0.49		
Approve of compromise in Diaoyu	Uni-Ed	0.55	-1.57	.12
	Not Uni-Ed	0.62		

Source: Chinese maritime disputes public opinion survey dataset (Chubb, 2013a).

Notes: Not-Y, not young; M-class, middle class; N M-C, not middle class; Uni-Ed, university educated; N Uni-Ed, not university educated.

^aEqual variances not assumed.

government lower scores than older respondents for its performance on the issue, they were less likely than older respondents to approve of military force being use to resolve the issue, and were more likely to approve of the pursuit of compromise. However, none of these perceptual differences was significant.

The third set of grouped means scores compares the views of middle-class and non-middle-class respondents. Here we can see that middle-class citizens on average pay significantly more attention to the Diaoyu Island issue than their non-middle-class counterparts. While middle-class citizens held evaluations of the government's performance on the issue that were insignificantly different from those of non-middle-class citizens, they were significantly more likely than non-middle-class respondents to approve of military force to resolve the dispute, and significantly less likely to support a compromise solution. All told, middle-class respondents tend to pay close attention to the issue, and to hold strident, pro-military stances on the question of how to handle it.

The fourth set of grouped means compares university-educated respondents with those who do not have a university degree. The results indicate, first of all, that those with

advanced educations were significantly more likely to pay attention to the Diaoyu Islands issue. At the same time, respondents with university educations assessed the government's performance on the issue less positively on average, and were more likely than their lower-educated counterparts to approve a military and not a compromise solution to the issue – though these differences were not statistically significant.

In sum, the attitudinal patterns evident in Table 5 point to surprisingly disparate perceptions across these key demographic groups regarding the salience of the maritime disputes issue, the Chinese government's performance in handling the disputes, and alternative policy options for resolving the issue. While the issue has broad salience, except for the young, there are widely different senses of how the government has performed and the best approach for handling the controversy. These different attitudes are held, in several cases, by groups who rely on similar media avenues for their information on the disputes. For example, although the young and the university-educated are both significant users of Internet sources for their information on the Diaoyu Islands dispute (see Table 4), young respondents are significantly *less* likely than their older counterparts to pay attention to the issue, while university-educated respondents are significantly *more* likely to do so than those without advanced education. Similarly, the young and university-educated both assign lower scores for the government's performance on the issue than their older and lower-educated counterparts, but the young tend to favour the pursuit of compromise through negotiation, while the university-educated are more likely to support using military force.

In short, different demographic groups that rely on similar media sources for their information on these political questions of national significance nonetheless derive different political attitudes towards the government's performance and different policy views from the process. Clearly, the Internet, despite its acknowledged irreverence and perceived independence from the state, is not conveying either a blanket endorsement or critique of the government, or monolithic support for a given policy course of action. The next section uses multivariate analysis to test the independent effects of media cues amongst these demographic groups in order to gauge more closely the independent impact of self-selection and of media conveyance of cues for these key demographic groups in Chinese society.

Demographic groups, media usage, and political views on the Diaoyu Islands dispute

We have seen that different demographic groups in China hold distinctly different political views about one of the nation's key foreign policy issues. At the same time, they rely on different media conduits for their information on the maritime disputes. Because individuals tend to self-select media sources based on their own values and predispositions, the next step in our analysis is to use multivariate analysis to test the extent to which the salience of the Diaoyu Islands controversy, attitudes towards the government's performance on that issue, and support for policy alternatives reflect those demographic groupings' predispositions, or the influence of three main media conduits: television, print media, and Internet sources, or a combination of the two.

Table 6, using OLS regression and logistic regression, tests the independent impact of our four key demographic groups and, separately, each of the key media conduits, on the

Table 6. Single-media use and perceptions of the Diaoyu Islands maritime dispute regression and logit.

	Diaoyu dispute: attention paid regression	Diaoyu dispute: government performance regression	Diaoyu dispute: approve military use logit	Diaoyu dispute: approve compromise logit
Constant	2.57*** (.06)	3.51** (.08)	0.27 (.17)	0.23 (.16)
<i>Newspapers</i>	0.51*** (.03)	0.13*** (.04)	-0.24** (.08)	0.15* (.08)
Males	0.26*** (.04)	-0.08 (.08)	0.30** (.12)	0.07 (.12)
Middle-class (income)	0.14** (.06)	0.10 (.08)	0.34* (.18)	-0.57*** (.16)
University educated	0.05 (.08)	-0.14 (.09)	0.26 (.21)	-0.26 (.20)
Post-1990 young	-0.14* (.08)	-0.06 (.10)	-0.35* (.21)	0.33 (.21)
<i>n</i>	1369	1240	1174	1310
Adjusted R^2 or Nagelkerke R^2	.24	.01	.02	.02
-2 log likelihood			1606.42	1723.12
Constant	2.28*** (.10)	3.19*** (.12)	.74** (.26)	-.17 (.24)
<i>TV</i>	0.49*** (.04)	0.22*** (.04)	-0.36*** (.10)	0.27** (.09)
Males	0.33*** (.05)	-0.07 (.05)	0.27** (.12)	0.09 (.12)
Middle-class (income)	0.18** (.07)	0.11 (.08)	0.32* (.17)	-0.55** (.16)
University educated	0.18** (.08)	-0.10 (.09)	0.14 (.22)	-0.18 (.20)
Post-1990 young	-0.20** (.08)	-0.06 (.09)	-0.30 (.21)	0.31 (.21)
<i>n</i>	1378	1248	1180	1317
Adjusted R^2 or Nagelkerke R^2	.17	.02	.03	.03
-2 log likelihood			1610.99	1727.86
Constant	3.18*** (.06)	3.77*** (.07)	-0.16 (.14)	0.52*** (.14)
<i>Any Internet source</i>	0.21*** (.03)	-0.02 (.03)	0.00 (.07)	-0.03 (.07)
Males	0.36*** (.05)	-0.05 (.05)	0.22* (.12)	0.14 (.12)
Middle-class (income)	0.17** (.07)	0.12 (.08)	0.27 (.17)	-0.53** (.16)
University educated	-0.04 (.09)	-0.13 (.09)	-0.16 (.14)	-0.20 (.21)
Post-1990 young	-0.40*** (.09)	-0.08 (.10)	-0.25 (.22)	0.28 (.21)
<i>n</i>	1365	1236	1167	1303
Adjusted R^2 or Nagelkerke R^2	.09	.001	.01	.02
-2 log likelihood			1608.20	1718.29

Source: Chinese maritime disputes public opinion survey dataset (Chubb, 2013a).

Note: Figures in the table are regression coefficients (b) with the standard error in parentheses.

*Significant at the .1 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

***Significant at the .01 level.

Diaoyu Islands' issue salience, government performance, and preference for a policy of military confrontation or compromise on the issue. In the first section testing the impact of use of print media for information on the Diaoyu Islands issue, we see that frequent usage of print media such as newspapers is significantly associated with higher levels of attention on the Diaoyu issue. Even controlling for print media usage, we see that male and middle-class respondents are still more likely than their female and non-middle-class counterparts to pay close attention to the island dispute, while young respondents are significantly less likely than older respondents to pay high levels of attention.

Across the other three print media models, we see that respondents who frequently use print sources for their information on Diaoyu are significantly more likely to give the government a positive performance evaluation on the issue, to oppose sending in the military and to support a compromise. In terms of government performance, once print media

usage is controlled for, there are no significant differences for any demographic groups. However, male and middle-class respondents are more likely than their female and non-middle-class counterparts to support the use of military force on the issue, while young respondents are significantly less likely than older respondents to support the use of military force. And in the final column, we see that those who use print media are more likely to support a compromise through negotiation in the Diaoyu Islands issue, while middle-class and university-educated respondents are more likely to oppose such a course of action – middle-class respondents significantly more so.

The second section of the models tests the impact of TV news on attitudes towards the Diaoyu Islands issue. We see essentially identical patterns of effects across the board. Given research showing distinctive effects due to television's emotive and personalized conveyance of information, as opposed to newspapers' detailed and dispassionate coverage, these results suggest that in China, despite their presentational differences, the government's close control of both these traditional media produces virtually identical influences on citizens' political views of this high-profile foreign policy issue.

The third set of models examines the influence of Internet news coverage. Here, despite the obvious stylistic differences of the Internet conduits, we find an equivalent conveyance of salience for the Diaoyu Islands issue. However, as the second model shows, unlike the significant influence of newspapers and television observed above, those who often use Internet news do not assign high scores to the government for its handling of the Diaoyu Island dispute. Interestingly, in the third model, we see that middle-class respondents, who have been shown to be more likely to be supportive of military use, lose their significant effect once Internet usage is controlled for. However, that influence is not sufficient to negate the middle-class respondents' opposition to a compromise solution in the Diaoyu Islands.

All told, then, these models point to the two traditional media as having highly equivalent effects on citizens' political perceptions. Internet news sources, while they also convey issue salience for the Diaoyu Islands issue to all but the young, actually undermine support for military intervention among all groups except for men, but do not affect the uncompromising stance of middle-class users, who remain the most likely to oppose a policy of compromise. Considered alongside the effects for China's traditional media outlets, the patterns in these single-media usage models point to the Internet as able to prompt user attention on the issue, but not to affect support for the government's performance, or endorsement of a particular policy approach. Because most Internet users also rely on traditional media conduits, [Table 7](#) looks at the Diaoyu issue salience, government performance, and support for military and compromise policies, with all three main media conduits included in the models.

Chinese citizens, though they may rely on a given conduit for the bulk of their political information, are likely to have their views influenced by a range of other media, as most people report getting information on the Diaoyu dispute from television, whether or not they also use the Internet as a conduit for their political news. [Table 7](#) reports OLS and logistic regression models replicating the models of the previous table, but including all three of the main media conduits: television, print media, and Internet sources. Each medium's influence, then, is controlled for, thus allowing us to see the independent influence of each conduit and the likelihood of the key demographic groups holding various stances on the Diaoyu Islands issue.

Table 7. Three-media usage models for perceptions of the Diaoyu Islands maritime dispute regression and logit.

	Diaoyu dispute: attention paid regression	Diaoyu dispute: government performance regression	Diaoyu dispute: approve military use logit	Diaoyu dispute: approve compromise logit
Constant	1.95*** (.10)	3.17*** (.13)	0.82** (.28)	-0.17 (.26)
Newspapers	0.39*** (.03)	0.08** (.04)	-0.14* (.09)	0.07 (.08)
TV	0.27*** (.04)	0.19*** (.05)	-0.32** (.10)	0.24** (.10)
Any Internet source	0.11*** (.03)	-0.04 (.03)	0.05 (.08)	-0.05 (.08)
Males	0.24*** (.04)	-0.08 (.05)	0.31** (.12)	0.08 (.12)
Middle class (income)	0.14** (.06)	0.13 (.08)	0.32** (.18)	-0.56*** (.17)
University educated	0.04 (.08)	-0.08 (.09)	0.16 (.22)	-0.17 (.21)
Post-1990 young	-0.18** (.08)	0.00 (.10)	-0.39* (.22)	0.38* (.22)
N	1355	1228	1161	1296
Adjusted R ² or Nagelkerke R ²	.28	.02	.03	.03
-2 log likelihood			1579.63	1700.12

Source: Chinese maritime disputes public opinion survey dataset (Chubb, 2013a).

Note: Figures in the table are regression coefficients (b) with the standard error in parentheses. See the [Appendix 1](#) for details on all variables used in this table.

*Significant at the .1 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

***Significant at the .01 level.

In the first model of [Table 7](#), which tests the influence of each of the main media conduits and the views of the four key demographic groups on the level of attention paid to the Diaoyu Islands issue, we see, as expected, that the more frequently that users get information on maritime disputes from any of the three media avenues, the more closely they pay attention to the issue. Amongst the demographic groups, it is only the young who remain significantly less attentive to the issue than their older counterparts, while those with university educations are insignificantly more likely than those with lower levels of education to pay attention to the issue.

In the second column, which reports support for the government's performance on the Diaoyu Islands issue, we see that those who rely often on the traditional media – television and print – assign significantly higher scores to the government's performance than those who less often use these media avenues. At the same time, those who frequently use Internet news sources for their information on this issue are no more or less likely to give the government positive scores for his handling of the Diaoyu controversy. The lack of impact for the demographic groups once the three media are controlled for underscores the influence of the media cues conveyed, even though, as we have seen, for some groups, like young respondents, their relative lack of engagement with the issue is resolute, despite the media influence.

The third column tests opposition and support for China using military force in the Diaoyu Islands controversy. Though the Chinese government does not rule out using the military option, its official stance has been to resist military confrontation, make incremental advancements, and to express a willingness to negotiate and potentially strike a compromise over the economic resources in the area. Again, it is the traditional media – television and newspapers – that significantly convey opposition to the idea of using military force at the risk of war, while those reliant on Internet news sources are no

more or less likely to endorse this position. At the same time, male and middle-class respondents are significantly more likely to support military action in the East China Sea, despite the traditional media's discouragement of this view. The young, however, are resolute in their opposition to military force despite not engaging closely with the issue.

In the fourth column, we see television news as able to convey the government line of support for the principle of compromise through negotiation on the Diaoyu Islands dispute, though those primarily reliant on print media for their political information are no more or less supportive of the compromise tack. The stridency of middle-class respondents remains evident, as reflected in their opposition to a compromise solution, while the young are significantly supportive of compromise, as their strong opposition to military force would anticipate.

All told, these patterns point to the influence of media conveyance of differential political sensibilities, but also to a significant role for media self-selection. Middle-class and young Chinese both turn to the Internet as one of their key sources of political information, but they embrace very different political policy preferences and levels of support for the government line. While middle-class respondents say they pay close attention to the issue, their political views less closely reflect the government's line than those of young respondents, who pay less attention to the issue, but are relatively clear cut in their opposition to militarism and support for the idea of a compromise. This serves as a reminder that media effects, even in authoritarian systems that are managed by government overseers, involve a strong element of user self-selection. In this sense, it seems clear that the Internet in China provides citizens of all stripes with information that can be interpreted and used to support manifold and disparate political stances.

Conclusion

This paper has used Chinese citizens' perceptions of a high-salience foreign affairs issue to examine the impact of traditional and Internet media in conveying differential cues to different groups of an authoritarian nation's citizenry. Because media effects in any political system are constrained by users' self-selection of alternative conduits for their information, and those conduits convey different styles and credibility, we use this critical case to test the much-debated assumption that the rise of the Internet intrinsically undermines the control of authoritarian regimes over their citizenry, as its more interactive and informal format boosts citizens' critical sensibilities and challenges governmental authority. Although our findings confirm the differential usage of traditional and Internet media by different elements of China's citizenry, they also clearly point to the ongoing and pervasive influence of the nation's traditional media, especially television, for conveying political information on this type of issue. Because virtually all of China's citizens – including those who use the Internet frequently – use television as a source of political news, China's more rough-edged online media cannot be seen as providing an agenda of political cues untainted by the traditional media's more closely controlled political information. This cross-media influence is evident in the three-media models in [Table 7](#), which show that, once the effects of usage of each medium are controlled for, Internet sources cease to have significant effects on anything but the fuelling of attention paid to the Diaoyu Islands dispute (and even this is mostly accounted for by the self-directed nature of Internet content consumption). It remains the traditional media, television, and newspapers

that not only carry the attention of the citizenry to the issue, but also convey support for the government's performance, opposition to the use of military force, and in-principle support for the pursuit of compromise through negotiation.

Despite the confirmation of the dominating influence of the traditional media, however, several patterns in the results point to the Internet as a domain of potential critical sensibilities and resistance to the government's informational agenda. Perhaps most obvious are the political views of young Chinese. Least likely to use television and newspapers for their information on this issue and, together with the university-educated, among the most likely to use Internet sources for their information on the Diaoyu dispute, the 'post-1990 generation' are the only group to significantly resist the salience of the issue, giving it relatively lower levels of attention. Those with university educations are equally likely as the young to use television as a source of information (and far more likely to use newspapers), but they pay no more or less attention to the issue than those from other educational backgrounds. The young, who say they frequently hear about the Diaoyu issue on the Internet, are unique in not translating this into attention paid to the issue. It is a reminder that, despite the Internet's interactive aspects, more diverse presentational style, and perceived distance from governmental control, users bring their own values and interests to the process.

The lack of effect of the Internet on government performance and approval for either military force or compromise through negotiation suggests that while online news tends towards sensationalist style, abrasive presentation, and angry nationalist discourse, the online environment as a whole provides its users with a smorgasbord of alternative political nuances, in which users with different predispositions can find what they want. Thus, as we can see in [Table 7](#), usage of Internet sources has no significant impact on citizens' governmental performance evaluations or their stances on use of military force or a compromise in the Sino-Japanese maritime dispute. Instead, despite the traditional media users apparently receiving consistent cues regarding the government's performance and policies, middle-class and university-educated respondents support military intervention and oppose a compromise, while the young's views are just the opposite. In short, when it comes to foreign affairs controversies, the Chinese Internet appears to provide a more acerbic domain where users may hone alternative stances. However, support for the government's performance is conveyed to those who rely on the nation's traditional media, which prompt less resistance from users, since no significant differences remain in perceptions of the government's handling of the issue once the media influence is controlled for.

These findings suggest that at this point the Chinese Internet's acerbic nationalism is ultimately non-threatening to the party-state. Traditional media remain powerful channels for conveying government-friendly views, while in contrast the Internet's effects on its users' views are uneven, and appear to be strongly mediated by users' predispositions. Thus, it would seem the Chinese party-state can safely continue to delay resolution of the Sino-Japanese maritime disputes (Fravel, 2010), while willingly accommodating, if not sponsoring, 'critics' who call for more forceful policies (Chubb, 2013b). Indeed, given the strong influence of the traditional media, the Internet may be seen as providing the government with an attitudinal 'safety valve' (Hassid, 2012), in which citizens' general dissatisfaction can be channelled into nationalist fervour and vented on an issue that has no real-world referents for the vast bulk of the population. Of course, the Internet remains a potential can of worms that the government may at times find difficult to close, especially

when its coverage involves more ‘obtrusive’ issues like pollution, whose real-world manifestations lie within the direct experience of the population, thereby allowing citizens to challenge media news messages. Moreover, prolonged exposure to the Internet’s more sensationalistic style of news may stimulate and normalize users’ appetites for harder-edged content, making the official line more difficult to present in appealing ways. On current evidence, however, the Internet’s jingoism and sensationalism on hot-button nationalist issues are more likely reinforcing the party-state’s political control than undermining it.

Notes

1. A study of the party-state’s censorship behaviour across multiple online platforms indicated that criticism directed at the party-state was not particularly likely to be censored; rather censorship tended to focus on forestalling social mobilization (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2013).
2. Original data were produced as part of a Beijing HorizonKey research consultancy’s self-sponsored survey (see Chubb, 2013a).
3. According to industry professionals at two Beijing-based survey companies, randomized telephone surveys on such topics in China typically produce response rates of between 5% and 10%.
4. Among the four online sources (news portals, BBS forums, Weibo, and Weixin) news portals clearly dominate. More than 22% of respondents said they ‘often’ obtained information about China’s maritime disputes from news portals, while only 10% said the same for Weibo, 6.7% for BBS forums, and only 3.4% for Weixin. More than 80% of these frequent Weibo and Weixin users also rely on online news portals ‘often’ for their information on the maritime disputes. Therefore, we use a combined ‘Internet Sources’ category in several of the tables in the article, reflecting citizens’ overall reliance on digital news sources, which share the similar user experiences of voluntary exposure to content, compared with the more prescriptive traditional media.
5. Respondents who said they heard about the maritime disputes through television were invited to name a specific outlet. More than one-third (36.9%) named the central broadcaster CCTV, while the remainder named provincial and satellite stations. This indicates that respondents distinguished television (*dianshi*) from online video platforms like Youku.

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Appendix 1. Variable codes, scales and measures^a

Political issue perceptions

- **C_DIAOYU_ATTENTION_NET_2PLUS** A 4-value variable for the degree of respondent attention paid to the Diaoyu Island dispute: ‘*nin dui Zhong-Ri Diaoyu Dao wenti de guanzhu chengdu ruhe?*’. 1 = low; 4 = high. (*d1a01*)
- **D_DIAOYU_GOV'T_PERFORMANCE_NET_2PLUS** A 5-value variable for approval of the government's performance on the Diaoyu Island dispute: ‘*nin ruhe pingjia Zhongguo zhengfu zai chuli Diaoyu Dao wenti shang de biao xian?*’. 1 = low; 5 = high. (*d3a01*)
- **E_DIAOYU_MILITARY_APPROVE_NET** A dummy variable for approval of use of the military (‘send in the troops’) as a policy option in the Diaoyu Island dispute: ‘*zhijie pai bing, bu xi yi zhan?*’. 1 = approve; 0 = disapprove. (*d403*)
- **E_DIAOYU_COMPROMISE_APPROVE_NET** A dummy variable for approval of ‘compromise through negotiation’ as a policy option in the Diaoyu Island dispute: ‘*tongguo tanpan, dacheng tuoxie?*’. 1 = approve; 0 = disapprove. (*d402*)

Media usage for information about the maritime disputes

- **A_NEWSPAPERS** Frequency of use of newspapers as a source of information on China's maritime disputes: 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often. (*d201*)
- **A_TV** Frequency of use of television as a source of information on China's maritime disputes: 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often. (*d202*)
- **A_INTERNET_SOURCES** Maximum frequency of use of any of four Internet media (news portals, Weibo microblogs, BBS, Weixin instant messaging service) as a source of information on China's maritime disputes: 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often. (*d204, d205, d206, d207*)
- **PORTALS_INTERNET** Frequency of use of Internet News Portals as a source of information on China's maritime disputes: 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often. (*d204*)
- **WEIBO_INTERNET** Frequency of use of Internet Weibo micro-blogs as a source of information on China's maritime disputes: 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often. (*d205*)

Demographics

- **MALES** A dummy variable for respondent's gender: 1 = male; 0 = female. (*z101*)
- **UNI** A dummy variable for respondent's education level: 1 = university educated; 0 = no university education. (*z301*)
- **MIDDLE_CLASS** A dummy variable for respondents' income level: 1 = those with monthly household income above 10,000 RMB (in Beijing, Shanghai & Guangzhou) or above 8000 RMB (in Changsha and Chengdu). (*z701*)
- **YOUNG_POST1990** A dummy variable for respondents born after 1990; i.e., those 23 years of age and under. (*z201*)

^aItalicized variable names in parentheses are variable names from the original raw data file. See Chubb (2013a).